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## PANDORA PAPERS – PART ONE

AN INVESTIGATION BY THE INDIAN EXPRESS WITH INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS

# After Panama, Pandora: elite Indians find ways to ringfence wealth in secret havens

Businessmen to corporate defaulters, CBI-, ED-accused to celebrities: offshore trusts used to park assets, evade detection

BY RITU SARIN,  
SHYAMLAL YADAV,  
SANDEEP SINGH,  
KHUSHBOO  
NARAYAN,  
JAY MAZOOMDAAR  
& P VAIDYANATHAN  
IYER



### WHAT ARE THE PANDORA PAPERS?

**E** • What do they reveal?  
• How is Pandora different from Panama and Paradise?  
P Vaidyanathan Iyer Explains, Page 11

home and the lax jurisdiction of tax havens.

So, Anil Ambani, who declares bankruptcy in one UK court, has 18 asset holding offshore companies; fugitive Nirav Modi's sister sets up a trust just one month before he fled India; the husband of Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, promoter of Biocon, sets up a trust with keys to a person who was banned by Sebi for insider trading, reveals an investigation by *The Indian Express*.

Of the 300-plus Indian names, the offshore holdings of as many as 60 prominent individuals and companies were corroborated and investigated. These will be revealed in the coming days.

Five distinct patterns emerge

in the investigation of Pandora Papers:

■ Several offshore entity owners, even in India, have found means to adapt to the post-Panama Papers scenario, when the offshore world was shaken, when several countries tightened regulations and, in India, the taxman has detected Rs 20,000 crore-plus of undeclared foreign and domestic assets until early 2021.

Sports icon Sachin Tendulkar, for instance, asked for the liquidation of his entity in the British Virgin Islands just three months after the Panama Papers expose. There are other prominent Indians and NRIs too, who have, following the 2016 data leak, opted for a rejig or reorganisation of their offshore assets. Evidently, Indian businessmen have been setting up a plethora of offshore trusts to project a degree of separation from their wealth and insulate their assets from creditors.

■ Individuals accused in economic offences and under investigation, have created an offshore network in tax havens like Samoa, Belize, or the Cook Islands, besides larger tax havens like the British Virgin Islands or Panama. Indeed, many of the individuals and entities named in the Pandora Papers are no strangers to investigating agencies in India. Some are in jail and several subjects of this investigation are presently on bail. There is a fairly long list of Indian offenders who are currently un-

der the scanner of agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Enforcement Directorate, and the Serious Fraud Investigation Office.

■ Those in debt to the tune of thousands of crores of rupees to Indian banks have, as the Pandora Papers show, diverted a sizeable section of their assets into a maze of offshore companies. In one case, major Indian economic offenders, currently in jail, have bought a Bombardier Challenger aircraft through their offshore entity. Many promoters, as the investigation reveals, parked their assets in offshore trusts, effectively protecting themselves from personal guarantees to loans being defaulted by their businesses.

■ Then there are PEPs or Politically Exposed Persons. Among the Indian PEPs are former Members of Parliament; those who have held public office in India; others who either deal in sensitive trades or trade in sensitive countries, or even those who have been previously booked by Indian investigating agencies. All these PEPs were moved to the "high risk" watch list by the offshore service provider.

■ Leaked records reveal that many of the power players who could help bring an end to the offshore system instead benefit from it — stashing assets in covert companies and trusts. The confidential data of the 14 offshore service providers, for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## 'Bankrupt' Anil Ambani didn't reveal his \$1.3-bn web of offshore firms

JAY MAZOOMDAAR  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

IN FEBRUARY 2020, following a dispute with three Chinese state-controlled banks, Anil Ambani told a London court that his net worth was zero.

The court observed that

"there are questions about the extent to which Mr Ambani has any offshore interests, because if so they have not been declared".

Three months later, he was ordered to pay \$716 million to the banks. But he did not, and denied having any asset or worthwhile beneficial interest in any

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Trust of Kiran Mazumdar Shaw's husband is run by advisor blacklisted by Sebi

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

ON JULY 8 this year, market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) barred

Allegro Capital Private Ltd and its majority shareholder, Bengaluru-headquartered Kunal Ashok Kashyap, from trading in the stock market for a year, ordered disgorgement of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Car linked to minister kills 4 farm protesters



At Lakhimpur Kheri site where a car allegedly linked to MoS, Home, Ajay Mishra, ran over protesters. PTI

MANISH SAHU & ASADREHMAN  
LUCKNOW, LAKHIMPUR KHERI, OCTOBER 3

FOUR FARMERS were among eight persons killed Sunday in UP's Lakhimpur Kheri after a convoy of three SUVs, including one owned by Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra, hit a group of farm protesters leading to a clash.

Following the incident, farm leaders called for the "arrest of the Minister and his son" who, they said, was driving one of the SUVs. They called for a probe by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court and said they would hold protests in all districts Monday to demand

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

## Khattar stirs row: At party meet, talks of 'tit for tat'

VARINDER BHATIA  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 3

ABOUT A month after Haryana IAS officer Ayush Sinha's "break heads" remark during a farmer protest resulted in a four-day sit-in by protesters, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar sparked a controversy Sunday telling a meeting of BJP workers to create their own volunteer force of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

## Shah Rukh's son among 8 arrested in drugs bust on Goa cruise ship

JAYPRAKASH S NAIDU,  
SADAF MODAK  
& MOHAMED THAYER  
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 3

BOLLYWOOD ACTOR Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan (23) was among eight persons arrested in Mumbai Sunday by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in connection with an alleged drugs bust on a cruise ship the previous evening.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

NEW DELHI, MUMBAI,  
OCTOBER 3

SEVEN LEAKS later, after regulators worldwide have begun cracking down on global money flows, the elite are finding ingenious new ways to ring-fence their assets from scrutiny at home, reshaping the secrecy industry in international finance.

This has been revealed in the Pandora Papers, the latest leak of offshore financial records, the most voluminous ever: as many as 12 million documents from 14 companies in offshore tax havens with details of ownership of 29,000 offshore companies and Trusts.

Obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) two years ago, a one-year investigation of data linked to India by *The Indian Express* reveals how individuals and businesses, many already under the scanner, are pushing the envelope to evade detection, using loopholes in the law at

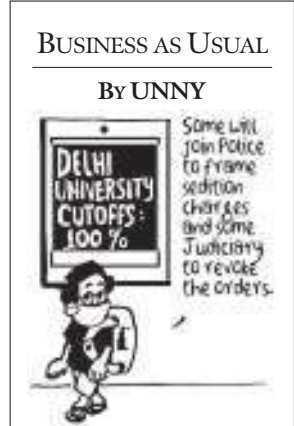
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**BUSINESS AS USUAL**

By UNNY



Some will join Police to frame section charges and some Judiciary to revoke the orders.

## Sachin, wife, her father had BVI firm; shut after Panama Papers expose

RITU SARIN  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

INDIAN CRICKET superstar Sachin Tendulkar, who has been a Member of the Upper House of Parliament, along with members of his family, figures in the Pandora Papers as Beneficial Owners of an offshore entity in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) which was liquidated in 2016.

Sachin, with wife Anjali  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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# Chandigarh faces challenge of garbage segregation: Purohit

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 3

ADMITTING THAT "garbage segregation and management is still one of the challenges faced by Chandigarh", UT Administrator Banwarilal Purohit Sunday said that he is sure "with concerted and collective efforts, Chandigarh can regain its lost status of being no. 1 in cleanliness".

Purohit said this on the concluding ceremony of "Safai Mitra Amrut Samman Samaroh" organised by the Municipal Corporation.

Purohit felicitated Safai Mitras and frontline workers at Tagore Theatre, Sector 18, Chandigarh, on the occasion.

Purohit added, "Garbage segregation and management is still one of the challenges faced by Chandigarh and I would like to solicit support and cooperation of each and every citizen so that we can achieve the task of 100 per cent garbage segregation at source."

"When we think of cleanliness, we think of large garbage dumps and heaps of scattered garbage, and not the small amount of garbage generated in our households. Cleanliness should start in our minds from the very beginning of waste genera-

tively tackling other cleanliness issues," he stated.

## Punjab CM awa

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
MOHALI, OCTOBER 3

PUNJAB CHIEF Minister Charanjit Singh Channi awarded teachers at National Awards for Outstanding Teachers held by Federation of Private Schools and Associations of Punjab (FAP) in Gharuan on Sunday. The event was held at Chandigarh University. The CM urged the teachers to become role models in transforming the des-

## UT Administrator Banwarilal Purohit flags off the cycle rally held at Sukhna Lake in Chandigarh on Sunday. *Express*

city clean.

"When we discuss cleanliness, the role and responsibility of Swachhata Sainiks comes first. The modern parameters of Swachhata imply the need for an improved understanding of our resources, and the ability to manage that demand in an equitable and sustainable way," he stated.

Mayor Ravi Kant Sharma thanked the Safai Mitras for their contribution. He said that without their cooperation during COVID, the situation could have been bad if the cleanliness activities had not been undertaken at full speed. Cleanliness has led to lesser diseases, better health and better life. He called upon the people not only to maintain cleanliness in their surroundings but also help

The Governor and Mayor also honoured all the teams for performing during the week-long mega event of 75th Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav.

Purohit also flagged off a cycle rally organised by Chandigarh Smart City Ltd as part of the 75th Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav celebrations of 75 years of Independence at Sukhna Lake here on Sunday.

The rally started off at Sukhna Lake and the total route was 7.5 km. The highlight of the event was participation of almost 50% of women bicyclists and enthusiastic participation by kids. City officials promised to scale up such events to make more people participate in celebrating 75 years of freedom.

## Smart City projects displayed to public

**handigarih:** Commemorating the 75th Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav, a video message of the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) project, including smart field solutions such as intelligent traffic management system, adaptive traffic control system, CCTC surveillance equipped with artificial intelligence-based video analytics were shown at Sector 17 Plaza, through a display van. **ENS**



**A labourer cleans paddy, ahead of government procurement, at the grain market at Kharar in Mohali on Sunday.** *Jasbir Malhi*

## Expedite registration of unorganised workers under 'e-shram' portal: Yadav

UNION MINISTER of Labour and Employment Bhupendra Yadav on Sunday directed all the states and UTs to complete the work of registration of unorganised workers under the 'e-shram' portal expeditiously.

This is the first such national database of unorganised workers, including workers, construction workers and platform workers. It will provide facility to them to avail the benefits of the schemes. Apart from this, he has instructed the officials that all the issues related to the workers should be settled immediately.

The office of the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central), Ministry of Labour and Employment, organised a special camp for registration of unorganised workers under 'e-shram' portal in Chandigarh. Union Minister Yadav also visited this camp. He held discus-



sions with Labour Secretaries and Commissioners of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Union Territories of Chandigarh,

**CAMPS BEING HELD AT NIGHT**

organised workers. He distributed e-shram cards to the unorganised workers and thereafter conducted interaction sessions with trade union leaders, employers and unorganised workers.

## Mohali: Four involved in robberies, thefts arrested

THE KHARAR police arrested four persons who were said to be involved in various criminal activities, including snatching, on Sunday. The accused were arrested near Jamuna Apartments. The police were, however, yet to recover the stolen items from the accused.

According to the police, those arrested were identified as Shiv Chopra, Vijay Kumar, Mustkeem Ali and Salman Khan. Police officials said that the accused were also carrying weapons.

The Kharar (city) Station House Officer (SHO), Inspector Ashok Kumar, said that the police received information regard-

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ing a gang that was assembled near Jamuna Apartments to carry out robbery or other crimes. "Acting on a tip-off, our team conducted a raid and arrested the four accused," SHO Ashok Kumar said.

The accused were also said to be involved in the robberies in the nearby areas. The police officials said that further investigation was going on in the case and some more revelation could be made.

The police registered a case under sections 382 (theft after preparation made for causing death, hurt or restraint), 392 (robbery), 397-B (snatching), 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and relevant sections of the Arms Act.

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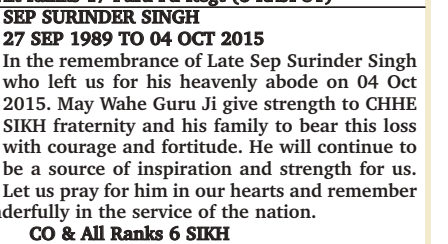
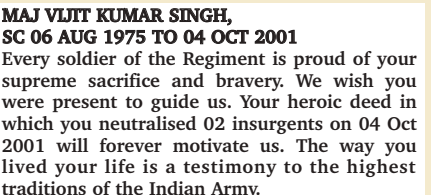
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## SALUTE THE SOLDIER





## 5 REGION

# In tweet, Sidhu again demands removal of AG, DGP; Channi says 'if there are differences, let's settle it at party forum'

Congress central observer Harish Chaudhary in UT to make report

KANCHAN VASDEV  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 3

CONGRESS LEADER Navjot Singh Sidhu on Sunday reiterated his demand for removal of Advocate General A P S Deol and DGP Iqbal Preet Singh Sahota, tweeting: "Demand for justice in sacrilege cases and for arrest of main culprits behind the drug trade brought our Govt in 2017 & due to his failure, people removed the last CM. Now, AG/DG appointments rub salt on wounds of victims, they must be replaced or we will have no face."

Later in the day, Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi said: "He (Navjot Sidhu) has sat down with me and talked about it. He asked me to send the panel. I have sent the panel... as per the law. As far as the government is concerned, it will do its work with honesty and good intent and it has to take everybody together. Sidhu sahib should do the party's work. We both should work in coordination and we want to work with coordination. If there are any differences, if something is not being liked, then let us talk about it at party forum. We have made a coordination committee for that."

Meanwhile, three days after Channi and Sidhu had a meeting to sort out differences over appointments of Deol and Sahota, Congress central observer Harish Chaudhary camped in Chandigarh to prepare a report for the high command on how the issue was affecting party prospects.

Sidhu has neither withdrawn his resignation as PPCC chief, nor has the high command lent any

clarity on the status. He had resigned in protest against the appointments of the AG and DGP last week. Chaudhary had got a meeting organised between Channi and Sidhu and the issue was to be resolved.

After the meeting, it was agreed upon mutually that the government would send a panel to UPSC the same day and the decision on AG was left to the party high command. It was also stated that the high command would soon issue a statement about Sidhu's resignation. However, the statement has not been issued even after three days of the meeting. The government prepared a panel of 10 police officers in a jiffy till late night that day and sent it to the UPSC.

Channi, who was at Morinda on Sunday, told the media that the government had sent a panel for the next DGP to the UPSC. The CM said now the state government was awaiting a panel from the Centre regarding three names finalised for the post of DGP.

Thereafter, the name of DGP would be finalised after consultation with PPCC president Navjot Singh Sidhu, all ministers and MLAs.

Channi said that the state government is functioning with dedication, sincerity and honesty and ensuring transparency in its administration would be the top most priority. He, however, said that organisational work is being looked after by the PPCC president and a committee had been constituted for better coordination between the government and the party.

Sources said that senior leaders of the party had not taken the tweet by Sidhu very kindly. "In an organisation, discipline is



Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi starts the paddy procurement operations at a grain market in Morinda, Rupnagar district, on Sunday. PTI

## AMARINDER MAY FORM PARTY AND ENTER PRE-POLL ALLIANCE WITH BJP: PARGAT SINGH

**Jalandhar:** A day after alleging that former chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh has conspired with the BJP-led government at the Centre to delay paddy procurement in the state, Punjab Sports and Education Minister Pargat Singh on Sunday alleged that Captain might form a party

and enter a pre-poll alliance with the BJP.

Pargat was talking to mediapersons during his visit to Jalandhar Grain Market where the procurement started on Sunday. "I have been saying earlier also that Captain has been hobnobbing with BJP," Pargat said. **ENS**

CM," the leader said.

## ENTIRE CABINET TO MEET DERA BEAS HEAD

The Punjab government has postponed its Cabinet meeting by a few hours on Monday as all the ministers would be going to Dera Radha Soami Satsang in Beas in the morning. They will be meet-

ing the dera head ahead of 2022 Assembly elections.

## AMARINDER HITS BACK AT PARGAT

A day after Cabinet minister Pargat Singh alleged that the procurement was delayed after former CM Amarinder Singh's meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Amarinder hit back at Pargat. He tweeted: "What nonsense? Do you really think the people of Punjab will believe I'd ever collude with @BJP4India to delay procurement? And have you forgotten it affected BJP-led Haryana too? Or are you too naïve to understand these things?"

"And do you have any proof for these lies? Or are you so irresponsible you believe you can get away with such trash? People of Punjab know me & know I always have & will stand with the farmers. I expect honesty from a former Indian hockey Capt."

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## ELLENABAD BYPOLL: ABHAY CHAUTALA TO RE-CONTEST FROM INLD

# 'Bypoll will be a people's decision, whether they support black farm laws or oppose them'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 3

SENIOR INLD leader Abhay Chautala, whose resignation in support of the farmers' agitation necessitated the Ellenabad bypoll, will be re-contesting as the party nominee on October 30.

Abhay, INLD's lone MLA in the 90-member Haryana Vidhan Sabha, has been a three-time legislator from Ellenabad, which is considered a Chautala-clan stronghold.

"When I resigned, I had asked people of Haryana who agreed with me and told me that they would stand with me in whatever decision I take. Thus, I decided to resign in support of the farmers who are protesting against these three black farm legislations. Today again, people gathered in huge numbers in Chopta mandi and called a mahapanchayat. It was not a party's programme. It was a people's programme which invited us gave me their verdict to re-contest from Ellenabad. People announced their mandate in my favour and told me that they would like to give me this responsibility of representing them again," Abhay Chautala said.

He added, "The bypoll shall be a contest between the people's decision if they go in favour or against these three black farm legislations."

BJP and JJP are yet to announce their nominee. Although leaders of both parties have been saying that they would contest Ellenabad bypoll as allies, it was yet not clear if the candidate will be from BJP or JJP. Congress, on the other hand, had invited applications from party workers till October 4.

Haryana Lokhit Party's Gopal Kanda's brother Govind Kanda, a businessman and philanthropist, joined BJP Sunday. Govind is



Senior INLD leader Abhay Chautala

among its 17 shortlisted for Ellenabad.

BJP's state chief Om Prakash Dhankar said the final decision on the party's nominees shall be taken after discussions with the party high command. "There are 17 party workers who are eager to contest. The party's election committee has taken a stand and left the decision on me and chief minister. We have held discussions between us and now shall be taking it up with the party high command. The nominee will be declared soon."

Ellenabad seat had fallen vacant eight months ago after Abhay Chautala resigned. It was a reserved seat from 1977 to 2005. Lokdal's Bhagiram won from this constituency five times during this period. In 1977, he defeated an independent candidate, and a Congress nominee twice from 1982-87. However, Bhagiram lost in 1991 and got re-elected twice in 1996 and 2006.

In 2009, Ellenabad was declared a general constituency. From then onwards, it has remained a Chautala clan stronghold. In 2009, Om Prakash Chautala won from Ellenabad, but in the 2010 bypoll was held in which Abhay Chautala contested and won from the same constituency. Since 2010, Abhay Chautala had been consecutively winning from Ellenabad.

## AT BATHINDA RALLY, AKALIS FLAY CONG OVER INFIGHTING

# 'Everyone is fighting just for the chair. For the next three months, they are going to loot you all'

RAAKHI JAGGA  
LUDHIANA, OCTOBER 3

The SHIROMANI Akali Dal (SAD) on Sunday trained its guns at the ruling Congress party and said that Punjab had ceased to have a government, with the chief minister himself not knowing that he was the head of the state, and his party not even considering him as the CM.

"The one who wanted to be the CM, became the deputy CM (Sukhinder Randhawa). The other who wanted to be the deputy CM, is not even a minister. Everyone is fighting just for the chair. For the next three months, they are going to loot you all," SAD president, Sukhbir Badal, said while addressing the masses during his first rally in Bathinda seeking compensation for cotton crops that are under Pink Bollworm attack.

Sunday's event was the first major rally by the SAD in Punjab after the party had earlier discontinued its 'Gall Punjab Di' poll outreach programme following vociferous protests by farmers.

Sukhbir's father and SAD supreme, Parkash Singh Badal, also made a public appearance by the side of his son on Sunday, addressing the massive crowd in Bathinda's Thermal Colony.

"My lifespan has increased by another 2-3 years. It seems that I will hit a century now," Badal senior, who barely makes a public appearance, joked...

Parkash Badal, a nonagenarian, said one more betrayal was done by BJP by bringing in farm laws. "I salute the grit and resilience of our farmers. When the ordinances were first brought in the Cabinet, Harsimrat Kaur Badal was the Union minister. She had stated to the Cabinet then that this ordinance shouldn't be made bills without the consent of farmers and farm unions. They [the BJP]



SAD leaders Sukhbir Badal, Harsimrat Badal and Parkash Singh Badal at a rally in Bathinda Sunday. Gurmeet Singh

agreed to her and later betrayed her by passing it first in Lok Sabha and later in Rajya Sabha."

Talking about the protest by farmer unions against SAD leaders in many rallies due to which the 'Gal Punjab Di' programme had to be cancelled, Badal senior said, "We are with the farmers. No matter what they say about us, we will be with them. They stopped us from organising our previous programme, and we discontinued it in between. Today, we are here to demand compensation for the damaged cotton crop on their behalf again. We are the only party that has worked for the farmers and will continue doing so."

He added, "I felt utterly betrayed and deeply pained when the new agricultural bills were introduced in the Parliament to convert ordinances into Black Laws..."

He went on to say that Harsimrat resigned as a Union minister in response to the three farm laws and the SAD broke their 27-year-old alliance with the BJP. "I returned my Padma Vibushan and we are still standing tall with farmers."

Sukhbir chimed in by saying, "You all need to realise the difference between people who are your own and people who are indifferent. 'Apne taan apne hi hundne and we are your own party,' he

said. Badal senior said, "...They (Congress) are not serious about the interests of Punjabis. When we buy a buffalo, we do a lot of research in the market. So this time, don't make a mistake when you choose your next government."

## IF CM DOESN'T ANNOUNCE COMPENSATION SOON, WILL PROTEST DHARNA OUTSIDE HIS HOME

Sukhbir said, "If Punjab CM doesn't announce compensation for cotton farmers soon, we will stage a dharna outside CM's residence." The SAD-BJP government in 2015 had compensated the farmers at the rate of Rs 8000 per acre when whitely had hit their cotton crops. On Sunday, Sukhbir Badal said that farmers must get compensation in the range of Rs 70,000 to Rs 80,000 per acre for their crop loss due to Pink Bollworm. "We had spent Rs 650 crore on compensating the farmers, while the government is busy in buying sprays," Sukhbir said.

Harsimrat said seven farmers had died by suicide in Bathinda parliamentary constituency post the Pink Bollworm attack. "Farmers were forced to take this extreme step because of the Congress government's failure to announce quick compensation to them," she said.

# After months of staying out of public eye, SAD patriarch back in action

NAVJEEVAN GOPAL  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 3

WITH MERE months to go for the 2022 Punjab Assembly elections, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) patriarch Parkash Singh Badal, 93, who had stayed out of the public eye for a long time, has started making public and political appearances.

On Sunday, he addressed a party rally in Bathinda to protest against the Congress government in Punjab for cotton crop damage due to pink bollworm attack. This is the third time in last twelve days that he addressed a rally and was out in the field.

In the more than 30-minute speech, senior Badal told the gathering: "All your problems would be solved if they formed SAD-BSP government in Punjab". He accused Congress and BJP of committing a betrayal of the people.

On September 25, he had addressed an Indian National Lok Dal programme in Jind to mark the 108th birth anniversary of late deputy prime minister Devi Lal, and sent out a strong political message as he gave a call to strengthen regional parties. Badal also took a jibe at the Congress government in Punjab saying that the party high command had "changed four CM candidates" in the past few days.

Though Parkash Badal cited close family ties as the reason for attending the programme, he ensured that a political statement seeking to get together regional parties was made.

On September 23, he visited Central University of Punjab in Chudda village of Bathinda district and interacted with the faculty members, and expressed satisfaction with the development works of the campus, the foundation stone of which was laid in the year 2015 when he was CM.

After SAD was ousted from power in 2017, Parkash Badal had



SAD patriarch Parkash Badal speaks at the rally in Bathinda. Gurmeet Singh

largely restricted his political activities. In 2019 parliamentary polls, however, he had joined the party campaign and was covering candidate of Harsimrat Kaur Badal, from Bathinda parliamentary seat.

Despite not making many public appearances, including not attending Vidhan Sabha sessions, Badal used to be active in his area and would maintain a connect with electors by attending functions and other rituals.

During the Covid pandemic, the nonagenarian was advised by the doctors to restrict his movement in public. "Now, doctors think that he (Badal) should get back to his normal routine," said a person close to the Badal family, adding that ailments senior Badal had been suffering from keep flaring up. He added, "Badal sahib has chronic asthma and was hence strongly advised by doctors to avoid public meetings during the pandemic."

A party leader said Badal's health would be a key factor in determining how much he can campaign in run-up to 2022 elections.

Former minister and Akali nominee from Rampura Phul Sikander Singh Maluka told The Indian Express: "We have requested him to address a big political rally each in Majha and Doaba

and two rallies in Malwa. He agreed to that, saying that if his health allowed he would address those rallies." The rallies are likely to happen towards the end of the year.

SAD MP in Rajya Sabha and senior leader Balwinder Singh Bhunder said, "Why he has become active and why he was earlier restricted to his area only, I cannot say. But he always lived a disciplined life, meeting people, exercising, taking medicine – all without a miss."

While asserting that Badal went to the Jind function as he and Devi Lal had close family ties, Bhunder added that the statement made by Badal to strengthen regional parties was "in the interest of the nation".

Harcharan Bains, principal advisor to SAD president Sukhbir Badal, said, "He (senior Badal) had been attending functions earlier also, was only staying away from political events. His participation in the Jind event is an exception, but it was basically due to personal reasons that he went there." Bains added, "The party has left it to Badal sahib to take decisions on his future course of action."

Five-time CM and sitting legislator from Lambi, Parkash Badal is known to keep his cards close to his chest. On Sunday, however, he dropped enough hints that he would ensure to make his presence felt in the party's poll campaign in an election where SAD would contest under the command of his son and party chief Sukhbir Badal. Said Akali patriarch towards the end of his speech, "Today I want to tell Sukhbir, though I have gone old and my health is also not that well, that I am ready to sacrifice my life also for Punjab, dignity of Punjab, farmers and farm labourers."

Addressing the gathering, he summed up, "I have seen you after a long time and this I think has increased my life by two to three years. If that happens, I will score a century and continue."

DIVYA GOYAL GOPAL  
LUDHIANA, OCTOBER 3

NEWLY-APPOINTED PUNJAB CM Charanjit Singh Channi's Cabinet colleague, Amarinder Singh 'Raja' Warring on Sunday took a leaf out of his boss' book and reached Ludhiana bus terminal and started picking garbage on his own.

Channi, who has tried to don the hat of an 'aam aadmi politician' ever since his coronation last month, so far has done bhangra with students on the stage, stopped at a roadside to bless and give 'shagun' to a newlywed couple, and ordered officials to prune his security. Channi's new 'aam aadmi politician' avatar had gained him accolades from both political pundits and citizens alike and seems to have caught the attention of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supreme, Arvind Kejriwal, who last week had taken a dig at him in Ludhiana.

"Channi saab is now trying to show himself as an aam aadmi (common man). But Kejriwal ki nakal karna aasan hai, amal karna mushkil (It is very easy to copy Kejriwal, but very difficult to tread his path)," Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal had said during the press conference. He had further told Channi that if he really wanted to copy him and the AAP's working style, then he should cleanse his Cabinet and take action against 'tainted ministers'.

On Sunday, it was Amarinder Raja Warring's turn to don the aam aadmi politician's hat, and in turn, invite a swift retort from the AAP and others.

Warring on Sunday reached the Ludhiana bus terminal in the morning and started cleaning the premises – picking garbage and filth from various spots – accompanied by transport department officials. Earlier, after being appointed as the transport minister of the state in the new Punjab Cabinet, Warring had uploaded his videos of traveling on Punjab



Transport Minister Amarinder Singh Raja Warring picks up garbage from a bus stand in Ludhiana. Gurmeet Singh

Roadways/PRTC buses, to 'know problems of the common man'.

Warring said that he has ordered a vigorous cleanliness drive at all bus terminals of Punjab to make them free of dirt and filth.

He added that the transport department would also be launching a WhatsApp helpline/complaint number in a few days, where commuters can register any type of complaint against staff members by sharing photos/videos.

Terming Warring's 'action' of clearing garbage at Ludhiana bus terminal as 'pure drama', the Opposition, however, took a swipe at Channi and his ministers, saying that it was unclear that whose 'wrongdoing' they were trying to correct after 4.5 years, when the Congress government in Punjab is at the fag end of its term.

"Was this garbage not visible to the Congress leaders for 4.5 years? Has it suddenly become visible now after Channi has become the CM? Such actions by the Congress ministers are proving that their government actually did nothing for 4.5 years," said Sarjit Kaur Manuke, AAP MLA from Jagraon and deputy leader of Opposition in Vidhan Sabha.

"The work of a minister is to clean the system, not the bus stand. Had this government regularized class-IV employees and

filled their vacant posts, they would have happily cleaned public places which is their job. Also, will Warring come daily to clean the bus stand? No, so why this one-day drama? He should instead focus on taking action against the transport mafia, fixing the time table of buses which could not happen in 4.5 years and ending the monopoly of private buses so that poor people do not suffer. Four buses run on one permit, who is going to clean this system first? Not a single bus enters Jagraon bus stand in order to evade tax," said Manuke.

"They can try to show themselves as aam aadmi, but can't become one," she added.

Akali Dal spokesperson, Dr Daljit Singh Cheema, said that the Congress ministers should clarify whose wrongdoing they were trying to correct now. "It was the Congress government only which was in power for 4.5 years. So by doing all this, is Channi and his colleagues now accepting that they actually did nothing under Capt Amarinder Singh's rule? Why did this garbage accumulate at all? What was the Congress government doing for 4.5 years? They are simply admitting what we have been saying – the Congress government has been a failure in Punjab."

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Chandigarh



## 6 REGION

## DAY 1 OF PADDY PROCUREMENT

## 37,000 tonnes arrive in Punjab grain markets, govt procures 11,000 tonnes

A total of 76,000 tonnes have reached mandis of 19 districts in past few days

**ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA**  
JALANDHAR, OCTOBER 3

ON THE first day of procurement, a total of 37,000 tonnes of paddy (parml non-Basmati) arrived in Punjab's grain markets Sunday, of which government agencies procured 11,000 tonnes.

While procurement began on Sunday, paddy has already been coming in over the past few days. A total of 76,000 tonnes has already reached the grain markets.

The Centre had earlier postponed procurement of paddy from October 1 to October 11, but after massive protests by farmers over the past two days, yielded and allowed it to begin Sunday.

The official date of paddy procurement has always been October 1 in previous years, but in the last two years, it was changed. In 2020-21, the date was advanced to September 25 and this year it began October 3.

The Punjab government has already notified 1,873 mandis and 646 temporary yards including rice mills for this paddy procurement season.

On Sunday, the arrival of paddy started in 268 mandis of 19 districts of the state. Mandis in Pathankot, Barnala and Mansa districts had not received any paddy till the time of filing this report.

The MSP of the paddy is Rs 1,960 per quintal.

Ludhiana district witnessed maximum arrival at 27,044



A farm labourer separates wheat from the husk at a wholesale grain market in Amritsar Sunday. Rana Simranjit Singh

tonnes, followed by 10,814 tonnes in Patiala and 6,008 tonnes in Mohali, respectively. Fatehgarh Sahib and Jalandhar received 5,560 tonnes and 5,137 tonnes respectively.

Punjab Food and Civil Supplies Minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu, while kickstarting procurement at Khanna, which has the largest mandi of

**Farmers in some mandis said that their crop is fully matured as against claims made by the Centre, which had delayed procurement**

timely payment of the produce to farmers."

He said that arrangements for saving produce from rain are already in place. Besides, the facilities of power, sheds for farmers, portable water supply and equipment to monitor the quality of paddy have also been provided in each procurement centre.

Ashu also said that the state government has evolved a viable mechanism for lifting grains within 48 hours of procurement and started a campaign against malpractice of bogus billing. Several teams have been formed to nab the culprits.

Meanwhile, farmers in some mandis said that their crop is fully matured as against claims made by the Centre, which had delayed procurement earlier.

"I have brought around 100 quintals paddy of my three-acre land and the moisture level is as per the specification in my crop," said farmer Hardeep Singh in Jalandhar's grain market, adding that he has to harvest the crop on remaining four acres in the coming few days because that was also fully matured.



Farmers at a grain market in Karnal with Deputy Commissioner Nishant Kumar Yadav Sunday. Manoj Dhaka

## Hooda alleges mismanagement

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 3

WITH THE government claiming that paddy procurement has started in Haryana, former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who visited several grain markets Sunday, alleged mismanagement, saying "it has turned out to be a jumla as the procurement is not taking place actually".

Following the protests by angry farmers, the Central government was forced to announce procurement of paddy from Sunday itself. A Haryana government spokesperson said, "As per the instructions of the Haryana government, the procurement of paddy has been started in the state. All the farmers are urged

to bring their crop to the grain markets only after drying, cleaning and reducing the moisture content so that they can get a good price for the crop. The farmers will not have to face any problem during paddy procurement."

However, several farmers in the mandis of Karnal complained that they were not allowed to enter the mandis on the pretext of scheduling and gate passes. The officials have been asking the farmers to come to the mandis as per their turn only.

On Sunday, Hooda visited several grain markets, including Ladwa, Pipli and Thanesar, to know the ground reality of procurement. "The mandis are littered with paddy and the situation is such that there is no place

to even set foot in the market and farmers are facing constant fear of rain. The farmers are forced to sell crops to private agencies below MSP due to the threat of rain and delay in government procurement," he said.

Asserting that the farmers need clarity, Hooda said during the Congress government, when he was the Chief Minister, farmers knew a week before the purchase of paddy which agency would buy and which sheller their paddy would go to. "Not only this, farmers were not harassed in the name of portal and registration during Congress government. Crops were purchased when they landed in the mandis and simultaneous payments were made. Today, farm-

ers are being harassed by asking them to register on portals and on the pretext of high moisture content. As soon as our government is formed, every farmer's grain purchase will be ensured by eliminating the hassle of portal and registration," he said.

The Leader of Opposition said that "we have had a long rainy season this time and it is still raining intermittently and hence the government should give concession to the farmers in the standard moisture content this time". "Far from giving relief, the standard moisture content is being continuously reduced and it is clear from the policies of the government that they do not want to give a proper rate of crops to the farmers," he said.

## UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER BHUPENDER YADAV IN CHANDIGARH

## ‘Central govt has got constructive cooperation from Punjab, Haryana over stubble burning’



Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav in Chandigarh on Sunday. Kamleshwar Singh

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 3

UNION ENVIRONMENT Minister, Bhupender Yadav, on Sunday said that the Centre has got positive support from the governments of Punjab, Haryana, UP and Delhi on the issue of stubble burning, while expressing satisfaction on the role of neighbouring states to the National Capital in handling the issue.

Yadav, who also handles the ministries of labour and employment, forest and climate change, was in the town in connection to a few official engagements.

Talking to journalists in Chandigarh, Yadav said apart from various reasons — like industries and construction activities — stubble burning was also a major contributor responsible for spiking pollution levels in Delhi and surrounding areas. While referring to the steps taken by the government to

check the problem, Yadav said the government has issued seven advisories and more than 52 directions in this regard since July 29.

While talking about the economic viability of stubble burning, the minister said that the state-run NTPC had even floated a tender to buy crop residue for use as fuel for its power plants.

Touching upon the issue of machines needed to deal with stubble, Yadav said the Union Agriculture Ministry has given nearly Rs 7,000 crore to these northern states.

Notably, farmers in Punjab, Haryana and some other states set their fields on fire to quickly clear off the crop residue left after harvesting and before cultivating wheat and potato.

Experts have claimed it is one of the main reasons for the spike in pollution in Delhi-NCR at the onset of winters.

The paddy harvesting season is between October 15 and November 15.

## 3 women from Haryana suspected drowned in Dehradun

**Dehradun:** Three women from Haryana's Sonapat district are suspected to have drowned while bathing in the Ganga river in Raiwala area here on Sunday, police said.

The women identified as Kusum (36), Seema (34), and Neha (24) were washed away in

the current around 5 am at the Geeta Kutir bank in Haripur Kalan.

A search was launched by the State Disaster Response Force after it got the information about the incident.

None of the women have been found yet, they said. **PTI**

## How central govt can get around MSP demand and end stalemate with farmers

FARMERS CAMPING at Delhi's borders for the past 10 months have clear cut demands — the cancellation of three farm laws, legal assurance on Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all crops, and continuation of the ongoing MSP scheme for wheat and paddy. Experts said the government was leaning towards the withdrawal or cancellation of the three farm laws and a recent tweet of the former chairman of the Punjab farmers commission and farmworkers commission was an indication of the same. The question of a legal guarantee of MSP for all crops, however, continues to be the bone of contention, with the government not willing to take direct responsibility of the same and farmers not ready to pull back from protest sites without getting an assurance.

**ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA** explains if there is a solution in sight for the predicament.

**Is there a possibility of the three farm laws being cancelled in the near future?**

Former chairman of Punjab farmers' commission and farmworkers commission, Ajay Vir Jakhar, who had submitted his resignation with the change of guard in Punjab, had recently tweeted, "In my judgement, the government has in principle already decided to withdraw/compromise on 3- farm laws to the satisfaction of the farm unions, but the issue on legal MSP remains. After so much distress and loss of trust hope better sense prevails on both sides of the fence."

Though no formal talks have taken place between the farm unions and government for the past eight months, sources in the government said that informally, they had been engaging continuously with representatives of farmers' unions to discuss the matter and to reach a consensus. Sources said that the government and farmers unions were likely to reach a mutually acceptable solution on the three contentious farm laws soon, because Assembly elections in several states, including Punjab, were to be held soon. Punjab being a primarily agrarian state has defined the direction of the farmers' agitation, with its farmers leading from the front. Another state where elections are due next year was Uttar Pradesh (UP) — the most populous state and one that sent the maximum number of parliamentarians to



Paddy arrives at a grain market in Ludhiana. Gurmeet Singh

the Parliament. Both the states were crucial for the BJP for obvious reasons.

**What is other major demand of farmers for a legal guarantee of MSP for all crops?**

The major point of contention between farmer leaders and the government's emissaries seems to be the issue of assurance of MSP for all 23 crops — including seven kinds of cereal, seven oilseeds, five pulses, and four other commercial crops. Sources said that the farmers have told the government that the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) releases MSP for all Kharif and Rabi crops every year.

The government should hence assure the implementation of the same legally in practical form also. Most of these 23 crops are purchased by private players and there is high fluctuation in the prices. Sometimes these crops are sold much below the MSP and sometimes they fetch a little more than the MSP. The farmers, therefore, want a legal guarantee that crops can be sold only at MSP or above it. But the government is not ready to give legal guarantees at the moment, except reiterated verbally several times that it will continue its current MSP regime, which mostly covers wheat and Paddy in Punjab, Haryana, MP and parts of UP. The farmers, however, have refused to budge.

Some states, in the meanwhile, have already stepped in and have started compensating farmers for crops that they sell below the MSP rates under their

own state-level policies.

**Can state-level policies assure that the farmers get MSP for their crops?**

In the past years, some states like Madhya Pradesh (MP), Haryana, Kerala have launched schemes like Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojna (price difference payment scheme), floor prices, and Bhavantar Bharpayi Yojna, respectively, under which the state governments pay the difference to the farmers when the sell their crop below MSP in the market. While the MP government has covered some cereals, pulses, oilseed and horticulture crops under its scheme, Haryana and Kerala have covered only horticulture crops. Haryana has recently added millet to its scheme.

Under these schemes, the state price or floor price are fixed by the state governments and if the covered crops are sold below that price then the state government pays the difference to the registered farmers on their respective portals. But experts said that state governments cannot sustain such schemes for long and also they cannot cover all the crops. Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Kerala have not been able to cover most of the agriculture crops under it. Experts also said that there are mixed results of these schemes everywhere.

"These schemes are good but the state governments do not have resources to sustain such

policies and to cover all the crops, as in the case of Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Kerala," said Jagmohan Singh, general secretary of Bharti Kisan Union (Dakaunda). He added that such state-level policies cannot work where a bulk amount of cereals are sold by the farmers.

**Is there a solution then?**

Experts have suggested some solutions.

Along with the current MSP regime, corporations, like Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), should be formed by the centre government for cereals, some of which are not covered under centres' current MSP regime, said Agriculture experts at Punjab Agriculture University (PAU), Ludhiana.

CCI enters the market when the price of 'Kapas' (unginned raw cotton) goes below the MSP fixed by CACP. The CCI then purchases Kapas at MSP, as witnessed several times in the past in Punjab. This in turn forces the private players also to offer prices at par with the MSP or little more than the MSP so as to stop the CCI from purchasing all the cotton from the market.

In the case of Basmati last year, for example, rates were at an all-time high in the international market but farmers got much less because of their dependence on the private players. That is where a corporation like CCI could step in and play the role of a deterrent to stop farmers from being exploited.

When such corporations cover all the crops, private players will not be able to exploit farmers, experts said. Just like wheat and paddy MSP, which the government purchases through Food Corporation of India (FCI) by taking cash credit limit (CCL) from RBI, such corporations too can follow the same policy because there is a huge market of oilseeds and pulses in our country and this way both the government and farmers will not be at loss, explained experts. This, they said, will lead farmers to opt for diversification of crops also in states like Punjab. Some farmer leaders suggested that even a state-Centre joint "Bhavantar scheme" can be launched to compensate farmers in case their crop price goes below the fixed rate or government can regulate purchase by private players through some policy to stop farmers' loot.

## Haryana govt allows all varsities to reopen for in-person classes, later recants order

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 3

THE HARYANA government on Sunday extended the partial Covid-19 lockdown (Mahamari Alert-Surakshit Haryana) for another fortnight (till October 18), while allowing various relaxations and allowing the reopening of universities initially, before recanting the order.

The order for extension of the partial-lockdown was issued by the chief secretary, Vijai Vardhan, who is also the chairman of Haryana's State Executive Committee of State Disaster Management Authority.

Though the administration initially allowed residential universities to conduct offline classes, but only after adopting SOPs for Covid-appropriate behaviour, it later withdrew its order.

"Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) are allowed to open for students with 100 per cent attendance with strict adherence of requisite social distancing norms, regular sanitisation of the premises, Covid appropriate behavioural norms and guidelines as indicated in the SOPs released by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. The Department of Skill Development and Industrial Training, Haryana, will release guidelines for implementation of these orders immediately," the initial order released by the administration read. All

hostel students will also be given priority for getting fully vaccinated.

Later, on Sunday evening, the chief secretary, however, issued a "corrigendum" to his earlier order, which read, "Fully residential universities in the state are directed to continue conducting classes online till further orders. The matter will be reviewed after all students, faculty members and staff (including the outsourced ones) fully vaccinated and share the progress with the Departments of Higher Education, Technical Education and Medical Education and Research as the case may be".

Regarding the upcoming festival season, the order reads, "Various festivities will follow one after the other till December 31 — such as Navratri, Dussehra, Milad-un-Nabi/Eid-e-Milad, Karwa Chauth, Diwali, Govardhan Puja, Bhaiya Dooj, Chhath Puja, Guru Nanak Jayanti, Christmas and New Year's eve. This is a critical period as there may be a tendency to violate Covid-appropriate behaviour during festivals, resulting in large gatherings, events, fairs. Therefore, adherence to guidelines to allow festivities in a safe and Covid-appropriate manner, especially in religious places, maybe strictly enforced by the district administration".

## Punjab police scraps examinations to fill 560 vacant sub-inspector posts

**Chandigarh:** Punjab Police on Sunday said it has scrapped the examinations that had been conducted for filling up 560 vacant posts of sub-inspectors (SIs). The common computer-based tests to recruit SIs in four cadres/wings (investigation, district, Armed Police, and intelligence) of Punjab Police were held from August 17 to August 24 in different centres of the state.

The official spokesperson of Punjab Police on Sunday informed that the examinations were scrapped "on the directions of the Punjab Chief Minister

Charanjit Singh Channi and Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa to maintain the integrity and fairness of the examination process for recruitment".

The spokesperson said dates to conduct fresh examinations for the recruitment of SIs will be notified soon. "The Recruitment Board constituted for the recruitment of SIs had recommended scrapping of examinations after cheating and use of malpractices was reported in the tests..." said the spokesperson. **ENS**

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Chandigarh



## SATISH SHARMA WAS PROTECTOR OF THE JAN ZEGERS TRUST

## Gandhi family friend Sharma set up offshore entities

Trust was declared in Income Tax returns, my family and I have no role in companies: wife Sterre

SHYAMLAL YADAV  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

CAPTAIN SATISH Sharma, Congress leader, friend of the Gandhi family, and a former Union Minister who passed away in February this year, had offshore entities and properties abroad, the Pandora Papers show.

At least 10 members of Sharma's family including his wife Sterre, children and grandchildren are among the beneficiaries of a trust, the Jan Zegers Trust — a declaration Sharma never made to the Election Commission while filing poll nomination papers.

According to documents of the AsiaCiti Trust, the Jan Zegers Trust was incorporated in the Cayman Islands in 1995 — Sharma was then Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas — and later under the governing law of New Zealand.

Another trust, named the JZ II Trust, was incorporated in New Zealand in October 2015 when Sharma was a Rajya Sabha member.

He was protector of the two trusts and his wife Sterre a beneficiary. The documents suggest he was managing his properties in

France and Singapore and transferring several payments to Sterre through bank accounts of third parties.

Most of the remittance orders had been categorised as high risk with a note: "reason for classification as a high risk remittance: Sterre Sharma is married to an Indian politician, Satish Sharma."

A document from August 2014 lists the beneficiaries of the Jan Zegers Trust. These include Satish Sharma (protector), Henriette Jeanette Zegers Ten Horn, Sterre Candida Maria Sharma Zegers, Mei Celesta Regina Zegers, Engelen Felicia Gabrielle Zegers, Samir Sharma, Sarika Sharma, Patrick Brenny, Paul McGowan and The Kalakar Trust.

The Kalakar Trust's Delhi address in the Pandora Papers is of a property owned by Sterre as per Sharma's affidavit filed with his Rajya Sabha nomination in 2010.

In his declaration while filing the nomination for the Rajya Sabha elections in 2004 and 2010, the only immovable property outside India that he declared was Sterre's "inherited house" in Amsterdam.

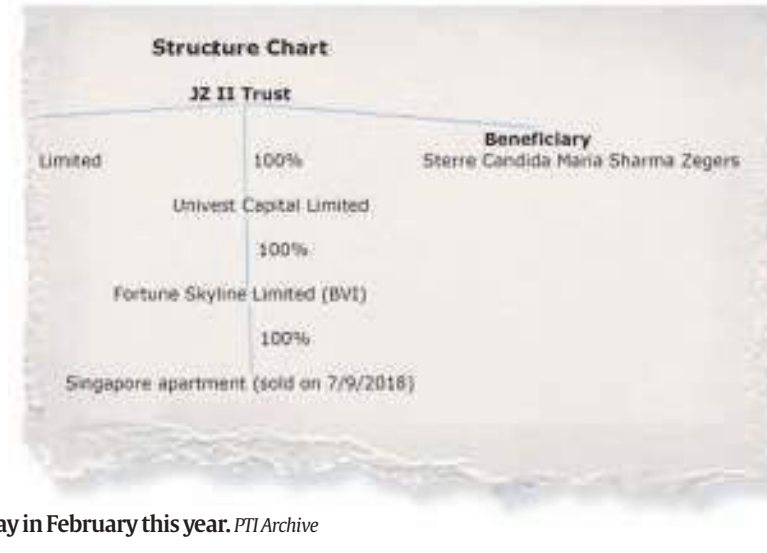
A document of the AsiaCiti Trust details the Sharma offshore network and lists the



Congress leader Satish Sharma passed away in February this year. PTI Archive

entities: The Jan Zegers Trust and its underlying companies, Dansor SARL (Luxembourg), Anenice Limited (UK), and Lomond Investments Limited (Cayman Islands) — Lomond was later dissolved and replaced by Univest Capital Limited (Samoa); JZ II Trust and its underlying companies, Univest Capital Limited (Samoa) and Fortune Skyline Limited (British Virgin Islands).

Documents show that between July 2013



Papers, lives in Amsterdam. Documents show that when the Jan Zegers Trust was formed in 1995, he signed as "witness" on requisite documents. Chadha did not respond to an email seeking his comments.

Responding to queries from *The Indian Express*, Sterre Sharma, in a written reply (*full response online*), said: "Jan Zegers Trust was incorporated in 1995 by my late father as Settlor, as a mechanism to manage his assets

and pass on his inheritance to the beneficiaries which included his wife, the issue and remoter issue of the Settlor (my father) and his wife, the husbands, wives, widows and widowers of the issue of the settlor and his wife and the Kalakar Trust of New Delhi India which has done commendable charitable and philanthropic work in India."

"Jan Zegers II trust was incorporated to help liquidate the trust assets to pay French taxes on trust property, which tax demand far exceeded the value of the trust property. Late Mr Satish Sharma was made a Protector of the Trust, who could act in place of Settlor (my late father)... For all purposes, heirs of my late father were beneficiaries and all powers and control vested in my late father," she said.

"I declared the Trust in my IT return since FY 2016-2017. Family Settlement was underway. Assets were liquidated to pay French Taxes which exceeded the value of property. Final Tax claims have been settled only this year in recent past months. Once family settlement is arrived at whatever the taxes fall due in each jurisdiction shall be duly paid. Trustees were mandated to strictly carry out all regulatory compliances," Sharma said.

"Companies are formed solely to manage assets under the trust which holds inheritance of my late father and are to be duly wound up with the Trust. None of my family members or myself to my understanding have any role in these companies," she said.

## Niira Radia set up a dozen firms, asked Trident Trust to not contact her directly

I have no shareholding in any of the companies, do not recognise them or the transactions referred to, says Radia

KHUSHBOO NARAYAN  
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 3

THE PANDORA Papers show that corporate lobbyist Niira (Nira) Radia is a "do not contact client" of corporate service provider firm Trident Trust Company BVI, who has been conducting her offshore transactions through London-based Sanjay Newatia, a former Credit Suisse banker.

Radia, whose name earlier figured in both The Panama Papers and The Paradise Papers, once again figures in the Pandora Papers with about a dozen offshore firms and a more detailed account of transactions executed by these firms including the purchase of a \$251,500 watch in Dubai through one of her BVI companies.

Radia, according to the documents, is linked to companies such as Irthema Associates Limited; Roxbury Estates Limited; Elmashe Holdings Limited; Thyer Investments Limited; Malaga Overseas Limited; Collets Trading Limited; Kingston International Limited; Himlen Trading SA; Zilla Limited; Koios Holding Limited; Mehone Consultants Limited; and Nyine Holdings Ltd.

The Trident Trust documents pertaining to Elmashe Holdings, Thyer, Zilla, Koios, Mehone and Nyine have listed Radia as the master client of these offshore companies with her Chattarpur farm address in Delhi.

Newatia hasn't responded to a query from *The Indian Express* but in an email reply, Radia said, "I am alarmed and deeply anguished by yet another attempt by *The Indian Express* to malign my image. It is evident that your questions are an example of adventurous journalism. I have no shareholding in any of the companies mentioned in your mail; I do not recognize any of these companies and neither do I recognize the transactions which you have referred to... For the sake of completeness, I also must state that I have always made true and accurate disclosures to all relevant author-



ities. My sister Karuna has never even heard of these firms mentioned by you. Mr Jehangir Pocha passed away in 2014 and we have no knowledge of his personal affairs."

Radia was at the centre of a controversy in 2010 over intercepted phone conversations that came to be known as the Radia Tapes and suggested that she used her proximity with some journalists and politicians to try and influence ministerial appointments in UPAIL.

Subsequently, Radia came under the scanner of several investigative agencies. In 2011, she closed down her public relations firm Vaishnavi Corporate Communications.

However, this was not the only company that was shut down by Radia following the controversy.

The Pandora Papers show that in January 2011, Radia gave instructions to Trident Trust to close a Credit Suisse bank account of Roxbury Estates and transfer \$97,860 from

its account to another account, controlled by Radia through Irthema Associates, in the Zurich branch of the same bank.

This transfer request came with an instruction to "not contact the beneficial owner (Radia Nira)" as she is a "do not contact client" of Trident Trust.

Roxbury Estates, according to the company formation documents, was set up in January 2008 with Radia as its sole beneficial owner and Guardian Nominees Ltd, a company in Nevis, West Indies, as a nominee of the firm. In August 2009, Roxbury became the shareholder of a Cyprus firm and helped it open a bank account.

Apart from this, Pandora Papers records reveal that Radia's sister and business partner, Karuna Menon, and Radia's associate Jehangir Pocha, former journalist named in the Radia Tapes controversy, also set up offshore companies with Trident Trust.

and September 2015, Satish Sharma gave "consent" to pay EUR 0.9799 million, USD 0.1885 million, and 2 lakh Singapore dollars to various entities through some third party accounts.

Approximately Rs 4.28 crore (EUR 4 lakh and USD 1 lakh) of that was to be sent in several tranches to Sterre Sharma through Kul Rattan Chadha in his account at the Jammu & Kashmir Bank in Vasant Vihar, Delhi branch. Chadha, also named in the Panama



Documents list Radia as client of offshore firms. She had figured in the Panama and Paradise Papers as well.

Menon is the owner of Tineos Ventures Limited and Pocha of Magnitude Enterprises Limited. The Trident Trust has tagged the accounts of Menon and Pocha with Radia. Pocha died in 2014.

The Trident Trust documents also show that in April 2009, Radia used Collets Trading execute two transactions. One, a \$500,000 payment to Hongkong-based Fortune Exports for marketing and consultancy services and the second, \$251,500 to purchase a diamond watch from Diamond Infinity DMCC. The purchase of the diamond watch even sparked a conversation between the employees of Trident Trust on Radia's jewellery collection.

"...she (Radia) really does have amazing jewellery. I meet with her when she comes to London..." said a Trident Trust employee while executing the transaction.

According to records, in July 2009, Radia bought 100,000 pounds worth shares of Unitech Corporate Parks Plc, a UK subsidiary of Unitech Ltd at an upper limit of 20 pence per share through Kingston International.

In 2012, the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) began investigating the role of Radia and her firms in a Rs 1700-crore deal between Tata Group and Unitech in 2007.

This probe was a fallout of a larger investigation into the Radia Tapes. In March 2014, the SFIO informed the Supreme Court that it is planning to prosecute Radia's firm for alleged violation of Companies Act. The agency is yet to prosecute the firms.



Trident Trust document shows ownership detail and Adani's Cyprus nationality.

## Adani brother set up a company in BVI; says it has been closed now

SANDEEP SINGH  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

THE BROTHER of billionaire Gautam Adani set up a company in the British Virgin Islands three years ago, records in the Pandora Papers investigated by *The Indian Express* reveal. He now claims that the company has been "closed".

The records show that Vinod Shantilal Shah Adani, elder brother of Gautam Adani, set up Hibiscus RE Holdings Limited in the British Virgin Islands in 2018. Vinod Adani, who is a Cyprus national residing in Dubai, is the sole shareholder of this offshore firm with 50,000 shares, and a director since May 2018.

While setting up Hibiscus RE Holdings, Vinod Adani stated in records that its purpose was trading and services in the global market, and that the current assets of the company were then estimated to be worth \$10-15 million.

While Vinod Adani is a Cyprus national now, his son Pranav Adani is on the board of several Adani Group companies in India, including the flagship Adani Enterprises and Adani Total Gas among others.

Records show that the agent for registering Hibiscus RE Holdings in BVI is Trident Trust Company, which provided its office address as the registered address for the firm.

Trident Trust's information form for setting up Hibiscus RE Holdings have been filled and signed by Vinod Adani and it lists the

Dubai address of Adani Global Investment DMCC (AGI) — 3606-A, Oaks Liwa Heights, Jumeirah Lake Towers, Cluster W, Dubai, UAE — for physical record-keeping for the BVI firm.

Records for Hibiscus RE Holdings also list an employee of AGI, identified as Subir Mitta, as the person to be responsible for physically maintaining its records in Dubai.

The records also show that Vinod Adani resides at 394, Al Thanyah Fourth Villa R-41, 394 Emirates Hill Third, which is an upscale location in Dubai.

This is not for the first time that Vinod Adani's name has figured in a company registered in a "tax haven". His name appeared in Panama Papers, which was reported by *The Indian Express* in 2016, in connection with a company set up in the Bahamas on January 4, 1994 — just months after the formation of Adani Group's flagship company Adani Exports.

When contacted, Vinod Adani said: "Hibiscus Real Estate is a BVI company, wholly owned by myself. Purpose was to hold my Real Estate assets in UAE, in a corporate vehicle. Current status of Hibiscus RE is CLOSED and Assets are NIL... I have been overseas now for more than 25 years and all of the above are as per applicable regulations and guidelines."

"Adani Global Investment DMCC is also wholly owned by me and Subir Mitta is an employee of this company. As both these companies are owned by me, the record keeping is maintained in a common office," he said.

## Before Nirav fled, sister founded offshore firm to act as trust protector

We deny all allegations, cannot comment since matter is sub judice, says Purvi Modi's lawyer

KHUSHBOO NARAYAN  
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 3

A MONTH before fugitive diamond jeweller Nirav Modi fled India in January 2018, his sister Purvi Modi set up a firm in the British Virgin Islands to act as a corporate protector of a trust formed through the Trident Trust Company, Singapore.

Records investigated by *The Indian Express* show that the firm, Brookton Management Ltd, was set up in December 2017 to act as the corporate protector of The Deposit Trust.

Purvi, in the incorporation form for BVI companies, declared that the source of funds to be infused into Brookton were salary and

her personal earnings as the creative director of Firestar, the firm that is accused of defrauding Punjab National Bank (PNB) through fraudulent letters of undertaking (LOUs).

These documents of the new firm and the trust set up by Purvi are part of the Pandora Papers.

Significantly, Purvi, earlier named as an accused in the \$2 billion (Rs 13,600 crore) money laundering case registered by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi, has now turned approver and is likely to escape prosecution as the court has pardoned her on the condition of full and true disclosure.

Purvi, a Belgian national, also has an Interpol red notice against her.

Manavendra Mishra, lawyer of Purvi



Trident Trust document mentions Purvi Modi, a Belgian national.

Modi, in an email response to *The Indian Express*, said, "We are the lawyers acting for Ms Purvi Modi in India. We deny all the below allegations raised in your email. We are not in a position to respond or comment at this stage since the matter is sub-judice

before the special PMLA court."

Records also show that Purvi and her brother Neeshal Modi are beneficial owners of three BVI firms: Integrated Investing Ltd; Xclusive Consultant Ltd; and Panera Assets Inc which, according to the ED, were used to

laure money by Nirav Modi.

According to the Trident Trust company records, Integrated Investing in October 2012 set up a branch in Dubai called Diagems FZC. Similarly, Xclusive Consultants Ltd set up Universal Fine Jewellery FZE in January 2012. The ED has alleged both Diagems and Universal Fine are "dummy companies" used by Nirav Modi to divert \$265 million (Rs 1,811 cr) to his sister Purvi Modi.

Records show that Purvi Modi was also the settlor and beneficial owner of Monte Cristo Trust, managed by Trident Trust Singapore.

The trust, documents show, set up a BVI firm, Belvedere Holdings Group Ltd, in 2013. The ED has alleged that in 2017, a property in London was purchased in the name of Belvedere Holdings Group Limited for EUR 6.25 million. This property, which belongs to Purvi, has been attached by ED as a part of the proceeds of crime allegedly generated by Nirav Modi while perpetrating the bank fraud. Nirav Modi left India in the first week of

January 2018 before the PNB scam came out in public. In March 2019, Modi was arrested in the United Kingdom and is currently lodged at Wandsworth prison in London.

Last month, Nirav Modi moved the UK high court for an oral hearing with a renewed "leave to appeal" application for a judge to determine if it can proceed to a full appeal hearing against extradition ordered by a lower court.

In April, the UK government approved the extradition of Modi to India. Earlier, on February 25, a UK court had ordered Modi's extradition. It held that the evidence against him was prima facie sufficient to order his extradition to India to face the charges.

On July 1, the ED said it has recovered Rs 17.25 crore from an account of Purvi in the UK, which was opened by Nirav Modi. This, the agency said, was done after Purvi disclosed the information to the probe agency.

So far, the ED has seized assets worth Rs 2,400 crore belonging to Modi in India and abroad.



# Iqbal Mirchi family expands offshore empire, with links to ex-Pak General

After Panama Papers leak, Mirchi clan companies moved to Trident Trust from Mossack Fonseca

RITU SARIN

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

DESPITE A sweeping enforcement crack-down including attachment of properties worth hundreds of crores in India and Dubai, members of the Iqbal Mirchi family have been one step ahead of authorities with fresh offshore deals that link a retired Pakistan Army general as well, an investigation of data contained in the Pandora Papers shows.

Iqbal Mirchi was a trusted aide of under-world gangster Dawood Ibrahim and was wanted by the Mumbai Police and the Enforcement Directorate. He was arrested by Scotland Yard in 1994 and died of a heart attack in London in 2013.

Since then, members of his family have set up a slew of offshore assets to manage their global property empire and in 2016, *The Indian Express* investigation of the Panama Papers revealed 17 such companies.

Five years later, the Pandora Papers add another crucial layer to the family's offshore money trails: investments and transfers done by Iqbal Mirchi's first wife Hajra Iqbal Memon and their two sons Junaid Memon and Asif Iqbal Memon.

Significantly, after the Panama Papers expose, the Mirchi family transferred several offshore companies from Mossack Fonseca to the Trident Trust of British Virgin Islands, just in time before the Panamanian law firm shut shop in March 2018. This was done as part of what is referred to in Trident Trust emails as the "MossFon" project.

The latest revelations deals with Akbar Asif, the brother of Iqbal Mirchi's second wife, Heena Kausar, whose offshore dealings were also covered by *The Indian Express* in the 2016 Panama Papers.

Akbar Asif is the son of renown film director Kasif (of *Mughal-e-Azam* fame). It is known that in 2004, he met then President Pervez Musharraf to request for the ban on Indian films to be lifted. Asked about this meeting, Gen Shah, in his response to ICJ, has stated that the meeting lasted only 2-4 minutes and that brief encounter was the only time he himself met Akbar Asif.

Secret records of Trident Trust BVI reveal that in 2007, Akbar Asif, the wife and son of Lt Gen Shafaat Ullah Shah, now a retired three-star General of the Pakistani Army, became shareholders in one of Asif's companies, Talah Limited.

Shah served as Military Secretary to former Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf and was Pakistan's Ambassador to Jordan as well.

Shah was a two-star serving General when Talah Ltd was transferred in the name of his wife, Fariah Shah. Their son, Raza Ullah Shah, also became a Talah shareholder when he turned 18 in 2010.

In the company incorporation form of Trident Trust, Raza Ulla Shah's "occupation" is shown as Director of Talah Ltd and source of funds is listed as shareholder funds from past earnings for an 18-year-old.

The ownership of another company,



TALAH LIMITED				
REGISTER OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS			Summary of Appointment / Resignation	
Name	Address	Office	Appointment	Resignation
Mrs. Fariah Shah	111, Summer Colony, Varanasi Road, Lahore Cantt, Pakistan	Director	24th December 2007	
Mrs. Raza Ullah Shah	111, Summer Colony, Varanasi Road, Lahore Cantt, Pakistan	Director	24th May 2010	

Share register of Talah Limited showing ex-Pak general's family members as shareholders; (top) Midwest Hotel Apartment attached by ED last year.

Mustique Investments Limited, was also transferred to Talah Ltd around the same time. Records reveal that Mustique Investments took over shareholdings of several of Akbar Asif's offshore companies detailed in the Trident Trust data shortly after they were incorporated.

The Register of Directors of Talah Limited shows that Mirchi's brother-in-law Akbar Asif and his wife, Kavita Charles Singh, became its Directors in 2002; with Fariah Shah joining in 2007 and her son, Raza Ullah Shah, in 2010. Records show that in January 2008, the entire shareholding of Mustique Investments Limited in Talah Limited was sold to Fariah Shah and she was appointed as "sole Director" of the company.

Significantly, Talah Ltd owns an apartment in London confirmed in current UK registry records accessed as part of this investigation. Records show

Talah bought the flat for pounds 676, 250 (\$1.3 million at 2006 rates when it was bought by the BVI entity).

So just a year later, the ownership of Talah Limited comes to the wife and son of the retired Pakistani General, and with it, the ownership of the London apartment.

While the Panama Papers had linked Akbar Asif to the ownership of Dates Foundation, set up in 2005, the Pandora Papers uncover the existence of at least eight other, mostly, BVI entities.

There is a clear pattern of these entities being set up by Akbar Asif and his wife around 2002-2003 and a year or two later, their shares are transferred to Mustique.

In all, there are 21 companies owned by Akbar Asif for which documents are available in the secret data. One of them is Karram Limited for which Trident Trust incorporation

form states that the "source of funds" of Akbar Asif comes from investments in properties and money from running restaurants in Dubai and London while that of his wife from her jewellery business in Dubai.

Correspondence and emails of Trident Trust employees show that while processing the request for transfer of the companies of the Mirchi clan — in the wake of the Panama expose — they get negative "hits" while doing the customary background checks. An email dated June 15, 2017, with reference to the transfer of three Memon companies, reads, "Kindly note our world check findings reflect a hit on the beneficial owners of the companies..."

Mentioned in records is that in 2015, Hajra Memon was sent notices by Enforcement Directorate for allegedly selling properties in Mumbai and using front companies in tax havens to purchase real estate abroad through hawala.

An identical negative input was inserted in the case of her son, Asif Memon. It is also alleged that he was the "manager" of Dawood Ibrahim's business interests in Dubai, India and the UK. The ICJ-Indian Express reports on the Mirchi clan are also listed as part of the negative profiles and are part of the data.

Records show that Asif Memon wrote to the Trident Trust denying all allegations: "I would like to state that all of the above was only a media propaganda in order to defame us/ conspire against us... we have obtained police clearance certificates from UAE where we are presently resident and also UK."

Subsequently, email trails show that the Trident Trust staff asked for certified copies of police clearance certificates before the transfer of companies from Mossack Fonseca was done. In the data, Hajra Memon and Junaid Memon are shown as Indian citizens while Asif Memon as a British citizen.

Marcus Rutherford, lawyer for Iqbal Mirchi's family, did not respond to questions sent by *The Indian Express*.

When contacted by ICJ, Lt Gen (ret'd) Shafaat Ullah Shah said: "The purchase of Talah Limited was immediately disclosed to the relevant authority in my Declaration of Assets. Since the purchase of Talah, all income arising from the asset has been declared to the tax Authorities in my Annual Tax returns and all taxes have been paid to the relevant authorities. Talah Limited was owned by an offshore holding company and not by Mr Akbar Asif."

He added: "Tallah Limited is an SPV, it was purchased in 2007 through a referral by my ex Army colleague working as a consultant with real estate firms in London. The only asset of the company was and is a flat at 155 Discovery Dock East, South Quay Square, London E14 9RZ. The possession of the apartment was provided in 2008. There was no transfer of shares but simply purchase of the Company. There were no shares to transfer to our son Razauallah Shah but only inclusion of his name in the Board of Directors."

Identity of Proposed allottees	If allottee is not a natural person, identity of the natural person who are the ultimate beneficial owner of the shares, proposed to be issued, if applicable	Category
Musk Holdings Limited	Francatina Development Inc.	FCCB Holder (Non-Promoter Group)

JCT records identify Musk Holdings and its ultimate beneficial owner Francatina Development Inc as "non-promoter" entities.

## Samir Thapar owns BVI firm holding 'non-promoter' stake in JCT Ltd

JAY MAZOOMDAAR

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

AN OFFSHORE stakeholder in JCT Ltd, which has been declared as a "non-promoter" by the Punjab-based textile giant, is linked to its own chairman and managing director Samir Thapar, records in the Pandora Papers investigated by *The Indian Express* reveal.

This offshore entity is registered in the British Virgin Islands, where Thapar is also the beneficial owner of another company, the records show.

A certificate of incumbency issued by Trident Trust (BVI) in September 2011 records Thapar as the holder of all 50,000 shares of Musk Holdings Ltd (BVI). In the same year, records show, he acquired Zanha International Ltd (BVI) as its beneficial owner.

Set up in 2009, Musk Holdings has stake in JCT Ltd and is listed as a "non-promoter" in official records of the company, including annual reports and RoC filings.

According to JCT records, Musk Holdings was allotted a 7.94 per cent stake in JCT Ltd in 2013-14. While records in Pandora Papers list Thapar as the sole shareholder of Musk Holdings, JCT's official documents identify "non-promoter" Francatina Development Inc as the ultimate beneficial owner.

Company records and *The Indian Express* investigation of records in the Panama Papers, leaked in 2016, show that Francatina Development was linked to another BVI company, Alport Ltd, which also held a "non-promoter" stake in JCT Ltd.

Alport Ltd was allotted a 4.79 per cent stake in JCT Ltd in 2015-16. In 2012, the shares of Alport were held by Francatina Development.

Records in Panama Papers of the now-defunct Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca list a Singapore address for the administrative office of Alport. The same address is listed in JCT records for Thapar's

Musk Holdings.

According to Mossack Fonseca records, the address belongs to Orbis Advisory. Operating from offices in Switzerland, Singapore and Liechtenstein, the Orbis Group "specialises in structured transactions" to find "tailor-made solutions for protecting, maintaining and increasing" client assets.

The Orbis Group figured prominently in the Income-Tax case against meat exporter Moin Qureshi, where investigators identified Orbis Consulting Trust (Liechtenstein) as the ultimate beneficial owner of Francatina Development Inc.

In the case of Zanha International Ltd, the BVI company acquired through wealth management services provider Mirabaud (Dubai), Thapar is listed as the beneficial owner. "BO has a liability on his company

which for liquidation purposes needs to be segregated to a BVI company and subsequently the debt will be written off

and the company/structure will be put into voluntary liquidation," records state.

For funds, Thapar listed three sources: inherited property and cash from grandfather; recently sold a property for USD 8 million in Zone 1 of Lutyens Delhi; salary as well as dividends from JCT.

In 2015, Zanha International was struck off the Registry for non-payment of licence fees. Records show that discussions were held in 2017 to restore the company for a fee of \$5,725. The outcome remained unclear.

Reached for comment, Thapar sought time until September 30 but, subsequently, did not respond to queries from *The Indian Express*.

One of India's leading manufacturers of textiles and filament yarn, JCT reported a total income of Rs 207.44 crore during the quarter ending March 31, 2021 as compared to Rs 191.28 crore in the previous quarter ending December 31, 2020, while its net profit fell from Rs 10.49 crore to Rs 5.71 crore between the two quarters.

## Jackie Shroff linked to New Zealand trust, BVI firm, Swiss bank account

SANDEEP SINGH

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

POPULAR BOLLYWOOD actor Jackie Shroff was the prime beneficiary of a trust set up in New Zealand by his mother-in-law, records in the Pandora Papers investigated by *The Indian Express* reveal. He also made "substantial contributions" to this trust, which had a Swiss bank account and owned an offshore company registered in the British Virgin Islands, records show.

On November 29, 2005, Claudia Dutt, the mother of Shroff's wife Ayesha, formed Media Trust, which is registered with London Fiduciary Trust Company Limited (LFTC) in New Zealand, a trustee company that provides trust and corporate services. Media Trust was terminated in September 2013.

According to the memorandum concerning the trust, Shroff's son Jai Shroff (Tiger Shroff) and daughter Krishna Shroff were the other beneficiaries.

The memorandum states that Shroff made "substantial contributions to the Trust" and wished "to be considered the primary beneficiary during his lifetime and his needs should be paramount".

Records in the Pandora Papers do not mention the amount contributed by Shroff to the trust. But they show that the trust held a bank account at Clariden Leu Bank, a private Swiss bank. This account was also closed in 2013.

Shailesh V Patkar — C/o S V Patkar & Co, 1208, Maker Chambers-V, Nariman Point, Mumbai — was appointed the protector of the trust. The protector has the power to add/revoke beneficiaries, appoint beneficiaries and issue instructions regarding distributions.

Records also show that Media Trust

The wishes of JS follow:
1. The Beneficiaries comprise:
(a) JS (DOB 01/02/1957);
(b) Jai Shroff (DOB 02/03/1990); and
(c) Krishna Shroff (DOB 21/01/1993).
2. JS wishes to be considered the primary beneficiary during his lifetime and his needs should be paramount.

Media Trust documents show Shroff wished to be considered the primary beneficiary during his lifetime



owned Millenstock Holdings Limited, an offshore firm incorporated in the British Virgin Islands, which was struck off the Register of Companies on May 1,

2013. The shares of Millenstock Holdings were allotted to LFTC as the trustee of Media Trust.

Accounts of LFTC for the year ended September 2008 list Media Trust/ Millenstock Holdings under the head

"Debtors Not Currently Collectable" along with an amount of US\$38,565.

The records list a transaction involving Media Trust. In November 2005, AsiaCiti Trust New Zealand Limited, which is a shareholder of LFTC, generated an invoice of \$3,750 on November 29, 2005, in the name of LFTC with regard to opening the Media Trust account. The receivables reconciliation showed total dues of \$27,740 till June 2008 in the name of the beneficiaries of Media Trust.

In August 2013, an LFTC resolution recorded that Millenstock Holdings had been struck off the Register and the Swiss bank account closed. "The Trust has no other assets and there will be no further settlements to the Trust Fund. Therefore due to lack of trust assets, the Trust has failed," it said.

Responding to queries from *The Indian Express*, Ayesha Shroff said: "My family and I have absolutely no knowledge of any such Trust. My mother, who passed away over ten years ago, was a Belgian citizen and not a resident of India."

## Held for fraud, Ajit Kerkar of Cox and Kings linked to offshore firms

KHUSHBOO NARAYAN

MUMBAI, OCTOBER 3

THE NOW arrested promoter of bankrupt travel firm Cox and Kings Ltd, Ajay Peter Kerkar, owns two BVI trusts and is connected to at least half a dozen offshore firms, an investigation of records in the Pandora Papers reveals.

Most of these firms were set up by Kerkar and his business partner Shyam Maheshwari, non-resident Indian between 2010 and 2016. Maheshwari is a partner at Ares SSG Group, a global alternative investment management firm.

Kerkar is accused of money laundering and was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in November 2020. His firm, Cox and Kings, came under the scanner after the ED initiated an investigation into allegations of kickbacks taken by Rana Kapoor, former co-founder of Yes Bank Ltd. Cox and Kings owes Rs 5,500 crore to banks and financial institutions and was one of the top borrowers of Yes Bank.

Documents investigated by *The Indian Express* show the two BVI vista trusts — The Welcome Trust and The Castle Cove Trust — were both set up in March 2010 with Kerkar, his wife Emma Patience Tully, and their two daughters as the ultimate beneficial owners and Aleman, Cordero, Galindo & Lee Trust (BVI) Ltd as their trustee.

While the Welcome Trust controls a BVI firm Coad Investments Ltd, the Castle Cove Trust holds shares of Castleman Management Ltd. The initial settlement corpus of Castle Cove Trust was shares worth \$50,000 of Castleman Management, according to its trust deed.

Records show that between September

Residential address: 5 Priory Road, London NW6 4NN, UK
Date of Appointment: 2 March 2010
Beneficiary full name: Aj ay Ajit Peter KERKAR
Residential address: 5 Priory Road, London NW6 4NN, UK
Date of Appointment: 2 March 2010
Beneficiary full name: Emma Patience TULL Y

ALCOGAL records identify Kerkar with his London address

2015 and October 2016, Kerkar, through Castleman Management, became a guarantor to a \$45-million loan given by Cayman Islands-based SSG Secured Lending Opportunities to Kubber Investment (Mauritius) Pvt Ltd, a shareholder of Cox and Kings. Similarly, Coad Investments, too, became a guarantor for loans of \$34 million taken by Kubber Investment from SSG Secured Lending between 2014 and 2016.

Incidentally, Kubber Investments is being probed by ED for allegedly siphoning around \$15 million from the sale proceeds of Holiday Break Education Limited, a UK subsidiary of Cox and Kings. Holiday Break Education was sold for Rs 4387 crore in 2018. The ED has alleged that Kubber Investments is owned by Kerkar.

Emails and phone calls to Kerkar's lawyer Akhilesh Dubey did not elicit any response.

Castleman Management is also under investigation after the arrested chief financial officer of Cox and Kings, Anil Khandelwal, in a statement to the Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai Police, alleged that the

BVI firm has "siphoned" Rs 450 crore from Cox and Kings Asia Pacific Travel.

Records show that Kerkar and his associates have set up a number of offshore companies: Shirmont International Ltd; Coad Financial Management Ltd; Castleman Financial Management Ltd; Blue Kite Investments Ltd in the BVI; Courbet Holdings Ltd in Cyprus; and SSG Special Opportunity II Ltd in the BVI.

While Kerkar is the sole director at Coad Financial and Castleman Financial, Maheshwari is a director at Blue Kite, Courbet and SSG Special Opportunity II. Maheshwari's wife Sulata Maheshwari is the sole director at Shirmont International, a personal company of the Maheshwaris. Blue Kite, Courbet and SSG Special Opportunity II are a part of Ares SSG.

"Any entities Ares SSG establishes in connection with its fund investment activities are for specific and legitimate business purposes and are formed based on the advice of third party professional legal and tax advisors in full compliance with the law", said a spokesperson for Ares SSG in response to queries from *The Indian Express*.



# EXPRESS NETWORK

## LAKHIMPUR KHERI VIOLENCE

# Opp leaders head for protest site in UP today

SP says 'cruel' Adityanath must resign; Priyanka, Baghel, RLD's Chaudhary and Channi among those en route

**MAULSHREE SETH**  
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 3

CALLING THE Lakhimpur Kheri incident reflective of the "kroor (cruel)" ideology of the BJP, the Opposition Sunday demanded the resignation of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Bhupesh Baghel, and RLD leader Jayant Chaudhary are on their way to Lakhimpur Kheri. Baghel, the Chhattisgarh Chief Minister, has been made senior observer for the coming UP elections by the Congress. Vadra said what had happened would strengthen the voice of farmers and their "satyagraha".

Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi was also heading to Lakhimpur Kheri, the Congress said.



A vehicle set ablaze in Lakhimpur Kheri, Sunday. PTI

Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav said UP had had enough of the BJP's "suppression", and that he had only one demand of the state government: that Adityanath should resign. "The farmers were peacefully protesting against the farm

laws. BJP sarkar ke griha rajya mantri ke putra duara gaadi se raundna, ghor amanveeya aur kroor kriti hai... Yahi haal raha to Uttar Pradesh mein Bhajpai na gaadi se chal payenge, na utar payenge (It's utterly inhuman and cruel on the part of the son

of the BJP's Union Minister of State to mow them down... If this situation continues, then in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP will neither be able to get into a car nor get off one)," Akhilesh said, adding that a delegation led by the party state chief and other prominent leaders would visit Lakhimpur Kheri. Chaudhary said the images coming from Lakhimpur Kheri were horrifying, adding in his tweet, "Virodh ko kuchalne ka kaala kritya jo kiya hai, saazish jab griha mantri kach rahe hain, phir kaun surakshit hai (The black deed of trampling opposition, if the conspiracy is being plotted by the Home Minister, then who is safe)?"

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted, "The one who is silent even after seeing this inhuman massacre, he is already dead. But we will not let this sacrifice go in vain -- Kisan

Satyagraha Zindabad!"

Vadra asked if farmers had no right to live in a BJP-ruled country. "If they raise their voice, will you shoot them, trample under your car?... Kisan Satyagraha will be strengthened and the voice of the farmer will be louder."

BSP chief Mayawati said farmers had been "allegedly trampled by car of son of Union Minister and murdered", and urged the Supreme Court to take suo motu cognizance.

Congress general secretary Saif Ali Naqvi, who is from Lakhimpur Kheri, said Union minister Ajay Mishra had recently shown the protesting farmers a "thumbs down", provoking them.

Another party leader, Gourav Vallabh, invoking a Jallianwala Bagh comparison, said Mishra had warned farmers to "sudhar jao (mend your ways)", or he

would "fix them in two minutes". He questioned the silence of the Union government and demanded that a probe be held by a sitting Supreme Court judge to determine who gave the orders to "trample" farmers.

The incident also drew reactions from West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav. Saying she was "pained", Banerjee said a TMC delegation will visit the dead farmers' families. Yadav called the incident "genocide", and said this was the reality of "New India". "Rioters are in power and constitutional institutions are in fear."

Kejriwal did not attack the BJP directly, saying: "It is violent and unjust to crush protesting farmers in Lakhimpur with a vehicle... I am with the farmer brothers in this hour of grief."

**WITH ENS, DELHI**

# Only UP Brahmin face in Modi Cabinet shake-up

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 3

A TWO-TERM MP from Lakhimpur Kheri, Ajay Mishra (Teni), 61, was the lone Brahmin face from Uttar Pradesh to be inducted into the Narendra Modi government in the recent Cabinet reshuffle.

Ahead of the UP polls where every party is fighting for the Brahmin vote—especially the BJP, that is fighting allegations of anti-Brahmin bias—Mishra was inducted into the crucial Home Ministry as Minister of State.

Party leaders say Mishra used to be an office-bearer in the BJP's Lakhimpur Kheri unit earlier, before winning as an MLA from Nighasan of Lakhimpur Kheri in 2012. The first time he became an MP was in 2014, winning by 1 lakh votes over his nearest rival, belonging to the BSP. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elec-



**MP Ajay Mishra**

tion, he doubled his margin to over 2 lakh votes, against an SP candidate.

His son Ashish, alleged to have been travelling in one of the two SUVs involved in the Lakhimpur Kheri incident, was reportedly eyeing a ticket from the Nighasan seat in the coming Assembly polls. A businessman, Ashish has been participating in political functions lately and also managing the work of his father.

Every year, Mishra organises a sports festival in his native village Banveerpur in Nighasan. On Sunday, UP Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya was to be chief guest at the function. It was to coincide with his visit that farmers had announced a protest.

## DRUG BUST ON CRUISE SHIP

# Aryan Khan did not possess or consume contraband: Lawyer

**SADAF MODAK**  
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 3

ARYAN KHAN, the 23-year-old son of actor Shah Rukh Khan, was a special invitee on the cruise ship Cordelia and had been screened twice, with no contraband or evidence of consumption being found on him, his lawyers told the court where he was produced late Sunday.

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), which has invoked bailable charges against Aryan and two others, said that there was material in the form of WhatsApp chats against the three, allegedly 'showing nexus with peddlers and suppliers on regular basis'.

After being detained from the ship in the early hours of Sunday, Aryan, Arbaaz Merchant (26) and Munmun Dhamecha (39) were produced before the additional metropolitan magistrate's court around 7 pm. The NCB was granted one-day custody until October 4.

Piecing together the events on the cruise ship before the court, Aryan's lawyer Satish Maneshinde said Aryan was invited by the organisers of the party as a special invitee.

"He did not have a ticket or a boarding pass, no allotted seat number or cabin. He reached the dock to board and the authorities screened him. His luggage along with that of his friends was also screened and nothing was found,"

Maneshinde told the court.

He said that a further search by NCB officials was conducted and then also nothing was found. He added that Aryan's phone was then examined and he was detained for questioning based on chats, both deleted and present.

"Prima facie investigation indicates that there is material in form of WhatsApp chats showing the nexus of these respondents (Aryan, Merchant and Dhamecha) with peddlers and suppliers on regular basis," special public prosecutor Advait Sethna told the court. He added that the chats were recovered on Day 1. The NCB submitted a case diary, including chats to the court for its perusal.

"I am not venturing into the merits at all, not saying who is right, who is wrong. I am only requesting for a reasonable two days of custody looking at the circumstances and quantum of recovery," Sethna argued.

He said that the NCB was conducting raids in the city and was in the process of apprehending others, including one person in the 'supply chain'. The prosecutor also added that while the accused "may have a fine case" but sought custody stating that prima facie there were "suspicious transactions constituting offences under the NDPS Act".

The three are booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act on charges of possession, consumption and sale of illegal substances.

# Salve on Mamata Nandigram wounds, scores biggest win from her seat

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, OCTOBER 3

BREAKING HER own record in the constituency, set in the 2011 Assembly polls, and winning all its wards, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Sunday swept the Bhabanipur bypoll by 58,835 votes. The BJP's Priyanka Tibrewal got 22,222 per cent votes compared to Banerjee's 71.9 per cent — the thumping victory healing some of the wounds of her bitter loss from Nandigram in the Assembly polls earlier this year.

The ruling Trinamool Congress also won the Jangipur and Samserganj constituencies in Murshidabad district, where elections had to be countermanded during the March-April Assembly polls due to the death of candidates. The TMC's tally in the Assembly is now 215 in a House of 294 MLAs. Elections in the three constituencies were held on September 30.

Speaking to reporters outside her Kalighat residence, flanked by party members including nephew and TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, the CM thanked Bhabanipur for the "huge mandate". "People of Bengal were hurt after I lost the election from Nandigram, when my party won across the state. There was a conspiracy to defeat me at Nandigram. A case (on Nandigram results) is pending in court. But the people of Bhabanipur voted against



CM Mamata Banerjee with nephew and TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee and other family members at her residence in Kalighat after the bypoll results. Express

this conspiracy," Banerjee said, noting that her victory margin this time was more than the 2011 bypoll (when she won by over 54,000 votes) and the 2016 Assembly polls (over 25,000 votes).

Banerjee also pointed out that the TMC led in all the eight wards of the constituency. "This is the first time we have not lost from a single ward in Bhabanipur. In 2016, I did not lead in two wards... About 46% of the voters here are non-Bengalis. They have cast their votes in a peaceful atmosphere. They have given me inspiration and new energy to work more for the people," she said.

While Banerjee got 85,263

votes, Tibrewal bagged 26,428 and CPM candidate Shrijeeb Biswas 4,226 votes (3.56% of the total) and lost his deposit. Having lost from Nandigram by a narrow margin of 1,956 votes against former party leader Suwendu Adhikari, Banerjee needed to get elected to the Assembly by November.

In the March-April Assembly polls, the TMC's Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay had won from Bhabanipur by 28,719 votes (57.71% of the votes). Later, he had vacated the seat to allow Banerjee to contest from there. The BJP had emerged second with 35.16% of the votes, while the Congress was third with 4.09% votes.

# FROM PAGE ONE

## 'Drugs bust'

Three of those arrested, including Khan and two others identified as Arbaaz Merchant and Munmun Dhamecha, were produced before a local court and sent to NCB custody till Monday. The other five will be produced in court Monday.

The three in custody have been charged under sections 8C, 20B, 27 and 35 of the Narcotic

Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act related to charges of possession, consumption and sale of illegal substances identified under the law, an official said. Special Public Prosecutor and lawyers for the accused said the charges are bailable.

The central agency said it was investigating "suspicious transactions constituting offences" under the Act. It said the total recovery in this case was 13 grams of cocaine, 5 grams of mephedrone, 22 pills of MDMA (Ecstasy) — all categorised as "intermediate quantities" — and 21 grams of charas, which falls in the category of "small quantity".

The recovery also included Rs 1.33 lakh in cash, it said.

NCB sources told *The Indian Express* that "some of the accused had concealed narcotics in specially sewn pockets in their clothes to get it on board". They said more operations linked to the alleged bust were on in various parts of Mumbai, and that "one more suspect has been intercepted".

Aryan Khan is the eldest of Shah Rukh and Gauri Khan's three children and a graduate from the School of Cinematic Arts in the

University of Southern California.

The alleged drugs bust took place during a raid conducted by 22 NCB officials on the cruise ship Cordelia that, the cruise company said, was chartered by a Delhi-based event company "for a private event". The event company, identified as Namas' Cray Experiences Pvt Ltd, did not respond to queries.

According to the ship's owner, there were around 1,000 persons on board, and the rate of an entry ticket for the event ranged from over Rs 60,000 to Rs 5.5 lakh per person.

NCB officials said the raid by officers posing as passengers in the ship, which was to depart from the International Cruise Terminal at Ballard Pier in South Mumbai at 4 pm, was based on a tip-off from an accused arrested in another case.

According to officials, the ship was about to leave when some of the accused were found using narcotics following which the eight were detained and taken to the NCB office for questioning. Their luggage was also seized, and the ship's captain asked to keep the vessel anchored, officials said. A person onboard the ship told *The Indian Express* that the vessel finally left the terminal around 5 am Sunday.

Jürgen Bailom, CEO of Cordelia Cruises, said in a statement that the company "is in no way, directly or indirectly, connected to this incident". "Cordelia Cruises had chartered its ship for a private event to a Delhi based event management company," the state-

ment said.

"We, at Cordelia Cruises, condemn all acts such as these and will strictly refrain from letting our ship out for similar events in the future. Nonetheless, Cordelia Cruises is extending our full support and cooperating with the authorities," it said.

The event titled "Cray Ark" was to be held on October 2-3, and was advertised online and on hoardings put up in Mumbai as a cruise for the Arabian Sea. The "event details" on some of the advertisements called it "an exclusive cruise taking you on a musical voyage. Experience the crazy in style on Cordelia, India's largest and premium cruise liner".

Officials said that on Saturday several persons waiting to board the ship at the terminal were told that the event had been overbooked and turned away. (**WITH ENS IN DELHI**)

## Khattar

farmers and be ready for "tit for tat".

As a video of the meeting went viral, and drew sharp reactions from Opposition parties and farmer unions, a senior Haryana government officer said just a portion of what Khattar said was "mischievously" being shared, and that the CM had gone on to call for discipline. There was no clarification from the CM. By evening, the video of the meeting, that was telecast live on YouTube, was no longer available.

Addressing BJP workers, Khattar says in the video: "Kuch naye kisanon ke jo sangathan aur ubhar rahe hain, unko bhi protsa-

mein, khaas kar ke uttar or paschim Haryana ke... har zile mein apne kisanon ke 500-700-1,000 logaap logapne khade karo, unko volunteer banao aur phir jagah-jagah 'Sathe Sathyam Smacharet'... yaani, jaise ko taisa... Khalo dande, hain, theek hai (The new farmer organisations that are emerging, we must encourage them... And in every district, especially in north and west Haryana... raise our own volunteers of 500-700-1,000 farmers and then, in every other place, (let there be) tit for tat. Be ready to be beaten, fine)?"

Somebody from the audience says something, which is not very clear. Khattar replies: "Nahi woh dekh lenge. Aur doosri baat ye hai, jab khavenge dande to jamaanat ki parwah mat karo. Maheena, do maheena, cheh maheena reh aage na, toh itni padhai is meeting mein nahin hogi... bade leader apne-aap ban jaenge... Itihaas mein naam likha jaata hai (We will handle that. And another thing, if lathis are wielded, don't worry about getting bail. If you spend one, two, six months (inside)... what can these meetings teach you... you will emerge as big leaders. Your name will be written in history books.)"

The CM goes on to add: "Ismein ek hi baat dhyaan rakni hai. Josh ke saath anushasan ko bana ke rakni hai. Jo sochna mil gayi ke yahan tak kama hai, iske aage nahin karna hai, toh phir nahin kama hai (You have to keep just one thing in mind. Along with enthusiasm, you must maintain discipline. If you are told to do something, and to not do more, you must stick to that.)"

Denying Khattar's remarks were meant to incite, the senior

state officer said, "As part of mischief, a select portion of the meeting is being circulated. The Chief Minister made the remarks in a lighter vein, he did not actually mean them. Rather, after talking about this, he immediately added that people should ensure total discipline."

In a series of tweets, Congress general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala lashed out at Khattar, saying: "Your mantra of instigating BJP supporters to attack protesting farmers with sticks will never succeed. Spreading anarchy in an open programme after taking oath on the Constitution is sedition... If a chief minister... will talk about spreading violence, communal disharmony and lawlessness, governance as per law and the Constitution cannot function."

Guram Singh Chaduni of the BIKU, who has been the face of the farm protests in Haryana, said: "Such remarks have exposed the CM and BJP... They are instigating riots as part of their conspiracy to crush the farmers' agitation. But we once again appeal to our farmers not to indulge in any violence... The government can beat us, shoot us or even kill us, but we shall carry on with our peaceful agitation."

Sources said Khattar has been holding a series of meetings with party workers over the farmer issue. While the agitation against the farm laws started from Punjab, it has been most vociferous in Haryana recently, with BJP-JJP coalition leaders facing constant protests, forcing them to stay away from constituencies and meetings. The meeting on Sunday, held at Khattar's residence, was part of these discussions.

# 90% Covid deaths in two months of those without a dose: TN

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
CHENNAI, OCTOBER 3

NEARLY 90 per cent of people who died of Covid-19 in state-run hospitals in Tamil Nadu over the last two months had not received even a single vaccine dose, Principal Secretary of Health and Family Welfare department J Radhakrishnan said on Sunday.

After inspecting the fourth mega vaccination camp in the city, he said some western districts in the state, where prevalence of the virus was high, have started witnessing a downward trend in the new cases.

Appealing to public to get vaccinated against Covid-19, he said, "... in government-run hospitals during the last two months, 90 per cent of deaths occurred because the patient did not get vaccinated even partially."

"Vaccination has become the prime strategy to combat the virus. People who are in the ICU after being infected by Covid-19 are also those who have not been vaccinated at all...," he said.

Radhakrishnan noted that 7.4 per cent Covid deaths reported in the last two months from government hospitals were those who received only single shot while 3.6 per cent had received both the doses.

A close aide of the CM said, "His aim was basically to encourage party workers to be active so that rumours being spread regarding the farm laws can be negated, including on social media."

A Commission of Inquiry is currently probing the circumstances that led to the police lathi-charge on farmers at Bastara toll plaza in Kamal on August 28, during which IAS officer Ayush Sinha, then SDM, Kamal, was caught instigating his men to "break heads" if farmers crossed a blockade.

## 8 killed

punishment for the guilty.

Opposition parties slammed the BJP state government for the "inhuman" and "cruel" incident and called for the resignation of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Describing the incident as "unfortunate", Adityanath said "strict action will be taken against those found guilty" but also said that his government "would go deep into the matter and expose the people behind today's incident". He also appealed to residents in the area to maintain peace.

While UP Police remained tightlipped, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) identified the four farmers killed as Lovepreet Singh (20), Daljeet Singh (35), Nachattar Singh (60) and Gurvinder Singh (19). They said 12-15 others were injured. An official at the Lakhimpur Kheri district hospital said farm leader Tejinder Singh suffered serious injuries.

**FULL REPORTSON**  
**www.indianexpress.com**  
**(WITH MAULSHREE SETH)**



10

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

Labour Bureau is doing fresh surveys, of migrant labour, domestic help... Now, we only know available workforce data. Labour Bureau will look into the potential for jobs... indicate the road to take on employment”

**LIZ MATHEW:** UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has called the current moment a turning point for humanity. How prepared is India for the climate change and environmental issues challenge?

India has always been proactive on environment, we were at the forefront of implementing the Paris Agreement, we have also met the NDC (nationally determined contribution) targets... In alternative energy, India has created 165 MW of resources and set a target of 450 MW for 2030. It is the world's most ambitious target. That's one. Second, Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated an international solar alliance of which 51 countries are a part. Third, we have increased our forest cover in the past five years. Also, the impact of air, water changes leading to desertification... India has set a target of 20 lakh hectares (to recover land)... The developed countries must fulfill their commitment to financial assistance and technological transfer (as per the Paris Agreement)...

The Modi government sees climate change also as a reflection of life and lifestyle. Our carbon emission per capita is among the lowest in the world. As PM Modi keeps saying, India's lifestyle is not one of consumption. This is why we have met our targets of alternative energy sources, preservation of forest cover....

**LIZ MATHEW:** The WHO has come out with revised air pollution standards, which are more stringent than before. What is India's stand, given its struggle to meet the current norms?

The WHO has itself clarified that these are suggestions, they are not binding... As far as standards are concerned, we have already commissioned a study by IIT-Kanpur... So we have always been cognisant of these issues.

**ESHA ROY:** You have just come back from a tour of Manipur... you are the in-charge of polls there for the BJP. The party has been seeing a lot of infighting there. Chief Minister Biren Singh has inducted several Congress leaders and your ally Conrad Sangma has declared he will fight all the seats.

The BJP government in Manipur has brought the state out of its environment of bandhs. We believe a lot can be done to develop Manipur's language, culture, sports and abilities, and this requires constancy and consistency, and for that the BJP should return to power. The PM keeps giving the slogan 'NARA' — National Ambition and Regional Aspiration. So in our alliances we bear in mind the aspirations of regional leaders... I can say that the people of Manipur are with the BJP.

As for your infighting question, there is no infighting in the BJP. The changes in the party have been taken by the core committee, and such decisions are party decisions, by consensus, not an individual's.

**SANDEEP SINGH:** Where does the labour code stand now, one year after implementation? And are you looking into the falling numbers of women in the work force post-Covid?

Various states are in the process of putting in place the rules regarding the labour code, and most are on the verge of completing the task. At the Central level too, rules have been framed, we are holding talks with associations of both employees and employers... About women in the workforce, the latest PLFS (Periodic Labour Force Survey) shows that it's not such a drastic fall. What we observed during the Covid phase is that the unskilled, unorganised workers are mostly migrant labourers. The Social Security Code will have this data. The portal that we launched has seen registration by 1 crore workers in less than a month. The government has also cleared some fresh surveys to be done by the Labour Bureau, and the first we are doing is of migrant labour. We have also got permission for domestic help. The one on institution-based employment is ready with its report. Till now, under the PLFS, we had numbers for the available workforce. The Labour Bureau survey includes institutions that are seeing growth and have the potential of employment. So this will give us a very good idea on direction to take on employment.

Post-Covid, we are also looking at the 'work from home' aspect. The IT Department has brought out rules. We are looking at gig workers too, who have seen a huge growth in numbers but whose working conditions (remain ungoverned). We hope to bring them under the Social Security Code. Under the ESIC, more than 12.5 crore people take benefit of our health schemes. Now this has been linked to Ayushman Bharat to provide facilities at places which don't have ESIC hospitals. We expect more to benefit from this after



WHY **BHUPENDER YADAV**

HAVING held charge of several crucial states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra and Bihar for the party, senior BJP leader Bhupender Yadav was inducted into the Modi Cabinet in the July 7 expansion, with important portfolios like Labour, and Environment, Forest & Climate Change. The importance in which the BJP

holds the 52-year-old leader is clear from the fact that despite his ministerial responsibilities — Labour is being watched closely post-Covid — it continues to entrust him with party matters. Yadav remains the general secretary in-charge of Gujarat and was recently made in-charge of elections in poll-bound Manipur



“A party’s graph can go up and down, but what matters is if you are consistently among people, act transparently, convince them of policies ... We’re not in politics to be *amar*. We have to prove ourselves to people

‘A party around for long must set new norms... Change in Gujarat, with consensus... isn’t it good for democracy?’

Bhupender Yadav talks about meeting climate goals, differentiates BJP changes from those ‘enforced’ by Cong in Punjab, expresses trust in Yogi’s leadership, and says govt will answer on Pegasus in court. The session was moderated by Deputy Political Editor LIZ MATHEW



Union minister Bhupender Yadav with Liz Mathew in *The Indian Express* newsroom. Gajendra Yadav

coming under the Social Security Code. ... With such labour reforms, we will also move towards ease of doing business. So that's also a big message of these steps.

**MANOJ CG:** The BJP recently changed the entire ministry of Gujarat. Had Vijay Rupani and his ministers become so unpopular?... Three BJP states saw CM changes, and the Congress too did the same in Punjab... Is this a new system of political accountability for the CMs?

You must consider why the change — is it for instability or consistency, for crisis management or consistency building?... In the Congress, the change implies something different. In Bihar under the Congress, from 1977 to 1990, the CM would change every eight months. Our circumstances are different. We have been in power in Gujarat for a long time, some of our leaders have been ministers for 15-20 years... The party has to grow further in the state, and the leadership together decided that we need to give chance to a new generation. The party's work is as important as the government's. So everyone decided that the seniors will work for the party and give new people a chance... Any political organisation that continues for so long, has to set some new standards, whether setting an age limit of 75 (to hold posts), ensuring that leaders don't promote own families, take an ideological stand on issues... And I believe what was done in Gujarat, with everyone's consensus, will be seen as a new chapter in the country's politics. Taking a decision based on a political philosophy, propagating and implementing it... this is not an individual move, it is collective... Isn't it good in a democracy? Everyone should support it.

**MANOJ CG:** Will the same model now be implemented in Madhya Pradesh, where Shivraj Singh Chouhan has been CM for long?

No such 'model' will be implemented anywhere. An example has been put forth. This change is based on self-consciousness... It hasn't been implemented by an 'enforcement agency', like seen in Punjab.

**LIZ MATHEW:** The BJP has come under pressure from state units earlier too, including since 2014, for a change of guard ahead of elections. Has the BJP changed its stance on the matter?... Then BJP president Amit Shah had said such a change would mean no-confidence in a CM... Could Covid be a reason, as all governments faced severe criticism in the second wave?

As far as Covid is concerned, all BJP

CMs did commendable work, and even in vaccination, they have met the targets... But what can't be denied is that after 2014, the BJP has emerged as the focal point of politics in the country. As such, it is the BJP's responsibility to set the standards to strengthen the country's democratic processes... That is what the BJP is doing, and we believe there should be a discussion on this, including among other parties — giving a chance to the new generation, standing firm on one's ideological position, running a pro-poor government, making good governance an issue.

**LIZ MATHEW:** What about Uttarakhand, where you changed a CM who had served four years, and then changed him too?

We gave importance to the new generation... The sitting CM himself said he couldn't run the government due to constitutional processes (Tirath Singh Rawat needed to get elected to the Assembly through a bypoll, which wasn't scheduled). The CM now, Pushkar Singh Dhami, is a young, energetic leader... The BJP is the only party whose constitution itself says that any new president will induct at least one-third new people, that it will reserve 33% posts for women, that SC/STs will be represented... And we are the only party that holds its polls every three years, we don't look at a family to make up its mind on who will be the party president.

**HARIKISHAN SHARMA:** You have argued that change should be seen from the perspective of its objective. But could one reason also be that since May 2019, you have been losing in states. In the 13 Assembly polls since, the BJP won 400-odd seats out of the 1,300 or so it contested.

I don't agree with your argument.



After winning in 2014, the BJP won Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand. But in 2015, we lost Bihar. Then we went on to win Uttar Pradesh, but again before 2019, lost three big states — Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan. Still, we won in 2019, then emerged as the single biggest party in Maharashtra... We were duped in the state, not by the people, but our ally. In MP, we might have not formed the government initially, but we got more votes than the Congress though it won more seats. Even in Bengal we have surged in strength. Politics is live, it's about consistency, about being among people. The graph can go up and down, but what matters is about whether you are consistently among people, ready to act transparently, convince them about your policies... We don't believe that one is in politics to be *amar* (immortal). We have to prove ourselves in people's eyes.

**HARIKISHAN SHARMA:** How do you think the farm protests will play out in the polls in Punjab and west UP?

As a party, we are concerned about doubling farm incomes. Not just agriculture, but our government has worked to improve horticulture, animal husbandry... I believe the farmer agitation is sponsored. The laws were passed by Parliament, the government has never said no to talks. But if something is sponsored with a political agenda, then it needs a political response. I carried out my Jan Ashirwad Yatra for three days in Haryana and on each of these days, 30,000-35,000 people turned up... I didn't see any issue on the ground.

**MANOJ CG:** The government is conceding no ground on Pegasus — a discussion was not allowed in Parliament and it is yet to file an affidavit in the Supreme Court. What

“You just need to tell a district commissioner a marriage is not through allurements, what’s wrong in that? Every party gives an affidavit to EC saying it believes in secularism... you may ask, where’s the need

stops you from clarifying whether the government procured or used Pegasus, or not?

The day the Pegasus issue broke, the minister made a statement in the Lok Sabha. Who asked the Opposition to not ask questions? After that, a statement was made in the Rajya Sabha. Again, who asked the Opposition not to ask questions?... Instead, you create a ruckus... The scenes the Opposition created in the House bypassed all decorum and decency... The government has made its stand known in Parliament and court. We are ready to clarify all issues on this sub-judice subject — in front of the court.

**SHUBHAJIT ROY:** During the second Covid wave, there were scenes of chaos due to severe shortage of oxygen and medicines. Has there been any introspection on whether the political capital and credibility of the government and PM were affected?

I admit there was a time when there was a shortage of oxygen. But it was this very government that did all it could — whether special flights or trains, it fixed the problem in two-three weeks. How do you come up with a solution in the time of a crisis — that's what PM Modi demonstrated, and people recognised that.

**MANOJ CG:** The Indian Express carried a series of reports on how your Deputy CM in Bihar and his family were beneficiaries of contracts for the state's Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal scheme.

The Bihar government has denied any wrongdoing in tenders and clarified that all rules were followed. It has also made it clear that it has received no complaints over tenders or deficiency of services.

**HARIKISHAN SHARMA:** The BJP is going out of its way to woo OBCs. In UP, OBCs comprise a substantial chunk of the population. Will the party consider an OBC as CM?

Social justice is not a slogan but a commitment for the BJP. However, our social justice is not one of conflict, but cooperation. Our social justice is not based on *varg sangharsh*, but is an all-inclusive one. So the question itself is wrong. The BJP keeps *sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas* in mind. On CM pick... that's up to the Parliamentary Board... The BJP is doing good work under Yogi Adityanath.

**AVISHEK DASTIDAR:** In Bengal, a number of your leaders and workers have joined the TMC. Top leaders are accused of abandoning party workers in the state even as they face attacks.

Those who are leaving the party are doing so for their personal reasons. The party is with the people of Bengal and our workers are resisting the violence.

**APURVA VISHWANATH:** Only the principal bench of the National Green Tribunal has been working for long, with the judiciary and executive blaming each other over the delay in appointments. Is this deliberate, to make these tribunals dysfunctional?

Tribunals are constitutional courts to facilitate procedure. So the government has nothing to lose from having tribunals; in fact, it makes the procedure smoother. The government is committed to ensuring proper working of tribunals.

**KRISHN KAUSHIK:** In BJP-ruled states, anti-conversion laws have been brought in, with talk of 'love jihad'. Can't women choose for themselves?

Anyone who is an adult has the right to choose her partner; we have never said no. Article 25 that talks of freedom of religion has three aspects... fraud, force and allurements (as interpreted by courts)... that's true freedom of religion. This is *Bharatiya* culture. We are not against anyone choosing their partner, but if constitutional principles are not being followed...

**APURVA VISHWANATH:** But the new set of laws expressly prohibit conversion for the sake of marriage. Why should I need the State's permission to convert to another religion for the sake of marriage?

All you have to do is tell the district commissioner that the marriage is not through allurements, what's wrong in that? Every party in India has to give an affidavit to the Election Commission saying that I believe in secularism... you may ask, where's the need to do so if I believe in secularism, if the Constitution says India is a secular state... Whether these laws are unconstitutional or not will be examined by courts. We have never suspended Article 19 (freedom of speech and expression) or 21 (protection of life and personal liberty).

**ESHA ROY:** One of the criticisms levelled at the Environment Ministry is related to forest land diversion. Last year alone, around 1,000 hectares of eco-sensitive land were cleared to make way for projects.

Of 8,07,000 hectares, only 1,000 hectares (have been diverted) and that too, so that the poor living in these sanctuaries get electricity, roads. It's only for this. Other than that, there is no diversion.



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THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2021

EXPLAINED



PANDORA PAPERS 2021

AN EXPRESS INVESTIGATION

## SPREAD ACROSS THE WORLD

**14 OFFSHORE** financial service providers in 10-plus tax havens and counting  
**POLITICALLY CONNECTED:** Alcogal (Panama), GDG & Citi Trust (Belize), AsiaCiti (Singapore)

**FINED/INVESTIGATED** by governments for facilitating corruption: AsiaCiti, Trident, Commence (BVI)

**ACCUSED OF** poor anti-money laundering policies, lax KYC measures and due diligence

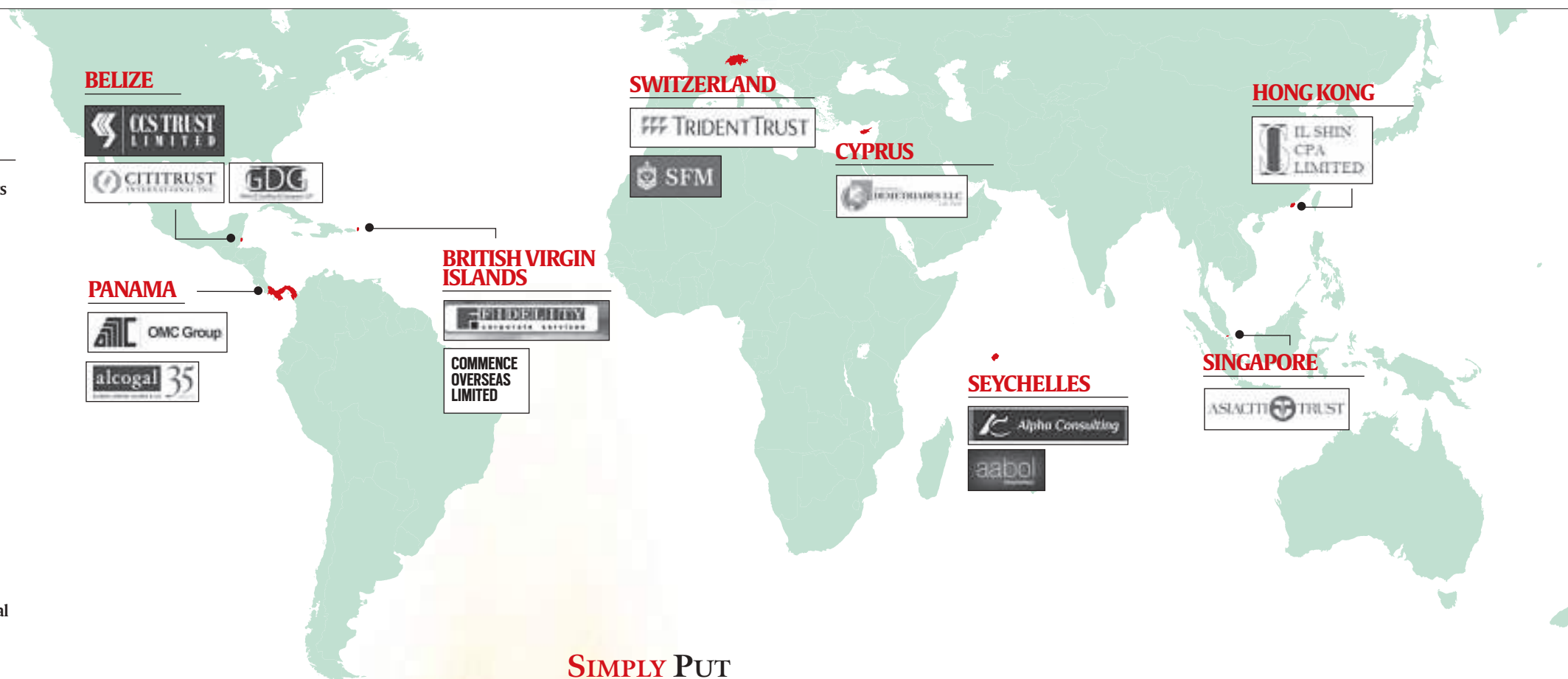
**SECRECY** is the rule everywhere

## THE STASH

**MORE THAN** 11.5 million files  
**MOSTLY FROM** the 1990s to 2019

## WHO'S ACCOUNTABLE

Introducers (fiduciary firms, small notaries, etc.), lawyers, offshore financial service providers, formation agents, accountants, bankers, lobbyists, lawmakers



SIMPLY PUT

# Why do the Pandora Papers matter?

There are at least 380 Indians in the Pandora Papers. Of these, *The Indian Express* has so far verified and corroborated documents related to about 60 prominent individuals and companies. There are legitimate reasons to set up trusts — but they are also used by some as secret vehicles to park ill-gotten money, hide incomes to evade taxes, or use it for criminal activities. Overseas trusts provide remarkable secrecy because of the strict privacy laws in those jurisdictions

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

## What are the Pandora Papers?

These are 11.9 million leaked files from 14 global corporate services firms which set up about 29,000 off-the-shelf companies and private trusts in not just obscure tax jurisdictions but also countries such as Singapore, New Zealand, and the United States, for clients across the world.

These documents relate to the ultimate ownership of assets 'settled' (or placed) in private offshore trusts and the investments including cash, shareholding, and real estate properties, held by the offshore entities. There are at least 380 persons of Indian nationality in the Pandora Papers. Of these, *The Indian Express* has so far verified and corroborated documents related to about 60 prominent individuals and companies. This is an ongoing investigation.

## What do Pandora Papers reveal?

The Pandora Papers reveal how the rich, the famous and the notorious, many of whom were already on the radar of investigative agencies, set up complex multi-layered trust structures for estate planning, in jurisdictions which are loosely regulated for tax purposes, but characterised by air-tight secrecy laws.

The purposes for which trusts are set up are many, and some genuine too. But a scrutiny of the papers also shows how the objective of many is two-fold: i) to hide their real identities and distance themselves from the offshore entities so that it becomes near impossible for the tax authorities to reach them and, ii) to safeguard investments — cash, shareholdings, real estate, art, aircraft, and yachts — from creditors and law enforcers.

## How is Pandora different from Panama and Paradise Papers?

The Panama and Paradise Papers dealt largely with offshore entities set up by individuals and corporates respectively. The Pandora Papers investigation shows how businesses have created a new normal after countries have been forced to tighten the screws on such offshore entities with rising concerns of money laundering, terrorism funding, and tax evasion.

The Pandora Papers pierce the corporate veil and reveal how trusts are prolifically used as a vehicle in conjunction with offshore companies set up for the sole purpose of holding investments and other assets by business families and ultra-rich individuals. The trusts can be set up in known tax havens such as Samoa, Belize, Panama, and the British Virgin Islands (BVI), or in Singapore or New Zealand which offer relative tax advantages, or even South Dakota in the US, the world's biggest economy.

## What is a trust?

A trust can be described as a fiduciary arrangement where a third party, referred to as the trustee, holds assets on behalf of individuals or organisations that are to benefit from it. It is generally used for estate plan-

ning purposes and succession planning. It helps large business families to consolidate their assets — financial investments, shareholding, and real estate property.

A trust comprises three key parties: 'Settlor' — one who sets up, creates, or authors a trust; 'trustee' — one who holds the assets for the benefit of a set of people named by the 'settlor'; and 'beneficiaries' — to whom the benefits of the assets are bequeathed.

A trust is not a separate legal entity, but its legal nature comes from the 'trustee'.

At times, the 'settlor' appoints a 'protector', who has the powers to supervise the trustee, and even remove the trustee and appoint a new one.

## Is setting up a trust in India, or one offshore/ outside the country, illegal?

No. The Indian Trusts Act, 1882, gives legal basis to the concept of trusts. While Indian laws do not see trusts as a legal person/ entity, they do recognise the trust as an obligation of the trustee to manage and use the assets settled in the trust for the benefit of 'beneficiaries'. India also recognises offshore trusts *i.e.*, trusts set up in other tax jurisdictions.

## If it's legal, what's the investigation about?

This is a very valid question. True, there are legitimate reasons for setting up trusts — and many set them up for genuine estate planning. A businessperson can set conditions for 'beneficiaries' to draw income being distributed by the trustee or inherit assets after her/ his demise.

For instance, while allotting shares in the company to say, four siblings, the father promoter set conditions that a sibling can get the dividend from the shares and claim ownership of the shares, but not sell it without offering the first right of refusal to the other three siblings. This could be to ensure ownership of the enterprise within the family.

But trusts are also used by some as secret vehicles to park ill-gotten money, hide incomes to evade taxes, protect wealth from law enforcers, insulate it from creditors to whom huge moneys are due, and at times to use it for criminal activities. *The Indian Express* investigation reveals this.

## So, why are trusts set up? And why overseas? What else should you know?

Overseas trusts offer remarkable secrecy because of stringent privacy laws in the ju-

risdiction they operate in.

A lot depends on the intention behind setting up an offshore trust — and if the tax-man can provide evidence that suggests *mala fide* intent by the trust, then the courts tend to back the tax department in their attempt

to recovering the taxes due.

From the investigation, some key tacit reasons why people set up trusts are:

**i) Maintain a degree of separation:** Businesspersons set up private offshore trusts to project a degree of separation from their personal assets. A 'settlor' (one who sets up/ creates/ authors) of a trust no longer owns the assets he places or 'settles' in the trust. This way, he insulates these assets from creditors.

This is best illustrated through an example: A real estate promoter sets up an offshore trust, which sits on top of four offshore entities holding some assets. Now, private equity investors drag various entities of the real estate group to the National Company Law Tribunal under the bankruptcy law. So do homebuyers who have invested in residential properties by this company. But the Pandora Papers show the promoter moved tens of millions of dollars in assets to the trust

children's hands.

**iv) Prepare for estate duty eventuality:** There is fear in a section of the wealthy that estate duty, which was abolished back in 1985 when Rajiv Gandhi was Prime Minister, will likely be re-introduced soon. Setting up trusts in advance, business families have been advised, will protect the next generation from paying the death/ inheritance tax, which was as high as 85 per cent in the more than three decades after its enactment (The Estate Duty Act, 1953). Although India does not have a wealth tax now, most developed countries including the US, UK, France, Canada, and Japan have such an inheritance tax.

**v) Flexibility in a capital-controlled economy:** India is a capital-controlled economy. Individuals can invest only \$250,000 a year under the Reserve Bank of India's Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS). To get over this, businesspersons have turned NRIs, and under FEMA, NRIs can remit \$1 million a year in addition to their current annual income, outside India. Further, the tax rates in overseas jurisdictions are much lower than the 30% personal I-T rate in India plus surcharges, including those on the super-rich (those with annual income over Rs 1 crore).

**vi) The NRI angle:** Offshore trusts, as noted earlier, are recognised under Indian laws, but legally, it is the trustees — not the 'settlor' or the 'beneficiaries' — who are the owners of the properties and income of the trust. An NRI trustee or offshore trustee taking instructions from another overseas 'protector' ensures they are taxed in India only on their total income from India.

Of late, NRIs are under greater scrutiny of the Income-Tax Department; they have been receiving notices to prove their non-resident status of past years, to check if they made the required disclosure of 'foreign assets' in years when they were ordinarily resident in India.

## Can offshore trusts be seen as resident Indian for tax purposes?

There are certain grey areas of taxation where the Income-Tax Department is in contestation with offshore trusts. After The Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015, came into existence, resident Indians — if they are 'settlors', 'trustees', or 'beneficiaries' — have to report their foreign financial interests and assets. NRIs are not required to do so — even though, as mentioned above, the I-T Department has been sending notices to NRIs in certain cases.

The I-T Department may consider an offshore trust to be a resident of India for taxation purposes if the trustee is an Indian resident. In cases where the trustee is an offshore entity or an NRI, if the tax department establishes the trustee is taking instructions from a resident Indian, then too the trust may be considered a resident of India for taxation purposes.

For instance, in one case, an Indian wealth manager has been appointed a 'protector' (with powers to supervise the trustee) by an offshore trust, leaving a window open for the taxman.

I-T Dept may consider an offshore trust to be a resident of India for taxation purposes if the trustee is an Indian resident. Where the trustee is an offshore entity or NRI, if the Dept establishes the trustee is taking instructions from a resident Indian, the trust may be deemed a resident of India for taxation purposes

amid police complaints in Delhi by his foreign investors, alleging siphoning off funds to the tune of hundred-plus million dollars. His wealth moved to an offshore trust remains safe from creditors.

**ii) Hunt for enhanced secrecy:** Offshore trusts offer enhanced secrecy to businesspersons, given their complex structures. The Income-Tax Department in India can get to the ultimate beneficial owners only by requesting information with the financial investigation agency or international tax authority in offshore jurisdictions. The exchange of information can take months.

**iii) Avoid tax in the guise of planning:** Businesspersons avoid their NRI children being taxed on income from their assets by transferring all the assets to a trust. The ownership of the assets rests with the trust, and the son/ daughter being only a 'beneficiary' is not liable to any tax on income from the trust.

In many business families, children have one foot abroad, hence family patriarchs have increasingly looked at trusts to ensure a hassle-free transfer of assets into their

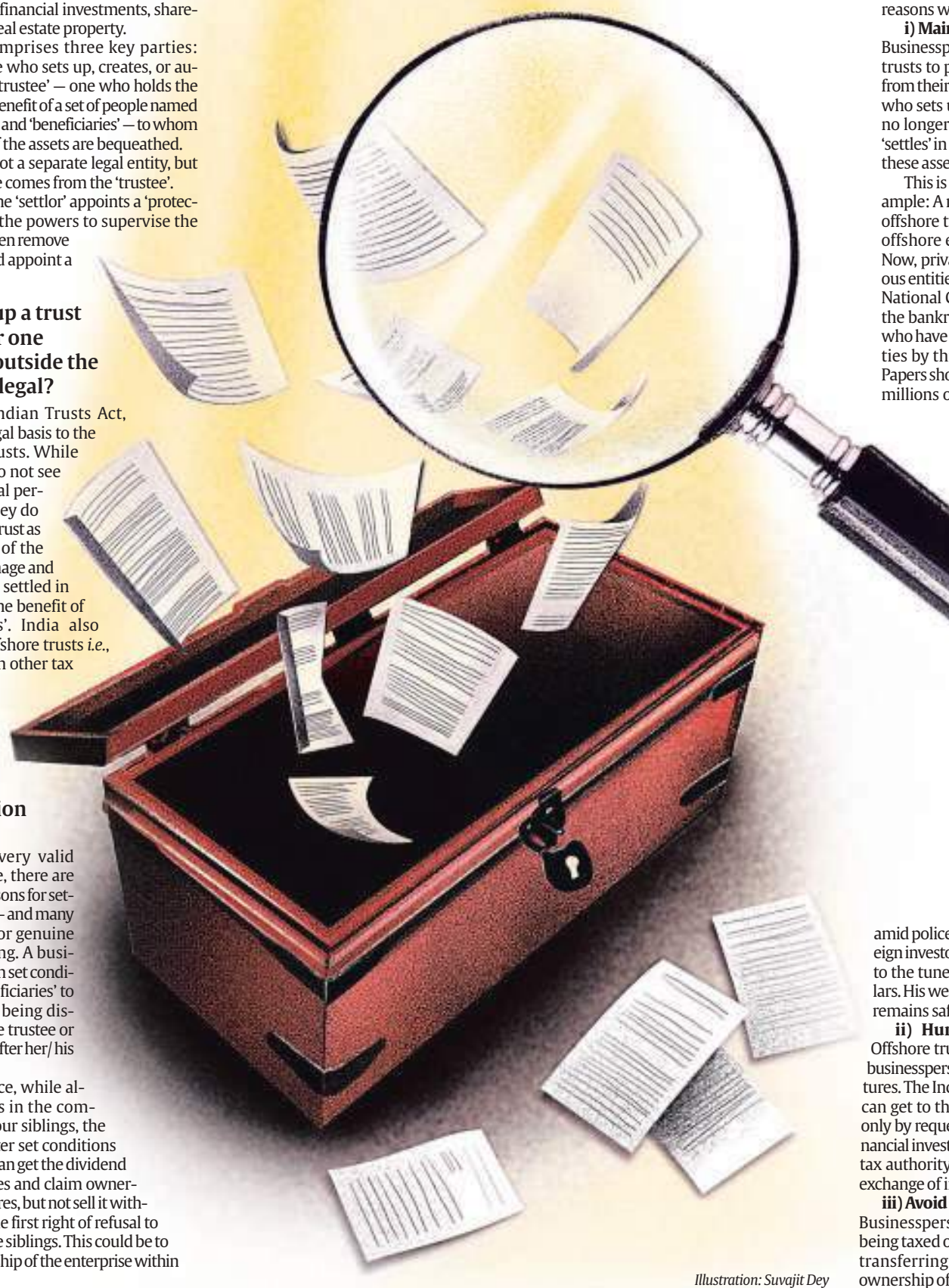


Illustration: Suvajit Dey

## The Greek legend of Pandora and the 'box'

THE EXPRESSION 'Pandora's box', which describes something best avoided as it leads to many complications, derives from a legend in Greek mythology. Pandora was the 'first woman', and 'Pandora's box' refers to a jar (rather than a box) she opened and unleashed all the evil in the world today.

The legend is described by the ancient Greek poet Hesiod in *Theogony*, and in *Works and Days*. The god Prometheus stole fire from Zeus, king of the gods, and gave it to humans. To punish him, Zeus created Pandora and presented her to Prometheus's brother, Epimetheus, who mar-

ried her. Zeus gifted Pandora a jar that contained all things evil. She was told never to open it, but she eventually did. From it escaped greed, envy, hatred, pain, disease, hunger, poverty, war, and death. Pandora slammed the jar shut, and one thing remained inside — hope, which humans can still

hold on to in the face of suffering.

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Pandora's jar became a 'box' in the 16th century, when the Renaissance humanist Erasmus "either mistranslated the Greek or confused the vessel with the box in the story of Cupid and Psyche".



Pandora opens her box in a depiction by James Gillray, published by print seller Hannah Humphrey in 1809. Wikimedia Commons

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## GAINING MOMENTUM

Tax collections have been robust so far. Meeting disinvestment and non-tax revenue targets could provide additional fiscal space

DATA RELEASED BY the Controller General of Accounts points towards a sustained improvement in central government finances. At the end of the first five months (April-August) of the current financial year, the Centre's gross tax collections touched almost 40 per cent of the budgeted target — this is far in excess of what has been the trend so far. However, government spending has been restrained so far. The situation is likely to change in the second half of the year with the lifting of restrictions imposed on spending by various ministries.

On the revenue side, while both direct and indirect tax collections have witnessed robust growth, indirect tax collections continue to account for a larger share of total tax collections, as revenue through GST, customs and excise continues to register healthy growth. However, there is cause for concern. For one, disinvestment proceeds continue to lag. As against a target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore, collections so far are a mere Rs 8,369 crore. The sale of Air India, and successful fructification of other big ticket items such as BPCL, the listing of LIC, could boost government coffers dramatically. Two, the government's recent moves to provide relief to the telecom sector are likely to have an adverse effect. Giving telecom operators a moratorium on their dues, while in the financial interest of the sector, will affect the government's non-tax revenues. Inflows are likely to be much lower than the Rs 54,000 crore the government had hoped to garner from other communication services. On the expenditure side, at the end of the first five months, central government spending remained relatively muted — spending was only two per cent higher than last year. In fact, non-interest revenue expenditure was only 0.8 per cent higher than in 2019-20. Encouragingly, however, in August, government spending was up around 40 per cent, driven by both revenue and capital expenditure.

High tax collections notwithstanding, the fiscal math is not that straightforward. First, the distribution of free foodgrain for eight months is likely to cost around Rs 1 lakh crore. Second, an additional Rs 15,000 crore is to be spent on the fertiliser subsidy. And third, arrears of Rs 56,000 crore of export incentives have to be cleared. However, the government's borrowing programme for the second half of the year suggests that it expects the fiscal deficit to be lower than the budgeted amount — an indication of its comfort with revenue collections in the second half of the year. Much will depend on disinvestment and non-tax revenues. Healthy collections will create the fiscal space for the government to ramp up spending, to provide support to the economy during the second half of the year.

## A LEG-UP FOR SPACE

Delhi needs a sensible regulatory framework for India to catch up with rapidly changing commercial dynamic in outer space

ALTHOUGH INDIA STARTED early in launching a space programme and built impressive capabilities against great odds over the decades, it remains a laggard in realising its full potential. At the heart of the problem is the fact that the programme remains a governmental enterprise. Meanwhile, the rest of the world has moved on letting the private sector run ever larger parts of the space programme. India was not an exception to state monopolies in the space sector in the 20th century. The sophisticated nature of technologies involved, the military implications, and the international prestige associated with them meant that the state led the space sector around the world. In India, the developmental imperative added another justification for state control. But continuing with that framework in the 21st century is a losing proposition.

As space technologies find a growing number of commercial uses, the size of the global space economy has grown rapidly. It is estimated to be around \$450 billion and is expected to grow to \$1.4 trillion by the end of this decade. India has barely 2 per cent share of the global space commerce today. The only way Delhi can boost India's weight in the global economy is by ending the monopoly of the Department of Space. Although the NDA government did announce some reforms in encouraging private sector activity in 2020, the Department of Space and its agencies continue to exercise paternalistic control. India needs space legislation that will provide a sustainable framework for space commerce, even though critics say a space bill under consideration by the government does not go far enough.

The longer Delhi takes to come up with a sensible regulatory framework, the harder it will be for India to catch up with the rapidly changing commercial dynamic in outer space. Consider, for example, telecommunication, an area that saw the early deployment of space technologies for commercial purposes. A number of western companies are planning to launch hundreds of low-earth satellites to provide broadband internet around the world. Beijing has plans for a Space Silk Road. New economic activities are emerging — from innovative uses of space-based earth observation to manufacturing specialised products in gravity-free environments, space tourism, and possible mining of Moon and other celestial bodies. The expanding commercial use of outer space has been marked by deeper involvement of private actors. The long-standing state monopoly on rocket launches has finally been broken by Elon Musk's SpaceX company. The time is now apt for Delhi to mandate government space agencies to focus on basic research, while allowing the private sector to take the lead in the full range of activities relating to the space business.

## FREEZE FRAME



## E P UNNY



VIKRAM SINGH MEHTA

THE WORLD IS familiar with the cycles of boom and bust in the energy market. It would be understandable, therefore, if the current surge in the price of natural gas in Europe and its rippled impact on the price of coal and oil is seen as just one more twist in the sector's business trajectory. That would be a mistake. For, this time, there is the added dimension of its consequence on the pace, nature and course of the "green transition". Were this dimension ignored, the price hike would incentivise an increase in the production of fossil fuels and that would run counter to not just public sentiment but also the efforts to shift to a clean non-fossil fuel energy system.

The nub of the dilemma for governments created by this latest price shock is to find a way to navigate the long-term imperatives of decarbonisation and also manage the political and social backlash from consumers impacted by high electricity and fuel costs. COP 26 should add the resolution of this dilemma to its agenda. It will be a recurring issue.

The price of natural gas in Europe has shot up by approximately 600 per cent over the past 12 months. A year back, it was trading at just under \$4/mmbtu; today it is hovering around \$25/mmbtu. And, in a reversal of the conventional feedback loop wherein the price of oil would lead to a change in the price of gas, this time it is the price of gas that has pushed up the prices of oil and coal. This is because as the former became increasingly unaffordable, consumers turned to the latter. The average price of Brent crude in 2020 was \$42/bbl. Today, it is just under \$80/bbl. Thermal coal has also moved to historic highs of above \$200/tonne.

There are many reasons for this price surge, but they distil down to the perennial influencers of the energy market — the interplay of demand, supply and geopolitics.

On the demand side, the strongest driver has been the global economic recovery. Added to that are the micro factors of the drop in hydropower in Brazil and China be-



SWASTI RAO

FUMIO KISHIDA, 64, will be sworn in as the new prime minister of Japan today. After a close runoff with the popular vaccine minister Taro Kono, Kishida, a former foreign minister, won the race for the Liberal Democratic Party leadership — he secured 257 votes against Kono's 170. He is expected to form a new cabinet and reshuffle the LDP executive this month. The first test of his leadership will be in November when Japan is slated to have general elections.

The LDP has been in office continuously since 1955 (except for brief intervals). The Japanese PM, then, is virtually the leader of the LDP as the party hardly ever loses elections. However, factional support that decides the leadership frequently switches from one leader to another — leading to prime ministers with short stints. A few like Junichiro Koizumi or Shinzo Abe have broken this barrier with the latter becoming the longest serving PM of Japan. The latest to fall before LDP factionalism is the outgoing Yoshihide Suga. Although Kishida has moderate support, it is his reputation as a consensus builder that has won him support across the factions. With this he has checked the rising momentum of the charismatic Kono. By favouring Kishida, the LDP power-brokers have proved that they favour structural stability, calm and consistency rather than out-of-the-box reformatory politics that Kono championed. It is expected that Kishida and his cabinet will distribute positions among the factions to maintain a balance. In an attempt to strike a chord with the younger legislators, he has pledged to reduce the term length for LDP executives to three



# Staying the green course

Natural gas crisis highlights hurdles to green transition, which governments must address

A few years back, the impact of changes in the natural gas market would have been geographically limited. This is because its market would have been defined by inflexible, long-term contracts that set out the supply source, destination and pricing. The contracts were structured to allow for only limited deviation from these terms. Today, the gas market is different. It is global, integrated and liquid. What happens in one region does, therefore, quickly spill over into other geographies. The CIF price of spot LNG landed in Hazira, Gujarat averaged around \$6/bbl a year back. Today, on account of the surge in Europe, Indian buyers would be fortunate to lay hands on a cargo for less than \$25/bbl.

cause of drought, the reduction in wind power because of unfavourable wind conditions in the North Sea and the underperformance of nuclear reactors in Europe. The severe summer heat in the US, Europe and China has also been a factor.

On the supply side, there have been three economic blockers and one geopolitical bottleneck. The economic blockers were the cold wave in Texas in February this year, which froze gas wells and throttled the export of US LNG, the start-up of the maintenance work suspended since 2020 on account of Covid-19 and the declining production profile of the giant Groningen field in the Netherlands. This field is slated to close down in two years. Matters have been compounded by the diversion of US LNG cargoes destined for Europe to Asia and low inventories.

The geopolitical stumbling block is Russia. Historically, Russia has provided approximately 40 per cent of Europe's gas requirements but it always had the capacity to supply more and could have come to Europe's rescue this time. But it decided not to. Analysts have speculated on the reasons. Most believe it has to do with the 1,230 km long Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany. The US has been an opponent of this pipeline on the grounds it strengthens Russia's leverage over Europe. In consequence, the EU has not yet approved its operationalisation. Russia has hinted it may relax its stance over gas supplies if the pipeline were approved. Who knows how this saga will play out but for the present it does compound the demand-supply imbalance.

A few years back, the impact of changes in the natural gas market would have been geographically limited. This is because its market would have been defined by inflexible, long-term contracts that set out the supply source, destination and pricing. The contracts were structured to allow for only limited deviation from these terms. Today, the gas market is different. It is global, integrated and liquid. What

happens in one region does, therefore, quickly spill over into other geographies. The CIF price of spot LNG landed in Hazira, Gujarat averaged around \$6/bbl a year back. Today, on account of the surge in Europe, Indian buyers would be fortunate to lay hands on a cargo for less than \$25/bbl.

The political (populist) response to this latest energy shock would be to give markets free rein. The price increase would incentivise companies to jack up the production of natural gas, and consumers would switch to the cheaper alternatives of coal (and even oil) and conserve demand. Such a market-led response would, however, render hollow the commitments to phase out coal and limit the production of fossil fuel and call into question the targets for achieving net-zero carbon emissions.

The sustainable response would be to leverage this price shock to improve energy efficiency, intensify demand conservation, intervene to prevent the switch to coal and increase investments in battery and storage technology and transmission infrastructure to scale up solar and wind energy supplies. This would, however, leave unaddressed the hardships faced by consumers from power cuts and higher fuel costs.

World leaders will assemble in Glasgow next month for COP26. On paper, at least, they are aligned on the nature of the climate crisis and the steps that must be taken to address it. The hope is they will convert this alignment into tangible action. The natural gas crisis has highlighted the bumps on the road to the green transition. Leaders will have to work together to smoothen these bumps especially those created by our continued dependence on fossil fuels. Time may need to be set aside to discuss how best governments can help each other stay on the "green" course and also manage shorter-term political compulsions.

*The writer is Chairman, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)*

# A CONSENSUS BUILDER IN JAPAN

Fumio Kishida as PM signals LDP's preference for stability over radical change

Kishida will continue with Abe-Suga era policies in international politics. He will take a hard position on China. He shares the broad consensus on the need to boost Japan's defences and strengthen security ties with allies, particularly the US. A free and open Indo-Pacific will remain a mainstay of Japan's diplomatic outreach in the region and to other partners, including the Quad members, i.e. the US, Australia and India. With India, a continuation of Suga-era policies will be seen in ongoing projects like the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) project.

years. This will allow younger people into the party leadership structure.

Kishida had previously served as LDP policy chief and was foreign minister between 2012-17, when he negotiated accords with Russia and South Korea, with whom Japan's relations are often rocky. Most recently, while Kono favoured Japan acquiring nuclear submarines, Kishida remains much more cautious and traditional when it comes to controversial topics. He has a steadfast anti-nuclear stance. If he stays, this reputation might help him get away more easily with security additions in a country where the pacifist Article 9 guides the direction of Japanese constitutional discourse on security.

China's assertiveness and a pandemic-hit economy remain the two most important challenges for Kishida. On the domestic front, he has proposed an income distribution plan by announcing a spending package of more than 30 trillion yen (\$270 billion). If he also addresses the interests of the middle class, his tenure could turn out to be more stable than Suga.

In contrast to Abe's "Abenomics" that boosted corporate profits in the hope that the benefits would trickle down to the lower-level wage earners, Kishida has stressed the need to distribute more wealth to households and thus maintain a stable middle-class in Japan. The Suga administration laid emphasis on decarbonisation and digital transformation, which is likely to be carried forward by the new administration.

Kishida will continue with Abe-Suga era policies in international politics. He will take

a hard position on China. He shares the broad consensus on the need to boost Japan's defences and strengthen security ties with allies, particularly the US. A free and open Indo-Pacific will remain a mainstay of Japan's diplomatic outreach in the region and to other partners, including the Quad members, i.e. the US, Australia and India. With India, a continuation of Suga-era policies will be seen in ongoing projects like the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) project. There will also be deepening of bilateral security and defence cooperation with India. Advancements will also be seen in the recently-launched Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) between India, Japan and Australia. On the security front, Kishida wants to rev up Japan's coast guard and has reiterated Taiwan's security as crucial to Japan's own. He has sharply criticised China's treatment of the Uighur minority and favours passing a resolution condemning it. He also aims to appoint a prime ministerial aide, a first for Japan, to monitor the Uighur human rights situation.

Despite the above, he stands for preserving trade ties with China because of pandemic-linked supply chain disruptions in Southeast Asia. The good news is that the latest wave of coronavirus infections has decreased rapidly. Despite the global economic slowdown, Japan's GDP is likely to grow in the fourth quarter centred on consumption due to pent-up demand.

*The writer teaches at the Department of Strategic and Security Studies, Aligarh Muslim University*

## OCTOBER 4, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

COLLECTIVE STAND  
COMMONWEALTH LEADERS SUCCEEDED in hammering out a consensus on key economic issues particularly on aid to developing nations like India hit hard by oil imports. Indications were that the 43 Commonwealth countries were in sight of a collective stand on bridging the gap between the rich and developing nations. The views of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on the immediate economic problems of oil-importing countries received wide support during the informal discussions between the leaders. She pleaded for urgent financial assistance by international agencies for development of energy resources in the country. She drew the attention of other leaders to the burden imposed because of

oil imports. A collective Commonwealth stand on North South issues is considered important in view of the Cancun summit which is less than three weeks away.

### CABINET RESHUFFLE

IN A MAJOR reshuffle of portfolios of ministers in UP, Chief Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh designated Swarup Kumari Bakshi, a relative of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, as home minister in place of Naunihal Singh. Singh was allocated the education portfolio held by Bakshi. Some other ministers were stripped of additional portfolios which were allocated to ministers of state. The changes are believed to have been made under pressure from Delhi.

### HIGHWAY BLOCKED

TRAFFIC WAS BLOCKED on the Chandigarh-Ambala highway for more than five hours because a group was protesting the refusal of the police to register a case against some protagonists of Khalistan who tried to disrupt the Ramlila at Dera Bassi. It is believed that three persons asked the stage secretary to announce a donation of Rs 2 for Khalistan.

### ZAIL SINGH'S THREAT

THE UNION HOME Minister Giani Zail Singh has said that the government might consider a ban on parties instigating communalism in the country. He, however, clarified that this would be done as a last resort after talks fail.



# 13 THE IDEAS PAGE

## Counting the kisan

India's farming population may be smaller than estimated. This has policy implications



HARISH DAMODARAN  
AND SAMRIDHI AGARWAL

THE LAST AGRICULTURE Census for 2015-16 placed the total “operational holdings” in India at 146.45 million. The Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) scheme has 110.94 million beneficiaries who got their Rs 2,000 income support installment for April-July 2021. And now, we have the National Statistical Office’s Situation Assessment of Agricultural Households (SAAH) report for 2018-19. It pegs the country’s “agricultural households” at 93.09 million. In short, India officially has anywhere from 90 million-plus to almost 150 million farmers.

This wide variation has largely to do with methodology. The Agriculture Census looks at any land used even partly for agricultural production and operated/managed by one person alone or with others. The land does not have to be owned by that person (“cultivator”), who needn’t also belong to an “agricultural household”. The SAAH report, on the other hand, considers only the operational holdings of agricultural households. Members of a household may farm different lands. While the Census treats each of them as separate holdings, the SAAH takes all these lands as a single production unit. It does not count multiple holdings if operated by individuals living together and sharing a common kitchen.

Accounting for only “agricultural households”, while not distinguishing multiple operating holdings within them, brings down India’s official farmer numbers to just over 93 million. But even this figure is an exaggeration, given the SAAH’s own rather expansive definition of “agricultural households”. The latter covers households having at least one member self-employed in agriculture and whose annual value of produce exceeds Rs 4,000. Such self-employment needs to be for only 30 days or more during the survey reference period of six months (in this case, the two halves of the July 2018-June 2019 agricultural year).

What we have done is take the SAAH figure of 93.09 million — which is, at best, an upper limit — and estimate from it the agricultural households that are significantly farm income-dependent. They would, in our view, constitute “serious”, “full-time” or “regular” farmers.

The SAAH report gives data on agricultural household income from farm and non-farm sources, both state-wise and across different land-possessed/operational holding size classes. Non-farm income includes that from wages/salary, business, leasing out of land and pension/remittances. For farm income, we have factored in net receipts from crop production as well as animal husbandry (dairying, poultry, goat/sheep rearing, piggyery, bee-keeping, aquaculture, sericulture, etc).

We would categorise “full-time/regular” farmers as those households whose net receipts from farming are at least 50 per cent of their total income from all sources. The farm income dependence ratios have, accordingly, been worked out for all states and across holding sizes (from below 0.01 to 10 hectares and above). The SAAH report also has state-wise estimates of agricultural households for each land-possessed size class. By taking only those



STATE-WISE ESTIMATES OF “FULL-TIME/REGULAR” FARMERS (IN THOUSANDS)

	Farming-dependent households	Total agricultural households	per cent of Regular farmers		Farming-dependent households	Total agricultural households	per cent of Regular farmers
Jharkhand	6.6	2808	0.24	Bihar	3351.6	7011.3	47.80
Kerala	8.1	1466.9	0.55	Madhya Pradesh	3489.9	7276.3	47.96
West Bengal	75.7	6626.2	1.14	Uttar Pradesh	8746.5	17789.5	49.17
J&K	12.3	658.3	1.86	Maharashtra	3646.6	7289.3	50.03
Tamil Nadu	60.3	2597.7	2.32	Telangana	1528.2	2668.5	57.27
Odisha	283.7	4815.3	5.89	Punjab	884.3	1473.8	60.00
Tripura	25.3	289.3	8.75	Gujarat	2499.9	4037.1	61.92
Himachal Pradesh	140.5	1034.2	13.59	Manipur	166.4	241.2	68.99
Sikkim	10.4	65.2	15.95	Meghalaya	272.2	364.7	74.64
Uttarakhand	172.9	983.4	17.58	Karnataka	3664	4251.6	86.18
Assam	637.6	3099.7	20.57	Mizoram	71.5	76.4	93.59
Andhra Pradesh	745.5	3159.4	23.60	Nagaland	181.6	191.8	94.68
Haryana	710	1906.7	37.24	Arunachal Pradesh	152.40	152.4	100
Chhattisgarh	1302.6	2985	43.64	ALL-INDIA	36114	92360.7	39.1
Rajasthan	3267.4	7041.5	46.40				

Note: All-India figures are sum total of all states. The total agricultural households are slightly less than the 93.09 million given in the SAAH report.

CR Sasikumar

policy on farm commodities will matter mainly to “full-time/regular” farmers. Even PM-Kisan would be more effective if directed at these farmers, whose quantum of income support can be enhanced to encourage them to remain in or expand their agriculture business.

Secondly, land size matters. The SAAH report reveals that the 50 per cent farm income dependence threshold is crossed at an all-India level only when the holding size exceeds one hectare or 2.5 acres. This is clearly the minimum land required for farming to be viable, which about 70 per cent of agricultural households in the country do not possess.

It links up with the final point: What should be done for this 70 per cent, who are effectively labourers and not farmers? Their problems cannot be addressed through “agriculture policy”. A more sustainable solution lies in reimagining agriculture beyond the farm. Crops may be produced in fields, but not everyone needs to engage in cultivation. The scope for value-addition and employment can be more outside than on the farm — be it in aggregation, grading, packaging, transporting, processing, warehousing and retailing of produce or supply of inputs and services to farmers.

Damodaran is National Rural Affairs & Agriculture Editor, The Indian Express and is currently on sabbatical as Senior Fellow with the Centre for Policy Research. Agarwal is Research Associate with CPR

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“By dint of sheer longevity, the 007 brand has also become a venerable cultural ambassador for the big-screen blockbuster experience, making this latest outing a symbolic moment in cinema’s post-pandemic recovery.” —THE GUARDIAN

## Unmask the distress

Simply extrapolating the performance of the organised sector to that of the unorganised presents an inaccurate picture of the economy



ISHAN BAKSHI

ECONOMIC DATA RELEASED over the past few weeks suggests that the Indian economy has emerged from the second wave of the pandemic better than most expected. Two broad points emerge. First, although the second wave was far more virulent, the impact of the localised restrictions imposed during this period on economic activity was less damaging than observed last year. And second, in the weeks and months thereafter, large parts of the economy are almost back to pre-Covid levels. However, these data points mask the distress lingering in large parts of the informal economy.

The informal/unorganised sector in India accounts for roughly half of the total value added in the economy (52.4 per cent in 2017-18), and employs around 90 per cent of the labour force. The extent of distress that continues to persist in this part of the economy — at least in rural areas — can be gauged from the state of the informal labour force. This can be gleaned from the MGNREGA data.

In the first quarter (April-June) of the ongoing financial year, the number of households demanding work under MGNREGA, while higher than pre-Covid levels, was lower than last year. There could be two possible explanations for this. One, that the extent of distress in the labour market last year was of a much higher magnitude. Or two, that the spread of the pandemic in rural areas this year curtailed the registration of households demanding work under MGNREGA.

In the second quarter (July-September), however, the number of households demanding work this year was not only around the same level as last year, but was also significantly higher than the pre-Covid level (2019-20). This signals two possibilities.

First, that sections of the informal labour force in rural areas and the migrant households who have not returned to urban areas, were unable to find non-farm employment, and had to rely on MGNREGA. This implies that large parts of the informal economy — sectors like manufacturing, construction, trade and transport, where those currently demanding work under MGNREGA would have normally found jobs — were operating well below their pre-Covid levels in the second quarter as well.

Second, it is also plausible that to the extent that employment opportunities were available, a section of the informal labour force simply opted for whatever work was available at depressed wage rates, supplementing its income by seeking work under MGNREGA. After all, in the absence of safety nets, at current per capita income levels, few can afford to stay unemployed for long and look for remunerative employment. (MGNREGA also provides an avenue for these households to rebuild their buffers, which would have been depleted while dealing with the fallout of the second wave.)

The situation is unlikely to be materially different for the urban informal labour force considering that even formal em-

ployment in some of these sectors (trade, accommodation and restaurants) has been badly hit, as revealed by the latest Quarterly Employment Survey. This implies that even a downward trending unemployment rate will not be an accurate gauge of labour market distress.

This level of sustained distress in the informal labour market points towards a continuing divergence in the fortunes of the formal and informal parts of the economy. For, if both formal and informal segments were rebounding at an equal pace, then surely, the labour market distress in both these segments should also have been dissipating, even if with a lag, at similar momentum. After all, the value added per worker is unlikely to rise dramatically in the informal economy. It is more likely to rise in the case of the relatively larger firms in the formal sector. This is in line with the first quarter results of the listed companies which show that while the bigger companies flourished, the smaller ones (those in the range of Rs 0-25 crore) continued to be mired in distress.

This also suggests that in sectors with a large informal presence — construction (where three-fourths of the overall value-added was by the informal segment in 2017-18), trade, transport and communication (value added by the informal segment ranges from 47.7 per cent to 86.6 per cent), real estate and professional services (roughly half the value-added is by the unorganised segment) and manufacturing (where between 20-25 per cent of the value-added is by the unorganised segment) — the relatively larger firms in the formal sector would have gained at the expense of the unorganised.

Thus high-frequency indicators, which indicate that the economy is operating at more than 90 per cent of its pre-Covid level — even surpassing it in many sectors — do not reflect the distress in the informal economy or among the smaller firms in the formal economy. Simply extrapolating the performance of the organised sector to that of the unorganised, as may be the case with some estimates, would thus present an inaccurate picture of the Indian economy.

One outcome of this sustained divergence between the formal and the informal labour force is the worsening of the income distribution. To the extent that it endures — even when the economy had recovered to pre-Covid levels during the second half of last year, the number of households demanding work under MGNREGA remained significantly higher than pre-Covid levels — this loss in purchasing power of the lower half of the distribution chain would translate to the aggregate household consumption basket shifting towards that of the relatively affluent households. This would raise demand for the less labour-intensive services and high-end/imported manufactured products and reinforce the current labour market trends.

How quickly, and to what extent, the informal economy can return to its pre-Covid level of value-added and employment is debatable. While during demonetisation, a badly bruised informal sector clawed its way back, the disruption this time is of a much higher magnitude. This labour market scarring has broader implications for aggregate consumption and investment, and indicates subdued medium-term growth prospects.

ishan.bakshi@expressindia.com



A FAIZUR RAHMAN

“NARCOTIC JIHAD” IS the latest social offensive Indian Muslims are supposedly plotting against non-Muslims. This accusation came out of the blue as a holy bill of indictment from a Catholic bishop in Kerala who warned, without an iota of evidence, that “hardcore jihadis” are using drugs “as a weapon to spoil non-Muslims”. The Kerala Catholic Bishops Council endorsed the bishop.

The outlandish “holy wars” Muslims in India have been accused of waging include “love jihad”, “corona jihad” and “land jihad”, not to mention the propaganda that they may also be pursuing a “demographic jihad” by intentionally producing more children to outnumber the Hindus.

But what is more worrying is the growing tendency among the Muslim elite to sacrifice truth at the altar of unwarranted self-criticism and express righteous indignation at acts their community did not commit. Last month, a Mumbai-based Muslim outfit ended up fueling Islamophobic suspicions about the ideological moderateness of Indian Muslims when it claimed without evidence that “a section” of them (neither defined nor identified) was in a state of euphoria over the Taliban’s capture of power in Afghanistan. Javed Akhtar and Naseeruddin Shah were among the signatories to the outfit’s statement that contained this unsubstantiated allegation.

Shah, in fact, repeated the charge in a short video saying that “some sections” of Indian Muslims celebrating (*jashn manaana*) the

## The prejudice within

How unwitting Islamophobia of elite Muslims hurts the community

Taliban’s return is as dangerous as the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan. Within days, he conceded in an interview that he should not have talked of *jashn*, for celebrations were not held anywhere in India. Akhtar too subsequently agreed that only a minuscule minority within the Muslim community supports the Taliban.

But the damage had been done; a new wave of Islamophobia hit the world’s second-largest and most diverse Muslim population. The carelessly used phrases “a section” and “some sections” were exploited to equate the community’s political quietism with a kind of dissimulated socio-theology that nurtures a yearning for the Taliban’s shariah. No attempt was made to muse on the fact that present-day Muslims are the proud descendants of those who in 1947 not just chose a secular democratic India over an “Islamic” Pakistan, but for the sake of national unity gave up the system of separate electorates they had been enjoying for nearly four decades since the passage of the Indian Councils Act in 1909. In *The Widening Divide: An Insight into Hindu-Muslim Relations*, Rafiq Zakaria writes that the loss of separate electorates “politically orphaned” Muslims by depriving them of adequate representation in legislatures and other elective bodies.

The situation has not changed since then. According to Christophe Jaffrelot, between 1980 and 2014, the representation of Muslim MPs in the Lok Sabha has diminished by nearly two-thirds even as the share of Muslims in the population rose during the same period. Yet,

this has not provoked Indian Muslims to harbour pan-Islamic sentiments or extra-territorial loyalties — a fact endorsed by no less than two Indian Prime Ministers.

In a July 2005 interview to CNN, PM Manmohan Singh took pride in the fact that not one Indian Muslim out of 150 million had “joined the ranks of al Qaeda or participated in the activities of Taliban”. This, he explained, was due to the community’s firm belief in India’s secular democracy.

Nine years later, PM Narendra Modi told Fareed Zakaria of CNN that terror outfits such as al Qaeda will have no effect on Indian Muslims. “If anyone thinks Indian Muslims will dance to their tune, they are delusional. Indian Muslims will live for India. They will die for India. They will not want anything bad for India.” Home Minister Rajnath Singh expressed similar confidence in 2017.

A factual confirmation of India’s top leadership’s faith in the Muslim community came from The Soufan Center affiliated with The Soufan Group that provides strategic security intelligence services to governments and multinational organisations. Its January 2019 report revealed how Indian Muslims had managed to ignore the lure of jihadi narratives, despite being precariously close to the geographical centre of al Qaeda.

Yet, Shah wanted to know from “*har Hindustani Musalmaan* (every Indian Muslim)” if he/she wants reforms in Islam or “live with the *wahshipan* (barbarism) of the past few cen-

turies.” Such inquisitorial cruelty can only be the result of a total lack of understanding of the Indian Muslims and their post-Independence history. If, as Shah concedes, Indian Islam had always been different from its international versions, then how can Indian Muslims who, like Shah, follow this Islam possess an inclination different from Shah’s own mystical (Sufi) outlook on life?

Truth be told, notwithstanding politically instigated acts of violence, Indian Muslims have lived in harmony with all communities. For instance, the people of the Sadhan village near Agra have shown that it is possible to be a born a Hindu and practice Islam, and to be a Muslim but retain a Hindu name.” Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan explained in a recent interview why his state is free of “community consciousness”. Keralites don’t wear religion on their sleeves, he said, and there is no distinction between Muslims and Hindus insofar as language, culture or food is concerned which is common to all.

Given this reality, members of the Indian Muslim elite who believe that occasional Muslim-bashing will enhance their non-partisan image should realise that facts are sacred; but comment is not free if it goes against facts. Unwitting Islamophobia cannot become a secular cant.

The writer is an independent researcher and the secretary-general of the Islamic Forum for the Promotion of Moderate Thought

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### FOCUS ON JOBS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The case of missing jobs’ (IE, October 3). For the Establishment, GDP growth is paramount and receives more attention than employment. It is time this changed, and job creation received more attention because of the growing inequality in the country and the consequences of a rising number of unemployed. Some economists have rightly suggested that employment targeting, like inflation targeting, should be a goal for the government. It is time it did so to keep the employment situation under focus.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

### SONGS OF EQUALITY

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The songs of Kamla Bhasin’ (IE, October 2). I was fortunate enough to attend lectures by Kamla Bhasin when I was a fresher in college. Her ideas shook me and I began questioning things at my home and around myself. Her ideas of feminism were real, relatable and thought-provoking. Her writings on patriarchy and its impact on the lives of men and women both are based on the realities of life. Her songs motivates us. She will always be there in our hearts and memories.

Sarachana, Burari

### HOLLOW CLAIMS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Journey to recovery’ (IE, October 2). After perusing

this article, most of us must have pinched ourselves to make sure whether, as claimed by its writer, the country is really making big strides in every field. This is because his assertion of India having a \$5-trillion economy seems to be hollow as his government had to monetise its assets to manage its immediate financial commitments. No wonder, then the writer’s wholesome praise of his government’s initiatives and policies only invite disbelief.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

### A BLOT

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Garbage mountains in cities to be removed: PM Narendra Modi’ (IE, October 2). On the eve of Gandhi Jayanti, the PM invoked B R Ambedkar to eradicate inequality. He also called the cleanliness workers and garbage collectors “superheroes”. The sad reality is that these superheroes are hired by unscrupulous contractors for manual scavenging, and they die during cleaning of septic tanks because of lack of essential safety gear. Their deaths are not even acknowledged as is evident from the statement of Union Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Ramdas Athawale in the Parliament that “No such deaths have been reported due to manual scavenging.”. The very existence of the practice of manual scavenging represents an unparalleled inequality and the ultimate human exploitation.

LR Murmu, Delhi



THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2021

## 14 THE WORLD



ITALY

## HISTORIC ROMAN BRIDGE DAMAGED IN BLAZE

A blaze destroyed part of a historic bridge spanning the Tiber River in Rome before firefighters extinguished the flames early Sunday. Firefighters said the fire erupted before midnight Saturday. Pope Pius IX attended the 1863 inauguration of the bridge, one of the last major construction works in Rome in the waning years of the papal state controlling the city.

## Secret wealth, dealings of world leaders exposed

BBC PANDORA PAPERS REPORTING TEAM  
OCTOBER 3

SOME 35 current and former leaders and more than 300 public officials are featured in the files from offshore companies, dubbed the Pandora Papers.

They reveal the King of Jordan secretly amassed £70m of UK and US property.

They also show how ex-UK PM Tony Blair and his wife saved £312,000 in stamp duty when they bought a London office.

The couple bought an offshore firm that owned the building.

The leak also links Russian President Vladimir Putin to secret assets in Monaco, and shows the Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis — facing an election later this week — failed to declare an offshore investment company used to purchase two villas for £12m in the south of France.

It is the latest in a string of leaks over the past seven years, following the FinCen Files, the Paradise Papers, the Panama Papers and LuxLeaks.

The examination of the files is the largest organised by the International Consortium of

Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), with more than 650 reporters taking part.

BBC Panorama in a joint investigation with the Guardian and the other media partners have had access to 12 million documents from 14 financial services companies in countries including the British Virgin Islands, Panama, Belize, Cyprus, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore and Switzerland.

Some figures are facing allegations of corruption, money laundering and global tax avoidance.

But one of the biggest revelations is how prominent and wealthy people have been legally setting up companies to secretly buy property in the UK.

The documents reveal the owners of some of the 95,000 offshore firms behind the purchases.

It highlights the UK government's failure to introduce a register of offshore property owners despite repeated promises to do so, amid concerns some property buyers could be hiding money-laundering activities.

The Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and his family, who have been accused of looting their own country, are one example.

The investigation found the Aliyevs and their close associates



The pandora papers reveal the King of Jordan secretly amassed £70m of UK and US property. *Reuters file*

have secretly been involved in property deals in the UK worth more than £400m.

The revelations could prove embarrassing for the UK government, as the Aliyevs appear to have made a £31m profit after selling one of their London properties to the Crown Estate — the Queen's property empire that is managed by The Treasury and raises cash for the nation.

Many of the transactions in the documents involve no legal wrongdoing.

But Fergus Shiell, from the ICIJ, said: "There's never been anything on this scale and it shows the reality of what offshore companies can offer to help people hide dodgy cash or avoid tax."

## King of Jordan's Malibu mansions

The leaked financial documents show how the King of Jordan secretly amassed a property empire in the UK and US worth more than £70m.

They identify a network of offshore companies in the British Virgin Islands and other tax havens used by Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein to buy 15 homes since he assumed power in 1999.

They include £50m on three adjacent ocean view properties in Malibu, California, and properties in London and Ascot in the UK.

His property interests have been built up as King Abdullah has been accused of presiding over an

authoritarian regime, with protests taking place in recent years amid austerity measures and tax rises.

Lawyers for King Abdullah said all the properties were bought with personal wealth, which he also uses to fund projects for Jordan's citizens.

Among the other revelations in the Pandora Papers:

■ Kenya President Uhuru Kenyatta and six members of his family secretly owned a network of offshore companies. They have been linked to 11 firms — one of which was valued as holding assets of \$30m

■ Members of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's inner circle, including cabinet ministers and their families, secretly own companies and trusts holding millions of dollars

■ The law firm founded by President Nicos Anastasiades of Cyprus appears to have provided fake owners to disguise the real owner of a series of offshore companies — a former Russian politician who had been accused of embezzlement. However, the law firm denies this

■ Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky transferred his stake in a secret offshore company just before he won the 2019 election

■ Ecuador President Guillermo Lasso, a former banker,

replaced a Panamanian foundation that made monthly payments to his close family members with a trust based in South Dakota in the US

## No stamp duty on Blair office buy

There is no suggestion in the Pandora Papers that Tony and Cherie Blair were hiding their wealth.

But documents show why stamp duty was not payable when the couple bought a £6.45m property.

The former Labour prime minister and his barrister wife Cherie acquired the building in Marylebone, central London, in July 2017 by buying the offshore company that owned it.

It is legal to acquire properties in the UK in this way and stamp duty does not have to be paid — but Mr Blair has previously been critical of tax loopholes.

The townhouse in Marylebone, central London, is now home to Mrs Blair's legal consultancy, which advises governments around the world, as well as her foundation for women.

Mrs Blair said the sellers had insisted they buy the house through the offshore company.

She said they had brought the property back under UK rules and will be liable to pay capital gains tax if they sell it in future.

## Bomb at Kabul mosque kills 5 civilians: Taliban

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
KABUL, OCTOBER 3

AT LEAST five civilians were killed in a bomb blast outside a Kabul mosque Sunday, a Taliban official said. It was the deadliest attack in the Afghan capital since US forces left at the end of August.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but suspicion fell on Islamic State extremists who have stepped up attacks on the Taliban in recent weeks, particularly in an IS stronghold in eastern Afghanistan.

An apparent roadside bomb went off at the gate of the sprawling Eid Gah Mosque in Kabul at a time when a memorial service was being held for the mother of chief Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. Five people were killed, said Qari Saeed Khosti, the spokesman of the Interior Ministry.

The explosion underscored the growing challenges the Taliban face just weeks after they took control of Afghanistan in a blitz campaign, culminating in their takeover of Kabul on Aug. 15.

During their 20-year insurgency, the Taliban themselves had frequently carried out bombing and shooting attacks, but are now faced with trying to contain rival militants using the same methods. The growing security challenges come at a time of an economic meltdown, as the Taliban struggle to run the



At the entrance of the Eidgah Mosque in Kabul Sunday. *AP*

## There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but suspicion fell on IS extremists who have stepped up attacks on Taliban in recent weeks

country without the massive foreign aid given to US-backed government they toppled.

Three suspects were arrested in Sunday's explosion in Kabul, said Bilal Karimi, a Taliban spokesman. He said Taliban fighters were not harmed.

Mohammad Israil, a Kabul resident, said he heard "a loud sound" and saw people running away.

An Italian-funded emergency hospital in Kabul tweeted it had received four people wounded in the blast.

The area around the mosque was cordoned off by the Taliban, who maintained a heavy security presence.

## Alleged lover, others linked to Putin came into extreme wealth

LUKE HARDING  
OCTOBER 3

IN SEPTEMBER 2003, a secret transaction took place. The location was Monaco, a tax haven associated with the international rich. Specifically, an exclusive block just beneath its lavish casino. An apartment changed hands. A local notary signed the deal. Purchase price: £3.6m (£3.1m). For this, the buyer got a luxury fourth-floor flat, two parking spaces, a storeroom, and the use of a pool in the Monte Carlo Star complex.

The identity of the flat's buyer was a mystery. The official "purchaser" was an offshore company listed in the British Virgin Islands (BVI), Brockville Development Ltd. Brockville was in turn owned by two further Panama-registered entities — Sefton Securities and, later, Radnor Investments SA. To outsiders, the arrangements looked a little like a Russian doll, with the ultimate beneficiary nestled under layers.

Thanks to documents in the Pandora papers, the *Guardian* can identify the flat's buyer — a woman, 28 years old in 2003, and at the time unknown. Name: Svetlana Krivonogikh. In the space of a few years, around the turn of the millennium, Krivonogikh became extremely wealthy. She acquired a flat in a prestigious compound in her home city of St Petersburg, properties in Moscow, a yacht, and other assets, worth an estimated \$100m.

How to explain her fairytale rise? Krivonogikh was a business student and worked as a cleaner in a store. Then, in the late 1990s, she appears to have acquired a benefactor: Vladimir Putin.



Vladimir Putin

In 2020, the investigative website Proekt claimed Krivonogikh formed a friendship with Putin when he was St Petersburg's deputy mayor. She became Putin's lover, it alleged.

Regardless of the exact nature of their relationship, they seem to have been close.

In March 2003, Krivonogikh gave birth to a daughter, Elizaveta, or Luiza. Proekt has claimed Putin is Luiza's father.

The Kremlin has not commented. Putin does not discuss his private life. He and his wife, Lyudmila — who have two daughters, Masha and Katerina — divorced in 2013.

Political figures are entitled to a private life. But the Krivonogikh story is not merely about an alleged romance that fizzled out some time ago. Rather it is about money, and how, according to the Pandora papers, some of Putin's inner circle used Monaco as a discreet hub for their financial affairs. There is geopolitics, too. Prince Albert, Monaco's ruler, has good relations with Putin.

Over the past two decades, Russian influence in Monaco grew. "Nobody asks where your money comes from. There's no culture of checking. You don't make a tax declaration," said Dominique Anastasi, a lawyer.

THE GUARDIAN

## Imran promised 'new Pak' but members of his inner circle secretly moved millions offshore

MARGOT GIBBS & MALIA POLITZER  
OCTOBER 3

IN 2018, Imran Khan, the Pakistani cricketing legend turned anti-corruption campaigner finally broke through.

After more than two decades in the political wilderness, the charismatic Oxford-educated media star seized on the publication of the Panama Papers, the 2016 journalistic exposé that revealed the offshore secrets of the global elite. Among the findings:

The children of Pakistan's sitting prime minister secretly owned a string of luxury London apartments.

Riding a wave of public outrage, Khan led protests around the country and a sit-in at the residence of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, demanding that he step down. With the support of the military establishment, Khan propelled his reformist party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), past its rivals in the 2018 national elections and propelled himself into the prime minister's office in Islamabad.

In a televised victory speech, Khan promised a new era. Now leaked documents reveal that key members of Khan's inner circle, including cabinet ministers, their families and major financial backers have secretly owned an array of companies and trusts holding millions of dollars of hidden wealth. Military leaders have been implicated as well. The documents contain no suggestion that Khan himself owns offshore companies.

Among those whose holdings have been exposed are Khan's finance minister, Shaukat Fayaz Ahmed Tarin, and his family, and the son of Khan's former adviser for finance and revenue, Waqar Masood Khan. The records also reveal the offshore dealings of a top PTI donor, Arif Naqvi, who is facing fraud charges in the United States.

The files show how Chaudhry Moonis Elahi, a key political ally of Imran Khan's, planned to put the proceeds from an allegedly corrupt business deal into a secret trust, concealing them from Pakistan's tax authorities. Elahi did not respond to ICIJ's repeated requests for comment. On Sunday, a fam-

ily spokesman told ICIJ's media partners that, "due to political victimisation misleading interpretations and data have been circulated in files for nefarious reasons." He said the family's assets "are declared as per applicable law".

The Pandora Papers also reveal that in 2007, the wife of Gen. Shafaat Ullah Shah, then one of Pakistan's leading generals and a former aide to President Pervez Musharraf, acquired a \$1.2 million apartment in London through a discreet offshore transaction.

The property was transferred to Gen. Shah's wife by an offshore company owned by Akbar Asif, a wealthy businessman who has opened restaurants in London and Dubai. Asif is the son of the Indian film director K Asif.



Pakistan PM Imran Khan

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## Kenya leader's family's secret fortune expanded offshore

WILL FITZGIBBON  
OCTOBER 3

AS UHURU Kenyatta mounted a political comeback by campaigning against corruption, his family's secret fortune was growing offshore, a massive new leak shows.

At his annual State of the Nation address last fall, President Uhuru Kenyatta mounted the podium at Kenya's Parliament to acknowledge that too many Kenyans live in poverty and too many officials



Uhuru Kenyatta

loot the country's public resources.

But a massive cache of newly leaked documents show that Kenyatta's family has for years been secretly accumulat-

ing a personal fortune behind offshore corporate veils.

Kenyatta, along with his mother, sisters and brother, have for decades shielded wealth from public scrutiny through foundations and companies in tax havens, including Panama, with assets worth more than \$30 million, according to records obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

The records — from the Panamanian law firm Aleman, Cordero, Galindo & Lee (Alcogal) — show that the fam-

ily owned at least seven such entities, two registered anonymously in Panama and five in the British Virgin Islands. One BVI company owned a home in central London, according to the records, and two other companies held investment portfolios worth tens of millions of dollars.

The Kenyattas' offshore wealth, revealed here for the first time, represents part of an estimated half-billion-dollar family fortune amassed in a country where the average annual salary is less than \$8,000 a year.

ICIJ

## N Korea threatens top UN body after emergency meet

HYUNG-JIN KIM  
SEOUL, OCTOBER 3

NORTH KOREA has warned the UN Security Council against criticising the isolated country's missile programme, in a statement Sunday that included unspecified threats against the international body.

During an emergency closed-door meeting of the top UN body Friday, France circulated a proposed statement that expresses concern over North Korea's missile launches and calls on it to fully implement council resolutions that ban its ballistic missile firings.

On Sunday, Jo Chol Su, a senior North Korean Foreign Ministry official, warned the UN council it "had better think what conse-



A North Korean missile is launched during a test last week. *AP*

quences it will bring in the future in case it tries to encroach upon the sovereignty" of North Korea.

Jo also accused the UN body of a "double-dealing standard" because it doesn't equally take issue with similar weapons tests by the United States and its allies, according to the statement circulated by state media. **AP**

## China tightens political control of internet giants

JOE MCDONALD & ZEN SOO  
BEIJING, OCTOBER 3

THE RULING Communist Party is tightening political control over China's internet giants and tapping their wealth to pay for its ambitions to reduce reliance on US and European technology.

Anti-monopoly and data security crackdowns starting in late 2020 have shaken the industry, which flourished for two decades with little regulation. Investor jitters have knocked more than \$1.3 trillion off the total market value of e-commerce platform Alibaba, games and social media operator Tencent and other tech giants.

The party says anti-monopoly enforcement will be a priority through 2025. It says competition will help create jobs and

raise living standards.

President Xi Jinping's government seems likely to stay the course even if economic growth suffers, say businesspeople and lawyers. "These companies are world leaders in their sectors in innovation, and yet the leadership is willing to squash them all," said Mark Williams, chief Asia economist for Capital Economics.

The crackdown reflects Xi's public emphasis on reviving the party's "original mission" of leading economic and social development, said Steve Tsang, a Chinese politics specialist at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. He said it could also help Xi politically if, as expected, he pursues a third five-year term as party leader.

Chinese leaders don't want to reimpose direct control of the



Xi visits the Monument to the People's Heroes in Beijing last week. *AP*

economy but want private sector companies to align with ruling party plans, said Lester Ross, head of the Beijing office of law firm WilmerHale.

"What they are worried about is companies getting too big and too independent of the party," said Ross.

Chinese internet companies and their billionaire founders, including Alibaba Group's Jack Ma and Tencent Holdings' Pony Ma, are among the biggest global success stories of the past two decades. Alibaba is the biggest e-commerce company, while Tencent operates the popular WeChat messaging service.

But party plans emphasize robots, chips and other hardware, so these companies are rushing to show their loyalty by shifting billions of dollars into those.

The ruling party's campaign is prompting warnings the world might decouple, or split into separate markets with incompatible technology. Products from China wouldn't function in the US or Europe, and vice versa. Innovation and efficiency would suffer.

US curbs on Chinese access

to telecom and other technology haven't helped.

Alibaba said it will invest \$28 billion to develop operating system software, processor chips and network technology. The company has pledged \$1 billion to nurture 100,000 developers and tech startups over the next three years.

Last year, Tencent promised to invest \$70 billion in digital infrastructure. Meituan, an e-commerce, delivery and service platform, raised \$10 billion to develop self-driving vehicles and robots.

Investors, many burned by the drop in technology shares, are keeping their money on the sidelines. Tencent's market capitalisation of \$575 billion is down \$350 billion from its February peak, a decline equal to more than the total value of Nike Inc. or Pfizer Inc. **AP**

## 1st official EgyptAir flight lands in Israel

*Jerusalem:* Egypt's national carrier Sunday made its first official direct flight to Israel since the two countries signed an historic 1979 peace treaty as an EgyptAir jet landed at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport.

The airline's affiliate, Air Sinai, has for decades operated flights to Israel without the company logo, out of fear of public backlash. The national carrier will now run three weekly flights between Cairo and Tel Aviv with the EgyptAir markings.

The Israeli Embassy in Cairo tweeted that direct flights are "an important and welcome sign of strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries..."

Last week, Bahrain's GulfAir made its first direct flight to Israel, further cementing commercial ties established with the signing of the "Abraham Accords" between Israel and Arab states last year. **AP**



## 15 ECONOMY

## Stock recommendations: Sebi tightens screws on business channels

## Action in cases if 'unfair practices' are established

SANDEEP SINGH  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

AMID SURGE of retail investors into stock markets, and the rise of benchmark indices to record highs over the last one year, the capital markets regulator is closely monitoring stock recom-

mendations aired across business TV channels for "unfair trade practices" by hosts.

Sources in the know of the matter told *The Indian Express* that the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has deployed sophisticated surveillance tools to help it establish any connection between recommendations made by hosts during a show and illicit profiteering on the side if any — including image processing and machine learning models to capture stock recommendations on shows.

Action will be taken in cases where unfair practices are established. A source said that the regulator is closely monitoring all business channels, across languages, that air recommendations to buy/hold/sell stocks with price targets.

"The videos of such shows are captured and converted to a readable format to grab details of recommendations. The recommendations are then checked with the price movement of the particular scrip, and trading activity in the scrip, to

## 'SURVEILLANCE TOOLS DEPLOYED'

**MARKETS REGULATOR**  
Sebi has deployed surveillance tools to help it establish any connection between recommendations made by hosts during a business show and illicit profiteering on the side if any, sources said



Sebi has been using software and tools to analyse call records

detect if anyone has made significant profits," a source said.

data, social media messages which are publicly accessible, as well as bank statements etc, to establish connections amongst suspect entities.

Under current Sebi Chairman Ajay Tyagi and whole-time member Madhabi Puri Buch (who heads both Surveillance and Information Technology Departments of Sebi), the regulator in the past couple of years has strengthened its surveillance capabilities through various technological tools.

The focus has been to aug-

ment market surveillance systems in Sebi with advanced analytics (like pattern recognition, text mining, predictive analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning etc).

The monitoring of stock recommendations aired on TV channels is one more area where Sebi has now deployed new technological tools. In January, the watchdog had passed an interim order against the host of a show on a prominent business channel for indulging in "unfair trade practices".

According to the confirmatory order passed by the markets regulator last month, buy positions were created in the trading accounts of the wife and mother of the TV show's host in the respective scrips one day prior to the recommendations given on the show.

These buy positions were excited by selling the said shares on the recommendation day, at a price higher than at which the shares were bought just the day before, thereby generating significant profits.

## END AT \$638.6 BILLION DURING WEEK TO SEPTEMBER 24

## Forex reserves slide for third straight week amid fall in currency assets

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

THE NATION'S forex reserves declined again, this time by \$997 million, to reach \$638.646 billion for the week ended September 24, according to RBI data.

In the previous reporting week ended September 17, the overall reserves had decreased by \$1.47 billion to \$639.642 billion.

The decline in the reporting week has primarily been on account of a fall in foreign currency assets (FCA), an essential component of the overall reserves. This is the third straight week of decline in the foreign exchange — or forex — reserves, which started in the week ended September 10

RESERVES DECLINE BY \$997 MILLION		
	Sept 17 2021	Sept 24 2021
Foreign currency assets	577,986	576,731
Gold	37,103	37,430
SDRs	19,434	19,379
Reserve tranche position	5,119	5,106
<b>Total</b>	<b>639,642</b>	<b>638,646</b>

*in million US dollars; source: Reserve Bank of India/Reuters*

when it fell to \$641.113 billion.

The reserves had last surged by \$8.895 billion to a lifetime high of \$642.453 billion in the week ended September 3.

As per Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data released Friday, for the week ended September 24, the

FCA component of the reserves fell by \$1.255 billion to \$576.731 billion. Expressed in dollar terms, the FCA includes the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the forex reserves.

Meanwhile, the special draw-

ing rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) decreased by \$55 million to \$19.379 billion in the week, according to the RBI. India's reserve position with the IMF too saw a decline, falling \$13 million to \$5.106 billion, the data showed.

However, gold reserves were the outlier, increasing by \$327 million to \$37.43 billion in the week.

Falling forex reserves may cause issues for the government and the RBI in managing the nation's external and internal financial issues. High forex reserves are a big cushion in the event of any crisis on the economic front and enough to cover the import bill of the country for a year. Higher reserves also help the rupee strengthen against the dollar.

A rise in reserves will provide a level of confidence to markets that a country can meet its external obligations, demonstrate the backing of domestic currency by external assets, assist the government in meeting its foreign exchange needs and external debt obligations, and maintain a reserve for national disasters or emergencies.

The Reserve Bank functions as the custodian and manager of forex reserves, and operates within the overall policy framework agreed upon with the government. It allocates the dollars for specific purposes. For example, under the Liberalised Remittances Scheme, individuals are allowed to remit up to \$250,000 every year.

## 'Industrial, logistics space leasing rise 13% in Jan-Jun'

*Leasing of industrial and logistics spaces saw about 13% half-yearly growth to 14 million sq ft in January-June in eight major cities on better demand, a CBRE report said*



**Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru** dominated leasing activities and accounted for about 50% of the space absorption in H1 2021

**Medium-to large-sized deals** (more than 50,000 sq ft) dominated leasing with a share of about 62% during H1 2021

**5% rise in new supply:** New supply rose 5% to 11 million square feet (sq ft) in January-June against second half of 2020

**Major drivers:** Third-party logistics and e-commerce & retail players were major demand drivers in leasing activity

**Chennai leads new supply:** On new supply, Chennai accounted for about one-third of the total supply addition in H1 2021, followed by Delhi-NCR (19%) and Mumbai (16%)

*Source: CBRE South Asia/PTI*

## Field work for survey on jobs in informal sector launched

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

THE GOVERNMENT on Sunday flagged off the field work for the Area Frame Establishment Survey (AFES), a survey aimed at capturing employment in the informal sector and establishments having less than 10 workers.

It comes after the Labour Ministry had last week unveiled results of the revamped Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) for

April-June, which captured the employment situation for organised sector and establishments having more than 10 workers.

"... data on all aspects of labour is crucial and scientifically collected data is bedrock for any evidence-based policy making," Labour Minister Bhupender Yadav was quoted as saying in a statement issued by the Labour Ministry after an event in Chandigarh marking the 101st Foundation Day of the Labour Bureau.

The survey will be carried out

**Labour Minister Bhupender Yadav flagged off the field work for the Area Frame Establishment Survey**

by the Labour Bureau alongside the QES and the results are expected to be collated in an annual report. As per the QES, organised sector employment in nine key sectors — construction, manufac-

turing, IT/BPO, trade, transport, education, health, accommodation & restaurant and financial services — increased to 3.08 crore this April-June from 2.37 crore in 2013-14, the base year chosen based on the sixth economic census; translating into a growth of 29 per cent from 2013-14 or roughly an annual growth of 4 per cent per annum.

Yadav also held discussions with state Labour Ministers, Labour Secretaries & Commissioners of States of Punjab, Haryana,

Himachal Pradesh & UTs of Chandigarh, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh regarding progress in registration of unorganised workers under e-SHRAM portal and preparedness of states/UTs on implementation of various schemes and reforms, the statement said.

Over 2.5 crore unorganised workers have registered on the e-SHRAM portal, which is the national database on unorganised workers including migrant workers, construction workers, gig and platform workers.

## China tightens political control over internet giants

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BEIJING, OCTOBER 3

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## ₹3,050-cr DoT penalty notice to Vi, Airtel may set off legal tussle

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

THE TELECOM sector is set to witness a fresh round of litigation between the operators and the department of telecommunications, thus upsetting the government's intent of putting in place a second set of reforms aiming to put an end to legal battles.

The industry — operators like Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea — received a jolt when late evening on September 30, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) sent notices to them asking to pay a cumulative penalty of Rs 3,050 crore within three weeks.

This penalty was recommended by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) way back in 2016, ratified by the Digital Communications Commission, the highest inter-ministerial, pol-

**On September 30, the DoT sent notices to the telcos asking to pay a cumulative penalty of ₹3,050 crore in 3 weeks**

icy making body in the DoT in July 2019, but held back by the telecom minister since then.

Expressing its disappointment at the DoT's move and moving the legal forum for redressal as its next step, a Bharti Airtel spokesperson said, "We are deeply disappointed with the arbitrary and unfair demand based on Trai recommendations of 2016 relating to provisions of point of interconnect to a new operator." Cases relating to intra-circle roaming, one-time spectrum charges, etc between the operators and DoT are pending in various courts. **FE**

## Goyal: Proposed e-commerce policy to be robust, financial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DUBAI, OCTOBER 3

UNION MINISTER Piyush Goyal on Sunday assured that every stakeholder's interest will be taken into consideration while framing the e-commerce policy which would be robust and in the interest of every Indian.

Goyal, who heads commerce and industry as well as consumer affairs ministries, also said that he welcomes all the feedback on the draft e-commerce rules but comments about inter-departmental issues on the draft rules are totally unwarranted.

His comments came following reports that the Department for Promotion of Internal Industry and Trade (DPIIT), the Corporate Affairs Ministry and the Niti Aayog have objected to some provisions of the draft e-commerce rules.

The report citing an RTI reply has claimed that Niti Aayog has expressed apprehensions that the draft rules may harm ease of doing business. Goyal said that the whole purpose of an inter-ministerial consultation was to get views and comments from different quarters.

"I do believe that I welcome all the feedback and look forward to a very robust and healthy consultations with all the stakeholders... We are trying to balance everybody's interest and come up with a robust framework in which this (policy) can be implemented in the interest of all Indians," the minister told PTI.

## BRIEFLY

## UK, India pact

*London:* The UK wants to strike agreements covering trade and security with India and other democratic nations in the strategic Indo-Pacific region to challenge the influence of authoritarian states, Britain's new Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said on Sunday.

## Coal Min plan

*New Delhi:* The Coal Ministry is planning to come up with a scheme to permit coal block allottees to surrender mines that they are not in a position to develop due to technical reasons.

## Google report

*New Delhi:* Google said in its monthly transparency report that it received 35,191 complaints from users and removed 93,550 pieces of content based on those complaints in August. **PTI**



Chandigarh











# Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT)

Deemed to be University (Declared U/S 3 of UGC Act, 1956)

Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India | Website: [www.kiit.ac.in](http://www.kiit.ac.in) | Email: [kiit@kiit.ac.in](mailto:kiit@kiit.ac.in)



## Slow and steady wins the race...

On the eve of 25 Years Celebration

1997 – 2022 Silver Jubilee

## Academic Excellence

As KIIT is on the verge of the significant milestone of completing 25 years (1997 - 2022), it has become a trusted destination for professional education for students from all parts of India and over 64 countries. It has been consistently achieving academic accolades transforming itself into a world-class knowledge hub.



Solar-enabled Green Campus

Winner of Times Higher Education Awards Asia 2020 in the category 'Workplace of the Year'

Ranked 501-600 in Computer Sciences, 601-800 in Engineering & Technology and 1000+ overall in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings

India's Top Private University in Innovation (ARIIA Rankings, Govt. of India)

Ranked 24<sup>th</sup> among all Government and private Universities in India (NIRF India Rankings)

Ranked 301-350 in the Emerging Economies University Rankings by Times Higher Education

Utkrisht Sansthan Vishwakarma Award-2020 by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)

Quality Council of India - DL Shah Quality Silver Award

KIIT-Technology Business Incubator (TBI) granted 'Centre of Excellence' by Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India

Times B-School Survey 2020: KIIT School of Management Ranked 2nd in BBA

Odisha's first self-financing university to enter QS BRICS University Rankings

Legal Education Innovation Award to KIIT Law School by Society of Indian Law Firms (SILF) and Menon Institute of Legal Advocacy and Training (MILAT)

Ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> among all Government and private Universities in India (NIRF India Rankings)

Ranked 52<sup>nd</sup> among all Government and private Universities in India (NIRF India Rankings)

Hosted 99<sup>th</sup> Indian Science Congress

New Schools set up - Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS),

Kalinga Institute of Dental Sciences (KIDS),

Kalinga Institute of Nursing Sciences (KINS),

School of Rural Management (KSRM),

School of Biotechnology (KSBT),

KIIT Law School (KLS),

Kiit International School (Among the best public schools in the country, offering CBSE as National and IBDP & IGCSE as International curriculum)

Declared Deemed University by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India (Youngest Deemed University in the country - Limca Book of Records)

Took shape as an Institution of Higher Learning Engg., MBA & MCA Programmes started

Ranked 801-1000 by Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2022

Ranked No. 1 Deemed University in Odisha and Eastern India

Ranked 201-300 by Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2021

Rated 5 Star institution by the QS Stars Rating System

Ranked 21st among all Government and private Universities & among Top 10 Law Schools in India (NIRF India Rankings)

Ranked 251-300 in the Emerging Economies University Rankings by Times Higher Education

'Institution of Eminence' tag by Govt. of India

Ranked 31<sup>st</sup> among all Government and private Universities in India (NIRF India Rankings)

Ranked 301+ in Times Higher Education Young University Rankings

Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in Innovation among Private Universities (ARIIA Rankings, Govt. of India)

Internationalization Strategies Advisory Service (ISAS) Badge from the International Association of Universities (IAU)

KIIT-Technology Business Incubator (TBI) Ranked No. 1 Biocubator in private sector by BioSpectrum

Ranked 49<sup>th</sup> among all Government and private Universities in India (NIRF India Rankings)

National Award for KIIT-Technology Business Incubator (TBI) from Department of Science and Technology (DST), Govt. of India

IET, UK Accreditation

'Category A' Status by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India

Tier 1 Accreditation (Washington Accord) by National Board of Accreditation (NBA), AICTE

More Schools set up - School of Fashion Technology, School of Film & TV Production, School of Mass Communication

Reaccredited in 'A Grade' by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), UGC

Accredited by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), UGC Accredited by National Board of Accreditation (NBA), AICTE

## Academic Conferences

KIIT has been organizing academic conferences of national and international significance since its inception. It has also organized a few prestigious international conferences.

- 99th Indian Science Congress (2012)
- All-India Seminar on Global Legal Education (2015)
- 69th All India Commerce Conference (2019)
- 92nd Indian Economic Association (IEA) Conference (2010)
- World Congress of Poets (2019) and many more

## Unmatched Exposure

Under Nobel Lecture Series, 22 Nobel Laureates have delivered lectures at KIIT.

KIIT has produced three Olympians (Tokyo Olympics 2020) and hundreds of international level sports talents.

Taking advantage of KIIT's academic collaborations, a large number of students take admission in top universities of the world every year.

Besides top-notch campus placement, KIIT students have a very successful track record in prestigious exams like IAS, Indian Engineering Services (IES), Odisha Judicial Services (OJS), GATE, etc.

Fully wi-fi, fully air-conditioned & fully residential campus

## Global Recognition

KIIT has entered into academic tie-ups with 195 international universities and institutions to enrich the student experience, facilitate faculty growth and contributions, and enhance the impact of research. It is also a member of prominent national and international university networks such as:

International Association of Universities (IAU) | Association of Indian Universities (AIU) | Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) | University Mobility of Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) | International Association of University Presidents (IAUP) | Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific (AUAP) | International Institute of Education (IIE), New York | United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) | Eurasian Silk Road Universities Consortium (ESRUC)

## Campus Placement

Placement is one of the key advantages that KIIT offers. KIIT has been maintaining a very successful track record in campus placement since inception. Despite the prevailing pandemic situation, placement of 2020 and 2021 batches has been excellent. In the ongoing campus placement drive for 2022 batch students, 1500 students have already bagged jobs on 'Day Zero'. The highest salary is Rs. 40 lakh p.a., while the average salary is Rs. 7 lakh.

University of Compassion & Humanity

Multi-cultural University

Student-friendly Campus

Multi-disciplinary University

Best Practices & Innovation

Best in Digital Teaching-Learning

Community-based University

Fulfilling Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

25 years as an institution, 18 years as a university

KIIT (Deemed to be University) has only one permanent campus in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. It has no other campus / off campus anywhere else in the country and globe.

<https://twitter.com/KIITUniversity> <https://www.facebook.com/KIITUniversity> <https://www.instagram.com/KIITUniversity>

