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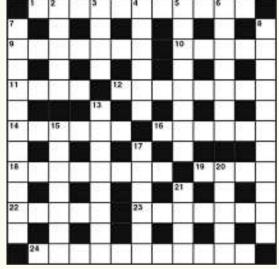






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CROSSWORD 4545



DOWN

Sense of anxiety possibly nags

the third mate (5)

will try to avoid

6 Fix a quiet spot (7)

(4-2)

(7)

(6)

3 Do nothing in mid Lent

4 An even chance the matador

Stop and relax with a shower

7 Most appealing feature of a

8 Supplementary benefit for

workers lacking security

13 Cloth worker; one in a mess

15 Choose one mother - the bes

17 A problem for the bridge-

builder to emphasise

newspaper perhaps

ACROSS

- Dictatorial soldiers in khaki for
- example (11) 9 Gapes at spectacles
- 10 A pie is turned a fine shade of
- brown (5) 11 Record a piece of music
- $12\ I\,drag\,gun\,out\,for\,protection$
- 14 Plant one hundred and fifty
- too many (6) 16 Cold tart
- 18 Make a suit?
- 19 Temperature in the freezer
- ordinarily (4) 22 A poisonous creeper

- 24 Way that is perfectly clear

23 This is irritating for sightseers, naturally(7)

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

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis





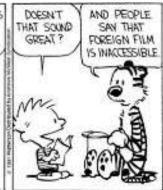
CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson



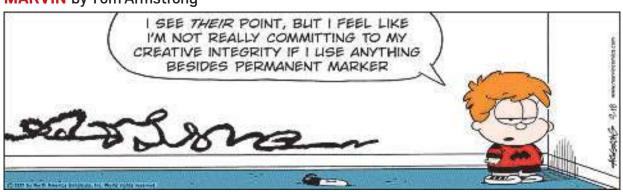




SOLUTION SUDOKU 4606



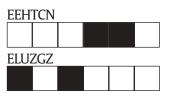
MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

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

DOEER



Answer: It takes a wise man to recognize a wise man. - Xenophanes SOLUTION: ERODE, PATIO, THENCE, GUZZLE

Difficulty Level 5s Instructions

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

Difficulty Level 1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy 3s = Medium: 4s = Hard: 5s = Very Hard: 6s =

Genius

SUDOKU

		-1		-			-	0
3		1		5				8
	4				8	7		
			4	3	Ī			
7	9				ii-		2	
				6	2			
		6	8				7	
7				4		9		5
1	2			-		6		

5	3	8	2	6	1	7	4	9
6	9	2	7	5	4	1	8	3
4	1	7	3	8	9	6	2	5
1	5	9	8	3	6	4	7	2
3	7	6	5	4	2	8	9	1
2	8	4	1	9	7	5	3	6
9	4	3	6	7	5	2	1	8
8	2	5	4	1	3	9	6	7
7	6	1	9	2	8	3	5	4

DAY TODAY

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)



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

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Look inward for the answers today, for the key to your hopes and the solution to

your fears lies with you rather than with friends, lovers or employers. True, they may have a role to play, but they also depend on your imaginative lead. Do your bit.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21) Go for teamwork

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

CANCER (June 22 - July 23) Professional affairs must take first place

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

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23) The broad, far-

reaching connection between Mercury and Venus is increasing your charm level. There will be moments over the next fortnight when you are grievously provoked, but vou'll be foolish to respond in kind.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept 23)

You'll do much better to react to



a snarl with a smile.

rather charitable mood, and could be a soft touch for deserving causes. It's all a question of making sure they're genuine. Mind you, that might be easier said than done

BY PETER VIDAL

LIBRA (Sept 24 - Oct 23) You have to pay more attention to partners' hopes and

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

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22) Harmonious

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

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22) The broad planetary

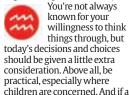
alignment is profoundly helpful. It doesn't take much imagination to see that, with confidence, you could leave planet earth, fly to the clouds and soar with the birds over the next two days - at least in your dreams. In other words, it's good to try to take an overview of all your daily

activities and pressures CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20) Your attention will



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

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)



for advice, try to see the world PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

through their eyes.

younger relation comes to you



see that an investment is returned. You may, however, be required to put in just a little extra effort. But then, it might be an emotional favour that needs to be repaid.

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12/21	Assistant Manager (SAP MM)	1
13/21	Engineer (Dot Net)	1
14/21	Engineer (JAVA)	1
15/21	Manager (Social)	1
16/21	Assistant Manager (Social) on contract	2
17/21	Assistant Manager (Environment) on contract	2

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Chief General Manager/Projects APEPDCL: VISAKHAPATNAM Ph: 0891-2582325, 0891-2582326 Advt-76

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ontainer Corporation of India Ltd. shall be auctioning scrap items, empty damag containers and unclaimed/uncleared imported cargo landed at the terminals of Area 1 and Area 4 those containers arrived on or before **31.03.2021** through e-auction or 13-10-2021 & 27-10-2021 on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS". All details along with Terms & Conditions of auction sale & cargo details will be available on www.concorindia.co.ir & www. mstcecommerce.com w.e.f. 28-09-2021 & 15-10-2021. All importers includin Government Undertakings/ Departments whose containers/goods are lyin unclaimed/uncleared and falling in the said list uploaded in website at respectiv terminals, because of any dispute, stay by Court/Tribunal/others or any such reason may accordingly inform the concerned Executive Director at Area 1 and Area 4 CONCOR as wel Commissioner of Customs of the concerned Commissionaires, and file their objections/claims regarding disposal of such goods within **7 (Seven Days)** of this notice failing which the goods will be auctioned on "**AS IS WHERE IS BASIS**" without any further notice. For full details please log on to **www.concorindia.co.in** &

Executive Director



GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KENDRAPARA-JAJPUR. AT/PO- Nayabazar, Cuttack -753004,

Tel No. 0671-2444488, Email-serw kpd@yahoo.com

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

E-Procurement NOTICE

The Chief Construction Engineer, R. W. Carde, Kendrapara-Jaipur on behalf of Odisha State Rural Road Agency invites the
percentage rate bids in electronic tendering system for construction of roads under Practice from State Project in
districts of Kendrapara-For 6 (Sking numbers of packages with estimated cost tending to Rs. 29-67 Or (Approximately) including
their maintenance for five years from the eligible contractors registered with State PWD / CPWD / MES / Railways. The registered bidder of outside Odisha, can also perficipate in this process, but shell have to subsequently undergo registration with the appropriate authority of the Sane Gost, preferably within a month of the deadline for bid authorisem, but prior to signing of the contract. Date of release of invitation for Bids through e-procurement to 428.09.21

Availability of Bid Documents and mode of automission: The bid document is available online and should be submission.

online in www.pmgsytenders.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have a valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities. The bidders are required to submit (a) original Demand Draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security declaration and(c) original affidovit regarding correctness of information formished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.48 (a) (a) of ITB with Chief Construction Engineer, R. W. Circle, Kendrapara-Jappur on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the Bid, either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids shall be declared non-responsive. Summary for key dates is provided below:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification			of seeking tender	Date & Time of opening of tender		
	No.	From	To	clarification	Technical Bid	Financial Bid	
. 3	2	3	- 4	- 10	6.	7	
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur	Tender Online RCK-2021	28.09.2021 at 11.00 A.M.	18.10.2021 to 5.00 P.M.	18.10.2021 up to 1.00 P.M.	21.10.2021 at 11.30 A.M	Will be interested later	

Date of Submission of original documents such as Bid Security Declaration, Cost of Bid document and Affidavit: Dr. 21.10.2021 at 11.30 A.M. to 26.10.2021 at 3.00 P.M.

Chief Construction Engineer Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpu OIPR-25129/11/0017/2122



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RACC (Main Branch), Dhangu Road, Pathankot

[Rule 8- (1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable property)

Whereas. The undersigned being the authorized officer of the State Bank of India, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financi Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice to borrower on the date mentioned hereunder calling upon the orrower to repay the amount mentioned in the demand notice within 60 days of the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has

iken Symbolic Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him / her under sub-section (4) o ection 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on the date mentioned against. Account,

The berrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the State Bank of India, for an amount mentioned below and other Charges/ Expenses thereon The borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the

& Address	Owner of the Property etc.	Property Mortgaged Charged
eneral Store, Dhangu	Guarantor Sh. Om Parkash Mahajan S/o, Sh. Badri Nath. Sunder Nagar, Dhangu Road, Pathankot-145001.	Commercial property Khasra
aniau Mahaian S/o Sh. On	Parkash Mahajan (Prop.) Dhannu	

Name of account

Borrower(s)

ooden, West: Dhangu Road.

Dated: 27.09.2021

Road, Sunder Nagar, Pathankot-145001.

Partners/ Guarantors/

2 Maria and its Share 1/3 which comes to Six Only) as on 26.05.2021 plu measuring 5 Maria 3 Sarsai vide sale future interest and other deed No. 1344 dated 11.08,1986 in the expenses thereon.

Description of the

All the part and parcel of the 26.05.2021 23.09.2021 Rs. 6,71,156/-

Date of Demand

ommercial property Khasra No. 144/1 (Rupees Six Lac Seventy Or 0-16), 399 (0-16) total measuring 1 Kanal Thousand One Hundred Fift

Date of

iame of Sh. Om Parkash Sio Sh. Badri Nath Situated Near Ashirwad Palace, Dhangu Road, Sunder Nagar, Pathankot (situated in th revenue estate of Saili HB No. 332, Tehsil Pathankot, Bounded as: East: House of Dr. Guleria, North: Street, South: Shop of Sh

> Place: Pathankot Sd/- Authorized Officer

JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2021, CHANDIGARH, LATE CITY, 16 PAGES

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PUNJAB REJIGS CABINET

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

KANCHAN VASDEV

CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

ALMOST A week after the successor to Capt Amarinder Singh took oath, the new Punjab Cabinet was sworn in by Governor Banwari Lal Purohit in the presence of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and Deputy Chief Ministers Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and O P Soni at Raj Bhawan around 4.30 pm on Sunday evening.

There are seven new faces in the Channi ministry: Raja Warring, the two-time MLA from Gidderbaha: Dr Rai Kumar **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**



Former hockey captain Pargat Singh being sworn in as minister at Punjab Raj Bhawan in Chandigarh on Sunday. PTI Hours before swearing-in, many add/drops, demotions, protests

KANCHAN VASDEV CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

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

The party was barely able to decide on all the names of ministers till a few hours before the oath taking ceremony. It had not submitted the list till afternoon. At the

last minute, PPCC working president and Fatehgarh Sahib MLA, Kuljit Nagra's name was dropped. Amloh MLA, Kaka Randeep Singh Nabha was included instead.

While the list was finalised by senior party leaders including Rahul Gandhi, K C Venugopal Harish Chaudhary, Harish Rawat and Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi Wednesday, they had to tweak it further late Friday. After a protest by Nabha, Channi had two V-Cs with Rahul Gandhi. Thev

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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

before

WITH STATE polls around

the corner, the emphasis

in the UP Cabinet expan-

nalling to the non-Yadav

non-Jatav Dalit commu-

to woo Brahmins by in-

ducting Jitin Prasada

community vote.

given how opposition

parties are courting the

Paltu Ram and Dinesh Khati (SC),

and Sanjeev Kumar Gond (ST).

resentation to all sections, has

been done with the feeling of so-

cial balance, and carries the mes-

sage of harmony," Adityanath

said, adding that it gives an op-

"Today's expansion gives rep-

nity. The BJP has also tried

sion is on political sig-

OBC community and

state polls

MAULSHREE SETH

LUCKNOW. SEPTEMBER 26

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

The party's move comes in UP barely 10 days after it revamped the entire Cabinet in Gujarat, which goes to polls later next vear.

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

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

strata of society. Signal

State BJP leaders told The Indian Express that apart from Prasada, the others are leaders who "worked their way up from the grassroots within the party". They include Chhatrapal Gangwar, who hails from Bareilly and represents the Kurmi community, Sangita Balwant Bind from Ghazipur, and Dharamveer Prajapati from

Paltu Ram is from Balrampur, Dinesh Khati from Meerut in western UP, and Gond from eastern UP's Sonbhadra where his community is a key player in electoral politics.

While Adityanath stressed that the expansion gives representation to all sections from across the state, the opposition SP described the exercise as a "mere illusion" with an eye on the state polls to be held early next year.

'It is a drama being played to **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

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



Opp attacks

DEBRAJ DEB AGARTALA, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

The media adviser to the chief minister retorted that critspeech before spreading "fake"

The BJP said it was "wrong" to interpret the CM's comments as an endorsement of contempt of court. Deb himself did not respond to the video that went viral on social media on Sunday. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

BUSINESS AS USUAL

SPOT INSPECTION

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

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

BHUBANESWAR, BHOPAL, SEPTEMBER 26

THE LACK of development is the main reason for dissatisfaction in the districts where Maoists are active, and it is important to have uninterrupted development to wean the youth away from the

movement, Home Minister Amit tion is that development has not **EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** Shah said on Sunday.

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

Six chief ministers were present; four states were represented only by their chief secretaries and directors general of police. The root cause of dissatisfac-

reached there...since independensure accessibility to fast-paced development so that common and innocent people do not join them," the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) quoted Shah as having said during the meeting.

Without that, "neither we will be able to spread democracy **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

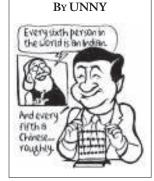


GERMANS VOTE TO DECIDE MERKEL SUCCESSOR

TALIBAN ASK AIRLINES TO RESUME INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS PAGE 11

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





NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

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

26,000 and 10,000 students respectively -- face an anxious wait. There are nearly 12,000 women studying in Kabul University and 1.000 in Kandahar University, including 300 from other provinces ac-

commodated in the dormitories. Many private universities with fewer students have resumed classes.

"Public universities can only

reopen once they have the money. We also have to remember that public universities have many more students in one class than private universities. In private universities, there are only about 10 to 20 students in each class and hence separating men and women in such classes is much simpler. We have about 100 to 150 students in one class. CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Rajasthan shuts down internet, businesses as nearly 16 lakh appear for teacher examination

ANCHOR

HAMZAKHAN

JAIPUR. SEPTEMBER 26

ATEACHERS' entrance examination held on Sunday saw an unprecedented shutdown of internet services and businesses across Rajasthan on the orders of the administration.

Nearly 16 lakh candidates appeared for the Rajasthan Eligibility Examination for Teachers (REET) -- held to recruit Level 1 (class 1-5) and Level 2 (classes 6-8) teachers -- in 4,019 centres across the state on Sunday. The last REET was conducted in 2018.

On Friday, Principal Secretary, Home, Abhay Kumar had written to the state, divisional and district officials to take a call on suspending internet services, wherever required, to prevent fraud. "About 16 lakh students will participate in REET 2021 and will travel from one district to another. In such a situation, there is a possibility of deteriorating law and order situation due to fake news, rumours of accidents, paper leak, etc," he wrote. Thus, keeping in mind the Central government's 2017 notification on "public safety" and "public emergency", Kumar Divisional the Commissioners to take a call on suspending internet services. Barring Jaisalmer, where Vice

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

President M Venkaiah Naidu and his wife Usha Naidu arrived on Sunday, internet services remained suspended for different

durations across the state on the orders of the Divisional Commissioners

In Jaipur division, Divisional

Commissioner Dinesh Kumar Yadav issued orders for suspension of internet services in Alwar, Dausa, Jaipur, Jhunjhunu and Sikar. In his order, Yadav said it has become necessary to suspend, "2G/3G/4G/ Data (mobile internet), internet services, bulk SMS/MMS WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and other Social Media Services through Internet Service Providers (except voice calls and broadband internet)."

In Jaipur Urban, orders were issued for suspension of the internet for 10 hours between 7 am and 5 pm; in Jaipur Rural, it was between 7.30 am and 5.30 pm. Internet services were suspended for 12 hours, between 6 am and 6 pm, in Alwar, Dausa, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

portunity to those at the lower Nitish turns up heat on caste census, says

SOURAV ROY BARMAN NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

MOUNTING PRESSURE on the BJP,

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Sunday reiterated his call for a caste census, saying it will be "in the national interest", and urged the Centre to "reconsider" its position against such an exercise.

Nitish's latest call comes three days after the Centre effectively ruled out a caste census in 2021, and told the Supreme Court that such an exercise "would not be feasible", and that its stance on the issue is a "conscious policy decision".

Pointing out that unanimous resolutions backing a caste census have been passed in the Bihar's Assembly and Legislative Council, Nitish told reporters in Delhi: "All of us have already jointly placed our demand. The issue has come up now in connection with the socio-economic caste census matter in the

SHUBHAM KUMAR



Stepping up

COUNT THE CASTES

BY TEJASHWI PRASAD YADAV PAGE 10

ensus be carried out."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

INSIDE

BHARAT BANDH TODAY, SKM SAYS NO PLACE FOR VIOLENCE **IN MOVEMENT PAGE 8**







pressure

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

court. It has no connection with our demand. We would like to request that the issue be considered and reconsidered, and caste

Asked if the JD(U) would exit the NDA in the event of the Centre rejecting his request, Kumar said: "There is no point discussing all that now. We will sit together and decide the future roadmap...and if you look





help formulate policy for poor. No one has anything to lose... Nitish raised demand earlier too ... ' **RAJIV RANJAN SINGH**

PAGE 9





JAGRATI AWASTHI **ANKITA JAIN** YASH JALUKA AIR-4 MAMTA YADAV MEERA K

DDAVEEN KIIMAD

JIVANI KARTIK NAGJIBHAI

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a strong message by dropping the

closest aide of former CM Capt

Amarinder Singh, Rana Gurmeet

Singh Sodhi, it has accommo-

dated eight ministers from his

Cabinet. In the process, the party

prevented a number of leaders

from joining his camp and posing

a threat to it. At the same time, it

has dropped five ministers, all of

whom have been in the midst of

clean image like Pargat Singh, the

party has also conveyed a mes-

sage that integrity matters.

However, the induction of

Kapurthala MLA Rana Gurjit

Singh -- who was dropped from

the Amarinder Cabinet over al-

legedly pocketing sand mining

contracts in the names of his em-

ployees -- has evoked protests

within the party with seven lead-

ers of Doaba writing to the top

leaders. His name, however, was

chosen Rana Gurjit to counter the

SAD-BSP combine in Doaba, He is

considered a strong leader of the

region and was warming up to

the senior-most Congressmen of

the state. He was local bodies

minister in Amarinder's Cabinet.

He was tipped to be the deputy

CM but his name was dropped at

the eleventh hour. Mohindra is a

well-connected Congress leader.

He had sided with Captain in the

Manpreet Singh Badal is nephew

of former Chief Minister Parkash

Singh Badal and had been with

SAD earlier. An MLA from

Bathinda, Manpreet had put in a

word for Channi to AICC leader

Privanka Gandhi before he was

Tript Bajwa, former rural de-

velopment and panchayats min-

ister, spearheaded the revolt

against Amarinder. He was all set

to be dropped from the Cabinet

citing that he was over 70 years.

But it was felt that he should be

mer Cabinet minister. She is re-

lated to Channi. She was also set

top be dropped but was retained

as she is a representative of the SC

former housing and water re-

sources minister, was also among

those who had revolted against

Muslim face in the Cabinet. She

was in Amarinder's Cabinet as

well. An MLA from Malerkotla,

she is the wife of former DGP

Mohd Mustafa, who was ignored

by Amarinder for the post of DGP.

Mustafa, once considered close to

Amarinder, is Navjot Sidhu's

also a minister in Amarinder's

Cabinet was considered close to

former CM. Being a Hindu face of

Bharat Bhushan Ashu, former

food minister in Amarinder's

Cabinet, was also retained as he is

considered a strong Hindu face.

Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, a

vociferous Badal baiter too found

a berth in Cabinet this time de-

spite Manpreet Badal opposing

his induction. Sidhu is learnt to

INPUTS FROM ABHISHEK

MOHANTY, IRAM SIDDIQUE

ANGAD, AISHWARYA

have supported him to the hilt.

many add/drops,

Hours before

swearing-in,

demotions,

protests

the party, he was not dropped.

Vijay Inder Singla, who was

strategic advisor now.

Razia Sultana is the only

Sukhbinder Singh Sarkaria,

Aruna Chaudhary is also a for-

rewarded for the revolt.

community.

named the CM of the state.

Former finance minister

revolt against him.

Brahm Mohindra is the one of

SAD with his three MLAs.

Sources said the party has

cleared by a probe panel.

By inducting leaders with a

controversy lately.



HOW MANY DALIT AUTHORS FROM BIHAR HAVE YOU READ? HERE IS WHY YOU HAVEN'T

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

TECH



WHAT THE SURFACE **DUO SAYS**

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

ENTERTAINMENT



FILMS DEV MADE WITH BROTHER VIJAY ANAND

The pair has given Indian cinema some of its finest work

EXPRESS AUDIO

Game Time: Into the bizarre world of NFTs

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

What are NFTs? What does it mean to own one? And are there any downsides to it? In this episode, hosts Gaurav Bhatt and Mihir Vasada, and producer Shashank Bhargava talk about the bizarre world of NFTs, and what it means for sports fans and artists.

FROM PAGE ONE

Channi ministry

Verka, three-time legislator from Amritsar: three-time MLA Sangat Singh Gilzian; two-time MLA from Jalandhar Cantt, Pargat Singh; four-time MLA Randeep Nabha; Gurkirat Kotli, the grandson of former chief minister Beant Singh and also a two-time legislator; and Rana Gurjit Singh, a former minister who had resigned from the Amarinder Singh ministry in 2018 amidst allegations of corruption.

Eight former ministers have $been\, retained: Brahm\, Mohindra,$ Manpreet Badal, Sukhbinder Sarkaria, Tripat Rajinder Singh Bajwa, Vijay Inder Singla, Aruna Chaudhary, Razia Sultana, and Bharat Bhushan Ashu.

The Doaba region, which had only one representative in the Amarinder cabinet, has got three ministers now. The most populous Malwa region has nine ministers, and Majha seven. The Amarinder cabinet had 11 ministers from Malwa, including the chief minister himself.

Sadhu Singh Dharamsot, Sunder Shvam Arora, Rana Gurmeet Sodhi, Balbir Singh Sidhu, and Gurpreet Kangar, who were part of the previous ministry, have been dropped.

Randeep Singh Nabha, 54, was included in the list of ministers at the eleventh hour. He had protested after the list was finalised, and had threatened to chalk out his future course of action himself. The Congress high command gave in to pressure and replaced PCC working president Kuljit Singh Nagra with Nabha.

Dr Raj Kumar Verka: 58, the Valmiki face of the party, had been in the running for a ministerial berth ever since the Amarinder Singh government came to

is also working president of the PPCC, had resigned from all posts after he was denied a berth by Amarinder. He had subsequently supported Navjot Singh Sidhu in

his revolt against the former CM. Hockey Olympian Pargat Singh is a close aide of Sidhu's, and had joined the Congress ahead of the 2017 Assembly election. He is also the PPCC general secretary, and has been vociferous in raising issues against Captain. He was ignored by Amarinder and not inducted in his Cabinet.

Raja Amrinder Singh Warring, 43, is the youngest minister in the cabinet, who has beaten back strong protests against his induction by Manpreet Badal. A well known baiter of Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Badal and his wife Harsimrat, who defeated him from the Bathinda Lok Sabha seat in 2017, Warring was an IYC chief from 2015 to 2018, and is consid-

ered close to Rahul Gandhi. Beant Singh's grandson Gurkirat Singh Kotli had faced trial in the infamous Katia molestation case. He had been angry with Amarinder for not including him

in the 2017 ministry. The Channi ministry has nine Jat Sikhs, four Hindus, three SCs,

one OBC, and two women. It will be after a gap of two years that the Cabinet will have no vacancy. With 18 berths in total, including the CM, the Cabinet had 17 ministers for two years after Navjot Sidhu had resigned. Channi's Cabinet now has 17 min-

Though there is no Mazhabi Sikh in the Cabinet despite Sidhu was pushing for Sukhwinder Singh Danny in place of Aruna Chaudhary, the Cabinet has AICC leader Rahul Gandhi's stamp on it. He commandeered the selection of ministers and till the last minute, when Kuljit Nagra was dropped from the final list, was in

constant touch with Channi. The party has tried to strike a balance of region, caste and community in the Cabinet, Congress $has\,three\,women\,MLAs, of\,whom$

two are in the Cabinet. While the party has conveyed had deliberated on dropping Gurkirat Singh Kotli from the list, but later changed their minds as he was former chief minister Beant Singh's grandson. His grandfather was associated with

routing of the militancy from the state and was well-liked in

Sources said they finally decided to drop Nagra, who however said he was never on the list. "It was a narrative created by the media. I am willing to sacrifice anything for the sake of the party and will continue to be soldier of the party. I had resigned from the Vidhan Sabha on farm laws. I am not even an MLA. How can I be a minister?" he asked. His resignation was never accepted by the Speaker.

RAWAT DEFENDS FLIP-FLOP, RANA GURJIT

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

Defending the induction of Rana Gurjit Singh, Rawat said, "Where is the controversy? He was exonerated by a departmental inquiry against him. Where is

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

DEMOTION FOR SOME MIN-ISTERS

Brahm Mohindra, who was the second-most senior minister in Amarinder's Cabinet, has been demoted to no. 4 after Channi took oath with two other ministers. Now Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, deputy CM, is the no. 2, with OPSoni being no. 3 in the pecking order. Manpreet Badal, who was earlier at no. 3 is now at no. 5 and so on. Tript Bajwa, who was no. 4 is now at no. 6. Aruna Chaudhary was on no. 6 and now on no. 7.

There has been a promotion for Sukhbinder Sarkaria, who was earlier on no. 12 and this time on no. 7. Razia was on no. 7 but has been pushed to no. 8 now. Vijay Inder Singla was on no. 14, and is now no. 10. Bharat Bhsuhan Ashu was on no. 16, now no. 11.

Sunday was a day of protests as seven MLAs and leaders --Navtej Cheema, Sukhpal Khaira, Mohinder Singh Kaypee, BS Dhaliwal, Avtar Henry Junior, Pawan Adya -- shot off a letter to the PPCC chief stating that a shell company of Rana Gurjit Singh had taken Rs 5 crore from a seamster Gurinder Singh and he had to resign from the Cabinet. They demanded he be replaced with an SC leader.

Two former ministers, Balbir Sidhu and Gurpreet Kangar, also questioned the high command as to why they were removed.

Caste census

closely, this is not just our demand. The demand has been raised in many states, not just in Bihar. It will be in the national in-

Nitish said political parties in Bihar will now chart the future course of action on the matter over which he had led a 10-party delegation from the state, including JD(U)'s principal rival RJD, to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 23.

On September 23, submitting an affidavit in response to Maharashtra's request that the data of the 2011 socio-economic census be revealed, the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment had informed the apex court that the data was "unusable" as it contains many technical flaws.

Referring to that submission, the Bihar Chief Minister stressed that ruling out a caste census citing errors in the 2011 exercise would be "wrong". He said that such a census was needed to get "a clear idea about the situation". "It will help in identifying

Elections coming, UP expands Cabinet

give representation to those chief Akhilesh Yadav said.

While the stress in Sunday's

sugarcane prices.

The exercise ignored former bureaucrat-turned-politician A K Sharma, who had served in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). While some party leaders say Sharma has mainly been given an organisational role, others point out that he had taken VRS to enter politics ahead of UP elections.

The inductions also indicate a sense of desperation within the BJP, with the state polls looming, as it comes during the "pitri-paksha" period consid-

so that they can see the teacher,

pecially in politics, are usually avoided.

Prasada, who is the son of former Congress veteran, the late Jitendra Prasada, joined the BJP in June. Former Union MoS in the Congress-led UPA government and ex-Lok Sabha MP from Dhaurahra, the 47-year-old hails from Shahjahanpur and was once regarded as the "youth face" of the Congress.

Prasda, incidentally, had undertaken a Brahmin Chetna Yatra while in the Congress and had been made the party's incharge for West Bengal before he switched sides.

On September 16, the BIP had brought in an entirely new Cabinet in Gujarat, replacing all the existing names in the newlook government led by firsttime MLA Bhupendra Patel.

The party has also changed Chief Ministers in two other states, replacing BS Yediyurappa with Basavaraj Bommai in Karnataka and Tirath Singh Rawat with Pushkar Singh Dhami in Uttarakhand.

police are needed. The chief min-

Odisha attended the meeting. West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala were represented by

chief minister said.

Deb asked officials to work

with "niyat, neeti, and niyam"

(good intentions, principles, and

regulations). "Don't work only if

CM, Secretary or the DM asks you

to. You will become exceptional if

you work on your own. If you are

on the field, distributing relief and

ration in a flood before the chief

secretary arrives, people will re-

to the bottom nor will we be

Chief Ministers Uddhav

able to develop the underdevel-

oped areas", he said, according to

Thackeray of Maharashtra,

Hemant Soren of Jharkhand, K

Chandrashekar Rao of Telangana,

Nitish Kumar of Bihar, Shivraj

Singh Chouhan of Madhya

Pradesh, and Naveen Patnaik of

Shah tells states

member you," he said.

the MHA statement.

top officials. Several states asked for security-related expenditure and de-

velopment funds for LWE districts to be increased. Invoking "cooperative federalism", Soren said it "did not seem

pragmatic" for the Centre to "demand money" from states for the deployment of central forces in IWE-affected areas.

"The central and state governments have to deal with this problem together on the principle of cooperative federalism... Till now a bill of Rs 10.000 crore has been raised by the Ministry of Home Affairs against the state of lharkhand in this regard. It is my humble request that these bills be written off. Also, the Government of India should take a decision not to send such bills to state governments in the future," Soren said, according to a Jharkhand govern-

Patnaik said Odisha had kept up efforts to curb LWE activities despite the pandemic, and "from 70 per cent of the districts being affected during the peak (of the Naxal problem), now we have hardly parts of three districts af-

fected by LWE".

He listed five development proposals for LWE-affected areas, including four-laning of NH 326 from Jeypore to Motu via Malkangiri upto Bhadrachalam; railway networks between Malkangiri and Bhadrachalam (153 km), and Nabrangpur and Junagarh (118 km); mobile phone access to all villages of the state through an estimated 2.000 more mobile base stations; setting up banks in LWE-affected areas within a year or two; and conducting a study to determine how many children from LWE-affected areas across the country get into national-level exams like

NEET, IIT, or JEE. Sources said Thackeray demanded Rs 1,200 crore under the Security-Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme and for development projects in Maharashtra. The state told the meeting that it wanted to increase the numbers of police posts, develop new $schools, and \, set \, up \, mobile \, phone$ towers in the Naxal-affected dis-

Chouhan spoke about the efforts made by the state's security forces to combat the Maoists, and the various development initiatives of his government in LWE-

of women and others, covering 2.64 lakh families had been set up in the Naxal affected Balaghat, Mandla, and Dindori districts, Chouhan is learnt to have said. According to the Madhya Pradesh government, some 10,000 youths have got jobs in these districts since April 2020.

Sources said it was emphasised during the meeting that states should conduct joint operations because Naxals keep mov-

FULL REPORTS ON www.indianexpress.com

ment has announced a hike in ered to be inauspicious by Hindus when such changes, es-

whose rights were snatched... By the time the ink on nameplates of these Ministers dry, the election notification would be out for the 2022 Assembly polls," SP

expansion is on the OBC community, Prasada's induction is in line with a push from all parties to woo the Brahmin vote. The inductions, however, did not cover the influential Jat community from western UP, which is protesting over the Centre's farm laws -- the state govern-

castes which remain backward.

Consequently, corrective meas-

ures can be taken for their devel-

opment. What they carried out in

2011 was a socio-economic caste

census. It was not a caste census.

And that was not undertaken

properly and was not published. A

caste census will be more system-

atic... To say that caste census can-

not take place as the socio-eco-

nomic caste census report is not

the Centre had reasoned in the

apex court that there are multiple

state and union territory lists in

the case of OBCs. "In case, a ques-

tion of OBCs is canvassed, it will

return names of hundreds of

thousands of castes, sub-castes,

And it might be difficult to cor-

rectly classify such unspecified re-

turns," it had said in the affidavit.

with the Centre, Nitish said:

"(During the census) a person

might share the name of his sub-

caste. Do we have any caste in the

country that does not have sub-

castes? So training will have to be

imparted (to enumerators). Caste,

sub-caste, everything will have to

So it's not that easy for us, es-

pecially in cases where there are

very few women in one class,"

Kandahar University Chancellor

Abdul Wahed Wasiq told The

There are about 40 public uni-

versities in Afghanistan. After the

Taliban's order banning co-edu-

cation, public universities were

asked by the Ministry of Higher

Education to submit their plans

for reopening based on the local

have proposed that women be al-

lowed to attend classes from be-

hind curtains or cubicles, or trans-

ferred to institutes in provinces

separately for men and women

wherever more than 15 women

are in one class. To do this, we plan

to introduce shifts: morning and

afternoon. If there are less than 15

women, we will purchase di-

viders, as they use in hospitals, to

separate men from women in the

classroom," said Khairuddin

Khairkhah, chancellor of Takhar

University, which was established

chancellor said the issue has been

deliberated upon in the institute's

academic council, following

which a plan was forwarded to

the government, including a re-

quest to allow transfer of women

students to institutes in their own

some of our women students

have expressed interest in getting

transferred. But for those who

want to continue classes at

Kandahar University, we will cre-

ate a corner inside the classroom

that is separated by a curtain

These two or three or four women

can sit in this corner, behind the

curtain and we will sew some iaali

(a patch of net) of about 30 to 50

cm in measurement in the curtain

"We have proposed this since

The Kandahar University

"Our plan is to hold classes

For now, most universities

Universities

Indian Express.

realities.

they come from.

30 years ago.

provinces.

Flagging his disagreement

In ruling out the caste census,

right is not correct," he said.

the class and the board through it," Wasiq said. Like Takhar University, for classes with more than 15 women, Kandahar University has proposed to call students in shifts -- morning for women and after-

posals will put a strain on the fibeen able to pay salaries to teachmeasures, and for classroom fur-

Undergraduate education in vided free food and lodging.

Meanwhile, a recent develop-Taliban administration's apstitute sought some flexibility in up partitions appeared impracti-

"Kabul University runs around 560 programmes and has around 250 classes. We had told the government (before the new Chancellor's appointment) that splitting up classes and teaching women separately is not immediately feasible. It's not possible to carve out separate spaces (for women) for everything. How do we do that for libraries and laboratories? Also, there is an expectation that women should only be taught by women. Female teachers make up about 20% of the 900 faculty of Kabul University. How can 170 to 180 women teachers teach almost 12,000 female students? Splitting up classes means doubling teaching hours, so we need twice the number of faculty members," the source said, adding that the university, in its plan to the Ministry of Higher Education, had suggested "gradual implementation" of the gender policy.

Ghairat, for comment.

The Kandahar and Helmand

In the case of relatively newer

noon for men. But implementing the pro-

nances of the cash-strapped institutes, some of which have not ers since Kabul fell to the Taliban. For now, Kandahar University has sought roughly \$6,200 from the government, Takhar University \$19,000, and Helmund \$12,000 to introduce the segregation

fghanistan's public universities is free. Students are not charged any tuition fee, and those living in hostels and dormitories are pro-

ent at Kabul University has deepened worries that the proach leaves very little room for institutional autonomy. A source in the university said the Taliban sacked its chancellor after the inimplementing the gender policy, such as permitting women to sit in separate rows where putting

The Kabul University source said the Taliban, in its response to the proposal, reiterated the need to strictly enforce gender segregation. It has also asked the university to consider shifting women students to their local provinces if it cannot hold separate classes for men and women under the present circumstances. "But Kabul University has its own curriculum. So moving students to other institutions is not feasible," the source added. The Indian Express could not reach the new chancellor, Mohammad Ashraf

University Chancellors, however, said there is no ban on men teach-

"It's not that easy to take you to jail. In order to take (you) to jail,

universities such as Helmand and Nimroz Higher Education Institute, the challenges in enforcing the diktat are steeper due to the smaller presence of women --both students and teachers -- on the rolls, as well as infrastructure constraints such as lack of classrooms and, in some cases, a permanent campus. Rajasthan

and Jhunjhunu, while it was suspended for nine hours, between 8 am and 5 pm, in Sikar. The internet shutdown hit food aggregators such as Zomato that displayed messages on suspension of services. Local businesses were af-

fected and mostly stayed shut across the state. In Jaipur, the district adminis-

tration had earlier held meetings with trade association representatives and requested them to keep their establishments shut on Sunday, "It was a voluntary decision following the administration's request. Barring essential services such as shops selling food items, restaurants, juice shops, medical stores, etc. everything else remained shut," said Jaipur Vyapar Mahasangh president Subhash Goyal, claiming about 80,000 to 90,000 shops remained shut in Jaipur, "Business worth around Rs 100 crore was affected in Jaipur today due to suspension of internet services," he added.

As the internet suspension hit life across the state, BJP state president Satish Poonia attacked the Congress government, saying, "There is a stark difference between the words and deeds of the Congress party... Shutting down the internet on such a large scale caused inconvenience to the public. Even after suspending the internet, there were several irregularities. The government will have to come up with a strategy," Poonia said.

Incidentally, in 2018, while it was in the opposition, the Congress had opposed the suspension of internet for police constable recruitment examinations.

Barring minor incidents, the examination, held amidst strict security, went off peacefully.

On Sunday evening, Rajendra Gupta, spokesperson of the Raiasthan Board of Secondary Education (RBSE), said about 95 per cent of the 16.51 lakh eligible candidates appeared for the exam, which was held in two sessions, from 10 am to 12.30 pm and from $2.30 \, \mathrm{pm}$ to $5 \, \mathrm{pm}$.

In Bikaner, five persons, including three REET candidates, were arrested before the exam as the aspirants were found wearing slippers with Bluetooth devices.

Tripura CM

In the video, the chief minister says: "...(Officials) say, 'Sir, there will be problems with the system'. What problems will happen? (They say), 'Sir, we can't take the risk, there will be contempt of court'... Who has gone to jail in Tripura for contempt of court? I am here; if you go, I shall go be-

ister runs the police. They can't pick up someone just like that... The police will say they haven't found anyone. What will they do?" The CM is heard saying that fears of contempt of court are expressed as though it is "a tiger". (But) I am the tiger," he says. "Power lies with the person running the government. That means all power is with the people. We are a by-the-people government, not by-the-court government. We keep hearing 'contempt of court, contempt of court'. Has contempt been committed? (The) former chief secretary said there would be contempt of court and (he) would go to jail, he would die. Arey, let him die. We bid him adieu..

Deb was speaking at the 26th biennial conference of the Tripura Civil Service Officers' Association at Rabindra Shatabarshiki Bhawan in Agartala on Saturday.

TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee tweeted the video on Sunday evening, saving: "@BjpBjplab is a DISGRACE to the entire nation! He shamelessly mocks Democracy, MOCKS the Hon'ble JUDICIARY and seemingly gets away with it! Will the SUPREME COURT take cognizance of his comments that reflect such grave disrespect?" In response, the CM's media

adviser Sanjay Mishra posted on Twitter: "You must listen to the full speech before spreading your fake propaganda which you have learned from your political guru CPM and how much respect you have for government institutions we all know that".

Mishra tagged screenshots of three news reports headlined "Abhishek Banerjee's wife in Delhi's beauty parlour on summons date: ED claims in HC", "West Bengal governor is a corrupt man, claims Mamata Banerjee", and "Staggering price for speaking truth': TMC slams Calcutta HC fine on Mamata

The West Bengal chief minister too reacted to Deb's video, saying it was "too much". Speaking in a mix of English and Hindi at a public meeting, Banerjee said: "Whatever I (Deb) say, the court has to listen, I do not listen to anyone... (this cannot be)... As a chief minister whatever he has said, it is too much, it is a devastation, especially from the justice delivery point of view... We can discuss a judgment, that is our right, but it can't be that only I decide, no one else matters...'

In his speech, Deb cited former Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee as having said that courts were the agency to implement laws made by the legislature. "Court is for the people, people are not for the court. Once (former) Speaker Somnath Chatterjee said this, when the Supreme Court said 11 MPs would not retain their posts. He said their positions would stay and said lawmakers are there to make laws, you (court) is there to implement the law. He said (court) is the agency to implement laws that we (lawmakers) make," the

tricts, the sources said. affected areas. Over 23,000 self-help groups

ing across state borders.

 ${\tt Chandigarh}$

any response, most of the in-

vestors who had come to the

protest on Sunday had invested in

Athens project, but now we are

also contacting the other investors who had invested in other proj-

ects of the company," Rana added. The investors alleged that the

banks are also in hands-in-glove

with the owners of the company,

as the banks kept charging the

EMIs but failed to keep a watch on

the private firm owners. The in-

vestors alleged that the banks kept

giving money to the owners of the

The company allegedly fled af-

Zirakpur police has booked

the owners of the company on

charges of criminal breach of trust

SECURITY STAFF MAKE WAY

As the owners of GBP Group

had allegedly fled after duping the

investors, the company's offices in

Zirakpur were abandoned by the

security staff. Thieves stepped in

and took away the furniture and

construction material. The

Zirakpur police found that some

people were trying to flee with

some items which they left in the

ter duping hundreds of people. It

also closed its offices at Derabassi

GBP Group.

and Zirakpur.

and cheating.

FOR THIEVES

First phase of PU Senate polls sees 14.66% voting

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

THE FIRST phase of polling for Registered Constituency of Senate saw 14.66 per cent voting. The polling was held at 211 polling booths out of 272 booths spread across the states of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Chandigarh.

Vikram Nayyar, registrar and the returning officer, Senate elections, said the total number of voters registered at these polling booths was 2,87,997 and out of these, 42,228 voters came forward to cast their votes. The percentage of votes polled is 14.66%.

Voting at all the polling booths passed off smoothly. People, who came to cast their votes, included 83-year-old Chitranjan Singh. The highest voting took place in booths situated in Muktsar district with 25.60 per cent of the polling. The least polling took place in Delhi with merely 1.69 per cent. As many as 77 voters out of a total of 4,565 turned up to cast their votes. In Chandigarh, 8.65 per cent voting was reported and



During the polling at Panjab University in Chandigarh on Sunday. Express

4,414 voters out of 47,548 turned up to cast their votes.

The strongroom for the votes is situated at Panjab University under the close supervision of Chandigarh Police and PU security. As much as 17.25 per cent voting took place in Panchkula, 18.52 per cent in Una district, 11.54% voting took place in Solan district. As much as 9.90 per cent voting took place in Sirmaur, As much as 20.41 per cent voting took place in Ropar while 12.02 per cent voting took place in

Mohali's Ambedkar institute to provide 100 seats for MBBS

ADMISSIONS TO the Ambedkar Institute of Medical Sciences (AI-IMS) will start for 2021-2022 session and the institute will admit 100 students from this aca-

a letter of permission from the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) after fulfilling the remaining formalities. The MARB had approved 100 seats for the institute and found that the institute still had a faculty deficiency of 8 per cent which the management will fulfil and inform the National Medical Commission (NMC) within a stipulated time period.

Anandpur Sahib MP and former Union minister Manish Tewari said that the NMC for Mohali- based medical college has approved the admission of

He said that all-round development of Shri Anandpur Sahib Lok Sabha constituency was his sole objective. In a similar vein, the Ambedkar **Institute of Medical Sciences** has been set up in Mohali, where people will get world-

He added that with this sanction, students would get admission in 100 seats of MBBS

The MARB had made the assessment of the facility regard-

THIRD WAVE OF CORONAVIRUS

'No evidence that children will be more infected'

PARUL CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

"THERE IS no scientific evidence that children will be more infected during the third wave," said Dr Pivush Gupta, President of Central Indian Academy of Pediatrics (CIAP), during the on-going North Zone Pedicon 2021 held by the

Association of Pediatricians of

Chandigarh here on Sunday. During the conference, faculty members of institutions of national and international repute presented talks and papers on various aspects of child health, discussing extensively about Covid-19 and its impact on the mental, physical and emotional health of children.

Children, during the first and second wave were 90 per cent asymptomatic and were infected by adults, who were Covid-19 positive. The death rate was low because of less severity of infection and those who had severe infection were already immunocompromised, had immunity and heart issues and were vulnerable. Covid-19 infection in children in some cases has resulted in the Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in children, but the proportion is small, said Dr Gupta.

MOHALI, SEPTEMBER 26

Highlighting the issue of anxiety among children regarding Covid-19, he said, "A child asked a paediatrician recently if he was going to die because of Covid-19. The issue of concern right now is the rising anxiety among children regarding COVID-19, and the third wave, with many facing loneliness and confusion.'

On the looming threat of the

third wave, he said: "Nobody can predict the third wave. All of us have failed when it comes to predictions about Covid-19 and how the virus will behave, mutate and affect the larger population. As a doctor, I can tell that paediatric facilities have been upgraded across the country on account of the fear of the third wave, which was the need of the hour, and we are prepared and equipped to handle tough situations."The doctor, who is also a senior professor, said that the working of the virus is gradually learnt, like the Spanish Flu ended with the third wave but "we cannot say how the coronavirus will mutate. We may have herd immunity against one variant, but not against another."

Regarding the issue of vaccination of children, Dr Gupta agreed that vaccination is important to break the chain of infection, especially since everything is opening up. "In a couple of months, we will have vaccination for the age group 12 to 18 years. Right now, there is a long process of framing of policies for this exercise," said Dr Gupta.

TRICITY: 3 NEW COVID CASES. 1 VIRUS-RELATED DEATH

The Tricity reported 3 new cases and one Covid-related death on Sunday.

Mohali: One death, 3 cases

One more death was reported in Mohali district Sunday, taking the total number of fatalities to 1,064. As many as three positive cases were also reported, increasing the number of cases to 68,717 with 28 active cases.

Chandigarh: 1 new case

The UT reported one new Covid-19 case on Sunday, taking the tally of cases to 65,210. There are 41 active cases here now. In the last 24 hours, 2,340 samples have been tested for the virus.

Panchkula: 1 case, no death

One new Covid positive case was reported in Panchkula on Sunday. There was no Covid-related death. The active cases tally stood at 20. A total of 40,421 cases have so far been here.

Servant drugs woman employer, makes off with cash, jewellery

fields.

GBP Group investors protest,

demand arrest of owners

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

HUNDREDS OF investors of GBP

Group gathered at the project site

of the private housing company in

Zirakpur on Sunday and de-

manded the arrest of the promot-

ers of the company who have al-

legedly duped hundreds of people

site of the Athens Housing Project

that was being developed by GBP

Group. Recently, Zirakpur police

booked four promoters of the

group for the alleged fraud, how-

ever, the accused have not been

Gulshan Bansal, one of the in-

vestors, said that he had invested

in the project in 2016 and was to

get the possession of his property

in 2019, but it never happened. He

added that most of the investors

who gathered at the site on

Sunday had paid around 80 per

said that most of the investors

worked in private companies and

had to pay EMIs as well as the

rents, and many of them have

been facing pay cuts due to the

pandemic. "We had been trying

to contact the company for the past 10 days but were not getting

Arvind Rana, another investor

cent of the total amount.

arrested vet.

The investors gathered at the

to the tune of several crores.

MOHALI, SEPTEMBER 26

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

A DOMESTIC servant is suspected of drugging his woman employer and stealing cash along with gold ornaments in Sector 19 government quarters Sunday. Police said the incident happened Saturday but the theft came to light on Sunday.

The suspect is identified as Rinku. The house was allotted to the doctor husband of the victim woman. The victim's husband is posted in Civil Hospital, Mani Majra. He was out of station when the incident occurred. The woman reported to the police that her lakh in cash and gold ornaments, which were kept in a

Police sources said Rinku gave food laced with intoxicant substances to the woman, who lost consciousness. In the meantime, Rinku stole the cash and ornaments from the locker. Police said the woman had gained her consciousness late in the evening on Saturday. By then, Rinku was there. He told the woman that he is going to meet his friends but never returned. Police said that on Sunday, the woman checked the locker and found cash along with gold ornaments missing.

Police have started an investigation. A report was lodged at Sector 19 police station.

BHARAT BAND CALL

UT Police issues advisory, urges public to use alternate routes

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE CHANDIGARH, MOHALI. SEPTEMBER 26

IN VIEW of the 'Bharat Band' called by the various farmers' unions on Monday to agitate against the three farm laws, the UT police issued traffic advisory urging people to avoid specific routes on Monday. The road blockade is expected at Mullanpur Barrier from the side of Mohali and Hallomajra light point on Dakshin Marg. Police said that public is advised to adopt alternative routes. The traffic diversion will be put in place at the various points leading towards Mullanpur barrier. The points included 66KV light points, Khuda Lahora Bridge, Dhanas Bridge, Tube well turn Sector 25, ۲ point near Dhanas lake and PGI

Police said that the traffic bound to Hallomajra light point will be diverted towards Kalibari Light point from Sector 29 roundabout (Tribune chowk). The traffic coming from Ind Area Phase 1 and 2 at Poultry farm chowk will be diverted towards Sector 29 roundabout (Tribune Chowk). Traffic coming from Panchkula towards Hallomajra Light Point will be diverted towards Village Baltana near Raipur Kalan barrier and towards Airport Light Point at Makhan Majra Turn.

MOHALI ADMIN PREPARES

Mohali administration issued an appeal for the public to avoid the roads where the protests are to be held. The farmers unions will hold the protest at 18 sites in the district. Sources said the protests will be held at Kurali-Siswan toll plaza, Khanpur, Desumajra, Mullanpur T-Point, Light Point Singh Saheedan, Sohana; Landran Chowk, Azizpur toll plaza and Chatt Light point near Zirakpur. The protest are more likely to be held on the main roads due to which the traffic will be affected and those commuting to Mohali from other districts have been advised to take alternative routes.

WORLD

TOURISM DAY 20

Chandigarh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MOHALI, SEPTEMBER 26

students for MBBS seats. The institute has already got

> class healthcare facilities. from this academic year.

ing the infrastructure in

Azad group opposes Mohali civic body's move to allot land for keeping cattle Sukhdev Singh Patwari on Sunday tle menace could be solved. **EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** alleged that the intention behind

THE AZAD Group led by former mayor Kulwant Singh has objected to the Municipal Corporation's decision to shift the cattle out of villages near the dumping ground. The MC is going to give 3.5 acre land to the cattle owners and an agenda item in this regard will be brought in the House meeting which is scheduled to be held on September 28.

The Azad group's councillor

allotment of land was not good. He said that the land is being allotted to some people close to former Punjab health minister Balbir Singh Sidhu. "We demand that the land should not be allotted in haste and the opposition councillors must

be taken into confidence. We sense something fishy in this and our doubts must be redressed," he said. The MC is bringing an agenda item to earmark the land for keepAccording to the agenda, the MC shall allot the land on a lease basis to the cattle owners near the dumping ground in sectors 74 and 91 where around 1,000 head of cattle could be kept.

The land will be allotted for three years which would be extendable to one more year. The MC will charge Rs 500 per cattle.

The Azad group councillors alleged that the land was specially allotted for the dumping ground purpose and it should not be allotted for any other purpose

servant took away around Rs 5

Sh. Jai Ram Thakur Hon'ble Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh

विश्व पर्यटन दिवस

हार्दिक शुभकामनाए

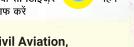


कृपया सुरक्षा उपायों का सम्पूर्ण ध्यान रखें और एक जिम्मेदार पर्यटक बनें :-





हाथों को बार-बार धोएं या सैनिटाइज्र से साफ करें



मास्क

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Le Corbusier: The curator of Chandigarh's urban landscape

MAKING OF

CHANDIGARH

SANGEETA BAGGA

CHANDIGARH is considered the most modern city of India, built to fill the void left by the loss of Lahore. It was a departure from the existing modes of thought with a great responsibility: to provide the best of amenities to all classes of people. Chandigarh was also the first complete realisation of Le Corbusier's urban precepts and the surrounding landscape.

Who was Le Corbusier?

A Swiss-born French architect who adopted the pseudonym Le Corbusier, meaning crow, Charles Edouard Jeanneret Gris was the strongest protagonist of the Modern Movement whose quest for precision and artistic pursuit was inherited from a father, a watch dial engraver, and a musician mother.

His journey from the Alpine -Jura landscape to the plains of Panjab produced a 450,000strong archive, which includes a vast repository of sketches, paintings, sketchbooks, drawings, maps, sculptures, artwork, poetry, and above all, the most majestic and provoking ensembles of architecture.

Corbusier is often criticised for treating his architecture as an object disconnected from the context. But that is not so.

Corbusier's greatest 'Landscape Project' in Chandigarh, its The Spiritual Directeur, was the Capitol Complex where he designed an 'optical apparatus' to capture and frame the views of the Shivaliks. The Capitol Complex exhibited his concerns for the site and the urban landscape.

On the verdant plain of Chandigarh, visually closed off by the Shivalik hills, Corbusier revisited the epiphany of the Acropolis in Athens, which he had documented in his sketchbooks during his travels, the Voyage d'Orient. It was the ideal placement of the city at the foothills of the emerald hills and the Capitol Complex was its noblest element. It was due to his respect for this context that his





A building in Chandigarh designed by Le Corbusier (above) and the logo (left) of the Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's forum. File

original buildings, which were planned in a linear fashion, had to be rearranged to be perpendicular to the Shivalik range so as not to block the view.

The initial sketches were buildings in two groups, the High Court on the one side and the Assembly and Secretariat on the other, with a large central open space between them, thus offering the extended view of the mountains. A single structure, the Open Hand, was to rise atop a tall podium in this space. Working on this scheme, the composition became tighter and more geometric to include four majestic edifices and six monuments arrayed atop a 5-metre-high plaza where the 'pedestrian is the king' in eternal contact with nature. The creation of the symbolic axis depicted by the ceremonial path, the Jan Marg linking the city centre Sector 17, to the Capitol Complex, brought the

citizens to the 'seat of

Administration'.

The new composition created a 1,400-metre-long Capitol and formed two equal squares, each divided into four equal sections, 350m on one side. Peripheral obelisks marking the boundaries of the Capitol Parc, as Le Corbusier called it, and a water channel forming its southern boundary, were seemingly inspired from the landscape architecture of the Mughal gardens of Pinjore, which Corbusier visited prior to his final sketches of the Capitol.

Corbusier's visits to the Mughal Gardens at Red Fort and the presidential Palace designed by Lutyens where he had his earliest meetings with Pandit Nehru were opportunities to appreciate architectural and natural compositions structured according to end points that identify notable elements of the landscape.

Thus began the story of Chandigarh, amidst the disci-

Corbusier's Capitol Parc stands tall today as the largest property on the transborder serial nomination of Corbusier's works spanning seven countries across five

continents on UNESCO's World

LE CORBUSIER

PIERRE JEANNERET

plines of local climate, a shoestring

budget, and indigenous materials

and methods of construction.

With its theme of 'Sun, Space and

Verdure', it was to be "a capital that

would serve as a model in city

planning for the nation, if not for

the world'. The Capitol Complex

as its ceremonial and administra-

tive head also represents the first-

ever largescale use of the modern

material -- Reinforced cement

concrete. Cast and poured in situ

with plastic qualities, it created the

sculpturesque skylights and mag-

nificent ramps for the Assembly

Chambers, the parasols in the

Secretariat, and porticos in the

High Court. To add richness to the

monochromatic concrete were

the hand-painted ceremonial

doors, the colourful tapestries or

nomadic murals as Corb called

them depicting Indian motifs and

forms from nature.

Heritage List.

(The writer is the principal of Chandigarh College of Architecture)

6 REGION



Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi with his Cabinet after the oath-taking ceremony in Chandigarh, Sunday. PTI

OPPN REACTS TO NEW PUNJAB CABINET

AAP: Cong has just changed 'Ali Baba', retained his 40 thieves

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

THE AAM Aadmi Party on Sunday condemned the inclusion of ministers who had corruption charges against them in the new Punjab Cabinet, headed by Chief Minister, Charanjit Singh Channi, and termed it as an insult to democracy.

In a statement issued from the party headquarters here on Sunday, senior leader of the AAP and Leader of Opposition (LoP), Harpal Singh Cheema, said that the involvement of 'tainted' ministers in the new Cabinet made it clear that Charanjit Singh Channi was also part of the same gang and by only changing the face of the Chief Minister the Congress was trying to once again rob the people of the state. He said that the Gandhi family wanted to further plunder the natural resources of Punjab by including mafia lords in the Cabinet of Punjab.

Cheema said that before this, Captain Amarinder Singh, and his cronies, had looted a lot of Punjab in four-and-a-half years. Now, to avoid public opposition in the runup to the elections, the Congress has changed them and was pretending to be clean. He said the people of Punjab had high expectations from Charanjit Singh Channi that maybe he would do

LoP Harpal Singh Cheema

common man. But the difference between his words and deeds was clear, Cheema said. AAP The

ferent, as he

claimed to be a

leader further said that the Congress, by changing the mask of the Chief Minister, has only changed the 'Ali Baba', while his 'forty thieves' were still there. He said that Chief Minister Channi

and the Congress state president, Navjot Singh Sidhu, should clarify their views on Rana Gurjeet now. On the letter being written by the Congress MLAs to the Gandhi family for non-inclusion of Rana Gurjeet Singh in the Cabinet, Cheema said it proves the allegation of the Aam Aadmi Party that Rana Gurieet is the kingpin of the sand mafia in Puniab.

Expressing strong objection to the inclusion of former Chief Minister Beant Singh's grandson, Gurkirat Singh Kotli, in the Puniab Cabinet, Cheema said it was unfortunate that Kotli was included in the Cabinet on the occasion of International Daughter's Day. He said that Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Privanka Gandhi should make their stand clear.

Spl commission to probe deeds of corrupt Cong ministers if SAD wins 2022 polls: Sukhbir

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUDHIANA, SEPTEMBER 26

SHIROMANI AKALI Dal (SAD) president and Punjab's former deputy CM, Sukhbir Singh Badal, on Sunday stepped up his attack on the Congress and said that all ministers of the ruling party who had indulged in corruption would be taken to task if the SAD is voted to power in the 2022 elections. Sukhbir said that the next SAD-led government would establish a special commission to probe the misdeeds of Congress ministers.

Sukhbir on Sunday visited Ludhiana, where he paid a visit to some temples and held meetings with members of the Hindu community. He later also visited the Jain School at the Daresi ground as well as the Sangla Shivala Mandir and the Gyan Sthal Mandir in the central constituency. The SAD chief topped off his visit by making his way to various localities in the west constituency, besides attending an interaction with industrialists

Addressing a press conference, Sunday, Sukhbir said the Congress should not think that ousting a few corrupt ministers will wash away their sins. "It is a fact that the entire Congress party is stained in corruption. Congress ministers have engineered scams worth thousands of crores. I assure Punjabis that all these scams will be probed thoroughly by a special Commission and that those guilty of looting Punjabis and the state will be brought to book".

He also announced that the next SAD-led government will review all decisions taken during the last three months of the Congress rule, adding that all decisions aimed at enriching Congressmen or their near and dear ones will be struck off.

Sukhbir said the SAD had welcomed the appointment of Charaniit Channi as the CM. "However it is painful to watch the new CM being overshadowed by PPCC president Navjot Sidhu, as well as deputy CM Sukhjinder Randhawa..."

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

'Gross injustice despite giving best performance as ministers'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

TWO SENIOR Congress leaders and former ministers in Captain Amarinder Singh's Cabinet on Sunday lashed out at the party high command for denying them ministerial berths, terming it as "gross injustice" The duo – Gurpreet Singh Kangar and Balbir Singh Sidhu — on Sunday said that they "have been subjected to gross injustice despite giving their best performances as ministers".

"As Power and Revenue Minister, I brought things back on track by working day and night. The power department was in a state of disarray and I streamlined it. Today Punjab is ranked among one of the top states in power management. Similarly, there were multiple leakages in the collection of revenue, which were plugged despite colossal resistance from nefarious forces,"

On the other hand, listing his achievements as the state Health



Ex-ministers Balbir Singh Sidhu and Gurpreet Singh Kangar in Chandigarh Sunday. Jasbir Malhi

Minister, Sidhu, got emotional during the press conference and said that during the pandemic, he ensured that the healthcare system did not flounder and worked efficiently. "I worked tirelessly to ensure that the people of the state do not face any problems. In the past years, we streamlined health infra at the grassroots level. This is not the way to treat committed party

workers who have given the best of their life to serving the cause of the party," said Sidhu.

The two former ministers have written to the high command to express their displeasure at being left out of the Punjab cabinet which was sworn in on Sunday. They have asked the reasons due to which they were ignored by the high command They, however, have made it clear

Minister, Charanjit Singh Channi. 'We supported former Chief Minister, Captain Amarinder Singh, as advised by the high command. Now, we will work along with the new CM as per the instructions of the party high command," they said.

"If the high command would have asked for our resignations, we would have resigned on our own. What has been done is quite embarrassing and humiliating," said Kangar, adding that his "loyalty towards former Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh had cost him dearly.

'Now, as a Congress soldier. I owe my allegiance to the present CM Charanjit Singh Channi. But if the loyalty to the party causes the kind of outcome that has happened in my case, then it is really sad. The high command should answer why I have been ignored despite so many achievements. I was responsible as the Revenue Minister for computerising land records," said Kangar.

Despite having

highest Dalit

population, no

from any Doaba

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA

JALANDHAR. SEPTEMBER 26

DOABA, WHICH is the smallest of

the three regions of the state and

accounts for 23 of the total 117

Vidhan Sabha seats, is politically crucial for any party aspiring to

Doaba has also got the highest

proportion of Dalit population not

only in Punjab, but across the

country. But in the past over four-

and-half year rule of the Congress.

no Dalit MLA has ever found rep-

resentation in the Punjab Cabinet

from Doaba, even though the

On Sunday, three Dalit minis-

ters were sworn in under the new

Cabinet was reigged thrice.

come to power in the state.

cabinet berth

Dalit MLA

CHIEF MINISTER



CHARANJIT SINGH CHANNI (58), SC(Malwa)

DEPUTY CMS



OPSONI (64) Hindu



(Majha)

NEW CABINET: SEVEN NEW FACES, EIGHT OLD



(Majha) TRIPT RAJINDER S











Hindu (Malwa)





SINGLA (49) Hindu **RAJA AMRINDER**

Jat Sikh

VIJAY INDER



RANDEEPS NABHA (54) Jat Sikh (Malwa)

SWARRING (43)











(Malwa)

Cabinet, none of who belong to Doaba. While Punjab has a 31.9% **GURKIRATS** Dalit population (according to the 2011 census), the Doaba region **KOTLI**(47)

In Captain Amarinder Singh's Cabinet, which was formed in 2017, there were two ministers from the Doaba region - Rana Gurjeet Singh from Kapurthala, and Sunder Sham Arora from Hoshiarpur – neither of who was a Dalit. When Rana Gurjeet Singh was dropped in January 2018, after his name appeared in the infamous sand mining contract scam, people from Doaba hoped that the Captain will compensate and include another minister from the region, preferably a Dalit, when he expanded his Cabinet later in April

On Sunday, the new CM Channi, picked three ministers from Doaba — Pargat Singh and Rana Gurjeet Singh (both general category), and Sangat Singh Gilzian, who belongs from Backward Class.

2018. However, that was not to be.

In Doaba region, there are eight reserved constituencies out of a total of 23. On the eight reserve seats of the region, five are represented by Congress MLAs, all of who are first-time winners, which effectively cut out their chances of making it to the new

RANDEEP SINGH NABHA (54)

The quiet party loyalist who never shied away from speaking his mind

Nabha replaced Fatehgarh Sahib MLA Kuljit Singh Nagra, Rahul Gandhi's aide

DIVYAGOYALGOPAL LUDHIANA, SEPTEMBER 26

COMING FROM a dyed-in-thewool traditional Congress family, Randeep Singh Nabha, better known as 'Kaka Randeep' in political circles, has been four-time MLA - twice from his hometown of Nabha in Patiala district and twice from Amloh of Fatehgarh

Nabha's name as a minister in Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi's new Cabinet was cleared at the last minute after Rahul Gandhi held a meeting with the CM around midnight on Saturday. Randeep replaced his party colleague and Fatehgarh Sahib MLA, Kuljit Singh Nagra, the two-time MLA, and Rahul Gandhi's close aide.



Punjab Cabinet Minister Randeep Singh Nabha at the swearing-in on Sunday. Express

However, sources close to Randeep Singh Nabha said that it was neither Rahul Gandhi nor PPCC president Navjot Singh Sidhu, who paved his way into the new Cabinet. It was rather Randeep Nabha's old proximity with former Madhya Pradesh CM, Kamal Nath, whom he considers

his 'Godfather', that swung the ministerial berth in his favour. "After Nagra's name was an-

nounced as a probable for the Cabinet, Randeep protested because Nagra was already appointed as working president PPCC by Sidhu and was only a two-time MLA, whereas he had won four times. He also didn't see eye to eye with Nagra. Randeep lobbied with the help of Kamal Nath, who in turn told Sonia Gandhithat Randeep must be included, which led to the lastminute changes in the list," said a

close aide of the leader. Randeep, within the Congress ranks, is known for speaking his mind and standing up for himself, even if it means lodging protests against his own party. Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls 2019, he had demanded a ticket from Patiala,

which was instead given to Preneet Kaur, wife of Captain Amarinder Singh. Randeep then refused to campaign for her in Patiala and said "CM Amarinder might be a good leader, but he was mostly inaccessible."

Party leaders identify Randeep as a man who barely is influenced by anyone, often walking his own path and not being part of any camp within the Congress. However, his political success as four-time MI A is attributed to the legacy left behind by his father Gurdarshan Singh, who was four-time Congress MLA (1962, 1967, 1977, and 1988) from the family's hometown constituency of Nabha. He had also lost from Nabha thrice, but contested seven times from this seat.

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

CABINET SNIPPET: CHANNI RUSHES TO BATHINDA. FORGETS MANPREET BADAL

Chandigarh: Channi rushed

to Bathinda to review loss of cotton farmers due to the pink bollworm attack ahead of the swearing-in ceremony. He was accompanied by his deputy Sukhjinder Randhawa, but did not take old associate Manpreet Badal along. Bathinda happens to be Manpreet Badal's constituency. While Channi and Randhawa flew by government chopper, Manpreet was in Chandigarh. The development is being watch curiously as Channi had visited Manpreet's residence Saturday evening. **ENS**

REGIONAL REPRESENTATION ASSEMBLY Total **Amarinder Cabinet** Majha Malwa 25 Doaba **Channi Cabinet** Doaba Malwa Malwa 69 Majha Jat Sikhs | Hindus SCs BCs REGION-WISE BREAK-UP IN LAST TWO POLLS MAJHA **MALWA DOABA** 2012 | 2017 2012 | 2017 **Party** 2012 2017 22 **INC** 32 **40** 15 BJP 2 1 5 1 5 1 2 AAP 18 SAD 33 12 11 5 Others 2 2 0 0

Rahul's signature, attempt to infuse fresh blood: takeaways from new Cabinet

MANRAJ GREWAL

SHARMA CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

SIX DAYS after Charanjit Singh Channi was enthroned the chief minister of Punjab along with two deputies, Sukhjinder S Randhawa and OP Soni, the Punjab Congress today (Sunday) introduced its new ministry with seven new faces.

The ministry, which has Rahul Gandhi's stamp all over it, is an attempt to infuse fresh blood in the team, balance caste and regional considerations, and take everyone along without providing ammunition to former CM Capt

Here are the five key take-

aways from this rejig:

RAHUL HOLDS THE SWAY

The new Cabinet has the stamp of Rahul Gandhi all over it. Chief Minister Charaniit Singh Channi was summoned to Delhi twice, and a final video conference was held late on Saturday night to finalise the list. Six of the seven new ministers were informed by Congress about their imminent elevation on Saturday morning, even before party chief Sonia Gandhi could formally approve the list.

Rahul also played a role in placating Randeep S Nabha, 54, a four-time MLA, by dropping Kuljit Singh Nagra, Considered close to Rahul, Nagra, working president of PCC, was earlier party in-charge

for Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim. When Nabha started complaining about being left out of the ministry despite his seniority, Rahul replaced Nagra with him, without any opposition.

> Rahul also stood by the elevation of Raja Amrinder Warring, chief of Youth Congress from 2014 to 2018 despite opposition from within. Warring had contested against Manpreet Badal and defeated him.

LOYALTY TO THE PARTY/FAMILY PAYS

he three rebel ministers, namely Tripat Rajinder Singh Bajwa, Sukbinder Sarkaria and Sukhjinder Randhawa, also called the Majha brigade were not only retained but Randhawa, the most

Sukhi is a second-generation Congressman and his father was one of the few legislators to stand by then prime minister Indira Gandhi after Operation Bluestar in 1984. Similarly, Beant Singh's grandson Gurkirat Kotli has also rewarded. Mohindra, though close to Capt Amarinder, has been retained due to his longstanding ties with the Gandhi family, and his stature as a tall Hindu leader.

vocal of them all, was elevated to

the rank of deputy chief minister.

Jagroop Singh Sekhon, a political observer, says the party has walked the tightrope to isolate Amarinder. "While it has left out his hardcore supporters such as Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi, Balbir Sidhu and the tainted minister Sadhu Singh Dharamsot, who did not join the rebels, it decided to retain his loyalist Brahm Mohindra because it doesn't want too many disgruntled leaders trying to join hands with the former CM.

BABY STEPS TO A

GENERATIONAL SHIFT By elevating Pargat Singh, former captain of the Indian hockev team, Warring and Nabha and giving PPCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu a say in the Cabinet, the party also signals a generational shift. Sidhu has managed to get a berth for all his men except Nagra who is a working president.

There was talk about capping the age of the ministers at 70, but it was not carried through be-

cause it would have ended up excluding seasoned leaders like Tripat Bajwa and Brahm Mohindra. At 43, Raja Warring is the youngest in the ministry, while Tripat Bajwa is the oldest at 78. Both had joined hands against Amarinder. Earlier the party had just one minister, Vijay Inder Singla, below fifty, now it has three. Of the seven new faces, only two are senior citizens.

REGIONAL BALANCE

The curious re-entry of Rana Gurjit Singh, the minister who had to quit the Captain Amarinder Cabinet after being caught in a sand mining storm, may have something to do with his stature in the Doaba region. Ashutosh Kumar, a political sci-

entist, says the party hopes that the well-heeled Jat Sikh industrialist along with Pargat Singh will be able to deal with any backlash from the Jat Sikhs in a region dominated by SCs. Rana is also known for his mastery over the electoral system. Much before the BJP started scripting booth-wise poll strategy, Rana was practising it.

With the present rejig, the party now has nine ministers from Malwa, which has 69 seats in the 117-member assembly, seven from the border belt of Maiha (25 seats), and three from Doaba (23 seats). With this, the party has addressed the gripe of Majha politicians that despite winning 22 of the 25 seats in the region in 2017, the

party had not adequately rewarded its legislators.

THE CASTE CARD

Well aware that SCs in the state are not a monolithic body, and the mere elevation of Channi as the chief minister may not be enough, the Cabinet has also inducted Raj Kumar Veka, a Valmiki, from Amritsar, and Sangat Singh Gilzian, a grassroots politician from the backward class Lubana community. Aruna Chaudhry, who's been retained from the previous Cabinet, also belongs to the SC community. The ministry now has four

members from SC and BC communities against three in the previous government

REGION

PARTAP BAJWA (64)

Why one of Capt's most fierce critics found no place in new Cabinet

KAMALDEEPSINGH BRAR AMRITSAR, SEPTEMBER 25

IN THE new-look Punjab Cabinet that was unveiled on Saturday, a bunch of new faces and a few old loyalists managed to find spots. A prominent name missing from that list, however, was that of former Punjab Pardesh Congress Committee president and member of Rajya Sabha, Partap Singh Bajwa, who has been a staunch opponent of former Chief Minister, Captain Amarinder Singh, for the last nine years.

Speaking to The Indian Express on Sunday, Bajwa — who was known among the Congress ranks as the most vociferous critics of the Captain, if not his strongest opponent – said he was willing to watch for now as new alliances emerged within the Congress after the Cabinet formation and did not want to think much of the fact that he had missed out on a Cabinet berth

Baiwa said that he had pushed for a few names of his own to be included in the new Cabinet. But all the names he backed were first-time MLAs.

"A total of six tickets were handed out on my recommendation in the 2017 Assembly polls. Five out of the six candidates i suggested won the elections. One of these MLAs, later, had joined a rival camp within the Congress after his election. Hence, I just had four loyalists — Joginder Pal from Boha, Balwinder Singh Laddi from Hargobindpur, Santokh Singh Bhalaipur from Baba Bakala, and my brother Fathe Singh Bajwa from Qadian. All these MLAs are

There are faces in the new cabinet who remained loyal to Captain Amarinder Singh and opposed Navjot Singh Sidhu, and still managed to bag ministerial berths. It is only Bajwa and his men who seem to have missed

"It is not that I didn't push their names to be included in the new Punjab cabinet. But I was told that no first-time MLAs were being included in the new Cabinet and said Bajwa, on being asked why

he had no representation. He said that for now he will

just wait and watch. "The new government will have to meet the expectations of Captain

Partap Singh Bajwa

Amarinder Singh couldn't meet their expectations. So he had to go. It is obvious that people will judge the new It was at this moment that

Bajwa, however, continued to

Bajwa started losing ground to the

Captain with the latter ultimately

emerging as the CM's face in the

oppose the Captain even after the

formation of the Congress govern-

ment in the state in 2017 and was

isolated. His rivals in Gurdaspur —

Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa and

Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa —

became ministers in the Captain

Captain Amarinder Singh and

Baiwa had become routine affairs

till Bajwa finally reached some

agreement with the Captain, even

as Navjot Singh Sidhu started up-

ping the ante against the govern-

ment, earlier this year. Back in the

good books of the Captain, he

ended up launching a political

campaign to contest the 2022

Assembly elections from

Gurdaspur. He also managed to

appoint some of his men at key

capitalise on his new-found-truce

with the government, the Captain

resigned as the Chief Minister of

the state, paving the way for

Charanjit Singh Channi to become

the new leader at the helm of the

After Channi's elevation, all of

Bajwa's men were immediately

removed from key positions they

had secured just a month ago and

his rival — Tript Rajinder Singh

Bajwa - managed to get his loy-

years, when the time came, Bajwa

didn't gain much from the depar-

ture of the Captain government.

His truce with the Captain at the

last moment proved out to be his

second bluncer and potentially led

OTHERS MAKING NEW AL-

very few options. MPs like Jabir

Singh Dimpa and Gurieet Singh

Aujla from Majha have not taken

much time to move on. Both Aujla

and Dimpa had sided with the

Captain till the last moment.

minister took the oath of office,

they were quick in reaching out to

Channi. Going a step further,

Dimpa even hosted Punjab

Congress unit president, Naviot

Singh Sidhu, for lunch Saturday.

While Bajwa seems left with

to his undoing.

Despite opposing him for nine

alists to fill up the vacant spots.

However, before he could fully

posts in Gurdaspur.

War of words between

2017 polls.

government on if it is able to deliver on the promises made to them," said Bajwa.

He added that the new government should immediately get to work by acting against leaders involved in the drugs trade. "Action should also be taken in the sacrilege cases. The new Cabinet will also be expected to lower the electricity charges in the state. There are many promises that they need to deliver on if they want to win the trust of the people

BAJWA'S TWO 'BLUNDERS'

Bajwa had led the Charge against the Captain after the Congress had failed to form the government in the state in 2012 despite being piped as the hot favourites to do so. He later even went on to topple Captain Amarinder Singh and take over the reins of the state Congress unit in March 2013, becoming its pres-

Bajwa also, in what was initially considered as a masterstroke, had pushed the name of Captain Amarinder Singh to contest against BJP's heavyweight candidate, Arun Jaitley, from Amritsar in the 2014 Parliament elections. In doing so, Bajwa had sensed that the Captain wouldn't like to get involved in such a high profile contest and it won't be an easy fight for him. This in turn, he hoped, would automatically push the Captain into retirement, Bajwa was right in his calculations to some extent. Captain Amarinder, indeed initially, drag his feet in getting into a poll contest against Arun Jaitley. It was only after a push from Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, that the Captain jumped into the fight and later emerged victorious by a hand-

Bajwa, however, on the other hand, too contested the 2014 polls, and lost from his home constituency, Gurdaspur. In a matter of months, his masterstroke had turned into a blunder.

•SUNDER SHAM ARORA (63)

Only Doaba minister in Capt Cabinet dropped

'Scam' in auction of prime land overshadowed developmental works of Sunder Sham Arora, led to exit

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA HOSHIARPUR, SEPTEMBER 26

HOSHIARPUR HAS undergone a plethora of changes in the past four-and-half-years. From becoming the first district in the state where women e-rikshaw drivers can be seen plying on city roads, to the installation of 110 open-air gyms and providing dedicated tracks and smart bicycles to cycling lovers, a number of projects were successfully implemented in the district, under the watchful eyes of its MLA Sunder Sham

Arora has represented the Hoshiarpur Assembly segment since 2012 and became minister for the first time in 2017 when the Congress came to power. He held the Industries and Commerce portfolio in the state till last Saturday when the then Punjab CM, Captain Amarinder Singh, submitted his resignation and that of his council of ministers.

On Sunday, when a new Cabinet was sworn in under the leadership of the new Chief Minister, Charanjit Singh Channi, Arora's name didn't figure out on the list of new ministers. Sources said that Arora was not dropped from the Cabinet for being a Captain loyalist. He was rather left out as his name figured in an alleged multi-crore scandal in which a Rs 300 crore alleged loss was incurred to the exchequer during the auction of 31-acre prime land of JCT Electronics in Mohali. The Opposition cornered the government often demanding that Arora resign and the party



Sunder Sham Arora. File

had no choice but to drop him.

Talking about his achievements, regrets, and challenges, Arora said that in the past fourand-half years he has tried to make his constituency, which has a total of 1,88,041 registered voters, more developed than what it was under the tenure of the previous SAD-BJP regime. "I tried to bring some changes in the daily life of people of my constituency. and the Punjab Chief Minister was always very kind when it came to providing funds," Arora said.

HISFIVE ACHIEVEMENTS AS A MINISTER

■ Under the 'Ghar Ghar Rozgar mission and to make women selfdependent, Arora handed over free e-rickshaws, at a total cost of Rs 50 lakh, to 38 women after providing them free training. "The initiative was undertaken under the Coca Cola CSR fund to provide erickshaws to differently-abled, divorced, widows, and the other needy women. They are now selfdependent and earn their livelihood respectfully by plying these e-rickshaws," said Arora.

■ With the help of school teachers, Hoshiarpur became a torch-

bearer in rainwater recharge projects, and 33 government schools installed rainwater harvesting systems on their premises. "We got smart classrooms made in 65 of the total 95 government schools of the constituency," he said. ■Under Tandrust Punjab Mission,

Arora installed 110 open gyms in city parks and in other places. "Everyone in my constituency can now exercise free of cost at their own timings in these gyms. Also, a dedicated 8.25-km long bicycle track was made where bicycle lovers can go pedal without being bothered by the traffic. If they register through our App, then they can also be provided cycles and headgears at a very nominal rate by us. We spent Rs 50 lakh on this project so that people remain healthy," he said. ■An air-conditioned community

hall was constructed in the city, at a cost of Rs 3 crore, where people can organise their social functions by paying very nominal charges - ranging from Rs 5,000 to Rs 25,000 only. And also in all 60 villages of Hoshiarpur, a water tanker was provided during marriages or other social gatherings. ■The entire city was covered under CCTV cameras, which can be controlled at three main police stations, at a cost of Rs 98 lakh. "This has helped us to bring down the crime rate in the city. Also, after Mukatsar Sahib, Hoshiarpur is the only district that has been providing heavy vehicle driving licences. We spent Rs 2 crores on renovating our cremation ground. Vehicles, with a seating capacity

tion ground and back home. Two plant saplings are provided to the families of every deceased with an aim to minimize the impact of deforestation. Besides, the entire city was provided 100% water supply and sewer system, and projects like a sports complex, an open-air theatre, food street, a mini sports hub for every five villages are under progress," he said.

CHALLENGES

The major challenge was to provide jobs to the youths during Covid. We led the way and helped Punjab in the time of its distress with the help of district administration and local industries and various banks. We could provide jobs to hundreds of people right from the disabled to the poor. Setting up a Rs 325 crore medical college, which is already sanctioned for the district, is another major challenge that we will definitely achieve.

Regrets: There are no regrets as such. I have tried to do my best and the people of my constituency can vouch for it. A small and backward place like Hoshiarpur is now witnessing projects on the lines of any metro city, he claimed.

Voter's views: "Apart from some small issues, overall there has been a great amount of change in our city. All the parks have been maintained properly and open gyms are installed. The bicycle project is very interesting and anybody can enjoy it, even without owning a bicycle," said Baljit Singh, a city resident, adding that the new community hall was a big relief for the poor people who can now organise the marriages of their wards in fully AC hall at reasonable prices.

Some residents said that the menace of illegal colonies and illegal mining could not be stopped even under the Congress regime.

"Minister Arora may count the upcoming 'Armed Forces Preparatory Institute (AFPI) for Male, as an achievement but it's actually the other way round. A 130-year-old 19th-century government-aided school, Sardar Bahadur Amin Chand (SBAC) Senior Secondary School Bajwara, had to be shut down to make way for this institute. The AFPI snatched away the right to education from many poor students, said another resident Manish

OPPOSITION VIEW

Former BJP minister Tikshan Sood, who contested against Arora in 2017, alleged that everyone knows that the minister has his share in various alleged unauthorised colonies at the periphery of the city. He claimed that under the Central government's schemes, water supply and sewer lines are being laid at the peripheries for helping such colonies and Arora was just taking credit for the same.

"Apart from this, Arora's name has appeared in an alleged multicrore scandal in which there was a Rs 300 crore loss incurred to the exchequer during the auction of 31-acre prime land of ICT Electronics in Mohali, All the opposition parties had demanded a CBI probe in the case," said Sood.

had quipped, 'Mantri ho ya santri,

sabko thokunga'. (Be it a minister

•BHARAT BHUSHAN ASHU (50)

The only minister in new Cabinet from Ludhiana city

of 23, are provided to family

members travelling to the crema-

DIVYAGOYALGOPAL LUDHIANA, SEPTEMBER 26

BEGINNING HIS political career as

a Congress councilor from Ludhiana in 1997, three-time councilor and two-time MLA, Bharat Bhushan Ashu (50), belongs to a business family that owns dairy farms.

Ashu grew close to Rahul Gandhi after getting in touch with senior Congress leader Kishori Lal and was eventually given a ticket from Ludhiana West — an urban constituency with Hindu voters for the Punjab Assembly elections in 2012. Ashu won defeating BJP candidate Rajinder Bhandari, despite the SAD-BJP combine managing to sweep to power in the

Ashu's political clout in Ludhiana grew after senior

Congress leader and former Ludhiana MP, Manish Tewari, backed out from contesting the Lok Sabha polls 2014 from Ludhiana, and Ravneet Singh Bittu landed as the parachute candidate. Bittu won the polls and eventually, the Ashu-Bittu duo became the face of Ludhiana Congress, replacing Tewari and his aide Pawan Dewan.

Ashu, who never saw eye-toeye with Manish Tewari, soon became Bittu's go-to man. Ashu always maintained his 'with the party' stand, even as the Captain chief Partap Singh Bajwa's tussle Later, even when Captain

Amarinder Singh and Navjot Singh Sidhu were at loggerheads, Ashu managed to stay clear of the tussle and maintained he was just a 'party soldier' without taking any individual sides.

Ashu was later elevated and made deputy leader of Opposition in Vidhan Sabha during the SAD-BJP regime in 2015, overlooking several seniors, such as six-time Ludhiana north MLA. Rakesh Pandey, and others.

In the 2017 Assembly polls, Ashu again won from Ludhiana West with a margin of over 36,000 votes defeating AAP candidate Ahbaab Grewal, During the Punjab Cabinet expansion in 2018, he was made the Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs minr an elevation that was pushed by Rahul Gandhi himself.

Ashu, however, has had his own share of controversies as well, with the major one being his alleged involvement in the Grand Manor Homes CLU scam and eventually the audio clips of his conversations

officer moved court against the minister claiming that he was 'threatened' by the minister during the ongoing probe. Denying allegations. Ashu however claimed that the officer had sent him 'abu-It was alleged that Ashu and

Balwinder Sekhon (who was

probing the case) going viral. The

another Ludhiana Congress leader, Kamaliit Karwal, allegedly helped a private company, building residential flats on Gill road of Ludhiana, and used their political influence in getting them to Change of Land Use (CLU) certifi cate using forged land ownership papers and their names figured in the probe report submitted by DSP Sekhon to then local bodies minister, Navjot Singh Sidhu, in 2019.

The case even led to the fallout

or anyone, I won't spare any one), when the Opposition AAP and SAD questioned Sidhu in Vidhan Sabha over the action taken by him against Ashu on the report submitted by the DSP. While AAP had staged a walk-out from the House demanding the sacking of the minister on the basis of audio clips in which Ashu was purportedly 'threatening' DSP, then CM, Captain Amarinder Singh, defended Ashu in the House and said that he won't take any arbitrary out any evidence. Ashu had said he was open to any inquiry and claimed that the DSP was abusing him for over three months. The DSP was later dismissed from service. **FULL REPORT ON**

DAY AFTER SAD CHIEF'S VISIT OVER PINK BOLLWORM ATTACK

Channi visits cotton fields in Bathinda, meets affected farmers

RAAKHI JAGGA

LUDHIANA, SEPTEMBER 26

A DAY after SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal visited Bathinda villages to take stock of the pink bollworm attack on cotton crop, Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and his deputy Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa visited Bathinda villages to meet farmers.

Channi moved around with minimum security in the area. At Mandi Kalan village, he had a meal at the house of a farm labourer who had died during farm protests. He was seen frequently getting out of his vehicle to meet farmers on the way. He also stopped on the way to greet a newly married couple.

At Katar Singh Wala village, the CM interacted with farmers and visited their cotton fields. He expressed his concern over the pink bollworm attack on their crop. "We are not bothered about money to be spent to save crops, we are committed towards farmers. First of all, we will be using pesticides spray to control the spread of the disease and if nothing works out, we will compensate the farmers," he said.

Channi instructed agriculture officers to check the quality of pesticide spray as farmers have raised allegations that the spray used by them wasn't working on the pink bollworm. Sukhbir Badal had alleged that spurious quality pesticides and poor quality seeds were being





supplied, and demanded an inquiry into the same. He even alleged that deputy CM Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa was involved in a seeds scam earlier and had it been checked in time, this wouldn't have happened.

Channi also visited village Mandi Kalan where apart from visiting the cotton fields he went to the house of farm labourer Sukhpal Singh, who had died at the Delhi borders while protesting against farm

the cotton fields of Bathinda to take stock of crop damage by pink bollworm attack. ■(Left) having a meal with deputy chief minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa at the house of farm labourer Sukhpal Singh-who had died at the Delhi borders while protesting

against farm laws -- in

Mandi Kalan. Express

Channi met his brother Natha Singh and handed him a job letter, Rs 5 lakh compensation had already been given to him by the administration earlier. This is the first job letter given by the Punjab government to any farmer or farm

labourer who died during protests against farm laws at the morcha sites within Punjab or its borders

The CM was scheduled to visit one more village, Cheema Kalan, but couldn't do so due to paucity of time. Hence, administration officials went to the village to hand over a job letter to yet another farm labourer's family.

"Channi is trying to project an image of aam aadmi by eating at labourer's houses, trying to be one among them. He will do a lot many things now to grab votes, it is a poll gimmick. Rahul Gandhi also does it, and so does Raja Warring," said Jagseer Singh Jhumba, a Bathinda-based farmer.

CM's visit to Malwa cotton belt brings back memories of 2015 pesticides scam

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR AMRITSAR, SEPTEMBER 26

NEWLY-APPOINTED PUNJAB Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi's Malwa visit on Sunday morning, just before the oath-taking ceremony of his Cabinet, to inspect the loss of cotton crops due to worm attack has brought back memories of the 2015 pesticides scam. Back then, cotton growers suffered huge losses allegedly due to spurious pesticides and Congress, after coming to power in 2017, did not act on the allegations it had levelled against former agriculture minister Tota Singh of Shiromani Akali Dal for his alleged

Based on a report by the then special secretary (agriculture) and additional chief secretary (development) Suresh Kumar, the Akali Dal government removed the then agriculture director Mangal Singh Sandhu, but gave a clean chit to Tota Singh. Mangal Singh was arrested and the case is still pending in court. Suresh Kumar had since then become the allpowerful chief principal secretary in the Amarinder Singh regime.

role in the scam.

The removal of the agriculture director is just an eyewash and too little, too late. The director is a small fish in the big scheme of things of the government. While the agriculture director might have a role in the purchase of spurious pesticides, the overall responsibility was that of the minister, who must resign immediately. You can't escape from responsibility by putting the entire blame on a particular officer. The minister had been convicted by the court in the past in a case of abusing his official position," Captain Amarinder Singh had said

WHITEFLY ATTACK AFFECTED **60% OF COTTON CROPS IN**

PUNJAB Back in 2015, the whitefly attack affected around 60 per cent of cotton crops in the state. It was alleged that the attack could not be contained because farmers were sold spurious pesticides approved by the Punjab agricultural

department. The Punjab government initially announced a relief of Rs 10 crore for cotton growers, which was later increased to Rs 600 crore

to compensate for the loss. Now holding additional charge of Punjab DGP, then ADGP Iabal Preet Singh Sahota probed the case. Agriculture department special secretary Daljit Singh also probed the allegations of purchase of sub-standard pesticides worth crores by Mangal Singh.

On September 2, 2015, a case of cheating was registered at Rama police station in Bathinda district against two pesticides dealers, Vijay Kumar and

Shubham Goyal, who operated a dealership in Rama.

A separate case was registered in Mohali too, the status of which is not known.

MANGAL SINGH MADE A SCAPEGOAT TO SAVE TOTA SINGH, ALLEGED CONGRESS

Congress alleged that Mangal Singh Sandhu had been made a scapegoat in the case to save Tota Singh, In 2016, then PCC vice-president Sunil Jakhar had said that the Akali government had filed a challan against the former director of agriculture in a separate corruption case registered on September 15, 2005 for accepting a bribe of

Rs 8.5 lakh from a pesticide dealer. "But what happened to the case registered on October 6, 2015, related to the purchase of Oberon pesticide worth Rs 33 crore? This case was registered after a departmental enquiry headed by special secretary (agriculture) Suresh Kumar had said that a scam had taken place in the purchase of the Oberon which led to damage of cotton crop in 8.5 lakh acres in Malwa region and hit about 3 lakh

families," Jakhar had said. Jakhar had alleged that this was being done to "deflect attention from the main issue of the multi-crore purchase of Oberon".

"The former agriculture director was authorised to make purchases up to Rs 10 lakh only, while in this case purchases were made

8 EXPRESS NETWORK

The SKM has however stated

that all emergency establish-

ments and essential services - in-

cluding hospitals, medical stores,

relief, and rescue work, and peo-

ple attending to personal emer-

gencies - will be exempted from

eral secretary of BKU-Dakaunda,

said, "The Samyukta Kisan

Morcha appeals to every Indian to

join this nation-wide movement

and make the Bharat Bandh a suc-

cess. In particular, we appeal to all

organisations of workers, traders,

transporters, businessmen, stu-

dents, youth and women, and all

social movements to extend soli-

darity with the farmers that day."

asked all its workers, state unit

chiefs and heads of frontal organ-

izations to take part in the 'Bharat

Bandh' called by farmer unions on

The Congress on Sunday

Jagmohan Singh Patiala, gen-

Monday's bandh.

Armed with new slogans, SKM says 'no place for violence in movement'

Congrasks its workers, state unit chiefs and heads of frontal organizations to take part

RAAKHIJAGGA

LUDHIANA SEPTEMBER 26

A BUNCH of new slogans has been issued to farmers to be chanted during Monday's Bharat Bandh that has been called by the Sanyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) and has so far seen support from Aam Aadmi Party, Congress, and the SAD-BSP combine.

The SKM has so far categorically stated that though all political parties have been asked to support Monday's strike, none of them, or their representatives, will be given any space on the farmers' stage. They, however, can, set up their own stages in support of the

On Sunday the new bunch of slogans issued to the farmers included "Modi karega mandi band, kisan karega Bharat bandh", and

Chandigarh: The farmers' out-

fits have finalised their plans

to block all state and national

highways in Haryana on

Monday as part of the Bharat

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

Kavita Kuruganti, another SKM member, added, "Farmers from across the world are supporting us. They even observed a protest in New York when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited there recently. Over 600 farmers have died during the protest morcha against farm laws so far."

According to the SKM, the Bharat bandh will be from 6 am to 4 pm on Monday. "The SKM has appealed to all government and private offices, all educational and other institutions, all shops, industries, and commercial establishments to remain shut on Monday. They have also stated that no public event or functions should be organised during the day while adding that public and private transport should also stop functioning during the period of the bandh," said Dr Darshan Pal.

Administration officials said that road as well as rail traffic is likely to be affected on Monday with farmers having already declared that they will protest on highways as well as on railway

The All India Bank Employees Association has already supported the bandh, while the Shahi Imam of Punjab, Maulana Usman Ludhianvi, too, having thrown his weight behind the strike call. Ludhianvi has issued an appeal to one and all to support this bandh.

Haryana Police issues advisory, warns of traffic blockages on roads, highways

September 27 to protest the Centre's three agri laws.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, the umbrella body of over 40 farm unions spearheading the farmers' agitation, had earlier appealed to the people to join the bandh.

Congress general secretary (organization), K C Venugopal, said the Congress and its workers will extend our full support to the peaceful 'Bharat Bandh' called by farmer unions on Monday.

"We believe in the right of our farmers and we will stand by them in their fight against the black farm laws," he said in a

"All PCC Presidents, Chiefs of Frontal Organizations are requested to go out in front with our Annadatas in their peaceful Bharat Bandh across the country,' Venugopal said, WITHPTI

Farmers ready to protest for 10 yrs, won't allow farm laws to be implemented: Tikait

BHARATIYA KISAN Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Sunday said farmers protesting against the central farm laws for the last 10 months are ready to agitate for 10 vears, but will not allow the black legislations to be implemented.

He was speaking at a mahapanchayat held by farmers in Panipat on Sunday before the bandh. Several senior farmer leaders, including Tikait and Gurnam Singh Chaduni, addressed the mahapanchayat.

Chaduni said: "We urge all sections of society to join the Bharat Bandh as the ongoing agitation is not only for a particular section of society but for all." Expressing anguish over the issuance of summons to the protesting farmers in connection with different police cases. Chaduni said: "We will not let any farmer's arrest. When the fate of our agitation is decided, only then will a call on FIRs be taken."

Pagdi Sambhal Jatta Kisan Sanghrash Samiti president Mandeep Nathwan said: "We have identified as many as 12 main points in Fatehabad, Sirsa and Hisar to block the roads as part of the agitation apart from several other points where roads will be blocked by the people on their own. There is a warm response to the bandh call, especially after the rally of Muzaffarnagar and lathicharge

on farmers in Karnal recently." Thousands of farmers, mainly

Farmer BKU leader Rakesh Tikait at a Kisan Mahapanchayat in the grain market of Panipat on Sunday. Manoj Dhaka

from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, have been sitting at Delhi's borders for the past 10 months demanding that the farm laws, enacted in September last year, be scrapped. It has been 10 months of

this agitation. The government must listen with open ears that even if we have to agitate for 10 years we are ready, said Tikait, while addressing a well-attended Kissan Mahapanchayat The Bharatiya Kisan Union

(BKU) leader said that the Centre will have to repeal these laws.

Indicating that farmers were ready to intensify their stir if their demands are not met, Tikait asked farmers "to keep their tractors ready", saying "these may be required anytime (to move to-

The mahapanchayat came a day ahead of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha's "Bharat Bandh" call for September 27 against the Centre's three contentious farm laws, marking completion of 10 months of the ongoing agitation.

Tikait also said that if the pres-

ent government does not rollback these laws then future governments will have to take it back. Those who have to rule in

this country, they will have to repeal these laws, he asserted, while adding that we will not allow these laws to be implemented, we will continue our agitation

Tikait said that if farmers have not returned to their homes for 10 months, they will continue to agitate for 10 years, but will not allow the laws to be imple-

blocked from 6 am to 4 pm. Although the farmer outfits had earlier hinted at focus-

Gulab crosses coast, Andhra fisherman dies

Cyclonic storm

ENS&PTI VISAKHAPATNAM,

BHUBANESWAR, SEPT 26

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

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

In Odisha, people from low-lying areas of Ganjam, Gajapati and Koraput districts were evacuated to safe locations. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced that schools in 11 districts that are likely to be affected by Gulab will remain closed Monday. He also emphasised on a zero-casualty target in the vulnerable parts.

42 Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force, 24 National Disaster Response Force and 103 fire services teams have been deployed in the areas likely to be affected.

Engineering departments have been asked to keep a close watch on river embankments in Ganjam and Gajapati.

parties, the farmers have re-Bandh call given by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha to deceived support from trader mand repealing of three farm bodies too. laws. The highways will be The traders of Jind have decided to keep the markets

closed till Monday noon.

In view of the nationwide

ing on state and national high-

ways, there are reports that

the protesters will block link

Apart from the opposition

call for Bharat Bandh given by various farmers' organisations, the Haryana Police has issued an advisory stating that people may face traffic blockades on various roads and highways of the state on

A police spokesperson said: "As per reports, it is expected that agitating groups may sit on dharna on various

roads and highways and block them for some time. The national and state highways in the state may see some traffic disruptions for several hours. All the citizens are being informed about these arrangements in advance so that they are able to plan and modify their journey accordingly to avoid any inconvenience. All the districts have also been

asked to make necessary arrangements in this regard.' The spokesperson also appealed to the farmers to raise their issues peacefully without disturbing law and order

"Stern action as per the law would be taken against the elements trying to disturb public order under the guise of bandh call." he added. ENS

All court work to be done virtually only today, orders HC after Bar Association plea

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE CHANDIGARH. SEPTEMBER 26

THE PUNJAB and Haryana High Court has ordered the holding of all court work through video conference on September 27 (Monday), as farmers across the country observe a daylong Bharat bandh against the three contentious farm laws.

The order has been passed by the Bench of Chief Justice of Punjab and Harvana High Court, following the request of the Bar Association.

The HC had received a request from the Bar Associations of High Court stating that on September 27, all court may be held through virtual/video conference mode and no adverse order be passed in cases on account of non-appear-

farm associations in the ongoing agitation against the new farm and agricultural laws. Accordingly, the HC, by modifying the earlier order for physical

ance of advocates due to the call

for Bharat Bandh made by the

hearing of some courts, ordered that all courts, including those nominated for physical hearing for the said day, will be held only through virtual mode.

Ramana bats for 50% reservation for women in judiciary

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

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

WOMEN LAWYERS should raise their voices "with anger" for 50 per cent reservation in the judici-

ary, which they are entitled to, Chief Justice of India NV Ramana said Sunday as he called for "urgent correction" of the gender im-

"...With anger you have to

shout, demand that you need 50 percent reservation. It's not a small issue. It's (an) issue of thousands of years of suppression. You are entitled. It's a matter of right. Nobody is going to give charity. It's unfortunate, some things we realise very late. With the help of all of you, after some time, we may realise and reach this goal in the apex court as well as other courts," the CII said at a felicitation ceremony organised by the Lady Advocates of Supreme Court of India. Invoking Karl Marx's "workers of the world" call, the CJI said: "Women of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your

CJI Ramana said women constitute only about 30 per cent of the lower judiciary, 11.5 per cent of the High Courts, and 12 per cent of the Supreme Court. Of India's 1.7 million advocates, only 15 per cent are women, they make up only 2 per cent of the elected representatives in the State Bar Councils, and there are no women members in the Bar Council of India, he said, "This needs urgent correction," he added.

The CJI spoke about the diffi-



ing the legal profession, including gender stereotypes that force them to bear the responsibilities of the family, the preference of clients for male advocates and an uncomfortable environment within courts — including a lack of infrastructure and washrooms. and crowded courtrooms.

Elaborating on infrastructural issues, CJI Ramana said out of 6,000 trial courts, nearly 22% have no toilet for women. "The National **Judicial Infrastructure Corporation** I have proposed will ensure inclusive design of Court complexes. We need to create a more welcoming environment," he said.

The Chief Justice also favoured increasing gender diversity in legal education. "I strongly support the demand for a certain percentage of reservation for women in all law schools in the country," he said. "We hope more women will join the profession and achieve the goal of 50 percent shortly."

On the Supreme Court resuming physical functioning, CJI Ramana said he was hopeful of this happening after the Dussehra vacation. The top court is closed for the festival from October 11-16.

Goa polls: Senior Cong leader may join TMC ranks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

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

scheduled for early 2022.

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

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

Seventy-one year old Faleiro, who is the sitting MLA from south Goa's Navelim, served as chief minister of the state in 1998-99. A Congress veteran, Faleiro has also served as AICC general secretary in-charge of Northeast states.

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

A team from the Prashant Kishore-led Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), a political advocacy group, has been assessing the political situation in Goa from three months. IPAC, that advised Banerjee in the West Bengal Assembly polls earlier this year, will continue to work with the TMC. Amid talk of Faleiro's exit. Chodankar and Congress legislative party leader Digambar Kamat had met Rahul Gandhi in Delhi on

Saturday. Chandigarh

SERO SURVEY OF 6,000 PEOPLE

Over 70 per cent Odisha kids developed antibodies: survey

AISHWARYA MOHANTY

A RECENTLY concluded serological survey covering 12 districts of Odisha to estimate and compare the age-specific prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies has found that 70 per cent children in the age group 6-10 years were found to have developed antibodies, while the figure for the 11 -18 years age group was 74 per cent.

The survey, conducted by the ICMR Regional Medical Research Centre (RCMR), also revealed a weighted community sero prevalence of 73.5 per

"70 per cent sero prevalence was found in the age group 6-10 years while for 11 -18 it was 74 per cent. Most children especially in the 6-10 age group

have not been exposed to the virus as they were expected to stay indoors. Their exposure must have been from immediate family and friends. Our findings are similar and are at par with the national sero survey,' RCMR director Dr Sanghamitra Pati told The Indian Express.

Conducted between August 29 and September 15, the survey covered 6,000 people, including 1,200 healthcare workers, in 12 districts.

Of those surveyed, 25.6 percent were fully immunised, 41.4 percent were partially vaccinated and 33 percent were not vaccinated at all. In the 19-44 years age

group, the survey revealed a sero prevalence of 75.68 per cent – higher than the age groups 45-60 years (72.65 per cent) and 60+ years (66.04 per cent).



did assessment of the challenges in India-China ties, India's ambassador to Beijing Vikram Misri has listed "avoid shifting goalposts", "take a one-sided view of concerns and sensitivities "viewing bilateral relations through the prism of relations with other countries" as "obstacles which could block progress" in the relationship.

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

This is the most frank analysis of the problem in the bilateral relationship by the Indian envoy, a vear-and-half after the border stand-off in Ladakh began. The speech was made on September 23, but was made public by the Indian embassy in Beijing on Saturday.

Following the disengagement in the Galwan Valley in July last year, the two sides were able to disengage from the North and



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

Envoy on hurdles in India-China

South Banks of the Pangong lake in February 2021, and most re-

"The conversation between the two sides continues regarding the remaining locations and we hope that disengagement at the remaining friction areas will enable us to reach a point where we can pick up the threads of bilateral cooperation," Misri said.

On the challenges facing the relationship, he said, "The first is to avoid shifting goalposts. For long, the Indian and Chinese sides have adhered to a well-understood distinction between resolving the Boundary Question and managing border affairs."

Underlining the pacts signed since the 1988 understanding between the two countries, Misri said, "...Any attempt to confuse border affairs with the Boundary Ouestion is a disservice to the work of those involved in finding solutions. This is why the Indian side has been consistently saying that the current issue is about

restoring peace and tranquillity to the border areas, and is not about the resolution of the larger Boundary Question, on which our stance has not changed, despite what happened last year."

The second obstacle, the Indian ambassador said, is to "take a one-sided view of concerns and sensitivities, where one's own preoccupations trump any of those flagged by the other side".

"Affixing blame exclusively on the other side is not a helpful approach. And to press one's own concerns and disregard the other side's concerns and sensitivities without any explanation or recourse goes beyond disrespect. It actually creates even more obstacles to finding solutions," he said.

Misri said these issues need not be limited to the "realm of high politics". Far less complex issues, which have a purely humanitarian context and are not connected to bilateral diplomatic positions – such as facilitating the movement of students, businesspersons, and stranded family members from India to China for over a year and a half now, await a more balanced and sensitive approach, he said.

India, he said, has also attempted to keep trade and commercial relationships insulated to Chinese businesspersons to visit India. "However, we are disappointed to see an unscientific ap-

from current differences, for in-

stance by continuing to issue visas

proach with regard to several problems currently being faced by Indian students, businessmen, marine crew and exporters, to name a few " the Indian envoy said. The third obstacle, Misri said, is "viewing bilateral relations through the prism of relations with other countries". This was said in the context of the Quad leaders' summit, and Beijing's publicly-articulated concerns over it. The ambassador underlined that India and China are two ancient civilisations and two modern Asian nations that have developed their independent foreign policies, and cherish their strategic

He said that India formulates its national and foreign policies on the basis of national interest first and foremost. Many of these forums include China — the SCO, BRICS, and RIC are some examples – and these dialogues have continued even during the difficult phase that the bilateral relationship is passing through.

FULL REPORT ON

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

AVISHEKG DASTIDAR NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

Starting September 13, all ministries, departments and subordinate offices of the government, as per instructions from Cabinet Secretariat, have been preparing the material

and identifying the scope of the work to be done. While doing this, ministries

are also to review the existing rules and old orders that increase paperwork in government working.

..The existing processes may be reviewed with a view to reducing compliance burden and unnecessary paperwork done away with, wherever feasible," says the letter to all ministries from Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, who wrote "to convey the directions of the Prime Minister." "It may be recalled that dur-

ing his Independence Day address this year, the Prime Minister has emphasized the need to review existing rules and procedures on a continuing basis," the letter states. This process is set to last till

September 29, and the disposal

exercise will start October 2,

Gandhi Jayanti. The disposal ex-

ercise is part of the nationwide cleanliness campaign started by the NDA government. Typically the Centralised

Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CP-GRAMS) website of the Ministry of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances receives complaints from citizens concerning any ministry. It is the nodal body to oversee this drive as well. It forwards the complaints to ministries concerned and there is a set protocol for redressal.

Along with disposing of all pending matters, the directive from the Cabinet Secretary also lists out that ministries should review record retention rules so that records are neither prematurely destroyed nor are they retained beyond a necessary time frame. Redundant scrap material and obsolete items are also to be identified for disposal.

culties women face while enter-

IDEA EXCHANGE NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

RAJIV RANJAN SINGH, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, JD(U)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There were many sections... But let bygones be bygones. We are focusing on the future... Chirag Paswan put up candidates against ours. They also put up candidates against the BJP. There were some people

BJP candidates, they became (Paswan's) Lok Janshakti Party candidates. All this

who were possible

RAVISH TIWARI: So it wasn't a vote

against Nitish governance? No. In the 2019

general elections. (the NDA) got 39 of the state's 40 seats. If the 2020 vote was against Nitish Kumar's governance, then the 2019 results should have also reflected that. Nitish Kumar has people's support now, he had it in the 2020 Assembly polls, and it has increased.

RAVISH TIWARI: But 2019 was a vote for Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

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

RAVISH TIWARI: Why has the JD(U)

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

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

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

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

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

Are you ready to forgive him? It is not for us to forgive him. They have no MLA in the Bihar NDA, so where is the question of including him in the Bihar NDA? In the Lok Sabha also, he is alone in his party, five of his people have left. We believe they left because of his stubbornness during the Bihar elections. They say

There is a crucial difference

from Vajpayeeji's time. The

BJP did not have a majority

on its own then. Now, it

has. So it takes decisions,

then consults allies

he behaved that way because of certain advisors. His father Ram Vilas Paswan was a grassroots leader. Chirag Paswan did not face any struggle. He was airdropped, and then he became an MP. He had no understanding of the ground re-

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

concerns, we have registered the same.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He (Prasad) has explained his position.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We have been working continuously... During the pandemic, around 24-25 lakh migrants working in other states came back. Nitish Kumar did a lot of work for them set up centres, quarantined those who tested positive... But governance never affected...

whether selecting school headmasters, building roads, medical colleges, infrastructure for nurses... Work hasn't stopped.

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

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

HARIKISHAN SHARMA: In his Independence Day speech, the PM said the Centre's Jal Jeevan Mission has taken water connections to 4.5 crore households, most of them in Bihar. Sanjay Jha, a minister in your government, said only 8.5 lakh connections in Bihar are under Jal Jeevan Mission and the rest are part of your Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal. What does this tell you about the current level of political discourse, where governments exaggerate their work

Illustration: Suvajit Dev

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

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

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

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

He was saying different things, was associated with different parties. It's not right to then hold a party post. If I, as party president, think I am everything, that won't work. Work should happen according to the democratic process within the

People have freedom to say

what they want against the

govt in Bihar... This is about

democratic rights... We

fought Emergency... So we

firmly believe in the press

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

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

HARIKISHAN SHARMA: The Pegasus issue stalled the Monsoon Session of

Parliament. What is your party's stand on it? Are you in favour of a parliamentary committee or a **Supreme Court-monitored probe?**

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

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

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

Chandigarh



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

THIS IS THE STORY OF AMERICA. EVERYBODY'S DOING WHAT THEY THINK THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO DO.

— JACK KEROUAC

The Indian **EXPRESS**

∞ FOUNDED By ∞ Ramnath Goenka

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

IN STEP WITH US

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

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

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

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

Count the ladder's rungs



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

TEJASHWI PRASAD YADAV

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

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

For more than 70 years, we have heard from all governments about poverty alleviaThe ruling elite as well as some members of the mainstream media have been suggesting that the demand for making the caste census public may lead to casteism in every sphere. Such fearmongering needs to be dealt with objectively. Who are the people carrying out occupations that offer neither dignity nor adequate livelihood? Who are the workers who have absolutely no social security and are always one crisis away from destitution? Who are the people migrating from our villages for uncertain futures in cities? Why does the welfare state or at least the government —

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interested in knowing who

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

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

The ruling elite as well as some members of the mainstream media have been suggesting that the demand for making the caste census public may lead to casteism in every sphere. Such fear-mongering needs to be dealt with objectively. We shall counter the misleading propaganda around this issue with facts and well-grounded arguments. Let us ask some valid questions with regards to the contemporary development paradigm, which goes with the rhetoric of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas. Who are the people carrying out occupations that offer neither dignity nor adequate livelihood? Who are the workers who have absolutely no social security and are always one crisis away from destitution? Who are the people migrating from our villages for uncertain futures in cities? Why does the welfare state or at least the government — which is otherwise very inquisitive - not seem interested in knowing who these people are? Does their caste determine their economic status or their agency to speak for what is fair?

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

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

> The writer is Leader of Opposition, Bihar Legislative Assembly

GRAIN DIPLOMACY

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

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

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

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

Freeze Frame

EPUNNY





LEARNING WITHOUT BARRIERS

Developments in online education open up access for disabled children

Feza T Azmi

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

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

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

The pandemic has made us realise how technology is reshaping education. Online education has the potential to make learning more accessible for persons with disabilities. It takes care of physical barriers created by transportation and mobility issues. Children have the advantage of accessing learning from the

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

Lockdowns made schools rapidly migrate to

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is professor, Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Studies & Research, Aligarh Muslim University

DHAKA PROTESTS

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT has brushed aside reports from Dhaka that 18 Bangladesh citizens had been killed within Bangladesh borders in an attack by Indian security personnel earlier this week. No Indian security person was involved in the reported incident, a spokesperson of the Union external affairs ministry said. The spokesperson said that there has been no request from the Bangladeshi government in response to the request from local Indian officials for a meeting to sort out the problem. He said about 5,000 people belonging to tribal communities had crossed into India from Bangladesh in the last few days. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh government had lodged a strong protest with India alleging border violations by 500 miscreants in the Chittagong Hill Tract Areas.

SEPTEMBER 27, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

CM Denies Charges

DENYING THE CHARGES of corruption levelled against him, Bihar Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra launched a counteroffensive against Karpoori Thakur who he alleged was attempting "to give authenticity to his fabricated lies basing his information on an imaginary home ministry report". In his lengthy rejoinder, Mishra accused Thakur of earning more than Rs 2 crore from contracts given by the Bihar Electricity Board. Denying that he had a hand in the raising of the price of spirit from 75 paisa to Rs 1.80 per litre, the price had been settled by the excise department after negotiations with the manufacturers. He also said that Union Home Minister Giani Zail Singh had told him that no inquiry had been initiated into the charges against him.

STORM WARNING

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



THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

THE IDEAS PAGE

Not the MSP route

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

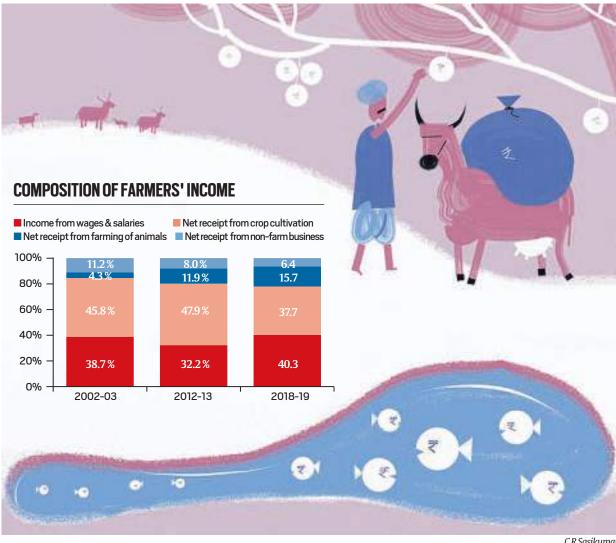


By Ashok Gulati and Ranjana Roy

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

What these survey results indicate is that the scope for augmenting farmers' incomes is going to be more, and from rearing animals (including fisheries). It is worth noting that there is no minimum support price (MSP) for products of animai nusbandry oi fisheries and no procurement by the government. It is demanddriven, and much of its marketing takes place outside APMC mandis. This is the trend that will get reinforced in the years to

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

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

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

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

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

Singing like a feminist

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



Urvashi Butalia

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

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

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

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

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

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

She did this through her formidable and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is publisher, Zubaan

The choice to monetise

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

come as incomes rise and

diets diversify.



dramatically.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A BLOT

closet.

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

Hemant Contractor, Pune

PUBLIC VS PRIVATE

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

Gangadhar Karalay, Nagpur

RSS TOKENISM

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

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

(IE, September 25). I believe RSS chief

Ritwik Trivedi, Delhi

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

VP's signal

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

LR Murmu, Delhi

12 THE WORLD

TOPOFTHE _



Walter Scott

USA Billionaire, philanthropist Walter Scott dies at 90

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

WEST ASIA

Israeli troops kill 4 Palestinians in shootout

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

USA

Thousands traverse Panama on way to US

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

Canada lifts ban on direct flights from India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 26

CANADA WILL allow direct flights from India from Monday. lifting the ban on them after a gap of more than five months.

Announcing the decision, Transport Canada on Saturday in a tweet said: "Beginning at 00:01 EDT on September 27, direct flights from India can land in Canada with additional public health measures in place.

"Travellers must have proof of a negative Covid-19 molecular test from the approved Genestrings Laboratory at the Delhi airport taken within 18 hours of the scheduled departure of their direct flight to Canada," it added.

In April, Canada had banned all direct flights to and from India.

Swiss approve same-sex marriage by wide margin

ASSOCIATED PRESS GENEVA, SEPTEMBER 26

SWITZERLAND VOTED by a wide margin to allow same-sex couples to marry in a referendum on Sunday, bringing the Alpine nation into line with many others in western Europe.

Official results showed the measure passed with 64.1% of voters in favour and won a majority in all of Switzerland's 26 cantons, or states. Switzerland has authorised same-sex civil partnerships since 2007.

Supporters said passage would put same-sex partners on equal legal footing with heterosexual couples by allowing them to adopt children and facilitating citizenship for same-sex

Montana on Saturday. AF

AMY BETH HANSON

JOPLIN. SEPTEMBER 26

AT LEAST three people were

killed Saturday afternoon when

an Amtrak train that runs be-

tween Seattle and Chicago de-

railed in north-central Montana,

toppling several cars onto their

Builder train derailed about 4

p.m. near Joplin, a town of about

200, Amtrak spokesman Jason

Abrams said in a statement. The

accident scene is about 241 km

northeast of Helena and about 48

km from the border with Canada.

patcher Starr Tyler told The

Associated Press that three peo-

ple died in the derailment. She did

not have more details. Amtrak

Liberty County sheriff's dis-

The westbound Empire

sides, authorities said.

& TAREK HAMADA

VOTING ENDS IN TIGHT GERMAN ELECTION



Candidate for chancellor Armin Laschet and his wife Susanne cast their ballots in Aachen, Germany, on Sunday. AP



Social Democratic Party candidate for chancellor, Olaf Scholz, casts his vote in Berlin. AP

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

THOMAS ESCRITT & PAUL CARREL BERLIN, SEPTEMBER 26

GERMANY'S CDU/CSU conservatives and their Social Democrat rivals were virtually tied in Sunday's national election, exit polls showed, leaving open which of them will lead the next government as Angela Merkel prepares to stand down after 16 years in power.

The CDU/CSU bloc won 25% of the vote, their weakest result in a post-war federal election and on a par with the centre-left Social Democrat (SPD), the infratest poll for broadcaster ARD showed. A Forschungsgruppe Wahlen poll for broadcaster ZDF put the SPD and its chancellor candidate Olaf Scholz on 26% and the CDU/CSU on 24%.

"The SPD is back. We are where we belong," SPD Secretary General Lars Klingbeil said shortly after first exit polls. He said the polls showed the SPD and its

confirmed the deaths and said

learn local authorities are now

confirming that three people

have lost their lives as a result of

The train had about 141 pas-

sengers and 16 crew members

onboard, Abrams said. The train

had two locomotives and 10 cars,

eight of which derailed, he said.

learn local authorities are now

confirming that three people

this accident," Abrams said.

lized to help the passengers.

"We are deeply saddened to

Residents of communities

Chester Councilwoman

near the crash site quickly mobi-

others helped about 50 to 60

passengers who were brought to

a local school.

this accident." Abrams said.

"We are deeply saddened to

there were multiple injuries.

At the scene of the Amtrak train derailment in north-central

train derails in Montana



German Chancellor Angela Merkel appears at the CDU party headquarters in Berlin on Sunday after the first exit polls were released. Reuters

chancellor candidate Olaf Scholz had the mandate to govern. CDU General Secretary Paul

Ziemiak told ARD after the publication of their poll: "That hurts". Attention will now shift to informal discussions —likely with the Greens, on 15%, and liberal Free Democrats (FDP), on 11% —

followed by more formal coali-

tion negotiations, which could take months, leaving Merkel in charge in a caretaker role.

The election pitted Armin Laschet, of the CDU, against Scholz, the finance minister in Merkel's "grand coalition" who won all three televised debates between the leading candidates for Chancellor. REUTERS



THE 2021 elections change a lot for Germany, with Merkel stepping away as the country's leader after 16 years in charge, and her party facing its worst results since 1949. However. the broad political landscape remains largely unaltered. Merkel's CDU and its main rival SPD, both of which are effectively in a tie according to exit polls, as well as the Greens, who have made significant gains in these elections, are all moderate centrist parties who have previously been in governing alliances with each other. The Left, the most leftwing party in the German parliament, seems to be hovering at just 5% of the votes, and the far-right AfD did not make the gains it expected.

rupting the qualification process

for drivers, preventing new

labour from entering the market.

Brexit and poor working condi-

tions forcing out foreign drivers.

announced a plan to issue tem-

porary visas for 5,000 foreign

risks major disruption beyond

But business leaders have

truck drivers. read more

Others pinned the blame on

The government on Sunday

Taliban ask airlines to resume international flights to Afghanistan

REUTERS SEPTEMBER 26

THE TALIBAN government in Afghanistan appealed on Sunday for international flights to be resumed, promising full cooperation with airlines and saying that problems at Kabul airport had been resolved.

The statement from the foreign affairs ministry comes as the new administration has stepped up efforts to open up the country and gain international acceptance following the collapse of the Western-backed government last month.

A limited number of aid and passenger flights have been operating from the airport. But normal commercial services have vet to resume since it was closed in the wake of the chaotic evacuation of tens of thousands of foreigners and vulnerable Afghans that followed the Taliban's seizure of the capital.

The airport, which was damaged during the evacuation, has since been reopened with the assistance of technical teams from Oatar and Turkey.

While some airlines including Pakistan International Airlines have been offering limited services and some people have been able to get places on flights, prices have been reported to be many times higher than normal.



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

Foreign ministry spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi said the suspension of international flights had left many Afghans stranded abroad and also prevented people from travelling for work or study.

"As the problems at Kabul International Airport have been resolved and the airport is fully operational for domestic and international flights, the IEA assures all airlines of its full cooperation," he said, using an abbreviation for Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Taliban's term for their new government.

Since taking power, the Taliban have grappled with a severe economic crisis and have faced pressure on issues ranging from girls' education to allegations of reprisals against former officials and others associated with the previous government.

Women candidates win majority of seats in Icelandic election

EGILL BJARNASON REYKJAVIK, SEPTEMBER 26

ICELAND HAS elected a femalemajority parliament, a landmark for gender equality in the North Atlantic island nation, in a vote

that saw centrist parties make the biggest gains. After all votes were counted Sunday, female candidates held 33 seats in Iceland's 63-seat parliament, the Althing. The three parties in the outgoing coalition government led by Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir won

a total of 37 seats in Saturday's

vote, two more than in the last

election, and appeared likely to continue in power. The milestone for women comes despite a poor outcome for parties on the left, where female candidates are more often

frontrunners Politics professor Silja Bara Omarsdottir said the gender quotas implemented by left-

Saturday that they "must" pass

Katrin Jakobsdottir decade had managed to create a new norm across Iceland's polit-

Iceland's Prime Minister

ical spectrum. "It is no longer acceptable to

ignore gender equality when selecting candidates," she said.

Opinion polls had suggested a victory for left-leaning parties in the unpredictable election, which saw 10 parties competing for seats. But the centre-right Independence Party took the largest share of votes, winning 16 seats, seven of them held by women. The centrist Progressive Party celebrated the biggest gain, winning 13 seats, five more than

Behave normally, transport minister tells Britons as many queue up for fuel **WILLIAM JAMES** BRIGHTON, SEPTEMBER 26

TRANSPORT MINISTER Grant Shapps on Sunday called on Britons to behave normally when buying petrol, saying there was no shortage of fuel and the government was stepping in to ease a shortage of drivers bringing it to petrol stations. Three dead after Amtrak In recent days long lines of ve-

hicles have formed at petrol stations as motorists waited, some for hours, to fill up with fuel after oil firms reported a lack of drivers was causing transport problems from refineries to forecourts.

Some operators have had to ration supplies and others to close gas stations.

"There's plenty of fuel, there's



Drivers queue to enter a fuel station in London, Reuters

no shortage of the fuel within the country," he told Sky News.

"So the most important thing is actually that people carry on as they normally would and fill up their cars when they normally would, then you won't have queues and you won't have shortages at the pump either."

Shapps said the shortage of drivers was down to Covid-19 dis-

warned the government's plan is short-term fix and will not solve an acute labour shortage that

> fuel deliveries, including for retailers in the run-up to Christmas. Shapps called the panic over fuel a 'manufactured situation'. "They're desperate to have

more European drivers undercutting British salaries," he said. leaning parties for the past

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

ALAN FRAM

WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 26

DEMOCRATS PUSHED a \$3.5 trilhave lost their lives as a result of lion, 10-year Bill strengthening social safety net and climate programs through the House Budget Committee, but one Democrat voted "no," illustrating the chal-Rachel Ghekiere said she and lenges party leaders face in winning the near unanimity they'll need to push the sprawling package through Congress.

The Democratic-dominated panel, meeting virtually Saturday, approved the measure on a near party-line vote, 20-17. Passage marked a necessary but minor checking of a procedural box for Democrats by edging it a step closer to debate by the full House. Under budget rules, the committee wasn't allowed to significantly amend the 2,465page measure, the product of 13 other House committees.

More important work has

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

Pelosi told fellow Democrats

the social and environment package this week, along with a separate infrastructure Bill and a third measure preventing a government shutdown on Friday. Her letter to colleagues underscored the pile of crucial work Congress' Democratic majority faces in coming days and seemed an effort to build urgency to resolve long-standing

disputes quickly. "The next few days will be a time of intensity," she wrote. Moderate Rep. Scott Peters, D-

Calif., joined all 16 Republicans on the Budget committee in opposing the legislation. His objections included one that troubles many Democrats: a reluctance to back a Bill with provisions that would later be dropped by the Senate.

Many Democrats don't want to become politically vulnerable by backing language that might be controversial back home, only to see it not become law.

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

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

DAVE PHILIPPS SEPTEMBER 26

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

It was a first for the Marine Corps, which almost never allows deviations from its hallowed image, and it was a longawaited chance for the officer to combine two of the things he holds most dear.

"I finally don't have to pick which life I want to commit to, my faith or my country," Toor, 26,

said in an interview. "I can be who I am and honour both sides."

His case is the latest in a longrunning conflict between two fundamental values in the US military: the tradition of discipline and uniformity, and the constitutional liberties the armed forces were created to defend.

While Sikh troops in Britain. Australia and Canada have long worn turbans in uniform, and scores of Sikhs do so now in other branches of the military, Toor's turban is the first in the 246-year history of the Marine Corps. For generations, the Marine Corps has fought any change to its strict ap-

The Marine Corps has made

the allowance only to a point. Toor can wear a turban in daily dress at normal duty stations, but he cannot do so while deployed to a conflict zone, or when in dress uniform in a ceremonial unit, where the public could see it.

Toor has appealed the restrictive decision to the Marine Corps commandant, and he says that if he does not get a full accommodation, he will sue the Marines.

"We've come a long way, but there is still more to go," he said. "The Marine Corps needs to show it really means what it has been saying about strength in diversity — that it doesn't matter what you look like, it just matters that you can do your job."



First Lt. Sukhbir Toor at a Marine Corps training facility in Twentynine Palms, California, on Friday. NYT

For the Marine Corps leadership, an exception as small as one man's turban was seen as so potentially dangerous that Toor's request went all the way to top Marine Corps authorities. Their initial reaction in June was largely a denial. In a stern response, one Marine Corps general warned that individual expression of that kind could fray the fabric of discipline and commitment that binds the Marines. It could erode the nation's trust in the Marines. It could undermine combat effectiveness.

Toor appealed to the commandant of the Marine Corps, which retreated a bit in August, allowing him to wear a beard and turban in limited circumstances.

The Marine Corps' argument, time after time, has been that change could hobble its ability to fight. "In order to build squads that will move forward in a combat environment where people are dying, a strong team bond is required," Col. Kelly Frushour, a spokesperson for Marine Headquarters, said in written responses to questions from *The* New York Times about Toor's case. "Uniformity is one of the tools the Corps uses to forge that bond. What the Corps is protecting is its ability to win on the battlefield, so that the Constitution can remain the law of the land."

Toor grew up in Washington, DC. and Ohio. the son of Indian immigrants. He joined the Marines after college in 2017, knowing he would initially have to forgo the physical symbols of his faith, but he

was willing to make the sacrifice. Believing it was wrong to ask for anything before he had given of himself, he shaved daily and wore a Marine Corps utility cap for

years without complaint. When

motion to captain, he decided it was time. He wrote his formal request for a religious accommodation in April. Two months later, he got a let-

he was selected this spring for pro-

ter that granted the accommodation — but with so many caveats that it amounted to a denial. Toor would be allowed wear a beard and turban whenever he wanted, as long as it was not while he was deployed, serving in a combat unit that might deploy or doing ceremonial duties in dress uniform.

How often might those circumstances occur? "Like, every day," Toor said

with a laugh. "That is just what I do. I'm a combat arms officer." NYT

M-CAP OF TOP-10 VALUED COS IUMPS

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

TWO GROUPS OF MINISTERS FORMED FOR GOODS AND SERVICES TAX REFORMS

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

AANCHAL MAGAZINE

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

an overarching mandate: an evaluation of "special rates" within the tax structure, rationalisation measures that include "a merger of tax rate slabs for simplifying the rate structure", alongside a review of instances of inverted duty structure and an identification of potential sources of evasion to

The Finance Ministry has constituted a seven-member Group of Ministers (GoM) under Karnataka Chief Minister Basavarai S Bommai for "rate rationalisation" and another eight-member GoM under Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar for "GST system reforms", orders issued on September 24 stated

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

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

ORDERS ISSUED ON SEPTEMBER 24

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

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

"The GoM may suggest chan-

cers and suggest measures to ges that may be implemented immediately and the roadmap for make the system more efficient implementation for the changes and effective, identify potential that should be implemented in sources of evasion, identify possithe short and medium term." the ble use of data analysis towards order said. The Group may submit better compliance and revenue an interim report for such immeaugmentation and suggest use of diate measures as it may deem fit such data analysis and identify and will have to submit its report mechanisms for better coordinain two months, it added. tion between Central and State tax Members of the GoM on rate administration. This GoM will give rationalisation include Bihar Depits recommendation to the uty Chief Minister Tarkishore Pra-Council from time to time and will sad; Goa's Minister for Transport review the implementation of reand Panchayati Raj, Housing,

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

> > ADVERSE IMPACT OF

COVID: About 59% of

adversely impacted by

Top priorities for business

leaders: Top priorities cited by

accelerate transformations in

organisational areas identified

during the crisis (99%);

Indian business

admitted having

the coronavirus

pandemic

form measures approved by the

SITHARAMAN STRESSES NEED FOR FOUR OR FIVE BIG BANKS LIKE SBI

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

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

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

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

Sitharaman underlined the importance of seamless and interconnected digital systems in creating a sustainable future for Indian banking industry. "Longterm future of Indian banking is going to be largely driven by digitised processes.'

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

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

every district of the nation. "Almost two-thirds of nearly relocating to India, she said. Sitharaman also spoke of the high potential for banking out-

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

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

"Fintech understands that UPI is its backbone, you have to give it its flesh and blood, you have to

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

Sitharaman said this is absolutely the right time to become professional, adding, "Bank valuations should be razor-sharp, enabling you to raise the right kinds

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

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

7.5 lakh panchayats have optical

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

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

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

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

payment intentions.

strengthen UPI," she told bankers. She stressed that the National

of amount at the right cost.'

POLICY WATCH **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

AASHISHARYAN NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile, under Section 79, any intermediary shall not be held legally or otherwise liable for any third party information, data, or communicaion link made available or

hosted on its platform.

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

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

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

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

PANDEMIC IMPACT

'Biz leaders feel Covid pressed need to improve crisis management' Over 90% of the Indian business leaders opined that the

Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to improve crisis management capabilities, says a survey by consultancy firm PwC India

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

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



Protocol and Legislative Affairs

Mauvin Godinho; Kerala Finance

Minister KN Balagopal; Rajasth-

an's Minister for Local Self Gove-

rnment, Urban Development and

Housing, Law and Legal Affairs

Shanti Kumar Dhariwal; Uttar

Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh

Kumar Khanna and West Bengal

reforms will review IT tools and

interface available with tax offi-

The other GoM on GST system

Finance Minister Amit Mitra.

action, with 92% of Indian organisations saying they were 'confident', against just

shared company data and personal insights into the impact of the Covid-19

pandemic and the future of enterprise resilience

adapt strategy to respond nimbly to major interruptions and implement changes (96%); and implement after-action review process to assess response to future incidents

and crisis (89%) Survey details: As part of PwC's Global Crisis Survey 2021- India Insights, the consultancy said more than 2,800 business leaders around the world

Source: PwC India/PTI

Beer companies penalised for 'cartelisation': Recovery to gather What were the findings of CCI investigation pace, but worries over

KARUNJITSINGH

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

Why have beer companies

been penalised? The search and seizures conducted by the Director General of the CCI during an investigation found regular communications between the three companies to coordinate price hikes submitted

to state authorities for approval. The investigation found that key managerial personnel emailed competitors about the price hikes they were planning to propose to state authorities in various states and sought to coordinate price hikes.

Representatives of the beer companies held discussions among themselves about prospective quotes and the way forward with state excise departments and used to meet with the

excise authority under the umbrella of the AIBA so that they would have a better chance of getting proposed price increases approved. The AIBA was also

EXPLAINEI fined for its role in arranging discussions between beer companies on various issues including pricing. The CCI cited multiple instances of the companies

making identical price revisions

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

The CCI found that the beer

companies also coordinated cuts in supply of beer in Odisha, Maharashtra and West Bengal to oppose moves by state governments to hike excise duties or reduce the price of beer. It also found that UBL and AB In Bev had agreements on the price at which they

> would procure used bottles from bottle collectors for reuse at their breweries.

What was the rationale of the beer companies?

Key managerial personnel from the beer companies who were also penalised by the CCI cited the need to seek approvals from state authorities for any price revisions as a key reason for the need for coordination among competitors. In one case, an executive at UBL said that as price changes were only permitted on three specific dates in a year in Karnataka, competitors would exchange notes and price main products similarly to "ensure that

we do not suffer huge losses as a

result of this policy.'

In its submission to the CCI, UBL said that "draconian laws and practices adopted by the states make it impossible for beer companies to compete in the ordinary course of business," highlighting the fact that the final price of their products was subject to the ap-

The CCI noted that such state policies "cannot be taken as an excuse for entering into price coordination by the parties."

Why was AB InBev not penalised?

proval of state authorities.

All three beer companies, UBL, CIPL and AB In Bev had applied for a reduction in penalty. AB InBev was given a 100 per cent reduction in penalty as the company explained the nature of the cartel and submitted evidence of email communications between key managerial personnel at an early stage in the investigation.

The final penalty of Rs 751.8 crore on UBL and Rs 120.6 crore CIPL also included reductions in penalties of 40 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, for cooperation with the investigation by the CCI.

jobs, capex remain

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BRIEFLY —

Diesel price hike

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

e-Shram portal

New Delhi: Over 1.71 crore

unorganised sector workers

are registered on e-Shram.

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

'Funding oversight of Evergrande property projects in China stepped up' to ensure homebuyers' payments

REUTERS

BEIJING, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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



Headquarters of **Evergrande Group in** Shenzhen, Guangdong **province in China.** Reuters matter has set global investors wondering if they will have to swallow large losses when a 30day grace period ends. The special accounts have

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

These include Anhui, Guizhou, Henan, Jiangsu and cities in the southern Pearl River

The custodian accounts aim

are used to complete Evergrande's housing projects, and not diverted elsewhere, such as to creditors, Caixin said. In some southern cities, such

as Zhuhai and Shenzhen, the offices of the housing regulator, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, were also involved in overseeing and reviewing fund use by Evergrande's projects, it said.

Evergrande and the housing ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

HDFC Bank to double rural presence, hire 2,500

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

products and services to MSMEs in over 550 districts. Its rural banking services extend to 1.00.000 villages. The private sector lender said it aims to double this to 2,00,000 villages and as part of this plan, it plans to hire 2.500 people more in the next 6 months.

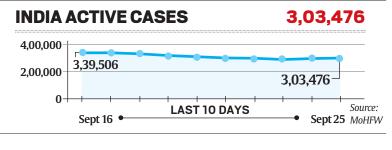
On the rural expansion strategy, Rahul Shukla, group headcommercial and rural banking, HDFCBank, said, "India's rural and semi-urban markets are underserved in credit extension. They present sustainable long-term growth opportunities for the Indian banking system."

pauses tax suit to allow Cairn to settle dispute New Delhi: A New York court has

New York court

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

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



CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD TOTAL VACCINATED IN INDIA (at least one dose) 63,08,31,085 First dose Second dose 1,50,00,000 -39,60,154 36,56,211 75,00,000 34,96,156 •-LAST 10 DAYS (daily) **COVISHIELD** COVAXIN **TOTAL DOSES** 88.3% 11.6% 85,60,81,527 (Sputnik V's 9,24,468 doses not represented in pie) DOSES ON SEPT 25 71,52,367 SEPT 24: 74,11,134 (1st doses: 42,72,481; 2nd: 31,38,653) Note: The Sept 25 figures in these graphs are based on the government updates on Sept 26 Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on September 26

TELLING NUMBERS

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

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

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

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

BIDEN' RATINGS SINCE MARCH 2021 (FOR SELECT MONTHS)

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

OTHER PRESIDENTS' RATINGS DURING FIRST YEAR

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

Source: Pew Research Center

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SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Assam's conflict over land

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

TORA AGARWALA

GUWAHATI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

What was the Sipajhar drive about?

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

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

Who were the people being evicted?

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

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

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

What do indigenous locals say?

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



inspect the remains of their homes in Dholpur. Sadiq Naqvi

Evicted villagers

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

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

Did anyone among those targeted for eviction seek legal recourse?

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

How did the eviction turn violent?

Last Monday, about 800 families were happened without resistance, locals and activists were unhappy because it was done without a "proper rehabilitation plan".

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

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

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

What is the extent of encroachment of land in Assam?

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

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

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

Is it limited to migrant communities?

No, not all of it. Some government land is often occupied by people considered indigenous to the state, especially in districts such as Tinsukia, Dibrugarh etc. The Brahma Committee's report suggested that many natives do not own land documents.

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

What about eviction drives?

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

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

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

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

EXPLAINED THE PANDEMIC

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



of specialists, exclusive insight

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

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

Is this a cause for alarm?

No, because protection against hospitalisation is still high. Ideally, a public vaccination programme should protect the population from infection, transmission, and hospitalisation (and subsequent mortality). Initial vaccine data showed high efficacy versus infection and hospitalisation. (The correlation between infection and transmission is not automatic and has to be proven. Some post-clinical trial data showed this for the current vaccines.) Even if protection against infection decreases, vaccines highly protective against hospitalisation are still beneficial because hospitalisations place the maximum burden on healthcare capacity. As long as the disease can be managed at home (and there are no lingering effects such as long Covid) then is it any worse than flu-like discomfort?

The data do show protection versus hospitalisation remains high.

What could be the explanation for the differences in effectiveness?

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

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

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

RECENT DATA ON VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS Country Main | Fully | VEversus | VEversus | Approximate

	Vaccine	vaccinated population as on Aug 31,	Symptomatic Disease		Hospitalisatio		study dates
		2021	Initial	Latest	Initial	Latest	
Israel	mRNA	60.6%	95%1	40.5%	89%1	88.0%	20 Jun '21 -
							17 Jul '21
USA	mRNA	53.0%	90%2	42% -80%	90%²	75%-90%	Initial: Mar '21 Latest: Jul' 21
UK A	AstraZeneca	64.4%	97%2	71-84%	92%2	94%	Two different studies ³

1: Initial VE is efficacy in clinical trial. Efficacy measure in clinical trials is against severe disease not hospitalization. **2:** Initial VE as measured prior to delta variant. **3:** Jan '21 - 16 May '21 for Initial data. Latest data from 17 May '21 for study versus symptomat disease. 12 Apr '21 – 4 Jun '21 for study versus hospitalisation and data was spilt into Alpha and Delta population based on genetic sequencing.

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

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

THE EXPERT

DR TUSHAR GORE's focus area is pharmaceuticals. He studied at IIT-Bombay and the University of Minnesota, and has worked at McKinsev and Novo Nordisk. He is the former MD/CEO of Resonance Laboratories, a niche pharmaceuticals manufacturer.

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

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

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

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

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

Will a third dose help?

Given that a two-dose regimen is still

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

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

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

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

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

SHAHIDJUDGE MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

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

When she came out to bat in the second innings, Yastika scored 64 runs off 69 deliveries in the Indian women team's highestever successful ODI chase.

The win snapped Australia's world record of 26 ODI wins on the trot, a streak which comprised wins over the likes of New Zealand, South Africa, and world champions England. Though the Indians had already lost the three-match series, the win in the final game on Sunday would give them a muchneeded boost. There is a Test match next week and three T20 Internationals to follow.

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

More's help

In Sunday's innings, Harish saw the result of the thousands

of throw downs he and her personal coach Santosh Chaugule would launch at the makeshift-nets at home. Former India wicketkeeper Kiran More helped her develop power-hitting.

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

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

For those aggressive strokes on Sunday she notched up nine boundaries – Harish credits More's work. At the same time, he re-



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

members the early morning sessions with his daughter when the pandemic struck last year. "The society we live in was very helpful. They moved a few vehicles around in the parking area to help us set up a makeshift batting net," he recalls. "We couldn't use the hard leather ball because it could get noisy and a lot of residents are elderly, so we practiced with tennis balls. The bounce was sudden and unpredictable, but that's what Australian pitches can be like. And you need

to have quick wrists to work in those conditions. Training with Chaugule sir really sharpened her batting reflexes, and then Kiran More's help polished it further."

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

NUMBER PLATE

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

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

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

KIRAN MORE

FORMER INDIA WICKETKEEPER

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

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

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

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

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

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

"She's quite a jovial character when she's not playing. No doubt the win today would spark something in her, but I'm sure there might be a few celebratory guitar sessions in the team hotel tonight," Gaekwad adds

BRIEF SCORES: Australia women: 264/9 in 50 overs (Ashleigh Gardner 67, Beth Mooney 52; Jhulan Goswami 3/37, Pooja Vastrakar 3/46) lost to India women: 266 for 8 in 49.3 overs (Yastika Bhatia 64, Shafali Verma 56; Annabel Sutherland 3/30).

BRIEFLY —

Mirza-Zhang win Ostrava Open

Ostrava: Sania Mirza won her first title of the season as she and her Chinese partner Shuai Zhang beat the pair of Kaitlyn Christian and Erin Routliffe in the women's doubles final of the Ostrava Open here on Sunday. The second seeded Indo-Chinese duo defeated the third seeded pair of American Christian and New Zealander Routliffe 6-3 6-2 in the summit clash in one hour and four minutes. The 34-year-old Sania and Zhang had defeated the Japanese pair 6-27-5 in the semifinals of the WTA 500 event. It was Sania's second final of the season, following a runner-up finish at the WTA 250 Cleveland event in the USA last month with Chirstina Mchale.

Johnson helps USA take huge lead

Sheboyan: Dustin Johnson helped the United States take a commanding lead in the Ryder Cup by doing something no American golfer has accomplished in over four decades- sweeping all four of his team matches. Johnson went undefeated over two days at Whistling Straits to help the US lead Europe 11-5 heading into Sunday's singles matches. He's the first American since Larry Nelson in 1979 to go 4-0 in team play. "Everything's been working for Dustin," said Collin Morikawa, who teamed with Johnson on three of those victories.

Parthiv Patel's father passes away

Mumbai: Former India wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel's father Ajaybhai died on Sunday, the cricketer informed through social media. Parthiv, 36, played 25 matches for India in which he scored 934 runs, with 71 as his best. "It is with the deepest grief and sadness, we inform the passing away of my father Mr. Ajaybhai Bipinchandra Patel. He left for his heavenly abode on 26th September 2021. We request you to keep him in your thoughts and prayers. May his soul rest in peace. Om Namah Shivay," tweeted Parthiv.

AGENCIES

Oleksandr the great

Ukrainian dethrones world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua with a stunning display in London

MORGAN CAMPBELL SEPTEMBER 26

ANTHONY JOSHUA needed a knockout.

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

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

Late in the 12th, Usyk wobbled Joshua with a left hand, and a two-handed flurry of punches sent Joshua to the ropes as the final bell approached. That emphatic last round carried Usyk to

a unanimous decision win in a fight most observers expected him to lose. The judges scored the bout 117-112, 116-112, and 115-113, all for Usvk The outcome quieted the roughly 70,000 spectators present, most of whom supported

undisputed cruiserweight champion who moved up to heavyweight in 2019. "The fight went exactly the way I excted it to go," said Usyk, who is now 19-0 There were a couple of moments where

Anthony pushed me, but nothing special." Joshua entered the bout with natural advantages in size — he stands 6-foot-6, compared with 6-foot-3 for Usyk, and at 240 pounds he outweighed the challenger by

more than 18 pounds. He also held heavyweight championships from four different boxing governing bodies: the World Boxing Association, the World Boxing Organization, the International Boxing Federation, and the International Boxing Organization.

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

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



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

Joshua entered the bout with natural advantages in size - he stands 6-foot-6, compared with 6-foot-3 for Usyk, and at 240 pounds he outweighed the challenger by more than 18 pounds.

Joshua won rounds mid-fight by relying on his jab and body punching, dialing back his power to increase his accuracy, and wearing Usyk down. By the 10th, Usyk had red marks under each eye, and a divot in his right eyebrow. Joshua's right eye had also swollen, making him an easier target for Usyk's overhand lefts.

Leading up to the fight, Joshua and his backers framed the event as a celebration the first stadium show and most-attended boxing event in England since the coronavirus pandemic began. NYT



Heavyweight division wide open

Oleksandr Usyk's world-title win over Anthony Joshua means the latter's long-anticipated clash with fellow Brit Tyson Fury is back on hold. Earlier this year, the Joshua-Fury superfight for the WBA, WBO, IBF and WBC championships looked closer than ever, In May, an arbi-

tration hearing, however, ruled that Fury had to fight American Deontay Wilder for the third time, prompting Joshua to prepare for mandatory challenger Usyk. Minutes after the defeat on Sunday, Joshua was talking about evoking the rematch clause. He had done so against Andy Ruiz Jr, when he lost his belts to the Mexican in 2019 but reclaimed them six months later. Fury defends his WBC title against Wilder on October 9. The first fight between the two ended in a draw, the second was a one-sided, seventhround stoppage for Fury. The 33-year-old is the favourite to retain, and if he does, a fight with a title-less Joshua wouldn't make sense. The quest, then, will be to pit Usyk against Fury to give the four-belt boxing era its first undisputed heavyweight champion.

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

Federer says he's in a good space but not rushing back

REUTERS

SEPTEMBER 26

Roger Federer says he is "in a really good place" with his recovery from last month's knee surgery but clarified that he would not rush into returning to court.

The 40-year-old Federer, who shares the men's record of 20 major titles with Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic, had two knee operations in 2020 that kept him out of the tour for more than a year.

He returned to action in March but injured the knee again during the grass court season and said he needed more surgery in order to resume playing.

"It was a tough process to take that decision, just because I already had couple of knee surgeries last year," Federer told American former world number one Jim Courier in an interview at the Laver Cup on

"I was really unhappy with how things went at Wimbledon. I was just nowhere near where I wanted to be to play at the top, top level. But I tried my best and at the end, at some point, too much is too much. Now I've iust got to take it step by step.' Federer reached the quarter-finals at the

All England club but lost in straight sets to Poland's Hubert Hurkacz, failing to win a game in the third set.

The Swiss, who is a co-creator of the Laver Cup, made a late decision to travel to Boston for the fourth edition of the exhibition event featuring Team Europe and Team World.Federer has been seen moving around on crutches and has received thunderous applause from spectators at the TD Garden arena during the three-day event concluding on Sunday.

Step by step

"I've got to first walk again properly, run properly and then do the sidesteps and all the agility work and then eventually I've got to be back on the tennis court," he said.

"But it's going to take me a few more months and then we'll see how things are at some point next year. I've got to take my time. I don't want to rush into anything at this point. This is also for my life. I want to make sure I can do everything I want to do later on. There's no rush with anything, so I'm actually in a really good place. I think the worst is behind me. I'm really happy."

RUSSIAN GRAND PRIX

Hamilton wins milestone 100th race, wrests back lead from Verstappen

ASSOCIATED PRESS SOCHI, SEPTEMBER 16

TO WIN his 100th Formula One race, Lewis Hamilton drew on much of his vast experience from the first 99.

Hamilton used his overtaking skills, strategic thinking and driving skills in the rain to fight back from seventh place on the first lap to a landmark victory to retake the championship lead from Max Verstappen.

Hamilton was chasing Lando Norris for the lead when the rain started late in the race. Hamilton heeded his team's advice to stop for intermediate tires - though he was reluctant to break off chasing Norris — but Norris stayed out on slick tires and paid the price when he slid off the track and let Hamilton through.

"It's taken a long time to get to 100 and at times, I wasn't sure it would come," Hamilton said. It was Hamilton's fifth win of the season and his first since the British Grand Prix in July. "It's a magical moment," Hamilton added. "I could only have dreamed of still be-

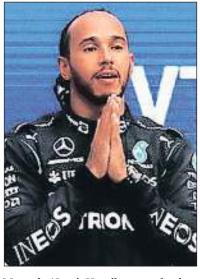
ing here and having this opportunity to win these races and get to drive with such phenomenal talents this late in my career.'

Hamilton turned Verstappen's five-point championship lead into a two-point lead of his own after the Dutch driver finished second after a dramatic drive from last on the grid. Carlos Sainz led the race early on and finished third for Ferrari.

The race had plenty of echoes of

After his tough start, the British driver started moving up with a tough overtake around the outside of Fernando Alonso. They were fractious teammates and title rivals when Hamilton was a rookie in 2007. The chaotic wet finish also brought back memories from Hamilton's long record of victories in the rain.

Verstappen started last after a penalty for an engine change in his Red Bull but sliced through the field and had Hamilton in sight by the halfway stage. Hamilton's Mercedes worked better on the hard tires in the second half of the race and Verstappen's charge seemed to have stalled when he was over-



Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton now leads the championship race by two points from Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

taken by the Alpine of Alonso and stuck in seventh.

But then the rain came and Verstappen switched to intermediate tires early, allowing him to claim an unexpected podium finish and limit the damage to his hopes of a first title. "We didn't lose so many points today, so that's really, really good," Verstappen told his team over the radio. One key question for the rest of the season is whether Hamilton too will need to use an extra engine and take a penalty.

Verstappen's verdict on his title chances? "Fifty-fifty."

Hamilton too predicted a close fight. "Undoubtedly, it's going to be tough. I think for the two-thirds of the season so far (Red Bull) had the edge," he said. "However, it's been difficult with all sorts of things, curveballs sent to both of us and our teams. It's still everything to play for in these next races."

It doesn't take much rain to make a difference in Sochi, where the flat track means water builds up on the surface.

Norris finally finished seventh after his failed gamble to stay on dry tires despite warnings from his team about how slippery the track was becoming. If not for the rain, Hamilton said, "it would have been tough to get past Lando. He had great pace." Norris had been aiming to give McLaren back-toback wins after Daniel Ricciardo took victory at the last race in Italy when Hamilton and Verstappen collided.

Hamilton has now won the Russian Grand Prix on five of eight occasions, and his victory Sunday continues a clean sweep of victories in Russia for Mercedes.

Ricciardo narrowly missed the podium for McLaren in fourth and Hamilton's teammate Valtteri Bottas was fifth after an eventful race for the Finn. Mercedes' decision to swap the engine in Bottas' car and take a penalty prompted speculation the team was deploying Bottas to hold up Verstappen, something the team denied. Regardless, it didn't take long for Verstappen to swoop past Bottas.

river's championship standings: 1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 246.5 points, Max Verstappen (Red Bull) 244.5, V Bottas (Mercedes) 151, Lando Norris (McLaren) 139, Sergio Perez (Red Bull) 120.

Third-place finish for Daruvala

New Delhi: India's Jehan Daruvala capped off his weekend in Russia with a third place finish in the feature race of the Formula 2 Championship here on Sunday. Jehan, who was second fastest in the qualifying, dropped a place at the start to settle for the final podium position. It was also his fourth podium this season. The Red Bull junior driver remains seventh in the standings with 96 points. One of the two sprint races were scrapped this weekend due to wet weather. Jehan finished out of points in the sole sprint race held. Oscar Piastri took his second consecutive feature race win and extended his lead in the drivers' standings with a commanding drive at the Sochi Autodrom. PTI

Glenn's Max Impact

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

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

SANDIPG

SEPTEMBER 26

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

Maxwell's perfect night

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

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

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

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

Patel's dream night

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

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

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



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

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

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

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

Glorious drivers

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

	POIN [®]	TS T	AB	LE	
	M	W	L	NRR	Pts
CSK	10	8	2	+1.069	16
DC	10	8	2	+0.711	16
RCB	10	6	4	-0.359	12
KKR	10	4	6	+0.322	8
PBKS	10	4	6	-0.271	8
RR	9	4	5	-0.319	8
MI	10	4	5	-0.551	8
SRH	9	1	8	-0.637	2

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

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

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

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

Jadeja's allround brilliance

There's a refreshing change in KKR's approach in this leg of the tournament. Morgan's team is now playing fearless cricket. The defeat not withstanding, they were very good.

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

The left-arm spinner went on to bowl a game-turning spell – 21 runs from four overs, including Tripathi's wicket. Thakur castled Russell in his second spell and returned with 2/20 from four overs. KKR still managed to post 171/6, but they didn't have Jadeja's allround quality in their ranks.

BRIEF SCORES: CSK 172 for 8 (du Plessis

43, Gaikwad 40; Narine 3-41) beat KKR 171 for 6 (Tripathi 45, Rana 37; Thakur 2-20) by two wickets

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER -

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

Sir-Lord guarding Kings' galaxy



'Lord Shardul' and 'Sir Jadeja' bowled four overs in the middle in tandem and gave away just 20 runs. iplt20.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mighty Angry Rahul Chahar

With his braided locks, eye-piercing stare, and penchant for snarls and verbals, Rahul Chahar has all the requisites of a pantomime villain. He clearly was one on Sunday evening. He didn't take kindly to KS Bharat slog-sweeping him after he had beaten him with his first ball and then induced a leading edge. In his next over of an intense game, Virat Kohli flayed him for a four before Hardik Pandya dropped a difficult catch at

Compounding his woes, Bharat smacked him over deep square-leg. Chahar was furious, with himself and the world. But the very next ball, he undid Bharat with a clever change of pace, and he vented out all his anger. Eyeballs jumping out of the socket, veins popping on his neck, he frenziedly kept punching the air and even punched at the gloves of wicket-keeper Quinton de Kock. He almost charged toward Bharat for a send-off, before he was whisked away by Rohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah. A stormy petrel so to say.

Gill-Dhoni play Tom & Jerry

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

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

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

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

Arsenal's fast start secures derby delight

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON, SEPTEMBER 26

ARSENAL STRUCK three times inside 35 min-

utes to beat Tottenham 3-1 on Sunday and move above their north London rivals in the Premier League table. Just three weeks ago Spurs sat top and

Arsenal bottom after their worst start to a league season for 67 years. However, the Gunners have been rejuve-

nated by six summer signings and the return to fitness of a number of key players. Emile Smith Rowe opened the floodgates by taking advantage of some awful Tottenham

defending on 12 minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

move reminiscent of Arsenal's glory days un-

der Arsene Wenger.

Tottenham claimed in vain for a foul on Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg as Granit Xhaka turned onto Aaron Ramsdale's pass out from the back. Aubameyang then flicked the ball through

for Smith Rowe to charge in on the Spurs goal before having the presence to turn back and pick out his captain for a cool finish. The Tottenham Hotspur stadium played

The Tottenham Hotspur stadium played host to Anthony Joshua losing his world heavy-weight boxing titles to Oleksandr Usyk on Saturday. And Nuno's men were dealt a knockout blow before the break.

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

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

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

IIC RC

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANARC. NO.61024/TSIIC/E-AUCTION/PH-II/2021 DATE: 26.09.2021



ADDENDUM

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

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

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

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

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

For further clarification call on +91 95738 14737 | +91 88844 06412 or log on to TSIIC.TELANGANA.GOV.IN

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

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

Chandigarh

vol XLV No. 44 RNI Regn. No. 31172/1977. Printed and Published by Mukesh Kumar Bhatnagar on behalf of The Indian Express Private Limited (Former name: - The Indian Express Limited) and printed at IE Press, C-5, Institutional Area, Sector 6, Panchkula 134 109, Haryana and published at SCO 2441-42, First Floor, above Jagdish Jewellers, Sector 22-C, Chandigarh. Editor (Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh): Manraj Grewal Sharma* (Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act). Chairman of the Board: Viveck Goenka, Chief Editor: Raj Kamal Jha, Editor: Unni Rajen Shanker. Copyright: The Indian Express Private Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction of any manner, electronics or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior permission is prohibited. Editorial & Advertising Office: C-5, Institutional Area, Sector 6, Panchkula 134 109 (Haryana) Phone: 5024420, Fax: Editorial 5024426. The Indian Express®