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WEST BENGAL



YECHURY IS CPI(M) GEN SECY AGAIN; BIMAN DROPPED FROM POLITBURO

TMC LEADER'S SON HELD FOR RAPE & MURDER OF TEEN P4

INSIDE

COVID NOT GONE, COULD SHOW UP ANYTIME: MODI PAGE 3

HOUSE LEADER ELECTION TODAY

Shehbaz Sharif set to be Pakistan PM, Imran party members may quit House

Freedom struggle begins again against foreign conspiracy: Imran

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 10

PAKISTAN'S OPPOSITION leader Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday nominated himself for the post of prime minister after the ouster of Imran Khan, whose party threatened to withdraw its lawmakers from Parliament if the former Punjab chief minister was allowed to contest the election on Monday.

The process of electing the new leader of the House began on Sunday after Khan was removed from office through a no-confidence vote, becoming the



Opposition supporters celebrate in Karachi on Sunday. AP

first prime minister in Pakistan's history to be sent home after losing the House's trust.

While the joint Opposition — a rainbow coalition of socialist, liberal and radically religious parties — agreed on 70-year-old

Sharif for the prime minister's post, Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) named ex-foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi as its candidate.

The nomination papers of **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

India-Pak ties may see 'diplomatic opening'

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

EXPLAINED WITH SHEHBAZ Sharif set to be the next Pakistan Prime Minister, New Delhi is watching the developments in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore with "cautious optimism" about a headway in bilateral ties. Top sources said the change in regime may offer a "diplomatic opening". According to sources in the strategic establishment, the implications may be far-reaching.

■ Known to be the Pakistan

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



Army's candidate, Imran Khan's government was widely referred **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Ukraine & 2+2 in background, Modi and Biden to hold virtual meet today

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will hold a virtual meeting with US President Joe Biden on Monday, the Ministry of External Affairs said even as the White House stated that Biden will continue "close consultations on the consequences of Russia's brutal war against Ukraine and mitigating its destabilizing impact on global food supply and commodity markets".

The meeting is expected to take place at 8.30 pm IST, which will be followed by the 2+2 meeting between the Foreign and Defence ministers of the two countries in Washington DC at 11.30 pm IST.

After the 2+2 meetings, involving Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and their US counterparts, Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin and



The meet will be followed by the 2+2 dialogue.

Secretary of State Antony J Blinken, the two sides are likely to sign pacts on cooperation in the education and space sectors.

The two Union ministers will also hold separate bilateral meetings. Jaishankar is also likely to meet Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, while Rajnath Singh will travel to Hawaii, the headquarters of US Indo-Pacific Command after his visit to Washington DC.

In a statement issued Sunday on the Modi-Biden meeting, the **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Govt plans database to mark countries with overstaying nationals

ANISHA DUTTA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

THE UNION government wants to identify countries whose residents tend to overstay in India and is considering creating a database of foreign visitors to help with this process, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

According to sources, the government is planning to use Artificial Intelligence to analyse this database; the resulting list of countries is expected to help Indian Missions put in place checks while issuing visas to foreign citizens. The Home Ministry's Foreigners Division, the External Affairs Ministry, and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) are to be involved in the exercise, it is learnt.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had brought up the idea during a conference of Director Generals of Police (DGPs) and Inspector Generals of Police (IGPs) in Lucknow in November 2021, an official said.

Last month, this plan was

again discussed with DGPs and IGPs in a meeting called by the Ministry of Home Affairs, according to officials aware of the development. The action points for this meeting came from the Prime Minister, they said.

"(At last month's meeting), it was discussed to create a database for superior monitoring of people overstaying in India past their issued visas and identifying the regions where they come from. In countries like Bangladesh, India has more than a dozen visa facilitation centres but biometric scanning has to be strengthened across all centres for sufficient monitoring so that the information can be shared with our Indian Missions and other agencies," said an official, requesting anonymity.

In December 2021, the Karnataka High Court had suggested to the Centre to make changes in the law governing grant of visa to foreign nationals to check instances of foreigners staying in India despite expiry of visa.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Two out of five new companies opted for 15% tax in 2019-20

1,244 new firms that took concessional tax regime earned just Rs 35 cr in FY20

AANCHAL MAGAZINE & PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

TWO OUT OF every five new domestic manufacturing companies incorporated in 2019-20 (April-March) opted for the 15 per cent concessional corporate tax rate announced by the Union government in September 2019. These companies, numbering 1,244 in 2019-20, cumulatively

accounted for just Rs 35.13 crore in total income, government data showed.

For 2019-20, the number of new manufacturing companies that filed corporate tax returns has been taken as 3,219 (the difference between 1,36,909 manufacturing companies that filed corporate tax returns for 2019-20 and 1,33,691 companies that filed returns for 2018-19).

The regime was introduced **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



Sri Lankans protest in Colombo on Sunday. AP

REPORT, PAGE 10

Anger in Rajapaksa stronghold: Voted for them, see what they did

EXPRESS IN SRI LANKA

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
TANGALLE (HAMBANTOTA), APRIL 10

IN THE small fishing town of Tangalle, 200 km from Colombo, Carlton, the ancestral home of Sri Lanka's ruling family, used to be

thronged by adoring visitors whenever Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa visited.

The mood has changed. "In 2009, when he finished the war against the LTTE and came here, we were proud. We went to Carlton and like we do for the Buddha, we did the same for him," said Roshan, a tuk-tuk driver waiting for passengers in the local market.

"But if I meet him now, I will say, 'thank you very much for finishing the war, but if you can't do

anything now, please hand over the job to someone better'," said the 39-year-old father of one.

Explaining the dollar squeeze that has led to crippling shortages of essential commodities and an unaffordable rise in prices, Roshan said: "When I have 2 kg of rice at home, and 1 kg gets over, I know I have to buy 1 kg to replace it. But they waited till all the dollars were finished."

Until a few months ago, it would have been difficult, if not **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

INSIDE



COMMUNAL CLASHES IN GUJARAT, BENGAL, MP TOWNS

'STIFLES CRITICISM OF GOVT': 14 QUIT AUSSIE CENTRE PAGE 3

RUPSACHAKRABORTY
MUMBAI, APRIL 10

ON MARCH 25, Kaliprasad Ramlakhan, 36, was rushed to Mumbai's JJ Hospital, the largest state-run hospital in Maharashtra, after being bitten by a dog. As it did not have even basic medicines like TT injections and antibiotics like Amoxicillin, his brother had to

go and queue up at a private chemist shop nearby.

"There were no medicines in the hospital. It refused to give me even a rabies injection from their stocks, although they obliged when I pleaded," said Ramlakhan, who was running a high fever and had to wait outside the hospital. It is another matter that JJ Hospital gets over 30 dog bite cases daily for treatment.

Ramlakhan's case is not an

isolated one. With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, the footfall of patients in the OPD and emergency sections of government hospitals across Maharashtra dropped by nearly 70 per cent, as per the state's public health department. Now, with the flattening of the pandemic curve, these hospitals are flooded with non-Covid patients. For instance, the number of patients visiting JJ hospital

daily has almost doubled to 1,100 since February this year from 600 during 2020-21. A senior hospital doctor said, "Most patients refrained from visiting hospitals during the pandemic. Now, the patients with more severe complications are rushing to hospitals. To meet the demand, we have also added beds."

Maharashtra's nodal official body for centralised purchase of **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

WORLD



U.S. COMMITS TO ARMS SUPPLY AS BATTLE LOOMS IN EAST UKRAINE
'THE EAGLE HAS LANDED' AUTHOR JACK HIGGINS DIES AT 92 PAGE 10

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

RITU SHARMA
AHMEDABAD, APRIL 10

"THIS IS a ball... that is a tree," Pooja Goyal explains, holding up a picture book for her students. Himanshi Ninama, 12, looks on quizzically. For the Class 7 student of the Ekalavya residential school in Ambaji, Gujarat, and her friends, the shift from the Gujarati *dado* to ball and from *vruksh* to tree is as exciting as it is baffling.

Himanshi, a Bhil tribal from Bhloda taluka of Sabarkantha district, joined the school a year ago, when she was in Class 6. "I

speak Bhil at home, but I learnt Gujarati after I came here. Now we are learning English. It's scary, but also a lot of fun... Sometimes I wonder if I can learn all of this," she says.

The transition that Himanshi is part of is on account of the Centre mandating all 375 tribal schools in the country — also known as the Eklavya Model Residential Schools — to switch from regional state school boards to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

"The idea behind asking all Ekalavya schools to compulsorily affiliate to CBSE is to help them adhere to common norms and

academic standards," said Asit Gopal, Commissioner of the National Educational Society for Tribal Students or NESTS, an autonomous body set up by the Centre in 2019 to facilitate a more centralised system of administration for the Eklavya schools.

Ekalavya schools are funded by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, but administered locally by state governments and affiliated to the state school boards, with the regional language as medium of instruction.

Of the 35 Ekalavya schools in Gujarat, 25 are migrating to CBSE, while the others are relatively new and already affiliated



Students during an additional English class at the Eklavya Model Residential School in Ambaji. Nirmal Harindran

to the board. Gujarat has the third highest number of Ekalavya schools, only behind Chhattisgarh (71) and Madhya Pradesh (63).

As a result of this board migration, most Eklavya schools also have to change their medium of instruction since the CBSE allows its affiliated schools to only use Hindi or English as medium of instruction. All Ekalavya schools in Gujarat have opted for English medium from the new academic year, an official said. To begin with, the transition will be implemented in Classes 6, 7 and 8.

Back at the Ambaji school,

teacher Goyal is now translating simple sentences from Gujarati to English. Every day, her batch of 58 students waits eagerly for Goyal, their new English teacher hired specifically to handhold the students through this transition.

The school, located on a hilllock nearly 3 km from the temple town of Ambaji, has 448 students enrolled from Classes 6-12, most from underprivileged families.

So far, the transition from Gujarati medium to English has had its fair share of challenges. When Goyal was hired in December, she was told that the students did not know English

and that she would have to start with the alphabets. "I had to begin with A-B-C-D and cursive writing. I would bring kindergarten-level books for students of Classes 6 and 7," she says.

With preparations for the switch initiated only late November, school principal Girish Patel has had to hit the ground running. He has divided the daily schedule into two halves — the first when regular classes in Gujarati are held, and the second for the English bridge course.

Two months on, there has been some progress. Goyal's students, a total of 113 in Classes 6 **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



India-Pak ties

While New Delhi has been in and out of Islamabad's political discourse, Khan praised India for

Khan, who came to power in 2018 with promises to create a 'Naya Pakistan', was dogged by claims of economic mismanagement and his government battled depleting foreign exchange re-

Database

As per the current norms,

In the gunfight that lasted for several hours, two policemen and a CRPF personnel were also injured. They are reported to be stable.

On Tuesday, in a shoot-and-

Dr Pallavi Saple, Dean, JJ hospital said, "Currently, we are procuring the medicines at the local level to handle the shortage. We have given the list of required medicines to Haffkine. We are hopeful that we will get the medicines within the next 15 days." Also, she

Modi, Biden

MEA said: "The two leaders will review ongoing bilateral co-operation and exchange views on recent developments in South Asia, the Indo-Pacific region and global issues of mutual interest. The virtual meeting will enable both sides to continue their regular and high-level engagement aimed at further strengthening the bilateral Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership."

The conversation at the high-

Under the new regime introduced in September 2019, a tax rate of 15 per cent was announced under Section 115BAB for newly incorporated domestic companies, which make fresh investment by March 31, 2023, for manufacturing, production, research

Corporate tax collections rose to Rs 7.11 lakh crore in 2021-22 as against Rs 4.58 lakh crore in previous fiscal. "The corporate tax return filing for this year is at 9.86 lakh crore which was 9.24 lakh crore last year and the growth of over 60,000, it also tells a tale. Corporate tax collections surge has also happened due to these new filings...so those numbers also when crunched later will give us an idea as to the increase in corporate tax collections through those returns also," Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman JB Mohapatra said at the briefing.

EXPRESS NETWORK



TUSSLE APART

THE UNION government is currently at loggerheads with IIM-Rohtak Director Dheeraj Sharma over his appointment to the post in 2017. Sharma is accused of concealing his academic credentials and being ineligible for the job. The latter has been acknowledged by the government in court and it has even issued a showcause notice to Sharma over it, which he has further challenged in court. Even as he takes on the Centre in court, it was interesting to see Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar accept Sharma's invite to attend the IIM-Rohtak convocation ceremony held on Saturday. Incidentally, in his speech during the event, Khattar said Union Home Minister Amit Shah was first scheduled to attend the convocation. But since Shah had to cancel his visit last minute, he personally asked him to attend instead, the Chief Minister said.

THE EVICTION

WITH THE Directorate of Estates last week sending an eviction notice to All India Congress Committee (AICC) for vacating an accommodation — C-II/109 — allotted to it in Chanakyapuri in New Delhi where Congress MP Rajeev Gowda is currently residing, the buzz was that the government would soon be eyeing the Congress headquarter at 24 Akbar Road as well. But sources have confirmed that no eviction notice will be sent for now to the opposition party. The Congress meanwhile has told the Directorate of Estates that Gowda will vacate the bungalow by April 14.

SURPRISE MOVE

THE MINISTRY of Education has given IIT Khargapur Director Prof Virendra Kumar Tewari additional charge of the IIT Bhubaneswar campus. Prof R V Raja Kumar, who was heading IIT Bhubaneswar, was on extension. It was widely expected that Prof Kumar will be relieved only after a full-time Director is appointed as his successor. Towards that end, interviews have been conducted and a successor has nearly been finalised, sources said. The move to replace Prof Kumar with an in-charge director has come as a surprise for many.

Barred from temple, dancer to perform at CPI(M) event

Thiruvananthapuram: Two weeks after being barred from performing at the Koodalmanikyam temple at Irinjalakuda town in Thrissur district for being a non-Hindu, Bharatanatyam exponent Mansiya V P would perform in the temple town on Monday at a venue organised by DYFI, the youth wing of CPI(M).

"I am performing as an artiste, not as a token protest against the

denial of venue for me at the temple. But DYFI wants to give a message to society at large that art has no religion...," Mansiya said.

Mansiya, a PhD research scholar in Bharatanatyam, had earlier faced the ire and boycott of Islamic clerics for being a performing artiste of classical dance forms despite being born and brought up as a Muslim. She, later, abandoned Islam.

ENS

VIOLENCE DURING RAM NAVAMI PROCESSIONS

10 houses burnt, many hurt in MP city; curfew imposed

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, APRIL 10

AT LEAST 10 houses were set ablaze and more than two dozen people, including Superintendent of Police (SP) Siddharth Choudhary, were injured in clashes that erupted during Ram Navami procession in various areas of Khargone in Madhya Pradesh on Sunday, forcing the administration to impose curfew in some pockets of the city.

According to Khargone District Collector Anugraha P, the first incident of stone pelting was reported around 5 pm, when the Ram Navami procession set out from Talab Chowk locality and had barely moved about 500 metres. The police resorted to lathi

charge and fired teargas shells to control the situation.

According to sources, the clash broke out near Talab Chowk mosque when some people opposed the provocative songs being played as part of the procession. Videos of the incident showed a mob pelting stones at the mosque and homes close to it. The police are seen discharging the mob. When the incident broke out, BJP leader Kapil Mishra was also in Khargone to attend the Shriram Janmotsav Shobha Yatra procession. Sharing photos on Twitter, he wrote, "Na Musa na Burhan, Bas Jai Shree Ram. Hamari Ram Navami yatra Khargone, Madhya Pradesh, me shuru."

The Collector said said the Talab Chowk clash led to clashes in Qazipura and other parts of the

Will fight Himachal polls under Jai Ram's leadership: Nadda

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, APRIL 10

PUTTING AN end to all speculation, BJP president J P Nadda Sunday said the party had no plans to replace Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, adding that the forthcoming state Assembly polls will be contested under his leadership.

Nadda said this when asked about Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia's claim that Union minister Anurag Thakur will replace Jai Ram Thakur as the state CM. "There is no possibility of replacing Jai Ram Thakur," he said. He added: "Under his leadership, the government is doing well. The government will run under his leadership even in the future."

To another question, Nadda said none of the state ministers will be changed. He, however,

Cong names its Uttarakhand state unit chief, CLP leader

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, APRIL 10

A MONTH after Congress was defeated by the BJP in the Uttarakhand Assembly elections, the party's central leadership on Sunday announced their pick for the posts of Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president and Congress Legislative Party (CLP) leader.

According to the announcement, Karan Mahara, a two-time MLA from the Ranikhet seat, is the new PCC president while senior Congress leader and Bajpur MLA Yashpal Arya, who returned to the party just before the elections, was named the new CLP leader. Mahara won the election from Ranikhet in 2007 and 2017, but lost to BJP candidate Pramod Nainwal this year.

Meanwhile, Bhuwan Chander Kapri, who defeated CM Pushkar Singh Dhami from the Khatima seat, was named as deputy CLP leader.

"Congress president has appointed President of Uttarakhand Pradesh Congress Committee, and Leader & Deputy Leader of Uttarakhand Congress Legislature Party with immediate effect," read a statement issued and signed by party General Secretary K C Venugopal.



BJP president J P Nadda and Himachal Pradesh CM Jai Ram Thakur

said around 10-15 per cent sitting BJP MLAs may not get ticket in the elections.

"BJP is a dynamic party. Considering the ground reality, decisions are taken here. In BJP, ten per cent tickets have always been changed... Ten to 15 per cent BJP MLAs did not get ticket in the UP Assembly elections and it is likely to happen here too," he said.

Asked if BJP will enforce conditions like one-family, one-ticket rule and if it will give a ticket to former CM Prem Kumar Dhumal, he



Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel at the 'Seemadarshan' project function. *Nirmal Harindran*

Border tourism project will create 5 lakh jobs, says Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BANASKANTHA, APRIL 10

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah, who inaugurated the 'Nadabet India-Pak Border' tourism project in Banaskantha in Gujarat on Sunday, said that the pilot project will provide employment to over 5 lakh youth in the next 10 years.

The Nadabet India-Pak Border Darshan' project has been started jointly by the Gujarat government's Tourism Department and the Border Security Force (BSF), where tourists can get acquainted with stories of BSF personnel and also engage in a number of sports and recreational activities.

"I pay my homage to the vision of the prime minister Narendra Modi for he had come up with the idea of a multidimensional project for Nadabet. I see a vision that after ten years, will give employment to at least 5 lakh youth in

evaded a direct reply.

Regarding the demand for restoration of old pension scheme, Nadda said that resolving the problem was a priority for the BJP.

Nadda also exuded confidence that the BJP will emerge as one of the main political parties in Punjab. He said the BJP used to contest only 23 of 117 Assembly seats in Punjab as a junior alliance partner but in the recently held elections there, it contested on 68 seats as a senior alliance partner. "So, the BJP will emerge as a major ideological alternative in Punjab in the next elections," Nadda added.

The Assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh are scheduled for later this year. Nadda said that the state government and the party organisation were working in "full coordination". He also said that the party will return to power in the state.

WITHPTINPUTS

Covid not gone, could show up anywhere: PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, APRIL 10

DESCRIBING COVID as a "bahurupiya bimari" (multi-faced disease), Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned on Sunday that the "danger" is not gone and could show up anywhere at any time.

Delivering a virtual address to mark the 14th foundation day of the temple of Umiya Mata, the patron deity of the Kadva Patidars in Gujarat's Junagadh, Modi also issued an appeal for the adoption of natural farming, investment in water harvesting, and eradication of malnutrition among children and women.

He also suggested that every district should have 75 "amrit sarovar" (ponds) by creating them or repairing existing ones before August 15, 2023, so that the flag-hoisting for Independence Day is done from these locations.

Referring to Covid, the Prime Minister said: "See how big a danger this Corona was. And we still do not believe that this danger has gone... somewhere it raises its ugly head. Nobody knows when and where it will show up... this ailment is multi-faced..."

He said over 185 crore Covid vaccine doses have been admin-



PM Narendra Modi addresses the 14th Foundation Day celebration at Umiya Mata Temple in Gujarat through video conferencing. *ANI*

istered across the country. "When people across the world hear (about the vaccine doses), they are surprised. How is it possible? It was because of the co-operation of all of you, the coming community," Modi said.

The Prime Minister described his call for natural farming as part of a "major campaign to save mother Earth". "As the Chief Minister (Bhupendra Patel) said, this land is our mother and I am a devotee of Umiyadham so I have no reason to cause pain to Mother Earth. Do we give medicines to our mother without any reason?

Do we give them blood without any need? We know what our mother needs, so why not for Mother Earth. Won't she get frustrated? Due to this we are facing so many problems," he said.

Recalling former chief minister, the late Keshubhai Patel, in this context, Modi said: "The way Keshubhai (Patel) and I had worked so hard for water, today Bhupendra Patel is working for Mother Earth. To save Mother Earth, it is my special appeal to the people of Gujarat and especially to devotees of Umiya Maa."

Linking his call to resolving the scarcity of water faced by Gujarat, Modi said: "In the past, people were living in drought and scarcity of water but since the construction of check dams, drip irrigation and Sauni Yojana, things have changed... We are slowly coming out of this problem because of a mass movement... But still... we should be doing water harvesting."

Speaking about the issue of female foeticide, especially in the north Gujarat districts, Modi said: "In Gujarat and in Ujjhna, the number of girls kept declining against boys and once I gathered my supporters and asked them to promise... There is now an awareness about not killing the girl child in the mother's womb."

Maya slams Rahul: Congress can't set its house in order, intruding into our affairs

LALMANI VERMA
LUCKNOW, APRIL 10

BSP PRESIDENT Mayawati on Sunday rejected senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's claims that his party had reached out to her for an alliance ahead of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections and even offered her the chief minister's post but she did not respond because she was under pressure from the Centre's investigating agencies.

Addressing the media in Lucknow, Mayawati suggested Rahul Gandhi first "look at his own house that is in disarray" and said that the Congress leader's remark showed his party's "inferiority complex, casteist mindset and hatred for Dalits".

"Meri party ke baare me kuch bhi kehne se pehle unhe apne khud ka ghar bhi dekh lena chahiye jo bikhra pada hai. Jiska BJP bhi khub faayda utha rahi hai (Before making any such remarks against my party, he should first look at his



BSP chief Mayawati in Lucknow, Sunday. *PTI*

own house, which is in disarray. Even the BJP is taking advantage of that," Mayawati said, adding that it will be better if Rahul Gandhi directed his concern on his own party rather than others.

On Rahul's remark about sending messages to her for forming an alliance in the UP polls and offering her the CM's post, Mayawati said, "This is completely false and fact-less. There is no truth in this. In fact, every opposition party should review the deadly results of the UP Assembly polls. But such baseless remarks

should not be made."

She also said that the Congress should think 100 times before commenting on the BSP.

Mayawati added that the Congress' own record of its political fight against the BJP has been poor and wavering. She said the Congress party does not appear to be fighting against the BJP and Rashtriya Swamsevaka Sangh (RSS) even when the ruling party looked eager to finish the Constitution and democracy in the country by making China like one-party system from panchayat to Parliament and making the country "Congress-mukt" (free from Congress) and "vipaksh vihin" (without the Opposition).

Mayawati said that the Congress should answer why it could not stop BJP from coming to power when it contested the UP polls in alliance with Samajwadi Party in 2017.

Mayawati accused the Congress of "using every disgusting tactic to weaken and finish the BSP".

One killed as groups clash in Gujarat: police

ONE PERSON died and several others, including policemen, were injured as members of two communities clashed during Ram Navami processions in Khambhat town of Anand district in Central Gujarat and Himmatnagar town of Sabarkantha district of North Gujarat on Sunday.

Shops and vehicles were set ablaze as the groups clashed and threw stones at each other even as police resorted to lathi charge and lobbing of tear gas shells.

According to police, the body of an unidentified man was found in Khambhat town of Anand late Sunday after the clashes. In Himmatnagar, several persons, including four policemen, were injured in stone-pelting.

Gujarat Home Minister Harsh Sanghavi called an emergency meeting with senior police officials late at night.

ENS

Northeast groups oppose Centre's Hindi move

TORA AGARWALA & JIMMY LEIVON
NEW DELHI, IMPHAL, APRIL 10

SEVERAL NORTHEAST-BASED outfits — including Assam's apex literary body, the Asom Sahitya Sabha and Manipur's Meitei Erol Eyek Loinashillon Apunba Lup, a group established to safeguard Manipuri manuscripts and language — have opposed the Centre's proposal to make Hindi compulsory till Class 10 in the region and urged the government to reconsider its move.

"The Union Home Minister should have instead taken steps to develop Assamese and other indigenous languages. Such steps spell a bleak future for Assamese and all indigenous languages in the Northeast. The Sabha demands that the decision to make Hindi mandatory till Class 10 be revoked," the Asom Sahitya Sabha said in a statement released on Saturday.

Earlier this week, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who chairs the Parliamentary Official Language committee, had announced that Hindi would be made compulsory in all eight

EXPLAINED

The number game

IN THE Northeast region, Hindi is compulsorily taught till Class 8 except in Arunachal Pradesh, where the language is the lingua franca, it is a mandatory subject till Class 10. In Tripura, Hindi is not compulsory till any class.

northeastern states upto Class 10. The Northeast Students' Union, an umbrella group of student bodies in the region, called it an "imposition". "We have always maintained the three language formula be followed — English, Hindi and the local language," said chairman Samuel B Jyrawa. "The mother language should be compulsory and Hindi can be made the alternative."

In Manipur, the Meitei Erol Eyek Loinashillon Apunba Lup, a group established to safeguard Manipuri manuscripts, has construed the move as aimed at rewriting the history.

'Institute stifles criticism of Indian govt': 14 scholars quit Aussie centre

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

FOURTEEN ACADEMICS from universities across Australia have quit their affiliation to the Melbourne-based Australia India Institute (AII) over what they allege is its reluctance to discuss issues critical of the ruling establishment in India.

Among others, they cite its decision to "decline" an essay on the implications of the "rise of Hindu nationalism" and pulling the plug on a podcast on the impact of

caste in academia and private enterprise in India.

The AII was set up in 2008 at the University of Melbourne with a grant of US\$ 8 million from the Australian government to "engage and gain a greater understanding of the two countries through various streams of academic research" in the wake of a series of hate crimes against Indians.

On March 29 this year, 13 academics with affiliation to AII signed a resignation letter addressed to University of Melbourne Vice Chancellor Prof Duncan Maskell. The letter ac-

cused the AII of promoting Indian government "propaganda", "overlooking" a crackdown on dissent and "marginalisation of Indian minority". Later, another academic fellow resigned.

"Following some criticism on an All fellow's talk on invisible inequalities (touching on class and caste), the AII declined to support the publication of a piece aimed at discussing the attacks on Gandhi (in view of the attempted beheading of his statue in Melbourne) prepared by two All fellows (including one who gave the talk). It was communicated to

them that the AII has decided to "stay away from the topic a little longer", the letter stated.

"We also noted that an Ear to Asia podcast entitled Caste and the Corporation, in India and abroad by these two fellows has also not been included on the website of Aii, although those by others have been included," the letter said.

Both the essay and the podcast were projects of Prof Hari Babuji, Professor, Department of Management and Marketing, and Prof Dolly Kikon, both from the University of Melbourne. Babuji is

among the 14 who have resigned.

The essay, "Understanding Modern Attacks On Gandhi", seeks to examine the possible reasons behind the targeted attacks on Gandhi, including vandalism of his statues. "The life of Gandhi and his vision for the future is associated with India's principles of secularism and rights for all religious groups. The right to religious freedom is actually enshrined in the Constitution of India. But these principles are now losing favour as Hindu Nationalism gains currency and the possibilities of changing the constitution are also

now being considered," states the essay, which was later published by Pursuit, a platform of the University of Melbourne.

The 47-minute podcast, "Caste and Corporation, in India and abroad", traces the genesis of the caste system, and its effect on various fields, ranging from academia to private corporations, and the bureaucracy.

A University of Melbourne spokesperson told *The Indian Express*: "The University stands firmly in support of the strategic direction of the AII, its Board and Chief Executive Officer."



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4 WEST BENGAL

Magrahat double murder: Prime accused arrested

Kolkata: The prime accused in the double murder that took place in the Magurpukur area of Magrahat in South 24 Parganas district a day before was arrested on Sunday, police said.

Barun Chakraborty (35), a civic volunteer posted under the Magrahat police station, and his friend Malay Makhal (31) were shot from point blank range before being slit in the throat.

The accused, identified as Jaane Alam Mollah, was nabbed from Tollygunge in south Kolkata after a chase by the police when he tried to flee in a car, an official claimed. "The arrested suspect will be interrogated. Prima facie, the murders seem to be a fallout of a personal dispute," he added.

A special team of the Diamond Harbour police with the help of their counterparts from the Kolkata commissionerate conducted an overnight search for the accused on the basis of the location of his mobile phone and tip-offs, it was learnt.

Besides carrying out construction work in the area, Mollah is allegedly involved in chit fund business too, the police said. **ENS**

CBI arrests one more in Birbhum violence case

Rampurhat: The CBI on Sunday apprehended one more person in connection with the Birbhum killings, taking the total number of arrests made by the agency in the case to five, an official said.

The accused, identified as Samir Sheikh, a resident of Bogtui village, was called by CBI sleuths for questioning on Sunday morning, he said.

"This man's name cropped up every time we spoke with eye-witnesses. Today, he was giving us different versions and trying to confuse us. We arrested him and will continue questioning him," the CBI official said.

Earlier, the CBI had arrested four accused people from Mumbai. The West Bengal Police had further arrested 22 people for their alleged involvement in the case. **PTI**

Yechury re-elected CPI(M) gen secy; Biman, Mollah dropped from Politburo

SHAJU PHILIP
KANNUR, APRIL 10

THE 23RD party congress of CPI(M) on Sunday re-elected Sitaram Yechury as party general secretary for a third consecutive term. Also, senior leader from West Bengal Ram Chandra Dome was elected to the Politburo, becoming the first Dalit leader in the highest body of the party.

As the party fixed 75 as the age limit for the members of the central committee and Politburo, leaders who are above that age limit and a few others who are on the border of the age bar were dropped from both bodies, bringing new faces into the party leadership.

In another decision, the party reduced the size of the central committee from 95 to 85 at the 23rd party congress, which concluded here on Sunday.

In the newly constituted 17-member Politburo, apart from Dome, other inductions were Kerala's LDF convener A Vijayaraghavan and All India Kisan Sabha president Ashok Dhawale. Those dropped on age factor were S Ramachandran Pillai, Hannan Mollah and Biman Bose.

In the 85-member central committee, 17 are new faces. The women representation in the central committee has gone up to 15 with inclusion of three new faces.

From Kerala, Finance Minister K N Balagopal, Industries Minister P Rajeev, and former Lok Sabha members P Sathidevi and C S Sujatha were elected to the central committee.

Three leaders from West Bengal have been inducted into the Central Committee. They are Debalina Hembram, a woman tribal leader, Samik Lahiri and Sumit Day.

The party congress on Sunday adopted the organisational report, which called for steps to arrest the fall in the party membership, except in Kerala, since during the four years after the last party congress in 2018.



Sitaram Yechury addresses the 23rd party congress of the CPI(M) in Kannur on Sunday. *Twitter/cpimspeak*

Nothing historic about my induction: Politburo's first Dalit member in 58 yrs

ATRI MITRA
KOLKATA, APRIL 10

RAM CHANDRA DOME, who became the first Dalit member of the Politburo — the highest decision making body of the CPI(M) — 58 years after its inception, doesn't think it to be a "historic moment" for the party. According to the 63-year-old leader, who began his political journey through student politics, there have been "many stalwart leaders" in the party from the Dalit community.

"In our party, a person becomes a leader through some movement. It is a continuous process. In our party's history, many stalwart leaders were from the Dalit community. Somehow they were not in the Politburo... Therefore, my induction into the Politburo is not a historic moment," Dome told *The Indian Express* over the phone.

Dome hails from Chilla village in Birbhum district. He was born



Ram Chandra Dome in Kannur, Sunday. The six-time MP was born in a family of rural artisans who became a doctor before joining politics during Emergency

and brought up in a family of woodwork artisans. A bright student from his childhood, Dome cracked the MBBS entrance examination and got admission to the prestigious NRS Medical College from where he completed his MBBS degree in 1984.

During the Emergency in mid 1970s, Dome became active in student politics and joined the

Left Front's students' wing.

In 1989, five years after he completed MBBS, he entered Parliament after winning from the Birbhum Lok Sabha constituency. He continued as an MP till 2014, winning in six consecutive Lok Sabha elections. In the 2014 General Elections, he lost to TMC's Anupam Hazra in the Bolpur constituency.

According to his colleagues, despite being a six-time MP, Dome's lifestyle did not change at all. "He (Dome) is probably the only leader who continues to roam in Suri on his old bicycle. He is one of those rare leaders who maintains his old lifestyle even after becoming MP for six consecutive times," said a CPI(M) leader.

Welcoming Dome to the Politburo, Sitaram Yechury, who on Sunday was re-elected as party general secretary for a third consecutive term, said: "In the history of CPI(M), he will be the first Dalit politburo member. We are proud of it."

Senior CPI(M) leader Hannan Mollah, who has been dropped from Politburo this time, also called Dome's inclusion a proud moment for the party and the "perfect Dalit representation in the Politburo".

"Ram comes from a marginal family in West Bengal. He became a leader through mass movement and mass organisation. We got a perfect Dalit representation in the party leadership. His inclusion in the Politburo has made us proud," Mollah told *The Indian Express*.

Meanwhile, Dome feels that the party has to "sharpen" its movement across the country. "We are going through a fascist rule in our country. In West Bengal also, we have to fight against two fascist forces — the BJP at the Centre and TMC in the state... We have to sharpen our movement against these fascist rulers. We have to reach out to the whole country and send our party cadres and our message to all the corners of the country," Dome said.

NADIA

TMC leader's son held for rape & murder of 14-yr-old

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 10

A 14-YEAR-OLD girl died after she was allegedly gangraped by the son of a panchayat member owing allegiance to the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and others in West Bengal's Nadia district, police said on Sunday.

Brajgopal Goala (21), the son of Samar Goala, a member of the local gram panchayat, has been detained in this connection.

"A case was registered after we received a complaint after seven days of the incident. The girl's body has already been cremated by the family," said a senior police official.

"We are questioning the youth," the officer added.

The case was registered under sections of 376(2)(G) (gangrape), 302 (murder), 204 (tampering with evidence) of the Indian Penal Code and relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The victim's family has alleged that Brajgopal invited her besides his friends to his birthday party on April 4.

Family says the girl died of excessive bleeding a day after she was gangraped. Police say they received the complaint a week after the alleged incident when her body was already cremated

He along with others gangraped her after they made her drink alcohol, they claimed.

The 14-year-old died the next morning due to excessive bleeding, the family said.

The family also accused Brajgopal and his friends of pressuring them to cremate the body and threatening them against informing the police.

"The family lodged a complaint at the Hanskhali police station on Saturday seeking arrest of the culprits," said a police official.

A worker of the crematorium where the body was cremated has not been traced since the incident, the official added.

Communal tension in Howrah after VHP leader's speech at rally

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 10

COMMUNAL TENSION prevailed in the Shibpur area of Howrah city on Sunday after a purported provocative speech was made during a Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) rally. The police, however, were able to bring the situation under control.

According to sources, the members of two communities pelted each other with stones when the rally reached near Panchsheel Apartments around 5pm. The tension escalated when the rally moved towards Mullick Fatak and Fazir Bazar.

Some police personnel and members of the public were injured in the clash, it is learnt.

The cops used batons to disperse the crowd engaged in pelting of stones, officials said. A few police bikes were set on fire with some people even receiving serious injuries. Those injured were taken to hospital for treatment.

A contingent of Rapid Action Force (RAF) was deployed to help

The VHP took out rallies or shobha yatra across the state on Ram Navami

the local police.

Soon the incident, photos and videos of the incident were circulated on social media. The police appealed to people to maintain peace.

"We are making efforts for maintaining peace and tranquillity in the city. All are requested to show utmost restraint and discretion while posting anything on social media. They should abstain from spreading rumours about the Shibpur rally. Do not to post anything which could disturb social harmony as one could be prosecuted under law," Howrah city police posted on official social media page.

The VHP took out hundreds of rallies or shobha yatra across West Bengal on Ram Navami. In the wake of the pandemic, mass gatherings on Ram Navami remained cancelled for two years.

PMC/ON/LD/1161/2022
Pandharpur Municipal Council
Date :- 09/04/2022

Pandharpur Municipal Council,
Pandharpur, Dist-Solapur
- E-Tender Notice -

Chief Officer, Pandharpur Municipal Council, Under the Pilgrimage Development Plan of the Government of Pandharpur, e-tenders for the operation of CCTV monitoring systems at various places in the city of Pandharpur are being invited from experienced contractors registered with the Government subject to the terms and conditions mentioned in the tender notice.

Tender form available online from 11.00 am on 11/04/2022 to 5.00 pm on 03/05/2022 and information about the cost of work as well as tender price, acceptance of tender etc. is available on the website <http://mahatenders.gov.in>

Signed/-
Chief Officer,
Pandharpur Municipal Council

EMBASSY OF INDIA DUBLIN
MARRIAGE NOTICE

April 6, 2022
Mr. Bhavik Madanlal Tukrel, an Indian national, son of Mr. Madanlal Radhakishandas Tukrel, resident of 9, Kishan Gopal Apts, 2nd Floor, 185, West Venkataswamy Road, R.S. Puram, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu-641002, India and Ms. Anusha Mondal, an Indian national, daughter of Mr. Anindom Mondal, resident of 4, Kaliprasad Banerjee, 1st Bye Lane, Howrah, West Bengal- 711101, India both presently residing in Dublin, Ireland have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communication in this regard can be made by Email: cons.dublin@mea.gov.in / letters / telephone calls (00353-1-2060932, 00353-1-2830771). (Jyema Sharma)
Second Secretary (Cons) and Marriage Officer
Embassy of India, Dublin



Campaigning ends for bypoll

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 10

CAMPAIGNING FOR the by-elections to the Asansol Lok Sabha constituency and the Ballygunge assembly seat in West Bengal came to an end on Sunday.

The BJP candidates along with their supporters took part in Ramnabami processions in Asansol town and neighbouring Raniganj. In Ballygunge, Babul Supriyo of the TMC, Keya Ghosh of the BJP and Shaira Shah Halim of CPI(M) started campaigning early in the morning.

Voting in both the constituencies will begin at 7am on Tuesday (April 12) and end at 5pm, an Election Commission (EC) official said.

The Ballygunge segment has a total of 300 booths while Asansol

has 2,102. As many as 680 booths have been declared as 'sensitive' in Asansol, Ballygunge has 23 such booths. As a security measure, police are checking all the entry and exit points in the two constituencies. The EC has transferred two police officers in Asansol after the BJP alleged that the by-elections could be rigged. A delegation comprising opposition leader Suwendu Adhikari has lodged a complaint with the EC observers in this regard.

A total of 133 companies of central forces will be deployed in the two constituencies — 70 in Ballygunge and the remaining in Asansol — while there will also be live webcast from all the booths in the assembly constituency and 51 per cent of the booths in the Lok Sabha segment.

No untoward incident was reported during the campaign-

ing that started in the first week of March with central forces regularly conducting flag marches in sensitive pockets of the two constituencies.

While 10 candidates are in the fray in Ballygunge and eight in Asansol, the main fight is likely to be between the TMC and BJP, while CPI(M) and Congress have also put up their nominees in both the seats.

The by-elections were necessitated as Babul Supriyo resigned as MP of Asansol after joining the TMC from the BJP, while state minister Subrata Mukherjee, who represented Ballygunge, died last year. The TMC has fielded actor and former Union minister Shatrughan Sinha against BJP MLA Agnimitra Paul.

In Ballygunge, TMC has fielded Supriyo against BJP's Keya Ghosh and CPI(M)'s Saira Shah Halim.


Government of India
Ministry of Education
Department of Higher Education
Technical Section VII

ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE POST OF DIRECTORS OF INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE EDUCATION & RESEARCH (IISER), PUNE, KOLKATA, BHOPAL, TIRUPATI AND BERHAMPUR

Applications are invited for the post of Directors of the Indian Institute of Science Education & Research, Pune (Maharashtra), Kolkata (West Bengal), Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh) and Berhampur (Odisha). The Director shall have a contractual tenure of appointment for five years, or until attaining the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier. The detailed advertisement and proforma for application is available on the Ministry of Education's website at: <https://www.education.gov.in/en/advertisements> as well as on the websites of respective institutes.

The last date for receipt of applications is 23.05.2022.


Human Resources Department
State Bank Bhavan, 16th Floor, Madame Cama Road, Mumbai - 400021

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

State Bank of India has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for empanelment of HR Consultant/s as specified in the RFP. For details please visit 'Procurement News' at Bank's Website <https://bank.sbi>

Sd/-
Deputy General Manager (CMD)
HR Dept., Corporate Centre Mumbai


Chiplun Municipal Council,
Government of Maharashtra
Notice for Tender
Providing Solid Management Service on Output Basis for 1 Year

CHIPLUN Municipal Council, Government of Maharashtra, invites proposal from reputed and experienced companies to participate in the competitive bidding process to providing solid management service on output basis for 1 year. For the detailed tender documents, interested bidders should visit <http://Maharashtra.gov.in/tenders>. Tender submission would be online and the deadline to submit the proposal is 21.04.2022.

Date : 08.04.2022.

Sd/-
Chief Officer
Chiplun Municipal Council
Government of Maharashtra

CULTURE & TRADITION

At a city exhibition, an attempt to display Bengal's art of masks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 10

KOLKATA'S GAGANENDRA Shilpa Pradarshashala was packed with art enthusiasts on Sunday as it was the last day of Sharmi's "Art Beyond tradition", an exhibition on the masks of Bengal.

From a decorative painted wooden mask depicting the tribal face of Hindu goddess Kali to a four-foot mask, describing different scenes from the Mahabharata, the exhibition featured masks of all sizes produced by local artisans.

"I want to promote this art globally, I want people to see the heritage of Bengal. I want to provide these artisans of rural Bengal a platform where their talent and creations are valued all across," says Sharmila Sen, the artist and the person behind the show.

On the day of the inauguration of the exhibition, 86 masks



Artist Sharmila Sen at the exhibition, Sunday. *Partha Paul*

were on display.

The exhibition, which is in its 10th edition, also showcased five chhau masks from Purulia. Now, most of the masks have either been booked or bought.

"We design masks of all sizes... The woods are of the best quality and we use natural colors. These masks are crafted by Shankar Das of South Dinajpur. I design them and make their sketches, and he

transforms those in the form of wooden masks," says Sen, who had started designing masks almost a decade ago.

Stating that art and culture have no religion and boundaries, Sen says that most of her artisans engaged in Kalighat patachitra are Muslims. "Infact, they know more about Hindu mythology than many of us, and it amazes me," adds Sen.

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

How Delhi University will admit students via CUET

ARANYA SHANKAR & DEEKSHA TERI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

WITH THE government having made the Central University Entrance Test (CUET) compulsory across all central universities, it will change the way undergraduate students are admitted to Delhi University, which attracts candidates from across the country, and which so far had been admitting them based on their Class 12 scores. A look at how DU will use CUET now to admit students this year:

What is the format of the CUET paper?

CUET 2022, open to students who have passed Class 12, is a computer-based test with three sections. The first section, with multiple choice questions, tests a candidate's language skills based on her understanding of passages. This section is of two parts: 1A and 1B.

Section 1A has 45-minute papers in English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Urdu, Assamese, Bengali, Punjabi and Odia. A DU applicant must take the test for at least one of these languages.

Section IB has to be attempted only if a candidate wishes to pursue a degree in any one (or more) of 19 other languages: French, Spanish, German, Nepali, Persian, Italian, Arabic, Sindhi, Kashmiri, Konkani, Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Manipuri, Santhali, Tibetan,

Japanese, Russian and Chinese.

Section II will test a candidate in the core subjects she wishes to study. She can appear in up to six papers (as long as she studied each in Class 12) out of 27 domain subjects — 18 in Section B1 and 9 in B2.

Subjects listed under B1 are: Accountancy/ Bookkeeping; Biology/ Biological Studies/ Biotechnology/ Biochemistry; Business Studies; Chemistry; Computer Science/ Informatics Practices; Economic/ Business Economics; Geography/ Geology; History; Home Science; Legal Studies; Environmental Studies; Mathematics; Physics; Political Science; Psychology; Sociology; Anthropology; Sanskrit.

B2 contains Engineering Graphics; Entrepreneurship; Knowledge Tradition and Practices in India; Fine Arts/Virtual Arts (Sculpture/Painting)/Commercial Arts; Teaching Aptitude; Agriculture; Mass Media/Mass Communication; Physical Education/NCC/Yoga; Performing Arts – (i) Dance (Kathak/ Bharatanatyam/ Kathakali/ Odissi/ Kuchipudi/ Manipuri) (ii) Drama-Theatre (iii) Music General (Carnatic/ Rabindra Sangeet/ Hindustani/ Percussion/ Non-percussion).

Section III, which will test the candidate's general knowledge, quantitative reasoning etc, is not compulsory: a student needs to take the one-hour paper only if it's a requirement for the programme she is applying to.



Counselling at Delhi University in 2017, when admission was based on Class 12 scores. File

What if a subject a candidate studied in Class 12 is not among the 27 domain subjects?

Candidates should only appear for CUET domain papers in subjects that she has passed in Class 12. If a student is unable to find a particular subject in the CUET list, she will have to choose the domain paper that is most similar to the subject she studied in class 12. For example, students who studied Biochemistry in Class 12 will have to take the Biology test in CUET, since Biochemistry is not among the 27 domain subjects.

How will DU calculate CUET scores?

DU has said it will continue to honour the “best performance” of applicants in the new system. In the cut-off system, admission was based on an applicant's performance in the four subjects with her best scores. Now her best performance in domain papers of CUET will be the determining factor.

For example, to enrol in BA (Honours), applicants need to appear for one language test from Section I and at least three subjects from Section II. However, they can choose to sit for five subjects from Section II. The final CUET score will be decided on their performance in the language test, and their top three scores in the five domain subjects.

For B Sc, DU will calculate merit based on the score in one language (from Section I) and three domain subjects from Section II. A minimum score of 30% in the language test is compulsory.

Eligibility criteria for each programme is now available at www.admission.uod.ac.in.

What are these criteria?

■ For B Sc (Hons) in Physics or Chemistry, candidates will have to sit for Physics, Chemistry and Maths from Section II, and also obtain 30% marks in one language. For Maths and Computer Science, B Sc candidates will have to appear for a language test from Section IA, Maths test from Section II, and another two subjects of which at least one should be from B1.

■ For BA including Political Science,

History, Sociology, the candidate must appear for one language paper from Section I, any two subjects from B1 and one more subject from either B1 or B2. So, for BA (Honours) Economics, the requirement is a language test from Section 1A, Maths test from Section II and any two domain papers out of which at least one should be from Section B1.

■ For B Com (Hons), the criteria is the same as for Economics, except that applicants also have the option for appearing for Accountancy instead of Maths.

■ For undergraduate language programmes, if an applicant wants to study Punjabi but hasn't studied it in Class 12, she can still attempt a language paper from Section 1A. But DU will give preference to students who have studied the concerned language in Class 12. An applicant will have to take the Punjabi test in CUET under Section 1A, two domain papers from B1 and another paper from either B1 or B2. Those who haven't studied Punjabi in school can appear for any other language test from 1A, while the rest of the criteria remain the same.

■ For B El Ed, candidates must have scored at least 50% in Class 12. In CUET, candidates will have to appear for one language from Section IA, any two subjects from B1 list of Section II and any one subject from either B1 or B2 list of Section II.

■ For physical education or music-related programmes, the candidate will be assessed based on CUET score and also on perform-

ance/trial/certificates. There will be equal weightage for both. For Music, applicants will need to sit for one language test from 1A, Performing Arts paper from B2 and any two subjects, of which at least one has to be from B1. If a student has not studied Music in school, she can take one language test from 1A, any two subjects from B1, plus any one subject from either B1 or B2.

Can students apply for programmes outside of their stream at school?

Like earlier, a student who studied science in high school is eligible to pursue humanities-based undergraduate programmes. However, candidates will have to ensure that they check the eligibility criteria of the desired programme, and make sure they choose domain and language courses accordingly.

Can students who have dropped a year apply?

Yes, there is no bar. But this time, they too will have to appear for CUET.

Will entrance exams for professional programmes such as BBA, BBE and BMS still continue?

No, these are no longer valid. Admissions for these courses will also be done through CUET scores. For BBA, BBE and BMS, candidates will have to appear for one language test from Section 1A, Maths from Section II and the general ability test (aka Section III).

SIMPLY PUT

Pak power shift: takeaways

Imran Khan's defeat in the no-confidence motion paves the way for Shehbaz Sharif to take over as Pakistan PM. What does this mean for Pakistan, and for India's relations with its neighbour?

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

ON APRIL 10, 1973, Pakistan's Parliament approved its Constitution. On the same date 49 years later, a Prime Minister of that country was ousted following a no-confidence vote for the first time, as 174 members in the 342-member House voted in favour of the resolution against Imran Khan. Shehbaz Sharif, brother of former PM Nawaz Sharif, is likely to replace Imran Khan, with a vote expected in the National Assembly on Monday.

How will this change play out? From New Delhi's perspective, five key takeaways:

Pakistan's democracy

Pakistan's flawed democracy is still seen as a “guided democracy”. No elected Prime Minister there has ever completed his or her five-year term. The first, Liaquat Ali Khan, was assassinated on October 16, 1951. After him, seven PMs resigned, five faced dismissal, while four were ousted through military coups. Nawaz Sharif and Yousuf Raza Gilani were disqualified due to their convictions by the Supreme Court.

Three PMs — Shaukat Aziz, Raja Pervez Ashraf and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi — relinquished office on the completion of the National Assembly's five-year term, but they had come into office to complete the remainder of the terms of their predecessors who had been disqualified or had resigned. That list includes Nawaz Sharif, who had to quit as PM four times during his three terms.

According to an analysis by Dawn, Sharif has to his credit the longest run at 3,422 days; Imran Khan is at number six at 1,335 days.

This being the first time a PM in Pakistan has been voted out, it suggests democracy in Pakistan is gradually finding its feet, albeit with some help from the military establishment.

Imran Khan's downfall

Khan, the cricketer, had arrived in politics as an unknown, since he didn't belong to the mainstream parties. That meant that he did not carry any historical baggage, but eventually he became unpopular each passing day.

The “Naya Pakistan” he promised did not turn out the way it was dreamt to be. Dawn



For New Delhi, the power shift signals the possibility of improved ties. Reuters



found that out of the 51 promises in the manifesto of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), only two were complete and six hadn't even started.

Pakistan's economy has been hit by massive inflation, an outcome of the government's economic mismanagement, with many pushed to poverty. Pakistan's GDP has fallen from \$315 billion in 2018 to \$292 billion in 2022. It has now been asking the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for bailout packages and its dependence on China has increased.

Many believe Khan's ill-timed visit to Moscow was an outcome of its overt dependence on Beijing. His remarks trying to blame Washington for the “hidden hand” against his government's downfall was possibly the last straw for the Pakistan Army, making his continuance as PM untenable.

Falling out with Army

Many in Pakistan say it was the Army that “selected” Khan for Prime Minister in 2018, after the Sharifs fell out of favour with the military establishment.

Khan always flaunted his USP: that the Pakistan Army and his government were “on the same page”. But this cosy relationship broke last year, as Khan tried to block the appointment of the Army's pick Lt Gen Nadeem Anjum as the new ISI chief, instead backing Lt Gen Faiz Hameed to continue. It was reported that Khan struck a deal with Lt Gen Hameed: Khan would help him become Army chief, and he would then help Khan win another term in 2023. But Army chief Gen Gen Qamar Bajwa

got wind of this and put his foot down, sending Hameed on a posting away from Rawalpindi while bringing in Lt Gen Anjum.

As Khan kept sitting on the orders from the Army, that was the breaking point between the two. Khan relented after three weeks, but the damage was already done. The Army finally decided to dump Khan. Gen Bajwa, who retires in November, now has the chips with the new PM and the ruling coalition as he bargains for an extension beyond November 2022.

Return of the Sharifs

Four years after their defeat, the Sharifs are back in the game.

It was Shehbaz Sharif who moved the no-confidence motion, and he has worked his way into getting the support of the Pakistan Army. Shehbaz, who has been the chief minister of Pakistan's key Punjab province, has always been under the shadow of his brother. But his ties with the Pakistan Army are deep. Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir wrote in *The Indian Express* in July 2017 that Shehbaz was offered the Prime Minister's position by the Army at least three times (1992, 1993 and 2016) but refused to ditch his brother.

What is important for India is that the Sharif family has always been very positive about improving relations with India. Shehbaz visited India in December 2013, met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Commerce Minister Anand Sharma, and went on a visit infrastructure projects. He had also visited Punjab where he met the then CM and his deputy CM, Parkash and Sukhbir Badal, and is-

sued a joint statement on cooperation between the Punjabs.

In an interaction with journalists, including from *The Indian Express*, he pitched hard for the resumption of “peaceful dialogue” on all issues including “Sir Creek, Siachen, water and Kashmir”. “I told him [PM Singh] that both trade and commerce have to be combined with strategic issues...only exchange of cultural troupes is not enough. We have to resolve problems through talks,” he said.

Both Shehbaz and Nawaz have faced numerous corruption cases in the National Accountability Bureau, including under Imran Khan's premiership, but Shehbaz has not been found guilty on any charges.

His can-do approach and trying to bring Pakistan's economy “back on track” will be key to his stint as the PM in the next year or so.

Possible diplomatic opening

Khan had made it politically difficult for New Delhi to open channels, as he had personally attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP-RSS combine. After the revocation of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019, his tone became more strident, calling BJP-RSS “Nazi” and using strong language against the Indian government.

But in the last year-and-a-half, the Pakistan Army opened back channels with India and they agreed to adhere to the ceasefire along the Line of Control. With the ceasefire holding for one year since February 2021, Shehbaz Sharif will find a willing partner in the Army to move forward on the ties.

It will be crucial to see how Shehbaz will act as trade ties with India could bring in funds, even as he navigates the political and diplomatic minefield for repairing ties with India.

From India's perspective, the power shift signals the possibility of an improvement of ties, amid potential challenges and difficulties.

Unlike Khan, the Sharifs will find it easier to do business with India, be in a better relationship with the US and the West, as well as engaging with China more proactively. Khan was extremely hostile towards the US under the Biden administration — he never got a call from President Joe Biden. In contrast, Shehbaz said in an interview last week that good relations with the US were critical for Pakistan for better or for worse.

How to withdraw cash from an ATM through UPI, without a card

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has proposed to make a cardless cash withdrawal facility available at all ATMs, irrespective of banks, through the Unified Payment Interface (UPI). This is one of the key decisions made by the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee.

“At present the facility of cardless cash withdrawal through ATMs is limited only to a few banks. It is now proposed to make the facility available across all banks and ATM networks using UPI,” RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said while making the announcement.

How will cash withdrawals via UPI work?

The RBI has not yet disclose details on how the process will work. According to a source

familiar with the proposed technology, ATMs soon would show an option to withdraw cash using UPI. One that option is selected, the user would have to add the amount to be withdrawn, following which a QR code would be generated on the ATM machine. The user would then have to scan that code on their UPI app and enter their PIN, following which the ATM would dispense cash.

According to Das, allowing cash withdrawals through UPI would increase the security of such transactions. “In addition to enhancing ease of transactions, the absence of the need for physical cards for such transactions would help prevent frauds such as card skimming and card cloning, among others,” he said.

What are the current ways of cardless cash withdrawals at ATMs?

At the moment, a few banks such as ICICI,

Kotak Mahindra, HDFC and SBI allow their users to withdraw cash from their ATMs without a card, a feature introduced in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, it is a cumbersome process. Users have to install the apps of their respective banks and first select the option of cardless cash withdrawal on the app, followed by adding beneficiary details and the withdrawal amount. After confirming the mobile number of a user, the bank sends an OTP and a nine-digit order ID to the beneficiary's phone. After that, the beneficiary has to visit an ATM and key in the OTP, the order ID, the amount for transaction and their mobile number to get the cash.

Cardless cash withdrawals must also be within specified limits — they start from Rs 100 per transaction and cannot cross an ceiling set by respective banks. For HDFC Bank users, such withdrawals are restricted to a

maximum of Rs 10,000 each day and Rs 25,000 per month. Such withdrawals are also charged a service fee of Rs 25 per transaction. At the moment, it is not clear whether UPI-based cash withdrawals, too, would be subject to the same restrictions and service fee.

RBI Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar said the central bank is currently working on “systemic changes” that may need to be done and the “issues will clear in the next 2-3 months”. Das said the RBI would soon send separate instructions to the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), ATM networks and banks.

Could this impact debit card usage?

Debit cards are currently the most popular way of cash withdrawals at ATMs. As of now, there are more than 900 million debit cards in the country, and experts have cautioned that allowing cash withdrawals

through UPI could negatively impact debit card usage

“There could be a potential first-order impact on debit cards as this step would reduce the need to carry debit cards. There could be a potential second-order impact on other payment forms such as credit cards and wallets since this step seems to promote ubiquity of the UPI,” said Shivaji Thapliyal, lead analyst (institutional equities) at YES Securities. “Prima facie, this step seems negative for MDR fee-generating payment form factors”.

Das clarified, however, that the issuance of debit cards would not stop due to the move, since these cards have uses beyond cash withdrawals, an argument echoed by some industry stakeholders.

“Due to other intertwining dependencies built in the banking system for authorisation at call centres or Internet Banking and change of PIN for UPI, the issuance of debit cards may

not reduce,” said Anand Bajaj, the founder, MD & CEO of PayNearby.

What's next in the UPI pipeline?

It is projected that in the next 3-5 years, UPI would be processing a billion transactions a day, and to enable that, a number of initiatives have been introduced. Chief among these is UPI's AutoPay feature, which has already seen increased adoption owing to the RBI's guidelines to curb recurring transactions. According to industry experts, the AutoPay feature will be crucial to increasing daily transactions on the platform.

The RBI has also announced UPI on feature phones without an Internet connection, which is expected to open up the payments system to more than 40 crore individuals who use such devices. This will expand digital financial inclusion and add to the number of transactions made on the platform.



The IndianEXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

CHANGE NEXT DOOR

Pakistan's new PM has his task cut out — he must also face Imran Khan in trying conditions

EVERY LAST BALL does not yield a turnaround in sagging fortunes, and so it was with Imran Khan. Even after he knew that his government had lost its majority in parliament, Khan fought every inch of the way to remain prime minister, pulling surprises on the Opposition, and delaying the inevitable. A no-confidence motion against him, which he and his party did their best to stall since it was submitted to the speaker on March 8, finally went through Pakistan's National Assembly with 174 votes in the House of 225, bringing his term in office to an end 16 months ahead of time. The last minute delays, and a late night cabinet meeting, suggested he was preparing to try one final move. Was Khan playing with the idea of removing the army chief and appointing a new man before he was voted out, as suggested by a late night petition asking the Islamabad High Court to restrain him from doing this? Whatever it was, it threatened to turn what was an open-and-shut case of the removal of a prime minister by means of a parliamentary process, a first for Pakistan, into a full blown constitutional crisis.

Pakistan will have a new prime minister today, barring last minute surprises. Parliamentary elections are due in next July or August. It is upto the new government to decide if these elections should be held earlier than that. Khan's various gambits also carried more than a hint of a campaign for the next election. His ruse of alleging an American conspiracy to unseat him was possibly intended to tap into a deep-seated hostility in large sections of Pakistanis, especially the young who form the bulk of his support base, against the US. Khan has made clear he will remain in politics, and even if he does not win the next election, it will be no surprise if he and the PTI emerge as a strong opposition.

From India's point of view, Khan's exit could create opportunities for repairing ties with Pakistan. The Pakistan military establishment has so far been the main obstacle in this, but Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, and his frequent assertions in favour of trade and "geo-economics" as the way forward for the region, give the impression that he wants to pursue these ideas with India. It is not clear though if all his army colleagues back him, or even if the new government will endorse his plans. Khan and his government did not. Bajwa's own term in office ends in November this year. Irrespective of this, if and when a new page is turned, New Delhi should respond with an open mind. At the same time, given the fraught equations in the wake of the growing Russia-China axis, it must remain vigilant for spoilers.

BOND IDENTITY

Court must settle challenge to the electoral bonds scheme quickly. The sanctity of elections is at stake

INDIA'S APEX COURT will hear the petitions challenging the electoral bonds scheme. While this news should be welcomed, it is noteworthy that Chief Justice of India N V Ramana has not specified any specific date or set any timeline for arriving at a judgment. Two prominent non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in India — Common Cause and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) — have legally challenged the scheme that was started in 2018. They, along with several other critics, have been alleging that the introduction of electoral bonds is "distorting democracy" in India. Given the increasingly polarised nature of India's polity, it is of utmost importance that the Supreme Court either removes all doubts about the validity of the scheme or orders the government to make the necessary changes.

The electoral bonds scheme was first mentioned in 2017 when then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley presented it as a way to reform electoral funding in the country. Until then, most political parties used to bypass scrutiny of their finances by claiming that they received most of their donations in cash. Further, since cash amounts less than Rs 20,000 were exempted from scrutiny, parties routinely claimed that most of the donations they received were in cash and in amounts less than Rs 20,000. This opened channels for black money to flow into political parties. So Jaitley capped cash donations at Rs 2,000 and introduced electoral bonds, which could only be bought either by cheque or a digital transfer. These steps, it was assumed, would ensure that black money was not used to fund elections.

However, in actual practice, the electoral bonds scheme has left a lot to be desired. For one, it has not improved transparency in electoral funding. Worse still, it is being argued that this scheme has rigged the game in favour of the ruling party. That's because while a donor's identity is hidden from the public view, it is possible for the ruling party to know since these bonds are issued by a government-owned bank (State Bank of India). This advantage with the ruling party allows the possibility for the government of the day to either extort money or victimise those individuals/entities that fund the Opposition. The fact that the BJP has cornered more than 75 per cent of all such bonds issued to date gives credence to this criticism. Another key area of concern is that the government, as part of the introduction of the electoral bonds, had removed the cap on how much money a company could donate. A quick closure in these matters is necessary to ensure transparency in campaign financing, critical to the integrity of the electoral process.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



AJAY DARSHAN BEHERA

PRIME MINISTER IMRAN Khan's loss in the no-confidence motion may have been the first in Pakistan's history. But that fact may not be as significant as what has been reiterated about the political stability of elected regimes: No elected regime in Islamabad has managed to complete its tenure since the formation of the country.

Khan, who has had a remarkable political journey in a short period, became the prime minister in 2018. He has been instrumental in single-handedly building the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). From just one seat in parliament in 2002, his party increased its tally to 116 in the 2018 elections. By holding agitations on an anti-corruption agenda, he created a new support base. His campaigns reached out to the young educated people and he successfully projected the PTI as an alternative third force capable of bringing change from the feudalistic and dynastic rule of the past. However, the 2018 elections were questioned for their fairness. It is strongly believed that he came to power due to the political engineering by the military establishment.

His politics reflected an eclectic set of agendas — Khan mixed his anti-corruption agenda with soft Islamism and anti-Westernism. He spoke about turning Pakistan into an egalitarian, modern, Islamic, democratic, welfare state. He gave the slogan for "Naya Pakistan" and promised to bring change. That vision of a "Naya Pakistan" has been shattered for some time now. He proved to be no different from other politicians when he dissolved parliament instead of facing the no-confidence motion and plunged the country into a constitutional crisis. His claim of being different from the existing political leadership and practising clean politics is now seen as hypocritical.

Khan's tenure in office was a difficult one. He came to power at a time when Pakistan

The vision of a Naya Pakistan is in tatters as Imran Khan bows out

Pakistan has become a difficult country to govern. Even if the military does not wield power directly, it remains the final arbiter in Pakistan's politics as the 2018 general elections had shown. Years of social and political engineering have unleashed forces in Pakistan that have created structural incapacities to address social, economic and security challenges. Neither the political class nor the military has solutions to these problems.

faced serious economic challenges — it was on the verge of a balance of payments crisis. Foreign exchange reserves were very low. The high trade deficit adversely affected the current account deficit and foreign currency reserves. Pakistan's total external debt and liabilities have since gone up to \$91 billion, 31 per cent of the GDP. Even then he continued to make populist promises like creating 10 million jobs within five years, constructing five million houses for the homeless and so on. His idea of an Islamic welfare state also required big public spending on health and education. But Khan had no pragmatic economic policy. He showed a superficial understanding of the problems faced by Pakistan. His economic mismanagement created enormous hardships for the people. The poor state of the economy diminished his popularity. There are also contradictions in his worldview. His populism has been punctured by the hard realities of governance.

Eventually, it was Imran Khan's relationship with the military and the Opposition that was instrumental in his fall. His standoff with the military over the appointment of a new ISI chief and differences over foreign policy issues created a rift with the military establishment. In the face of Pakistan's difficult challenges, Khan was not able to build consensual politics of any kind and carry the Opposition along with him. He resorted to demagoguery to undermine the Opposition. The military has taken a neutral stand in the Opposition's attempt to constitutionally unseat Khan. Whether Khan and the PTI will remain a formidable force in Pakistan's politics is difficult to predict. While it is still believed that he has popular support, how he will fare in electoral politics without the support of the military is not clear. Given his self-image and ego, will he be able to rebuild bridges with the military? Can he reach out to sections in the Opposition, which is necessary

in coalition politics? We must remember that the 2018 mandate was probably not reflective of the PTI's actual popular support.

Questions have been raised about the role of the military in the current political crisis. Is this a sign of the military retreating from politics? While the military still remains dominant in the power structure in Pakistan, it is increasingly becoming clear that it is unlikely to seize power again. Pakistan has become a difficult country to govern. Even if the military does not wield power directly, it remains the final arbiter in Pakistan's politics as the 2018 general elections had shown. Years of social and political engineering have unleashed forces in Pakistan that have created structural incapacities to address social, economic and security challenges. Neither the political class nor the military has solutions to these problems.

The vision of a Naya Pakistan lies shattered. It is back to the old Pakistan with its intermittent political instability, difficult economic challenges and a military that will not allow the political class to govern. The challenges for the new prime minister will be no different. He has to deal with these structural issues. There is not much light at the end of the tunnel. The military might take a back seat for some time, but it will ensure that it is able to decide outcomes. The political class will have to get its act together to ensure that governance is the main agenda of the political regimes. Pakistan needs a major reorientation in its politics and foreign policy. It has to set its relations with external powers and its neighbours right. Cutting off support to religious militants and improving relations with India will be helpful in dealing with its economic challenges.

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RAHUL BAJAJ AND NISHTHA GUPTA

THEIR RIGHT TO WORK

Exempting central services from reservation for disabled is legally untenable

IN THE JUDGMENT delivered late last year in *Ravinder Kumar Dhariwal and Anr. v. Union of India and Ors.*, the Supreme Court dealt with the initiation of disciplinary proceedings against a mentally-ill CRPF employee. While concluding that the initiation of the proceedings against the employee was indirectly discriminatory, the Court held that it will have to develop, in an appropriate case, the standard of justification for evaluating the government's decision to exclude any establishment from the nondiscrimination guarantee contained in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act).

A case that the SC is currently hearing (*National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled v. Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities and Ors.*) might just offer it the opportunity to enunciate this standard. The petitioner has challenged a notification issued by the Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities (Department). The impugned notification exempts all categories of posts in the Indian Police Service, the Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli Police Service, as well as the Indian Railway Protection Force Service from the mandated 4 per cent reservation for persons with disabilities under the RPwD Act.

This notification is legally and constitutionally untenable. First, on the same day as the issuing of the impugned notification, the Department also issued another notification exempting from the purview of reservation under the RPwD Act posts only of "combatant" nature in the paramilitary police. This

This case presents the SC with the opportunity to rule that the disabled are not a monolithic entity. Every disabled person is different, and it is unfair to paint all disabled people with the same broad brush, based on a stereotypical understanding of what they can do. Let us hope that the Court recognises that the disabled have the right to exist and work in the world just like their able-bodied counterparts

classification between combat and non-combat posts was premised on a clear recognition of the fact that persons with disabilities are capable of occupying non-combat posts in the central forces. The Department has offered no justification as to why this classification would not hold good as regards the services covered in the impugned notification.

Second, in an office memorandum issued in January last year, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment had identified a range of ministerial/civilian posts as being suitable for reservation for the disabled. The impugned notification is in the teeth of this identification exercise, by virtue of its blanket character. Further, on November 22, 2021, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs released Draft Accessibility Standards/Guidelines for built infrastructure under its purview (police stations, prisons and disaster mitigation centres) and services associated with them. These Draft Standards state that the police staff on civil duty could be persons with disabilities. Curiously, even as the Centre appears committed to creating a more disabled-friendly police service, it has foreclosed the possibility of the disabled being part of the police force through the impugned notification.

Third, the impugned notification appears to be a colourable exercise of power. This is because, as per the RPwD Act, the grant of any exemption has to be preceded by consultation with the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities. It is common knowledge that the office of the chief commissioner has been lying vacant for many years, with the secretary in the Department

officiating in that role. Further, in the debate in Parliament at the time of the passage of the RPwD Act, an exchange between Sitaram Yechury and the then Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment is revealing. Yechury had feared that the central government would use the power granted to it under the RPwD Act to exempt people with disabilities from seeking reservation for posts that they are perfectly capable of occupying. The minister had assured that this concern would be addressed in the rules. By issuing the Impugned Notification, the Department has belied that assurance.

In a heartening development, on March 25, the SC passed an interim order, allowing physically disabled persons who have cleared the civil services (mains) exam to provisionally apply for posts in the IPS, IRPFS and DANIPS, considering this request to be "just and reasonable". The Court has asked the government to explain its stance on the impugned notification and listed the matter for April 18.

This case presents the SC with the opportunity to rule that the disabled are not a monolithic entity. Every disabled person is different, and it is unfair to paint all disabled people with the same broad brush, based on a stereotypical understanding of what they can do. Let us hope that the Court recognises that the disabled have the right to exist and work in the world just like their able-bodied counterparts.

Bajaj is a senior resident fellow at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and Gupta is a student at the NALSAR University of Law

APRIL 11, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

SNAG IN INSAT

ISRO SCIENTISTS FACED the first problem with Insat 1-A when their attempts to put it on a transfer orbit failed. The master control facility at Hassan announced that the apogee motor of the satellite failed to fire on command from the ground. The satellite, heralding the country's most ambitious project, to take the benefits of space technology to 60,000 villages developed the snag two hours after it was placed in the transfer orbit of the Delta rocket. Consequently, the apogee motor firing manoeuvre has been put off by a day. The control team at Hassan is now engaged in working out contingency operations. Insat 1-A, the first civilian satel-

lite to combine the function of telecommunications, TV broadcasting and meteorology will have a life span of seven years.

SIGNAL TO ARGENTINA

BRITAIN WON VITAL support in its diplomatic offensive against Argentina when the rest of the European Common Market banned imports in reprisal against the seizing of Falkland Islands. The 10-member EEC announced the ban, the toughest it has imposed, after a meeting in Brussels. The EEC response came as PM Margaret Thatcher waited for news from the US Secretary of State who is in Buenos Aires to convince the

Argentines that they risk an armed conflict with Britain if they do not leave the islands.

LEFT FRONT'S DEMANDS

THE LEFT FRONT wants Article 356 of the Constitution that enables the Centre to dismiss state governments to be scrapped. It has also demanded a guarantee that the requirement of President's assent will not hold up bills passed by state assemblies. These are amongst the first time demands in the Front's manifesto released by its chairman Pramod Dasgupta. It also wants the eligible age for voting to Parliament and other elected bodies be reduced to 18 years.

Blueprint for a prosperous Punjab

Addressing depleting groundwater, diversification of crops holds key to the state’s future



BY ASHOK GULATI, BHARAT SHARMA AND PURVI THANGARAJ

THE PEOPLE OF Punjab need to be complimented for giving a clear majority to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the recently-held Assembly elections. Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann has a golden opportunity to put Punjab back on the track to higher sustainable growth, lower corruption and ensure freedom from the drug mafia. Only then can Punjab regain its happiness and prosperity.

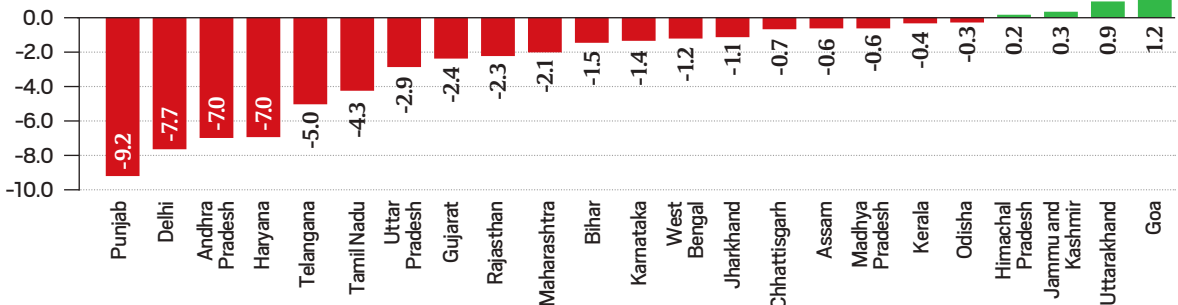
Mann has already vowed to root out corruption from government offices, but so far, he has not revealed a blueprint for agriculture — a sector in which Punjab has been the front runner by ushering in the Green Revolution. But the state has been languishing of late. We attempt to sketch out the key issues in Punjab’s agriculture, the factors that have driven it to the current situation, and what could be the potential solutions that lead to sustainable prosperity.

The biggest problem facing Punjab’s agriculture is the fast-depleting and degrading quality of its groundwater resources. Over the last two decades (2000-2019), the groundwater table in Punjab has depleted by 9.2 meters, the highest amongst all major states in India (see graph). Groundwater stress is the highest in Punjab, with 78 per cent of the assessment units being categorised as “over-exploited” and the remaining falling under “critical” (4 per cent), “semi-critical” (6.7 per cent), and “safe” (11.3 per cent) categories. Moreover, within Punjab, groundwater has depleted by 24.8 metres in districts like Sangrur and Barnala (see graph). This is nothing short of plundering groundwater and robbing the rights of future generations.

In addition to this depletion, is the increasing degradation of water quality. Fluoride and nitrate contamination is directly linked to excessive use of fertilisers. Intensive use of urea and other nitrogen-bearing fertilisers leaves residual nitrates, which leach into the groundwater. Punjab also faces high uranium concentration in groundwater (CGWB, 2021), which is linked to anthropogenic factors leading to cancerous effects. There is the infamous “Cancer Express” that goes from Abohar to Bikaner. Nothing can be more serious than this. This trend must be arrested and reversed if we have any love and respect for our children and grandchildren. Interestingly, Mann comes from Sangrur, and reforms in this regard should start in his home district.

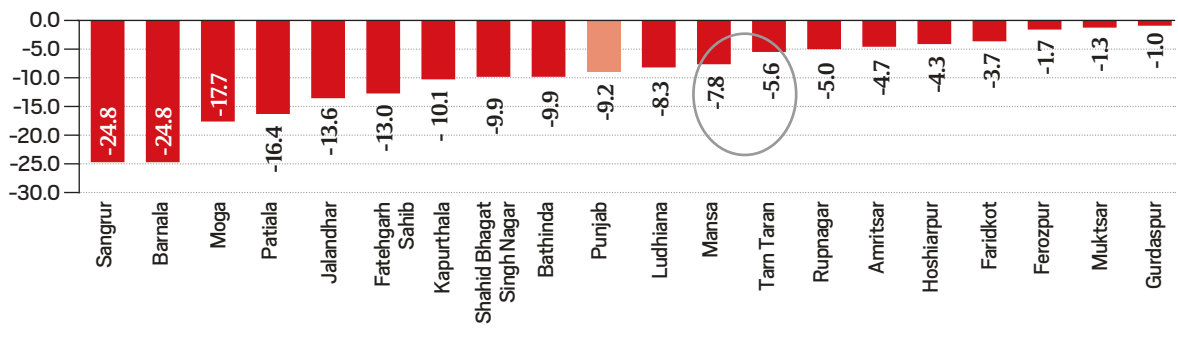
But how can we do that? Let us first understand the drivers behind this downward spiral. Punjab’s success in the Green Revolution led to an explosion of tubewells during the 1970s and ‘80s. Then, in September 2001, the government an-

AVERAGE CHANGE IN WATER LEVEL, 2000-2019*



* Metres below ground level (both graphs). Source for both graphs: India Water Resources Information System (Gol)

AVERAGE DECLINE IN WATER LEVEL 2000-19 PUNJAB *



nounced free power for farmers. Paddy cultivation, which was already on the rise, became more entrenched with assured and open-ended procurement by the government at minimum support price (MSP). Massive subsidies for urea (almost 75 per cent of the cost) further lured the farmers to overuse it in a race to increase productivity. It is these subsidies on power, fertilisers, and open-ended procurement, at assured MSP, that made paddy more profitable compared to competing crops like maize and kharif pulses. Today, Punjab’s famous cuisine of “makki ki roti and sarson ka saag” and “dal makhni” are not supported by the state’s cropping pattern, which has become largely a paddy-wheat rotation. Punjab needs to get out of this for its prosperity and the sustainability of its agriculture.

It is clear that the solution lies in moving away from paddy to other remunerative crops that are less water-intensive. Today, paddy is grown on almost 3.1 million hectares, which needs to be cut to at least half. It cannot be done overnight. But Mann has five years to convert his dreams into reality. A five-year plan as a New Deal for farmers can be chalked out. Punjab has the highest irrigation cover (almost 99 per cent) of any state. It can move toward horticulture and other high-value crops with fertigation (drip irrigation with soluble fertilisers). This will immediately cut down water depletion and environmental degradation. But a horticulture revolution requires significant participation by the private sector in building efficient value chains from farmers to consumers.

Punjab can target airlifting horti-produce for countries in the Persian Gulf. Punjab has a huge agri-surplus and it must look to market its produce beyond the government agencies. The MSP business has

The solution lies in moving away from paddy to other remunerative crops that are less water-intensive. Today, paddy is grown on almost 3.1 million hectares, which needs to be cut to at least half. Mann has five years to convert his dreams into reality. A five-year plan as a New Deal for farmers can be chalked out. Punjab has the highest irrigation cover (almost 99 per cent) of any state. It can move toward horticulture and other high-value crops with fertigation (drip irrigation with soluble fertilisers).

outlived its utility and needs revamping. New start-ups in agri-marketing must be invited and given support to market “Grown in Punjab” produce in metro centres and large cities, as well as export them to Europe, Gulf, and Central Asian countries. Horticulture requires a cold storage chain, reefer vans, air-conditioned outlets, along with agro-processing. This is a great investment opportunity.

Punjab’s dairy is doing very well, with the highest yields. It needs to build on that with more value-added products such as Punjabi lassi, makhana and kulfi. Punjab can also emerge as a centre for buffalo meat export to Southeast Asian countries. The replacement of some paddy farms with dairy and fodder farms is water-efficient, too.

Basmati rice and wheat can continue with more value addition and branding. Pulses and oilseeds must be rewarded by extra incentives given directly to farmers to save groundwater, using less subsidised urea (as they are nitrogen-fixing), less power, and cutting down on methane and nitrous oxide emissions. Per hectare, direct benefit transfer for switching from paddy to pulses and oilseeds would be the way to go (not-MSP bound procurement by government agencies). This is like creating carbon credits and rewarding farmers for that through innovative policies and pilots. That would be the road to farmers’ prosperity with sustainability.

The challenge for Mann now is to devise policies and scale-up pilots, especially in central Punjab’s hotspot districts, that can save groundwater and cut down emissions while making farmers more prosperous.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Though inexperience ultimately became its undoing, the PTI did also record some commendable achievements.” —DAWN

Without a coup

Imran Khan’s ouster as prime minister of Pakistan has a silver lining: Judiciary performed its role, and the army’s hand in the matter was subtle



KESAVA MENON

IMRAN KHAN, WHO ceased to be prime minister of Pakistan after losing a trust vote in the National Assembly, has not shed his anti-American affectations because he has few other viable political assets. What is puzzling is that so many should have fallen for his line that the United States administration was involved in a conspiracy to oust him from office.

When US officials desire to steer Pakistan in a particular direction, they do not need to deal with elected civilians. They deal with the men in uniform sitting in Rawalpindi. Politicians, even those possessing rabble-rousing abilities, can at best cause delay in the arrival when it comes to decisions on national security. However, in times such as the present, obstructionist tactics can have dangerous consequences. Given the context in which Imran Khan was kindling the hostility of a superpower, it is reasonable to think that the most formidable force against him was within Pakistan, not outside.

There is one great difference this time round in that the necessary political cleansing was carried through democratic, constitutional means. Pakistan’s Supreme Court upheld the spirit of democracy by annulling a presidential decree dissolving the National Assembly and another order by the Deputy Speaker of the House by which a no-confidence motion against the government was invalidated. Imran Khan was judicially mandated to take a floor test. The ruling Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf resorted to all manner of delaying tactics when the revived House reconvened but was eventually defeated.

Khan could not have taken Pakistan out of the US orbit and into the Russian one no matter the degree of excitement he felt when meeting Vladimir Putin on the morning the 21st-century Ivan Konev drove his forces into Ukraine. Given the current closeness between Russia and China – and Islamabad’s multi-dimensional dependence on Beijing – there could not have been any wholehearted endorsement of US policy by Pakistan. But the Americans surely understand that. As they also know that with only about \$200-million trade between Pakistan and Russia, there is hardly anything the South Asian country can do to stiffen the sanctions regime.

To the US, Khan does not and never has posed the sort of threat that would have necessitated a regime-toppling effort. Within the country, he had become a loose cannon that could jeopardise the operations of the ship of state during a difficult passage through stormy waters. This is a phase in history when Pakistan, like India, has to manoeuvre with precision to safeguard its interests.

Can it be said that the conspiracy, if any, originated in Rawalpindi, not Washington? No one will perhaps ever know the truth.

According to the broad trend of independent opinion from across the border, the crisis erupted at a tricky moment for the military. Antipathy towards Khan was increasingly being directed at the army as well for installing and keeping in office a grossly incompetent prime minister. On the other hand, disgust at the military’s proclivity to grab power and make messes even messier had built up over the decades. The dam of respect that had held it back was about to be breached. The military, apparently, was not of a mind to mount a coup and invite more opprobrium.

Whatever be the truth about the army’s active participation in anti-Imran operations, that is less relevant than the manner in which it handled the reverberations. Its moves before Khan’s coup of April 3 and afterwards, have been sure-footed. While maintaining an overall posture of rectitude, the military top-brass flashed signals at just the right moments to keep national policy and politics on the tracks it prefers.

Even as Khan was boasting about being the only politician who had dared to confront the US, Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa was to tell a security conference that Pakistan had an excellent relationship with the superpower and had every intention of maintaining it. Immediately after Khan declared that the National Security Council had endorsed his assertion that a letter from Washington provided irrefutable evidence of his conspiracy charge, Inter-Services Public Relations issued a communique that had no mention of this letter being discussed. Khan still claimed that he had the army’s endorsement only for a top officer to deny it in a private briefing to the media.

The operations of this “guiding hand” certainly had political implications. Khan’s whole case, legal and political, was that the no-confidence motion was unmaintainable because it was the product of a US-backed conspiracy and thus violative of the country’s constitution. The “letter from Washington” was cited as evidence of this conspiracy. By rubbishing the letter and celebrating ties with the US, the army damaged this case severely.

That done, GHQ seemed content to let the judiciary perform its duties. A five-judge bench seemed to be taking inordinately long to settle what many senior advocates in the country believed was an open and shut case. To be fair to their lordships, they seemed to have moved with due deliberation, giving all sides a hearing so that they would not themselves be later accused of mounting a judicial coup.

From the long-term perspective, the verdict might itself be only a little more momentous than the processes through which it was wrought. For the first time in Pakistan’s history, the guardians (of the national interest and not the ideology on this occasion) seem to have done their job with a sense of responsibility and due seriousness. A dangerous megalomaniac had to be ousted from power and that outcome was achieved without the stench of direct intervention.

The writer is former editor of Mathrubumi and was a correspondent in Pakistan from 1990-93



RUCHI GUPTA

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS have effectively supplanted traditional information networks in India. The dialectical relationship between online content, traditional media and political networks means that the messages propagated online effectively touch even those who are not yet online.

This ubiquity could have been a golden moment for India — democratising access to information, fostering community, increasing citizen participation and reducing the distance between ordinary people and decision-makers. However, social media platforms have adopted design choices that have led to a proliferation and mainstreaming of misinformation while allowing themselves to be weaponised by powerful vested interests for political and commercial benefit. The consequent free flow of disinformation, hate and targeted intimidation has led to real-world harm and degradation of democracy in India: Mainstreamed anti-minority hate, polarised communities and sowed confusion have made it difficult to establish a shared foundation of truth.

Organised misinformation (disinformation) has a political and/or commercial agenda. However, even though there is growing recognition of the political motivations and impact of disinformation, the discourse in India has remained apolitical and episodic — focused on individual pieces of content and events, and generalised outrage against big tech instead of locating it in the larger political context or structural design issues. The evolution of the global discourse on misinfor-

Politics of disinformation

Current system of content moderation on social media is more of a PR exercise

mation too has allowed itself to get mired in the details of content standards, enforcement, fact checking, takedowns, deplatforming, etc — a framework which lends itself to bitter partisan contest over individual pieces of content while allowing platforms to disingenuously conflate the discourse on moderating misinformation with safeguards for freedom of expression. However, these issues are adjunct to the real issue of disinformation and our upcoming report establishes that the current system of content moderation is more a public relations exercise for platforms than being geared to stop the spread of disinformation.

A meaningful framework to combat disinformation at scale must be built on the understanding that it is a political problem: The issue is as much about bad actors as individual pieces of content. Content distribution and moderation are interventions in the political process. There is thus a need for a comprehensive transparency law to enforce relevant disclosures by social media platforms. Moreover, content moderation and allied functions such as standard setting, fact-checking and de-platforming must be embedded in the sovereign bipartisan political process if they are to have democratic legitimacy. If this is not to degrade into legal sanction for government censorship, any regulatory body must be grounded in democratic principles — its own and of platforms.

Given the political polarisation in our country (and most others), the constitution of such a regulator and its operational legitimacy is difficult. However, the failure of a po-

larised political ecosystem to come to a consensus is not a free pass for the platforms. Platforms are responsible for the speed and spread of distribution of disinformation and the design choices, which have made disinformation ubiquitous and indistinguishable from vetted information. It is thus the responsibility of the platforms to tamp down on the distribution of disinformation and their weaponisation. We argue that platforms are sentient about the users and content they are hosting and bear responsibility for their distribution choices. Moreover, just as any action against content is seen as an intervention in the political process, the artificial increase in distribution of content (amplification) too has political and commercial value.

We recommend three approaches to distribution that can be adopted by platforms: Constrain distribution to organic reach (chronological feed); take editorial responsibility for amplified content; or amplify only credible sources (irrespective of ideological affiliation). The current approach to misinformation that relies on fact-checking a small subset of content in a vast ocean of unreviewed content is inadequate for the task and needs to be supplemented by a review of content creators itself.

Finally, as the country with the largest youth population in the world, it is important that we actively think of how we want our youth to engage in our democratic processes and the role of social media platforms in it. There are three notable effects of social

media on our politics, which require deliberation.

First, social media has led to a dislocation of politics with people weighing in on abstractions online while being disengaged from their immediate surroundings. Second, social media has led to a degradation of our political discourse where serious engagement has been supplanted by “hot takes” and memes. Third, it has obscured the providence of consequential interventions in our political discourse because of opacity in technology.

Meaningful politics, especially in democracies, is rooted in local organisation, discussion and negotiation. However, the structure of social media has facilitated a perception of engagement without organisation, action without consequence. This wasn’t and isn’t inevitable — there are more thoughtful ways to structure platforms, which would help connect and root people in their own communities instead of isolating them locally while “connecting” them virtually.

Instead of moving towards more grounded communities, there is an acceleration towards greater virtuality through “metaverse”. Social media cannot be wished away. But its structure and manner of use are choices we must make as a polity after deliberation instead of accepting as them fait accompli or simply being overtaken by developments along the way.

Gupta is founder, of the Future of India Foundation

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IMRAN’S EXIT

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Imran Khan goes, kicking & screaming’ (IE, April 10). As anticipated, Pakistan PM Imran Khan was removed from office through a no-confidence vote. His ouster more than a year ahead of elections expected by next summer comes at a time of mounting economic challenges for the country.

The nuclear-armed nation is in the midst of a \$6 billion loan programme from the IMF that has involved unpopular measures including increases in utilities prices. His promise to create a “Naya Pakistan”, was dogged economic mismanagement as his government battled depleting foreign exchange reserves and double-digit inflation. Now, the whole world is watching to see that who will be next PM of an economically and administratively torn country and whether unlike all of his predecessors since 1947, he will be able to bring the nation, out of the clutches of extremists and army generals and succeeds.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

WORK TOGETHER

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘If SC takes up all issues, what are LS, RS there for: CJI’ (IE, April 8). Chief Justice of India NV Ramana must have made two pithy statements not in passing but in all seriousness as the SC must have felt the alleged dereliction of duty on the part of our elected representatives and the alleged unsavoury attitude of the government in some cases. In order to avoid such unedifying situations in the future,

all three wings need to have broadened outlook and open mind to see and agree on what is good for the country.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

HIGH-HANDED

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Look out, look in’ (April 9). That the government routinely uses central investigative agencies to settle scores against dissenters is unfortunately not a new development. Its suspicion of “foreign” interference is well known. However, the CBI’s defiance of the Delhi court’s order clearing Aakar Patel for travel abroad smacks of high-handedness and contempt for the judicial process. The message sent couldn’t be clearer: Toe the line or else.

Ila Railkar, Mumbai

EC’S ABDICATION

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘ECI to SC: No power to check parties, governments from promising freebies’ (IE, April 10). The Election Commission is cleverly avoiding its responsibility of ensuring free and fair elections. The irrational offer of freebies certainly vitiates the sanctity of the election process. In one sense, it is also a crime. The offence attracts Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code because the political party concerned allured voters to cast votes in its favour knowing full well that freebies as promised shall not be given. The financially weak voters become the worst sufferers. How long shall the EC remain indifferent about this matter?

Arun Gupta, Kolkata

8

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

You have to be different from the person whom you are going to take on. If you are little Modis, then people will already reference Modi, who is in the stratosphere...telling them about his dictatorial tendencies won't hold

Vandita Mishra: You quote VS Naipaul on the art of non-seeing, something you have raged against. Fighting for lost causes seems to agree with you as the cover has a photograph of you and your wife, you are smiling...Looking back, what are the moments that made you smile like this?

I don't have any particular story in my mind but I do remember the special bonds that I forged over time as a journalist. Similarly, in government, there were just one or two dramatic occasions. But what matters are bonds. I'm absolutely certain that if I were in need and I rang up any one of my friends with whom I have worked, they would go out of their way to help me.

Vandita Mishra: Considering all the big cases that you fought — the undertrials, Kamala, Bhagalpuri blindings and Bofors — these could be grist for the mill of whataboutery. People could say that the Indira, Rajiv or VP Singh government, too, responded with obfuscation and saw conspiracy theories behind dissent. What's different about this Government?

The answer is the scale. Murder has always been going on but slaughter is a different dimension. Yes, there were lies on Bofors but today, you have to search for a truthful statement on everything, not just GDP figures. Similarly, electoral bonds are nothing but institutionalised corruption.

The second most visible differentiator is the fact that the BJP is working according to an ideology. And it is our great failing, including mine, to have not studied it. The RSS ideology, since Dr Hedgewar's time in the 1930s, is single-minded, defining Hindus as those who follow Hinduism, who subscribe to thousands of years of culture, who are purist and reject other influences.

The third difference is technology by which BJP cadres amplify what anyone says. Then somebody else says the same thing and it becomes the new normal. Sometimes, people don't work out the implications of a stray statement. For instance, while launching the hologram of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Our nation is thousands of years old." If that be the case, then the question would automatically arise, how is Gandhiji the father of the nation? Now, this question was actually raised soon after Gandhi's assassination in 1948 but died down following charges of conspiracy against the RSS. Now it is being revived. This is very significant because Panditji (Jawaharlal Nehru) is not, I repeat, not the problem for this government. But Gandhiji is. So, after the erasure of Panditji, it will be the erasure of Gandhiji. Somebody might just say, how is Gandhi the father of the nation, efface him. Ours is a motherland, how can it have a father?

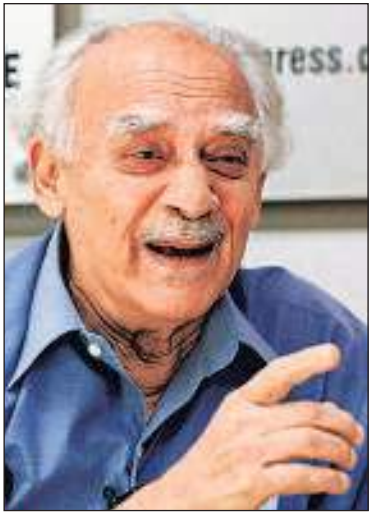
Ritu Sarin: As an editor, you've been a conscience keeper and activist. And in the Zail Singh episode, you seem like a participant in politics. Is it possible for editors to play this role now?

When I was working in *The Indian Express*, nobody recognised me as a journalist. When I was in government, nobody recognised me as a politician. But I did stand up for what I felt was wrong. I remember the time when Tarlochan Singh (then President Zail Singh's aide) had asked me whether the dismissal (of then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by Zail Singh following their tension) would happen. And I had given all my reasons as to how it would be unconstitutional. Whether I was with the paper (*The Indian Express*) or not, I would still have rushed to Rashtrapati Bhavan the way I did. Gianiji, too, did not think that an editor had come though he must have felt that he (Shourie) had brought *sneh* (affection) and a message, that the earlier message had been rescinded. But other than that, he would just say, a Punjabi has come.

Ritu Sarin: How would you like people to remember you as, considering you joined the Government...and there is a bit of a defensiveness there?

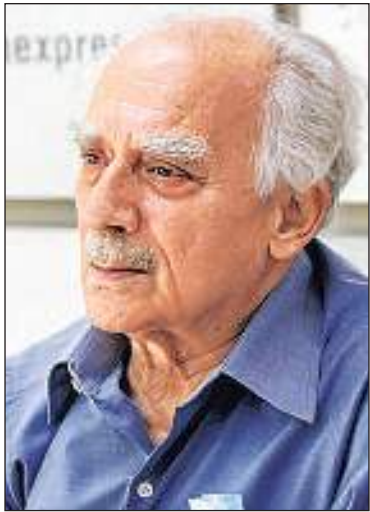
No defensiveness but I would be known only as Aditi's father. I don't think I'm priding myself for it or anything but when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was PM, the personnel supervisor at the Parliament security gate emptied me, saying, "Shourie *saab*, your identity is not of a minister, we read your articles in college." It was an important lesson that we should not become our jobs and worry about the perks that go as the froth subsidies. I was inspired by my father, who, at 75, taught himself painting. He was a one-man Common Cause and until 94, was as active as anybody else.

Vandita Mishra: These days the government can go straight to people using technologies and social media.



WHY **ARUN SHOURIE**

As editor of *The Indian Express*, Arun Shourie had taken on the Indira Gandhi government during the Emergency. In his latest book, *The Commissioner for Lost Causes* (Penguin), Shourie, who went on to serve as a Union minister in the Vajpayee Cabinet, documents his work as an editor that unsettled governments, institutions and systems. Be it freeing 40,000 undertrials, uncovering the Bhagalpur blindings, nailing corruption lies and unmasking the establishment, he faced punishing consequences but never traded his integrity, one that has made him one of the few World Press Freedom Heroes of our time



No one knew Kejriwal in 2013 but Modi was studying him. He asked IT wizard Rajesh Jain to come to Delhi and study AAP's campaign methods. Modi recognised that AAP's door-to-door approach was worth studying

‘Everybody can be instigated...people haven’t shifted, the lid has been lifted’

Arun Shourie on his days at *The Indian Express*, what's changed since then, what's new about the current establishment, the media's challenges and the weakening of institutions. The session was moderated by Vandita Mishra, National Opinion Editor



Vandita Mishra, National Opinion Editor, in conversation with Arun Shourie at *The Indian Express* office Abhinav Saha

What are the media's challenges now?

We are not important to the government. So, the government should not be important to us in our writing also. The best stories in this newspaper have been done by field reporters or by getting documents out through RTI or otherwise. Those things are in spite of the government, not because of the government.

However, a few years from now, even the few freedoms we have for occasionally doing a story that's inconvenient to the government will not be there.

Therefore, we must find ways to disseminate news. We must now set up networked groups in which people collect information and disseminate it one at a time.

Coomi Kapoor: What would you say was more rewarding and impactful: journalism or politics?

I don't know about the impact but both periods were interesting and exciting because of two individuals. It would be Ramnathji (Ramnath Goenka) for journalism and Vajpayeeji for politics. I liked whatever I was doing at that point of time. It's not one or the other. Both roles came to me by happenstance. I'll quote Ghalib here: *Lai hayat aae qaza le chali chale/apni khushi na aaye, apni khushi chale* (Came with life, will go with death).

Vandita Mishra: When you fought pitched battles with the government, the court would act as a friend of the Press. Now with institutional authority waning, how do you see the challenge?

The investigative institutions, the police, in fact all institutions are in a very bad way and the challenge is infinitely greater. Ramnathji would always say, "Nahin, abhi hathiyaar chhodne ki koi zaroorat nahin hai, court hai (there's no need to drop your weapon, the court is still around)!" Now, whether the court is there or not, one judge can speak in favour, the other may not.

As journalists, we can keep a hawk's eye on institutions, particularly the financial, regulatory institutions and even the RBI, regardless of the growth figures they give out. It's an absolute scandal. If you read the speech the late Arun Jaitley gave while introducing the Bankruptcy Bill, the resolution limit was 90 days. Yet cases are pending at the NCLT for years. Every reform has been proclaimed as great and nobody sees what's happening on the ground.

Vandita Mishra: You argue that in reportage or commentary, you should not be giving all sides of the story, you form a conclusion and give it to the reader. What about the middle ground in the time of polarisation?

This is one of the pills for laziness. Our job is to look at the facts and report them as we see them at that time. Maybe we will be wrong, we'll correct them later or somebody else will point out the facts. Let's take

the hijab controversy in Karnataka. You have a wonderful article of Faizan Mustafa and then you give a contrarian column on the other side. You are giving analytical pieces on different viewpoints. But as far as facts are concerned, there can be no middle ground.

Ritu Sarin: Did you struggle with confidentiality issues while writing this book? Did you debate whether discussions should be outed given the fact that Ramnathji is no more?

No, I did not struggle at all. I remember being criticised over my account of a lunch with the then Karnataka Chief Minister Gundu Rao. I had asked him, "What do you feel about Mrs Gandhi?" He said, "She can give me the keys and go to sleep." I wrote about what transpired but the then editor Nihal Singh decided not to publish it on grounds of privacy. So, I sent it to (MJ) Akbar and he published it in *Sunday* magazine. I sent our resident editor E Raghavan back to Gundu Rao, telling him to ask Rao not to contradict for I could have recorded that conversation. Gundu Rao did not contradict but said the revelation was wrong as the information was a matter of privacy. I am nobody's confidante. It may not be the right attitude and you should not have it, provided you don't mind losing friends. If the matter is of public concern, then your account is your little contribution, maybe just a comma in the writing of history.

Vandita Mishra: In the book, you quote Gandhiji as saying that the adage, *yatha raja tatha praja* (as is the king, so are the subjects), is just half the truth. It is also *yatha praja tatha raja* (as are the subjects, so is the king). Do you think that people have changed and are endorsing polarising politics?

People have not shifted but they have been instigated. For example, there was anti-Semitism all over Europe, below the surface, for 2,000 years. But when you scratched it, almost everybody participated in identifying and isolating the Jews. We



saw how old animosities were fanned during the break-up of Czechoslovakia or among Trumpists. Then you have a mob and with state protection, there's no limit. Everybody can be instigated to beat up small, poor people in the name of any big cause. People haven't shifted but the lid has been lifted. Be it the *namaaz* row in Haryana or the hijab controversy in Karnataka, their echo reached UP where elections were due. This is part of the BJP's technique.

Shyamal Yadav: The BJP is an election-winning machine. Can a challenge come to it from outside or inside?

Not from the inside. It's no longer a party but an electoral machine. It has a *sadhan* (resource) which the others don't have and that is the cadre of the RSS. The RSS is rationalising that its agenda is being carried out. Besides, the top leadership of the RSS is now just the *mukhota* (facade). The second-rung leadership and the cadres have all been co-opted by Mr Modi and are now his army. The only possibility of a challenge is external, if other parties join forces.

Anant Goenka: Do you believe that the mainstream media is to blame for not addressing majoritarian insecurity? Would that be one of the reasons why the BJP strategy is working so well?

Yes. Nobody in the mainstream media or in the academic community has looked at the primary literature of the RSS. So that neglect of ours has certainly contributed to the current state of affairs. We are surprised by what is happening while they are correct in saying, "*Hum jo kehte hain wohi karte hain*" (We do what we say)." But we were not listening.

Second, we did not pay attention to the people they have mobilised. For instance, we talk to ourselves in very small circles. But the RSS has been working since the 1940s to bring into its fold groups like the *sadhus*. They are influential in society but it never occurred to us to reach out to them and make sure that they do not become the instruments for things that are, let's say

non-Hindutva. In our neglect, they have become easy prey for others.

Anant Goenka: For instance, the emotions of the Kashmiri Pandits and the way they have been brought out by one film. Do you think the mainstream media has ignored the issue?

I am not a very good reader of newspapers, so I don't want to comment. But in this art of not-seeing, we don't want to look at what's happening. Kashmiri Pandits would have suffered from the same aversion to seeing the facts. Not that they were singled out.

Rakesh Sinha: What is the difference between the Opposition of a majority government like Rajiv Gandhi and the Opposition now?

I was interacting more with the government than with the Opposition. The selective bias was maybe because of the people I was meeting. Also, governments are so much larger in our mental space than the Opposition.

Still, I will say, it's not as if the country is in peril. Each of you (Opposition/regional leaders) as individuals are in peril. So at least for that reason, get together. Gulliver was brought down by Lilliputians. But that's not just going to be by stitching together. Each Opposition leader is a formidable figure in his/her state. Most leaders have a good organisation, reach; some of them have a reputation of doing good. But in the end, you have to be different from the person whom you are going to take on. If you are little Modis, then people will already reference Modi, who is a very big figure in the stratosphere. If the local ruler is as authoritarian or as oriented and if the government is as personality-oriented in that state, then to tell the voter about Modi's dictatorial tendencies won't hold. One has to be different.

Shubhra Gupta: How do you see polarisation playing out till the end? Is there a way where people with different ideologies can start having conversations?

The pattern is being set by people at the top that unless you are the sole of my foot, you are my enemy. This whole fanning of social media to abuse somebody is being done from the top. That is what is leading to polarisation. We should maintain our friendships, this politics is not that important. Why lose your friendship on that count? Nothing is going to change because of our opinions expressed to each other. So why make them so important in our lives? It's up to us to defeat the designs of the government which wants to polarise us.

The second factor is that we must not give currency to labels. This is a bad habit acquired from the Communists. You are rightist, I will not examine your facts. Now it has become generic to the entire society. Whether I am for or against the

PM, please examine the facts.

Shyamal Majumdar: You talked about regulators and how they have been almost hollowed out. Many people say that the RBI has become the cheerleader of the government. Others say it is being pragmatic. Your views?

It has become a cheerleader... The fact that people like Raghuram Rajan and Urjit Patel were removed or it was made difficult for them to continue shows the attempt to reduce the RBI to yet another instrument of power.

Narender Singh: Do you ever regret joining the BJP? Wasn't it in the making, whatever is happening today?

Not as long as Mr Vajpayee was there. Maybe it was my blindness but I was very focussed on him and the work that I was assigned. He had a way of dealing with contentious issues. I remember the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Kuala Lumpur, where I was the Minister accompanying Atalji. At a press conference, after which he was to meet Sri Lankan leaders, somebody asked him to comment on the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's (VHP's) call for a *shila puja* in Ayodhya. Atalji simply said, "*Ayodhya walo se hum Dilli jakar milenge, abhi toh hum Lanka walo se milne ja rahe hain*" (I will address Ayodhya concerns in Delhi, now I have to meet the Lankans)." And he deflected the issue.

Rakesh Sinha: How do you see Rahul Gandhi and the Congress? Is there an issue or has the BJP been successful in shrinking him?

I don't know Rahul Gandhi but the thing is he has stood up for the right issues against the government. This is not what I expected when he came into public life. He may be restricting himself to social media and may not have a mass base but he has taken up issues of considerable importance, much more than regional leaders. Maybe he should be the spokesman of the party and not someone who is running it.

Modi is a 24x7 politician, always devoting time to organisational matters in the party and listening to partymen. Congressmen have complained they don't get appointments with the leadership. The problem with the Congress is not ideology or G 23, it is the fact that its cadre has disappeared. That is why Modi is concerned about AAP and not anybody else, because that party just has volunteers signing up. I remember I was in Ahmedabad in 2013 and no one knew Kejriwal. But Modi was studying him and he asked IT wizard Rajesh Jain to come to Delhi and study AAP's campaign methods. Modi recognised that AAP's door-to-door approach was worth studying. After Punjab, AAP may very well form the government in Himachal, it might be formidable in Haryana. And even if it gets 15 seats in Gujarat, it's a victory.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2022

ECONOMY

INVEST RS 7,707 CRORE IN DOMESTIC EQUITIES

A first in 6 months: Mkt fall a chance to buy dips, FPIs turn buyers in Apr so far

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 10

AFTER MASSIVE net outflows to the tune of Rs 1.48 lakh crore from equities in the last six months from October 2021 to March 2022, foreign portfolio investors have turned net buyers in April so far by infusing Rs 7,707 crore in domestic equities (including secondary and IPO markets).

FPIs also put in Rs 1,403 crore in the debt markets during the period under review, after pulling out a net Rs 8,705 crore in the last two months (February and March), according to NSDL data. With this, total FPI investment is Rs 8,276 crore in April so far.

Foreign investors withdrew a net Rs 1.4 lakh crore from equities in the entire FY22. Despite the FPI pullout, the NSE Nifty rose 19 per cent in the same period, on the back of support from domestic in-



The BSE, Mumbai. Foreign investors withdrew net ₹1.4 lakh crore from equities in the entire FY22. *File*

stitutions and retail investors.

Analysts said FPIs have now factored in the US Federal Reserve move to tighten the monetary policy. The US central bank has hiked interest rates and indicated withdrawal of liquidity from the system to fight inflation. FPI outflows were largely on the back of anticipation of rate

hike by the US Federal Reserve, and later, due to the deteriorating geopolitical environment following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

However, analysts said it would still be slightly premature to call it a change in the FPI trend and it will be prudent to watch how the scenario unfolds over

EXPLAINED Recalibration exercise

THE INFLOW indicates that foreign investors are almost done with the recalibration exercise of their portfolios owing to the current scenario. Also, the recent correction in the equity markets have opened investment opportunities.

would have sought as a good entry point, he added.

FPIs had pulled out over Rs 50,000 crore in the month of March. As a result, forex reserves recorded the highest ever fall for the week ended April 1, sliding by \$11.173 billion to \$606.475 billion as the currency came under pressure due to geopolitical developments.

The steep fall in the foreign exchange reserves was because of a decline in the core currency assets, which declined by \$10.727 billion to \$539,727 billion. Typically, the RBI intervenes in the market to reduce volatility in the currency market by selling from its reserves kitty.

Shrikant Chouhan, head-equity research (retail), Kotak Securities, said FPIs flows are expected to remain volatile in the near term given the headwinds in terms of elevated crude prices and inflation, among others.

the next few weeks or months to get more clarity.

The inflow indicates that foreign investors are almost done with the recalibration exercise of their portfolios owing to the current scenario. Also, the recent correction in the equity markets have opened investment opportunities, which FPIs

EV retail sales zoom over three-folds in FY22: FADA

Electric vehicle (EV) retail sales in the country witnessed an over three-fold jump last fiscal with two-wheeler offtake leading the segment, according to FADA data



Total EV retails reached 4,29,217 units in 2021-22, a rise of three-fold from 1,34,821 units in the financial year 2020-21, according to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations

EV SALES had stood at 1,68,300 units in the 2019-20 fiscal, it noted. (FADA), electric passenger vehicle retail sales stood at 17,802 during the last fiscal, up over three-fold from 4,984 units in FY21

TATA MOTORS led the segment with retails of 15,198 units and a market share of 85.37 per cent in the vertical

Electric two-wheeler retail sales last fiscal stood at 2,31,338 units, a jump of over five-fold from 41,046 units in 2020-21

Source: FADA/PTI

LENDER REFUTES ALL ALLEGATIONS

Kotak Mahindra Bank staffer arrested over 'cheating' allegations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 10

THE LONAVALA City Police on Saturday arrested a bank employee for allegedly being involved in a case of cheating and forgery while giving a loan to a Lonavala-based hotelier.

The accused has been identified as Alankar Khare, a loan officer of Kotak Mahindra Bank.

The arrest came a day after an FIR was registered against seven officials of Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd including Uday Kotak, Vally Fernandes, Samprat Kamat, Amber Darbari, Pramod Krupal, Alankar Khare and Abhijeet Magar.

Kotak Mahindra Bank has, however, refuted all the allegations, terming them to be false. "A borrower at our Lonavala Branch has filed an FIR naming Kotak Mahindra Bank officials at the

Lonavala Police Station wherein he has made false allegations in the context of his borrowing transactions. The bank acted in accordance with the prevailing law and processes at all times. We are co-operating with the local authorities," said Rohit Rao, spokesperson, Kotak Mahindra Group.

According to the the FIR was registered based on a complaint filed by hotelier Ashok Purohit, who alleged that the accused cheated him by using documents with forged signature. "We have arrested one of the staffers and are probing if there was any forgery, as alleged..." said Pune Rural Superintendent of Police Abhinav Deshmukh. Meanwhile another official said Uday Kotak's name has been added in the FIR even as so far no direct involvement of Kotak has come into the probe.

The transactions allegedly took place between 2014 and 2020.

Musk's agenda: Shaking up Twitter 'Blue' subscription

REUTERS
BENGALURU, APRIL 10

ELON MUSK, Twitter Inc's biggest shareholder, Saturday suggested a raft of changes to the social media giant's Twitter Blue premium subscription service, including slashing its price, banning advertising and giving an option to pay in the cryptocurrency dogecoin.

Musk, who disclosed a 9.2 per cent stake in Twitter just days ago, was offered a seat on its board.

Twitter Blue, launched last June, is its first subscription service and offers "exclusive access to premium features" on a monthly subscription basis, Twitter says. In a Twitter post, he suggested that users who sign up for Twitter Blue should pay significantly less than the current \$2.99 a month, and should get an authentication checkmark as well as an option to pay in local currency.

MARKET WATCH

FOUR OF TOP 10 COS LOSE ₹1L CR IN M-CAP

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of four of the 10 most valued firms tumbled Rs 1,05,848.14 crore last week, with TCS and Infosys emerging the biggest laggards. The market valuation of RIL eroded Rs 25,503.68 crore and that of Bajaj Finance dipped Rs 2,999.9 crore. PTI

INTERVIEW WITH RACHEL KYTE

'India should be a hugely investable proposition for the rest of the world'

'Cost of not doing anything is way higher'



Rachel Kyte

Your views on India's approach at Glasgow, the early commitment on renewables and the subsequent intervention on phasing down coal?

I think what was really very strong about Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi's announcement in Glasgow was the 50% of energy coming through renewables by 2030. Because that is really ambitious... On the debate over the phased out or phase down (of coal), that I understood very much to be the China and India perspective; look, we've made our commitments. How we get there is our business. So you're not going to micromanage us. I mean, that's what I saw... Now, of course, India wants a lot of investment coming in as well. And it needs that investment in order to make sure that the grid is smart enough to absorb all the renewables to speed up the transition and to help with the social disruption of the transition and to help establish scale and speed perhaps in green hydrogen or whatever.

And India should be a hugely investable proposition for the rest of the world. Because I think we've got to make sure that India becomes a green powerhouse...

But I think there's this general understanding of the country like India, you can't get out of coal tomorrow, right? And that has to be a managed transition with huge social implications, and that India should get help with that. So the South Africa deal is important... Then as a community, the focus can be on how to replicate South Africa in other coal dependent economies (the US, the UK, France, Germany and the European Union have pledged upwards of 8.5 billion dollars to help South Africa finance a quicker transition from coal). So there's a coalition being built to support Indonesia and then Vietnam. India is a little different. India doesn't need an international coalition... But India wants the support to take along side. And that's what John Kerry and everybody has got to do.

There are multiple paradoxes in the transition itself. For

instance, the wind, solar and wind have gotten cheaper, electric vehicles are being pushed, but all of the minerals that are needed for these transitions are expensive and their exploitation degrades the environment. Be it copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt or silicon. And the war in Ukraine has complicated supply chains further. Also, India's EV push is not the same as in Norway, where 99 per cent of the electricity is hydro?

So first of all, the solar supply chains are highly dependent on one region in China. The war in the Russian invasion of Ukraine has also brought all the way to the top of the agenda, people's nervousness around sovereignty of supply chains, right and having supply security. That supply chain is also disrupted. Because of Covid, and because of events in China, and now the war. So just at the time when we want to ramp up, we've realized that we've got this highly dependent supply chain with problems added, which is entirely disruptive. You're beginning to see effects of inflation on the renewable energy market as well.

We're just starting to see prices of solar PV and wind go up again, for the first time in 10 years like this. Then you've got the commodity supply chains into the electric mobility revolution. And then I think, again, there's a security of supply issue, the dominance of China.

Also, the very vulnerable and weak governance regimes in some of the places that we depend upon (for supplies). Yeah, so of course, the answer to all of this is innovation. So in innovating, you need less lithium or whatever. And you're obviously recycling the circular economy, the extent to which you can recycle. As we discover a strategic dependency, then, you know, how do you get around that? So, I don't think it's easy at all. And the frustrating thing from the point of view of the scientists is that they've been warning us for 30 years. We didn't do anything. So now we've got to get our act together really quickly to get out of this mess...

FULL INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com

BRIEFLY

FM, PSB meet

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to meet heads of public sector banks (PSBs) on April 23 to review performance of lenders and progress made by them on various schemes launched by the government for revival of the economy battered by Covid.

Gold imports

New Delhi: India's gold imports, which have a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), rose by 33.34 per cent to \$46.14 billion during the 2021-22 fiscal on account of higher demand, as per official data.

Discoms' dues

New Delhi: COAI has said spectrum pricing should be kept conducive to market conditions as 5G entails up-front capital investments and pricing radiowaves high will only push players up against the wall. PTI

UNIFIED PAYMENT INTERFACE RECENTLY CROSSED \$1-TRILLION MARK IN TRANSACTION VALUES FOR FY22

UPI spreads, but with banking access limited, friendships foster

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

SUBHASH SINGH, a vegetable seller in New Delhi's Lajpat Nagar, is not a user of the Unified Payment Interface (UPI), yet a chunk of his daily earnings happen on the platform. He has been parking his cart in front of a grocery store for about two years now, and in the process, has befriended the store owner who accepts UPI payments on his behalf.

As the coronavirus pandemic hit India, Singh says, more people have started paying digitally through UPI. That was when he realised that he had to find a way to accept these payments. But, there was a problem: Singh does not have the digital literacy to operate a smartphone because of which he has never purchased a smartphone and more importantly, he does not have a bank account — two key requisites to join the UPI ecosystem right now. While the

Reserve Bank of India has said that it will launch a version of UPI called UPI123Pay for feature phones without internet access, having a bank account is still necessary to use the service. "My family depends on my daily earnings. Whatever I earn today, we end up finishing a large part of it today and we don't have any savings. So there has never been a need to open a bank account," Singh said when asked why he did not have a bank account. Singh is not alone. According to a 2018 World Bank report, around 190 million Indians did not have a bank account.

Realising Singh's problems, Rajendra Chaudhary, who owns the grocery store right behind where Singh parks his vegetable cart in Lajpat Nagar's H block, offered to take UPI payments on his behalf. He claims that there is nothing in it for him, and he is helping Singh because the two of them have become friends. "I saw he did not have any equipment to use UPI and because his cart was



Subhash Singh (left), a vegetable seller, with Rajendra Chaudhary, a grocery store owner who helps him with UPI payments. Soumyarendra Barik

parked in front of my store all the time, I offered to help him after he asked me about UPI when several

of his customers insisted on paying online," Chaudhary said. UPI recently crossed the \$1-

trillion mark in transaction values for the financial year 2021-22 after the payments system crossed 5 billion transactions in a month for the first time in March, marking a major landmark for the flagship payments architecture which has gained significant momentum in adaptation in the last few years.

The payments system, developed and managed by the National Payments Corporation of India, commands a lion's share in the volume of total retail payments made in the country. According to a Macquarie Securities report, in FY22, around 60 per cent of the volume of India's retail payments were done through UPI. The platform is also expected to have played a key role in increasing the adoption of digital payments in the country. The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) digital payments index (DPI) for September 2021 stood at 304.06 compared to 270.59 in March 2021.

UPI is used by more than 500

million users, but even as a percentage of the population remains to be onboarded to the platform, it is fueling unlikely friendships on the streets — between merchants who currently use UPI and those who don't. Singh says that on average, he earns around Rs 600 every day, and more than half of that — close to Rs 400 — comes to him via UPI. At the end of each day, he sits down with Chaudhary, the store owner, who maintains a logbook of the payments he receives on UPI on behalf of Singh and gives him the amount for each day in cash. This has made Singh and Chaudhary close friends, he says.

"I was even invited to his daughter's wedding last year. That is what happens when you can trust someone with your money, and in my case, a majority of my earnings sit with Rajendra (Chaudhary) throughout the day," Singh told The Indian Express.

Rinku Yadav, a hawkler in Lajpat Nagar's Central Market who sells

socks and handkerchiefs, has befriended Saurav Aggarwal, a competitor who sells the same items, for accepting UPI payments on behalf of him. He says that despite the threat of being rivals on the street, Aggarwal has agreed to help him with digital payments given the sheer number of people who prefer paying through UPI. Like Singh, the vegetable vendor, Yadav too doesn't own a smartphone or have a bank account. "A majority of my customers prefer paying through UPI, it has been like that for over two years now. I don't think people are carrying a lot of cash these days even when they visit markets," Yadav told The Indian Express.

"Even though Saurav (Aggarwal) sells the same things as me, he recognises that if I don't accept digital payments, I will not make much money in a day which is why he takes payments on my behalf. We may be rivals on the ground, but UPI has made us good friends," he added.

TOPOF THE WORLD



Australian PM Scott Morrison

AUSTRALIA PM Morrison calls May 21 election

AUSTRALIA'S PRIME minister has called for a May 21 election that will be fought on issues including Chinese economic coercion, climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic. Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Sunday advised Governor-General David Hurley as representative of Australia's head of state, Queen Elizabeth II, to set the election date. Morrison's conservative coalition is seeking a fourth three-year term. The date is the latest available to him. He urged voters to stick with a government that delivered one of the lowest Covid death tolls of any major economy rather than risk the Opposition Labour Party.

AP

CHINA

Shanghai boosts supplies, 11,000 Covid patients discharged

SHANGHAI ON Sunday discharged over 11,000 recovered Covid-19 patients and health authorities emphasised that they must be allowed to return home despite the lockdown that has severely restricted movement in China's largest city. City authorities also said they have secured daily supplies for residents from online platforms, according to newspaper *Global Times*, following complaints about deliveries of food and other basic necessities as the lockdown enters its third week.

AP

USA

Two killed in shooting at nightclub

GUNFIRE at a Cedar Rapids, Iowa, nightclub left two people dead and 10 wounded early on Sunday, authorities said. Police said in a news release that the shooting happened shortly before 1.30 am at the Taboo Nightclub and Lounge, and that officers who were patrolling downtown were able to respond quickly. The police didn't say whether there was one or more suspected shooters, what might have led to the shooting or whether they had arrested anyone, but they said there was no lingering threat to public.

CRISIS IN SRI LANKA

Tamil alliance says ready to back Opp in no-confidence vote against Gotabaya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COLOMBO, APRIL 10

SRI LANKA'S main Tamil party, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), said on Sunday that it is ready to support the Opposition in moving a no-confidence motion against the government of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and is prepared to impeach the embattled leader.

Sri Lanka's main Opposition party, the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) on Friday announced that it will move a no-confidence motion against the



Pressure has been mounting on Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa amid the economic crisis

government of Gotabaya as it has failed to take steps to address the concerns of the public amid the economic crisis.

FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Macron, far-right rival Le Pen set for runoff

JOHN LEICESTER & THOMAS ADAMSON PARIS, APRIL 10

FRENCH POLLING agency projections show President Emmanuel Macron and far-right rival Marine Le Pen leading in the first round of France's presidential election.

If borne out by official results, the two will advance to a presidential runoff on April 24 with strong echoes of their last face-



Macron greets supporters after voting, in Le Touquet, France, on Sunday.

off in the 2017 election. The projections show Macron with a

comfortable first-round lead Sunday of 27-29% support, ahead of Le Pen, who is expected to capture 23-24% of the vote.

But the second round is likely to be tight.

The election's result will impact Europe's direction as it tried to contain Russia and the havoc wreaked by Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine. The April 24 runoff appears set to pit the centrist president seeking to modernise the economy and strengthen European coop-

eration against the nationalist Le Pen, who has seen a popularity boost after tapping into voter anger over rising inflation.

In 2017, Macron trounced Le Pen by a landslide to become France's youngest modern president. That win for the former banker — now 44 — was seen as a victory against populist, nationalist politics, coming in the wake of Donald Trump's election to the White House and Britain's vote to leave the European Union, both in 2016.

AP

Nepal bans import of luxury items as foreign exchange reserves decline

SHIRISH B PRADHAN KATHMANDU, APRIL 10

NEPAL'S CENTRAL bank has announced a ban on the import of vehicles and other luxury items, citing liquidity crunch and declining foreign exchange reserves, despite government assurances that the economy will not go into a tailspin like Sri Lanka.

Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), the country's central bank, issued this directive last week after a high-level meeting here consisting of officials from Nepal's commercial banks.

"We have been seeing symptoms that there may become kind of crisis in the economy, mainly because of growing imports. Therefore, we have discussed halting the imports of those items which are not immediately necessary," NRB spokesperson Gunakhar Bhatta said.

Since July 2021, Nepal has seen a decline in forex reserves due to the surging imports, declining inflows of remittance and meagre earnings from tourism and exports.

By February 2022, the Himalayan country's gross forex reserves had decreased 17 per cent to \$9.75 billion from \$11.75 billion in mid-July 2021, according to central bank figures.

The forex reserves are now only enough to sustain the import of goods and services for 6.7 months, below the central bank's target for at least seven months.

However, despite the high balance of payment deficit, Nepal's Finance Minister Janardhan Sharma assured that the Himalayan nation is not headed in the direction of Sri Lanka.

PTI

SPAIN

PROBE INTO BIG PVT TAXIDERMY MUSEUM

Spain's Civil Guard says it is investigating a businessman in the Valencia region who owned a private taxidermy collection with more than 1,000 stuffed animals, including over 400 from protected species and at least one specimen of a North African oryx, already extinct. The collection would fetch \$31.5 million on the black market, the Civil Guard said on Sunday.

Before ouster, Imran tried to sack Pak Army chief: reports



Security was tightened outside Pakistan's Parliament amid the trust vote that took place in the early hours of Sunday.

Reuters

SAJJAD HUSSAIN ISLAMABAD, APRIL 10

IMRAN KHAN, who was ousted as Pakistan's prime minister after losing a vote of no confidence in the early hours of Sunday, made a botched attempt to replace the country's Army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, ahead of the vote, multiple media reports indicated.

BBC Urdu reported that a helicopter carrying "two uninvited guests" landed at Khan's residence on Saturday night, and the two were escorted by Army soldiers to the interior of the palatial building. The two met alone for 45 minutes with Khan. The meeting was not held in a cordial atmosphere, the report said.

"The Prime Minister had issued orders an hour ago to remove one of the high officials who came to meet him. So the uninvited arrival of these guests was unexpected for the Prime Minister," according to the report.

It further said that Khan was expecting that the helicopter would bring his "newly appointed official", instead of the two that it actually brought.

The report also said that the attempted effort for a "change" failed as the Defence Ministry



Imran Khan

did not issue the necessary notification for the appointment.

The BBC did not identify the "uninvited guests", but it is believed that they were likely to have been General Bajwa and ISI chief Lt Gen Nadeem Ahmed Anjum.

The Army rejected the report and termed it a "typical propaganda" story. It said in a statement that the article was "totally baseless and a pack of lies".

Khan has also said there was no truth to reports that he was trying to remove the Army chief.

The *Express Tribune* newspaper reported that an emergency petition was filed in the Islamabad High Court on Saturday night seeking to restrain Khan from denotifying Gen Bajwa as Army chief. According to the petition, it was filed to "uphold the... mandatory constitutional provision with regard to identification of the term" of the Army chief.

Khan apparently lost support of the powerful Army after he refused to endorse the appointment of the ISI chief last year. He eventually relented, but it purportedly soured his ties with the army.

PTI

Frontrunner for next Pak PM seen as 'can-do' administrator

SYEDRAZA HASSAN & GIBRAN NAIYYAR PESHIMAM ISLAMABAD, APRIL 10

SHEHBAZ SHARIF, the person most likely to be Pakistan's next prime minister, is little known outside his home country but has a reputation domestically as an effective administrator more than as a politician.

The younger brother of three-time PM Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz, 70, led a successful bid by the Opposition in Parliament to topple Imran Khan in a no-confidence vote early on Sunday that Khan's supporters tried for hours to block.

Analysts say Shehbaz, unlike Nawaz, enjoys amicable relations with Pakistan's military.

Pakistan's generals have directly intervened to topple civilian governments three times, and no PM has finished a full five-year term since the country's independence.



Shehbaz Sharif

Khan's ouster was a chance to make a fresh start, Shehbaz, the joint Opposition candidate to replace Khan, told Parliament soon after the vote. "A new dawn has started... this alliance will rebuild Pakistan," he said.

Shehbaz is best known for his direct, "can-do" administrative style, which was on display when, as chief minister of Punjab province, he worked closely with China on Beijing-funded projects.

He also said in an interview last week that good relations with the United States were critical for Pakistan, in stark contrast to Khan's recently antagonistic relationship with Washington.

There are still several proce-

dural steps before Sharif can become Pakistan's 23rd PM, but the Opposition has consistently identified him as its sole candidate.

If he does take on the role, analysts say, Sharif will not act with full independence as he will have to work on a collective agenda with the others Opposition parties and his brother, Nawaz, who has been in London for the past two years.

As chief minister of Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province, Shehbaz Sharif planned and executed a number of ambitious infrastructure projects, including Pakistan's first modern mass transport system in Lahore.

According to local media, the outgoing Chinese consul general wrote to Sharif last year praising his "Punjab Speed" execution of projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor initiative. The diplomat also said Sharif and his party would be friends of China in government or in opposition.

REUTERS

The Eagle Has Landed author Jack Higgins dies at 92

ASSOCIATED PRESS LONDON, APRIL 10

BRITISH AUTHOR Jack Higgins, who wrote *The Eagle Has Landed* and other bestselling thrillers and espionage novels, has died. He was 92.

Publisher HarperCollins said that Higgins died at his home on the English Channel island of Jersey surrounded by his family.

Born Henry Patterson in in Newcastle, England, in July 1929, Higgins served in the military before studying sociology at the London School of Economics. He became a teacher in the northern city of Leeds and a writer in his spare time, with novels that sold modestly starting in the late 1950s.



Henry Patterson wrote under the pseudonym Jack Higgins

That changed with the 1975 publication of *The Eagle Has Landed*, about a fictional World War II plot to kidnap British Prime Minister Winston

Churchill. In a 2010 interview with *The Guardian*, Higgins recounted a pivotal call from his accountant.

"He asked me what I wanted

to get out of my writing," Higgins said. "I replied that I wasn't really sure, before adding as a joke it would be nice to make a million by the time I retired. He then said: 'Well you're a bloody fool. Because you've just earned that much this week. So, what are you going to do about it?'"

He was advised to leave England because of 1970s taxation rates and settled with his family on Jersey.

The Eagle Has Landed became more popular after the 1976 film adaptation was released. Michael Caine, Donald Sutherland and Robert Duvall were among the stars of the eponymously named movie that was a box office success.

In a statement, HarperCollins chief executive Charlie

Redmayne said Higgins' death marked "the end of an era."

"I've been a fan of Jack Higgins for longer than I can remember. He was a classic thriller writer: instinctive, tough, relentless," he said.

"The Eagle Has Landed and his other Liam Devlin books, his later Sean Dillon series, and so many others were and remain absolutely unputdownable."

Patterson wrote nearly 80 books, most under the pseudonym of Jack Higgins. Other Higgins titles included *The Eagle Has Flown*, *Angel of Death*, *Day of Reckoning*, and *A Darker Place*.

According to his publisher's website, the novels have sold more than 250 million copies and been translated into dozens of languages.



PCB’s four-nation plan doesn’t find favour with ICC

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, APRIL 10

THE PAKISTAN Cricket Board’s (PCB) proposal to have an annual four-nation tournament which features Pakistan, India, Australia and England did not find favour with a majority of the International Cricket Council (ICC) members, it is learnt.

PCB’s chief Ramiz Raja had proposed the idea during the ICC board meeting in Dubai on Sunday and gave a detailed plan.

The Indian Express understands that a few boards did support the idea but majority were not in favour of it.

“He (Raja) spoke about at length but the majority felt it is important for boards to focus more on bilateral commitment. The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) members felt that going ahead they will only have the Asia Cup as a multi-team event in Asia and did not back the four-nation tournament,” a member, who attended the ICC meet said.

At the same time, other boards who didn’t feature in the proposal didn’t like PCB’s idea of going ahead with the tournament without them. Also, it was difficult to find space in the packed calendar.

“At the same time the Future Tours Programme is too tight, it’s hard to get in a new tournament at this stage for sure,” the member added.

In an interaction with this paper before the ICC tournament, Raja had stated that he was taking this proposal forward as an ICC Board member and not as a Pakistan Cricket Board chief.

“It’s not Us versus Them, it’s Us versus Us. The last great concept was the T20 World Cup, which was held in 2007. So nothing new has come since that 2007 event, and here’s an opportunity. This thing happens in rugby, so we have a precedent. I’m just hoping that we look at this concept as a cricketing concept and not as a political concept,” Raja had said.

India versus Pakistan bilateral cricket has come to a stop after India’s stand to not play until terror attacks are stopped on Indian territory. However, India does play Pakistan in ICC events and multilateral championships around the world. PCB chairman, Raja later in the day tweeted, “Great discussion regarding 4 Nations series today at the International Cricket Council meet. As a concept it was welcomed and debated upon and seen as promoting the interest of the game. Fingers crossed. More when I am back at the office tomorrow.”

International Cricket Council have left to its members to take the decision whether to have women Test matches or not.

A team like India doesn’t have a women’s Test match calendar as yet sadly. However, they have played Pink-ball Tests. In its press release, ICC informed that it has granted ODI status to a number of Associate members.



Ramiz Raja had proposed the idea during the ICC board meeting in Dubai on Sunday FILE

Great discussion regarding 4 Nations series today at the ICC meet. As a concept it was welcomed and debated upon and seen as promoting the interest of the game. (Fingers crossed emoji) More when I am back at the office tomorrow.

RAMIZ RAJA
PCB CHIEF, ON TWITTER

“Following the recent decision to expand the ICC Women’s Championship to 10 teams, the ICC Board approved a recommendation that One Day Internationals status be extended to a number of Associate Member women’s teams to enable them to progress to global qualifying events based on ODI rankings,” the International Cricket Council said in its press release. The International Cricket Council Board meeting agreed with the recommendation from the International Cricket Council Men’s Cricket Committee that more neutral match officials should be utilised as travel restrictions are lifted while building on the success of the use of home umpires.

In another decision, South Africa was confirmed as the host of the inaugural ICC U19 Women’s T20 World Cup 2023, to be staged in January next year as a 16-team, 41-match event.

Shah in committee

PTI adds: Board of Control for Cricket in India secretary Jay Shah is one of the new inductees in the International Cricket Council cricket committee with former Sri Lankan captain Mahela Jayawardene being reappointed as former player. New Zealand chief coach Gary Stead, International Cricket Council Elite Panel umpire Joel Wilson and Marylebone Cricket Committee representative Jamie Cox are also part of the panel.

Heartbreak, but future bright

India lose 0-3 to Netherlands in the semifinals of Junior Women's World Cup

MIHIR VASAVDA
APRIL 10

IF THE purpose of the Junior World Cup is to provide a peek into the future, then there are plenty of reasons for the Indians to get excited.

The under-21 side lost to The Netherlands 3-0 in the semifinals on Sunday, but the scoreline does not tell the entire story. For three-quarters of the match, India looked their technically-superior opponents in the eye, didn’t give them respect any more than what was needed and in the opening 15 minutes, even outplayed them. The tears streaming down the faces of the Indian players, and the relieved look on the Dutch faces after the full time provided a more accurate account of the match.

Heading into the tournament, The Netherlands, who’ve won the most number of titles (three) were the odds-on favourites to lift the trophy once again. They displayed that authority on field, swatting aside every opponent they had faced so much so that their goalkeepers barely had anything to do throughout the group stage – heading into this match, the Netherlands had gone four hours without conceding.

It would have been understandable if India would’ve felt slightly intimidated by Netherlands’ overwhelming supremacy but the batch of ’22 knows only one way to play – without any fear. That’s how they earlier defeated Germany, who hammered England 8-0 in the second semifinal.

And so, right from push back, they took the game to their opponents. Inside the opening 30 seconds itself, captain Salima Tete managed to create the first goal-scoring opportunity, firing a ball towards Mumtaz Khan who sliced it over the crossbar.

The Dutch had barely settled into the match and India created another glorious chance. Salima and Mumtaz combined again, minutes after the first attempt, but this time, Mumtaz’s shot hit the goal post. India went on to win three penalty corners in the opening exchanges.

India were causing the Netherlands more problems in the opening 15 minutes than they had faced in the entire tournament. Eric Wonink’s side did most things right – had more possession, better chances, and won penalty corners.

But they just couldn’t find the back of the net. Almost always, big teams will make you pay if the chances aren’t converted. It’s a lesson the under-21s learned the hard way. For, it did not take a lot for the Dutch to show their class.

18-pass goal by the Dutch

In the 12th minute, a Dutch defender picked up the ball near her ‘D’ and played it square to a teammate a couple of yards away.



India barely saw the ball in the second half and as a consequence, could neither create an opportunity for a field goal nor win any penalty corner. HOCKEYINDIA

It looked like a harmless pass but within seconds, it turned into something really dangerous for India.

They went back and forth at first, moved from one flank to another as the ball exchanged sticks with precision and speed.

The Indian players were chasing shadows and before they knew it, a one-two near the ‘D’ from Luna Fokke to Noor Omrani sliced open the defence.

Omrani played a through ball towards Tessa Beetsma, who expertly slotted it beyond Bichu Kharibam. For all their dominance, India were the first to concede following this brilliant 18-pass move.

The Indian players, however, did not let their shoulders drop. Upfront, Sharmila Devi weaved her way past the Dutch defenders, spraying passes to the forwards.

Lalremisiami and Tete provided the thrust in the attacking third, where Beauty Dungdung and Sangeeta were a constant threat. Ishika Chaudhary and Priyanka made sure the backline did not lose its shape.

India showed enough resilience to keep the scoreline within their reach going into the final quarter but as the minutes were ticking by, especially in the third quarter, there was an increasing drop in their intensity. That’s where – during the third and fourth periods – India, as Wonink described, ‘let it slip’.

India barely saw the ball in the second

half and as a consequence, could neither create an opportunity for a field goal nor win any penalty corner.

In the final 15 minutes, as they tried to press forward in desperation, they left their defence vulnerable and the Netherlands were too clinical to let the opportunity slip by and settled the match with two quick goals.

Coaches often argue that results in tournaments like these, which are designed to develop players, are secondary. The performances, although, do give an indication of what the future could hold. In that sense, the Netherlands – who have now scored 46 goals in the Junior World Cup and conceded 0 – look on course to extending their dominance at the senior level.

India, a well-oiled unit, will hope the resilience shown by the players in this tournament will continue to reflect in the senior side, given more than half-a-dozen players have already made their international debuts.

All’s not lost yet, however. On Tuesday, India will take on England in the bronze medal playoff. It’s a repeat of the 2013 Junior World Cup third-place match.

Back then, India secured a first-ever podium finish, a performance that ushered in a new era for women’s hockey in India. Wonink will hope his team will carry forward that legacy.

Ferrari’s Leclerc claims thumping pole-to-flag win

REUTERS
MELBOURNE, APRIL 10

FERRARI’S Charles Leclerc claimed his second win of the Formula One season with a thumping, pole-to-flag victory at the Australian Grand Prix on Sunday as Red Bull’s world champion Max Verstappen suffered “deja vu” with another retirement.

Leclerc’s car was dominant on the up-graded Albert Park circuit as the Monaguesque sealed his fourth career win more than 20 seconds ahead of Red Bull’s runnerup Sergio Perez. Third-placed George Russell grabbed his second podium and first for Mercedes in an encouraging day for the struggling constructors’ champions. “What a race and what pace,” said a thrilled Leclerc on the team radio, having finished more than 20 seconds ahead of Perez in the 58-lap race. “The car was incredible today, well done guys.”

Winner of the season-opener in Bahrain, 24-year-old Leclerc has now built a 34-point lead over Russell to emerge as early favourite for the drivers’ championship. Ferrari’s celebrations were tempered by Carlos Sainz crashing out shortly after the start, while four-times world champion Sebastian Vettel of Aston Martin crashed his car on his return after missing the opening races due to COVID-19.

Verstappen was second behind Leclerc when his RB18 car suffered a reliability problem and rolled to a halt during his 39th lap with smoke billowing.

“I smell some weird fluid,” said the Dutchman before coming to a stop at turn two. Yet he would have had little hope of reeling in Leclerc. “I knew I could not fight Charles so there was no point to try and put pressure on him,” Verstappen told Sky.

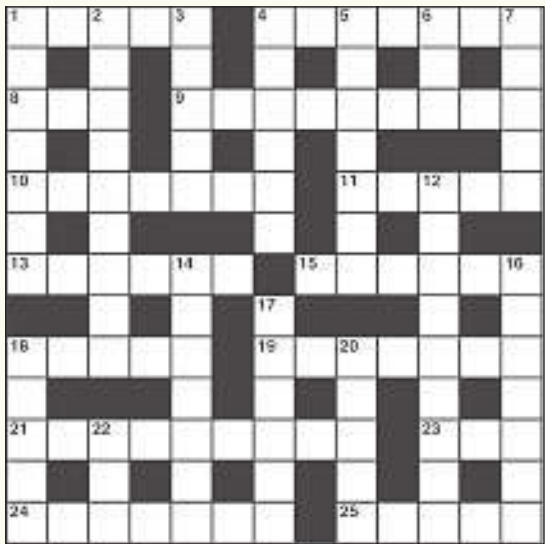
DRIVER STANDINGS



Leclerc won his second race after the season-opener in Bahrain.

| Rank | Driver (Team) | Points |
|------|------------------------|--------|
| 1. | C. Leclerc (Ferrari) | 71 |
| 2. | G. Russell (Mercedes) | 37 |
| 3. | C. Sainz Jr. (Ferrari) | 33 |
| 4. | S. Pérez (Red Bull) | 30 |
| 5. | L. Hamilton (Mercedes) | 28 |

CROSSWORD 4711



ACROSS

- It enables one to turn one's hand to many things (5)
- North America's largest meat producer (7)
- Either way she's very timid (3)
- Drawn wine ready to be put out (9)
- Sort of thinking of belonging to the side (7)
- Not all the number may be burnt (5)
- File an account in it - it's easy (6)
- Discount for the purchaser of a beret? (6)
- A girl to go out with (5)
- Given up to the faithful (7)
- Somehow pulverise something offensive (9)
- Danny takes her to heart (3)
- Shrink from any last solution (7)
- They may run out in time (5)

DOWN

- and 5 Down: In its turn it brings success or riches (5,2,7)
- I'd upset a client just the same (9)
- Arranged a trip to see an animal (5)
- Steal away by night (6)
- See 1 Down
- Unlimited choice? (3)
- Precedence of command (5)
- A main line express? (4,5)
- Constant quality (7)
- Fairytale ones should be happy (7)
- A tenor is currently helpless (6)
- Ray is out in the country (5)
- New verse goes in a new direction (5)
- In shape and size one is very like another (3)

Solutions Crossword 4710: Across: 1 Allegation, 8 Pecan, 9 Quartet, 10 Termini, 11 India, 12 Agency, 14 Relief, 17 Reign, 19 Patella, 22 Giant, 23 Wide screen. Down: 2 Lucerne, 3 Ennui, 4 Acquit, 5 Imagine, 6 Noted, 7 At half-mast, 8 Puts across, 13 Contend, 15 Ill fame, 16 Spasms, 18 In tow, 20 Tiger.

JUMBLED WORDS

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

Some men can live up to their loftiest ideals without ever going higher than a ____ - Theodore Roosevelt (8)

BCHEE



ACOUNT



CHMAS



NEURBM



OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4801

Difficulty Level 4s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4800

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

SUDOKU 4801

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4800

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

The scope for agreement today is extensive. Yet you may look upon differences of opinion as helpful developments which are bound to lead to the clarification of difficult and unresolved issues. Feelings can get in the way of harmonious solutions, so stick to the facts.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

There's an optimistic mood abroad, but you're still facing a series of misjudgements and miscalculations. You may look back on this week's minor blunders and laugh but, at the time, they may not be so funny. At least, other people probably won't think so.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Mercury, a planet with a special place in your horoscope, is the star of the week, forming and reforming a series of intricate patterns with a whole sequence of planets. Therefore, you must expect sharp changes of mood and alterations in your plans.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

You may have to backtrack on a number of domestic arrangements over the coming week. At times you will imagine that control over your personal affairs is slipping from your hands, a delusion resulting from Mercury's mischievous motion. You're being warned to start exerting more control.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Most of you will experience some misunderstanding or other this week, which is all the more reason to be straight about your intentions and clear about your arrangements. Relations at work will be passionate, so avoid falling out with those who feel equally strongly.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Financial questions will loom even larger this week than last. Today's indications look decidedly optimistic and you may be tempted to rush into rash commitments. However, by tomorrow the picture will start to look very different indeed, perhaps because reality will hit.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

A serious set of relationships from Mercury to various major planets is going to force you to change your mind. Some consolation will be offered by the fact that many of your friends and colleagues will themselves be undecided, perhaps because emotions are too strong.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

An intriguing aspect between Venus and Pluto is expected in the near future. You may already be beginning to feel the consequences, eagerly anticipating a future meeting or encounter. One word of warning for the week is to keep a close eye on your cash.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

You could be playing a dangerous game if you are still refusing to inform other people about your arrangements or your genuine feelings. When they eventually find out the real situation, they may have cause to complain, and you might be forced to back-track.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Professional plans may come unstuck, although this could work to your advantage. If you are given extra space to think again, you will be able to make sure that next time around your interests are given a higher priority. One thing to be said in your favour is that you learn from your mistakes.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Your high principles are your greatest strength. Do question your own beliefs, but please don't let other people undermine you or persuade you to lower your standards. The underlying pressures at the moment are very uncertain, but they do indicate that your interests could be best served by being utterly selfless.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Your romantic aspirations will be directed overseas. Perhaps this is because you're planning a major trip to a distant location. Or perhaps you're awaiting news of a loved one far away. At least, this is an ideal moment to build bridges and mend emotional fences.

BRIEFLY

Man City, Liverpool share spoils

Manchester: Manchester City remained one point clear of Liverpool at the top of the Premier League standings after the pair cancelled each other out in a pulsating 2-2 draw at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday. The clash lived up to its blockbuster billing right from the off as City took lead twice, through Kevin De Bruyne (5') and Gabriel Jesus (36') but Liverpool came back both times with goals from Diogo Jota (13') and Sadio Mane (46'). City moved on to 74 points, one ahead of their title rivals, after having both played 31 games.

Madrid win, Atletico lose in La Liga

Barcelona: Real Madrid consolidated its already commanding lead at the top of the Spanish league with a 2-0 win over Getafe, ahead of a week in which it hopes to finish off Chelsea in the Champions League quarterfinals. Casemiro put Madrid ahead in the 38th minute with his first goal of the season. Lucas Vázquez added a second goal against toothless Getafe in the 68th on Saturday. Madrid restored its lead to 12 points over second-place Sevilla, with Barcelona 15 points back having played two games fewer than Madrid. Atlético Madrid lost 1-0 at Mallorca as Diego Simeone's side stumbled again after its defeat at Manchester City. Atlético will now have to regroup before it hosts City on Wednesday needing to overturn a 1-0 first-leg loss to Pep Guardiola's side to reach the Champions League's final four.

Tamil Nadu crowned national champions

Chennai: Tamil Nadu defeated defending champion Punjab 87-69 in the final to win the men's title in the 71st Senior National Basketball Championship here on Sunday. The formidable Indian Railways team won the women's title, beating Telangana 131-82 in convincing fashion, riding on Poonam Chaturvedi's 26 points. In the men's summit clash, Tamil Nadu pulled ahead after a slow start when Punjab kept pace and never looked back. At half-time, the host had widened the lead to 17 with a 50-33 score line. A Aravind with 26 points and M Arvind Kumar (21) were in fine nick for the home team as they stamped their authority against their arch-rival.

India-England hockey matches cancelled

Bhubaneswar: The Indian women hockey team's two FIH Pro League matches against England, which were earlier postponed due to COVID-related issues in the English side, have been cancelled, handing the Savita-led side the top position in the standings. The two matches were initially scheduled for April 2 and 3 at the Kalinga Stadium here but postponed due to a high number of COVID-19 cases and injuries in the England team. The Indian team has now been awarded six points -- three each for a match -- for the two cancelled games.

PTI, REUTERS, AP

Thinking out of the box

Ashwin retires out, a masterstroke move in RR's three-run win over LSG that takes them to helm

SYNOPSIS: Marcus Stoinis threatened to do a Shimron Hetmyer on RR but debutant Kuldeep Sen held firm in the final over to deliver a narrow win. The talking point, though, would remain Ashwin's retired out

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
APRIL 10

SHIMRON HETMYER revived a sluggish Rajasthan Royals innings with late hitting; Trent Boult, and later Yuzvendra Chahal, all but sealed the victory for RR before Marcus Stoinis took Lucknow Super Giants to the brink with a last-gasp counterattack.

Ashwin, a trendsetter?

With ten deliveries to go in the RR innings, R Ashwin, on 28 from 23 deliveries, walked off the field and continued onto the Wankhede dressing room steps. No. 7 Riyan Parag took his place; he faced four deliveries and scored eight, including one six.

Ashwin was sent in at No 6 after RR had been reduced to 67 for 4 in the tenth over. RR allrounder Jimmy Neesham, who wasn't playing this game, told the on-air commentators during the RR innings that the plan was for Ashwin and Shimron Hetmyer to knock the ball around for a few overs, since there were several left, and for Parag to then come in and hit a few big ones. There was no mention of retiring anyone out.

It was Ashwin, in fact, who had kickstarted the RR counterattack, when he lofted and pulled off-spinner K Gowtham for consecutive sixes in the 16th over. But those remained the only boundaries he was able to hit. In the 19th over bowled by Avesh Khan, Ashwin took a single out to the sweeper and began to walk back to the pavilion.

It is incredible that it took almost two decades of T20 for a batsman to retire himself out amid high stakes in the world's richest cricket league. With every delivery carrying that much more weightage considering there are only 120 of them in an innings, you'd have thought the number crunchers would have made a convincing case long ago for stuck batsmen to strike themselves out. Of course, it is easier said than done, for it can easily open you to ridicule should the move not come off, at the cost of a wicket. Besides, there is that bit about a professional batsman being asked to sacrifice himself in what is already essentially a one-ball game for him.

Law 25.4 on 'Batters retiring' allows a batsman to retire at any time when the ball is dead, upon informing the reason to the umpires. If he is not retiring due to "illness, injury or any other unavoidable cause", he can resume his innings only with the consent of the fielding captain. If he does not resume his innings, he will be recorded as having 'retired - out.'

This was only the fourth such case of a batsman getting dismissed thus in T20s. The first, fittingly as well as surprisingly, was Shahid Afridi for the Pakistanis against Northamptonshire in 2010, but that came in a tour match after Lala had had his fill, having bashed 42 off 14. The other two instances occurred in 2019, in a game between Bhutan and Maldives, and in a Bangladesh Premier League match. It is also fitting that it is Ashwin, never shy of suggestions and innovations to drive the game forward, who has become the first to retire out in the IPL. He has already helped in getting the act of the bowler running out the non-striker to no longer be deemed unfair play. That may not have started a trend of bowlers rushing to run non-strikers out, but this latest act of retiring himself may well be one whose time has come in T20.

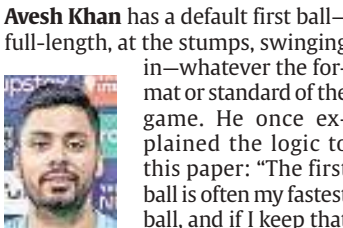


Rajasthan Royals' R Ashwin walked off after two balls of the 19th over, having scored 28 runs off 23 balls. Sportspics for IPL

EMOTIONAL
ROLLERCOASTER

Hot heads, calm minds and everything in between at the game

A-wish for Avesh gets granted, Jos like that



Avesh Khan has a default first ball—full-length, at the stumps, swinging in—whatever the format or standard of the game. He once explained the logic to this paper: "The first ball is often my fastest ball, and if I keep that at stumps, there is a great chance that the batsman could miss the ball and I could hit the stumps. I always stick to that." So he screamed in and bowled a full-pelt full-length ball around Jos Buttler's off-stump. The Englishman, stuck in a dot-ball pit, attempted an ungainly half-slap, half-slog at the ball. He was beaten for pace and marginal inward movement that hampered his middle-stump. Khan was ecstatic—his trusted method has earned him another wicket. And he blew kisses into the Mumbai night.

Hetmyer wakes up

After Ashwin exited, Hetmyer went on to demonstrate how quickly momentum can switch sides in this format. Heading into the last three overs of the RR innings, Hetmyer was on 21 off 25, and RR on 115 for 4. Hetmyer took 38 off his final 11 balls. He went up against West Indies team-mate Jason Holder, and won that battle. During the break, he'd say he knew what Holder was up to. The tall allrounder served up on-pace full deliveries, and Hetmyer walloped them into the stands. Bowling in friendly mid-120s, Holder's offerings were easy to take apart. He tried going wider but Hetmyer, dropped on 14 by Krunal Pandya at long-on off Gowtham, reached out and hit Holder over the straighter boundary.

Sheepish Sanju gone to a full toss



A sin more cardinal in cricket than bowling a thigh-high full toss is perhaps getting out to a full-toss. As did **Sanju Samson**, when he tried to flick a full-toss on the knee roll and completely missed it. The ball that slipped out of Holder's palm, dipped a trifle as it reached him (beaten on the dip off a medium-pacer, how embarrassing that could be), and Sanju just wafted the air. The ball struck him so adjacent that he did not even linger on for a review. Perhaps wondering how he contrived to perish to a full-toss, he even dropped his bat on the ground without realising when walking back. Maybe he premeditated; maybe his eyes lit up; maybe he tried to hit harder than usual. Whatever be the reason, Sanju walked back, defeated by a harmless little full toss.

Boult swings and stings

Having conceded 50 in the final three, LSG were to be now stunned by Trent Boult's lethal swing. He went round the wicket first ball to KL Rahul, and that was all he needed. It curled in like Shaheen Afridi's massive in-duckers had in the 2021 T20 World Cup, and uprooted the stumps past Rahul's attempted clip. Indicating it was a clear plan to Rahul, Boult went back to over the wicket to the incoming batsman, Gowtham, as LSG tried some pinch-hitting innovation of their own. Big swing, same result, this time leg-before. Prasidh Krishna took out Holder in the fourth with a surprise short ball after beating him with whiff, swinging ones.

Stoinis stunner

In his first match this IPL five days after

Boult, not quite from the blue



It's a nightmare first ball for a right-handed batsman when encountering a left-arm seamer—the full ball that nips back late. Wasim Akram was an unsurpassable master at that. **Trent Boult** is not too far behind either—as he had illustrated throughout his career and again showed on Sunday night. The ball began its deathly inward swerve from outside the off-stump and then bent a bit more back into KL Rahul to shatter his stumps. All this while Rahul knew the path the ball would take, yet he was helpless. He stood momentarily perplexed—turned back to see his stumps akimbo and walked back like a man who felt he had been wronged. But it has been a ball that has nailed him several times in the past. In all fairness, there is little a fresh-at-the-crease batsman could prepare to avert the danger when the in-swing is as inch-perfect as the Boult one was. That's why it's the worst nightmare for a right-handed batsman.

playing for Australia in Lahore, Marcus Stoinis caused some late momentum-shifting too. Coming in as low as No 8, at 101 for 6 in the 16th over, Stoinis belted an unbeaten 38 off 17, with four sixes. He moved Prasidh Krishna for 19 in the penultimate over, creaming straight sixes to reduce the equation to 15 off the last over. That came to debutant seamer Kuldeep Sen, who did really well to keep Stoinis quiet with three successive dots, before two closing boundaries reduced the margin of defeat to just three runs.

BRIEF SCORES: Rajasthan Royals 165/6 in 20 overs (Hetmyer 59 not out; Gowtham 2/30) bt Lucknow Super Giants 162/8 in 20 overs (de Kock 39, Stoinis 38 not out; Chahal 4/41) by 3 runs

Delhi's human capital clicks, overpower KKR

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
APRIL 10

IRRESPECTIVE OF the ground size, 215/5 posted by Delhi Capitals was an imposing total. And Kolkata Knight Riders eventually fell to scoreboard pressure. Shreyas Iyer was threatening to take the game away from DC. Even after his dismissal, KKR had Andre Russell and Pat Cummins. But it was Kuldeep Yadav's bright evening at Brabourne, who returned with 4/35. Both Khaleel Ahmed (3/25) and Shardul Thakur (2/30) supported him well. KKR were all out for 171 in 19.4 overs.

Kuldeep is back

Not many moons ago, while playing for KKR, Kuldeep Yadav cried on the field after a Moeen Ali batting assault. Things went downhill for the chinaman bowler after that. A knee injury that needed surgery to fix didn't help matters. This season, he lost out on a BCCI central contract even. This IPL has been witnessing a stirring fightback from the 27-year-old. Today's game against KKR was his best. The impact spell he bowled secured victory for DC. Iyer's wicket was the finest of them all. The KKR captain was going great guns. Iyer had just hit a six off Kuldeep to raise his fifty. The bowler responded with a googly, varied his flight and pulled the length back a little. The batsmen came down the track, missed the ball and was stumped. Iyer's wicket changed the game. But Kuldeep wasn't finished yet. He dismissed Cummins, Sunil Narine and Umesh Yadav in one over, slamming the door shut on KKR.

A study in contrast

Prithvi Shaw opens for DC in the IPL. Ajinkya Rahane does it for KKR. The two batsmen provided a study in 'opening' contrasts. Shaw so far has failed to replicate his talent in international cricket, his fitness being one of the reasons. In the IPL, however, where he is mentally unfettered, Shaw can be majestic on his day. His batting at CCI oozed class.

The first ball of the match, from Yadav to Shaw, went for a four. Four balls later, Yadav strayed down the leg and the batsmen tickled it to the fine leg boundary. The start set the tone for DC's innings. Shaw punished Yadav in his next over also, later pulled Cummins for a six and welcomed Venkatesh Iyer with a six and four, as he reached a 20-ball half-century. And although Varun Chakravarthy castled him soon, his innings set the platform for a 200-plus total.

Rahane, meanwhile, was bought by KKR at his base price of Rs 1 crore and so far, he hasn't lived up to the challenge. As KKR began their chase, Mustafizur Rahman hit him on the front pad, with the on-field umpire adjudging him leg-before. DRS saved him, but Rahane was given out leg-before next ball as well. There was an inside edge though and Ultra-edge spotted it. Rishabh Pant decided not to review when Rahane had nicked one behind the stumps.

Shardul, too, had a confident LWB shout against Rahane before he put the latter out of his misery, through a wonderful high catch.

Mystery unravelled

Narine and Varun, the two KKR spinners, thrive on their mystery. Shaw, Warner and Pant unravelled it, using the sweep shot to brilliant effect. When Varun tossed one up outside off, Warner slog-swept it over the deep mid-wicket boundary. Narine bowled faster and flatter, and Warner reverse-lapped it over short third man for a four. Shaw, too, swept Narine to the backward square leg boundary. Pant was even more innovative. A conventional sweep sent a Varun delivery over the deep mid-wicket fence before he reverse-swept the bowler past short third man for another four.

BRIEF SCORES: DC 215/5 in 20 overs (Shaw 51, Warner 61; Narine 2/21) lost to KKR 171 all out in 19.4 overs (Iyer 54; Kuldeep 4/35, Khaleel 3/25) by 44 runs

In Pant's footsteps, aggressive and nonchalant Rawat blossoms in the IPL

PRATYUSH RAJ
NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

THE PATH Rishabh Pant has traced, Anuj Rawat has retraced. Like Pant, he left the quaint hills of Ramnagar, a Mofussil town in Nainital in Uttarakhand, and reached Delhi with his mother to fulfil his cricketing dream. Like the Delhi Capitals captain, the left-handed wicket-keeper batsman relishes hitting big and expending his vocal energy behind the stumps.

But Rawat's tale has just begun—and it would not be a surprise if his story adds more colourful chapters to it. He has already registered a couple of first-class hundreds, but the announcement of talent came at the IPL stage, when he rattled out a power-laden 66 off 47 balls for RCB against Mumbai Indians, faying some of the fiercest bowlers around including the nastiest of them all, Jasprit Bumrah.

As with Pant, and so many others, the journey began in the backyard of the Rawat household. He began playing with his father, Virender and elder Prashant. "My father used to play cricket when he was young. But he never got any support from his family. He was the first one who spotted the talent in Anuj, and took him to Satish Pokhriyal, a cricket coach in Ramanagar. Anuj must have

been six or seven back then," Anuj's elder brother Prashant Rawat tells *The Indian Express* about the early steps.

Virender was a cricket tragic. "My father would never miss a match; he was so passionate about cricket. It was the same with Anuj and me. At our home, there used to be a festive atmosphere if India were playing any match," says Prashant.

After a few years, Satish Pokhriyal advised Anuj's father that if he wanted his son to play professional cricket, he should take him to New Delhi. Exactly eleven years ago, Asha Rawat, along with her sons Prashant and Anuj, boarded the train to New Delhi. The Rawats then rented a two-room flat in Uttam Nagar, closer to Raj Kumar Sharma's West Delhi Cricket Academy.

"I had completed my Class XIIth boards. I was anyway moving to Delhi, and Anuj also accompanied me. My mother stayed with us for six months, and then she moved back. We decided to stay at Uttam Nagar because it was closer to Anuj's cricket academy, while my college was in Noida," said Prashant, who now runs a digital marketing company with his wife Ranjana.

Financial hurdles

With Prashant's education and Anuj's cricket, Virendra started facing financial problems. He took loans from his friends and



Anuj Rawat (R) and Mohammed Siraj take a selfie after RCB defeated MI. Sportspics for IPL

family, but sometimes it did not suffice. "From my second year in college, I started working as well. I told my father that your dream is mine too. You don't have to worry about Anuj's cricketing career. I will pay his school fees, his coaching fees, I will take care of everything," recalled Prashant.

"For a few years, we hardly interacted with each other. When I am back from col-

lege, he will be heading out for training. And when he is back home in the evening, I will be at work," he said.

Finances became rosier, but Anuj's career was not going anywhere. He was facing rejections after rejections. "He was not selected for Delhi Under-14 and then Delhi Under-16. For any cricketer, it is disheartening. But my father never lost hope; he

As with Pant, and so many others, the journey began in the backyard of the Rawat household. He began playing with his father, Virender and elder Prashant

will just keep motivating him. My father always knew that Anuj had everything in him and he would succeed at the professional level," said Prashant.

It was not only Anuj who was hurt. The coach was equally anguished. Sharma took the rejection into his heart, and thus began the 'making of Anuj Rawat.'

"Anuj always has this great self-belief. He was the most sincere among the lot, the most hard-working. If I ask him to take four laps, he will finish those four laps," said Sharma.

He soon caught the eyes of Delhi selectors and made his Ranji Trophy debut in the 2017-18 season, when Pant was called up for India A. Anuj impressed with a fluent 71 and followed it up with another half-century against the Railways.

When Pant became a national team regular, Anuj began to get more chances. Next season, he registered his maiden hun-

dred, 134 off 183 against Madhya Pradesh. Delhi were reeling at 36 for 5, before he walked in, and he engineered them to a nine-wicket win.

Soon Rajasthan Royals' scouts picked him. He spent two years with the Royals, where he played only two games. Then RCB came calling, and realising his potential, coughed up Rs 3.4 crore, seventeen times more than his base price, to purchase him. It seems like money well spent. "Virat (Kohli), Faf (Du Plessis) and Mike (Hesson) were impressed with him at the nets. And it was team management's decision to play him at the top, and he is doing relatively well," said Sharma.

His greatest strength, Sharma says, is that he is unfazed by reputations. "One of the greatest strengths of Anuj is that he never goes by the bowler's reputation. He will always play the ball, not the bowler, and I have seen this in him since the first day he came to my academy," said Sharma.

In age-group cricket, Anuj always played as an opener, but when he played in the Ranji Trophy, he had to move down to the middle order. "He is a floater. He has opened for India Under-19, even for Delhi in the Ranji Trophy. He is a complete team-man," said Sharma, who is now the Delhi coach. So far, he has travelled behind and along with Pant, but their paths could cross one day.