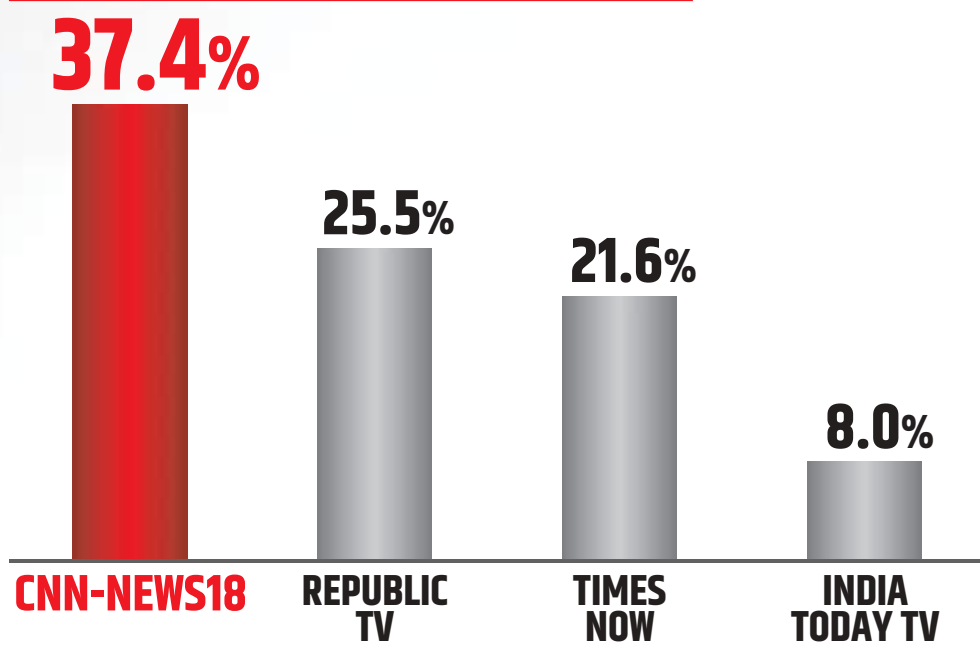


# CNN-NEWS18 RACES AHEAD OF TIMES NOW & REPUBLIC

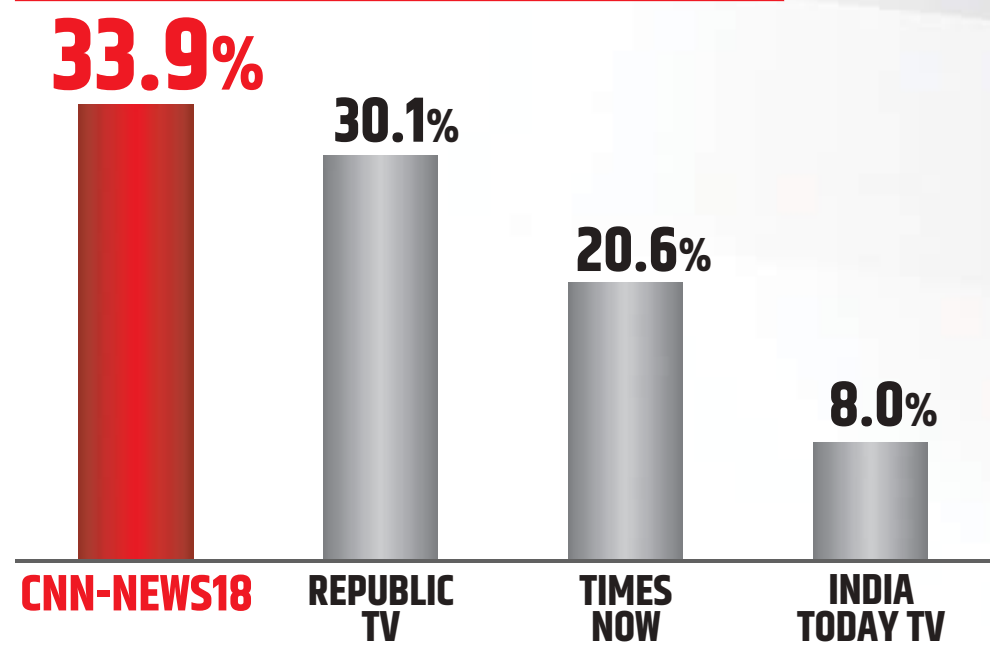
## NO.1 OVERALL BY A WIDE MARGIN

### FULL WEEK - MARKET SHARE %



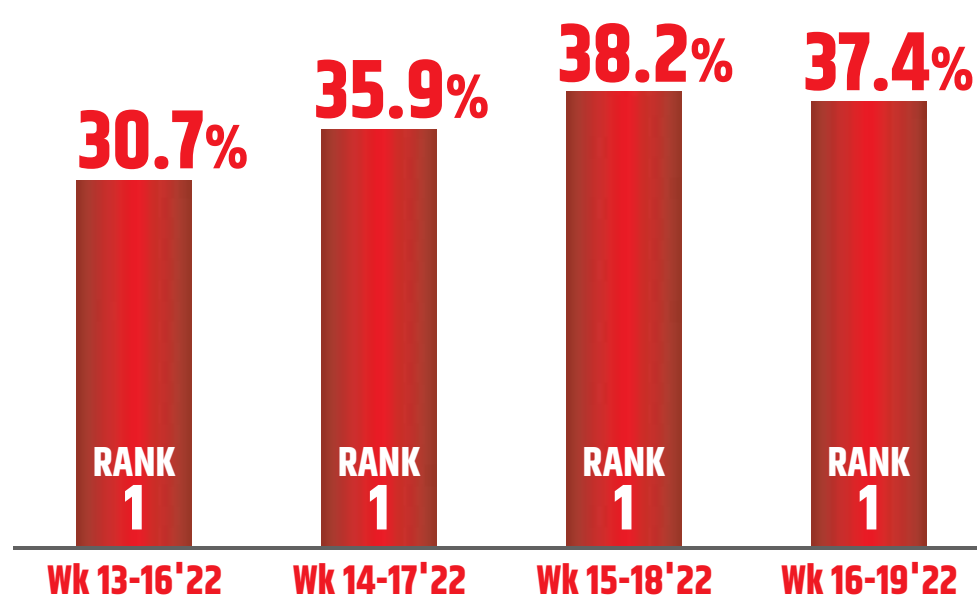
## LEADS IN PRIME TIME TOO

### 1800-2400 HRS - MARKET SHARE%



## AND GROWING WEEK ON WEEK\*

### RANK & MARKET SHARE




Source: BARC India | Mkt: India | TG: 2+ | Period: Wk 16-19'22 Rolling Avg. \*Period: Rolling 4 Weeks as mentioned | Market Share basis AMA  
Channels considered: CNN News18, Republic TV, Times Now, India Today Television, Wion, Mirror Now, Times Now World, News X



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Q-303

**Identification No.- Online Tender- PMGSY N.C.B. No. 227 for 2021-22.**

**Letter No. 1702/ Date: 20.05.2022**

1. Name of the work :- Construction & Maintenance of PMGSY-III (Batch-III) for the Package No-OR-21-905 & OR-21-LB-47 2021- 22 for Road & Bridge works in the district of Mayurbhanj.
2. Total No. of works :- 01 No. (One)
3. Estimated Cost :- Rs. 510.08 lakhs (approximately).
4. Eligible Class of Contractor :- As per annexure..
5. Period of Completion :- As per annexure.
6. Other details :-

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding	
		From	To
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Baripada	PMGSY Online N.C.B. No. 227	27.05.2022 at 11.00 A.M.	16.06.2022 up to 5.00 P.M.

Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/C C.E.R.W. Circle, Baripada	
	Technical Bid	Financial Bid
27.05.2022 up to 1.00 P.M.	27.06.2022 at 11.00 A.M.	30.06.2022 at 11.00 A.M.

● Further details can be seen from the website: [www.pmgstyenders.gov.in](http://www.pmgstyenders.gov.in)

● Any Corrigendum/ Addendum will be displayed in the above e-tender website only.

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दिनांक : 23 मई, 2022 | समय : सायं 06:30 बजे

स्थान : संत गाडगे जी महाराज ऑडिटोरियम, संगीत नाटक अकादमी, गोमती नगर, लखनऊ

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## BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNNY



'People told my father that boxing was a men's sport'

**NIKHAT ZAREEN**  
WORLD CHAMPION BOXER

PAGE 10

## SPORTS

**UMRAN MALIK EARNS FIRST INDIA CALL-UP FOR SOUTH AFRICA T20** [PAGE 13](#)

## PM IN TOKYO TODAY

## Modi, Biden will discuss war in Ukraine and food security at Quad meeting

New Australia PM to be at Summit hosted by Japan's Kishida

**SHUBHAJIT ROY**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden will have a "constructive and straightforward" conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the "impact" of Russia's "brutal invasion of Ukraine", US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Sunday, ahead of their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the Quad Leaders' Summit in Tokyo on May 24.

Responding to questions on India's ban on wheat exports, Sullivan told reporters on Air Force One, the US President's aircraft, "Food security will be a topic of conversation at the Quad."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## Navy info hub could play key role in Quad push to check China overfishing

**NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN**  
CHENNAI, MAY 22

THE INDIAN Navy's Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) may play a key role in a Quad initiative against illegal fishing.

Quoting a US official, the *Financial Times* reported that the initiative, to be announced by

the four leaders of the Quad at the group's Tokyo Summit, will bring together existing surveillance centres in Singapore, India, and the Pacific to create a tracking system for illegal unregulated and unreported fishing (IUUF) in the Indo-Pacific region.

Chinese trawler fleets are seen as responsible for most of the IUUF in the Indo-Pacific region, [CONTINUED ON PAGE 4](#)

## KCR hands out relief to kin of those who died in farm stir; says 'fight on'



The CMs of Punjab, Delhi and Telangana in Chandigarh on Sunday. *Jasbir Malhi*

**KANCHAN VASDEV**  
CHANDIGARH, MAY 22

TELANGANA CHIEF Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu, one of three chief ministers who gathered in Chandigarh on Sunday to pay tributes to those who died during the protest against the three now-repealed farm laws, said farmers have the power to change governments, and urged them to continue their agitation until they get the "right price" for their produce.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann were also at the event at which Rao, on [CONTINUED ON PAGE 4](#)

## PM MEETS THOMAS CUP WINNERS

PM Narendra Modi with Indian badminton coach Pullela Gopichand and members of the contingent that won the Thomas Cup, during a felicitation event in New Delhi, Sunday. *PTI*

## At RSS event, Yogi lists highlights: no Eid namaz on road, loudspeakers

Goa's Sawant wants temples rebuilt, Dharami calls for UCC

**DEEPTIMAN TIWARY**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE EID Namaz was not conducted on roads for the first time in UP, and "the volume of the mosque loudspeaker has gone down" following the state's recent crackdown, Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath said on Sunday while referring to his government retaining power in the elections this year.

He was speaking at an event organised to celebrate 75 years of RSS-affiliated magazines *Organiser* and *Panchjanya*.

Other BJP chief ministers also spoke at the event, with Goa's

Pramod Sawant calling for temples destroyed in the past to be rebuilt and Uttar Pradesh's Pushkar Singh Dhami reiterating that his state will form a "special committee" to implement Uniform Civil Code.

The chief ministers of Manipur (N Biren Singh), [CONTINUED ON PAGE 4](#)

## BENGAL 'SSC SCAM'

## Inquiry report shows how 5 officials booked by CBI 'committed fraud'

**ATRI MITRA & RAVIK BHATTACHARYA**  
KOLKATA, MAY 22

THE JUSTICE (retired) Ranjit Bag Committee that looked into an alleged scam in recruitment for Group C and Group D posts in the

School Education Department has recommended action against four West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) officials, former and current, and a senior education department officer for alleged criminal conspiracy. Based on the Committee's report, the Central Bureau of

Investigation (CBI) on Saturday filed a fresh FIR against the five.

In its report to the Calcutta High Court (HC) on May 12, the Committee, which a Division Bench of Calcutta High Court Justices Harish Tandon and Rabindranath Samanta set up on [CONTINUED ON PAGE 4](#)

## EXPRESS NETWORK



**ASSAM: DAY AFTER POLICE STATION, TORCHED, HOMES OF 'CULPRITS' RAZED**

**BJP'S ARJUN SINGH RETURNS TO TMC** [P8](#)

## Remove harmonium from Golden Temple? Sikh music scholars strike differing notes

**PAGE 1**  
**ANCHOR**

**KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR**  
AMRITSAR, MAY 22

AKAL TAKHT Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh has asked the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) to phase out the harmonium within three years from Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) so that the *kir-tan*, or singing of *Gurbani*, can be accompanied by traditional string instruments.

But not everyone is on the same note. One group of scholars in



Most of the hymn groups perform on the harmonium. *File*

Gurmat Sangeet, the Sikh tradition that has parallels with Indian classical music, support

the move and say the harmonium was "imposed" by the British. Then there are those who

ask: the world can't go back in time, why should music?

Every day, 15 *ragi jathas*, or groups of hymn singers, are deployed in turns to perform at Harmandir Sahib for 20 hours in one of the mainly 31 *raags* that are chosen depending on the time of day and season. According to SGPC officials, only five of these groups have the experience and skills to perform without the harmonium, using only string instruments such as rabab and saranda. Most of the over 20 departments of Gurmat Sangeet in SGPC-run colleges have started training in string instruments only recently.

"The harmonium was an [CONTINUED ON PAGE 4](#)

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# 8 dead, 3 injured as SUV rams into truck





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# 5 UTTAR PRADESH

## BUDGET SESSION FROM TODAY

# Yogi says discuss issues in 'positive environment'; Opp for longer session

At the all-party meeting, CM, Speaker call for smooth functioning of House

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, MAY 22

STATING THAT the discussions should be held in a "positive environment", Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday assured the Opposition parties that the ruling BJP will extend its support to ensure "smooth functioning of the Assembly to strengthen democracy".

Speaking at the all-party meeting on the eve of the Budget session of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, the chief minister said: "The people of the state have shown great confidence and sent the members to the country's biggest Vidhan Sabha. I will repeatedly say that you are the 403 special people in whom the 25 crore people of the state have reposed their faith and you should contribute to changing the destiny of the 25 crore people (of the state)... The members should live up to the expectations of the people."

During the meeting, Speaker Satish Mahana also urged all the parties to extend their support for the smooth functioning of the House.

Sources said that while assuring their support for smooth functioning of the House, some of the Opposition leaders pointed out the "short duration" of the Budget session and sought more time to be allocated for debates.

While SP chief and Leader of Opposition Akhilesh Yadav skipped the all-party meeting, the party was represented by MLA Indrajeet Saroj. Congress Legislature Party leader Aradhna Mishra, Umashankar Singh of the BSP, Raghu Raj Pratap Singh of

Jansatta Dal Loktantrik, and SBSP chief Om Prakash Rajbhar attended the meeting.

Speaking to The Indian Express after the all-party meet, Saroj said that on behalf of his party, he expressed the party's unhappiness with the short duration of the Budget session. "This government has been re-elected. Yet it seems that it is running away from the questions and discussions with the Opposition... However, our party will corner the government at every chance," the SP MLA from Manjhanpur added.

Meanwhile, in a statement, the SP said the Budget Session should be at least 35-day-long. "In a session lasting five-six days, issues pertaining to the common man cannot be discussed. The Budget Session should be extended so that detailed discussions can be held," the SP said.

After the drubbing that the BSP and the Congress received during the polls in March, the SP has emerged as the principal opposition party in the 403-member House. Presently, the SP and its have 111 MLAs while the Congress and the BSP have just one member each in the House.

The Budget Session will commence on Monday with Governor Anandiben Patel addressing the members of the Legislative Assembly as well as the Legislative Council. The 2022-2023 Budget is likely to be tabled on Thursday.

As per the announced schedule till May 31, the House will also sit on May 27 (Saturday).

The 18th Legislative Assembly will also witness the use of the National E Vidhan application for the first time as a step towards Assembly becoming paperless.



CM Yogi Adityanath with Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana and other ministers and Opposition leaders at the all-party meeting at Vidhan Bhawan in Lucknow, on Sunday. PTI

## Azam, his son & Shivpal skip SP MLAs' meet chaired by Akhilesh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, MAY 22

FORMER UTTAR Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav Sunday met Samajwadi Party MLAs in Lucknow to discuss the party's strategy for the upcoming budget session of the state Assembly. However, the meeting was skipped by Rampur MLA Azam Khan, his son and Suar MLA Abdullah Khan and, PSPL chief Shivpal Yadav who had contested the 2022 assembly polls from Jaswantnagar on an SP ticket.

A senior SP leader said, "Several MLAs couldn't make it today. One should not read too much into the absence of Azam *sahab* and Abdullah. And as far as Shivpal ji is concerned, he has a separate party and is an ally. He will be invited to a meeting convened for MLAs of ally parties."

Azam, who was granted interim bail by the Supreme Court

in a land-grab case, was lodged in Sitapur jail for the past two years. He was released on Friday.

Speaking to media persons in Rampur on Sunday, Azam Khan said that there was no reason for him to be upset with the party.

"I am a man without any base, so where will the basis for resentment come from? I am a poor person now and live in a by-lane. I am a poor person who lives in such a congested lane that not even a single four-wheeler could enter it," the senior SP leader said. On skipping the SP legislators' meet, Khan said, "The Vidhan Sabha is not a new place for me. I will be entering it for the 10th time."

Meanwhile, at the legislators' meet, Akhilesh Yadav urged SP MLAs to ensure maximum attendance in the Assembly and pose tough questions to the government with a special focus on the promises made by the ruling BJP in the recently concluded

Assembly elections.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, SP MLA from Katehri Lalji Verma said, "We were told that we must be present in the House to make the government accountable on people's issues. The most basic issues are unemployment and inflation, and they will be a part of our questions to the government."

Verma said that SP MLAs will also raise questions about the promises made by the government before the elections. "We will ensure that the government can't run away from its manifesto... Issues like stray cattle have still not been resolved. Farmers are struggling while selling wheat. Electricity shortage is another issue," he said.

Another SP leader said that the party will ensure that the government answers questions about the promises it made to the people of the state.

—WITH PTI INPUTS

## Varanasi district court judge to hear Gyanvapi suit today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
VARANASI, MAY 22

THE VARANASI district court of judge Ajaya Krishna Vishvesha on Monday will hear the civil suit on the Gyanvapi mosque-Kashi Vishwanath temple complex dispute after the Supreme Court on Friday ordered the transfer of the pending proceedings to the District Judge, Varanasi, for "trial and all interlocutory and ancillary proceedings".

Underlining the "complexity of the issues involved in the civil suit" earlier pending before the Civil Judge (Senior Division), Varanasi, the Supreme Court on Friday had said that the suit "should be tried before a senior and experienced judicial officer of the Uttar Pradesh Higher Judicial Service".

Following the apex court's order, all documents and files related to the case, including the reports of advocate commissioners and case-related applications, were transferred from the office of the Civil Judge (Senior Division) to the office of the District Judge on Saturday. Both the offices are located in the same building.

"The hearing will begin in the court of the district judge on

Monday... It is up to the district judge to decide at what point he starts the hearing. It would depend on the urgency and the importance of various issues," said a well-placed source.

Earlier, Civil Judge (Senior Division), Ravi Kumar Diwakar had listed the matter for hearing on May 23. On April 8, while hearing a petition filed by five women seeking the right to worship at Maa Shringar Gauri Sthal on the outer wall of the mosque complex, Civil Judge (Senior Division), Varanasi, Ravi Kumar Diwakar, appointed Ajay Kumar Mishra as Advocate Commissioner to carry out a video survey of the Gyanvapi Mosque complex, and directed him to submit a report.

While passing an order on an application filed by the Committee of Management of Anjuman Intezamia Masjid, Varanasi, which had accused Mishra of being "biased", the court on May 12 had appointed two more advocate commissioners — lawyers Vishal Singh and Ajay Pratap Singh — to assist him. Last week, the court removed Mishra as court commissioner. Singh and Mishra have submitted their separate reports of the survey.

## BRIEFLY

### Lightning strike leaves 3 dead, 6 injured

**Amroha:** Three people were killed and six injured when lightning struck them in Kaneta village here, police said on Sunday. The incident occurred on Saturday when some labourers were cutting trees, they said. SDM of Hasanpur Sudheer Kumar said the family of all the victims will be given Rs 4 lakh. **PTI**

### Villagers to be booked for 'killing leopard'

**Bahraich:** A leopard was allegedly killed by locals of Nabi Nagar village, following which the forest department decided to lodge an FIR against them, officials said on Sunday. According to Divisional Forest Officer Manish Singh, the female leopard was chased, its legs tied and pushed around with sticks on Friday. **PTI**

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**NOTICE**

**26<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TO BE HELD THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCING (VC) / OTHER AUDIO VISUAL MEANS (OAVM)**

Shareholders of the Bank may note that in pursuance of Circular issued by Ministry of Corporate Affairs and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in this regard, the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Bank will be held through **VIDEO CONFERENCING (VC) / OTHER AUDIO VISUAL MEANS (OAVM)** on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2022 at 11:00 a.m. IST, to transact the businesses that will be set forth in the Notice of the Meeting.

In compliance with the above Circulars, electronic copies of the Notice of AGM and Annual Report 2021-22 will be sent to all the shareholders whose email addresses are registered with the Bank/Depository Participant(s). Shareholders holding shares in dematerialized mode and whose email ids are not registered, are requested to register their email addresses and mobile numbers with their relevant depositories through their depository participants. Shareholders holding shares in physical mode are requested to demat their holdings / furnish their email addresses and mobile numbers with the Bank's Registrar and Share Transfer Agent KFin Technologies Limited, at einward.ris@kfintech.com. The notice of the 26<sup>th</sup> AGM and Annual Report 2021-22 will also be made available on the Bank's website, at **www.bankofbaroda.in**, the Stock Exchange websites and on the RTA's website, at <https://evoting.kfintech.com>

Shareholders will have an opportunity to cast their vote remotely on the business as set forth in the Notice of the AGM through electronic voting system. The manner of voting remotely for shareholders holding shares in dematerialized mode, physical mode and for shareholders who have not registered their email addresses will be provided in the Notice to the shareholders. The details will also be made available on the website of the Bank. Shareholders are requested to visit **www.bankofbaroda.in** to obtain such details.

**Shareholders may please note that in terms of aforementioned circulars, the Bank will not be sending physical copies of AGM Notice and Annual Report to the Shareholders.**

**For Bank of Baroda**  
**Sanjiv Chadha**  
Managing Director & CEO

Place: Mumbai  
Date: 23.05.2022

28/05/23

## Akhilesh too accustomed to ACs, should step out more often to meet people, says Rajbhar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MAU, MAY 22

SBSP CHIEF Om Prakash Rajbhar on Sunday said his ally Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has become "too used to air-conditioned rooms" and advised him to venture out more often to meet people.

"Akhilesh Yadav has become too used to air-conditioned

rooms," the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party chief said, addressing his party workers.

Asked if his statement would not be taken otherwise by Yadav or the SP, Rajbhar said, "Why should it be taken otherwise? Have I said anything wrong? Truth is bitter."

"His leaders have told me that I should advise him so that he meets people, strengthens his party and shun his '*navratnas*' (nine gems) who surround

him," the SBSP chief added.

Rajbhar also said Yadav's party men allege that he was prevented by his associates from forming government in the 2022 assembly elections.

Asked what will happen if SP snaps its ties with the SBSP over his statement, Rajbhar said, "I have formed the party (SBSP) on my own, and work on my strength. A person who requires me will come to me automatically."

## Man held for 'raping' woman on pretext of 'arranging job'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, MAY 22

A 27-YEAR-OLD man was arrested in Moradabad for allegedly raping a woman on the pretext of arranging a job for her. The man, identified as Mohammad Aslam, hails from Sambhal and works as a labourer in Delhi.

"On the basis of the allegation made by the woman, we have arrested the man on charges of rape and criminal intimidation... While the woman's medical examination report is still awaited, we

will get her statement recorded before a magistrate on Monday. The woman is a widow and mother of four children," the local SHO said.

According to police, the woman came in contact with the accused a year ago, and since then he had been visiting her house on a regular basis.

Meanwhile, members of a Hindu outfit staged a protest outside the police station, demanding action against the accused. The matter was resolved after senior police officers assured action in the matter.

The situation in the area is normal, said the SHO.

## 37 meat export unit staffers held for animal cruelty: cops

**Aligarh:** Thirty-seven employees of a leading meat export unit in Aligarh were arrested for alleged animal cruelty and violation of the Environment Quality Act, police said on Sunday.

The arrests were made on Saturday evening following a surprise check of the unit located. Those arrested have been booked under the Animal Cruelty Act and the Environment Quality Act, 1974, according to a police statement.

The Delhi-based owner of the Hind Agro industries plant and two top officers of the

unit, who were not present at the site at the time of the raid, have been booked under IPC sections 273 (selling food or drink knowing the same to be noxious), 420 (forgery) and 120 B (conspiracy).

A report mentioning technical violations at the unit found by the team of officials has been sent to the authorities in Lucknow, police said. A large amount of the slaughtered flesh was allegedly found strewn on the floor and their samples have been sent to a laboratory in Lucknow for testing, they said. **PTI**

**सड़क सुरक्षा माह**  
19 मई से 18 जून, 2022

**नशे में वाहन न चलाएं**

**सड़क सुरक्षा नियमों का पालन करें जिम्मेदार बनें, सुरक्षित रहें**

**आइए, हम सब यातायात नियमों का पालन करने का संकल्प लें। यातायात नियमों का उल्लंघन दण्डनीय अपराध है।**

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# BALANCE AND CHECK

In Gyanvapi-Kashi Vishwanath case, the apex court needs to say more to underline the primacy of the Constitution

A DAY AFTER the Supreme Court allowed namaz to continue at the Gyanvapi mosque and ordered securing the site where the Shivling is claimed to have been found, it transferred the case from the senior civil judge to the district judge arguing that the issue needed a more “seasoned hand”. Then the court suggested that the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 doesn’t bar ascertaining its nature. This attempt by the court, ostensibly to “heal” and to balance competing claims in the Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque dispute, raises questions.

Transferring the case to a senior judge, the court acknowledged “the complexity of the issues involved” in the case. This is reminiscent of the court’s decision in the Ayodhya-Ramjanmabhoomi dispute where the civil suits were clubbed and transferred from lower courts directly to the Allahabad High Court. Short-circuiting due process is a slippery slope, especially in cases where “complexity” is as much about the law as it’s about politics. Leading the three-judge bench, Justice D Y Chandrachud remarked, in the form of a question to the parties, that the 1991 law may not bar “ascertaining” the nature of the place of worship even when it bars conversion of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947. Surely, the bench is aware that “ascertainment” in this case is not a mere intellectual inquiry, an academic expedition by diligent history students. The plea explicitly calls for access to worship — in Mathura, one even calls for demolition of the mosque — and, outside the courtroom, the lawsuits are framed by politics, faith, and a disdain of Constitutional norms. The court’s remark also contradicts its own unanimous verdict, that included Justice Chandrachud, which drew the curtains on the Ayodhya case. The SC held that the 1991 Act is “a legislative instrument designed to protect the secular features of the Indian polity, which is one of the basic features of the Constitution”. It also emphasised that the law preserves non-retrogression, “a foundational feature of the fundamental constitutional principles of which secularism is a core component”.

Just days ago, the Centre told the Supreme Court, in the sedition hearing, that the Prime Minister has repeatedly expressed his “unequivocal” views on “Constitutionally cherished freedoms”, that he has underlined one of India’s strengths as the “diverse thought streams that beautifully flourish”. The petitions in Kashi and Mathura challenge this very strength. Their final goal is the conversion of the religious character of these places in the name of “correcting historical mistakes.” The Supreme Court itself has said that independence from colonial rule furnishes a Constitutional basis for healing injustices of the past. The question is how will the Court put this idea into effect. It may need to do more, to say more, than the “balance” it has tried to strike so far.

# WELCOME RELIEF

Fuel tax cuts will help ease price pressures, but inflation is likely to remain elevated

ON SATURDAY, THE Union government announced a reduction in the excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 8 per litre and Rs 6 per litre respectively. Alongside, the government also reduced the customs duty on raw materials and intermediaries for plastic products and iron and steel. Undoubtedly, these decisions are driven by the desire to cool the surge in inflation — recent data showed that retail inflation had risen to an eight-year high of 7.9 per cent in April, while wholesale inflation has been in double digits for 13 consecutive months. But, implicit in these decisions is also the acknowledgement that both fiscal and monetary policies are needed at this juncture to curb inflation. As per some analysts the cut in fuel taxes could help reduce inflation directly by around 20 basis points in June when its full impact will be visible. The second-round effects are likely to be equally strong.

This is the second time in the recent past that the Centre has cut fuel taxes. In November last year, the Centre had lowered the excise duty on petrol by Rs 5 and by Rs 10 on diesel. Back then, 21 states and some Union Territories had followed suit, cutting the VAT. If state governments follow suit this time also, the relief could be higher. Prior to this cut, taxes imposed by the Centre and states accounted for almost 43 per cent of the retail selling price of petrol. But with the latest cut, the government has brought the excise duty back to pre-pandemic levels. As per the finance minister, the reduction in excise duty will lower the government’s revenue by around Rs 1 lakh crore. However, it is possible that this loss in revenue is offset in part by higher collections through other sources. As per some analysts, the government’s tax revenues will exceed budget estimates by around Rs 1.3 lakh crore, even after this cut.

While this decision will have a moderating influence on price pressures in the economy, the worry is that inflation has become entrenched. As per projections by analysts, inflation is likely to remain above the RBI’s inflation targeting framework. To tackle this surge in inflation, analysts had, prior to this move, expected the monetary policy committee (MPC) to raise rates aggressively over the course of the next few meetings. The MPC, in its next meeting which is scheduled a few weeks from now, must not only release an updated forecast for inflation, but also shed some clarity on the extent of monetary tightening it envisages, and over what duration to bring inflation in line with its target.

# FREEZE FRAME



# E P UNNY



AMITABH MATTOO

AS ANTHONY ALBANESE is sworn in as Australia’s 31st Prime Minister, he will be conscious of the deep electoral angst against traditional politics and a groundswell in support for a contemporary avatar of Australia’s own “Aam Aadmi” politics: The Teal independents, a motley group brought together primarily by the lack of mainstream urgency to act against climate change.

But the alacrity with which the PM has acted to ensure that he and his Foreign Minister Penny Wong attend the Quad summit in Tokyo on Tuesday, should reassure those concerned about the future direction of Canberra’s foreign policy under a Labor government. At a moment of profound domestic churning, Australia’s foreign policy is unlikely to swing, especially under the charge of the wise and incisive Wong. This holds true, particularly of the near-consensus in Canberra about the importance of India and of improving bilateral relations.

After nearly a decade in opposition, Labor has come back to government. But that victory disguises the rise of a new force in Australian politics, the Teal independents and the fall in support for the Coalition (Liberals and Nationals) and for Labor, with a marginal increase in the standing of the Greens. The Teal independents, mostly women, are not connected organisationally except through the Teal colour (a blue-green that they used in the campaign) and financial support from an advocacy group — Climate 200.

The Teal independents have won at least nine seats; most of them, the safest blue-chip Liberal seats. Consider this: Kew, where my family has lived for the last decade, is part of the Kooyong constituency and a bastion of the Liberal Party ever since Robert Menzies, Australia’s longest-serving PM, occupied the seat in 1934. The incumbent, Josh Frydenberg, was the Treasurer in the Scott Morrison government and most saw him becoming PM one day. Frydenberg has been defeated by a rookie in politics, Monique Ryan — one of the Teals. Ryan, a well-regarded doctor, ran an electrifying campaign with hundreds of volunteers who campaigned door-to-door on just three planks — action on climate change; transparency and integrity

The new Labor government has signalled a commitment to the Quad, relations with India

in politics; and safety for women.

Climate 200 was set up as a “community crowd-funded initiative” by Simon Holmes à Court, a political activist and clean energy investor (and son of Australia’s first billionaire) that supported political candidates committed to a science-based response to the climate crisis; restoring integrity to politics, and advancing gender equity. The group backed 23 “Teal” candidates across the country, including the journalist Zoe Daniel in Goldstein and Allegra Spender in Wentworth, who defeated the Indian-origin Dave Sharma (a former diplomat who had served as Australia’s Ambassador to Israel).

Climate 200 has a deep resonance with sections of conservative Liberal voters who are concerned about the end of a “lifestyle” because of climate change. As Australia’s best-known novelist Richard Flanagan wrote last year: “Australia today is ground zero for the climate catastrophe. Its glorious Great Barrier Reef is dying, its world-heritage rain forests are burning, its giant kelp forests have largely vanished, numerous towns have run out of water or are about to, and now the vast continent is burning on a scale never before seen.”

Not surprisingly Climate 200 managed to raise over \$10 million, amidst concerns about the degree of control it would have over the Teals and suggestions of a conflict of interest with Holmes à Court’s clean energy business.

When Albanese arrives in Tokyo to meet with other leaders of the Quad, much will be expected of him. The leaders will seek reassurance that Australia is still as committed to the Quad as the previous Liberal government. For the Australian PM, this will be a moment to demonstrate that he is different from his predecessor, but equally committed to the multi-lateral arrangement and to the bilateral relations that have been fostered over the last decade, including with India.

To be sure, Albanese is not Scott Morrison. Morrison was flamboyant, with a background in marketing. He had headed Tourism Australia and presided over perhaps the most controversial campaign video ever launched to promote Australia tourism: “So, where the bloody hell are you?”

In contrast, Albanese has a low-profile presence and a workman-like attitude and is given to a considered rather than a brilliant spontaneous response on most issues. Remember that Albanese was a child of deprivation rather than privilege. He was brought up by a single mother who suffered dreadfully because of rheumatoid arthritis while living in council housing in Sydney. Success did not come easily to him, but whether in the party or the government, he was seen as a coalition builder having the skills and patience to generate a consensus.

Although he has roots in the left-wing of the Labor Party (in his youth he identified with the struggles of the African National Congress against apartheid and the campaigns for nuclear disarmament — both have a resonance in India) he is a pragmatic leader who understands that Australia faces today a deeply volatile situation in the region and beyond.

One of the most animated moments in the electoral campaign was when Morrison suggested that Albanese was soft on China. Albanese responded by describing the PM’s words as an outrageous slur. This was after he had questioned the government on its failures over not doing enough to prevent the Solomon Islands from signing a controversial security deal with China.

Albanese is fortunate to have the brilliant and charismatic Wong as his Foreign Minister. Wong, who has been part of the Australia India Leadership Dialogue which I chaired in the past, genuinely believes in the importance of Australia’s partnership with India and has often referred to the fact that it was under the Labor Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, that the policies to reach out to India were first initiated (including overturning the ban on uranium exports to India).

One of the tired clichés about Australia is drawn from Donald Horne’s book *The Lucky Country*, which suggested that Australia was a lucky country run by second rate leaders. In contrast, by all evidence, the Albanese cabinet is one gifted with outstanding leaders, and hopefully luck will continue to be on its side.

The writer is professor at JNU & honorary professor at the University of Melbourne

# AN EXCEPTIONAL JUSTICE

Perarivalan’s release highlights the gaps, callousness in India’s criminal justice system



ANUP SURENDRANATH AND ADRIJA GHOSH

THE SUPREME COURT’S May 18 order releasing A G Perarivalan, one of the convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, is the culmination of a long-drawn-out battle for freedom spanning over 31 years. Perarivalan’s agonising wait may have ended, but his struggle serves as a grim reminder of the several failures of our criminal justice system.

The fact that it took over 31 years for Perarivalan’s release despite strong concerns of wrongful prosecution and wrongful conviction ought to worry us. Perarivalan’s case forces us to reckon with the tyrannical legacy of terror laws and the broader crisis that plagues criminal justice administration. The case against Perarivalan, charged under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) and the Indian Penal Code (IPC), was that he had participated in the conspiracy to assassinate former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by supplying batteries for the belt bomb allegedly used for the assassination, with the knowledge that the batteries would be put to said use. The main evidence against him was a confession made to this effect to CBI officer, V Thiagarajan. Such confessions to the police, ordinarily inadmissible under the Indian Evidence Act, were admissible under the TADA.

In 2017, 18 years after the Supreme Court upheld Perarivalan’s conviction under IPC provisions, using the confession recorded under TADA (despite the TADA charges having been dropped), Thiagarajan submitted a sworn affidavit before the SC stating that he had omitted the exculpatory part of Perarivalan’s statement, denying knowledge of the use to which

the batteries would be put. This reveals the violent reality of our criminal justice system — that statements and evidence are manipulated to secure convictions. It also demonstrates the dangers of conferring extraordinary police powers under the garb of national security legislation. Again, in 2017, Justice KT Thomas, one of the three SC judges who had upheld Perarivalan’s conviction, acknowledged “serious flaws” in the CBI investigation.

For nearly half of his 31 years in prison, Perarivalan lived under the sentence of death. The SC confirmed the death sentence imposed by the TADA Court in ignorance of the Bachan Singh framework, which requires circumstances relating to both the crime and the criminal to be considered. Justice KT Thomas later expressed doubts as to whether such severe punishment would have been imposed, had it not been such a high-profile case. Nevertheless, in what must be seen as a triumph of the human spirit, Perarivalan’s educational attainments in prison are extraordinary. Life in prison, especially on death row, is one of despair; a reality that we can barely begin to imagine.

Perarivalan’s death sentence was finally commuted to life imprisonment by the SC in 2014, after almost 16 years on death row, on grounds of an extraordinary and unexplainable delay of 11 years, after which his mercy plea was rejected by the President. In 2015, Perarivalan filed a mercy petition before the Tamil Nadu governor under Article 161 of the Constitution, seeking pardon. For years, there was sustained back and forth between the state government in Tamil Nadu and the Centre

on which one of them had the authority to decide Perarivalan’s release. In 2018, the council of ministers of the Tamil Nadu government recommended to the governor that Perarivalan be released in the exercise of constitutional powers of clemency; advice that the governor was constitutionally obligated to follow. Despite this, the governor took no decision on the mercy petition and finally in 2021, forwarded the same to the President for his decision under Article 72. Holding that this was done without constitutional backing, the SC invoked its extraordinary powers under Article 142, releasing Perarivalan and deeming his sentence as having been served.

The manner in which Perarivalan and his mother Arputhammal ensured that their fight stayed alive for over three decades demonstrates the enormous effort required to correct an injustice in our system. Their efforts ensured that the case received national attention, that Perarivalan’s cause was backed by political parties in Tamil Nadu with strong support from the bar, civil society, and retired judges — all of these aspects are stories of exceptions rather than the norm. Perarivalan might have rightfully won his freedom back, but the same fate does not await others like him.

The passage of time has allowed us to look at the questions of injustice in this case in a far more meaningful way. It now is a question of whether we as a society have the courage to acknowledge what was inflicted in our name.

The writers are with Project 39A at National Law University, Delhi

# MAY 23, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

BAHUGUNA SURE TO WIN H N BAHUGUNA, chairman of the Democratic Socialist Party romped home in the elections to Garhwal Lok Sabha seat defeating his Congress (I)-rival Chandra Mohan Singh, minister of state for hill development, in one of the prestigious bye-elections. According to provisional figures available at the state headquarters, Bahuguna led his Congress (I) rival by over 20,000 votes. Postal results are yet to be counted and the results are likely to be declared in a day. Bahuguna was elected from the Congress (I) in a victory with a big margin over his Janata Party rival in the Lok Sabha polls. However, the seven-month

honeymoon with the Congress (I) came to an abrupt end on the eve of the elections to the assembly elections to the Garhwal assembly constituency. Bahuguna’s men won from all the constituencies making him desert the Congress (I) and seek reelection.

REVERSES FOR CONG (I) THE CONGRESS (I) has failed to secure a majority in Haryana and is facing a similar predicament in Himachal, the Left Front has romped home with a two-thirds majority in West Bengal. With the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress (I) bagging 28 and 29 seats respectively in the 65-member

Himachal Assembly, the poll in this hilly state, as also in Haryana, is in a stalemate. In Himachal much will depend on the six independents, four of whom are ex-Congress (I) members.

BRITISH FRIGATE SUNK A BRITISH FRIGATE was sunk in Argentine air raids on the British task force landing troops on the Falkland Islands. Twenty crewmen were missing and feared dead and 40 were injured aboard the frigate *MMO Ardent*. The 3,300 tonne frigate was the second warship lost by Britain in the seven old crisis caused by Argentina’s occupation of the South Atlantic colony.



# The carbon footprint cost

Rice and sugar are water guzzlers. Serious thought must be given to making our exports sustainable



BY RITIKA JUNEJA AND ASHOK GULATI

IN THE FISCAL year 2021-22 (FY22), agri-exports scaled an all-time high of \$50.3 billion, registering a growth of 20 per cent over the preceding year. This was made possible largely by rising global commodity prices, but also by the favourable and aggressive export policy of the Ministry of Commerce and its various export promotion agencies like APEDA, MPEDA, and commodity boards. However, from a strategic point of view, an important question that arises is how sustainable is this growth in agri-exports, given India's resource endowments and the country's domestic needs? Already, we have seen a sudden ban on wheat exports. To answer this question rationally, let us first look at the composition of agri-exports.

Among the several agri-commodities exported in FY22, rice ranks first with exports of \$9.6 billion in value (with 21.2 million metric tonnes (MMT) in quantity). It is followed by marine products worth \$7.7 billion (1.4 MMT), sugar worth \$4.6 billion (10.4 MMT), spices worth \$3.9 billion (1.4 MMT) and bovine (buffalo) meat worth \$3.3 billion (1.18 MMT) (see figure). Of these, two commodities, rice and sugar, are water guzzlers and serious thought should be given to their global competitiveness and environmental sustainability.

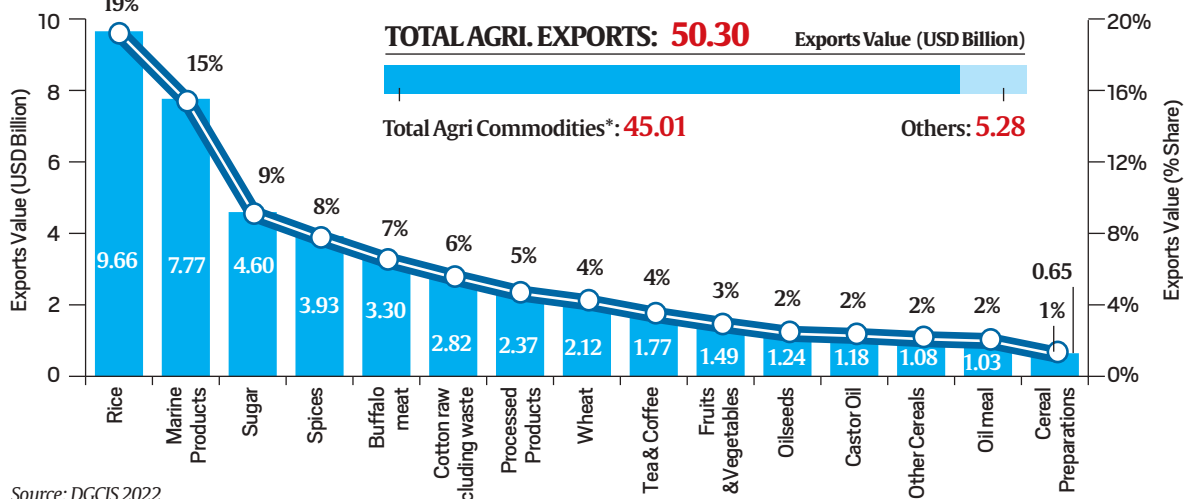
Let's take the case of rice first. India's exports of 21 MMT constituted 41 per cent of a global rice market of 51.3 MMT. Interestingly, when most of the other commodity prices were surging in global markets, the price of rice (Thailand supplies 25 per cent) collapsed by about 13 per cent from \$484/tonne in April 2021 to \$429/tonne in April 2022, largely due to India's massive exports. This means that India had to export a greater quantity of rice to get the same amount of dollars. Is this in the country's economic interest? In trade theory, it is a classic case for levying the optimal export tax of 5 to 10 per cent. India should optimally not go beyond 12 to 15 MMT of rice exports, else the marginal revenue from exports will keep falling. And that won't be in India's interest.

Another concern in the case of rice is that a substantial part of its global competitiveness comes from highly subsidised water, power and fertilisers that go into its production. It is well known that one kg of rice requires about 3,000 to 5,000 litres of water for irrigation, depending on the topography. Taking an average of about 4,000 litres of water per kg of rice, and assuming that half of this percolates into groundwater, exporting 21 MMT of rice would mean the virtual export of 42 billion cubic meters (m3) of water!

Sugar is another water guzzler, whose exports touched 10.4 MMT in FY22. It was backed partly by subsidies (including export subsidy) that crossed the 10 per cent limit mandated by the World Trade Organisation, bringing India into a dispute with other sugar exporting countries at the WTO. India lost the case. But rising global prices of sugar



EXPORTED AGRI COMMODITIES FY2022\*



Source: DGCIIS 2022

helped the country at that juncture.

However, from a sustainability point of view, we must note that exporting one kg of sugar amounts to roughly exporting 2,000 litres of virtual water. That means in FY22, India exported at least 20 billion m3 of water through sugar exports.

So, by exporting 21 MMT of rice and 10 MMT of sugar in FY22, India exported at least 62 billion cubic meters of virtual water. Much of this water is extracted from groundwater — as is being done in much of the Punjab and Haryana belt (for rice), where the water table is receding by 9.2 metres and 7 metres over the last two decades (2000-19), and in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh for sugar. This can lead to a water disaster. Also, remember that rice production systems are among the most important sources of anthropogenic methane emissions, contributing to 17.5 per cent of GHG emissions generated from agriculture (2021). This is all because of the distortionary policies of free power and highly-subsidised fertilisers, especially urea. In the case of common rice, our earlier research shows that power and fertiliser subsidies account for roughly 12 to 15 per cent of the value of rice in states like Punjab and Haryana. The best way to tackle this upcoming environmental disaster would be to support farmers smartly, by giving them aggregate input subsidy support on a per hectare basis and freeing up the input prices of fertilisers and power to be determined by market forces and their costs of production.

Innovative farming practices such as alternate wetting drying (AWD), direct seeded

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rice (DSR) that can save up to 25-30 per cent water and micro-irrigation that can save up to 50 per cent irrigation water, could be game-changing technologies in reducing the crop's carbon footprint. However, the real solution lies in incentivising the farmers to switch some of the area under rice and sugar cultivation to other, less water-guzzling crops. Haryana has come up with two schemes, Mera Pani, Meri Virasat and Khethi Khaali, Fir Bhi Khushali. Under the first scheme, Rs 7,000/acre incentive is given to farmers to switch from paddy to alternate crops, while under the second scheme farmers get Rs 7,000/acre even if they do not grow any crop during the kharif season.

A closer evaluation of non-basmati rice exports brings out another interesting fact. The unit value of these exports was just \$354/tonne, which is below the MSP of rice (\$390/tonne). How does that happen? One possibility is that a substantial part of the supplies through the PDS and PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) are leaking out and swelling rice exports. From a policy angle, it may be high time to introduce the option of direct cash transfers in lieu of almost free grains under the PDS and PMGKAY. This will help plug leakages as well as save costs. The savings can then be used for better diversification of our food systems, better use of scarce water and other practices that lower GHG emissions, and saving on burgeoning food and fertiliser subsidies. Can the Modi government make agri-exports more sustainable? Only time will tell.

Juneja is Consultant and Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor at ICRIR

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“While its collapsing economy is as much a product of its corrupt politics as of global economic trends, Sri Lanka is also a worrying bellwether for the instability elsewhere that may be triggered by declining economic security in countries with high levels of poverty.”  
—THE OBSERVER

# A civilisational question in Gyanvapi

Top-down secularism can't be saved by mocking Hindu beliefs, demonising Hindus and ridiculing their concerns and aspirations



ABHINAV PRAKASH SINGH

NANDI'S ETERNAL WAIT at Gyanvapi is symbolic of the sorrow, perseverance and hope of a civilisation. The hope is not only for the restoration of deities to their rightful places and the rebirth of temples but also for an end to the denialism and delusion that has plagued the Indian polity for too long. Kashi is an open and shut case like Mathura and many other places. There is no real controversy over the fact that these mosques were built after the destruction of the temples by medieval Islamic warlords. The only “controversy” is the manufactured political rhetoric, academic obfuscation and chicanery joined by Islamist religious supremacism. The Islamist claim over Hindu sites occupied by force and violence is untenable, unethical, and, like in the case of Ayodhya, illegal.

But Islamist supremacism and aggression are being provided intellectual cover by the usual suspects on the left and liberal spectrum. This has been a trend since the 1920s. The Kashi case is portrayed as a conflict between religious obstructionism and modernity, and appeals are being made to reject the past to build an enlightened secular future. This argument is both conceptually and theoretically flawed. First, it's about truth and justice and not modernity or obstructionism. Second, it assumes that there is some standard model of modernity or universal values like secularism, and the only task is to impose them forcefully. Third, it assumes that the past is dead, and a cut-off date of August 15, 1947, can decide between the old and new.

It is a liberal delusion that past, present and future are disjointed. But the past continues to shape the present and future. And no society can be detached from its past and unique trajectory. Ignoring the complex social formations and inter-community relations that evolved over centuries can only lead to disasters, as demonstrated repeatedly across the world. And Hindus and Muslims share a tumultuous past that has never been openly acknowledged. There has never been an honest Hindu-Muslim dialogue despite them not agreeing on the big questions of the day as a political community. No amount of academic jugglery and intervention can alter the ground realities.

The obsessive appeals to secularism have no legitimacy when it is always deployed in the service of the Islamic cause and is never used to challenge the Islamist agenda.

Secularism is also an uncomfortable fit outside Western Europe and America, whose unique experiences gave birth to it. There is growing evidence of the crisis of secularism across the world. It is not the fault of those societies or people not being secular enough. It is due to unrealistic expectations from societies whose historical experiences, evolution and intellectual traditions are in dissonance with secularism. India has no word for secularism in any classical language because the concept or idea never existed. India managed its unparalleled diversity and pluralism using its own framework.

Secularism comes under great stress when dealing with the presence of two Abrahamic religions in a polity. And it becomes a harbinger of discord and conflict when other non-Abrahamic religions are also present because it privileges expansionist Abrahamic religions over others. The doctrine of the “basic structure” is itself a violation of the basic structure of the constitution because the Constitution envisioned no such arbitrary doctrine or gave effective veto power to an unelected judiciary.

The appeal to the Place of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 may still have some legitimacy if not for the violent anti-farm laws protests and open rioting to oppose CAA supported by those now appealing to the sanctity of the legislation passed by Parliament. The 1991 Act is draconian. It was passed without any consultation with or regard for the affected communities, bars judicial review, mandates an arbitrary retrospective cut-off date, and closes the constitutional and legal route to justice for an entire community.

Then there is the argument to protect the post-1947 social and political compact with its socialist-secular core. Such nostalgic arguments mistakenly assume that the old system is worth saving, that it had popular legitimacy and that it can be saved. It produced only misery and regular riots. It could neither produce economic growth, social upliftment or cultural rejuvenation. It was always a top-down imposition by an ultra-minority of urban elites and collapsed as democratic deepening accelerated after the '80s. It can't be saved, not least due to the utter incompetence of its champions, busy mocking Hindu beliefs, demonising Hindus and ridiculing their concerns and civilisational aspirations. They are trying to do to Shiva what they did to Rama and Ayodhya for decades. They clearly do not understand Shaivism or the undercurrents and faultlines at work.

The way forward is to accept the burden of the past and restore the Hindu sites — the only ethical thing to do. A grand bargain, something which should have been done in Ayodhya in the 1980s itself.

The writer is National Vice-President, BJYM

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### FOR DIGNITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Unworkable’ (IE, May 21). The recommendation of the PM's Economic Advisory Council to launch an urban equivalent of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act deserves serious attention. Urban unemployment is higher than rural, and though income levels are also higher, so is the cost of living. Though urban employment is not seasonal, it is sporadic, and the current trend of contract employment aggravates the problem. An employment guarantee could mitigate many hardships that the urban poor face and prevent reverse migration to rural areas, as so sadly seen during the pandemic. Above all, as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act shows, guaranteed employment enables the poor to live with a modicum of dignity. Some states such as Kerala, Odisha and Rajasthan have seen the merit in an urban guaranteed employment scheme and it is time the nation too considers adopting it. The benefits will far outweigh the costs.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

### BIASED CENTRE

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The business of federalism’ (IE, May 21). The writer has lucidly explained how the Centre can motivate the states to compete and cooperate to create a win-win situation required for the country's development. This is because the competitive spirit in federalism goads states to try each other for far-reaching reforms. Similarly, these states can join hands for the synergy required for undertaking innovative projects. The problem surfaces when the party ruling at the Centre does not get well

with opposition parties ruling in states. They face problems in getting their share even in the much-touted federal tax, the Good and Services Tax. Apparently, this situation prevents these states from undertaking reforms and other welfare schemes. Unfortunately, the dwarfed NITI Aayog, the forerunner of the all-powerful Planning Commission often hesitates to come to their rescue when faced with such discriminatory situations.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

### LAW NEEDED

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘A regressive exception’ (IE, May 20). The marital rape issue in India revolves around the basis of the institution of marriage. Post marriage, women are considered something similar to property possessed as Hindu customs have termed it kanyadaan. Legislation regarding the crime is needed though such deliberations would take time. The judiciary may need to step in temporarily.

H Upadhyay, via email

### NOT IN OUR STARS

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Our languages soul of Bharatiyata... some are trying to poison: PM’ (IE, May 21). Prime Minister Narendra Modi while addressing the Bharatiya Janata Party national office-bearers spoke about the virtues and sacredness of every Indian language and connected it with Indianness. However, he overlooked the recent spate of speeches that were full of hate and bigotry targeted against Muslims. Nonetheless, he blamed the rival political parties for “trying to divert the nation's focus from major issues”.

LR Murmu, Delhi



RAJSHREE CHANDRA

SINCE 2010, INDIANS have spent nearly 3 million hours in prison on charges of sedition. An accused is most likely to spend up to 50 days in prison until a trial court grants bail and up to 200 days until a high court does so. The exhaustive database of Article 14 (corroborated by the NCRB data) reveals that more than 13,000 Indians are trapped in a black hole since 2010.

It is time, therefore, that the sedition law (IPC, Section 124 A) is consigned to the bin. However, as we wait with bated expectation after the Supreme Court order (to keep the 152-year old sedition law in abeyance), and after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's willingness to reconsider the colonial law in the spirit of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, a cautionary check is in order.

There are reasons to be sceptical. Not too long back, the BJP had attacked the Congress for its 2019 election promise to do away with dark laws like the AFSPA and sedition. Calling the Congress manifesto a “document of Pakistan's conspiracies”, PM Modi accused the Congress of hatching a conspiracy to destabilise the country and “demoralise” its soldiers. One could, of course, argue that election speeches are not reliable indicators of intent. But the zeal of the ruling regime in criminalising dissent is a matter of record. The Article 14 archive reveals that 2,862 citizens were charged with sedition during the anti-CAA protests; 133 farmers (and representatives)

during the farm protests of 2021; 42 persons after the Pulwama attack, and 59 journalists for reportage on the farm bills, Covid-19, Hathras gang rape, citizenship and for being critical of the government were charged with sedition in the last seven years. There has been a 28 per cent increase in the number of sedition cases filed each year after 2014.

It is this track record that makes one suspicious of the government's intent. But perhaps there's a change of heart, a change of tack. Sceptic reasoning ought to make as much room for doubt as for a promise. In either case, my argument is that any move to remove sedition is imperative, but by itself, it's only a half-measure and a half-hearted measure. As long as the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) is untouched, dissent will continue to be criminalised. The government will claim moral victory but nothing really will change in substance. Here are two reasons why.

First, the sedition law under Section 124 A is a part of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) where along with penal provisions, there are safeguards and constitutional remedies. Bail is easier, there is provision for anticipatory bail, police have to file a charge sheet within 90 days, failing which the accused arrested is entitled to bail, and so on. These safeguards are not available to those charged under UAPA. As an anti-terror law, it has more stringent provisions and far fewer safeguards. For instance, UAPA permits detention without a charge

sheet for upto 180 days, creates a presumption of guilt, places the burden of proof on the accused and creates a strong presumption against bail.

In April, a single-judge bench of the Allahabad High Court granted bail to three Kashmiri students accused of shouting pro-Pakistan slogans in a T-20 cricket match. Justice Ajay Bhanot remarked eloquently: “The unity of India is not made of bamboo reeds which will bend to the passing winds of empty slogans...the foundations of our nation are more enduring.” In contrast, especially after the SC's Watali judgment (2019), bail has become a virtual impossibility for the UAPA accused. The numerous bail rejections for the Bhima Koregaon and Delhi riots accused is a case in point.

Second, let's just look at the conviction rate of the sedition law. Arrests under sedition law may have risen but the conviction rate is as low as 2.25 per cent. Of the 399 cases that were registered between 2014-20, just nine were convicted. The ministry of home affairs data further reveals that of the cases registered, charge sheets were filed only in 169 cases. This tells us that the sedition law is not a very effective tool for incarceration.

The UAPA is a better bet. The conviction rate is higher. NCRB data reveals that between 2014-2020, 27.5 per cent of the cases saw convictions. But what is more damning is that very few cases even reach the stage where inno-

cence or guilt is proven. In the seven-year period, of the 6,900 cases, only 4.5 per cent of the cases sent for trial reached the stage of completion. And we are not yet talking of cases that languish in protracted pre-trial and trial period. 95.4 per cent cases were still pending trial at the end of each year between 2014-2020.

Many of those charged under sedition are also slapped with charges under the UAPA — Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, Tahir Hussain, Khalid Saifi, Siddique Kappan to name a few. For all the attention the sedition law has received, it is the UAPA that does the heavy lifting.

It is expected that after the SC interim order, those imprisoned under the sedition law are likely to get immediate bail. However, retired Justice Manmohan Singh is, reportedly, of the view that this may not be the case for those charged with the draconian UAPA. He rightly says that the “UAPA contains many aspects of the sedition law with far-reaching consequences”.

Civil liberties stand precariously poised in India today. The removal of the sedition law makes a dent, but it will be small and ineffective if the road-roller of civil liberties — the UAPA — remains untouched. We can celebrate the sedition law's much-awaited demise, but let's not miss the wood for the trees.

The writer teaches political science at Janki Devi Memorial College, DU







# ECONOMY

## POLICY WATCH EXTERNAL DEBT

### India has space to attract \$90 bn debt flows: RBI

GEORGE MATHEW  
MUMBAI, MAY 22

INDIA HAS the space to attract debt flows of another \$90 billion (around Rs 693,000 crore), given the threshold level of the country's external debt, says a Reserve Bank of India study.

"The empirical results suggest that as against India's current external debt to GDP ratio of 20 per cent, the estimated threshold level is higher in the range between 23 per cent and 24 per cent of GDP, indicating space for attracting more debt flows of the order of \$90 billion," says the RBI study on 'Growth maximising external debt of India'. Given the risk of amplifying external vulnerabilities because of higher exposure to external debt, the estimated space may be used carefully balancing the objective of growth and macro-stability, it said.

India's debt market is being progressively opened up to the foreign capital in a careful and calibrated manner.

According to estimates, India's external debt stood at \$614.9 billion as at end-December 2022. Commercial borrowings (CBs) at \$226.4 billion, NRI deposits at \$141.9 billion and short-term trade credit at \$110.5 billion, together account for about 78 per cent of the total external debt. The external debt to GDP ratio as at end-December 2021 was 20.0 per cent.

The total external debt, which fell below the pre-crisis levels in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic lockdown, crossed the pre-pandemic levels as at end-December 2020 and consolidated further helped by NRI deposits crossing pre-pandemic levels as at end-September 2021 and short-term trade credit crossing the pre-pandemic levels as at end-December 2021, the RBI said.

In contrast, India's external debt remained relatively immune to the global finan-

### NRI deposits down \$2.87 bn

*Mumbai:* Outstanding non-resident Indian (NRI) deposits in India fell by \$2.875 billion to \$139,020 billion in the financial year ended March 2022 as against \$141.895 billion a year ago, according to the latest RBI data.

India attracted only \$3.23 billion NRI deposits in FY22 as against \$7.36 billion a year ago. Non-resident external rupee account (NR(E)RA) witnessed a growth of \$3.33 billion in FY22 as against \$8.84 billion last year. FCNR (B) deposits declined by \$3.55 billion in FY22. **ENS**

cial crisis (GFC) reflecting the resilience of commercial borrowings, the most growth-sensitive and the largest component of India's external debt. "The resilience of commercial borrowings in the wake of the GFC stemmed largely from the relatively muted impact of GFC on growth in sharp contrast to that during GLD," the study said.

At present, a rule-based dynamic limit for outstanding stock of ECBs at 6.5 per cent of GDP is in place. As India aims at higher, sustainable and inclusive growth, the need for attracting larger external debt flows within the estimated threshold may be assessed along with other external vulnerability parameters so that the growth objective is pursued while preserving overall macro-stability, the RBI study said.

External debt, by supplementing domestic savings, can help countries grow faster. But a large stock of external debt can potentially create vulnerabilities and dent growth prospects. Since the onset of the pandemic, many countries have expanded public spending to support the recovery, which has led to a build-up of their external debt, the IMF says.

## FOCUS ON DISCLOSURES, COMPLIANCES FOR NEW-AGE COS

### Front-running: Sebi likely to soon initiate stringent action

SANDEEP SINGH  
MUMBAI, MAY 22

CONCERNED OVER the recent case of front-running in the mutual fund industry and possibility of similar practices happening, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) is likely to take stringent action, which may include action against top officials of the fund house. A source close to the development said Sebi is closely monitoring the situation and its actions may follow soon.

On May 19, Axis Mutual Fund terminated its chief dealer Viresh Joshi, who was under investigation for irregularities, including front-running the AMC's transactions. A couple of days later, it sacked its second fund manager Deepak Agrawal on similar charges. The fund house had suspended the two fund managers on May 6, after irregularities running into several crores at the fund house came under the scanner of the market regulator.

Front-running involves purchasing a stock based on advance non-public information regarding an expected large transaction that will affect the share price of a company. When MFs purchase in huge quantities, it leads to rise in share price, resulting into illegitimate gains for the front runners.

Sebi has investigated and penalised several brokers, fund houses and fund managers in the past for front-running. In June 2021, it passed an order against three dealers of Reliance Securities for front-running the



The Securities and Exchange Board of India building, Mumbai. File

trades of an alternative investment fund. In the HDFC MF front-running case, Sebi passed several orders, over the last few years, including disgorgement of illegal gains and penalty on several entities including the former equity dealer of HDFC MF for numerous instances of front running in 2006 and 2007.

Stating that investor protection is one the key roles of the regulator, the source added that Sebi is looking at various aspects of primary and secondary market in order to safeguard retail investors, who have been entering the markets in large numbers over the last two years. The number of investor accounts with CDSL and NSDL has jumped from 4.06 crore in March 2020 to 9.2 crore at the end of April 2022.

While on the primary market

front, the regulator is keen on enhancing disclosure and compliance requirement for listing of new-age technology companies, for the secondary market participants, it is keen on enhancing awareness around responsible investing as lot of new customers are going for speculative trading.

"What we worry about is the increasing amount of trading in the segment. As margins have increased for futures, they are shifting to options and largely in index options. It is pure trading... People need to be educated and made aware of the risks of these trades and so there is a thinking that it might be the right time for the broking community to come out with campaigns like responsible trading," said the source.

As concerns have been growing around valuations being commanded by new-age loss-making technology companies when they come out with their public issues, the regulator may be of the view that while it may leave the price determination with the markets, it may introduce disclosures that may take away liberty of the company management and merchant bankers from commanding unreasonable valuations.

The source said that the companies will have to disclose the change in financially quantifiable metrics that have resulted in increase in valuation and if there is no change in such metrics, then they will have to disclose upfront that there has been no change in the financial metrics but the valuation has gone up by 'x' times. So, they will have to disclose reasons for the increase in valuation

since the last funding round.

The source added that there was a thinking in the past that if the regulator had brought stringent regulations at the time of permitting loss-making new age technology companies to raise funds through public issues, it would have attracted lot of criticism. But now, with some not-so-happy experiences across several listings, additional regulations and compliances can be brought in and there is call for it, too.

"Sometimes you need to buy the time. And after what has happened with a couple of issues the regulator thinks that they can bring in the reform as people sometimes need to understand the need for reform and now everyone is aware of the issue and they feel that changes are needed," the source said.

The regulator is also looking at adding more disclosures for such companies.

Among some other key changes, the regulator is also learnt to be closely monitoring the appointment of chief financial officers (CFO) by several of these companies and may bring in a new compliance requirement with respect to CFO appointment for companies coming with public offering.

"It has been noticed that in several cases the CFOs are appointed few days before the issue and he/she signs up on all the financial details. Sebi is considering to make it mandatory for companies to appoint the CFO atleast 2-3 quarter before the IPO and deliberations are going on this particular issue as of now," the source said.

### Salil Parekh reappointed as CEO, MD of Infosys for 5 yrs

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE BOARD of Infosys has approved the reappointment of Salil Parekh as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director of the company for five more years, till March 31, 2027, according to a regulatory filing.

This is based on the recommendations of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC) and subject to the approval of shareholders. **WITHPTI**

**TOTAL ORIGINAL COST** of implementation of the 1,579 projects was ₹21,95,196.72 cr and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹26,78,365.62 cr, which reflects overall cost overruns of ₹4,83,168.90 cr (22.01 % of the original cost)

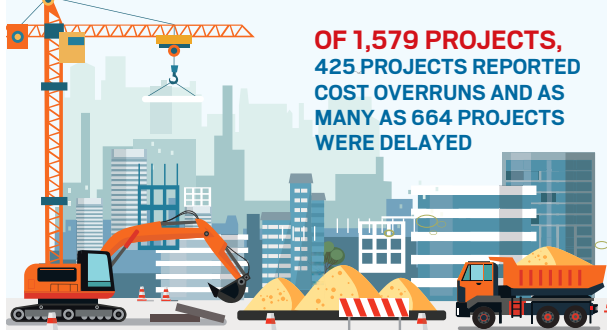
**EXPENDITURE INCURRED** on these projects till March 2022 stood at ₹13,88,760.73 cr, which is 51.85 % of the anticipated cost of the projects

**NUMBER OF DELAYED PROJECTS** decreased to 561, if delay is calculated on basis of latest schedule of completion

Source: MoSPI/PTI

### Cost overruns of ₹4.83 lakh cr impact 425 infra projects

As many as 425 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than Rs 4.83 lakh crore, as per a Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation report



## BRIEFLY Infra projects

*New Delhi:* All logistics and connectivity infrastructure projects, entailing investment of over Rs 500 crore, would now route through the network planning group.

### SIAM on CNG

*New Delhi:* SIAM on Sunday sought reduction in CNG prices while welcoming the government's decision to lower the petrol and diesel prices.

### 'GST Council'

*New Delhi:* The GST Council is likely to consider modification in summary return and monthly tax payment form GSTR-3B in its meeting next month, an official said.

### 'Specialty steel'

*New Delhi:* The government's PLI scheme for specialty steel has received just 10 applications, even as the last date to submit interest was extended twice.

### 'Paytm bank'

*New Delhi:* Paytm expects that the issue of RBI ban on its subsidiary Paytm Payments Bank to onboard customers would be resolved in 3-5 months, after the clearance by the regulator to the processes being put in place, Paytm group CFO Madhur Deora told PTI on Sunday. **PTI**

## CoinSwitch calls for regulatory 'peace, certainty'

REUTERS  
DAVOS, MAY 22

INDIA MUST establish rules on cryptocurrencies to resolve regulatory uncertainty, protect investors and boost its crypto sector, CoinSwitch CEO Ashish Singhal said on Sunday.

"Users don't know what will happen with their holdings - is government going to ban, not ban, how is it going to be regulated?" Singhal, a former Amazon engineer who co-founded CoinSwitch, told Reuters at the World Economic

**"Users don't know what will happen with their holdings - is government going to ban, not ban, how is it going to be regulated?"**

ASHISH SINGHAL  
CEO, COINSWITCH

Forum in Davos.

"Regulations will bring peace ... more certainty," he added.

While moves on taxation and certain advertising regulation had brought some relief, a lot more needed to be done, Singhal said, adding that India should develop a set of laws.

## Amazon: FRL independent dirs facilitated fraudulent stratagem

*New Delhi:* Amazon has accused independent directors of Future Retail of facilitating "fraudulent stratagem" of transfer of 835 stores to Reliance, saying the narrative of that transfer was on account of failure to pay outstanding rent was a "sham" as the retailer had a month prior to such move.

The retailer wrote on May 19 to FRL independent directors, stated the firm had in meeting with core lender banks on January 1 "categorically admitted the unpaid rental dues was Rs 250 crore only. FRL further stated that it voluntarily retained the amount." **PTI**

## 'To boost production outside China, Apple may turn to India'

REUTERS  
BENGALURU, MAY 22

APPLE INC has told some of its contract manufacturers that it wants to increase production outside China, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

India and Vietnam, which are already sites of Apple production, are among the countries short-listed as alternatives, it added.

Apple last month forecast bigger supply problems. The re-



An Apple store in Shanghai, China. Reuters file

port said Apple is citing China's strict anti-Covid policy and other reasons for its decision. Apple de-

clined to comment to WSJ and couldn't be reached by Reuters on Saturday.

## 'Govt considering spending \$26 billion more to fight inflation'

REUTERS  
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE GOVERNMENT is considering spending an additional Rs 2 trillion (\$26 billion) in the 2022-23 fiscal year to cushion consumers from rising prices and fight multi-year high inflation, two government officials told Reuters.

The new measures will be double the Rs 1 trillion hit government revenues could take from tax cuts on petrol and diesel the finance minister announced on Saturday, both the officials said.

Retail inflation rose to an eight-year high in April.

"We are fully focussed on bringing down inflation. The impact of Ukraine crisis was worse than anyone's imagination," one official, who did not want to be named, said. The government estimates another Rs 500 billion in additional funds will be needed to subsidise fertilisers, from the current estimate of Rs 2.15 trillion, the two officials said.

The government could also deliver another round of tax cuts on petrol and diesel if crude oil continues to rise that could mean an added hit of Rs 1 trillion-1.5 trillion in 2022-23, the second official said.

The government did not comment outside office hours.

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, MAY 22

DESPITE THE inflation in inputs, India Inc seems to have managed to protect its margins reasonably well by passing on the costs to consumers. Not all companies have been able to take price hikes to offset the entire increase in costs, but aggregate numbers for Q4FY22 show they have covered some ground.

For a universe of 927 companies (excluding banks and financials), operating profit margins contracted by only 50 basis points year-on-year to 16.37 per

### VOLUMES GAME

■ Management commentary suggests companies plan to either raise prices further or offer smaller volumes for the same price to protect margins

cent, in the three months to March. Consequently, the operating profit went up by the good 20 per cent y-o-y and the net profits by a handsome 34 per cent.

Management commentary suggests companies plan to ei-

## Excise cut on fuel: FM says burden to be borne by Centre

### CENTRAL EXCISE DUTY/CESS

Effective	Shared with states (Basic Excise Duty)	Not shared with states (RIDC, SAED and AIDC)	Total excise duty
<b>PETROL</b>			
Mar 2020	₹2.98	₹20	₹22.98
June 2020	₹2.98	₹30	₹32.98
Feb 2021	₹1.4	₹31.5	₹32.9
Nov 2021	₹1.4	₹26.5	₹27.9
May 2022	₹1.4	₹18.5	₹19.9
<b>DIESEL</b>			
Mar 2020	₹4.83	₹14	₹18.83
June 2020	₹4.83	₹27	₹31.83
Feb 2021	₹1.8	₹30	₹31.8
Nov 2021	₹1.8	₹20	₹21.8
May 2022	₹1.8	₹14	₹15.8

Note: Figures in ₹/L. RIDC is Road & Infrastructure Development Cess, SAED is Special Additional Excise Duty and AIDC stands for Agriculture & Infrastructure Development Cess; Sources: Lok Sabha, CBIC

AANCHAL MAGAZINE  
& KARUNJIT SINGH

NEW DELHI, MAY 22

PROVIDING DETAILS of the cut in excise duty on fuels, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said the excise duty cut of Rs 8/litre on petrol and Rs 6/litre on diesel has entirely been made in Road & Infrastructure Cess (RIC), which is not shared with states and, hence, the burden lies with Centre. The duty cut, effective Sunday, has a revenue implication of Rs 1 lakh crore annually for the Centre, which, coupled with the earlier duty cut of November 2021, will result in a total revenue loss of Rs 2.2 lakh crore a year, she said.

"Basic ED which is shareable with states has not been touched. Therefore, the entire burden of these two duty cuts (made in Nov. 21 and yesterday) is borne by the Centre. The duty reduction made yesterday has an implication of Rs 1,00,000 cr a year for Centre. The duty reduction made in November '21 has an implication of Rs 1,20,000 cr a year for Centre. Total revenue implication to Centre, on these two duty cuts is thus Rs 2,20,000 cr a year," she tweeted.

Opposition leaders had said that this round of excise duty cut would reduce the share of states in central taxes.

The excise duty reduction on petrol and diesel effective Sunday has entirely been made in RIC and this was the case even in November 2021 when tax on petrol was cut by Rs 5 and that on diesel by Rs 10, she said.

"Basic Excise Duty (BED), Special Additional Excise duty (SAED), Road & Infrastructure Cess (RIC) and Agriculture & Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC) together constitute Excise Duty on petrol and diesel. Basic ED is shareable with states. SAED, RIC & AIDC are non-shareable," she said.

Total Central tax on petrol before this duty cut was Rs 27.9 per litre, while basic excise duty was only Rs 1.4 a litre. Of Rs 21.80 a litre, total Central tax on diesel, basic excise duty was Rs 1.80. Special additional excise duty of Rs 11 a litre on petrol and Rs 8 per litre on diesel was levied. A Rs 2.50 a litre agriculture infrastructure and development cess (AIDC) was levied on petrol and Rs 4 per litre on diesel. Petrol had Rs 13 a litre additional excise duty in form of RIC and Rs 8 of such tax was levied on per litre of diesel, which has been cut now.

As per the tax sharing formula, 41 per cent of taxes collected by the Centre is shared

## EXPLAINED How it breaks up

BEFORE THIS round of duty cut, total central tax on petrol was Rs 27.90 per litre and Rs 21.80 a litre on diesel. Basic excise duty, which is shared with states, was only Rs 1.40 a litre on petrol and Rs 1.80 a litre on diesel. Special additional excise duty and agriculture infrastructure and development cess, accounted for Rs 13.5 a litre on petrol and Rs 12 per litre on diesel, not forming a part of the shareable pool with states but have been reduced now by the Centre.

with states, while cess collections accrue to the Centre. Cess constitutes the majority of the tax on petrol and diesel.

Before this round of excise duty cut, Central and state taxes accounted for about 43 per cent and 37 per cent of the retail price of petrol and diesel, respectively, in Delhi. States apply an ad valorem VAT or sales tax on the base price, freight charges, excise duty and dealer commission on petrol and diesel. Therefore, state collections also increase/decrease as the Centre hikes/reduces excise duties.

Former Finance Minister and Congress leader P Chidambaram had on Saturday evening stated that the cut in excise duty was "equal to rob Peter more & pay Peter less!" "FM's exhortation to States is meaningless. When she cuts Central Excise by one rupee, 41 paise of that rupee belongs to the States," he had stated. On Sunday, he tweeted stating that contrary to what he said on Saturday "the entire burden of the reduction falls on the Centre. To that extent, I stand corrected. The states are getting very little by way of share of duties on Petrol and Diesel. Their revenue is from VAT on Petrol and Diesel."

"The Union Government's levies on petrol have gone up substantially in the past 7 years. Though the revenue to the Union Government has increased manifold, there has not been a matching increase in the revenues to states. This is because the Union Government has increased the cess and surcharge on petrol and diesel while reducing the basic excise duty that is shareable with the states," Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Palanivel Thiaga Rajan said.

ther raise prices further or offer smaller volumes for the same price to protect margins. By a rough reckoning, prices have been raised by 5-15 per cent for consumer staples, 10-12 per cent for durables, around 10 per cent for automobiles, 5-15 per cent for residential properties and around 5-8 per cent at fast food eateries. By passing on the cost increases, companies have managed to grow their top lines despite, in many cases, selling smaller volumes. For the sample of 927 firms, net sales in Q4FY22 rose 24.2 per cent y-o-y.

Hindustan Unilever, for instance, has upped prices by about

10 per cent, enabling it to report a revenue growth of 11 per cent y-o-y in Q4FY22 despite volumes staying flat. Despite a 9 per cent y-o-y drop in volumes, Eicher Motors posted a revenue growth of 9 per cent y-o-y, thanks to a 21 per cent y-o-y increase in the average selling prices (ASPs).

While profitability may have been under some pressure, the good news is that businesses that were hit by the pandemic are bouncing back with the economy opening up. AB Fashion and Retail, for instance, reported better-than expected Q4FY22 revenue growth of 25 per cent y-o-y as the distributor channel recovered. **FE**



10

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

WORLD BOXING CHAMPION  
NIKHAT ZAREEN

‘People told my father that boxing was a men’s sport’

World champion boxer Nikhat Zareen talks about how people ridiculed her choice to become a boxer as a girl, her struggles in a conservative society and how she feels women boxers wearing hijab is a matter of choice. The session was moderated by Mihir Vasavda, Assistant Editor, *The Indian Express*



WHY  
NIKHAT ZAREEN

Nikhath Zareen won the World Boxing Championships in Turkey on May 19, becoming only the fifth Indian woman to be crowned world champion (flyweight). But her story to the podium is also about breaking free from the shackles of patriarchy, tradition, mindset and, most importantly, from inhibitions. She is now setting her sights on the Olympic gold

Mihir Vasavda: You mentioned the support you received from your parents. You have three sisters, what is your relationship with them like and what did you all bond over?

I have two older sisters and a younger one, who is seven years junior to me. Both my elder sisters are physiotherapists and were not interested in sports. I had always been interested in sports and used to be a bit of a tomboy those days, hanging out with the boys. I had a boyish short hair too and preferred wearing T-shirt and jeans. Nobody thought I was a girl. Perhaps, I became strong because I have been, what you would call, “rough-and-tough” since childhood.

Before boxing, I was into athletics. Since there were no proper facilities and coaches, I would accompany my father to the Collector’s Ground where many competitive

sports took place. I saw girls in every sport except boxing. I remember asking my father why there were no girls in the ring and if only boys could box? And he said, “no beta, girls can also box but people think they don’t have the guts to do so. That’s why they don’t send their girls to learn boxing.”

That challenged me to take up boxing as I couldn’t understand why people would think that girls weren’t strong enough to take up such a sport. So, I thought, let’s give it a try. *Bachpan sey mujhe khatron ki khiladi khelne ka bahut shauk tha* (I have always wanted to be a daredevil since my childhood). I didn’t quite anticipate what awaited me.

I was the lone girl practising in that stadium among boys. Initially, I used to get hit a lot but I did not give up. Maybe training in that atmosphere, surrounded by boys, helped me steel my resolve.



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

Sriram Veera: I was watching an interview of your mother talking about an early sparring session of yours. It was with a boy and he hit you in your face. Your mother said that she started crying and saying ‘beta tumse shaadi kaun karega?’

(Nikhath laughs) Let me tell you that story. That was my first sparring session and I was pitted against a boy who was very experienced. The coach shouted “box” and he started attacking me. I wasn’t ready for his attack and got hit on my nose, which started bleeding along with my eye which got bruised as well.

I went home with bloodstains on my T-shirt. When I entered my house, I directly rushed into the bathroom and didn’t come out until I had changed everything. I then stayed in my room, hiding my eye. But then my mother called me for dinner. We eat food together, while watching serials on TV, like every other household. This is the usual ritual but that day I chose to stay in my room. My mother got worried, barged in and seeing me bruised and black, she shivered. Then she started crying and said, “Beta maine tujhe boxing mein isliye nahi dala ki tera face kharab ho jaye (I didn’t allow you to pursue boxing so that your face would get scarred).” She then said that no one would marry me. I replied, “arre ammi, tension nako lo, naam hoga toh dulhon ki line lag jayegi! (Dear mother, don’t worry, once I make a name for myself, grooms will queue up at the doorstep).”

Now she’s used to it. Whenever I get hit, she casually tells me to apply some ice and says that it will be okay. Sometimes I feel she has become my coach. My parents watch all my bouts in every competition that I participate in and they now have a good idea of what boxing is. Whenever I have a match, my mother watches me closely and post-match calls me to review my performance, pulling me up on the mistakes I made during the fight. My parents have become my coaches and say things like, “Try to avoid clinching and play from a distance because your punches look clear then.” I find it funny that there was a time when they didn’t know anything about boxing and now they give me *gyaan* (laughs). But it feels nice that they’ve come a long way from their old mentality and have grown a lot with me.

Sriram Veera: Heard you say once that your plan B was to join the police.

In my childhood, I dreamt of becoming an IPS officer. When you are young, most children will say that they want to be a pilot, police, doctor or teacher. These were the professions we knew about and because of that, I wanted to be in the police. Also, the uniform looked cool and

when we were in school, IPS officers would visit us as chief guests during special events and programmes. I saw the respect they commanded. Whenever I looked at them, I told myself that one day I would wear a uniform like them and come as a chief guest to my school. That’s how I started dreaming about becoming an IPS officer.

Nitin Sharma: We talked about the gold medal you won as a junior boxer in 2011. You were 15 years old back then. Ten years later, you have got the senior title. What do these achievements mean to you and do you feel the senior title came a bit late?

*Medal der aaya lekin durust aaya* (better late than never). The medal I won in 2011 was memorable because it was my first-ever international competition where I got a standing ovation on the podium... our national anthem was being played in front of so many people. I was overwhelmed. That experience will always remain etched in my memory.

Still, I was a kid in a junior level championship. The elite level is very different. The competition is better and the pressure, higher. In the juniors, you don’t know your opponent – all you can think about is to enter the ring, beat the opponent and win the bout. But in the senior category, you know about your opponents’ styles, strengths and weakness. So, you end up having to plan your moves strategically. There is a lot more pressure on your mind at this level. And yet, I managed to win the gold medal for my country. I am really happy about that. Hopefully, I can continue to work hard like this and keep winning medals.

Nitin Sharma: In your weight category, you have had to compete with MC Mary Kom, whom you have idolised, over the past three-four years. We also saw your bid to get into trials against her for the Tokyo Olympic qualifiers. She did not want the trials and it turned into a spat. The bout eventually took place but how do you see her after that incident? Also how do you feel about the CWC trials knowing that Mary Kom is expected to take part?

She is an experienced boxer with many records in her past. So based on that

it was her right, perhaps. But when two boxers enter the ring, only the one who’s technically sounder wins. Because of that, when our trials took place, she won and was selected for the Tokyo Olympic qualifiers. I congratulated her on qualifying but unfortunately, she couldn’t win a medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

When I lost in the trials, I decided to move on from Tokyo and focus on the Paris Olympic Games. With regard to the Commonwealth Games trials, I heard she’s going for the trials in the 48-kg category, so I don’t think we’ll face each other.

Sandeep Dwivedi: What is so special about Hyderabad that so many world-beating women athletes come out of the city? Is it common aggression, that is so important in sport and that you share with athletes like Saina Nehwal and Sania Mirza, which propels you to such heights?

(Laughs) *Sab Hyderabad ki biryani aur haleem hi hai* (It’s all in Hyderabad’s biryani and haleem). I guess every athlete gets nervous. The quality of a champion is how she deals with that pressure and nervousness. Even I was nervous about the world championship. I was nervous about how I would play against my opponent, whether I would be able to make her play according to my style and dominate her or whether she would trap me in her boxing style. Such thoughts always come to mind. I won all my bouts with unanimous decisions and I am happy about it.

Sandeep Dwivedi: You have been good friends with the likes of Tokyo Olympics champion Neeraj Chopra apart from CWC and Asian Games champion Vinesh Phogat and athletes like Tejaswin Shankar. Tell us how did this sharing of ideas start?

We met when all of us were going through a bad phase. We were suffering from injuries and were feeling low. Vinesh had a knee injury, I had a shoulder injury, Neeraj had issues with hamstring and even Tejaswin was struggling with some wound. We were rehabilitating at the JSW Sport Centre in Bengaluru. We would eat meals and roam together always. So, it all started from there. Then we shared each other’s stories and understood how much struggle each one of us had to face. That’s how

our friendship started. After the recovery, everybody got busy and now, Neeraj Chopra is an Olympic champion while Vinesh is a Commonwealth and Asian Games champion. They have made the country proud and seeing them achieve their personal highs inspired me to work hard. When they can do it on the world stage, it inspires me to push myself harder and achieve big on the world stage too. We can all meet together at the next Games.

Mihir Vasavda: You have mentioned a lot of ups, downs and struggles in your career. Was there any moment in your life, in your career to be precise, that shaped you as a boxer or inspired you to pack a punch?

Yes, before my shoulder injury, I was not mature enough. After the injury, I learnt a lot. I got to know who my real friends were and who weren’t. Because most of them did not even message me or ask me how I was doing. But still I stayed positive and worked hard on my rehabilitation. I made my comeback in 2018 and took some time to recover before I won the gold at the Strandja Memorial in 2019. I have never looked back and have always thought of progressing ahead.

Mihir Vasavda: You have been a path-breaker your entire career. You come from an orthodox family and have seen all kinds of struggle. In the last two-three weeks, we have seen referees and some boxers wearing hijab during the world championships. All over the world, there is a debate about whether athletes should be allowed to wear the hijab or not. In the normal course of life, too, there is a debate about this. What’s your take?

According to me, it’s their choice. If they feel comfortable, they should wear it. If they don’t feel comfortable, they should wear whatever is normal for them. It’s absolutely their choice. So, there is no need for my comment. I like boxing in shorts and a vest and nobody is forcing me to wear a hijab or stopping me from wearing shorts and a vest. It’s everybody’s choice and we should respect that.

Mihir Vasavda: It’s known that you are a big Salman Khan fan and like watching Hindi movies. If a biopic is to be made on your life, which actor would you like to portray you?

I haven’t given it a thought yet. When a movie is made on me, I don’t know which actress will be on top of the charts at that time. Right now, I want Alia Bhatt to portray me. *Kyunki usko bhi dimple aata hai and mere ko bhi dimple aata hai* (Because she has got dimples like me). I guess she can portray me.





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## EXPLAINED HEALTH

# Is unexpected hepatitis in children linked to Covid-19?

## EXPERT EXPLAINS



DR ARVINDER SINGH SOIN

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight

SEVERAL COUNTRIES are reporting severe hepatitis in children who have contracted Covid-19. A study from Madhya Pradesh, which is yet to be peer-reviewed, has shown that 8% of children in the group being investigated reported a unique form of hepatitis and subsequent asymptomatic Covid-19 infection.

### Can we say there is a link between Covid-19 and hepatitis in children?

In the West, there have been some cases of hepatitis, which are unexplained by previously known causes. And there have been publica-

tions that have been peer-reviewed, including one published in *The Lancet* last week, where they have talked about several children reporting unexplained hepatitis, where every parameter they test usually is found negative. The majority of them actually get well. But there has been a small number of cases where children have actually developed severe liver cases that need a transplant. That is obviously of concern.

The timing suggests it is related to Covid. Because the chronology is suggestive of Covid having a role as such a condition wasn't seen before the pandemic, the theory of a link is gaining ground. I am talking about the *Lancet* paper. In the non-peer-reviewed data from Madhya Pradesh, they found 37 cases of hepatitis out of 457 patients of Covid-19.

The *Lancet* study detected adenovirus in nearly 80% of the cases. Normally, this virus is fairly harmless. It causes gastritis, diarrhoea and vomiting but so far has not caused any severe illness. But now nearly 80% of children with hepatitis have this virus. It is still not known if it is causally related. Researchers even analysed the type of adenovirus and found a

particular strain called 41F in all samples. Now this strain is typically associated with mild gastro-intestinal illness in children. So, the theory going around is that somehow the immune system of children affected by Covid have developed abnormalities or been compromised to such an extent that the adenovirus, which is normally harmless, has manifested itself severely.

It is all a little blurry right now. But as an expert in liver disease for over 30 years and as someone who does liver transplants in children literally every other day, I think the recent cases of hepatitis are related to Covid-19 in some way. It is very likely, in my view, that there is hepatitis which has previously not been seen that has come about in children because of the pan-

### THE EXPERT

**DR ARVINDER SINGH SOIN** is the Chief Hepatobiliary and Liver Transplant Surgeon and Chairman of the Institute of Liver Transplantation and Regenerative Medicine, Medanta. He has been part of the team that has issued national guidelines on liver transplantation during the pandemic.

demic. Whether the pandemic prevented the exposure to usual antigens or whether the virus itself in a silent or infected form created the imbalance in the immune system needs to be looked into. But there has been some disturbance in children's immune systems.

### Could this have been triggered by an immune response caused by Covid-19?

Covid-19 activates the immune system. Whether you are symptomatic or not, you have some antigens. Over time, they will get absorbed and stimulate the immune cells, little by little, even long after the infection is gone.

It is like inciting the enemy during a ceasefire. So, even the slightest skirmish on the bor-

der will activate the enemy in a big way. With the immune system activated by the viruses and the antigen hanging around in the gut after recovery from Covid, even a minor infection caused by the adenovirus or a repeat infection of Covid can trigger a large immune response. And when a large immune response happens, the patient can get hepatitis.

### Can we say children are at an increased risk of liver dysfunction after recovery?

It would be fair to say there is a risk of liver dysfunction after you recover from Covid. But the proportion of children or patients who get it is not large. It would be somewhere between the 10-20% mark. But then that translates to a significant number. In all seroprevalence studies done in India, 60-70% of children have been found to have Covid antibodies. So, if you are surmising that 70% of kids have developed infection and antibodies, they are susceptible to this kind of hepatitis. That's still a large number.

### What are the preventive measures?

There are two things that you can do. First,

prevent kids from getting Covid-19. That is easier said than done. We know that even without vaccination in India, 70% of them had antibodies. Second, boost immunity with nutritious food, adequate sleep and intake of vitamin and mineral supplements whenever needed.

I would say that families that have had Covid-19 infection in their homes are very likely to have children who will be at risk of developing hepatitis. They should see a paediatrician and make sure that nutritious food and supplements, if necessary, are given.

### When should parents visit a specialist?

As I said, if a kid is known to have had Covid-19 in the past, he/she should follow up with a paediatrician for at least three months after recovery. Even if the parent has had Covid-19, it is likely that the child has been exposed. This is true for children younger than eight years because it is very difficult to contain them.

*Dr Sooin spoke to Kaunain Sheriff M*

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## THIS WORD MEANS

## STORAGE GAIN IN WHEAT

Extra weight gained from absorption of moisture. How it is calculated, and why Punjab agencies want a waiver

HAVING ALREADY got a relaxation in Fair and Average Quality (FAQ) norms for wheat procurement this season, Punjab's state procurement agencies are now seeking a waiver of 'storage gain'. If allowed, the waiver would stand at around Rs 150 crore for the current season.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Wheat tends to gain some weight during storage. This is what is known as 'storage gain' and it mostly happens due to absorption of moisture by the endosperm of the wheat. State procurement agencies are required to give 1 kg wheat extra per quintal to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to compensate for storage gain.

While 20% of wheat procured by the FCI and the state procurement agencies, is moved immediately after procurement, it is usually on the remaining 80%, which is

moved out after July 1 every year, that storage gain has to be accounted for due to longer storage duration.

**CALCULATIONS THIS YEAR:** This year 96 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) wheat was procured in Punjab by all agencies. As 80% of this figure comes to 76.80 LMT, it means that storage gain would be around 7.68 lakh quintals on this. At MSP rate of Rs 2,015, it would cost state agencies Rs 154.74 crore if they are unable to supply 7.68 lakh quintals extra during movement of 76.80 LMT wheat. The state agencies argue that grain procured this year is both shrivelled and broken and therefore will not gain much weight.

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA

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# Battery-like device that captures carbon dioxide while charging

RESEARCHERS HAVE developed a low-cost device that can selectively capture carbon dioxide gas while it charges. Then, when it discharges, the carbon dioxide can be released in a controlled way and collected to be reused or disposed of responsibly, the University of Cambridge said in a press release. The device has been described in the journal *Nanoscale*.

The supercapacitor device, which is similar to a rechargeable battery, is the size of a coin, and is made in part from sustainable materials including coconut shells and seawater. The University of Cambridge said the supercapacitor could help power carbon capture and storage technologies at much lower cost. The most advanced carbon capture technologies currently require large



NEW RESEARCH

amounts of energy and are expensive.

The supercapacitor consists of two electrodes of positive and negative charge. The team tried alternating from a negative to a positive voltage to extend the charging time from previous experiments. This improved the supercapacitor's ability to capture carbon.

"We found that that by slowly alternating the current between the plates we can capture double the amount of carbon dioxide than before," the release quoted lead researcher Dr Alexander Forse as saying. "Our next questions will involve investigating the precise mechanisms of carbon dioxide capture and improving them. Then it will be a question of scaling up."

*Source: University of Cambridge*

HARISH DAMODARAN & PARTHASARATHI BISWAS  
NEW DELHI, PUNE, MAY 22

THE WORLD and India are witnessing a resurgence of food inflation. Between September 2021 and April 2022, consumer food price inflation in India has risen from 0.68% to 8.38% year on year. And with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index hitting new highs, it has reignited memories of the last great commodity inflation (from the mid-2000s till around 2012-13, briefly interrupted by the 2008-09 financial crisis).

But there's a difference between the two food inflationary episodes, especially in India.

The former was a structural, demand-led inflation, driven by rising incomes. Real incomes going up resulted in declining per capita consumption of cereals and sugar (which basically deliver calories) alongside growing demand for foods incorporating proteins (milk, pulses, egg, fish and meat) and micronutrients (fruits & vegetables). This dietary diversification also had a bearing on inflation. Between 2004-05 and 2012-13, the cumulative rise in the wholesale price index was 93.1% for sugar, 99.9% for cereals and 48.1% for edible oils; and to 108.1% for milk, 110.1% for vegetables, 141.3% for pulses and 144.5% for eggs, meat & fish.

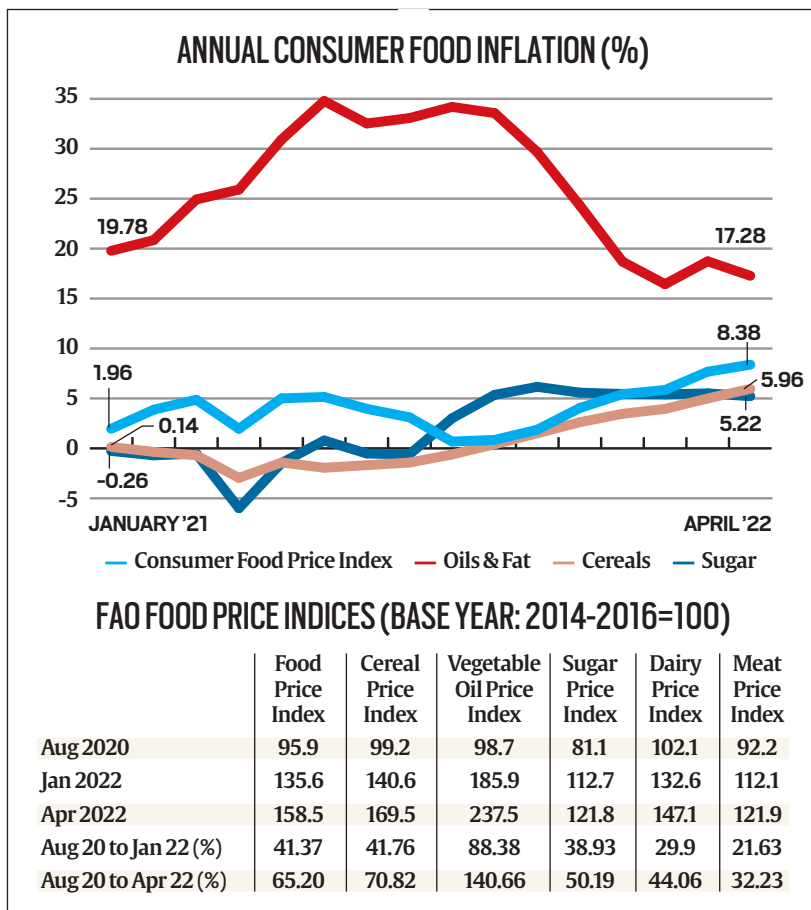
### Now and then

The current food inflation, by contrast, is idiosyncratic and supply shock-driven. And it is more "calorie" than "protein" price inflation, a term coined by the former Reserve Bank of India deputy governor Subir Gokarn.

Since August 2020, when global demand started returning with the gradual lifting of lockdowns, the FAO's vegetable oil, cereal and sugar price indices have soared 141%, 71% and 50%, respectively. These exceed the 32% cumulative rise in the meat price index and 44% for dairy over the same period till April 2020.

Moreover, as the table shows, much of this inflation predated the war in Ukraine. Ukraine had drought in 2020-21, while Russia, in December 2020, announced export curbs on wheat, corn, barley, rye, sunflower and rapeseed for quelling domestic inflation. These — coupled with shortages of migrant workers in Malaysia's oil palm plantations — drove up global prices of edible oils and cereals.

The war only worsened things — by squeezing supplies from the two countries having a substantial share of the world's wheat, corn,



barley and sunflower oil exports. Also, Indonesia's restrictions on palm oil shipments to contain local inflation, and surging petroleum crude prices made it all the more attractive to divert sugar, corn, palm and soyabean oil for bio-fuel production.

There has been no such major inflation in proteins. The FAO's dairy and meat prices indices have gone up, but that has had more to do with increased cost of feed ingredients.

### Impact on India

The transmission of the higher global calorie inflation to prices in India has been limited largely to vegetable fats. From the chart, it can be seen that retail edible oil inflation ruled at 20-35% levels through 2021, well before the surge in the overall consumer food price index from January. Interestingly, inflation in the other two calorie food commodities — cereals

and sugar — has been relatively muted.

The main reason for no imported inflation, at least until recently, in cereals and sugar is because of the country being a surplus producer of both. India's exports of cereals and sugar were valued at a record \$12.9 billion and \$4.6 billion respectively in 2021-22. Also, despite some 32.3 million tonnes (mt) of cereals being shipped out, overflowing stocks in government godowns still enabled an unprecedented 105.6 mt of grain to be sold through the public distribution system.

There has been a pick-up in cereal inflation of late. But that, basically in wheat, has come on the back of crop yield loss caused by the sudden heat wave. In other words, not imported. The transmission mechanism here has worked the other way round: With lower domestic production and depleting stocks prompting the Centre to ban wheat exports from India, global

prices have firmed up — translating into higher inflation for importing countries.

### What about proteins?

All-India modal or most-quoted retail prices of dals (split pulses) are lower now than a year ago. That includes *chana* (Rs 70 versus Rs 75/kg), *tur/arhar* (Rs 97.5 versus Rs 110), *urad* (Rs 97 versus Rs 105) and *moong* (Rs 98.5 versus Rs 105). The only exception is *masoor*, whose modal price of Rs 90/kg is higher than the Rs 85 at this time last year, according to Department of Consumer Affairs data.

The crash in international skim milk powder and butter fat prices has forced some correction in the domestic market as well. One can expect a similar easing of egg and meat prices. The heat subsiding should help reduce growing time and mortality of poultry birds.

On the whole, while there has been a recovery of demand from the reopening of hotels and other lockdown restrictions going, it is unlikely to trigger any "protein inflation". The demand-pull from rising incomes isn't strong enough this time round.

There is not much inflation in onion, potato and watermelons, cucumber, pumpkin, *okra*/ladies finger, gourds and other vegetables. Tomato prices are high, but not abnormally so.

### Summing up

Food inflation resulting from war, drought, unseasonal rains and heat waves is different from structural demand-pull factors. The inflation now is not only more of the former, but also in foods mainly delivering calories rather than proteins, vitamins and minerals. That, to some extent, makes it worse than the previous inflation, which, in Gokarn's words, was "an inevitable consequence of rising affluence".

While high prices would also induce supply response from farmers, a lot hinges on the monsoon. Last year's monsoon was "normal" overall, but marked by an extended dry spell in July and then too much rain from late-August, followed by heavy unseasonal showers in December-January. One has to see how normal the "normal" forecast by the India Meteorological Department turns out to be.

Meanwhile, the good news is the Centre, on Saturday, cutting the excise duty on diesel by Rs 6/litre and many states also announcing reductions. That should have a further salutary effect on food inflation in the coming days.

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# Ram Mohan Roy's legacy and its renewed relevance, 250 years on

PAROMITA CHAKRABARTI  
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

ONE OF the most influential social and religious reformers of the 19th century, Ram Mohan Roy, born on May 22, 1772, in what was then Bengal Presidency's Radhanagar in Hooghly district, would have turned 250 on Sunday. Amid changing social and religious circumstances in India, Roy's work in the spheres of women's emancipation, modernising education and seeking changes to religious orthodoxy finds new relevance.

### Early life

Born into a prosperous Brahmin family, Ram Mohan Roy grew up when orthodox caste practices such as child marriage, polygamy and dowry were prevalent among the higher castes. He was himself married more than once in his childhood. The family's affluence also made the best in education ac-

cessible to him. Roy knew Bengali and Persian, but also Arabic, Sanskrit, and later, English. His exposure to the literature and culture of these languages bred in him a scepticism towards religious dogmas and social strictures. In particular, he chafed at practices such as Sati; his own sister-in-law had been a victim of Sati after his elder brother's death.

This was a time when the Mughals were waning and the East India Company was on the ascendancy in Bengal. Roy spent considerable time studying the Vedas and the Upanishads, but also religious texts of Islam and Christianity. He was intrigued by the Unitarian faction of Christianity and drawn by the precepts of monotheism. He wrote extensively on matters of theology, polity and human rights, and translated Sanskrit texts into Bengali, making them accessible.

"Ram Mohan did not quite make a distinction between the religious and the secular. He believed religion to be the site of all fundamental changes. What he fought was not re-

ligion but what he believed to be its perversion... (Rabindranath) Tagore called him a 'Bharatpathik' by which he meant to say that Ram Mohan combined in his person the underlying spirit of Indic civilisation, its spirit of pluralism, tolerance and a cosmic respect for all forms of life," said historian Amiya P Sen, Sivadani Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, and author of *Rammohun Roy: A Critical Biography* (2012).

### First among liberals

Even though British consolidation of power was still at a nascent stage at the time, Roy could sense that change was afoot. Confident about the strength of his heritage



Ram Mohan Roy's portrait by Rembrandt Peale. *Wikipedia*

solitude but with the practical objective of securing human happiness and freedom. That made him a modern man."

In 1814, he started the Atmiya Sabha (Society of Friends), to nurture philosophical discussions on the idea of monotheism in Vedanta and to campaign against idolatry,

casteism, child marriage and other social ills. The Atmiya Sabha would make way for the Brahmo Sabha in 1828, set up with Debendranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore's father.

### Sati abolition, other reforms

During his 15 years in Calcutta, Roy became a prominent public intellectual. He campaigned for the modernisation of education, in particular the introduction of a Western curriculum, and started several educational institutions. In 1817, he collaborated with Scottish philanthropist David Hare to set up the Hindu College (now, Presidency University). The Anglo-Hindu School followed in 1822 and, in 1830, he assisted Alexander Duff in setting up the General Assembly's Institution (later Scottish Church College).

His relentless advocacy alongside contemporaries such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar finally led to the abolition of Sati under the governor-generalship of William Bentinck in 1829. Roy argued for the property

rights of women, and petitioned the British for freedom of the press (in 1829 and 1830).

His Brahmo Sabha, which later became the Brahmo Samaj, evolved as a reaction against the upper-caste stranglehold on social customs. During the Bengal Renaissance, it ushered in social changes and birthed the Brahmo religion, a reformed spiritual Hinduism that believes in monotheism and the uniformity of all men, irrespective of caste, class or creed.

Non-conformism brought its share of infamy. Roy, who was given the title of Raja by the Mughal emperor Akbar II, and who was among the first Indians to gain recognition in the UK and in America for his radical thoughts, was also often attacked by his own countrymen who felt threatened by his reformist agenda, and by British reformers and functionaries whose views differed from his.

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## TOP OF THE WORLD



At a polling station in Bangkok, Sunday. AP

## THAILAND

## Bangkok votes for governor 1st time since coup

VOTERS IN the Thai capital headed to the polls Sunday to elect a new governor in a contest delayed by a military coup that still reflects a divided country with main candidates either supported by the conservative establishment or the liberal opposition. A record 31 candidates entered the race, but the battle being watched most closely is between two who registered as independents. The candidates campaigned on issues including congestion, pollution and persistent flooding. AP

## IRAN

## Revolutionary Guard colonel shot dead

A SENIOR member of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard was killed outside his home in Tehran on Sunday by unidentified gunmen on a motorbike, state TV reported. Although the Guard gave only scant detail about the attack that occurred in broad daylight in the heart of Iran's capital, the group blamed the killing on "global arrogance," typically code for the United States and Israel. The two assailants shot Col. Hassan Sayad Khodadadi five times in his unarmoured Iranian-made Kia Pride, state media said. AP

## FRANCE

## New minister for the disabled accused of rape

DAMIEN ABAD, France's newly appointed minister for Solidarity and the Disabled, has denied he raped two women, following accusations published on Sunday by the Mediapart website in an article based on interviews with the women. The women quoted by Mediapart said Abad had forced them to have unwanted sexual relationships with him in late 2010 and early 2011, they said. "I contest with the greatest force these accusations of sexual violence," he said in a statement. "The sexual relations I have had throughout my life have always been by mutual consent." REUTERS

## ZELENSKY SEEMS TOUGHER SANCTIONS

## Poland PM in Kyiv, addresses Parliament: Only Ukraine has right to decide its future

As strikes intensify in Donbas, lead negotiator rules out giving territorial concessions to Moscow

## REUTERS

KYIV, MAY 22

UKRAINE RULED out a ceasefire or any territorial concessions to Moscow as Russia stepped up its attack in the country's east and south, pounding the Donbas and Mykolaiv regions with air strikes and artillery fire.

"The war must end with the complete restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty," Ukraine's presidential chief of staff Andriy Yermak said in a Twitter post on Sunday.

The comments came as Polish President Andrzej Duda told lawmakers in Kyiv on Sunday the international community had to demand Russia's complete withdrawal and that sacrificing any of it would be a "huge blow" to the entire West.

"Worrying voices have appeared, saying that Ukraine should give in to (President Vladimir) Putin's demands," Duda said, the first foreign leader to address Ukrainian parliament in person since Russia's Feb. 24 invasion. "Only Ukraine has the right to decide about its future," he said.

Speaking to the same parliamentary session, Ukrainian



Poland President Andrzej Duda in the Ukrainian Parliament on Sunday. Reuters

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy renewed a plea for stronger economic sanctions against Moscow. "Half-measures should not be used when aggression should be stopped," he said.

Shortly after both finished speaking, an air raid siren was heard in the capital.

Meanwhile, Russia pressed its offensive in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region Sunday. The heaviest fighting focused around

the twin cities of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk, interior ministry adviser Vadym Denysenko told Ukrainian television.

Russia's defence ministry said on Sunday its forces pummeled Ukrainian command centres, troops and ammunition depots in Donbas and the Mykolaiv region in the south with air strikes and artillery.

Ukraine's lead negotiator,

Zelenskiy adviser Mykhailo Podolyak, ruled out any territorial concessions and rejected calls for an immediate ceasefire, saying it meant Russian troops would stay in occupied territories, which Kyiv could not accept.

"The (Russian) forces must leave the country and after that the resumption of the peace process will be possible," Podolyak said in an interview with Reuters on Saturday.

## Fate of 2,500 POWs from Mariupol plant stirs concern

Pokrovsk, Ukraine: With Russia claiming to have taken prisoner nearly 2,500 Ukrainian fighters from the besieged Mariupol steel plant, concerns grew about their fate. Russia has declared its full control of the Azovstal steel plant, which for weeks was the last holdout in Mariupol.

Denis Pushilin, the pro-Kremlin head of an area of eastern Ukraine controlled by separatists, said the captured fighters were sure to face a tribunal. Russian officials and state media have sought to characterize the fighters as neo-Nazis and criminals. "I believe that justice must be restored," Russian state news agency Tass quoted Pushilin as saying.

A prominent member of Russia's parliament, Leonid Slutsky, said Moscow was studying possibility of exchanging the fighters for Viktor Medvedchuk, a Ukrainian with close ties to Putin who faces criminal charges in Ukraine. He later walked back those remarks. AP



US President Joe Biden arrives in Tokyo on Sunday. Reuters

## Biden visits Japan to launch economic plan to counter Beijing

## REUTERS

TOKYO, MAY 22

PRESIDENT JOE Biden arrived in Japan on Sunday to launch a plan for greater US economic engagement with the Indo-Pacific.

On the second leg of his first Asia trip as president, Biden is to meet with leaders of Japan, India and Australia, the "Quad," another cornerstone of his strategy to push back against China.

Biden met with Japanese business leaders in Tokyo shortly after arriving, said a person familiar with the matter.

On Monday, he will meet Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, to discuss Japan's plans to expand its military reach in response to China's growing might.

Biden on Monday plans to roll out the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), a programme to bind regional countries more closely.

Beijing appeared to take a dim view of the planned IPEF.

## Message for N Korea's Kim: 'Hello... Period'

Seoul: As US President Joe Biden was leaving Seoul for Japan, he had a simple message for North Korea's Kim Jong Un: "Hello... period."

Biden said he was "not concerned" about new North Korean nuclear tests, which would be the first in nearly five years. But his wry response when asked what message he had for Kim underscored the administration's low-key approach to the unresolved tensions with North Korea. REUTERS

"China welcomes initiatives conducive to strengthening regional cooperation but 'opposes attempts to create division and confrontation'," Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in a statement.

## The Godfather, on the beach: An offer one could not refuse



## EXPRESS IN CANNES

SHUBHRA GUPTA

MAY 22

A MAN sacked from his job at a slaughter-house makes his way home on a snow-laden night, hitching rides. As Mathias (Martin Gregore) enters his tiny town in rural Transylvania and gets off in front of his house, we see a fox run out of the bushes. Clearly, this is a place where people live in close proximity with nature: there are lumbering bears in the forest which abuts the town, and there are beasts who live in the houses.

"RMN", Cristian Mungiu's slow burn of a movie pulls back from the specific — a man who is at odds with his wife and his life — to the universal, townspeople riven by a visceral suspicion of the other. And that other could be ethnic Romanians (gypsy is not an endearing term in those parts), Bulgarians, Germans, and a group of Sri Lankan immigrants.

These people are dirty, yells a woman at a town meeting, face contorted in fury. And they put their hands in our bread. She is referring to the Sri Lankans employed by the local bakery where they work long hours for very little money, but we can hear

echoes of this kind of anger against 'outsiders' everywhere.

In this microcosm set in a small European town is a larger story which speaks to snow-balling provincialism, xenophobia, and ugly racism. RMN makes a powerful case for blurring boundaries between people.

## 'Brother and Sister'

The beauteous Marion Cotillard plays unforgiving sister to Melvil Poupaud's agonised brother in Cannes veteran Arnaud Desplechin's 'Brother and Sister'. The enmity between them is deep, but nowhere in the nearly two-hour long film do we find concrete reasons for it.

Cotillard and Poupaud deliver intense performances, as they circle around each other, but after a point, our inquisitiveness turns into indifference: what is with these two fifty-something siblings? Will they, or will they not reconcile?

## 'The Godfather'

The highlight of my day was the open-air beach screening of the restored version of 'The Godfather', which is celebrating its fiftieth year. Francis Ford Coppola's classic drew massive crowds at the Cinema de Plage. I've seen the film many times before, but the promise of this very Cannes experience pushed other things to the side: in Don Corleone's immortal words, it was an offer I couldn't, and didn't want to, refuse.

FULL REPORT ON [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)



## COUNTER VIEW

A resident fixes a banner on a balcony in Davos, Switzerland, to protest against the World Economic Forum. The WEF, an event that sees the world's business and political elite hobnob for days, is back two years after the Covid-19 pandemic struck. Reuters

## Sri Lanka minister warns to stop fuel delivery after arson

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, MAY 22

THE SRI LANKAN government has warned that it will suspend the delivery of fuel if transporters are threatened, after an angry mob torched a petrol pump owner's house in the country's North Central Province.

Spontaneous protests have been reported at the filling stations across the country where consumers have been waiting in long serpentine queues for fuel for hours on end.

Minister of Power and Energy Kanchana Wijesekera

said if the public continues to threaten the truckers delivering the fuel, then the government will have to suspend fuel deliveries for the safety of the transport workforce.

On Saturday, the residence of a fuel station owner and dealer in Anuradhapura, situated in Sri Lanka's North Central Province, was torched by an irate mob after the station ran out of fuel.

Citing obstructions and threat calls, the Ceylon Petroleum Private Tanker Owners' Association on Sunday requested police protection while transporting fuel, online portal the Daily Mirror reported.



A cargo ship carrying humanitarian aid from India arrives at a port in Colombo on Sunday. AP

Wijesekera, meanwhile, said a ship carrying petrol had begun unloading in Colombo port on Saturday night, and another ship carrying petrol is scheduled to arrive on May 25.

Sri Lankan police on Sunday began a nation-wide raid on those hoarding fuel for resale. Police spokesman Nihal Thaldudu has warned that anyone keeping unauthorised fuel and cooking gas would face arrest.

India on Saturday provided another 40,000 metric tonnes of diesel to Sri Lanka under the credit line facility to the island nation which is grappling with its worst economic crisis.

## SEEKING HELP TO CURE DEPRESSION USING HALLUCINOGENS SUCH AS TOAD POISON

## 'I want to reset my brain': Female US veterans turn to psychedelic therapy

ERNESTO LONDOÑO TIJUANA, MEXICO

PLUMES OF incense swirled through the dimly lit living room as seven women took turns explaining what drove them to sign up for a weekend of psychedelic therapy at a villa in northern Mexico with sweeping ocean views.

A former US Marine said she hoped to connect with the spirit of her mother, who killed herself 11 years ago. An Army veteran said she had been sexually assaulted by a relative as a child. A handful of veterans said they had been sexually assaulted by fellow service members.

The wife of a Navy bomb dis-

posal expert choked up as she lamented that years of unrelenting combat missions had turned her husband into an absent, dysfunctional father.

Kristine Bostwick, 38, a former Navy corpsman, said she hoped that putting her mind through ceremonies with mind-altering substances would help her make peace with the end of a turbulent marriage and perhaps ease the migraines that had become a daily torment.

"I want to reset my brain from the bottom up," she said during the introductory session of a recent three-day retreat, wiping away tears. "My kids deserve it. I deserve it."

A growing body of research into the therapeutic benefits of

psychedelic therapy has generated enthusiasm among some psychiatrists and venture capitalists.

Measures to decriminalise psychedelics, fund research into their healing potential and establish frameworks for their medicinal use have been passed with bipartisan support in city councils and state legislatures across the United States in recent years.

Much of the expanding appeal of such treatments has been driven by veterans of America's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Having turned to experimental therapies to treat post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries, addiction and depression, many former military members have become effusive advocates for a wider embrace



A ceremony initiating the psychedelic retreat. Meredith Kohut/ NYT

of psychedelics.

Psychedelic retreat participants often pay thousands of dollars for the experience. But

these female veterans and spouses of veterans who had traveled to Mexico for treatment at the Mission Within were at-

tending for free, courtesy of the Heroic Hearts Project and the Hope Project. The groups, founded by an Army ranger and the wife of a Navy SEAL, raise money to make psychedelic therapy affordable for people from military backgrounds.

The Mission Within, on the outskirts of Tijuana, is run by Dr. Martin Polanco, who since 2017 has focused almost exclusively on treating veterans.

Dr. Polanco said he had treated more than 600 American veterans in Mexico. "They understand what it takes to achieve peak performance."

In the beginning, he said, he treated male veterans almost exclusively. But recently, he started receiving many requests from fe-

male veterans and military wives and began running women-only retreats.

With the exception of clinical trials, psychedelic therapy is currently performed underground or under nebulous legality. As demand soars, a handful of countries in Latin America, including Costa Rica, Jamaica and Mexico, have become hubs for experimental protocols and clinical studies.

In Mexico, two of the substances that Dr. Polanco administers — ibogaine, a plant-based psychoactive commonly used to treat addiction, and 5-MeO-DMT, a powerful hallucinogen derived from the poison of the Sonoran desert toad — are neither unlawful nor approved for

medical use. The third, psilocybin mushrooms, may be taken legally in ceremonies that follow Indigenous traditions.

Dr. Charles Nemeroff, the chairman of the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Texas at Austin, which recently started a center for psychedelic research, said that the hype about the curative potential of psychedelics has outpaced hard evidence. The risks — which include episodes of psychosis — are considerable, he said.

The women at the Mexico retreat understood the risks. But several said they had lost faith in conventional treatments like antidepressants and had heard enough inspiring stories from friends to take a leap of faith. NYT



# Thiem out of sync, out of French Open

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
PARIS, MAY 22

IT ALL used to come so easily for Dominic Thiem on a tennis court \_ his powerful forehand, his elegant backhand, his hit-which-shot-when calculations, all fine-tuned to the point of a title at the U.S. Open and three other Grand Slam final appearances, including two at Roland Garros.

Nowadays, even though the pain from last year's torn tendon in his right wrist is no longer there, the strokes and, most disconcertingly, the wherewithal, are not what they once were, to the extent that his first-round exit at the French Open on Sunday was his 10th consecutive loss. The situation has become dire enough that Thiem, a 28-year-old Austrian once ranked No. 3 but now No. 194, acknowledged after being beaten 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 by Hugo Delien that perhaps it's time for him to head to the lower-level Challenger Tour to get a win and gain some confidence.

After lamenting his forehand, his backhand and a too-low first-serve percentage, Thiem got to the bigger issue: "Sometimes, I do really stupid decisions during the rally, drop shots or down-the-line (groundstrokes) at the wrong moment. (In) match match situations, I'm not playing well. ... Then, for example, there was one game today where I did four or five forehand return mistakes in a row, where I'm thinking, 'What the heck is happening?'" His quick departure was not the only noteworthy development on a cloudy, occasionally drizzly Day 1 at the year's second major tennis tournament, which welcomed back pre-pandemic sights and sounds of full attendance and no masks in the stands.

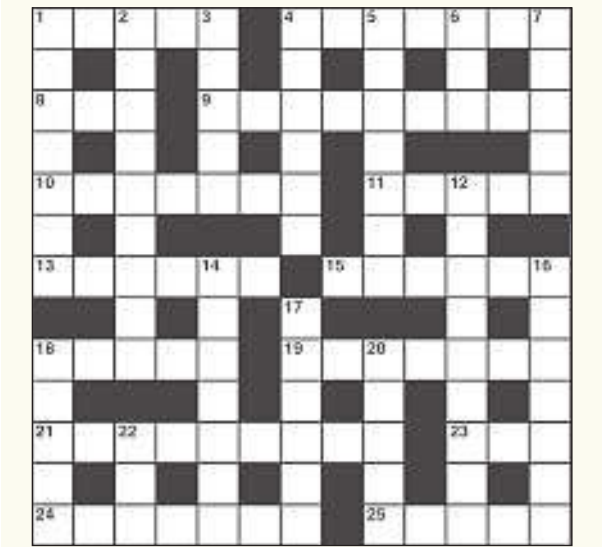
Given Thiem's troubles \_ sure, he was the runner-up to Rafael Nadal in Paris in 2018 and 2019, and to Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open in 2020, but his last victory came in May 2021 \_ there were other results that probably were more surprising.

Chiefly in that category would be No. 6 seed Ons Jabeur's 3-6, 7-6 (4), 7-5 loss to 56th-ranked Magda Linette of Poland.

Jabeur, a Tunisian who is the first Arab woman to win a WTA title and first to reach a Grand Slam quarterfinal, acknowledged: "I was expecting myself to go far in this tournament." As were others. That's because Jabeur began the day with a tour-leading 17 wins on clay this season, including taking the title at the Madrid Open and reaching the final of the Italian Open.

Another top-10 women's seed \_ and the 2016 champion at the place \_ was sent home when Garbine Muguruza was defeated 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 by 46th-ranked Kaia Kanepi of Estonia. Muguruza beat Serena Williams in the final at Roland Garros six years ago and Venus Williams in the final at Wimbledon in 2017, but she now has lost her opening match in Paris two straight years.

## CROSSWORD 4747



- ACROSS
- 1 Group tutorial (5)
- 4 Get mail perhaps but not without delay (4,3)
- 8 A low sound (3)
- 9 Goes ashore in South Africa to get the picture (9)
- 10 A sitter becoming a performer (7)
- 11 Not rounds used in an erratic salvo (5)
- 13 One can never be sure if one has them (6)
- 15 Dazed state possibly produced by Proust (6)
- 18 You may play it but don't let little Josephine (5)
- 19 Jams and preserves (7)
- 21 A plain fellow treated like a doormat (7,2)
- 23 One note produces anger (3)
- 24 Wrings out (7)
- 25 Do some spade work - for the figure (5)
- DOWN
- 1 Order the ambitious officer hopes to get (7)
- 2 A call for military revolution (5,4)
- 3 These are sure to be brisk for beer on board (5)
- 4 Well-filled vessel (6)
- 5 Fail to include something so I must be corrected (4,3)
- 6 Start leading the field (3)
- 7 Think of Americans (5)
- 12 A northerner brought up fish that's frightful (9)
- 14 Soldier puts nothing in report sent back (7)
- 16 Relation to treat with consideration (7)
- 17 Pass around the quarterdeck (6)
- 18 Cook and sew (5)
- 20 Dance around when beaten (5)
- 22 Take food from the attendant (3)

Solutions Crossword 4746: Across: 1 Perfect fit, 8 Put on, 9 Allured, 10 Student, 11 Growl, 12 Totems, 14 Lyrics, 17 Venus, 19 Umbrage, 21 Lariats, 22 Waist, 23 Headstrong, Down: 2 Entrust, 3 Fence, 4 Chaste, 5 Fall guy, 6 Torso, 7 Adolescent, 8 Positively, 13 Mascara, 15 Italian, 16 Nurses, 18 North, 20 Bowler.

## JUMBLED WORDS

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

\_\_\_\_\_ are just a way of showing other people that we have respect for them - Bill Kelly (4,7)

KMAER

AETDNN

COOPS

AENTGM

Answer: Good manners are just a way of showing other people that we have respect for them - Bill Kelly



# Patel hopes FIFA doesn't ban India after SC intervention

MIHIR VASAVDA  
MAY 22

FEARING A FIFA ban, which could grind most activities to a halt, former All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Praful Patel said he will talk to FIFA president Gianni Infantino and secretary-general Fatma Samoura to request them not to take such strong action. Patel also said he'll speak with the Supreme Court-appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA) and ask them to expedite the election process, underlining that 'dragging this issue can be very disastrous' for Indian football.

On Wednesday, due to a logjam in finalising AIFF's constitution to hold elections, the Supreme Court formed a three-member CoA to look after the day-to-day affairs of the federation, thus bringing an unceremonious end to Patel's stint as president. The Supreme Court also empowered the CoA - comprising Justice Anil Dave, ex-Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi and former India captain Bhaskar Ganguly - 'to take decisions on holding of tournaments, selection of players and all other matters necessary for the proper governance of the federation.'

Patel said the AIFF lawyers had pointed out to the court that this could amount to third-party interference and thus violate FIFA's statutes, leading to India's suspension. "All possible scenarios were pointed out and after that, it was up to the honourable court to decide," Patel, whose term officially ended in December 2020, said. "There was a phone call from FIFA on Friday asking for the order of the Supreme Court as they wanted to study that."

As per FIFA statutes, its Congress can suspend a member association at the request of the Council. However, the all-powerful FIFA Council can also temporarily suspend an association with immediate effect without a vote in the Congress.

The impact of FIFA's suspension could be 'drastic', Patel said. To start with, it could lead to India being thrown out of the Asian Cup qualifiers, which are scheduled to begin in Kolkata on June 8. The country could also lose the hosting rights of the Under-17 Women's World Cup, set to take place in October this year, Indian clubs will be barred from competing in continental tournaments and additionally, they will also be unable to sign foreign players other than those already on their rosters.

As per the court order, the CoA has been given time until July 15 to finalise the draft of the constitution before the next hearing takes place on July 21. The CoA has hinted that elections will be held within two or three months from the day the court approves the new constitution.



Former AIFF head Praful Patel says he will talk to the world body, and wants CoA to expedite election process

## 'Don't underestimate FIFA's power'

Patel said he will use his position as a Council member to request his colleagues to give the country time till July-end to complete the election process. "I don't want to pre-judge. FIFA is like a government, it's systems-driven. You have seen how FIFA reacts very strongly. They have suspended major football countries," Patel said, adding that he got an impression that 'AFC and FIFA legal teams have offered their services to quickly find a solution.' "I will do my best to tell them that if the court allows early elections, do not punish Indian football, but that can only be in the form of a request. I will do my best to talk to them in writing and in person."

The Rajya Sabha member added: "Dragging this issue can be very disastrous. If it's expeditiously dealt with, it'll be the best for Indian football. In the BCCI, we saw years and years of the CoA running the sport. For the ICC, if India doesn't play, there's no cricket in the world. In football, if India doesn't play, no one will miss it. I can't tell the courts what to do, but my suggestion is, please do not underestimate FIFA's strength to take radical decisions."

Patel looked back at his decade-plus long stint as the head of Indian football, which has been riddled with controversies, without any regrets and 'with a sense of satisfaction that one has laid the foundation for many more years to come.'

During his tenure, the AIFF was accused of succumbing to pressure from its commercial rights holders, IMG-Reliance (now Reliance Sports), on many football-related issues. And while the federation's dependence on corporate sponsors' money increased, its

government grant got slashed due to poor performance of the national team.

Patel insisted that the government support for football has always been 'very minimal' and lashed out at their policies. "They say 'you win a medal and we'll give you more money'. This is not the right approach. How can you say that? It's a very ridiculous argument," Patel said.

## 'Challenge to balance interests'

The career politician accepted it was a 'challenge' to balance the interests of corporates who pour in money, but said he 'never let anybody dictate the way AIFF does its duty.' "Nobody is doing charity. They give us money and get rights for lots of things," Patel said.

He cited the example of the impending merger of the Indian Super League and I-League, which has been one of the prickliest issues of his tenure.

"There was so much resistance from our partners (to merge the two leagues). But we could not let Indian football be driven by a closed league that would destroy it in the future. I can say with a sense of pride that I did push for it. I said, 'nothing doing, unless this issue is resolved, there is no future for Indian football'."

From next season onwards, the winners of the I-League will get promoted to the ISL, and from the 2024-25 season, a promotion-relegation system will be introduced in the top division. "The next people (in charge of AIFF) also will face that challenge. Integrating ISL with I-League will be a major challenge," he said, guaranteeing that there will be no going back on the merger promises already made.

## 'My position in politics would've helped AIFF than hurt them'

Patel said juggling issues like these showed that heading a federation required people with all kinds of skill-sets, going against the argument that former players should be elected to the top posts. Last month, the Madras High Court observed that only sportspersons, and not politicians, should be office-bearers of sports federations.

Patel said a democratic process should be followed to elect office-bearers, and everyone should be allowed to be a part of it. "Administration of football has nothing to do with just understanding the game. I understand the game as well but running the federation is not playing the game. The leader of the federation has to be administering the game, and balance various interests," he said. "I don't think it is right to say politicians cannot perform a job. My position in politics would have helped the AIFF on more occasions than hurt them."

## ASIA CUP

# Sardar's coaching debut talking point as India face Pak

MIHIR VASAVDA  
MAY 22

BIRENDRA LAKRA and SV Sunil smiled sheepishly when asked how they felt playing in a team coached by former teammate and captain Sardar Singh. "It's not weird under him. He's a strict disciplinarian," Sunil said. Lakra chipped in: "He has been a role model. He's always been known for his fitness and discipline."

It's come full circle for the trio that formed the core of the team when India clinched the Asia Cup at the previous edition in 2017. Then, after heading in different directions, they are reunited.

Sunil, playing his fourth Asia Cup, a testimony to his longevity, was on a sabbatical when he was summoned to join the training camp for the Commonwealth Games. Lakra was enjoying his retirement, juggling time between family and office work, when he, too, got the call-up. Sardar, who'd been earning his coaching credentials, had been waiting for this opportunity.

The Asia Cup, starting in Jakarta on Monday, might not be of huge significance for the defending champions. The teams that reach the semifinals of the tournament will make it to January's World Cup, but India, being hosts, do not have to worry about qualification. Yet, when they take the field against Pakistan in their opening match, there'll be some fascinating storylines to follow. Sardar's debut in the dugout - he'll be working alongside junior team coach BJ Kariappa - will be one of them.

The other important thread to follow during the tournament will be the return of Simranjeet Singh. The forward last played in India's bronze medal playoff at the Tokyo Olympics against Germany, where he scored two goals that had a decisive role in the outcome of the match.

Since then, he'd been nursing an injury and missed all Pro League matches as well as the Asian Champions Trophy.

## New faces

Simranjeet's comeback, coupled with the return of Sunil and Lakra, will be crucial for India given that the rest of the team has little-to-no senior international experience. Ten players, who were all part of last year's junior World Cup, will make their senior team debut on Monday. This includes the likes of drag-flicker Yashdeep Siwach, defenders Abhishek Lakra and Manjeet, midfielder Vishnukant Singh and forward Uttam Singh. Midfielders Mareeswaren Sakthivel and Sheshe Gowda BM, and forwards Abharan Sudev, Pawan Rajbhar and S Karthi will also make their first India appearances on Monday. The youngsters will immediately be thrown at the deep end when they open



Sardar Singh will be working alongside junior team coach BJ Kariappa.

## Simranjeet's comeback, coupled with the return of Sunil and Lakra, will be crucial for India given that the rest of the team has little-to-no senior international experience.

their campaign against Pakistan, who too have travelled with a young squad as part of their rebuilding process.

"We'll need to motivate them, guide them. If we get affected by the excitement and the pressure of playing Pakistan, the younger players too will come under pressure," Sunil said.

This young bunch, led by two veterans and coached by a former India captain, was selected for this tournament as preparation for July-August's Commonwealth Games. With an eye on the Asian Games, India had decided to send their second-string squad to Birmingham. To give the hastily-assembled group some match practice, Hockey India chose to send the group for the Asia Cup, where not a lot is at stake from an Indian point of view.

Now with the Asian Games postponed, it's unclear whether the main playing group coached by Graham Reid will take part at the CWG or the team currently in Jakarta.

The players aren't fretting over it. "I am at a stage of my career where I approach each tournament as if it's my last," Sunil said. "So, I hope to win this one, and not worry about what's in store in the future."

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## SUDOKU 4843

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

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



## SOLUTION SUDOKU 4842



## DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

### ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

May I advise you to keep a close watch on all financial transactions? Today's epic planetary influences will have an amazing range of effects, but the impact on your financial, emotional and material security seems to be greatest. If competing for a prize, go for broke.

### TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Tomorrow's challenging lunar pattern is already casting its shadow over your affairs in the nicest possible way. This will be an optimum weekend for creative expression, cultural events, romantic encounters and happy relationships with children.

### GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

You may imagine that you know what is going on, but you are probably mistaken. Rarely have you been so likely to pick up the wrong end of the stick. Please take proper advice in all legal, foreign and travel matters. After all, if you're properly prepared, then you'll be one step ahead of the game.

### CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Jupiter and Venus are as benevolent a pair of planets as you could wish to have watching over you. Generosity on your part will win friends and impress people, protecting you in the present and gaining you allies for the future: give now to receive later.

### LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

With so much planetary activity taking place today, chiefly a stunning Sun-Moon angle, you'd do very well to take centre stage. Watch out for flying missiles, though, and duck if anything comes in your direction. Emotionally, by the way, family relationships take first place.

### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

I am sure that you have been put out, pushed around and generally had your interests ignored, but then that's all part of life's rich tapestry. This is no time to complain about the world being unfair. You'll just have to live with it like everyone else.

### LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Recent unexpected developments at work have not undermined your confidence or commitment. Far from it. If your professional or worldly ambitions have been dented, I suspect that the real cause lies elsewhere. An intimate relationship could be proving costly, but a generous gesture will be worth it.

### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Today's lunar alignments are about the most intriguing that there have been for a long time. The news will be exciting, even if you are enjoying placid times. It's doubly significant for all new relationships, so go forward with hope in your heart.

### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

All the extraordinary planetary activity now taking place must be harnessed and used to channel your noble and selfless instincts. You have a clear choice whether to go all out for personal interest or to realise that material security is, in the grand scheme of things, purely temporary.

### CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

It's a day of major planetary configurations, but whether you are directly involved in today's dramatic events, or merely a passive observer is a moot point. I take the view that the latter is more likely. That way you can put your feet up while partners pick up the pieces.

### AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Today's lunar patterns are among the most striking to hit your sign for a good few months. If you're not knocked slightly off course there'll be something wrong, for it means that you're not directly in tune with your stars. After all, nobody promised it would be easy.

### PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

A helpful aspect between the Sun and Jupiter is only one of a series of benevolent planetary alignments which is causing you to think again. There'll probably be a major mystery to solve. The answers will come next month, but you might not get the full picture for another three months.



Lucknow



## 14 SPORT

## PLAYING TODAY

Hockey: Asia Cup  
India vs Pakistan; 5pm  
Live on Star Sports Network  
French Open  
Live on Sony Sports Network, 2.30pm

## Man City eclipse rivals United to become EPL's dominant force

SHASHANK NAIR  
MAY 22

JUST DAYS before Manchester City won their fourth league title in five years, Pep Guardiola compared his team's consistency in winning the Premier League to Alex Ferguson's golden era when he achieved the same level of dominance. Perhaps, it was a statement designed to rub salt into the wounds of their neighbours.

On Sunday, Guardiola and City won the title in a dramatic finale. City came back from 0-2 down to beat Aston Villa 3-2 with Liverpool breathing down their necks.

When a cash-strapped City was bought by Sheikh Mansour, their initial days of playing catch-up to an English football dynasty prompted a 'money can't buy everything' admonition. Yet City stuck to their guns, stressing that their project had nothing to do with United.

City's 2011-12 title confirmed that the threat was real. Ferguson came back next season to win the Premier League, but the writing was on the wall.

In 2012, City hired Ferran Soriano and Txiki Begiristain – the architects of Barcelona's famed success in the late 2000s and early 2010s. The owners of City Football Group then opened a £200m football campus – one that left behind Manchester United's famed youth facilities in the rear-view mirror by some margin.

Just as City continued to lay the red carpet for one of the greatest managers football has seen, United embarked on life after Ferguson and club CEO David Gill. City waited while Guardiola took over Bayern Munich. And in 2016, they finally had their target.

During this time, and in the years to come, City flouted financial rules, unlike any club before them with inflated sponsorship deals. When they were taken to task by UEFA for breaking Financial Fair Play rules, the Court of Arbitration for Sport provided the Citizens with get-out-of-jail cards. Money talked and titles started to flow.

Meanwhile, at the other end of town, a club geared towards proactively searching for the best deals in the market was now trying to break transfer records in a desperate attempt to close the gap. In three seasons at United, Jose Mourinho, Guardiola's eternal rival, had a net transfer spend of just under 315 million pounds. The money resulted in Paul Pogba, Romelu Lukaku and Zlatan Ibrahimovic signing for the Red Devils.

While rebuilds and managerial changes were taking place at United, City's golden period under Guardiola began in 2017. Their closest challenge has come from Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool, who managed to win their first-ever Premier League title, spending far less, but wisely. The Champions League is the only crown that evades the Citizens but signing a striker like Erling Braut Haaland could wipe away that blemish as well.

**When a cash-strapped City was bought by Sheikh Mansour, their initial days of playing catch-up to an English football dynasty prompted a 'money can't buy everything' admonition**

## COUNTY TO COUNTRY

## IPL snub turns out to be blessing in disguise as Pujara returns

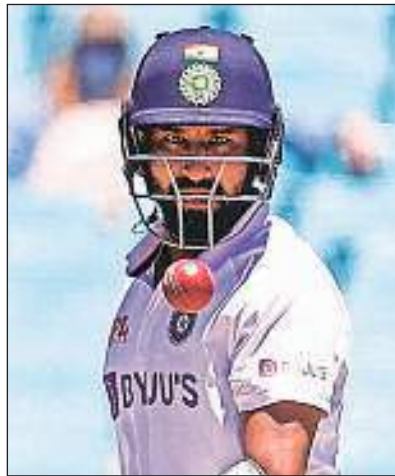
DEVENDRA PANDEY  
MAY 22

GOING UNSOLD in the Indian Premier League auction in February has turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Cheteshwar Pujara. While the IPL was on, Pujara travelled to England for a highly successful county stint with Sussex, which has helped him force his way back into the India Test squad for the deciding Birmingham Test in July.

"You can say that now in hindsight. Had I been picked by an IPL team, there were major chances that I wouldn't have got any games. I would have just gone (to nets) and practised. Getting match practice and practice in the nets is always different. So when the county thing happened, I just said yes. The major reason I said yes was that I wanted my old rhythm back," Pujara told The Indian Express from Paris, where he is on holiday.

With scores of 6, 201 not out, 109, 12, 203, 16, 170\* and 3, Pujara slammed 720 runs for Sussex in five County Championship games at a staggering average of 120 across April and May. The stunning performance raised his hopes of making an India comeback in whites.

"I was positive, there was no doubt about it. The way my county stint went, I was hopeful that I will make a comeback to the Indian team. But when I went to play county cricket, the India comeback was never on my mind; I just wanted to find my rhythm and I knew one big innings would help me find my rhythm back."



Cheteshwar Pujara has scored 720 runs in five County matches for Sussex. *File*

Pujara is back, but the other veteran batsman who had also been dropped for the home Tests against Sri Lanka in March, Ajinkya Rahane, hasn't made it back. The fates of the two middle-order stalwarts had been seemingly intertwined for quite a while. Their struggles to post big runs had played out in parallel; they had fought against their fading fortunes with a brave, counter-attacking century partnership in the second innings of the Johannesburg Test against South Africa in January. Nevertheless, time had appeared to run out when the na-

## How City nearly blew up 14-point cushion &amp; became champions on the final day

In mid-January, Manchester City were coasting to another EPL title. Guardiola's side had opened up a 14-point gap over Liverpool. However, Liverpool's incredible form since the start of 2022, coupled with a few slip-ups by City, helped them trim the lead to just one point by mid-March and take the title race right to the very last day of the season. City, ultimately held on to defend the title

## JANUARY 15

1. MANCHESTER CITY	56 PTS
3. LIVERPOOL	42 PTS

## JANUARY 16

1. MANCHESTER CITY	56 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	45 PTS

Kevin de Bruyne's superb curling shot helps City beat second-placed Chelsea 1-0. City, with the win, race 13 points ahead of Chelsea and 14 more than third-placed Liverpool. The following day, the Reds beat Brentford to move to the second spot but remain 11 points behind the leaders.

## JANUARY 22

1. MANCHESTER CITY	57 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	45 PTS

## JANUARY 23

1. MANCHESTER CITY	57 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	48 PTS

Manchester City drop points away from home to Southampton, who defend deep and hold the reigning champions to a 1-1 draw. The following day, Liverpool make most of City's slip-up by beating Crystal Palace and reducing the gap to nine points.



Manager Pep Guardiola masterminded Manchester City's title run. *Reuters*

## FEBRUARY 19

1. MANCHESTER CITY	63 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	57 PTS

City lose to Tottenham 3-2 while on the same day, Liverpool thrash Norwich City 3-1 to cut the deficit to six points.

## FEBRUARY 25

1. MANCHESTER CITY	63 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	60 PTS

Postponed due to Covid-19, Liverpool play their rescheduled match against Leeds United and thrash them 6-0 to get within three points of Man City.

## MARCH 15

1. MANCHESTER CITY	70 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	66 PTS

## MARCH 17

1. MANCHESTER CITY	70 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	69 PTS

A resilient Crystal Palace hold Manchester City to a goalless draw at Selhurst Park even though Guardiola's team dominated the proceedings.

A couple of days later, Liverpool produce a stunning performance to beat Arsenal 2-0 away from home and cut City's gap at the top to just one point.

## 3-2... No. 1

Down 0-2 to Aston Villa and title slipping out of their grasp, Man City stage stunning fightback to win fourth EPL title in five years

CITY'S TITLE NO. 4 IN 5 YEARS							
	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts	
1. Man City	38	29	6	3	73	93	
2. Liverpool	38	28	8	2	68	92	
■ Manchester City 3 bt Aston Villa 2							
■ Liverpool 3 bt Wolves 1							

## REUTERS

MAY 22

MANCHESTER CITY won their fourth Premier League title in five years on Sunday but nearly let the trophy slip from their hands, coming back from two goals down to beat Aston Villa with three goals inside an electrifying five minutes late in the second half.

After an afternoon of high nerves, laced with fear of Liverpool pipping them to the title at the post, relieved and jubilant City fans poured on to the field at the final whistle.

Matty Cash put Villa in front in the 37th minute with a fine header from a Lucas Digne cross from the left flank, and the mood in the stadium instantly changed. The edgy mood among the home fans turned to desperation after Philippe Coutinho then doubled the lead for Villa with a goal of pure simplicity. Ollie Watkins headed on from a goal kick by keeper Robin Olsen long, and the former Liverpool midfielder Coutinho produced a brilliant first touch to cut inside and then drilled the ball into the bottom corner. Liverpool were level with Wolves at the time of Coutinho's goal, but City knew that a goal for Jurgen Klopp's side could now take the title away from them.

But then came the City comeback blitz that sealed the title regardless of events at Anfield. Two substitutes combined for the first, with Ilkay Gundogan heading in a Raheem Sterling cross at the back post in the 76th minute. Half-time substitute Oleksandr Zinchenko, on the left flank, then showed composure to pull back to Rodri, and the Spaniard delivered a pinpoint finish – side-footing into the bottom corner from 20 metres out. The title-winning goal came in the 81st minute when De Bruyne whipped in a low cross to Gundogan, who tapped in from close range, sending the crowd into rapturous delight.



Manchester City players celebrate after winning their fourth Premier League title in five years on Sunday. *Reuters*

## SPURS TAKE FINAL CL SPOT

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
4. Spurs	38	22	5	11	29	71
5. Arsenal	38	22	3	13	13	69

■ Norwich 0 lost to Tottenham 5  
■ Arsenal 5 bt Everton 1

dominance. However, Tottenham Hotspur's 5-0 thrashing of Norwich City ensured they remained fourth, leaving Arsenal in fifth.

The Londoners, who last played in the Champions League in 2016-17 after 19 straight years of qualifying under Arsene Wenger, will have to settle for a place in the Europa League, which itself is something of a success after they began the season with three straight defeats.

Two goals from Dejan Kulusevski for Tottenham and Heung-Min Son, and a Harry Kane header guaranteed Antonio Conte's side a fourth-place finish and a spot in Europe's elite club competition for the first time in three seasons.

At full time the home fans gave Arsenal a good send-off after a troubled season but it was the Everton supporters, still giddy from their great escape on Thursday, who were making all the noise.

## MAN U SEAL EUROPA BERTH

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
6. Man U	38	16	10	12	0	58
7. W. Ham	38	16	8	14	9	56

■ Crystal Palace 1 bt Man Utd 0  
■ Brighton 3 bt West Ham 1

Manchester United secured a ticket to next season's Europa League after they ended their Premier League campaign in sixth place – despite losing 1-0 away at Crystal Palace.

Forward Wilfried Zaha scored against his former team in the first half as Palace celebrated their first-ever Premier League victory over United at home. Ralf Rangnick's tenure as interim manager came to an end with United collecting 58 points, their lowest tally in Premier League history.

## Umrn, Arshdeep get maiden call-ups

*New Delhi:* Umrn Malik and Arshdeep Singh, young pacers with vastly contrasting styles, have been given maiden call-ups to the India squad for the five-match home T20I series against South Africa starting June 9.

With speeds often above 150kph, Sunrisers Hyderabad tearaway Umrn has been among the leading wicket-takers in the IPL, and the sight of him shattering stumps has captured the nation's imagination, although he's gone for runs too. Meanwhile, left-arm Arshdeep has conceded just 7.70 runs an over for Punjab Kings, which is highly creditable considering he is regularly used at the death.

Hardik Pandya and Dinesh Karthik

tional selectors opted to try out fresh talent for the Sri Lanka Tests.

In February, the IPL auction had taken place, where both Pujara and Rahane had put in their names. Pujara would go unsold, and it had seemed even Rahane would, before he was picked up at his base price of Rs 1 crore, the sole bid coming from Kolkata Knight Riders. And that is where, in hindsight, the duo's fortunes diverged.

By the time Pujara began his county stint against Derbyshire on April 14, Rahane's IPL season had ground to a halt after only 80

have made comebacks, riding on their IPL showing. Pandya has led debutants Gujarat Titans to the top of the table, batted responsibly and bowled nearly 25 overs. Karthik, who hasn't played for India since the 2019 World Cup, has finished multiple games for Royal Challengers Bangalore at a strike-rate of 191.33.

**T20I SQUAD:** KL Rahul (Captain), Rituraj Gaikwad, Ishan Kishan, Deepak Hooda, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (vice-captain) (wk), Dinesh Karthik (wk), Hardik Pandya, Venkatesh Iyer, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Harshal Patel, Avesh Khan, Arshdeep Singh, Umrn Malik

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

runs at just a run-a-ball strike rate from his first five matches. From their sixth game on April 15, KKR would drop Rahane. And by the time he got his next game, on May 9, Pujara had racked up 720 runs. A 95-Test veteran churning out doubles and daddy tons in the country where the team is set to play a series decider – the timing, weight and significance of Pujara's runs forced the selectors to bring him back.

For Pujara, the aim at Sussex was to get 150-plus scores. "If you look at my innings in the past, I was getting 80s, 90s, so I never felt

I was out of form even when the big runs were not coming. I was just hoping to get big runs. Big runs means not 100 but 150-plus scores. Because to get back to my usual concentration level, I needed those big scores. And I found that in England. I found my rhythm and as I got those runs, things began to fall in place."

Spending hours batting in the middle is what Pujara is known for, and he said that getting into that mode again also made him more aware of where his fitness levels were. "Once I bat for long, it not only improves concentration, but it also improves fitness. The county stint helped me to see where my fitness stands. One cannot play big innings if one does not have proper fitness. So everything went well," Pujara said.

## Mayank dropped

With KL Rahul returning to the Test squad as vice-captain, and Shubman Gill retaining his spot as well, Mayank Agarwal has been left out. Agarwal opened along with skipper Rohit Sharma in the Sri Lanka Tests and had managed underwhelming scores of 33, 4 and 22. Before that, he had had a tough tour of South Africa, where he could average just 22.5 in six innings.

**TEST SQUAD:** Rohit Sharma (Captain), KL Rahul (vice-captain) Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Hanuma Vihari, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant (wk), KS Bharat (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Shardul Thakur, Mohd Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd Siraj, Umesh Yadav, Prasidh Krishna

## Punjab Kings beat SRH to finish sixth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, MAY 22

PUNJAB KINGS ended their campaign on a winning note, crushing an already demoralised Sunrisers Hyderabad by five wickets in an inconsequential final IPL league match here on Sunday. Battering first, Sunrisers Hyderabad managed only 157 for 8 on a good batting track.

But it was never going to be enough as Liam Livingstone made mincemeat of a hapless SRH attack, scoring 49 not out off 22 balls, and also hitting the coveted 1000th six of the tournament.

Shikhar Dhawan (39 off 32 balls) and Jitesh Sharma (19 off 7 balls) also contributed handsomely to the team's cause as the chase was completed in just 15.1 overs.

Punjab Kings, who haven't made the play-offs since their final appearance in 2014, finished sixth while the Sunrisers ended their high-spending IPL on eighth in the 10-team competition. For Livingstone, it was all about smashing big sixes once again as he hit five in all, while Dhawan helped himself to two fours and two sixes.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Sunrisers Hyderabad 157 for 8 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 43; Harpreet Brar 3/26, Nathan Ellis 3/40) lost to Punjab Kings 160 for 5 in 15.1 overs (Liam Livingstone 49 not out; Fazalhaq Farooqi 2/32) by 5 wickets

