

The Indian EXPRESS

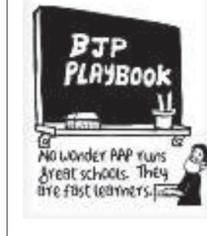
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE
SINCE 1932

MONDAY, MAY 9, 2022, MUMBAI, LATE CITY, 14 PAGES

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Ex Farm Broiler Chicken Rate
 ₹ 132 per kilo
 Retail Sale Rate Live
 ₹ 160 per kilo
 Dressed (with skin)
 ₹ 200 per kilo
 Retail Rate Per Dozen of Eggs
 ₹ 50 per Dozen

BUSINESS AS USUAL
By UNNY



JAHANGIRPURI

Court: Cops accompanied illegal rally, probe if any complicity

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

NOTING THAT there was "utter failure" on the part of Delhi Police in stopping the unauthorised Hanuman Jayanti procession in Jahangirpuri last month that triggered communal clashes in the locality, a local court said the issue "seems to have been simply brushed aside"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Worried India rating may turn junk, govt pushed 'narrative management' strategy

ANISHA DUTTA
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

AS THE country fought the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in mid-2020, the Ministry of Finance's economic division was drafting a strategy to counter the "negative commentary" on India by global think-tanks, indices, and media, amidst worries that this could lead to downgrading of sovereign rating to "junk".

SOVEREIGN RATINGS: DOWN AND UP

MOODY'S

Nov '19: Sovereign rating affirmed at Baa2; outlook changed to negative from stable

June '20: Rating down to Baa3, negative outlook

Oct '21: Affirms Baa3 rating; outlook changed to stable

FITCH RATINGS

Dec '19: BBB-, stable outlook

June '20: BBB-, negative outlook

Nov '21: BBB-, negative outlook, but notes "rating balances still-strong medium-term growth outlook and external resilience"

In June 2020, then Principal Economic Advisor in the Ministry of Finance, Sanjeev Sanyal, prepared a presentation — "Subjective Factors that impact India's Sovereign Ratings: What can we do about it?" — for internal circulation within the government. Sanyal is now a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council.

The 36-page presentation, seen by *The Indian Express*, noted

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



IndiGo 'denies' boarding to child with special needs

PRANAV MUKUL & ABHISHEK ANGAD
NEW DELHI, RANCHI, MAY 8

IN AN incident that raises questions over the handling of air travellers with special needs, budget airline IndiGo allegedly denied boarding to a specially abled child on a Hyderabad-bound flight at the Ranchi airport on Saturday.

A senior official of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) told *The Indian Express* that the aviation safety regulator is probing the incident, and that a report has been sought from the airline. IndiGo said in a statement that the child "could not board the flight...as he was in a state of panic".

The incident was brought to light in a Facebook post by a passenger at the airport who was waiting to board another flight. The author of the post, Manisha Gupta, told *The Indian Express* that the IndiGo staff "did not show any compassion".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

AT HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE JAN 2010

Demand up, output down: Atta prices at record high

Bakery bread prices up as well with 8.39% inflation in Mar

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE ALL-INDIA monthly average retail price of wheat flour (atta) was Rs 32.38 per kg in April, the highest since January 2010, the earliest month for which data are available.

Atta prices have been rising as both production and stocks of wheat have fallen in India, and demand has risen outside the country.

Data reported by State Civil Supplies Departments to the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution show the all-India average retail price of wheat flour was Rs 32.78/ kg on Saturday (May 7) — 9.15 per cent higher than the price (Rs 30.03

FLOUR PRICE RISE

Retail prices of wheat flour (₹/kg)



Note: All-India monthly avg

average wheat flour retail price was the highest in Mumbai (Rs 49/ per), followed by Chennai (Rs 34/ kg), Kolkata (Rs 29/ kg) and Delhi (Rs 27/ kg).

All-India average daily retail prices of wheat flour have been rising since the beginning of the calendar year, having increased by 5.81 per cent since January 1, the data show. The record high in April was significantly higher than the average retail price of Rs 31/ kg recorded in April 2021.

Sources said that the steady increase in the price of flour is due to the rise in wheat prices amid the fall in production due to the war in Ukraine, and a higher overseas demand for Indian wheat. The high domestic price of diesel has added to the logistics cost of both wheat and flour.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

'Aggression by Russia, not sanctions, is affecting global food security and prices'
 UGO ASTUTO
 E.U. AMBASSADOR TO INDIA
 PAGE 6

US moves can push Indo-Pacific over edge of abyss, warns China

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

PUSHING FORWARD Chinese President Xi Jinping's concept of a "Global Security Initiative", an important Chinese official has said that the Indo-Pacific strategy of the United States, "if left unchecked", would bring "horrible consequences and push the Asia-Pacific over the edge of an abyss".

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng, who is one of the top

EXPLAINED

The Chinese point of view

BEIJING IS trying to clear the air on its intent on the Indo-Pacific, Russia, and possible consequences for the region. Le is an influential official — his words carry the weight of the party and government.

contenders to succeed Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also said, "Rather than learning the painful lessons of conflict and suffering in Europe, they seek to create a "second theatre" and bring the conflict to the Asia-Pacific."

Beijing refers to the Indo-Pacific as Asia-Pacific, and Vice Foreign Minister Le has been one of the voices presenting the Chinese government's view on developments in the region. Le, a former Chinese ambassador to

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WORLD



JILL BIDEN, TRUDEAU MAKE SURPRISE VISIT TO UKRAINE

RUSSIA BOMBS UKRAINE SCHOOL, MANY FEARED DEAD

PAGE 10

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FROM PAGE ONE

Gyanvapi dispute

our case. The other four will continue with the legal proceedings," said Jain.

Asked why Singh was pulling out, Jain said: "There must be some reason if she is withdrawing."

Singh was not available for comment, with Jain citing "security concerns" as the reason why she did not wish to speak to the media.

The other petitioners were also not available for comment. A family member of one of them said they did not wish to speak to the media at this juncture.

The dispute has been bubbling through the last week with a court-ordered video survey halted on Saturday after the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee (Gyanvapi) filed an application in the Varanasi court seeking the replacement of Advocate Commissioner Ajai Kumar, accusing him of being "biased". The matter is scheduled to be heard on Monday.

On April 8, while hearing the petitioners, Civil Judge (Senior Division), Varanasi, Ravi Kumar Diwakar, had appointed Kumar to carry out a survey of the Maa Shringar Gauri Sthal at the disputed site — and directed him to "prepare videography of the action" and submit a report.

On April 21, the Allahabad High Court dismissed a petition filed by the masjid committee challenging the local court's order. On April 26, the Varanasi court again ordered videography of the disputed site, which began on Friday afternoon amid heavy security.

The petitioners have sought protection of their right to religion guaranteed by Article 25 of the Constitution, and orders for the defendants (mosque committee) to not create any hindrance to worship at the disputed site.

The petition had sought freedom to worship Maa Shringar Gauri, Lord Ganesh, Lord Hanuman and Nandiji in the "old temple complex situated at settlement Plot No. 9130".

The mosque side has claimed that the petitioners should first identify the plot. "They should first tell the court where exactly is this plot that they are talking about. We had asked the Advocate Commissioner to identify plot No. 9130 before they began the survey, but he did not listen to us. They should first clarify where this plot is," said a mosque official.

Meanwhile, the local police said they are trying to identify five people who raised "objectionable slogans" at the site when the team of surveyors visited on Saturday. Police have so far arrested one person in this regard, identifying him as Abdul Salam (47).

Salam, a resident of Chandauli district who works in Varanasi, was booked under IPC sections for rioting, creating obstruction in government work, and under section 7 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act for loitering and preventing access to a site. He has been sent to judicial custody. "We will soon identify and arrest the others," said a senior police officer.

Jahangirpuri

by senior officers — and complicity "if any" of police personnel needs to be investigated.

"The liability on the part of the concerned officials needs to be fixed so that in future no such incident takes place and the police is not complacent in preventing the illegal activities," said Additional Sessions Judge Gagandeep Singh in an order, while referring to the third procession in the area on April 16.

A copy of the order, which was issued on May 7 rejecting a clutch of bail pleas, has been directed to be sent to the Commissioner of Police "for information and remedial compliance".

The Rohini court noted that the sequence of events that took place on Hanuman Jayanti on April 16 and role of the local administration in preventing the incident and maintaining law and order needs to be seen. "It is fairly admitted... on behalf of the State that the last procession which was passing through, during which the unfortunate riots took place, was illegal having no prior permission from police," said the judge.

The court further said the contents of the FIR itself show that the local staff of the police station in Jahangirpuri, led by Inspector Rajiv Ranjan, as well as other officials were "accompanying the said illegal procession" on its route instead of stopping it.

"It appears that local police, instead of performing their duty in stopping the said illegal procession in the beginning itself and dispersing the crowd, was accompanying them to the entire route which later on led to unfortunate riots between the two communities," said ASJ Singh.

The court has made the observations in an order dismissing the bail applications of seven accused — Imteyaz, Noor Alam, Sheikh Hamid, Ahmad Ali, Sheikh Hamid, S K Sahahada, Sheikh Zahir and Ahir. The accused had argued that they had been falsely implicated and were not present at the spot on the day of the incident.

While dismissing the bail pleas, the judge said material investigation in the case is still underway and several offenders who were allegedly involved in riots are yet to be apprehended.

"The apprehension has been expressed by the prosecution that the public witnesses will not come forward as the rioters are known criminals of the area. Therefore, the apprehension of threatening/influencing the witnesses cannot be ruled at this stage, if the accused/applicant is enlarged on bail at this stage. The chargesheet is yet to be filed. The allegations are serious against the accused/applicant," said the court.

IndiGo

"He (the staff on duty) had made up his mind and that was it," said Gupta, adding that she "works in the social sector" and "has the experience in dealing with matters of disability rights". She took a flight on another airline to Delhi.

Gupta also posted a video of the incident, along with her

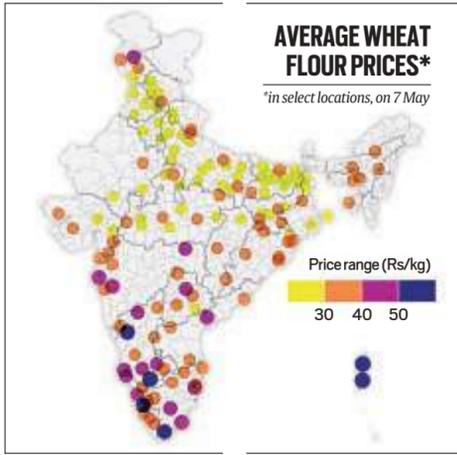
Wheat demand up, output down; prices of atta soar

The retail inflation, based on the Consumer Price Index, of non-PDS 'wheat/atta' reached 7.77 per cent in March 2022, the highest since March 2017, when it was recorded at 7.62 per cent.

Along with wheat flour, the prices of bakery bread too have registered a sharp increase in recent months. Retail inflation for bakery bread was 8.39 per cent in March this year, the highest from January 2015 onward, the period for which comparable data are available.

The prices of flour and bread are rising at a time when the country is staring at a fall in wheat output. The government had set a wheat production target of 110 million tonnes for 2021-22, which is higher than the estimated production of 109.59 million tonnes in 2020-21. In fact, the second advance estimates released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare on February 16 pegged the wheat output for 2021-22 at 111.32 million tonnes.

The sudden increase in temperatures in March, however, dampened the government's



hopes of record production. Officials now say the total wheat production for 2021-22 might fall short of the target. Union Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said last week that wheat production was expected to be around 105 million tonnes. A statement issued by the Food Ministry cited the early onset of

summer as a reason for the decline in wheat yield.

The fall in production and higher demand from private buyers has seen wheat prices in the open market hovering above the minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 2,015 per quintal announced by the government for the current rabi marketing sea-

son. In this situation, procurement by government agencies is expected to fall short of the target. As per Food Ministry estimates, wheat procurement during the current rabi marketing season is likely to be 195 lakh tonnes, significantly below the government's initial procurement target of 444 lakh tonnes and last year's actual procurement of 433 lakh tonnes. As per FCI portal, 156.92 lakh tonnes of wheat had been procured until April 28.

Food Ministry data show wheat stocks stood at 190 lakh tonnes at the beginning of 2022-23, which, with the 195 lakh tonne procurement in the current season, is expected to rise to 385 lakh tonnes. Taking into account the allocations for distribution under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013; Other Welfare Schemes; and Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), 2022-23 is expected to end with a balance of 80 lakh tonnes of wheat in government stocks, a little more than the minimum stocking norm of 75 lakh tonnes as on April 1.

Govt pushed 'narrative management' strategy

that 18-26 per cent of a country's sovereign rating is based on subjective factors such as assessments on governance, political stability, rule of law, corruption, press freedom, and so on.

"In most cases, India's ranking on these subjective factors is well below peers. This pulls down its sovereign ratings," it said. Rating agencies, according to Sanyal, used the World Bank's World Governance Indicators (WGI) as a proxy for these subjective factors. Highlighting WGI as the single-most important index, it said, the inputs that go into the making of the WGI were "arbitrary" and based on impressions from the Western press or small surveys of NGOs and a handful of academics.

"There is a danger that we may witness a drop in WGI scores due to the latest negative commentary on India by think tanks, survey agencies and international media. This could possibly downgrade our Sovereign Ratings to junk. Hence, it is of utmost importance to reach out to these think-tanks and survey agencies and set a positive narrative about India in general," Sanyal said in the presentation.

When contacted by *The Indian Express*, Sanyal declined to comment, and said: "We never comment on internal presentations."

Observing that most reports in 2019-20 projected a "negative commentary" on India, the presentation noted: "Specifically, Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act of 2019, Citizenship Amendment

FREEDOM HOUSE AND V-DEM'S INDICES

FREEDOM HOUSE
2019: Score 75/100, "free"
2020: Score 71/100, "free"
2021: Score 67/100, "partly free"
2022: Score 66/100, "partly free"

VARIETIES OF DEMOCRACY (V-DEM)
2019: Ranked 85 for the

Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) and other components indices. Among 24 countries severely affected by "third wave of autocratization"
2020: Slips to 90, among top 10 autocratizing countries
2021: Ranked 97, called an "electoral autocracy"
2022: Ranked 93 on LDI, "electoral autocracy"

Act, 2019, National Register of Citizens and construction of a Hindu temple at a disputed religious site by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his 'Hindu nationalist' Bharatiya Janata Party are seen as an exercise 'targeting Muslims' and 'threatening secular nature' of our country."

In fact, Moody's had downgraded India on June 1, 2020, from Baa2 to Baa3 (the lowest investment grade of ratings) and maintained a negative outlook. Amongst other reasons, Moody's had said: "Governance is material to India's credit profile and a material factor in today's downgrade... Policymakers' limited success in achieving stated objectives in recent years — an important aspect of governance under Moody's definitions — together with Moody's expectation that policymaking will remain challenged is an important driver in both the downgrade to Baa3 and the assignment of a negative outlook."

Fitch Ratings too revised India's outlook to negative from stable on June 18, 2020, although it affirmed the rating at BBB-. In its explanation, among other aspects, Fitch said, "Relations with Pakistan are, moreover, negatively affected by the repeal of the special status for Kashmir and recent changes to the status of illegal immigrants based on their religion. A stronger focus by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party on its Hindu-nationalist agenda since the government's re-election in May 2019 risks becoming a distraction for economic reform implementation and could further raise social tensions."

Sanyal said the "consistent" negative commentary about India was also becoming the opinion of sovereign rating agencies, and the finance ministry's protests on such opinion reaped no results. "Experience is that the rating agencies will usually go ahead and publish," his presentation said.

The government did reach out to sovereign rating agencies in the coming months. On October 5, 2021, Moody's

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Investors Service raised the outlook on India's sovereign rating to 'stable' from 'negative' in a revision after almost two years, minimising the chances of any rating downgrade.

Both Moody's and Fitch Ratings declined to comment on queries sent by *The Indian Express*.

Sanyal's presentation said the WGI was based on 32 third party sources and has been updated annually since 2002. Of these 32 data sources, 24 incorporate India, but not all sources score countries on all six WGI parameters. "The WGI scores run with a two-year lag. Hence, the latest available scores are for the year 2018. However, most third-party sources publish their reports every year. The commentary in these reports provides a clear indication of which way the scores will move in the coming years," it said.

"We need to reach out to the top third-party sources — initiate continuous discussions, clearly spell out the country's reform measures and sensitise them of our internal matters," it said.

The government felt that there was a need to keep continuous engagements with third party sources of WGI to set "positive narrative about India in general" adding that "last moment protests are of no use." Most of these sources seem to be swayed by general western media and NGO narratives rather than any in-depth objective analysis, it said, emphasising "consistent narrative management is important".

Facebook post, showing several passengers at the airport arguing with the IndiGo ground employee, seeking to speak with a senior supervisor. It shows the child seated on a wheelchair.

In the post, Gupta wrote that there was a delegation of doctors on the same flight who asked the

ground staff to get the airport doctor to take a call on the fitness of the child — and offered "full

support" to the child and his parents on the flight.

It also said that several passengers, including a man who identified himself as a government official, questioned the airline staff's decision.

"This child is... uncontrollable. He is in a state of panic," the Indigo manager kept shouting and telling everyone. But all we could see was a young adolescent, sitting very quietly on a wheelchair, terror-stricken by how he was being called out as a risk to the normal world. "The only person who is in panic is you", a woman passenger retorted," Gupta wrote.

The parents of the child could not be reached for comment.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Gupta said: "The child had a breakdown. It seemed that he had gone on a spiral of stress and the mother had slapped him once. There was a bit of crying and the sound echoed. In the meantime, the mother said sorry to her child and started hugging him to calm him down. She also cried. At this point, a person from Indigo Customer Service came to them and said if the child continues in this manner, he won't be allowed to board."

Gupta said: "The child was fed, given medicines and taken care of by their parents, and he was not showing any 'risky behaviour'. However, when boarding began, he was not allowed to board."

According to her, several people "stood up against this discrimination".

"One of them showed Supreme Court judgments on treating the specially-abled with dignity. The employee did not budge and kept saying that he was the final authority. While I had to leave around 7.45 pm, I saw the parents pleading from the other side of the glass doors to let them board, but no one moved," Gupta said.

In a statement, an IndiGo spokesperson said: "In view of the safety of passengers, a specially-abled child could not board the flight with his family on May 7, as he was in a state of panic."

"The ground staff waited for him to calm down till the last minute, but to no avail. The airline made the family comfortable by providing them hotel stay and the family flew the next morning to their destination. We regret the inconvenience caused to the passengers. IndiGo prides itself on being an inclusive organisation, be it for employees or its customers; and over 75,000 specially-abled passengers fly with IndiGo every month," the spokesperson said.

In Ranchi, Birsa Munda airport director Vinod Sharma said they were looking into the issue. (WITH ENDS, RANCHI)

China

India, has articulated Beijing's position in the past as well.

Le spoke about a "global NATO", and responded to concerns over China's "no-limits" partnership with Russia, in the context of the invasion of Ukraine. Responding to a question about the US wanting to control Europe while letting the Europeans bear the losses, Le said: "There is a famous line in

(the American web series) House of Cards: "Politics requires sacrifice. The sacrifice of others, of course."

Le, who spoke on May 6 on "Seeking Peace and Promoting Development: An Online Dialogue of Global Think Tanks of 20 Countries", said: "Some people urge the US not to forget about China when contending with Russia, but to regard the Eurasian continent as a battlefield and to focus on two theatres — war in Europe and the Asia-Pacific — and win both. This is a very dangerous proposition. Rather than learning the painful lessons of conflict and suffering in Europe, they seek to create a "second theatre" and bring the conflict to the Asia-Pacific.

"The US "Indo-Pacific strategy" indicates that the US seeks not so much to change China as to shape the strategic environment in which China operates. For quite some time, the US has kept flexing its muscle on China's doorstep, creating exclusive groups against China and inflaming the Taiwan question to test China's red line. If this is not an Asia-Pacific version of NATO's eastward expansion, then what is? Such a strategy, if left unchecked, would bring horrible consequences and push the Asia-Pacific over the edge of an abyss. To these people, let me stress that China is committed to peaceful development and seeks harmony, solidarity and cooperation in the region... And the attempt to "copy and paste" the Ukraine crisis in the Asia-Pacific is doomed to fail," he said.

Le sought to float the idea of a "global NATO": "Recently, some people have called for building "a global NATO", and NATO is interfering frequently in Asia-Pacific affairs. This is cause for concern to regional countries."

He obliquely took aim at the Quad, the strategic security forum of the US, India, Australia, and Japan: "We cannot allow bloc-based confrontation to repeat itself in the Asia-Pacific; we cannot allow certain countries to succeed in their self-serving attempt to drag the Asia-Pacific into conflict; we cannot allow small and medium-sized countries in our region to become the tool or victim of hegemony."

On the global concerns over the "no-limits" ties between China and Russia, he said: "Some people have twisted the words of the recent China-Russia joint statement and misinterpreted 'friendship has no limits and cooperation has no forbidden areas' to mean that China had "prior knowledge" of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine and even "endorsed" it. They have therefore concluded that China must be held accountable for the conflict. This is absurd. China is not involved in the conflict, still less the one who created it. So how could China be responsible? The relationship between China and Russia is based on the principles of non-alliance, non-confrontation and non-targeting of third parties, and it is not subject to the influence of any third party.

FULL REPORTS ON www.indianexpress.com

J&K LG joins pooja at ruins of ASI-protected temple

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
CHENNAI, MAY 8

JAMMU AND Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha participated Sunday in a religious ceremony held in the ruins of the 8th century Martand Sun temple, a protected monument under the charge of the central government's Archaeological Survey of India.

This is the second religious ceremony in three days at the site, which the ASI has tagged as a "site of national importance". The ASI does not permit prayers at a protected site unless it was a functioning place of worship at the time the body took charge of it.

A press release issued by Sinha's office said he took part in a "navagraha ashatamangalm pooja" at the temple, which was "held in the presence of saints, members of Kashmiri Pandit community and local residents".

It is unclear if the administration took permission from the ASI for the event. The press release did not mention if ASI clearance was obtained for the pooja. ASI officials were unavailable for comment.

The leader of the group that conducted a pooja on May 6 told *The Indian Express* they had not taken permission from the ASI, as it was a Hindu temple and worshippers should be allowed to conduct religious ceremonies and offer prayers.

According to the press release, the LG "reiterated the government's commitment to protect and develop ancient sites of cultural and spiritual significance". He was quoted as saying that the administration was "making dedicated efforts to transform historical spiritual places of J&K into vibrant centres that will guide us on the path of righteousness..."

The priests for the ceremony were flown in from Kerala, *The*



J&K LG Manoj Sinha

Indian Express has learnt. As the LG took part in the rituals, several of his security personnel ringed the area where the pooja was being held. The site was turned into a fortress for most part of the day.

A contingent of Kashmiri Pandits affiliated to the Panun Kashmir group were in attendance, as was the former BJP Assembly member Surinder Ambaradar. Kashmir Divisional Commissioner Pandurang K Pole, IGP K Vijay Kumar, Deputy

Commissioner Piyush Singla and other officials accompanied Sinha.

There have been periodic demands by Hindu groups for opening the temple for worship, but no religious ceremonies have been previously allowed at the site, although individual worshippers have not been prevented from offering prayers, local sources said. Mostly, it has been a picnic site for people of the area.

Since the August 2019 constitutional changes to the status of J&K, there have been demands from Hindu groups, including the Kashmiri Pandit community, for restoration of Hindu temples in Kashmir. Mostly the demands have centred on temples that were functional until the 1990s, when most Kashmiri Pandits fled the Valley in the face of militancy.

Such demands have increased over the past three months, and have been expanded to include protected sites such as the

Martand temple. On May 6, a group of over a 100 people led by the mahant of a Hindu peeth based in Karauli in Rajasthan, recited the Bhagvad Gita and the Hanuman Chalisa at Martand.

In November 2021, the National Monuments Authority, headed by Tarun Vijay, former editor of the RSS journal *Panchajanya* and former Rajya Sabha MP, said in a statement that it was planning to make a bid for the UNESCO World Heritage Site status for Martand among other sites in J&K.

Across the country, religious worship at protected monuments has been a fraught issue over the years. According to Rule 7 (1) of the 1959 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Rules, meetings, receptions, parties, entertainment or conferences cannot be held at a protected monument without permission in writing from the central government. Rule 7 (2)

says this shall not apply to any event held "in pursuance of a recognised religious usage or custom". However, every government, including the present government, has stuck by the practice of not permitting religious activities or events at sites that were not "live" places of worship at the time of being designated as a protected monument by the ASI.

As such, prayers are not allowed in the mosque in the precincts of Qutub Minar despite demands by Muslims of the area. Similarly, religious worship and rituals are banned in the 12th century Sidhpur Mahalaya temple in Gujarat's Pattan district, and at Shore temple in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu. But they are allowed at Shri Jagannath Temple in Puri and at Jama Masjid in Delhi because these were "live" monuments, functional temples at the time the ASI took them over.

Driver kills US-returned TN couple, flees with car, jewellery; held from Andhra

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, MAY 8

A COUPLE who reached Chennai from California early on Saturday were murdered allegedly by their driver and his friend, police said,

adding that they arrested the duo—who had fled in the former's car with 9kg of gold and 60kg of silver jewellery—from Ongole in Andhra Pradesh, 300km north, by the evening. According to the police, after Srikanth, 60, and Anuradha, 53, who had been in the US with their

children for the past 10 months, reached Chennai airport around 3.30am, driver Krishna took them to their home at Dwaraka Colony in Mylapore's Brindavan Nagar. Additional commissioner of police (south) N Kannan, said the murders happened around 1pm. "After

they went to the US, Srikanth came to Chennai for a brief visit two months ago and went back. During that period, Krishna overheard a phone conversation made by Srikanth about a big property sale worth Rs 40 crore. He assumed the cash had been kept in the house.

Even though Krishna was staying there, he did not have the keys. So he decided to wait for their arrival and committed the crime along with a friend, Ravi Rai from Darjeeling," said Kannan. Krishna, who is from Nepal, had worked for Srikanth for about seven years. It

was their US-based daughter Sunantha who raised the first alarm as she could not contact her parents. She asked a family friend to visit the couple, but the door of the house was found locked and the car was missing, according to the police.

Fine Arts row: Police file 2 FIRs in MSU protests

Vadodara: The Vadodara city police Sunday lodged two separate FIRs in two incidents of protest against the Faculty of Fine Arts at MS University in Vadodara that came under attack Thursday from right-wing groups for displaying "objectionable" paintings that "hurt religious sentiments". Officials of Sayajigunj police station are complainants in both FIRs. In the first FIR, two people were identified and booked for allegedly assaulting a constable of the police station while on duty to disperse the mob. Police constable Bharat Magabhai, who was

unarmed at the protest site Thursday, has stated the two accused—Kartik Joshi and Dhruv Parikh—allegedly obstructed him from performing his duty during the mob violence inside the faculty campus. "Dhruv Parikh and Kartik Joshi charged toward me warning, 'No one can tell us what to do'. They first manhandled me and then slapped me two-three times," the police constable states.

The second FIR is against 31 workers of the ABVP who staged a protest outside the MSU head office Saturday and clashed with the police. ENS

ANDHRA PRADESH

Maoists boxed into 2 divisions after losing ground: DGP

Hyderabad: There has been a significant decline in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in Andhra Pradesh in the last one year, both in terms of incidents and its geographical spread, according to the Andhra Pradesh Police.

The LWE-related activities in the state have largely been confined to Alluri Sitharama Raju, the new district carved out of Paderu division of Visakhapatnam district and Rampachodavaram division of East Godavari district,

with the Maoist cadre operating in the belt declining from 100 to 48 now, said AP Director General of Police (DGP) KV Rajendranath Reddy.

The Maoist military formations responsible for their guerrilla actions saw a sharp reduction from 2 companies comprising a total of 50 members to a mere platoon with 10 members in the last one year, as per information gathered by the state police's Special Intelligence Branch. ENS

3 THE CITY

Colaba Woods Garden: From dumping ground to Cuffe Parade's green lung

KANAK SINGH
MUMBAI, MAY 8

SITUATED RIGHT across the One Trade Centre, Colaba Woods Garden is a bona fide jungle located in the tony Cuffe Parade area of South Mumbai. An erstwhile dumping ground, the garden is a green lung for the locality.

The garden, about five kilometres from the bustling CST station, is an easy find even for those visiting it for the first time. Delivering serenity in the thick of a buzzing cityscape, there are two entrances to the garden. The main gate is located in front of the One Trade Centre, and the second is closed due to the Metro line construction.

Spread over nearly 31,000 square metres of space, the garden has 99 species of trees and the total number of trees in the garden itself is 803. There are two pathways in the garden for jogging and walking. The garden consists of benches which are built along the pathways for people to sit and enjoy the sea breeze.

Most of its 803 trees are towards the centre of the garden which is used by many as a meditation centre. Similar to other gardens in the city, Colaba



Spread over nearly 31,000 square metre, the garden hosts 99 species of trees. Express

Woods garden has gazebos and an under-construction amphitheatre. There's a joggers' track, a readers' corner, basketball courts, and kids' play areas. Colaba Woods received the prestigious Urban Heritage Award back in 1989.

Arjun Shah, a local, said, "I have been coming here every day for the past five years for an evening walk and being surrounded by so much greenery calms me after a rough day and it's soothing. The

park has changed a little due to the construction but the garden remains almost the same."

In 2015, a study was conducted because a quarter of the garden was supposed to be used for the Metro line that was being constructed, which would lead to the loss of diversity in the garden. This study concluded that the relocation of such big trees would not be possible and the trees would die because of the pollution that would come with the construction to be taking place next to the garden.

Out of hospital, and jail, Navneet Rana dares CM Uddhav to enter poll fray

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 8

PARLIAMENTARIAN Navneet Rana on Sunday challenged chief minister Uddhav Thackeray to contest elections from "anywhere in Maharashtra", adding she was "willing to contest against him and show him the empowerment of women in electoral politics."

After being discharged from Lilavati hospital, where she was admitted for treatment of spondylosis, the Amaravati MP, who was arrested last month, alleged that she was harassed and tortured in the lockup.

Stating that she was jailed along with her husband for "taking lord Ram's name", Rana said the "people of the state will give a befitting reply to them (the state's ruling MVA government) as they have misused their power".

Addressing CM Thackeray, she said, "If you have guts, then contest election from any of the districts in state. I will contest against you and then see who the people of the state choose. You have got the CM's position because of your forefathers' name. I challenge you to enter the electoral process, contest and win the elections. I will contest against



Navneet Rana

you." Rana said she would come up against Shiv Sena in the upcoming civic body election, accusing the party of "massive corruption in the BMC in the past few decades".

"If reciting Hanuman Chalisa is a crime then I am willing to stay in jail not only for 14 days but for 14 years too. If they think that they can suppress a woman's voice by keeping her in jail for 14 days then it's not going to happen... Our fight is in the name of god and it's going to continue further. The Shiv Sena-led government will pay the price for victimising me," the Independent MP said.

Rana and her MLA husband Ravi Rana were arrested under sedition charges after they had announced that they will recite Hanuman Chalisa in front of Matoshri, the personal residence of CM Uddhav Thackeray. Though they withdrew their decision, they faced protest from ruling Sena's activists.

The couple was released from jail on Friday after Mumbai ses-

Fadnavis: MVA govt has surpassed all limits of cruelty

Mumbai: Opposition leader Devendra Fadnavis said Sunday that the Maha Vikas Aghadi government has crossed the "Laxman rekha" on cruelty. "The ill-treatment meted out to Independent MLA Ravi Rana and his wife MP Navneet Rana shows how low the Shiv Sena-led coalition has stooped to. They have crossed all limits in inflicting cruelty," Fadnavis said. ENS

sion court granted them bail on certain conditions and observed that sedition charges were not made out against the couple.

Earlier, responding to Navneet Rana's statements, Shiv Sena spokesperson Manisha Kayande said, "We don't give much importance to her threats... We dismiss them as inconsequential."

Meanwhile, a few Sena leaders alleged that by speaking to the media, Rana had violated the conditions laid out by the sessions court while granting bail to her.

Developer claims land theirs, Jogeshwari pumping station hits roadblock

LAXMAN SINGH
MUMBAI, MAY 8

IN A setback to the upcoming storm water drain pumping station at Mogra nullah in Jogeshwari, a private developer filed a claim before the Bombay High Court over the ownership of land. With litigation, the court has allowed the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to carry out only preliminary work at the site till the time the case is pending.

In July 2021, the BMC Standing Committee had cleared a proposal of awarding a contract of Rs 393 crore to a joint venture of Michigan Engineers Private Limited and Mahalasa Construction Private Limited. The work was expected to be completed in 20 months (excluding monsoon). However, even though 10 months have elapsed, the civic body hasn't gone beyond preliminary works, such as, site survey and soil investigation.

Officials from the Storm Water Drain (SWD) department said that the progress of the project is impacted due to the legal battle.

"Earlier there was a dispute over the ownership of the proposed site of Mogra Pumping station. To resolve the issue of land acquisition, the department had decided to construct the pumping station over the nullah. Now, a private party has reached court, claiming that they own

the land over the nullah. The case is on and so far, the court has allowed us to go ahead with the preliminary work. Officials from the Development Plan department have also been involved in the legal fight," said a BMC official who is involved with the project.

The pumping station at Mogra nullah would be the seventh in the city under the BRIM-STOWAD project, to be constructed for flood mitigation. The project is expected to provide relief in areas such as Andheri, Jogeshwari, Oshiwara from flooding during monsoon.

"The pumping station will have the capacity of throwing out 42,000 litre water per second," said an official from the SWD department.

Earlier, another crucial pumping station proposed at Mahul faced the hurdle. The land exchanged between BMC and the private developer for the Mahul pumping station has been stuck as the land offered by BMC to the developer has been marked as Non-Development Zone (NDZ) in the new Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP).

After the deluge in 2005, the BMC had planned to construct eight pumping stations to improve the storm water drainage system in the city. So far, six pumping stations, at Haji Ali, Love Grove and Cleavand Bunder at Worli, Irla at Juhu, Britannia at Reay Road, and Gazdarbandh at Khar Danda have been completed.

'Our focus is on identifying learning loss, developing modules to help students cope'

Schools across the state are set to finally resume complete normalcy as they reopen in June, post summer vacation. PALLAVI SMART talks to Commissioner of Education SURAJ MANDHARE who has readied a plan of action for schools to help cope with the pandemic-induced loss. Excerpts from an interview:



MONDAY INTERVIEW
SURAJ MANDHARE
COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

With the education sector heading to normalcy, what will be your focus?

The pandemic has led to a huge learning loss among children. The foremost focus will be to identify the learning loss and developing modules such as bridge courses to help them cope. There is no point in students heading to higher classes without completely acquiring the learning outcome expected from them from an earlier class. The plan is to gauge the learning loss in an objective manner to be able to create an effective remedy teaching module. But this will be possible only after required capacity building of teachers. We are working on creating a 20-30 minute quick course to be made available for all, including parents. This course, which will be made available in a public forum with online platforms, will be designed to give the outline on the steps to be taken. This course will be disseminated through multiple channels such as DIKSHA App, YouTube Sessions, Community Radio among all.

Which other areas of school education require attention with resumption of normalcy?

The pandemic has led to several other issues too such as shortening of attention span of students, obesity, psychological needs after losing someone, including a parent, to Covid. We are working on creating various peer-learning activities to be held in schools to enhance the attention span of students who have been studying on digital devices until now. Most of

the students were at home during pandemic and it has resulted in obesity and tiredness along with a few psychological issues. It is important to create targeted sports and other extracurricular activities to bring them out of the lethargy. While there will be extracurricular activities, we plan to introduce gamification of learning by bringing in fun ways to learn in schools. The exposure to digitalisation in education can be used to make the content attractive and interactive.

The midday meal scheme is severely affected, especially while resuming to normalcy post-pandemic. How do you plan to strengthen it?

Initially, dry ration was distributed to children under the midday meal scheme. With schools starting offline functioning, we are slowly resuming the old practice of serving cooked meals to children. However, the transition has suffered due to multiple reasons such as court cases, inability of vendors, shortage of fortified rice etc. But most importantly, we have now identified the problems and resolved those one at a time. By June, when schools resume complete offline operation in the new academic year, midday meal scheme will be successfully back to its original format.

Woman found dead inside train toilet; husband, child missing

VALLABHOZARKAR
MUMBAI, MAY 8

A 20 YEAR-OLD woman was found dead in a toilet of a train at Daharu railway station in Palghar district. The woman, Arti Kumari, who is from Bihar, was travelling in Swaraj Express Bandra to Katra in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Palghar GRP is yet to ascertain if it is a case of suicide, murder or accidental death.

According to police, the train had left Bandra on Sunday at 11 am. The woman then went into the toilet but when she did not return for a long time, the passengers informed the TTE onboard.

The TTE tried to break open the door of the washroom but failed. A special halt was then given at Daharu road railway station where the staff managed to open the door and found the woman on the floor unconscious with a cloth around her neck. She was taken to Cottage hospital in Palghar where she was declared dead.

"The Palghar GRP has now registered a case of accidental death and is probing further," said DCP Sandip Bhajibhakre, Western Railway.

Another officer said, "It has been found that the woman was with a man, who is suspected to be her husband, but he and their child have not yet been found."

Recently, school education minister Varsha Gaikwad announced mandatory installation of CCTVs in schools, both private and government, in order to ensure students' safety. What is the status? What is your plan to bring safety on school premises?

CCTV installation will be part of the school inspection checklist now. We will ensure that the minister's directives are complied with at the earliest. While CCTV is important on school premises, we are also encouraging school administration to have character verification of all their staff. Additionally, we are training students to sense inappropriate behaviour. An effective mechanism is provided to complain against any such instance as severe action against the miscreants will be the most effective deterrent.

What are your plans for Zilla Parishad (ZP) schools, which are majorly catering to underprivileged sections of the society?

Literacy becomes the basis of economic growth of any state or region. The plans need to have components which will create a conducive environment for learning and self-development. The areas under focus include basic schooling, focus on introducing Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) in middle grades, opportunities for technical and vocational learning, affordable education, robust assessment and remediation system. As per the plan for ZP schools, the focus is on foundational literacy and numeracy skills, investing in early childhood care to make kids ready to face Grade I competencies, and learning and tracking out-of-school children. It is of utmost importance for the state to ensure no child gets dropped out and those who are already out are brought back to mainstream schooling.

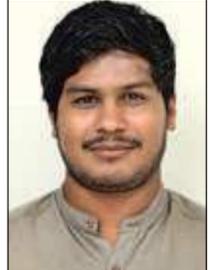
Particulars to be furnished as per the Non-Banking Financial Companies & Miscellaneous Non-Banking Companies (Advertisement) Rules, 1977 as amended.

A. Name of the Company: **BAJAJ FINANCE LTD.**
B. Date of Incorporation: **25th March, 1987**
C. Profits/Dividends:
Profits of the Company before and after making provisions for tax, for the three financial years immediately preceding the date of the advertisement and the dividends declared by the Company in respect of the said years.

Financial Year ended on	Profit (Standalone)		Dividend %
	Before Tax	After Tax	
31.03.2019	6,032.30	3,990.34	300
31.03.2020	6,808.13	4,881.12	500
31.03.2021	5,362.88	3,995.51	500

D. Brief particulars of the management of the Company:
The Company is managed by the Managing Director, subject to the control and supervision of the Board of Directors. The Managing Director is entrusted with necessary powers for managing the business and affairs of the Company.

E. Names, addresses and occupations of Directors:		
NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION
Shri Sanjay Bajaj (Chairman)	Bajaj Vihar Colony, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035.	Industrialist
Shri Madhur Bajaj (Non-Executive Director)	Bangalore No. 3, Bajaj Vihar Colony, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035.	Service
Shri Rajeev Jain (Managing Director)	D-2, Jyoti Glen, Marigold Premises, Kalyani Nagar, Pune 411014.	Industrialist
Shri Rajiv Bajaj (Non-Executive Director)	34/35, Yogi Koregaon Park, Lane No. 2, Pune 411011.	Industrialist
Shri D Balraj Rao (Independent Director)	D-103 Adarsh Residency, 47th Cross, 8th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore 560082.	Professional
Dr. Naushad Forbes (Independent Director)	74 Koregaon Park, Lane No. 3, Pune 411011	Business
Shri Anami Narayan Roy (Independent Director)	62 Sagar Tarang, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road, Worli Sea Face, Mumbai 400030.	Retired Civil Servant

RAVI KANOJIA
(07 JUNE 1982 - 09 MAY 2016)

Fondly remembered by his family and colleagues at The Express Group

BAJAJ FINANCE LIMITED

CIN-L65910MH1987PLC042961

Registered Office: Akurdi, Pune 411 035

Corporate Office: 4th Floor, Bajaj Finserv Corporate Office, Off Pune-Ahmednagar Road, Viman Nagar, Pune 411 014

FIXED DEPOSIT SCHEMES

'FAAA/Stable' rating by CRISIL AND 'MAAA (Stable)' rating by ICRA.

The abovementioned ratings indicate highest degree of safety with regard to timely payment of interest and principal on the instrument.

Rate of interest per annum valid up to ₹5 Crores per deposit (w.e.f. 10th May 2022) for NRIs, OCIs and PIOs

Period (except Table 2)	Cumulative At Maturity	Non-Cumulative			
		Monthly	Quarterly	Half Yearly	Annual
12 - 23 months	5.75%	5.60%	5.63%	5.67%	5.75%
24 - 35 months	6.40%	6.22%	6.25%	6.30%	6.40%
36 months	7.00%	6.79%	6.82%	6.88%	7.00%

Period	Cumulative At Maturity	Non-Cumulative			
		Monthly	Quarterly	Half Yearly	Annual
15 months	6.00%	5.84%	5.87%	5.91%	6.00%
18 months	6.10%	5.94%	5.97%	6.01%	6.10%
22 months	6.25%	6.08%	6.11%	6.16%	6.25%
30 months	6.50%	6.31%	6.35%	6.40%	6.50%
33 months	6.75%	6.55%	6.59%	6.64%	6.75%

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION
Shri Pramit Jhovari (Independent Director)	21C Woodlands Peddar Road, Mumbai 400026.	Business
Mrs. Kadinka Hariharthi (Independent Director)	51, Maker Tower B, Cuffe Parade, Mumbai-400005.	Financial Advisor/ Professional Director

F. Summarised Financial Position of the Company (standalone) as appearing in the two latest audited balance sheets:

	As at 31 March 2021	As at 31 March 2020
ASSETS		
Financial assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,383.63	674.53
Bank balances other than cash and cash equivalents	2.13	4.83
Derivative financial instruments	0.00	171.76
Trade receivables	720.10	867.18
Loans	1,13,089.94	1,14,477.08
Investments	20,169.12	20,128.98
Other financial assets	487.33	349.51
Total financial assets	1,35,82.25	1,35,623.87
Non-financial assets		
Current tax assets (net)	155.07	204.57
Deferred tax assets (net)	919.21	847.61
Property, plant and equipment	972.44	1,016.16
Capital work-in-progress	7.07	0.00
Intangible assets under development	43.99	0.00
Intangible assets	254.76	211.98
Other non-financial assets	134.10	99.38
Total non-financial assets	2,486.64	2,379.70
Total assets	1,38,338.89	1,38,003.57

	As at 31 March 2021	As at 31 March 2020
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
Liabilities		
Financial liabilities		
Derivative financial instruments	13.87	-
Payables		
Trade payables		
Total outstanding dues of micro enterprises and small enterprises	0.27	0.30
Total outstanding dues of creditors other than micro enterprises and small enterprises	676.62	636.76
Other payables		
Total outstanding dues of micro enterprises and small enterprises	-	-
Total outstanding dues of creditors other than micro enterprises and small enterprises	191.08	179.46
Debt securities		
Borrowings (other than debt securities)	43,071.71	41,713.77
Deposits	27,092.09	36,923.32
Subordinated debts	25,803.43	21,427.10
Other financial liabilities	3,898.61	6,692.90
Total financial liabilities	101,675.33	105,692.36
Non-financial liabilities		
Provisions	172.78	52.10
Other non-financial liabilities	135.56	78.87
Total non-financial liabilities	478.48	367.03
Total non-financial liabilities	784.82	498.80

	As at 31 March 2021	As at 31 March 2020
Equity		
Equity share capital	120.32	119.99
Other equity	35,818.42	31,693.22
Total assets	35,938.74	31,813.21
Total liabilities and equity	1,38,338.89	1,38,003.57

Contingent Liabilities (Standalone)		
Particulars	As at 31 March 2021	As at 31 March 2020
Disputed claims against the Company not acknowledged as debts	51.98	44.18
VAT matters under appeal	4.29	4.39
ES matters under appeal	5.14	5.14
Service tax matters under appeal	-	-
- On interest subsidy	1,905.44	1,971.65
- On penal interest/charges	237.25	223.15
- On others	6.42	6.22
Income tax matters:		
- Appeals by the Company	0.00	0.32
- Appeals by the Income tax department	0.28	0.24

Sr. No.	Name of subsidiary	Address of registered office	Activity
1.	Bajaj Housing Finance Limited	Bajaj Auto Ltd complex, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035.	Housing Finance Business
2.	Bajaj Financial Securities Limited	Bajaj Auto Ltd complex, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035.	Stock broking and depository participant

The above text of advertisement has been issued on the authority and in the name of the Board of Directors and has been approved by the Board of Directors at its Meeting held on 20 July 2021 and copy of the same signed by Shri Rajeev Jain, Managing Director, who is authorized by the Board to sign on its behalf, has been delivered to the Reserve Bank of India for registration.

By order of the Board of Directors for Bajaj Finance Limited
Rajeev Jain,
Managing Director
DIN: 01550158

By order of the Board of Directors for Bajaj Finance Limited
Rajeev Jain,
Managing Director
DIN: 01550158

HOW TO INVEST:
The amount should be deposited only by net-banking, cheque. Cheques should be payable to 'Bajaj Finance Ltd. A/c 00070550060738' and crossed 'Account Payee only'. The cheques should be payable at par and CTS compliant. Application Form along with the necessary remittance should be sent to the Distributors of the Fixed Deposit Schemes of BFL to be submitted at any of the BFL branches. For NEFT/RTGS, please use the following details: Beneficiary Name: Bajaj Finance Ltd, Bank acc no.: ZBAJAF01 (numerical account number is replaced by CMS Collection code - ZBAJAF01), Account type: current account, Bank Name: IndusInd Bank Ltd, IFSC: INDB0000006, Bank branch: Nariman Point, Mumbai.

For any investment queries or information about our affiliated partner websites, write to us at Wecare@bajajfinserv.in or call us on +91 8698010101

Cops can be booked for not registering FIRs

MOHAMED THAYER MUMBAI, MAY 8

MUMBAI POLICE Commissioner Sanjay Pandey issued an order last month that FIRs could be registered against police officers who do not take FIRs in cases where individuals approach them with complaints.

An officer said as per the order issued by Pandey, an FIR can be made out against police officers not registering FIRs under Section 166 C of the India Penal Code. The Act says, "Whoever being a public servant fails to

record any information given to him under sub-section (1) of section 154 of the Code of Criminal Procedure...in relation to cognizable offence...shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to two years."

The officer said as per the order, in case a complaint approached the Commissioner regarding non-registration of FIR at the police station, the Commissioner will look into the complaint. If the senior official finds that a cognizable offence was made out yet the FIR was not registered, an FIR will be registered in the case. In addition, an FIR will be registered against the concerned police officer who did not register an FIR in the case. The officer added that after

Pandey shared his mobile number with the public, he started receiving several complaints about police not registering FIRs. "Following this, the Commissioner issued this order in order to ensure that people are not made to run around for registration of FIRs," the official said.

The number of FIRs that have been registered ever since Pandey took over has been more than those registered earlier. "In most cases it involves cyber offences in which officers did not register FIRs since the detection rate in such cases is poor and can pull down their overall detection rate. But for the past few months, even in cyber crime cases where a large amount of money was not stolen, FIRs have been registered by the police," the official added.

State gov't looks to gain control over withdrawal of cases against activists

VISHWAS WAGHMODE MUMBAI, MAY 8

THOUGHT it had earlier proposed to withdraw cases against political and social activists and had authorised regional administrative committees to take a call on the matter, the Maharashtra government now seems to be wanting to control the withdrawal of cases in which chargesheets have been filed against activists in case of political and social protests across the state. The government had proposed to withdraw such cases filed between January 2020 and December 2021.

A source close to the development said that the proposal came up for discussion in a cabinet meeting held last month and a senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) minister raised an objection to the proposal. "The view was that if the powers were given to these re-

gional committees, the state government would not have any control over it. And it is possible that the district administration can come under the influence of the local political leadership and may force them to withdraw the cases. So, it was suggested to the Home Department to amend the proposal suitably and then bring it before the cabinet," said a source.

Another source pointed out that political opponents have been missing the central investigative agencies against the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) leaders for more than two years. "It is quite possible that the threat of central agencies can be given to these officials for withdrawing the case. And it needs to be taken into consideration and requires government control over it," added the source.

As per the proposal of the Home Department, it has been proposed to withdraw the cases registered against political and



MUMBAI CONFIDENTIAL

BLOCKED

FORMER MMRDA commissioner R A Rajew was recently in for a surprise when he found that he was blocked by the authority's Twitter handle. Ironically, it was Rajew who had started the handle on the micro-blogging website. Sources in the bureaucracy said that a few at the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) were upset with Rajew's name being mentioned twice by dignitaries during a Metro inauguration event a few weeks back.

DHARAVI DIARIES

DHARAVI HAS always been a popular destination for people visiting from abroad. Friday was no exception when the Australian consul general in Mumbai, Peter Truswell, went on a visit to the slum area with local MLA and minister Varsha Gaikwad. He seemed quite interested in self-financed groups, says Gaikwad. Truswell ended up spending more than 2.5 hours in the area, beyond the original plan of two hours. And while leaving, he made sure to snack on vada pao - Mumbai's signature dish.

NOT INTERESTED

GOING BY current postings, it does not look like any Maharashtra-cadre IAS officer wants to work at Haffkine Bio pharma. Located at Parel, the firm manufactures a lot of antibiotics and is also in-charge of procuring medicines for all government set-ups in the state. Until a year back, Sandeep Rathod of Tripura cadre worked here as a managing director. He was replaced by Madhavi Khode who went to Nagpur in three months after being appointed in February this year. Last week, Madan Nagargoje, an MP-cadre IAS officer, was appointed to work here.

COMPILED BY YOGESH NAIK

Have a comment or suggestion for Mumbai Confidential? Write to mumbai.newsline@expressindia.com with subject line: Mumbai Confidential

Aaditya to visit Ayodhya next month; Raut draws parallels between Modi-Hitler events

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, MAY 8

AFTER MNS chief Raj Thackeray announced his tour to Ayodhya on June 5, the Shiv Sena on Sunday said party leader and Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray would visit the temple town on June 10. Stating that Aaditya's visit wasn't political, Sena leader Sanjay Raut said that "Lord Ram doesn't



Aaditya Thackeray in Bawalwadi on Sunday. Deepak Joshi

bless those who go with fake or political intentions".

At a Shiv Sena event on social media, Raut also launched an attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleging that Modi and German dictator Hitler had similarities and that the PM "is doing the same kind of events that Hitler used to do".

Raut, while speaking to media persons on Sunday, said that the party's preparations were underway for Ayodhya tour.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

19 cops injured in fight between factory workers

Mumbai: Nineteen policemen were injured and 12 of their vehicles damaged when they tried to control an attack on employees of a steel company by more than 100 members of a labour union in Maharashtra, an official said on Sunday.

The Boisar police, under whose jurisdiction the incident took place, have arrested as many as 27 people for rioting, assaulting police and attempted murder, among other charges. According to the police, the incident took place Saturday evening at a steel factory's premises located in an industrial area in Boisar town of Palghar district. The police said a conflict has been going on between two unions of the factory and one of the unions had given a stop work notice to the company. ENS

3 dead, 32 hurt after bus falls into gorge

Mumbai: Three people including a woman died and 32 others sustained injuries after a bus carrying 35 passenger fell 60 feet down into a gorge near Mhasla tehsil in Raigad district Sunday.

The deceased have been identified as Ashwini Shirwadkar, Madhukar Shirwadkar and Sushant Rikame. The Mhasala police have registered an FIR against the driver for negligence and rash driving. "There were two drivers in the bus, who are also injured, are under treatment," said police. ENS

SALUTE THE SOLDIER. Martyrs on 09th May 1997. Shri A. C. Kumar, Deputy Inspector General. Naik/GD L. Ranjan Singh. Sashstra Seema Bal fondly remembers with gratitude and cherishes the valiant sacrifice of his brave hearts...

THE TAMILNADU CO-OPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS' FEDERATION LTD. TENDER NOTICE. Ref. No.: 1897/T4/PT/2019. The TCMFP Ltd., invite Two Part Tenders by way of OFF-LINE / E-SUBMISSION from the Private tanker providers / contractors for following contract works.

GUJARAT URJA VIKAS NIGAM LIMITED. Sardar Patel Viduyt Bhavan, Racecourse, Vadodra 390007. PBX: 0265-2310582, www.guvnl.com. NOTICE INVITING TENDER. GUVNL invites Tender for procurement of power through Competitive Bidding (followed by reverse auction) from 500 MW grid connected Wind Power Projects (Phase III) with an additional 500 MW capacity under 'Greenshoe Option'.

LATE NARAYAN MEGHAJI LOKHANDE MAHARASHTRA INSTITUTE OF LABOUR STUDIES, MUMBAI and REGIONAL LABOUR INSTITUTE, NAGPUR (Government of Maharashtra). ONLINE applications for the Entrance Exam of MASTER OF LABOUR STUDIES (MLS) are invited from eligible candidates during 09th May, 2022 to 7th June, 2022 on website www.mils.co.in for the academic year 2022-23.

The Indian EXPRESS Classifieds. FROM ANYTHING TO EVERYTHING. PROPERTY, SOCIETY NOTICE, RECRUITMENT, EDUCATION, TEACHERS Required in, DEATH ANNIVERSARY, POUSTRY, WATCH & CLOCKS, ZORABIAN Today's Ex-Farm Live Broiler Rate Rs. 122/-, Retail Market Rate Rs. 152/-.

BUSINESS LOANS. Loan from Nationalized MNC, Banks & Private Finance for Housing, Construction, Property Mortgage, Industry Top up, 5 Lakhs to 30 Crores. Contact: 9870318903 / 7304654331. "IMPORTANT" Whilst care is taken prior to acceptance of advertising copy, it is not possible to verify its contents. The Indian Express (P) Limited cannot be held responsible for such contents, nor for any loss or damage incurred as a result of transactions with companies, associations or individuals advertising in its newspapers or Publications.

FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY. Our Bhagyalaxmi. Late Smt. Uma Dinesh Kshirsagar. Death : 09 May 2021. Even though we have separated, Fragrance of remembrance diffused widely around us forever. Heartfelt Tribute : Kshirsagar, Raut, Pople, Dange & Ahire Family.

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS. OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE. No. COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162; Date: 06/05/2022. The following e-Tenders can be accessed under the link www.ireps.gov.in. Offers for such e-Tender can be submitted only electronically by accessing the link www.ireps.gov.in.

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियंता सा.नि.वि. वृत्त, जैसलमेर. निविदा सूचना संख्या 01/2022-23. राजस्थान के राज्यपाल महोदय की ओर से जैसलमेर जिले में भवन एवं सड़क निर्माण कार्य के लिए उपयुक्त श्रेणी के सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग राजस्थान में पंजीकृत संवेदकों एवं राज्य सरकार/केन्द्र सरकार के अधिकृत संगठनों/केन्द्रीय लोक निर्माण विभाग/डाक एवं दूरसंचार विभाग/रेलवे इत्यादित में पंजीकृत संवेदकों, जो कि राजस्थान सरकार के उपयुक्त श्रेणी के संवेदकों के समकक्ष हों, से कार्यों हेतु ई-टेंडरिंग के माध्यम से निर्धारित प्रश्न में प्राप्त की जावेगी। निविदा से सम्बन्धित विवरण वेब साईट www.dipr.rajasthan.gov.in, http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in व http://www.pwd.rajasthan.gov.in/व http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice. Tender No.: 08/2022-23/SE/PHC/PKDC. CWSS to Perumatty, Pattanchery, Elappully, Nalleppilly Panchayaths in Palakkad district - Phase V - Supplying and laying balance distribution network and providing balance FHTCs (2140 nos.) in Elappully Grama Panchayath (Zone - I part II). EMD: ₹2,00,000. Tender fee: ₹11,800. Last date for submitting tender: 27-05-2022 03:00 pm. Website: www.kwa.kerala.gov.in, www.etenders.kerala.gov.in

KARNATAKA POWER CORPORATION LIMITED (A Government of Karnataka Enterprise). NOTICE INVITING TENDER. (Two part system) (Through GoK e-Procurement Portal Only). Name of Work: IMPORT AND SUPPLY OF 6.36 LAKH MT OF COAL FOR YERMARU TPS OF RAICHUR POWER CORPORATION LIMITED AND FOR BELLARY TPS AND RAICHUR TPS OF KARNATAKA POWER CORPORATION LIMITED OVER A PERIOD OF ONE YEAR, ON FIRM PRICE BASIS. Tenders are invited from reputed mine owners and/or traders of imported coal meeting the Pre-qualifying Requirements stipulated for Import and Supply of 6.36 lakh Metric Tonnes of Coal for Yermaru Thermal Power Station (YTPS) of Raichur Power Corporation Limited (RPLC), located at Chikkasurgur, Raichur district, Karnataka, and for Bellary Thermal Power Station (BTPS) located at Kudlindi, Bellary district & Raichur Thermal Power Station (RTPS) located at Shaktinagar, Raichur district, Karnataka, of Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCCL) over a period of one year as per the terms and conditions detailed in the tender document. The tender processing fee and EMD payment through GoK e-procurement portal modes only. The tender document can be downloaded from the website https://www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in. Last date for receipt of completed bids: 17:00 hrs on 07.06.2022. Further details can be had from The Superintending Engineer (Mines), KPCCL, No. 82, Shakti Bhavan, III Floor, Race Course Road, Bengaluru-560 001, KPCCL, No. 94495 98901. Telefax: 080-22203894. E-mail: sefuels@gmail.com/cefuelskpccl@karnataka.gov.in Website: https://kpccl.karnataka.gov.in

Khalistan flags spring up at Assembly gate, Himachal seals state borders

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, MAY 8

HOURS AFTER Khalistan flags were found tied on the main gate and slogans scrawled on the walls of the Himachal Pradesh Assembly complex in Dharamshala, where usually only winter session is held, the state police Saturday ordered to seal all interstate borders and barriers.



Khalistan flags outside the Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha in Dharamshala, Kangra, on Sunday. Pradeep Kumar

Police officers "to seal all inter-state borders and keep strict vigil at the places of probable hideouts" of the miscreants. The senior officials were also directed to keep the special security units, bomb disposal squads and quick reaction teams on high alert and "strengthen the security of dams, railway stations, bus stands, government buildings and vital installations".

The DGP also issued directions to all field formations to "remain on high alert from today", keeping in view "the incidents of Khalistan elements in neighboring states, the 'incident of tying of a Khalistan banner in Una' on April 11, and 'hoisting of banners and graffiti of Khalistan on the outer boundary of Vidhan Saba in Dharamshala'. He also cited the

threat posed by the outlawed Sikhs for Justice announcing June 6 as voting date for Khalistan Referendum in Himachal Pradesh. An FIR under Sections 153-A, 153-B of IPC, Section 3 of HP Open Places (Prevention of Disfigurement) Act, 1985, and Section 13 of Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) has been registered at Dharamshala police station against Gurpatwant Singh Pannu of the SFJ and others. Earlier, Kangra SP Khushal Sharma said the banners might have been put late in night or early morning on Saturday. "We have removed the Khalistani flags. Investigation is going on," the SP said. Condemning the incident, Chief Minister Thakur said the culprits will be caught soon. "Only the winter session of the Assembly is held at Dharamshala, and hence it requires tighter security arrangements during that time only. Taking advantage of this, the cowardly incident was

carried out, but the government will not tolerate it. The culprits will be caught soon. Action will be taken," Thakur said. SDM, Dharamshala, Shilpi Beakta said, "It is an alert call for us. We received information around 7.30am. We removed the flags and walls have been repainted. We are going to register a case under relevant sections of the Himachal Pradesh Open Places (Prevention of Disfigurement) Act, 1985." Meanwhile, the AAP slammed the BJP asking how will its government save the people of the country when it failed in ensuring national security. On Twitter, Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia said the putting up of the Khalistan flags outside the gate of Assembly building in Dharamshala was a "complete" failure of the BJP government in dealing with the matter pertaining to national security and keeping the respect of the people of the hill state. WITHPTI

NFHS-5: Total fertility rate dips, sharpest decline among Muslims

At 2.3, it's still highest among all, followed by Hindus at 1.94

ESHARYO
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE FERTILITY rate in the Muslim community has seen the sharpest decline over the past two decades, shows a comparison of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data.

Keeping in trend with the pattern over the years, the fertility dipped further in the community to 2.3 in 2019-21 from 2.6 in 2015-16.

The overall total fertility rate (TFR) has reached replacement levels in the NFHS-5 at two children per woman in the country, declining from 2.2 in the NFHS-4, therefore showing below the replacement level of fertility at 2.1.

While all religious communities have shown a decline in the fertility rate, thus contributing to a decline in the nation's TFR, the decline has been sharpest in the Muslim community from 4.4 in NFHS-1 (1992-93) to 2.3 at present.

The Muslim community's fertility rate, however, remains the highest among all religious communities with Hindus following at 1.94 in NFHS-5, down from 2.1 in 2015-16. The Hindu community had a fertility rate of 3.3 in 1992-93.

these rounds of the NFHS. "The fertility gap between Hindus and Muslims is narrowing. High fertility is mostly a result of non-religious factors such as levels of literacy, employment, income and access to health services. The current gap between the two communities is because of Muslims' disadvantage on these parameters. Over the last few decades, an emerging Muslim middle class has been realising the value of girls' education and family planning," says Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director, Population Foundation of India.

The percentage of Muslim women who have had no schooling reduced from 32 per cent in NFHS-4 (2015-16) to 21.9 per cent in NFHS-5 (2019-21). In contrast, for Hindus, it saw marginal change — from 31.4 per cent in NFHS-4 to 28.5 per cent in NFHS-5.

The NFHS-5 report said the number of children per woman declines with women's level of schooling. Women with no schooling have an average of 2.8 children, compared with 1.8 children for women with 12 or more years of schooling. Women in the lowest wealth quintile have an average of 1.0 more children than women in the highest wealth quintile, and economic betterment organically leads to lower fertility rates, the report has found.

"The data also shows that Muslims are increasingly conscious of family planning. The use of modern contraception among Muslims increased from 37.9 per cent in NFHS-4 to 47.4 per cent in NFHS-5," adds Muttreja.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

38% men, 9% women above 15 years use tobacco products

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
PUNE, MAY 8

OVERALL, 38 per cent men and 9 per cent women above 15 years of age use tobacco products, as per the National Family Health Survey 5 (2019-21) released recently. The report also shows that only 1 per cent of women drink alcohol, compared with 19 per cent of men above the age of 15 years.

The NFHS-5 survey has been conducted in an approximate 6.37 lakh sample households across 707 districts in 28 states and 8 Union Territories. At least 7.24 lakh women and 1.01 lakh men have been covered to provide disaggregated estimates up to district level.

Women (19 per cent) and men (51 per cent) belonging to Scheduled Tribes are more likely to use tobacco than those from any other caste/tribe groups. Among men as well as women, the use of tobacco is higher in rural areas (43 per cent for men and 11 per cent for women) than in urban areas (29 per cent for men and 6 per cent for women). Nearly three-fifths of men (58 per cent) and 15 per cent of women with no schooling or less than 5 years of schooling use tobacco.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

'BJP-RSS turning Ram into Rambo, Hanuman into anger symbol'

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

CHHATTISGARH Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday hit out at the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), accusing them of turning "gentle and benign Lord Ram" into a Rambo-like figure and Hanuman into a symbol of anger.



The Chhattisgarh Chief Minister said the Congress will make a comeback

reported from across India in April — with no space for "dissent and disagreement". He added that this would pass and the Congress

would make a comeback. "Ram is embedded in our culture. Ram is both sakaar and niraakaar (form and formless)... We have accepted Ram in various manifestations. We know Kabir's Ram, Tulsi's Ram and Shabari's Ram..." Baghel said.

He went on to add, "Mahatma Gandhi also saw Ram. His last words were 'Hey Ram' and he used to recite Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram. But today, the way the BJP and the RSS see Ram and the agenda they are setting, the Ram who was 'Maryada Purushottam'... they have turned him into a fighter.

Rambo bana diya jara hai (They are turning him into Rambo). Akramak (aggressive). Hanuman is the epitome of humility, devotion and knowledge. But the posters of him today. If you look at Hanuman's old pictures, the Lord was so beautiful, bhakti se dhyamudra main (meditative and devotional). And today, angry and aggressive. The way they are setting the mindset of the society... they did it with Ram earlier and are doing it with Hanuman now..."

One of the Baghel government's ambitious projects is the Ram Van Gaman Pariyatan

Paripath or a tourism circuit envisaged to map the route that devotees believe the deity took during his exile from Ayodhya.

The CM also took a dig at the BJP, saying that its idea of nationalism was imported. "Who met Mussolini? It was BS Moonej... the drums, caps, everything is imported. Their model of nationalism has no place for dissent and disagreement. Our nationalism is different. Ours is rooted in traditions from the beginning, evolved by the likes of Shankaracharya, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Ramakrishna Paramahansa..."

Drainage system, jewellery, toys among Rakhigarhi excavation finds

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE LATEST round of excavations at the 5,000-year-old Harappan site of Rakhigarhi in Haryana's Hisar district have revealed the structure of some houses, lanes and drainage system, and what could possibly be a jewellery-making unit, say officials from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), while announcing the completion of the three-month-long phase of excavations. The digging, which has been going on at three of the seven mounds, has also revealed pieces of copper and gold jewellery, terracotta toys, besides thousands of earthen pots and seals.



(Above) An excavation site at Rakhigarhi in Haryana's Hisar district. A figure excavated at the site. PTI/ASI

Speech in February 2020. The other sites are Hastinapur in Uttar Pradesh, Sivasagar in Assam, Dholavira in Gujarat and Adichanallur in Tamil Nadu. The site was first excavated by the ASI in 1998-2001. Later, Deccan College, Pune, excavated the site from 2013 to 2016. Manjul added that this is the first time excavations have been done on Mound No. 3, which has revealed "an aristocratic settlement", but said that more rounds of excavation will be needed to ascertain the structure and nature of this elite settlement. A total 13 trenches are open across three mounds: Mound No 1, Mound No 3 and Mound No 7. At Mound 1, a huge quantity of debris/waste of semi-precious stones such as agate and carnelian

have been found, along with evidence of street planning with a general width of 2.6m. At Mound 3, a burnt-brick wall has been traced, conveying the possibility of a walled settlement. The noteworthy antiquity found at both the mounds include steatite seals, terracotta unbaked sealing with relief of elephants and Harappan script. In this field season, at Mound 7, two female skeletons, who were buried with a plethora of pottery and adorned jewellery like jasper, agate beads and shell bangles, have been excavated. The DNA samples from the skeletons have been sent for further analysis, say officials.

The new field season will commence by September 2022, the ASI said.

Asani to intensify into 'severe' cyclonic storm today; Odisha, Bengal on alert

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, MAY 8

CYCLONE ASANI, which developed over southeast regions of Bay of Bengal, will intensify into a 'severe cyclone' by Monday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.



Anchored boats on the shore after the IMD issued an alert for coastal states regarding Cyclone Asani, in Puri, Sunday. PTI

at about 610 km northwest of Car Nicobar, 500 km west of Port Blair, 810 km southeast of Visakhapatnam and 880 km south-southeast of Puri.

Cyclone Asani is very likely to continue to move northwards till Tuesday evening and reach west-central and adjoining Northwest Bay of Bengal region, off north Andhra Pradesh and Odisha coasts by Tuesday.

Odisha has been put on a high alert ahead of the heavy rain (64.4mm to 115.5mm in 24

hours) forecast on Tuesday and Wednesday. Under the influence of the system in the Bay of Bengal, thunderstorms, lightning and light rain is forecast over Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Sikkim till May 12.

In West Bengal, disaster management teams, police and KMC employees have been asked to stay prepared. Boats have been deployed at strategic locations. SDRF and NDRF, Coast Guard and Navy have also been alerted.

BAJAJ FINANCE LIMITED

CIN-L65910MH1987PLC042961

Registered Office: Akurdi, Pune 411 035

Corporate Office: 4th Floor, Bajaj Finserv Corporate Office, Off Pune-Ahmednagar Road, Viman Nagar, Pune 411 014

FIXED DEPOSIT SCHEMES

'FAAA/Stable' rating by CRISIL AND 'MAAA (Stable)' rating by ICRA.

The abovementioned ratings indicate highest degree of safety with regard to timely payment of interest and principal on the instrument.

Rate of Interest per annum valid up to ₹5 Crores per deposit (w.e.f. 10th May 2022)

Period (except table 2)	Cumulative At Maturity	Table 1 Non-Cumulative			
		Monthly	Quarterly	Half Yearly	Annual
12 - 23 months	5.75%	5.60%	5.63%	5.67%	5.75%
24 - 35 months	6.40%	6.22%	6.25%	6.30%	6.40%
36 - 60 months	7.00%	6.79%	6.82%	6.88%	7.00%

Period	Cumulative At Maturity	Table 2 Non-Cumulative			
		Monthly	Quarterly	Half Yearly	Annual
15 months	6.00%	5.84%	5.87%	5.91%	6.00%
18 months	6.10%	5.94%	5.97%	6.01%	6.10%
22 months	6.25%	6.08%	6.11%	6.16%	6.25%
30 months	6.50%	6.31%	6.35%	6.40%	6.50%
33 months	6.75%	6.55%	6.59%	6.64%	6.75%
44 months	7.20%	6.97%	7.01%	7.08%	7.20%

- a) Minimum amount for opening a Fixed Deposit ("hereinafter referred as 'Deposit') with BFL is ₹5000/-.
- b) For the locations mentioned in point M2) below, the minimum amount for opening a Deposit is ₹5000/- (not eligible for online investment).
- c) Individual depositor or primary depositor, falling under special category of Senior citizens (i.e. persons more than 60 years of age, subject to provision of proof of age) will be eligible for additional interest at the rate upto 0.25% per p.a. Deposit for an amount upto ₹5 (five) crore.
- d) Rate of interest for Deposits for an amount more than ₹5 crore per Deposit may vary from the published card rate and will be decided on case to case basis but within the cap on Rate of interest specified by the Reserve Bank of India.
- e) In case of online application for Deposit through BFL online link, the Deposit will be booked upon receipt of the funds by the Company from the customer and hence the Deposit will be booked within 5 days from date of the application. Subject to approval of Application by BFL, interest payable on a Deposit will be calculated from (i) the date of application made through BFL portal and associate partner portals, where payment gateway/payment aggregator enabled by BFL, is used for making payment by the Customer; (ii) the date receipt of the funds by BFL where the deposit is placed through associate partner portal and payment gateway/payment aggregator enabled by such associate partners are used; and (iii) the date of realization of amount by BFL where the payment is made by cheque or any other mode.

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION	As at	
			31 March 2021	31 March 2020
Shri Anant Narayan Roy (Independent Director)	G2 Sagar Sarang, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road, Worli Sea Face, Mumbai 400030.	Retired Civil Servant		
Shri Pramit Jhaveri (Independent Director)	21C Woodlands Peddar Road, Mumbai - 400 026.	Business		
Ms. Radhika Hariharikatti (Independent Director)	51, Maker Tower B, Cuffe Parade, Mumbai- 400005	Financial Advisor/ Professional Director		

F. Summarised Financial Position of the Company (standalone) as appearing in the two latest audited balance sheets:

	As at 31 March 2021	As at 31 March 2020
ASSETS		
Financial assets	1,383.63	674.53
Cash and cash equivalents	2.13	4.83
Bank balances other than cash and cash equivalents	0.00	0.00
Derivative financial instruments	7.00	171.76
Trade receivables	720.00	867.18
Loans	113,089.94	113,471.08
Capital work-in-progress	20,169.20	20,138.98
Investments	487.33	349.51
Other financial assets	1.85	1.85
Total financial assets	1,35,852.25	1,35,623.87
Non-financial assets	155.07	204.57
Current tax assets (net)	191.21	847.61
Deferred tax assets (net)	972.44	1,016.16
Property, plant and equipment	7.07	7.07
Intangible assets under development	43.99	0.00
Intangible assets	254.76	211.98
Other non-financial assets	134.10	99.38
Total non-financial assets	2,486.64	2,379.70
Total assets	1,38,338.89	1,38,003.57

LIABILITIES AND EQUITY

	As at 31 March 2021	As at 31 March 2020
Financial liabilities		
Derivative financial instruments	137.87	
Payables		
Trade payables		
Total outstanding dues of micro enterprises and small enterprises	0.27	0.30
Total outstanding dues of creditors other than micro enterprises and small enterprises	676.62	636.76
Other payables		
Total outstanding dues of micro enterprises and small enterprises	191.08	179.46
Total outstanding dues of creditors other than micro enterprises and small enterprises		
Debt securities	43,071.71	41,713.77
Borrowings (other than debt securities)	27,092.09	36,972.32
Deposits	25,893.43	21,477.00
Subordinated debts	3,898.61	4,141.75
Other financial liabilities	743.65	669.90
Total financial liabilities	101,615.33	105,692.36
Non-financial liabilities		
Current tax liabilities (net)	172.78	52.10
Provisions	136.56	78.87
Other non-financial liabilities	475.48	367.03
Total non-financial liabilities	784.82	498.00

D. Brief particulars of the management of the Company:

The Company is managed by the Managing Director, subject to the control and supervision of the Board of Directors. The Managing Director is entrusted with necessary powers for managing the business and affairs of the Company.

E. Names, addresses and occupations of Directors:

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION
Shri Sanjay Bajaj (Chairman)	Bajaj Vihar Colony, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035.	Industrialist
Shri Madhur Bajaj (Non-Executive Director)	Bangalore No. 3, Bajaj Vihar Colony, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035.	Service
Shri Rajeev Jain (Managing Director)	D-2, Ivy Glen, Marigold Premises, 31/03/2020	Industrialist
Shri Rajiv Bajaj (Non-Executive Director)	24/75, Yeg Koregaon Park, Lane No. 2, Pune 411001.	Industrialist
Shri D J Bajaj Rao (Independent Director)	D-103 Adarsh Residency, 47th Cross, 8th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore 560082.	Professional
Dr. Naushad Forbes (Independent Director)	74 Koregaon Park, Lane No. 3, Pune 411001	Business

Particulars	As at	
	31 March 2021	31 March 2020
Disputed claims against the Company not acknowledged as debts	51.98	44.18
VAT matters under appeal	4.29	4.39
ESI matters under appeal	5.14	5.14
Service tax matters under appeal		
- On interest subsidy	1,905.44	1,973.65

The above text of advertisement has been issued on the authority and in the name of the Board of Directors and has been approved by the Board of Directors at its Meeting held on 20 July 2021 and copy of the same signed by Shri Rajeev Jain, Managing Director, who is authorized by the Board to sign on its behalf, has been delivered to the Reserve Bank of India for registration.

Pune
06 May 2022

HOW TO INVEST:
Applications can be made online by visiting www.bajajfinserv.in/fixd-deposit or Bajaj Finance branches or any of our affiliated partner websites or apps or offices. The amount should be deposited only by net-banking or cheque. Cheques should be payable to Bajaj Finance Ltd. A/C: 0007035006738 and crossed 'Account Payee only'. The cheques should be payable at par and C/S compliant. Application Form along with the necessary remittance should be sent to the Distributors of the Fixed Deposit Schemes of BFL or the sub-distributor at any of the BFL branches. For NEFT/RTGS, please use the following details: Beneficiary Name: Bajaj Finance Ltd, Bank acc no.: ZBAJAFDD (numerical account number is replaced by CMS collection code - ZBAJAFDD), Account type: Current account, Bank Name: Indusind Bank Ltd, IFSC: INDI0000006, Bank branch: Nariman Point, Mumbai. For any investment queries or information about our affiliated partner websites, write to us at weare@bajajfinserv.in or call us on +91 8699010101

Sr. No.	Name of subsidiary	Address of registered office	Activity
1.	Bajaj Housing Finance Limited	Bajaj Auto Ltd complex, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035	Housing Finance Business
2.	Bajaj Financial Securities Limited	Bajaj Auto Ltd complex, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035	Stock broking and depository participant

By order of the Board of Directors for Bajaj Finance Limited
Rajeev Jain, Managing Director
DIN: 01550158

6 IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

UGO ASTUTO/EU AMBASSADOR TO INDIA

‘Russian aggression, not sanctions, is affecting global food security and prices’

EU Ambassador Ugo Astuto shares how Europe has a renewed interest in India and both can work together to deepen strategic partnerships on climate, green energy and connectivity while ensuring a rule-based order. The session was moderated by Deputy Chief of National Bureau, SHUBHAJIT ROY

Shubhajt Roy: As India-EU relations are getting stronger by the day, what is your assessment of this partnership?

We are at an extremely positive juncture. That's based on a number of reasons but for sure, it's about shared values as open societies, democracy and convergence of interests. Both India and EU are good global citizens who believe in a rules-based system of international governance and have a cooperative approach. That's the basis of our strategic partnership, which has been gaining momentum over the past couple of years or so. When it comes to trade, last year's decision to resume negotiations for free trade agreements (FTAs) was a very significant moment in launching our strategic partnership. This has been emphasised by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during her recent visit. Both India and EU have set ambitious targets for meeting climate change challenges and we can exchange best practices to address them. On green energy, India has invested massively in solar grids and cleaner sources of energy. The EU, with its Green Deal and 55 programmes, has vowed to become carbon-neutral by 2050.

Digital transition is the next area where our interests converge. As democratic and open societies, we want the digital revolution to be human-centric, consistent with our values and beneficial to our citizens, which means it must be underpinned by respect for their fundamental freedoms. We want to create an environment which is not only conducive to innovation and competition but is also respectful of individual rights and data protection. So, we will be working together on issues such as the security of networks. We want connectivity with quality infrastructure. We want to develop links, not dependencies. As our President recently said, connectivity and infrastructure development must be based on fiscal, social and environmental sustainability. We have seen some of your neighbours being ensnared by debt traps because of unsustainable infrastructure projects. Global Gateway is a major policy initiative that will build on the bilateral connectivity partnership agreed upon in 2021. The EU vision of the Indo-Pacific is pretty similar to India's advocacy of a rule-based order. Forty per cent of the trade with Europe passes through the Indo-Pacific and we want to contribute to the success story here. These are some of the areas that bring us together. In Europe, there's a renewed interest in India and we can work together as like-minded democracies.

Shubhajt Roy: Europe has been outrightly critical of the Russian invasion of Ukraine compared to India. What conversations have happened between EU and the Indian leadership?

The unprovoked and unjustified aggression of Russia against Ukraine is a blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter. Russia itself subscribed to these agreements. Our response has to be robust and Europe is united in helping Ukraine defend itself, its future and its right to choose the future of its citizens. Apart from political and humanitarian support, for the first time, EU has supplied weapons to Ukraine. We have five packages of sanctions against Russia to disable Kremlin's war machine, to affect Russia's capacity to continue its aggression and bring to account those responsible for this aggression.

Unfortunately, there's also evidence of human rights violations and war crimes. We have seen the indiscriminate shelling of cities and urban centres, and the targeting of civilians in places like Bucha. We cannot simply accept that might is right as it can have consequences not just in Europe but in the Indo-Pacific. We shall continue to support Ukraine and isolate Russia.

Nirupama Subramanian: What does a weakened Russia mean for Europe given its historical context and the present reality? What is the specific outcome that you are looking for?

What we need is the immediate cessation of hostilities and a Russian withdrawal. For four years, we've been trying to engage with Russia and establish mutually beneficial relations. The Kremlin narrative about an expansionist NATO being the cause of the current aggression is totally false. NATO has been expanded to respect the free will of east European countries that have emerged from the terrible experience of the Soviet occupation. NATO has never had aggressive intentions vis-a-vis Russia, quite the contrary. Russia was included in the G7, which then became G8. NATO and Russia



WHY
UGO ASTUTO

As Ambassador of the European Union (EU) in India and Bhutan, Ugo Astuto is overseeing a transformative change in its strategic partnership with India. There's a broad spectrum of issues — from trade to environment, technology to Indo-Pacific — that both are collaborating on, which is underpinned by shared values of democracy, individual freedom, pluralism and multilateralism

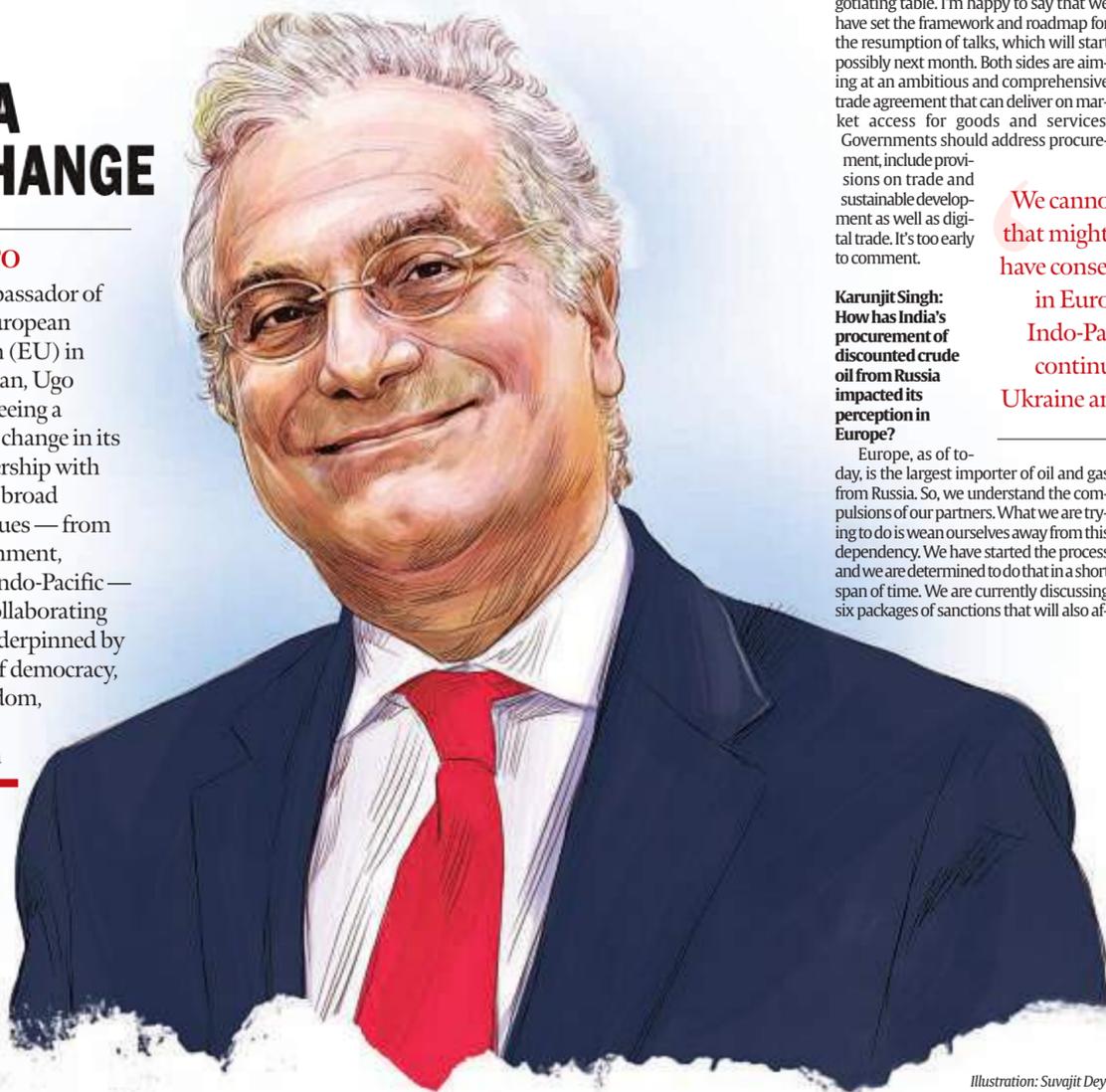


Illustration: Suvajit Dey

established a mechanism for a conversation with the EU. Ukraine has never caused any threat to Russia, for sure.

Nirupama Subramanian: Right now, Europe is united on sanctions. If this war drags on, how long do you think this consensus will hold?

I would say look at how fast the EU has come together and how effectively we have been coordinating with our friends and allies around the world, including the US, UK, Japan, Australia and Singapore, which are also implementing sanctions. When facing such an existential threat to the rules-based system of governance, the EU can and does come together to defend its values. Europe will stay united.

Rakesh Sinha: We've seen the Chinese aligning themselves with the Russians on Ukraine. What has been the EU's engagement with China on this?

We had a virtual summit with China on April 1. We have been telling China that it is also in its interest to speak up and contribute to the international community's efforts to stop the Russian aggression. Speaking in broader terms, we have a complex relation with China, which is a negotiating partner in addressing global challenges like climate. It's a competitor in trade. And then our ask is for China to abide by the rules when it advocates a system of governance which doesn't align with our principles of democracy. So, all these different strands come together. Our relationship with China is important but complex. What we are doing is to address this relationship with clarity, pushing back when necessary.

Rakesh Sinha: Do you see a post-war order in which the Russians and the Chinese will stick together?

I can't speculate, I can only look at facts and at the statement of intent, which was issued right before the Olympics when Russian President Vladimir Putin visited China. And we see pretty robust expressions, limitless friendship and so on. This came right before the aggression in Ukraine.

P Vaidyanathan Iyer: It seems that the EU and the individual big countries within it are at cross purposes with each other as far as India is concerned. For instance, Germany and France push bilateral deals with India on defence or big acquisitions. Yet when it comes to trade agreements, the EU supersedes interests of individual countries. How can we reconcile this divergence?

I don't see that in practice. What I see is a remarkable convergence among all member states. We are all on the same page. In the EU, some competencies have been devolved to European institutions, notably trade. So when it comes, for instance, to the FTAs, that's an exclusive competency for the EU to negotiate. But then again, I'm happy to note that there is consensus among all member states that we should proceed in earnest. We all realise the interest we have and the potential which lies in the conclusion of an FTA. This is largely true overall in our approach to India. The EU coordinates, complements and reinforces the policies of individual member states. I do not foresee any issue in terms of divergent perspectives, quite the opposite.

P Vaidyanathan Iyer: What about security concerns, be it of India or the EU. India is wary of China as EU is of Russia. So how does one factor in individual concerns?

The response must be multidimensional. It also depends on how you look at security. If you look at security holistically, it's not just about the weapons system. We're talking about the digital dimension, the security of networks is becoming more and more important. Our strategy for the Indo-Pacific and its convergence with the vision of India is relevant. It's also about fostering trade and creating conditions so that the next health emergency can be dealt with by an additional level of solidarity. These are also important elements of security. The EU has a strategic compass. We have decided to take measures to address this challenge in terms of working together better and integrating our procurement. We have decided to set up a rapid intervention force of 5,000 troops. Then, you have the efforts undertaken by individual member states, many of whom are partnering with India in security and defence.

Shubhajt Roy: There's a perception that China's rise has been enabled by the West. Europe, too, has helped it weaponise its growing heft despite

India flagging concerns about its belligerence. Could something have been done differently?

I don't know about the past. But what I see is a clear sense of purpose now. Yes, the EU is ready to engage with China but will push back when necessary. You mentioned trade. China cannot simply reap the benefits of belonging to a system of open trade without respecting the same ground rules. We want a level playing field for all. There is the EU legislation on investment, which has been enacted at the national level but follows a framework set at the EU level. We have taken measures for the security of networks.

Harish Damodaran: The sanctions seem to have inflicted much more collateral damage on other countries than Russia. We know that the Russian rouble has strengthened and Russia is merrily selling its oil. But the global prices of crude, fertilisers and commodities have risen. Should this strategy be re-looked at?

Sanctions are needed to stop the invasion and dent Russia's military capability. Europe is ready to pay a price although we are realising the war's cascading effects on food security and prices. But let me be very clear, the cause is not the sanctions, it's Russian aggression. As long as Ukraine is a battlefield, obviously the production of wheat will be limited. So early peace is in everybody's interest. We've also seen Russia stopping wheat-laden ships in the Black Sea. That's not the consequence of sanctions. That's a deliberate decision taken by Russia. You can see the plundering of agricultural equipment by Russia in Ukraine. Again, this has nothing to do with sanctions. It's the decision of the Russian occupiers. Let's not forget the origin of these issues.

Karunjit Singh: Will the proposed India-EU FTA envisage a stricter IPR regime or include a clause on Government procurement? Has the Indian side showed flexibility from its position in 2013 when the agreement was stalled?

We'll have to discuss all issues at the negotiating table. I'm happy to say that we have set the framework and roadmap for the resumption of talks, which will start possibly next month. Both sides are aiming at an ambitious and comprehensive trade agreement that can deliver on market access for goods and services. Governments should address procurement, include provisions on trade and sustainable development as well as digital trade. It's too early to comment.

Karunjit Singh: How has India's procurement of discounted crude oil from Russia impacted its perception in Europe?

Europe, as of today, is the largest importer of oil and gas from Russia. So, we understand the compulsions of our partners. What we are trying to do is wean ourselves away from this dependency. We have started the process and we are determined to do that in a short span of time. We are currently discussing six packages of sanctions that will also af-

We cannot simply accept that might is right as it can have consequences not just in Europe but in the Indo-Pacific. We shall continue to support Ukraine and isolate Russia

Harikishan Sharma: How has the India-EU Water Partnership progressed?

It has worked well so far and it brings together the expertise from Europe and best practices from India on management of water resources. India will have an increased population in cities and towns requiring access to clean water in a sustainable way. It needs a non-polluting waste water system. We have started work on the Tapi river and want to replicate this experience in other places. We also have Twinning Programmes of European and Indian cities to see how we can address water issues.

Ananthakrishnan G: At the recent Raisina Dialogue, the Indian Foreign Minister raised questions about how a rules-based order can justify whatever happened in Afghanistan.

The EU has pretty similar views on Afghanistan as India. We would like to see a peaceful Afghanistan posing no threat to neighbours and where citizens can enjoy their rights, particularly women and girls. We know the dangers of a humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan. That's why the EU and its member states have been at the forefront of providing humanitarian assistance. We pledged a significant amount at a pledging conference in March. We are ready to help the Afghan population, irrespective of the dispensation in power. Our help does not mean the recognition of Taliban rule. We want to help people survive. Our engagement is based on a principle of solidarity with the Afghan people. We will need clear engagement or respect for human rights. And those Afghans who want to leave Afghanistan should be free to. From our side in Europe, we will welcome them.

Ananthakrishnan G: But isn't the war against Putin impacting ordinary Russians? Yet you want to support Afghans despite Taliban rule. Isn't there a dichotomy here?

In Afghanistan, we are talking about basic survival needs that are not met by the ruling establishment. Sanctions are not directed against the Russian population, they are directed towards those responsible for the decision to attack Ukraine. They are directed towards the tools that the Kremlin used to attack Ukraine. For instance, there's a blacklist of Russian government officials, making it impossible for them to travel to Europe. We are blocking their financial institutions in Europe because they are used by the Kremlin to fund the war effort. The distinction is there.

Deeptiman Tiwary: While it talks of battling global terrorism, Europe's focus on India-centric terror groups, operating with Pakistan's support, has been less than satisfactory. How is the EU going to address this, considering the West needs Pakistan again to engage with Afghanistan?

Counter-terrorism cooperation is part and parcel of the various dialogues we have in place with India, at the EU level and also at the level of individual EU member states. Europe is also a victim of terror and it requires a cohesive and consistent response from the international community, which we are doing, including at Financial Action Task Force (FATF). No country should be harbouring terrorists or allow its territory to be used for targeting other countries.

Nirupama Subramanian: Can there be a negotiated end to this war? Prime Minister Modi, during his recent visit to Europe, called for an immediate ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine. Is there a role that India can play here?

I certainly hope there can be a negotiated end to the war. I'm also cognisant of the fact that Ukrainians themselves have signed the terms of this negotiation as a free country, a country which has the right to determine its future. There is a high level of distrust vis-a-vis President Putin. Actually, India does play a role. I understand the Prime Minister has spoken to President Putin as well as President Zelenskyy and I hope that the voice of reason can be heard.

Esha Roy: Although the EU has set ambitious targets, the latest IPCC report says we may not be doing enough to meet the 1.5-degree target. Should we look beyond energy transition? Also the finance and technology transfer that was promised to India and other developing countries by developed countries has not happened.

COP26 has clearly not solved the climate challenge but at least it has done the groundwork for the international community to come together and finally address the issue of keeping the global temperature below 1.5 degrees. It has also helped in a general awareness about climate being an existential risk. An important achievement at COP 26 was the pledge to review our commitment on a yearly basis. I'm hopeful that this awareness is going to translate into even more stringent commitments at COP 27. From the EU side, you are aware of our commitment to become carbon neutral by 2050 and cut emissions, including 55 per cent reduction in greenhouse gases, by

MAHARASHTRA

Children of observation home win hearts as annual dance event resumes after 2 yrs

SADAF MODAK
MUMBAI, MAY 8

FOR 16 children in conflict with law lodged at the Observation Home at Dongri — some for over a year without bail — a dance competition at Shammukananda Hall in Sion brought many victories.

The competition is held annually by NGO Our Children for custodial and non-custodial institutions across Mumbai where children are lodged. Usually, the participants include children in need of care and protection, including orphans and those who have lost contact with their families, lodged in children's homes.

This year, 16 children between ages 16 and 18, and a few older than that, lodged at the Home pending inquiries into the offences they allegedly committed, were among the participants.

Escorted by policemen, the group was taken for the performance on May 1. The theme of the competition was "India's First" and the group enacted a performance based on the first transgender

judge in the country, Joyita Mondal.

Over a month before their performance, officials from the Home and NGO Aashiyana spoke to the children.

"Our intention was to give them an experience they did not have before. Most of the children had never danced before; none had danced at such a platform around so many people. It was a means to show them that there is a world outside what they know," said Rahul Kanthikar, the superintendent of the Dongri Home. He said that the theme was chosen also to create awareness among the children on transgender persons.

In the first meeting with the children, however, the theme was not met with immediate approval. Two choreographers roped in by Aashiyana began teaching those who showed interest. Initially, the group was larger but with some dropping out due to stage fright and others getting bail before the performance, only 16 children remained. It also took some convincing to get them to wear sarees and

jewellery during their dance to the Marathi song Lallati Bhandar for which they rehearsed for nearly three weeks.

Sachi Maniar, director of Aashiyana, said that 2017 was the first time they took permissions for such participation for children in conflict with law. Since some of them are booked in heinous offences and require permission from the competent court, the process took longer. They also performed in 2018.

"The competition was not held for the past two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of the children have been at the Home for over a year. We wanted them to have this experience, to let them know that they have the capabilities and to increase their confidence to engage in such activities," she said.

Kshipra Marathe, a psychologist with Aashiyana, who accompanied the children on May 1, said that they were as excited about going to see as performers. "When they saw how big the stage was, they only had one regret — that they didn't practise more," she said.

Accused in Maharashtra ACB extortion case, Jitu Navlani was named in Panama Papers

MOHAMED THAYER
MUMBAI, MAY 7

THE MAHARASHTRA Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday registered an FIR against hotelier Jitendra 'Jitu' Navlani for allegedly collecting Rs 58 crore from businessmen by promising them protection from any action by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Navlani's name has cropped up earlier as well in connection with former Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Navlani, better known as Jitu Navlani — in his late 40s — is a builder and hotelier who owned the pub Dirty Buns SoBo in south Mumbai and was linked to another pub in Lower Parel.

The names of Navlani, along with his mother Geeta Devi, had

found mention in the Panama Papers leak where details of those with offshore accounts were made public by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), of which The Indian Express is a partner in India.

Sources said that Navlani is influential and has "close relations" with several IAS and IPS officers, along with politicians. He is married to Bhumiika Puri, a former model. The husband-wife duo is known to be close to several socialites and move around in the same social circle.

Navlani is known to throw lavish parties at his pubs, where IAS and IPS officers are also invited. Giving an example of Navlani's clout, an officer said that once when an IPS officer had raided a pub linked to him in Lower Parel, the single officer



Jitendra 'Jitu' Navlani

had been pulled up by then Maharashtra DGP and a complaint had been made to the chief minister that the officer had exceeded his brief.

Navlani's name first appeared in the media after the Gamdevi police registered an FIR against him for allegedly stopping the police from arresting an accused person who was partying in his pub Dirty Buns SoBo. The incident had taken place on November 23, 2019, when a police team came to the

pub late at night and found it open. The police had asked Navlani, the owner, to shut the bar. The police had then alleged that Navlani had dropped names of several cops with whom he had connections.

Then Gamdevi senior inspector Anup Dange, who was leading the police team, had alleged that after a scuffle broke out between patrons of the bar while they were leaving, the police tried to intervene. Dange had claimed that Navlani had helped one of the customers to flee from the pub, following which, the Gamdevi police had registered an FIR against him. Last month, however, the Bombay High Court quashed the FIR against Navlani.

Later, when Param Bir Singh was ousted as the Mumbai Police commissioner, Dange had sub-

mitted an application to the ACB alleging that Singh had asked him to not include Navlani's name in the FIR. However, since he had named him, Singh transferred and eventually suspended him.

Dange further alleged that Singh had demanded money from him if he wanted to be reinstated. The matter is currently being probed by the CBI.

Navlani's name cropped up again when Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut alleged that he, in cahoots with ED officers, was running an extortion racket in Mumbai. Raut had alleged that Navlani would approach businessmen claiming to be operating at the behest of ED and promise them reprieve from any action by the central agency if they paid him money.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

'Reports of rift in police dept did not amount to public mischief': Bombay HC quashes FIR against Solapur journalist

OMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, MAY 6

THE BOMBAY High Court Friday, while granting relief to a journalist from Solapur, noted that news reports by him about rifts within two sections of the police department will not amount to an offence under Section 505 (statements conducing to public mischief) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

A division bench of Justice Prasanna B Varale and Justice Shriram M Modak on May 6 allowed a petition filed by Amol Kashinath Vyavhare, a journalist from Solapur, seeking to quash criminal proceedings initiated against him for publishing news articles. As per police, the two articles published in a Marathi newspaper pertained to a rift among officers of two departments of Solapur police.

The articles referred to alleged raids by the crime branch wherein some police personnel were found drunk, and claimed that there was a tussle between officers from the city crime branch and Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP).

The articles said the police staff attached to the crime branch office were not following instructions of senior crime branch officers but were loyal to the DCP.

In light of this, on June 1, 2018, the DCP lodged a complaint with Sadar Bazar Police station against the reporter for offences punishable under Sections 505(2) and 500 (defamation) of the IPC, among others. The prosecution claimed that news articles were defamatory and tried to create differences between the two sections of the police department.

The bench observed that by reading the said news reports, "Any person will certainly form an

opinion about the rift between the police personnel and same may not give a good message about overall functioning of the Police Commissionerate, Solapur."

"It is also true that it will create alarm among members of the society to the effect whether the Solapur City Police are in a position to protect their interest in case of need and whether they are competent to maintain law and order," it added. However, the same would not be sufficient to attract offence under Section 505 (2) of IPC, it noted.

"The provisions of the sub-section are very clear. Alarming news or rumour must relate to the subjects including relation, race, place of birth, residence, language, caste and community. The subject of the two news articles does not relate to any of the categories mentioned in Section 505(2) of the Indian Penal Code," the bench held.

A 'golden record' of citizens to transfer welfare benefits

VALLABH OZARKAR
MUMBAI, MAY 8

THE MAHARASHTRA government is planning to prepare a Unified Citizen Data Hub (UCDH) that will contain a wide range of information about an individual in order to help streamline the transfer of welfare benefits and plan more schemes.

Citizens will get a unique ID — 'a golden record' — within the MH-UCDH portal that will help the government take data-driven decisions on targeting people through schemes and monitoring the existing ones.

The government will create this platform after merging 56 databases through 377 agencies

and bodies — including zila parishads, police, municipal corporations, collectorates, and the health, education and finance departments — in order to create a 360-degree profile of any particular citizen, said an official aware of the project.

The government believes the hub will help it reduce irregularities in social welfare schemes.

Currently, the state uses the Maharashtra Direct Benefit Transfer (MahaDBT) Portal to transfer benefits and subsidies — scholarships, loan waivers, agricultural support, etc.

But there are challenges with this. Multiple departments manage legacy systems and the beneficiary details are scattered. There is no single platform where data is readily available

GOVERNANCE AN EXPRESS SERIES MAHARASHTRA

for scheme planning and beneficiary identification.

During the Covid lockdown, for instance, the government was initially unable to provide relief to sections like auto and taxi drivers, construction workers and other workers as it either did not have bank details of all the beneficiaries or had no way to verify their identity.

The official mentioned above said: "The details of the most of the beneficiaries are also incomplete, inaccurate, not updated or available at all. There is a lack of

unique identifiers for identifying various entities. There is also difficulty in identification of family or household, monitoring of the quantum of benefits paid at various levels of entity — for example on individual-level, family-level, location-wise and ability to cross-check data (such as beneficiary details, benefits claimed, etc.) with databases of other government agencies."

And even though the use of Aadhaar data and the MahaDBT Portal has proved useful for transferring benefits, more challenges remain with the process.

"In the present system, a 360-degree view of the beneficiary and state social benefit system is not available. There is no facility to plan and administer schemes. Historical data and analysis of

payments made before linking of Aadhaar data is not available. The portal also maintains records of only registered citizens — it is not an exhaustive database of all eligible residents. The data primarily pertains to individuals and not organisations. Most importantly, there is also a possibility of leakages," said the official.

The identification of beneficiaries irrespective of their movement across various locations also becomes an issue.

"We are in the process of appointing a system integrator who will design, develop, deploy and maintain MH-UCDH. The platform will have the details of citizen's demographic information and master record of every citizen," said the official.

Pakistani among two LeT militants killed in gunfight

BASHAAR MASOOD
SRINAGAR, MAY 8

TWO LASHKAR-E-TAIBA militants, one of them a Pakistani national, were killed in a gunfight in south Kashmir's Kulgam district on Sunday, police said.

The foreign militant, Haider, was involved in multiple attacks in north Kashmir, including the killing of policemen. The other, Shahbaz Shah, was behind a recent civilian killing in the district, police said.

A joint team of Jammu and Kashmir Police and the Army cordoned off Cheyan village in Devsar area in the morning. The firefight that followed lasted several hours, said police.

"Both the trapped militants were killed," said a police tweet. "Incriminating materials including arms and ammunition recovered."

Police said Shah, a Kulgam resident, was involved in killing civilian Satish Kumar Singh in the district's Kakran village in April.

Quoting Kashmir Inspector General of Police Vijay Kumar, police said the Pakistani militant was active in north Kashmir for over two years before shifting base to south Kashmir.

"Pakistani terrorist Haider was involved in two recent terror strikes in Bandipore," they said, adding that he was behind the killing of two policemen, Mohammad Sulan and Fayaz Ahmad. Police added that in February, Haider killed a special police officer, Zubair Ahmad, in Bandipora. Two policemen and a BSF officer were injured in that attack. Police said the slain militants belonged to Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Woman accuses Rajasthan minister's son of rape

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

A 23-YEAR-OLD Jaipur-based woman has accused a Rajasthan minister's son of rape, officials on Sunday. The Delhi Police has registered a 'zero FIR', according to which the woman was allegedly raped on multiple occasions between January 8 last year and April 17 this year in Jaipur and Delhi.

The FIR has been registered in North Delhi and charges include causing hurt by intoxicating drugs, causing miscarriage, abducting a woman to compel her for marriage and criminal intimidation.

The woman has alleged she met the accused through Facebook last year. She said the two met in Jaipur following which the accused invited her to Sawai Madhopur on January 8, 2021. "My drink was spiked. The next day, when I woke up... he showed me photos and videos of myself where I was naked. I got worried and started crying..." reads the FIR.

The woman has alleged the accused met her again after that in Delhi and forced himself on her.

Navi Mumbai Municipal Transport
Belapur Bhavan, 8th Floor, Sect.-11, CBD, Navi Mumbai.

Engg. Department
E-Tender Notice

Tender No. 1) NMMT/TM/ENGG/01/2022-23
2) NMMT/TM/ENGG/02/2022-23

Tender Description :

1) Selection of Bus Operator for Operation and Maintenance of 15 Electric 9 MTR Single Decker Buses on Gross Cost Contract.

2) Selection of Bus Operator for Operation and Maintenance of 10 Electric 9 to 10 MTR Double Decker Buses on Gross Cost Contract.

Which is available on Web site
<https://nmmc.etenders.in>

Sd/-
Transport Manager, N.M.M.T.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the public at large, that we are investigating the right, title and interest of **Macrotech Developers Limited** (formerly known as Lodha Developers Limited prior thereto Lodha Developers Private Limited and prior thereto Palava Dwellers Private Limited and prior thereto Lodha Dwellers Private Limited), a company deemed existing under the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013, bearing CIN: L45200MH1995PLC093041 having its registered office at 412, 4/F, Floor, 17G Varadhan Chamber, Cavasji Patel Road, Homiran Circle, Fort, Mumbai - 400 001 (the "Company"), in respect of the parcels of land (the "Lands") more particularly described in the Schedule hereunder written. The Lands have been purchased by the Company from Harish Suresh Panjiwani (aka Hareesh Suresh Panjiwani) being the legal heir of Suresh Kamal Panjiwani (aka S.K. Panjiwani) (since deceased). The Lands were originally allotted in favour of Suresh Kamal Panjiwani by the Government of India, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation (Department of Rehabilitation), Custodian of Evacuee Property in terms of The Administration of Evacuee Property Act, 1950, The Displaced Persons (Claims) Act, 1950 and The Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation Act), 1954 (all since repealed).

All person(s) having any direct or indirect claim and / or demand and / or objection and / or share and/or benefit against / upon / in respect of the right, title, interest of the Company to the Lands or any part / portion thereof, including in any transferable development rights (TDR), floor space index (FSI) or any built-up areas constructed and/or to be constructed on the Lands or any part / portion thereof, including by way of sale, transfer, mortgage, charge, encumbrance, agreement for sale, assignment, lease, agreement to lease, sub-lease, tenancy, license, development rights, option agreement, allotment, possession, lien, guarantee, covenant, trust, maintenance, easement, right of way, reservation, family arrangement/settlement, agreement, gift, *lis-pendens*, exchange, share, beneficial interest, relinquishment, partition, power of attorney, order or decree or direction of any court or any other statutory or adjudicating authority or otherwise howsoever and of whatsoever nature ("Claims"), are hereby required to make the same known in writing to Khaitan & Co, Advocates, at One World Centre, Tower 1C, 13th Floor, Senapati Bapat Marg, Elphinstone Road, Mumbai 400 013, along with a copy addressed over email at mumbai@khaitanco.com (marked to the attention of Mr Devedra Deshmukh) along with original supporting documents, within 14 (fourteen) days from the date of publication hereof, failing which, it would be deemed that no such Claims exists and the same shall be treated as waived or abandoned and / or not binding on the Company.

SCHEDULE

ALL THAT piece and parcel of land bearing Survey Nos (i) 152/5 measuring 9,940 square meters; (ii) 158/1 measuring 21,320 square meters; (iii) 159/10 measuring 5,790 square meters; (iv) 171 measuring 880 square meters; (v) 172/1 measuring 7,960 square meters; (vi) 174 measuring 13,860 square meters; (vii) 175 measuring 1,800 square meters aggregate measuring 61,550 square meters, situated, lying and being at Village Hedutane, Taluka Kalyan, District Thane, within the Registration District and Sub-District of Kalyan.

For Khaitan & Co
Sd/-
Devedra Deshmukh
Partner

Date: Mumbai
Place: 09.05.2022

BAJAJ FINANCE LIMITED
CIN-L65910MH1987PLC042961
Registered Office: Akurdi, Pune 411 035
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FIXED DEPOSIT SCHEMES
'FAAA/Stable' rating by CRISIL AND 'MAAA (Stable)' rating by ICRA.

The above-mentioned ratings indicate highest degree of safety with regard to timely payment of interest and principal on the instrument.

Systematic Deposit Plan (SDP) (for Resident Individuals only):
Rate of Interest per annum valid up to ₹5 Crores per deposit (w.e.f. 10th May 2022)

Period (except table 2)	Cumulative rates of interest	
	For Depositors other than Senior Citizens	For senior citizens
12 - 23 months	5.75%	6.00%
24 - 35 months	6.40%	6.65%
36 - 60 months	7.00%	7.25%

a) Minimum deposit amount under SDP is ₹5,000/- per Deposit.
b) The SDP is offered only to Indian residents.
c) In SDP, each Fixed Deposit (referred as 'Deposit') will be treated as separate Deposit and separate Fixed Deposit Report ('FDR') will be issued with tenure that will be computed from the date of such respective Deposit.
d) In case of Monthly Maturity Scheme, the Depositor will have option to choose between 6 to 48 number of monthly Deposits under SDP.
e) In case of Single Maturity Scheme, the Depositor will have option to choose between 6 to 48 number of monthly Deposits under SDP.
f) In case of Single Maturity Scheme, the Depositor will have option to choose between 6 to 48 number of monthly Deposits under SDP.
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z) In case of Single Maturity Scheme, the Depositor will have option to choose between 6 to 48 number of monthly Deposits under SDP.

Period	Cumulative rates of interest	
	For Depositors other than Senior Citizens	For senior citizens
15 months	6.00%	6.25%
18 months	6.10%	6.35%
22 months	6.25%	6.50%
30 months	6.50%	6.75%
33 months	6.75%	7.00%
44 months	7.20%	7.45%

E. Names, addresses and occupations of Directors:

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION
Shri Sanjay Bajaj (Chairman)	Bajaj Vihar Colony, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035.	Industrialist
Shri Madhur Bajaj (Non-Executive Director)	Bungalow No. 3, Bajaj Vihar Colony, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035.	Industrialist
Shri Rajeev Jain (Managing Director)	D-2, Ivy Glen, Marigold Premises, Kalyani Nagar, Pune 411014.	Service
Shri Rajiv Bajaj (Non-Executive Director)	34/35, Yag Koregaon Park, Lane No. 2, Mumbai - 400001.	Industrialist
Shri D J Bajaj Rao (Independent Director)	D-103 Adarsh Residency, 47th Cross, 31th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore 560002.	Professional
Dr. Naashob Forbes (Non-Executive Director)	74 Koregaon Park, Lane No. 3, Pune 411001	Business
Shri Anam Narayan Roy (Independent Director)	62 Sagor Tarang, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road, Worli Sea Face, Mumbai - 400030.	Retired Civil Servant
Shri Pramit Jhaveri (Independent Director)	21C Woodlands Peddar Road, Mumbai - 400026.	Business
Ms.Radhika Haribhakti (Independent Director)	51, Maker Tower B, Cuffe Parade, Mumbai-400005.	Financial Advisor/ Professional Director

F. Summarised Financial Position of the Company (standalone) as appearing in the two latest audited balance sheets:

	As at 31 March 2021	As at 31 March 2020
ASSETS		
Financial assets	1,383.63	674.53
Cash and cash equivalents	1,383.63	674.53
Bank balances other than cash and cash equivalents	2.13	4.83
Derivative financial instruments	0.00	17.76
Trade receivables	720.10	867.18
Loans	1,13,089.94	1,13,417.08
Investments	20,109.12	20,138.99
Other financial assets	487.33	349.51
Total financial assets	1,35,852.15	1,35,623.87
Non-financial assets		
Current tax assets (net)	155.07	204.57
Deferred tax assets (net)	919.21	847.61
Property, plant and equipment	9,722.44	1,016.16
Capital work-in-progress	7.07	0.00
Intangible assets under development	43.99	0.00
Intangible assets	134.10	211.98
Other non-financial assets	134.10	99.38
Total non-financial assets	2,486.64	2,379.70
Total assets	1,38,338.89	1,38,003.57
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
Financial liabilities		
Derivative financial instruments	13.87	
Trade payables		
Total outstanding dues of micro enterprises and small enterprises	0.72	0.30
Total outstanding dues of creditors other than micro enterprises and small enterprises	626.67	636.76
Other payables		
Total outstanding dues of micro enterprises and small enterprises	191.08	179.46
Debt securities	43,071.71	41,713.37
Borrowings (other than debt securities)	22,092.29	26,932.32
Deposits	25,803.43	21,427.10
Subordinated debts	3,898.61	4,141.75
Other financial liabilities	745.65	669.90
Total financial liabilities	101,611.33	105,692.36
Non-financial liabilities		
Current tax liabilities (net)	172.78	52.10
Provisions	136.56	78.87
Other non-financial liabilities	478.48	367.03
Total non-financial liabilities	787.82	498.00

The above text of advertisement has been issued on the authority and in the name of the Board of Directors and has been approved by the Board of Directors at its Meeting held on 20 July 2021 and copy of the same signed by Shri Rajeev Jain, Managing Director, who is authorized by the Board to sign on its behalf, has been delivered to the Reserve Bank of India for registration.

Pune
Date: 09.05.2022

HOW TO INVEST:
Applications can be made online by visiting www.bajajfinance.in/fixd-deposit or Bajaj Finance branches or any of our affiliated partner websites or apps or offices. The amount should be deposited only by net banking or cheque. Cheques should be payable to Bajaj Finance Ltd./A/c: 0007035006738 and crossed 'Account Payee only'. The cheques should be payable at par and CTS compliant. Application Form along with the necessary remittance should be sent to the Distributors of the Fixed Deposits of BFL or submitted at any of the BFL branches. For NEFT/RTGS, please use the following details: Beneficiary Name: Bajaj Finance Ltd, Bank a/c no: ZBAJAFDP (numerical account number is replaced by CINS collection code - ZBAJAFDP), Account type: current account, Bank Name: Indusind Bank Ltd. IFSC: IN000900006, Branch: Nariman Point, Mumbai. For any investment queries or information about our affiliated partner websites, write to us at weare@bajajfinance.in or call us on +91 669901001

By order of the Board of Directors
for Bajaj Finance Limited

Sr. No.	Name of subsidiary	Address of registered office	Activity
1.	Bajaj Housing Finance Limited	Bajaj Auto Ltd Complex, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035	Housing Finance Business
2.	Bajaj Financial Securities Limited	Bajaj Auto Ltd Complex, Mumbai-Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411035	Stock broking and depository participant



The Indian EXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Question of timing

Surprise interest rate hike raises questions over RBI's aims. Its mandate is to target inflation, not shore up rupee



RAJESWARI SENGUPTA

Who's counting

WHO's excess mortality data stretches credulity. Yet, there's no need to be prickly, India has its task cut out

THE WORLD HEALTH Organisation's (WHO) report on excess mortality due to Covid-19 has pegged the India figure at nearly 10 times the official toll at 47.4 lakh. As an analysis in this newspaper showed, this raises several questions. India's death toll of 5.23 lakh so far is, most possibly an undercount, but the WHO's data suggests that over 90 per cent of deaths in India have gone unreported. Even the base number of expected deaths (in a no-Covid scenario) for the year 2020 which the WHO has used in its report is almost nine lakh more than the average number of deaths recorded each year in India for the last 15 years. Still, the WHO estimates reflect similar numbers by many other agencies and are based on well-established mathematical models. How effective are these in getting close to what actually happened, capturing the several variables of a pandemic given India's size and diversity — from high urban population-density Kerala to rural settings in other states — will always be open to question.

Counting the Covid dead is not a mere academic exercise. This effort is crucial to addressing the shortcomings of public health facilities and framing responses to future medical emergencies. It is also a vital part of the endeavour to heal the wounds of those who have suffered in the past two years. The Covid compensation exercise, under the watchful gaze of the Supreme Court, will, hopefully, encourage families to report their loss. Accurate information is paramount to the process, especially when, in a sharply polarised discourse, even science is contested. In the first month of the first pandemic year, an oft-quoted study said up to three million Indians could die by mid-April 2020. The author has since then back-tracked and acknowledged that his assumption of mortality rate was a little off the mark. The WHO's record on Covid hasn't been much to write home about. Its own study concluded that crucial time was lost in the fight against the virus because the global health agency delayed the announcement of an international emergency. It spent weeks persuading China to allow a team of international scientists to visit Wuhan after the outbreak. It then swung to the other extreme late last year after the relatively-less virulent Omicron began to infect people worldwide. Instead of educating the world about the nature of this new variant, it rang needless alarm bells.

That said, it would be, well, unscientific, to be prickly and attribute sinister motives to the WHO. Barely days ago, its Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus and Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in Jamnagar, that will play a key role as a "global repository" of traditional medicine practices across the world. What the WHO's Covid death estimates underline is the need for India to further strengthen its death recording system, finetune its accuracy and transparency. In fact, the success of India's vaccination programme has been facilitated by distribution and supply-chain processes on the ground, from the shop-floor to the primary health care centre, backed by a robust digital architecture of reporting and recording. Given the rapid digitalisation of social systems, this should translate to strengthening the Civil Registration System and Sample Registration System as well, the two main tools for recording births and deaths. Let the WHO and experts do their job, the Centre and state governments should do theirs.

Eye on the plate

Food inflation has not started to hurt India yet. Stepping up domestic production can help country duck global trend

A CONSIDERABLE PART of the RBI's statement accompanying its last week's exceptional monetary tightening measures focused on the challenges arising from food inflation. That problem, till recently, was largely confined to edible oils (from soaring international prices even prior to the Russia-Ukraine war) and the likes of onion and tomato (due to unseasonal heavy rains). But now there is fear of food inflation getting "generalised". The Food and Agriculture Organisation's food price index has shown a 29.8 per cent year-on-year increase for April. Moreover, all commodity group price indices have posted huge jumps: Cereals (34.3 per cent), vegetable oils (46.5 per cent), dairy (23.5 per cent), sugar (21.8 per cent) and meat (16.8 per cent). Simply put, food inflation is already rising across-the-board globally — because of supply disruptions from the war, dry weather in South America, high crude prices inducing greater diversion of corn, sugar, palm and soyabean oil for bio-fuel, and so on.

The transmission of the above global inflation to domestic food prices basically depends on how much of a country's consumption/production is imported/exported. Such transmission is evident in edible oils and cotton, where up to two-thirds of India's consumption and a fifth of its production are imported and exported, respectively. The same is starting to happen in wheat. Till two months ago, the country seemed set to harvest a bumper crop and also surpass last year's all-time-high exports. But with the heat wave from mid-March severely impacting yields, both public stocks and overall domestic availability are under pressure, even as open market prices have risen to export parity levels. Not surprisingly, the Centre has decided to slash wheat allocations and offer more rice under its flagship free-grains scheme. Export demand is, likewise, helping maize trade well above its minimum support price (MSP). But that, alongside higher oil meal prices, will also push up livestock feed costs and, in turn, translate into inflation in milk, egg and meat.

For now, though, the consolation is that there is little to no inflation in pulses, sugar, onion, potato and most summer vegetables. To that extent, food inflation isn't yet "generalised" in India. Sugar is one commodity where retail prices haven't gone up much, despite record exports by mills. The reason for it is production also hitting a historic high. In short, while global food inflation is a reality, the only way to contain the effects of it getting "imported" is to step up domestic production. That would call for early announcement of kharif MSPs with credible procurement plans for oilseeds and pulses; ensuring timely availability of seed, fertiliser, crop protection chemicals and credit by actively engaging the industry; and not resorting to knee-jerk export bans or stocking controls, which will only disincentivise producers.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



THE RESERVE BANK of India normally makes policy announcements in line with a well-defined schedule. But on May 4, it unexpectedly tightened monetary policy, increasing its policy interest rate and reducing liquidity in the banking system. Markets were taken aback by the announcement with the 10-year government bond yield jumping by 25 basis points to reach 7.38 per cent. Why did the RBI do this? Even after the governor's careful explanations, the answers remain unclear.

At one level, the answer is obvious: Inflation pressures are rising. Since the last MPC meeting of April 8, headline CPI (consumer price index) inflation has gone up from 6.1 per cent to 7 per cent, and the forthcoming inflation numbers are expected to be even worse. Clearly, the RBI had to respond. So, it raised the policy repo rate by 40 basis points to 4.4 per cent and increased the cash reserve ratio by 50 basis points to 4.5 per cent.

This explanation, however, does not seem entirely adequate because nothing fundamental has changed since the last policy meeting. Even back then, it was obvious that inflation pressures were rising — the wholesale price index (WPI) was already in double digits, inflation in the US and Europe was increasing, commodity prices were spiking due to the Russia-Ukraine war, and supply chain constraints were tightening as China imposed severe lockdowns to deal with a resurgence of the Covid-19 pandemic. But the RBI did not think that these pressures warranted policy tightening.

What made the RBI change its mind? Under the inflation-targeting framework, the central bank's thinking is typically revealed by its inflation forecast. If it projects that inflation will be above target for some time, it implies that the central bank is concerned about rising prices and will be taking action to bring inflation down. In the last policy review, the RBI projected that inflation would

moderate at 5 per cent by the end of the fiscal year, somewhat higher than the 4 per cent objective, but not unduly so, thereby explaining why the central bank saw no need to tighten at that time.

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Presumably, the RBI now thinks that the inflation pressures will either be more intense or more durable than it had earlier expected. And the RBI felt that its policy stance was now "behind the curve", meaning that urgent action was needed to quell these pressures. Otherwise, it would have waited till the next MPC meeting on June 8 to increase the repo rate. But it is impossible to know whether this was really the motivation as the RBI didn't release a revised inflation forecast — and because other explanations are also possible.

One possibility relates to the exchange rate. The US Federal Reserve was expected to announce a 50 basis point increase in interest rates later that day. So, it is possible that the RBI wanted to jump ahead of this announcement by announcing its own 40 basis point rate increase, maintaining (more or less) the interest differential against the US dollar and thereby keeping the dollar-rupee exchange rate relatively stable.

It's not obvious why exchange rate stability would be a priority for the RBI. After all, its legal mandate is to achieve an inflation target, not an exchange rate. But the RBI does seem determined to limit the rupee's depreciation. The April 8 statement highlighted that India's foreign exchange reserves had increased to \$607 billion at the end of 2021-22. In contrast, the May 4 statement mentioned that India's foreign exchange reserves now amount to \$600 billion — a decline of \$7 billion. Clearly, the RBI has been intervening in the foreign exchange market to stem the rupee depreciation. So, it appears plausible that the unexpected increase in the policy rate was done to defend the currency against further depreciation pressures.

There are, then, two potential explanations

for the RBI's sudden move. Both have rational, but both also have costs. Consider the first possibility that the RBI has now radically revised its inflation forecast (without, of course, releasing the same). Inflation targeting works best if monetary policy is predictable, with interest rate actions being announced on a regular schedule, based on clearly-explained inflation forecasts. On the contrary, sudden moves convey the message that the RBI is getting worried that it is no longer in control of the inflation situation, which is hardly a reassuring signal to send to the markets.

Next, consider the possibility that the RBI wanted to keep the exchange rate stable. The problem is that India is facing an adverse terms of trade shock in the form of rising oil prices, which is putting pressure on the current account deficit. If the RBI allowed the exchange rate to depreciate in response, this would alleviate the current account deficit. Perhaps more importantly, depreciation would help the nascent recovery by ensuring that exports can continue to grow, despite the difficult international circumstances. And there is the additional problem that targeting the exchange rate violates the RBI's legal mandate.

The RBI now faces a difficult task in the months ahead. At the broadest level, it needs to address the costs of its surprise announcement by reinforcing the credibility of the inflation-targeting framework. Specifically, it will need to focus — and be seen to be doing so — squarely on its inflation target, rather than the exchange rate or any other objectives. And it will need to convince the public that it is actually trying to get inflation under control.

To do this, it will need to continue to tighten policy, but in a gradual, predictable and transparent manner.

The writer is associate professor of Economics, IGIDR



AAKASH JOSHI

Why BJP needs Rahul Gandhi

A wedding function to a party adrift, shrinking him suits its politics

JUST FOR A minute, let's forget about his name. A leader of the Congress went to a party as part of a friend's wedding celebration. The BJP — which has six times the number of Lok Sabha MPs than the Congress, and rules in several more states — and its social media warriors went into overdrive. The wedding guest's morality was questioned, and many accused him of working against the national interest by attending a social function with the Chinese envoy. The latter accusation, like much of what is said on the internet, turned out to be false.

The reason for the overreaction is not just that a politician went to a nightclub. It makes sense only because that politician is Rahul Gandhi.

The images from the club came at a bad time for the Congress: The party's eight-year-long crisis was underlined once more with Prashant Kishor deciding not to help with its revival late last month. And at pivotal political moments in recent times — when the Punjab Assembly election campaign kicked off in December 2021 or when the Congress took out a peace march during the 2020 Delhi riots — Rahul Gandhi has been missing in action, often on trips abroad.

Yet, his style of working is not, in essence, the business of either the BJP or the government. Rahul holds no public office of concern to anyone but the voters of Wayanad constituency. Why, then, has India's most dominant political force been obsessed with a diminished leader from the Opposition?

For the Hindutva Right's political juggernaut, the obsessive demonisation of Rahul Gandhi yields dividends. Yet, this constant targeting isn't just a matter of tactics and political convenience. For all his faults, the

leader represents — in however shrunken a manner — a significant ideological and political challenge to the RSS-BJP.

Rahul Gandhi's denigration taps into popular discontent. That many political leaders — including a substantial number from the BJP — are dynasts does not detract from the fact that the descendants of Nehru appear to have a stranglehold on the party of the freedom struggle. Just as the House of Windsor is the lynchpin of Britain's ossified, regressive class structure, the Nehru-Gandhis have come to signify a lack of social mobility for the youth — the fact that descent, not achievement is enough to guarantee a career in politics.

For the BJP, especially since the ascent of Narendra Modi, Rahul Gandhi provides the most convenient juxtaposition to further a cult of personality. The PM is self-made, hard-working, openly and almost militantly Hindu, always present, a nationalist. Rahul (in the Right's view) is a dilettante politician, a descendant, eschews responsibility, is of mixed heritage, holds up "pseudo-secularism". Despite the fall in Rahul Gandhi's popularity, it is useful for the BJP to present him as the alternative on the national stage to strengthen the TINA factor. Would the BJP leadership compare as favourably with Mamata Banerjee — a politician risen from the streets — or even M K Stalin or Jagan Reddy, who are both sons of leaders but do not have either the 'elite' or 'outsider' tag? Rahul Gandhi's demonisation by the ruling forces has as much, if not more, to do with his background as it does with his political failures.

And that background — and Rahul himself — still carries with it an alternative idea that can challenge the BJP's "New India".

On the ideological front, it appears at first glance that the RSS-BJP's dominance is verging on the hegemonic. Regional parties and leaders that challenge the BJP electorally in the states have competing interests and lack coherence at the level of ideas. The Congress too appears ill-equipped to battle the BJP. After all, senior leaders have jumped ship, and its "soft Hindutva" tactics show a poverty of ideas. Yet, the Congress remains — in however vestigial a form — the only party with a national presence that can rival the BJP. As Suhas Palshikar argued (IE, April 30), the "Congress space" is still relevant, even if the Congress seems to be less so. It is the centrism of the "Congress space" that can act as an ideological glue to sustain a national coalition of non-BJP parties.

Unfortunately, that space — a liberal, federal idea of India — seems to be of no concern to many Congress leaders. Too many are willing to back the BJP line on issues like the Ram Mandir and J&K's constitutional status. Not enough have either national name recognition or a mass base. It is in this regard that Rahul Gandhi presents a potent challenge.

Unlike, say, a Jyotiraditya Scindia, he cannot be poached. He cannot abandon the Congress and the ideals it once represented — Rahul cannot abandon Nehru's secularism or Indira Gandhi's "garibi hatao" because to do so would be to deny his *raison d'être* as a politician. In that sense, he is perhaps one of the few significant implacable foes for the BJP that stands in the way of a "Congress-mukt Bharat". Best, then, to keep the focus on the name.

aaakash.joshi@expressindia.com

MAY 9, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

PM ATTACKS CPM

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi ended her two-day election tour of West Bengal with an attack on the Marxist idea of "one-party rule" to the exclusion of other non-communist parties. Addressing rallies in North Bengal, she said the CPM-led government's highhanded approach should be seen from this perspective. The Marxist Party branded her as "authoritarian" only to hide its "anti-democratic character". In which communist country was there in existence a multiparty system as in India, she asked and then observed: "Marxism and democracy cannot go together." The Prime Minister said that the

Marxists commended certain countries as models for India. But, now these very nations were beset with insoluble problems providing the relevance of the "Congress pattern of development", free from communist and capitalist systems. She accused the CPM of "wrecking democracy in West Bengal under the guise of protecting it".

BRITAIN'S MESSAGE

BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER to India, Sir John Thomson, met Foreign Secretary M K Rasgotra in New Delhi on Saturday and delivered to him a message from the British Government on the Falkland Islands crisis. In

the message, Britain is believed to have underscored its stand that implementation of any ceasefire must be unambiguously linked to Argentine withdrawal from the Islands.

ZIA'S OFFER

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT GENERAL Ziaul Haq on Saturday offered to lift the nearly three-year-old curbs on political activities if the number of political parties was reduced to two or three major ones, Radio Pakistan reported. Speaking to journalists at Rawalpindi, General Zia said the future political setup of the country would be based on Islamic tenets.



9 THE IDEAS PAGE

The cereal wonder

Fear mongering over wheat production must not push government towards an export ban, especially on cereals, the prices of which are at an all-time high

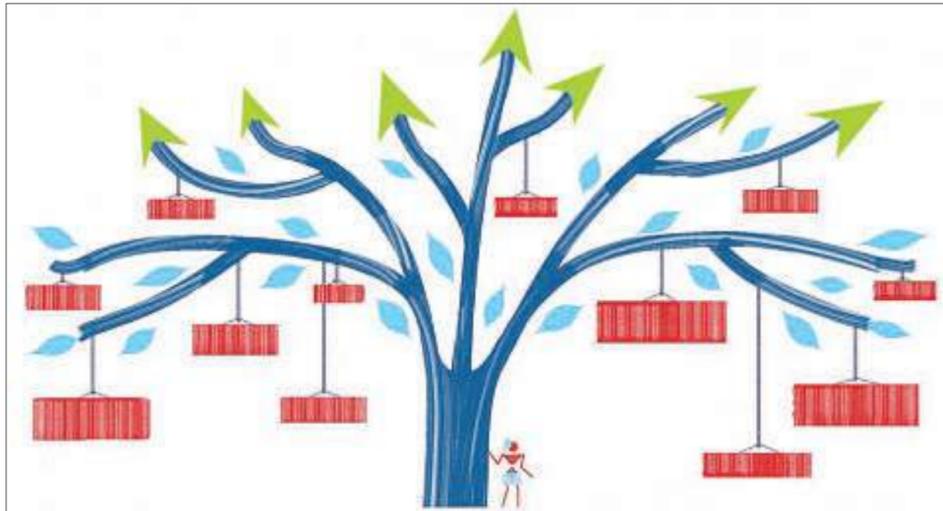


FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI AND
RITIKA JUNEJA

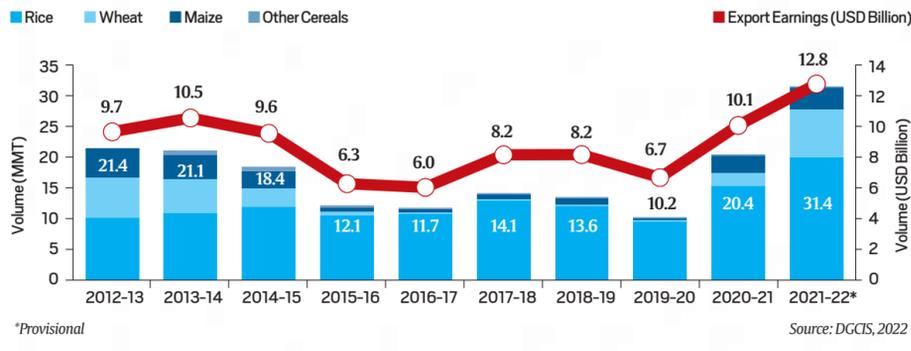
THE RBI TEAM led by Governor Shaktikanta Das must be complimented for raising the repo rate by 40 basis points (bps) and the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 50 bps with a view to tame inflation. High inflation is always an implicit tax on the poor and those who keep their savings in banks. The real value of their savings gets depreciated with every round of inflation as interest on deposits is often far below the inflation rate. So, controlling inflation is an important mandate of the RBI. The question that arises is: Will the increases in the repo rate and CRR control inflation, especially food inflation? The short answer is, "not yet". Our assessment of the situation is that the RBI has been behind the curve by at least 4 to 5 months, and its optimism in controlling inflation in the earlier meetings of the Monetary Policy Committee was somewhat misplaced. If the RBI has to make up for lost time, it will have to repeat this feat of raising repo rates and CRR by at least three more times in this fiscal year (FY23) to mop up excess liquidity in the system. Even then, it may be difficult to rein in food inflation, which is surging faster than the overall consumer price index (CPI).

The reason for this is simple. Food prices globally are scaling new peaks as per the FAO's food price index. The disruptions caused by the pandemic and now the Russia-Ukraine war are contributing to this escalation in food prices. India cannot remain insulated from this phenomenon. While on the one hand, it has opened opportunities for Indian farm exports, on the other hand, it has posed challenges as import prices of edible oils and fertilisers surge.

Let us focus here on cereals, which have the greatest weight in India's food CPI. For the first time in the history of Indian agriculture, cereal exports have already crossed a record high of 31 million metric tonnes (MMT) at \$13 billion (FY22), and the same cereal wonder may be repeated this fiscal (FY23). Among cereals, wheat exports have witnessed an unprecedented growth of more than 273 per cent, jumping nearly four-fold from \$0.56 billion (or 2 MMT) in FY21 to \$2.1 billion (or 7.8 MMT) in FY22 (see figure). Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is upbeat on agri-farm exports, which overall have crossed \$50 billion for the first time in FY22. On wheat, while the government has set a target of 10 MMT for exports in FY23, Goyal in a recent interview said that it may go even up to 15 MMT. This has raised fears amongst many about whether India can export 10 to 15 MMT in the face of the scaling down of the production estimate of the current crop from 111 MMT to 105 MMT due to the heatwave, and the massive drop in procurement in the ongoing season due to higher market rates compared to MSP. However, there is very little talk about rice exports, which have crossed 20 MMT in FY22 in a global market of 50 MMT. That's a much



INDIA'S CEREAL WONDER



bigger wonder than wheat. (See figure)

Some of the concerns on the wheat front are genuine, and we need to realise that climate change is already knocking on our doors. With every one degree Celsius rise in temperatures, wheat yields are likely to suffer by about 5 MMT, as per earlier IPCC reports. This calls for massive investments in agri-R&D to find heat-resistant varieties of wheat and also create models for "climate-smart" agriculture. We are way behind the curve on this. But we are way ahead of the curve in distributing free food to 800 million Indians, with a food subsidy bill that is likely to cross Rs 2.8 lakh crore this fiscal out of the Centre's net tax revenue of about Rs 20 lakh crore in FY23. Can Goyal, who is rightly upbeat on agri-exports also rationalise the public distribution system and PMGKAY, as food minister, targeting only those below the poverty line for free or subsidised food and charging a reasonable price, say 90 per cent of MSP, from those who are above the poverty line. The bottom line is: He has to effectively target the massive food subsidy and save resources for the higher import bill on edible oils and fertilisers. Inflation in edible oils has been running amok — to double digits — for a long time, and there has been no relief for consumers on that front.

In the wake of likely lower production

and procurement of wheat this year, Goyal has done well to substitute more rice in the PMGKAY, and may also do so in NFSA allocations. We would suggest giving an option to beneficiaries to receive cash in their Jan Dhan accounts (equivalent to MSP plus 20 per cent) in lieu of grains. This is permitted under NFSA and by doing so, he can save on the burgeoning food subsidy bill.

Illustration: C R Sasikumar, Graphics: Ritesh Kumar and procurement of wheat this year, Goyal has done well to substitute more rice in the PMGKAY, and may also do so in NFSA allocations. We would suggest giving an option to beneficiaries to receive cash in their Jan Dhan accounts (equivalent to MSP plus 20 per cent) in lieu of grains. This is permitted under NFSA and by doing so, he can save on the burgeoning food subsidy bill.

Goyal also needs to ward off any fear-mongering over wheat that can push him towards an export ban. That would be the worst thing he could do. It would be an anti-farmer move. The problem with our earlier policymaking has been that it is heavily biased towards protecting the consumers in the name of the poor by suppressing prices for farmers through choking markets — through imposing stock limits on traders, putting minimum export prices or outright bans on exports. He must avoid that route, and let agri-exports flourish. Indian farmers need access to global markets to augment their incomes, and the government must facilitate Indian farmers to develop more efficient export value chains by minimising marketing costs and investing in efficient logistics for exports.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor and Juneja is consultant at ICRIR

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The Ukraine crisis and the geopolitical tragedy it has triggered are not enough to kill the hunger of the US and some Western countries to reap political profits from the situation."
—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Welfare that changed lives

A pro-poor thrust in government programmes that involved building trust through community mobilisation led to a decline in rural poverty



AMARJEET SINHA

A RECENT WORLD Bank Report has shown that extreme poverty in India more than halved between 2011 and 2019 — from 22.5 per cent to 10.2 per cent. The reduction was higher in rural areas, from 26.3 per cent to 11.6 per cent. The rate of poverty decline between 2015 and 2019 was faster compared to 2011-2015.

In an earlier article ('A greater ease of living', IE, November 20, 2019), I had argued that poverty has reduced significantly because of the current government's thrust on improving the ease of living of ordinary Indians through schemes such as the Ujjwala Yojana, PM Awas Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission, Jan Dhan and Mission Indradhanush in addition to the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission and improved coverage under the National Food Security Act.

While debates on the World Bank's methodology continue to rage, it is important to understand how poverty in rural areas was reduced at a faster pace. Much of the success can be credited to all government departments, especially their *janbhagidari*-based thrust on pro-poor public welfare that ensured social support for the endeavour. It will nevertheless be useful to delineate the key factors that contributed to the success.

First, the identification of deprived households on the basis of the Socioeconomic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 across welfare programmes helped in creating a constituency for the well-being of the poor, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. The much-delayed SECC 2011 data was released in July 2015. This was critical in accomplishing the objectives of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas". Since deprivation was the key criterion in identifying beneficiaries, SC and ST communities got higher coverage and the erstwhile backward regions in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Rajasthan and rural Maharashtra got a larger share of the benefits. This was a game-changer in the efforts to ensure balanced development, socially as well as across regions. Social groups that often used to be left out of government programmes were included and gram sabha validation was taken to ensure that the project reached these groups.

Second, the coverage of women under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana and Self Help Groups (SHG) increased from 2.5 crore in 2014 to over 8 crore in 2018 as a result of more than 75 lakh SHGs working closely with over 31 lakh elected panchayati raj representatives, 40 per cent of whom are women. This provided a robust framework to connect with communities and created a social capital that helped every programme. The PRI-SHG partnership catalysed changes that increased the pace of poverty reduction and the use of Aadhaar cleaned up corruption at several levels and ensured that the funds reached those whom it was meant for.

Third, Finance Commission transfers were made directly to gram panchayats leading to the creation of basic infrastructure like pucca village roads and drains at a much faster pace in rural areas. The high speed of road construction under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadhak Yojana created greater opportunities for employment in nearby larger villages/census towns/kasbas by improving connectivity and enhancing mobility.

Fourth, the social capital of SHGs ensured the availability of credit through banks, micro-finance institutions and MUDRA loans. The NRLM prioritised livelihood diversification and implemented detailed plans for credit disbursement. New businesses, both farm and non-farm livelihoods, were taken up by women's collectives on a large scale with community resource persons playing crucial handholding roles, especially with respect to skill development. Fifth, in the two phases of the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan in 2018, benefits such as gas and electricity connections, LED bulbs, accident insurance, life insurance, bank accounts and immunisation were provided to 6,39,74 villages that were selected because of their high SC and ST populations. The implementation of these schemes was monitored assiduously. The performance of line departments went up manifold due to community-led action. The gains are reflected in the findings of the National Family Health Survey V, 2019-2021.

Sixth, the thrust on universal coverage for individual household latrines, LPG connections and pucca houses for those who lived in kuccha houses ensured that no one was left behind. This created the Labarthi Varg. Seventh, this was also a period in which a high amount of public funds were transferred to rural areas, including from the share of states and, in some programmes, through extra-budgetary resources.

Eighth, the thrust on a people's plan campaign, "Sabka Yojana Sabka Vikas" for preparing the Gram Panchayat Development Plans and for ranking villages and panchayats on human development, economic activity and infrastructure, from 2017-18 onwards, laid the foundation for robust community participation involving panchayats and SHGs, especially in ensuring accountability.

Ninth, through processes like social and concurrent audits, efforts were made to ensure that resources were fully utilised. Several changes were brought about in programmes like the MGNREGS to create durable and productive assets. This helped marginal and small farmers in improving their homesteads, and diversifying livelihoods.

Tenth, the competition among states to improve performance on rural development helped. Irrespective of the party in power, nearly all states and UTs focussed on improving livelihood diversification in rural areas and on improving infrastructure significantly.

All these factors contributed to improved ease of living of deprived households and improving their asset base. A lot has been achieved, much remains to be done. The pandemic and the negative terms of trade shock from the Ukraine crisis pose challenges to the gains made in poverty reduction up to 2019.

The writer is a retired civil servant with 38 years in the social sector. Views are personal

Dividing lines

Delimitation Commission's recommendations will deepen divides in J&K



M Y TARIGAMI

THE DELIMITATION COMMISSION formed to remap the electoral constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir submitted its final report after two years. The Commission's recommendations clearly reflect that the panel has gerrymandered the territorial constituencies to advance the electoral aspirations of the ruling party.

In the first place, the exercise was carried out under the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 and not in accordance with the Delimitation Act, 2002, which called for the 2001 census to be used as the basis for remapping poll constituencies.

This is not the only anomaly. In 2002, the Constitution of India was amended, deferring the delimitation of the constituencies until the first population Census is undertaken after 2026. Accordingly, the J&K Assembly amended the state constitution through the 29th Amendment deferring the delimitation process till 2026. The Delimitation Commission was set up under the Delimitation Act of 2002 — however, it has redrawn the constituencies in accordance with the provisions of the J&K Reorganisation Act 2019, which increased the number of seats by seven without any basis and criteria.

The Commission considered the 2011 Census for delimiting the territorial constituencies. However, there was scant regard for the population, a cardinal parameter for any delimitation process.

According to the 2011 Census, the population of the Kashmir region is 68,88,475; Jammu

has a population of 53,78,538; and Ladakh, which is now a separate Union territory, has 2,74,289 people. The Commission has allocated six extra seats to Jammu and only one to Kashmir. With this, Jammu will have 43 seats and Kashmir 47 in the assembly of 116 seats.

In effect, this means that with 44 per cent of the population, Jammu will get 48 per cent of the seat share, while Kashmir, with 56 per cent of the population, will get only 52 per cent share in seats. This arrangement is designed to create a disparity in regional representation.

The people as well as the political leaders in the region are unable to comprehend what, if any, objective criteria were employed by the Commission for this bizarre apportioning of seats. Despite the objections of various political parties, including the associate members, the panel went ahead with its pre-determined plans, riding roughshod over the aspirations of the people.

In 2002, when the J&K government placed a moratorium on the delimitation of assembly constituencies until 2026, it was accepted that the process must take place in step with the rest of the country. The freeze was also upheld by the Supreme Court. But the BJP, which toms that it has "integrated" J&K with India, has done the opposite by using a different yardstick for the delimitation of seats in J&K.

Thus, a malodour hangs over the entire exercise. Ever since the central dispensation read down the special constitutional provisions of J&K and broke the region into two Union territories, it has been making unceasing efforts to

change the electoral demography of the region.

The BJP government went ahead with the delimitation process despite a clutch of writ petitions challenging the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, pending before the Supreme Court, under which the entire delimitation exercise was carried out.

The BJP's dismal electoral performance in the region has spurred it to go for an early readjustment of poll boundaries. Despite fielding its candidates on multiple seats, the party has never been able to bag a single seat from the Valley. During the 2020 district development elections, the party took a drubbing in the Valley.

The recommendations of the Delimitation Commission are completely in line with the BJP's policy of creating an electoral autocracy in J&K as most of the seats were carved out in Hindu-dominated areas. The overhauling of the existing territorial boundaries of the constituencies has significantly brought down the electoral representation of Muslims in the Jammu region. For example, Doda was allotted an additional seat, taking the number of total assembly segments in this Chenab Valley district to three. But of them, two seats are carved out of Hindu-dominated areas despite the district having a Muslim population of over 53 per cent.

The Commission's assertions that it had taken the topography terrain and accessibility into account are without reason. The panel has recommended the merging of the Jammu division's Rajouri and Poonch districts with the

Anantnag Lok Sabha seat, thus carving out an Anantnag-Rajouri parliamentary constituency. But there is almost no geographical connectivity between the two regions as they are separated by the Pir Panjal mountains.

The historic Mughal road, which is the shortest route connecting Poonch and Rajouri districts via Shopian to the Valley, remains shut for at least six months a year. Shopian, on the other hand, which is comparatively nearer Rajouri has been made part of the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency. Moreover, these separate regions do not share common aspirations, as they are culturally and linguistically distinct. This peculiar readjustment of poll boundaries is beyond comprehension.

The BJP government has pursued divisive politics in J&K by pitting one region against the other and creating cleavages between communities. It has been manipulating and manoeuvring the situation to its advantage since August 5, 2019. The J&K Reorganisation Act modified the law of enfranchisement of J&K. Voting rights for the state assembly, which were restricted to only permanent residents, have been extended to non-state subjects. The redrawing of poll constituencies is of a piece with all this. It will deepen the communal and regional divide in J&K and is bound to disempower the people and will have deleterious effects on the political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir.

The writer is the former CPI(M) MLA from J&K. He is the Convenor and Spokesperson of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BAGGA BAGGAGE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Driving Mr Bagga' (IE, May 7). The arrest, intercession and now subsequent release of Tajinder Pal Singh Bagga had all the ludicrous action, straight out of a comic Bollywood scene. On a serious note, the police, doing the bidding of their political bosses was again on display. It is unfortunate that political vendetta, which the BJP as a dominant force in the country seems to be associated with, is now being picked up by fledgling parties like the AAP. The bottom line is that no matter how different their ideology, the police-political nexus is the common denominator binding all the political parties.

Kamna Chhabra, Gurgaon

BAD DECISION

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Lanka govt defends move, as Opp envoys criticise it over emergency declaration' (IE, May 8). Hit hard by the pandemic, rising oil prices and government tax cuts, Sri Lanka has been left with as little as \$50 million in usable foreign reserves. There is a grave shortage of food, fuel and electricity. The government's declaration of a state of emergency that gives greater powers to the president to deploy the military, detain people without charge and break up protests seems to be imprudent.

SS Paul, Nadia

PROUD MOMENT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Right man at the right place' (IE, May 8). The Bombay Engineering Group & Centre (BEG&C), better known as the Bombay Sappers, the Indian Army's youngest sappers after Madras and Bengal sappers of the Corps of Engineers, could have celebrated the success of its officer reaching the top rank in the Army way back in 1973. However, it had to wait for almost five decades for the moment, which came when the Central government announced that General Manoj Pande will be the next Chief of Army Staff. Pande's appointment should be a proud moment for the defence forces and particularly for engineers across the country.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

BRAZIL

AMAZON DEFORESTATION HITS APRIL RECORD

Deforestation detected in the Brazilian Amazon broke all records for the month of April, and that followed similar new records set in January and February, reflecting a worrisome uptick in destruction in a state deep within the rainforest. Satellite alerts of deforestation for April corresponded to more than 1,000 square km, the highest figure for that month in seven years of record-keeping.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Bashar Assad with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran on Sunday. AP

WEST ASIA

Syria's Assad in Iran for meetings in rare foreign trip

SYRIAN PRESIDENT Bashar Assad met Iranian leaders in Tehran on Sunday, Iranian and Syrian media reported, marking his second trip to major wartime ally Iran since Syria's civil war erupted in 2011. Nour News, a website close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council, reported that Assad met Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi. It said the leaders praised the strong ties between their nations and vowed to boost relations further. "Everybody now looks at Syria as a power," Khamenei told Assad in the meeting, according to Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency. AP

THE GULF

Saudi king admitted to hospital

SAUDI ARABIA'S octogenarian monarch underwent medical tests on Sunday, state-run media reported, just weeks after he had the battery of his pacemaker changed. The report in the official Saudi Press Agency did not provide further details about King Salman's condition or the nature of the medical examinations. It said that the king, 86, was admitted to King Faisal Specialist Hospital in the Saudi port city of Jiddah. The monarch's health is closely watched because he holds absolute power in the kingdom. AP

CUBA

Search on as hotel blast toll rises to 30

SEARCH CREWS with dogs hunted through the ruins of a luxury hotel in Cuba's capital Sunday for survivors of an apparent gas explosion and officials raised the number of known dead to 30. The Hotel Saratoga, a five-star 96-room hotel in Old Havana, was preparing to reopen after being closed for two years when an apparent gas leak caused a massive explosion on Friday. Cuban officials on Sunday raised the known death toll to 30 from 27 even as crews continued to search for dozens still believed to be trapped under the rubble. AP

Dozens feared dead after Russian bomb levels school sheltering 90 in Ukraine

ELENA BECATOROS & JON GAMBRELL
ZAPORIZHZHIA (UKRAINE), MAY 8

DOZENS OF Ukrainians were feared dead Sunday after a Russian bomb flattened a school sheltering about 90 people in its basement, while Ukrainian troops refused to surrender at a besieged steel plant that Moscow's invading forces sped to seize before Russia's Victory Day holiday.

The governor of Luhansk province, one of two areas that make up the eastern industrial heartland known as the Donbas, said the school in the village of Bilohorivka caught fire after Saturday's bombing. Emergency crews found two bodies and rescued 30 people, he said.

"Most likely, all 60 people who remain under the rubble are now dead," Gov. Serhiy Haidai wrote on the Telegram messaging app. Russian shelling also killed two boys, ages 11 and 14, in the nearby town of Pryvillia, he said.

The largest European conflict since World War II has developed into a punishing war of attrition due to the Ukrainian military's unexpectedly effective defense. Since failing to capture Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, Moscow's forces have attacked cities, towns and villages in eastern and southern Ukraine but not gained much ground, according to Western military analysts.

To demonstrate success in time for Victory Day on Monday, the Russian military worked to complete its takeover of Mariupol, which has been under relentless assault since the start of the war. The sprawling seaside steel mill where an estimated 2,000 Ukrainian fighters made a last stand is the only part of the city not under Russian control.

All the remaining women, children and older civilians who were sheltering with the fighters in the Azovstal plant were evacuated Saturday. The Ukrainian troops rejected deadlines given by the Russians who said the defenders could leave with their lives if they laid down their arms. AP



US First Lady Jill Biden with Ukrainian First Lady Olena Zelenskyy outside a school in Uzhhorod, Ukraine, Sunday. AP

Jill Biden pays surprise visit to Ukraine, meets First Lady Canada's Trudeau makes unannounced visit to Irpin

ASSOCIATED PRESS
UZHGOROD, MAY 8

JILL BIDEN made an unannounced visit to western Ukraine on Sunday, holding a surprise Mother's Day meeting with First Lady Olena Zelenska to show US support for the embattled nation as Russia presses its punishing war in the eastern regions.

She travelled under the cloak of secrecy, becoming the latest high-profile American to enter Ukraine during its 10-week-old conflict with Russia.

"I wanted to come on Mother's Day," the US First Lady told Zelenska. "I thought it was important to show the Ukrainian people that this war has to stop and that this war has been brutal and that the people of the United States stand with the people of Ukraine."

Biden spent about two hours in Ukraine, travelling by vehicle to the town of Uzhhorod, about a 10-minute drive from a Slovakian border village where she had toured

Bono performs in Kyiv metro

IRISH ROCK group U2's frontman Bono and his bandmate The Edge performed a 40-minute concert in a metro station in Ukraine's capital of Kyiv on Sunday and praised Ukrainians fighting for their freedom from Russia. "Your President leads the world in the cause of freedom right now... The people of Ukraine are not just fighting for your own free-



Bono with a Ukrainian soldier in Kyiv, Sunday. Reuters

a border processing facility.

Zelenska thanked Biden for her "courageous act" and said, "We understand what it takes for the US First Lady to come here during a war when military actions are taking place every day, where the air sirens are happening every day — even today."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also made a surprise visit to Ukraine on Sunday. He was in Irpin, which had been

damaged by Russia's attempt to take Kyiv at the start of the war.

Canadian officials said the PM would meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and "reaffirm Canada's unwavering support for the Ukrainian people."

Zelenskyy also met on Sunday with the German Parliament Speaker, Bärbel Bas, in Kyiv to discuss further defence assistance, according to Zelenskyy's press office.

Sherpa guide breaks his own record scaling Everest for 26th time

BINAJ GURUBACHARYA
KATHMANDU, MAY 8

AN EXPERIENCED Nepalese Sherpa guide scaled Mount Everest for the 26th time breaking his own record for the most climbs of the world's highest peak, expedition organisers said Sunday.

Kami Rita reached the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) summit on Saturday evening leading a group of Sherpa climbers who fixed ropes along the route so that hundreds of other climbers and guides can make their way to the top of the mountain later this month.

Rita and 10 other Sherpa guides reached the summit without any problems and had



Kami Rita

safely returned to lower camps, said Mingma Sherpa of the Kathmandu-based Seven Summit Treks.

Rita, 52, first scaled Everest in 1994 and has been making the trip nearly every year since then. He is one of many Sherpa guides whose expertise is vital to the safety and success of foreign climbers who head to Nepal each year seeking to summit the mountain. AP

Beijing loyalist John Lee elected as Hong Kong's next leader

ASSOCIATED PRESS
HONG KONG, MAY 8

JOHN LEE, a hard-line security chief who oversaw a crackdown on Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, was elected as the city's next leader on Sunday in a vote cast by a largely pro-Beijing committee.

Lee was the only candidate and won with over 99% of the vote in which nearly all 1,500 committee members were carefully vetted by the central government in Beijing.

He will replace current leader Carrie Lam on July 1. Her five-term was marked by huge pro-democracy protests calling for her resignation, a security crackdown that has quashed virtually all dissent, the recent Covid-19 wave that had overwhelmed the health system — events that



John Lee with his wife after winning the vote to be Hong Kong leader. He, however, was the only candidate in the fray. AP

have undermined Hong Kong's reputation as an international business hub with Western-style freedoms.

"I look forward to all of us starting a new chapter together, building a Hong Kong that is caring, open and vibrant, and a Hong Kong that is full of oppor-

tunities and harmony," Lee said in his victory speech.

The election followed major changes to Hong Kong's electoral laws last year to ensure that only "patriots" loyal to Beijing can hold office. The legislature was also reorganised to all but eliminate opposition voices.

Sri Lanka Opp rejects President's offer to form interim govt Leaves of security personnel cancelled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO, MAY 8

SRI LANKA'S main Opposition party, Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), said on Sunday that it rejected an offer by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to its leader Sajith Premadasa to head an interim government, amid continued political uncertainty in the country which is now under a state of emergency.

The Gotabaya-led government has come under massive pressure amid mass protests triggered by an unprecedented economic crisis in the country. The Defence Ministry has requested the public to assist the government in dealing with the crisis with "utmost intelligence and patience". The ministry also cancelled the leaves of all security personnel.

Regarding Gotabaya's offer for an interim government, SJB national organiser Tissa Attanayake said: "Our leader refused to accept the President's offer."

Gotabaya had talked over the telephone with both Premadasa and Harsha de Silva, the SJB's economic guru, on the prospect of forming an interim government which had been a demand endorsed by the powerful Buddhist clergy as well as the group which had broken away from the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) coalition.

The SJB announced on Saturday that they would back the proposal from the lawyers' body, BASL, which had called for the setting up of an interim government for a period of 18 months with a

move to abolish the presidential system of government.

They had also called for the repeal of the 20th Amendment of the Constitution, which conferred sweeping powers to Gotabaya in 2020.

Former Sri Lankan president Maithripala Sirisena also met Premadasa on Saturday to ask the SJB to take over the interim government.

Premadasa, 55, has already announced that he would not be a party to any government headed by the two Rajapaksas — Gotabaya and Prime Minister Mahinda.

The SJB, which has moved motions of no-confidence against the SLPP coalition government and Gotabaya, is putting pressure on Parliament Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena to advance the date of debate on the no-trust motions.

The government, hemmed in by a month of street protests, has imposed a state of emergency, which gives the security forces sweeping powers to crack down on dissent.

Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence on Saturday announced that due to the declaration of emergency, the leaves of security forces personnel are cancelled, the *Daily Mirror* reported. All military personnel are to report to duty with immediate effect, the ministry said.

In a separate statement, the ministry requested all citizens to "assist in managing the current economic and social crisis and unrest in the country with the utmost intelligence and patience".



Sri Lankans demanding cooking gas sit with their empty gas cylinders blocking a busy intersection for a second day, in Colombo on Sunday. AP

Senior Pak lawmaker: China's faith in Pak security system shaken

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, MAY 8

CHINA'S CONFIDENCE in Pakistan's security system's ability to protect its citizens and projects is seriously shaken after the Karachi University attack last month, a senior lawmaker said.

Three Chinese teachers were killed when a blade triggered by a woman suicide bomber from the Baluchistan Liberation Army ripped through a van of the Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi on April 26.

This was the latest targeted attack against Chinese citizens in Pakistan.

Sharing the mood of the Chinese side after the attack to *Dawn* newspaper on Friday,

Senator Mushahid Hussain, who is also the chairman of the Senate Defence Committee, said: "It has caused serious concern and understandable indignation in China."

Hussain led a Senate delegation to the Chinese embassy last week to express his condolences over the loss of Chinese lives.

"The Chinese confidence in Pakistan's security system's ability to protect their citizens and their projects is seriously shaken," said Hussain.

"The pattern of attacks is so recurring and it's clear that Pakistani promises of 'foolproof security' are mere words...," he said. "If such attacks continue, not just Chinese but other foreign investors will also be forced to review their role in Pakistan," he said. PTI

FOR MANY AFGHANS, THE HOLIDAY SERVED AS A REMINDER OF DISSONANCE BETWEEN PROMISE OF PEACE AND REALITIES OF THE WAR'S END

Marking Eid under Taliban rule shows a changed Afghanistan

CHRISTINA GOLDBAUM, YAQOUB AKBARY & SAFIULLAH PADSHAH
KABUL, MAY 8

THOUSANDS OF Afghans had piled into buses and set out down the country's once perilous highways bound for relatives they had not seen in years. Afghanistan's only national park was filled with tourists who had only dreamed of travelling to its intensely blue lakes and jagged mountains when fighting raged across the country.

And Zulhijjah Mirzadah, a mother of five, packed a small picnic of dried fruit, gathered her family in a minibus and wove for

two hours through the congested streets of the capital, Kabul, to a bustling amusement park.

From the entrance, she could hear the low whoosh of a roller coaster and the chorus of joyous screams from Afghans inside celebrating Eid al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan. But she could not go further. Women, she was told at the gate, were barred by the Taliban from entering the park on Eid.

"We're facing economic problems, things are expensive, we can't find work, our daughters can't go to school — but we hoped to have a picnic in the park today," said Mirzadah, 25.

As Afghans endured the constant and random violence of the last two decades of war, many held hopes that when peace finally came to the country, Eid al-Fitr would be its high-water mark, a day where families long separated by fighting would finally be able to celebrate together.

Now that war is over. People can travel freely down highways devoid of gunfire, roadside bombs and attempts at extortion. The terrifying drone of warplanes overhead is long gone. But for many, the holiday that began last Sunday in Afghanistan served as a reminder of the dissonance between the promise of peace many Afghans had imagined and



On the day of Eid, many chose to pray outside of the Shir Shah Mina Mosque in Kabul, fearing another attack. NYT

the realities of the end of the war.

A crippling economic crisis that has slashed incomes and sent the prices of basic goods soaring forced many families to

forgo for the first time the Eid traditions of new clothes or dried fruit. Mosques were emptier than usual after a recent string of explosions stoked fears of the re-

turn of terrorist attacks.

And many women in urban areas, who have been devastated by the Taliban government's restrictions, found little reason to celebrate. On Saturday, the Taliban decreed that Afghan women must cover themselves from head to toe, expanding a series of onerous restrictions on women that dictate nearly every aspect of public life.

"To be honest, we don't have Eid this year," said Mirzadah, who spent the afternoon with her family sitting across the street from the park on a strip of grass.

Most people in Kabul learned that the Taliban had announced the start of the holiday after a roar

of celebratory gunfire thundered across the city last Saturday night. Afghanistan was the first Muslim country to officially declare a sighting of a full crescent Moon, kicking off the start of the holiday.

The following morning, hundreds of men with prayer rugs tucked under their arms filed into the Sher Shah Suri Mosque, a large Sunni mosque in the west of Kabul. Across the courtyard, they laid out the rugs in the shade of twisted tree branches while armed Taliban intelligence agents clad in camouflage pants and bulletproof vests patrolled the mosque's grounds for threats — a stark reminder of the threat of violence that persists despite

the end of 20 years of war.

In the two weeks leading up to the start of Eid this year, a bloody spate of terrorist attacks on mosques, schools and public gatherings killed at least 100 people, mostly Afghan Shites, and stirred fears that the large prayers on the first day of Eid would be the next target.

At the Seyed Abad Mosque, the largest Shiite mosque in the city of Kunduz in the country's north, only around 50 worshippers arrived for prayers on Sunday morning — compared to 400 to 500 people in previous years, attendees said. Many people, terrified of another blast, steered clear of the mosque altogether. NYT



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

THIS WORD MEANS

MONKEYPOX

A zoonotic cousin of smallpox, found in Central and West Africa

HEALTH AUTHORITIES in the United Kingdom have confirmed a case of monkeypox, a rare viral infection similar to smallpox, in an individual who recently travelled to that country from Nigeria.



Monkeypox's symptoms are similar to smallpox's, but less severe. WHO

Monkeypox virus

The monkeypox virus is an orthopoxvirus, which is a genus of viruses that also includes the variola virus, which causes smallpox, and vaccinia virus, which was used in the smallpox vaccine. Monkeypox causes symptoms similar to smallpox, although they are less severe.

While vaccination eradicated smallpox worldwide in 1980, monkeypox continues to occur in a swathe of countries in Central and West Africa, and has on occasion showed up elsewhere. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), two distinct clades are identified: the West African clade and the Congo Basin clade, also known as the Central African clade.

Zoonotic disease

Monkeypox is a zoonosis: It is transmitted from animals to humans. According to the WHO, cases occur close to tropical rainforests inhabited by animals that carry the virus. Monkeypox virus infection has been detected in squirrels, Gambian poached rats, dormice, and some species of monkeys.

Human-to-human transmission is limited — the longest documented chain of transmission is six generations, the WHO says. "It is important to emphasise that monkeypox does not spread easily between people and the overall risk to the general public is very low," Dr Colin Brown, Director of Clinical and Emerging Infections at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said on Saturday.

Transmission can be through contact with bodily fluids, lesions on the skin or on internal mucosal surfaces, such as in the mouth or throat, respiratory droplets and contaminated objects, the WHO says.

Symptoms and treatment

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), monkeypox begins with a fever, headache, muscle aches, back ache, and exhaustion. It also causes the lymph nodes to swell, which smallpox does not. The WHO underlines that it is not to be confused with chickenpox, measles, bacterial skin infections, scabies, syphilis and medication-associated allergies.

The incubation period (from infection to symptoms) for monkeypox is usually 7-14 days but can range from 5-21 days. Usually within a day to 3 days of the onset of fever, the patient develops a rash that begins on the face and spreads to other parts of the body. The skin eruption stage can last between 2 and 4 weeks, during which the lesions harden and become painful, fill up with a clear fluid and then pus, and develop scabs or crusts.

According to the WHO, the proportion of deaths has varied between 0 and 11%, and been higher among young children.

There is no safe, proven treatment for monkeypox yet. The WHO recommends supportive treatment depending on the symptoms. Awareness is important for prevention and control of the infection.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Working away from office does not affect productivity: study

A STUDY in the United States has suggested that working remotely does not affect productivity. The study was published in *IOS Press* back in February, and was described on Friday in a press release from Texas A&M University.

The team has found that employee and company resiliency may be enhanced through the opportunity for employees to work remotely during natural disasters and other events that cause workplace displacement. The researchers worked with a large oil and gas company in Houston, Texas, to analyse software data from 264 employees. During the study period, the company was forced to close its offices because

of flooding from Hurricane Harvey, which required employees to work remotely for an extended period. Employee data before, during and after Hurricane Harvey showed that although total computer use declined during the hurricane, employees' work behaviours during the seven-month period of working remotely returned to pre-hurricane levels.

"This is a huge message right now for employers because we're having national debates about whether or not employees should be able to work remotely or in a hybrid schedule," the release quoted researcher Mark Benden as saying.

Source: Texas A&M University



PAPER CLIP

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SIMPLY PUT

Counting India's Covid deaths

The WHO's estimate of 47.4 lakh Covid-related deaths in 2020 and 2021 has sparked a debate. Why are such estimates so different from India's official count? A look at the nuances being missed in the debate.

AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, MAY 8

THE WORLD Health Organization (WHO) report on excess mortality due to Covid-19 is the latest in a series of exercises in the last over a year that tend to suggest India's official death toll is an undercount. The WHO report has pegged India's excess mortality (people who probably would not have died if there was no pandemic) for 2020 and 2021 at 47.4 lakh. Several other studies have shown India's Covid-related death count at anywhere between 25 lakh to 60 lakh. In fact, the upper bound for the WHO study is even higher.

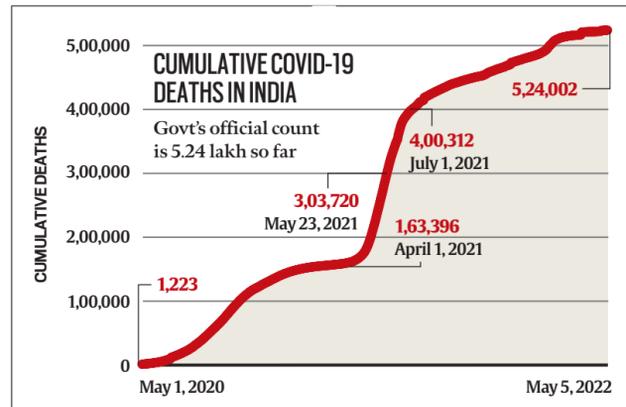
While these figures are being debated, many important nuances are being missed.

The official count

Any discussion on the undercount as of now is premature because India has not yet stopped counting its Covid deaths. The 5.24 lakh deaths counted until now is not the final official toll. The number is under constant revision, almost daily, and is likely to remain so for several months, if not years. Kerala, for example, is updating its death toll almost every day, and many other states have been doing it periodically. Last week, Assam added 1,300 deaths on a single day. Other states have made similar adjustments in the past.

Even the death numbers reported in 2020 and 2021 are not final. The more than 21,000 deaths Kerala has reported in the last four months have not all happened this year. Most of them pertain to last year. The 1,300 deaths Assam added on April 25 did not all happen that day, or that month, or this year. They most likely happened the previous year. Several hundreds, possibly thousands, of deaths that states adjusted in 2021 would have actually happened in 2020. The additions to the overall tally are being made on the day these deaths are being confirmed, and not the day these might have happened.

That would mean that even though the death count for 2020 still shows up as 1.49 lakh, chances are that it has already been substantially corrected, and may be revised even further at a later stage. Many of the deaths that would have happened in 2020 but are not included in the 1.49 lakh tally would have been accounted for at a later stage. Those deaths have not been missed; they will reflect in the



statistics. The same is true for 2021.

It is difficult to measure the scale of the undercount in a situation like this, particularly when the counting exercise is still on. A physical count, and verification, of the dead in a country as vast as India during such chaotic times is bound to take a little more time than running some equations in a computer model.

The WHO report does not get into calculating the scale of the undercount, for India or any other country. It has done a more straightforward exercise of calculating excess mortality. It has estimated the total number of people who likely died in India in 2020 due to all causes and, from that, has subtracted the expected number of all-cause deaths if there was no Covid. These 'excess' deaths are considered to be a direct or indirect result of Covid-19.

Multiple studies and estimates

It is often argued that, because multiple studies have been pointing to similar estimates, they must be reflective of the true death toll in the country. What is being overlooked is that these studies have been throwing up similar estimates probably because they have all been using similar mathematical models and statistical methods. The researchers, and those doing peer reviews, belong to an overlapping set of people.

What these studies certainly show is that there is a general agreement in academic circles on the usefulness of these models in the

current situation, possibly based on their ability to simulate the reality in some earlier situations. That, however, is no guarantee that these models have an unquestionable capability to accurately mimic the dynamics of the current pandemic, whose nature and behaviour is far from fully understood.

Computer modelling is routinely used by academics to simulate real-life situations. The accuracy of their results depend on the underlying quality of data and assumptions. Because of multiple layers of extrapolations involved, slight changes in assumptions or input data can significantly alter results.

To estimate India's Covid toll, the WHO study has relied, among various sources, on death registration data from the Civil Registration System (CRS). Several media houses had published monthly CRS data for a few states last year, and these numbers did not always match. Depending on which publication was selected to pick these numbers from, the output of the mathematical model would have been different.

Also, the monthly CRS death data, even if obtained through an RTI applications, was only 'provisional' and subject to change. Only the numbers mentioned in the annual CRS report, released last week, are final.

The quality of assumptions can also induce large uncertainties in the final result. In March 2020, a widely quoted computer modelling study led by Ramanan Laxminarayan had pre-

dicted 1 to 3 million Covid-related deaths in India by the middle of April, roughly three weeks from that time. When nothing like that happened, Laxminarayan acknowledged that the risk of dying from Covid was actually a lot lower than he had originally assumed.

Scientists admit that they still do not fully understand the nature and behaviour of this virus. It is thus difficult to assume that these processes and behaviours that epidemiologists have not fully understood have somehow found accurate description in modelling or machine learning algorithms.

CRS and SRS

As discussed in *The Indian Express* earlier, the CRS data released last week do not throw any fresh light on this debate on their own. That is because CRS only has death registration data, and not every death in the country is registered. The actual death data is revealed by the Sample Registration Survey (SRS) whose report for 2020 has not yet been released.

CRS and SRS are annual exercises that complement each other. The SRS uses a door-to-door survey in a few thousand sample towns and villages to produce an estimate of the total number of births and deaths in the country every year. This exercise is repeated after a few months to avoid duplication.

The CRS is a database of all births and deaths that get registered. The CRS database is therefore a subset of the SRS. Over the last few years, as more and more people are registering their births and deaths, the CRS numbers are converging closer to the SRS estimates.

These two systems might still not be perfect, but they are extremely robust sources of birth and death data. These data are consistent with the findings of the Census and a vast array of other data-collection exercises that together make up all the demographic, social and economic indicators that everyone agrees on.

SRS numbers from the past 15 years have established that about 83 lakh people die in India every year on an average. If the SRS for 2020, whenever it comes out, reveals that 90 lakh or more people died in the country in that year, instead of the expected 82 to 84 lakh, then it would suggest that the computer models used by WHO or other studies were accurate in estimating 8 lakh excess deaths due to Covid-19 in India in 2020. If the SRS numbers are not close to that, it can be inferred that those many never died.

Why Mother's Day founder Anna Jarvis later hated it

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

IN ALL the Mother's Day WhatsApp forwards and social media posts that you sent or were sent on Sunday, the name Anna Jarvis probably never figured. Jarvis founded Mother's Day in the US and worked to have it officially recognised — but eventually came to hate its commercialisation, and spent the last of her energies and money to campaign against it.

Memory of her mother

Jarvis (1864-1948) was an American activist who founded Mother's Day to honour her mother and "all mothers" in 1908.

Her mother had spent her life working for causes centred on motherhood, and a young Anna once heard her say that she hoped a mothers' day would be founded to commemorate mothers "matchless service". After Mrs Jarvis died in 1905, Anna wrote to



Jarvis founded Mother's Day in 1908

politicians, businessmen, and church leaders to enlist their support, proposing the second Sunday of May be dedicated to celebrating mothers, with a white carnation — her mother's favourite flower — as its emblem.

In 1908, two Mother's Day events were held in the US; and on May 8, 1914 President Woodrow Wilson signed into law an Act to recognise Mother's Day.

Definition, celebration

There were others before Jarvis — including author and suffragist Julia Ward Howe, who had started a Mothers' Day (note the placement of the apostrophe) celebration in June 1873. Historians note that Jarvis narrowed the definition of 'mother' to one who puts her children's needs first — in choosing the singular over Howe's "Mothers' Day", she wanted people to honour their own mothers who cared for them at home.

Jarvis' version was eagerly taken up by the greeting card industry, the flower industry, etc, and Mother's Day was heavily commercialised. A report in *The New York Times* from 1964, said: "According to the National Committee on the Observance of Mother's Day, Inc., the day has become a gift-giving occasion second only to Christmas."

Jarvis' disillusionment

Jarvis hated it. She threw her energies into arresting this commercialisation through

campaigns, litigation, and direct action. She had copyrighted the phrase "Second Sunday in May, Mother's Day" early on, and sued people for using it for marketing campaigns.

In a press release, she demanded, "What will you do to rout charlatans, bandits, pirates, racketeers, kidnapers and other termites that would undermine with their greed one of the finest, noblest and truest movements and celebrations?" according to a BBC report.

She attacked First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt for using Mother's Day to raise funds for charity, and was arrested in 1925 after crashing a convention of American War Mothers, who sold carnations on Mother's Day to raise funds.

In 1948, Jarvis died, almost penniless and alone. According to the BBC, one of her final public activities before being admitted to a sanatorium was "to go door-to-door in Philadelphia asking for signatures to back an appeal for Mother's Day to be rescinded".

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EXPLAINED CLIMATE

Heatwaves and the role humidity plays in making them deadly

EXPERT EXPLAINS

JOY MERWIN MONTEIRO



THE CONSECUTIVE heatwaves over South Asia since March 2022 have continued the disturbing tradition of breaking historical temperature records. Mercifully, these record temperatures were not accompanied by the high mortality burden observed in previous heatwaves such as the one during 2015. Why those heatwaves were so deadly is a puzzle that we are yet to resolve.

The recent IPCC report AR6 has emphasised that humidity is also very important while estimating the physiological stress that extreme heat puts on the human body. Instead of the "dry bulb" temperature that is usually measured using a regular thermometer, an alternative metric known as the "wet bulb temperature" has been used to measure exposure to extreme heat. The report men-

tions that sustained exposures to wet bulb temperatures above 35°C are fatal, while sustained exposures to wet bulb temperatures above 32°C are dangerous for intense physical activity. The critical word here is "sustained", which we will come back to later.

These projections are very welcome and are the outcome of more than a decade of work put in by the climate science community. The public health community was, of course, aware of the implications of humidity for a much longer time. Furthermore, a number of recent articles in the media have helped make the public aware of this. However, there has been a growing concern about the 35°C threshold and whether parts of South Asia will become "unsurvivable" in the coming years.

Humidity and temperature

Why is humidity such a critical factor while measuring heat exposure? Humans lose heat generated within their body by producing sweat that evaporates on the skin. The cooling effect of this evaporation is essential in maintaining a stable body temperature. As humidity rises, sweat does not evaporate — just like clothes take a long time to dry in hu-

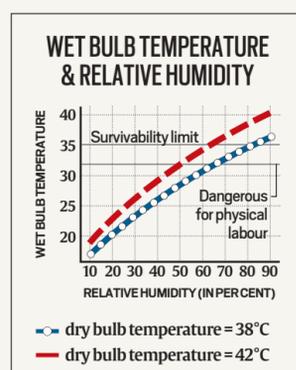
mid locations — and makes it difficult to regulate body temperature. This is why we feel more discomfort in humid places.

The wet bulb temperature is usually lower than the dry bulb temperature, and the difference between the two increases dramatically as the air becomes dry. The variation of wet bulb temperature for a fixed dry bulb temperature is shown in the figure.

The humidity required to reach wet bulb temperatures in excess of 35°C over land is exceedingly difficult to achieve for a variety of reasons, which this article will not go into. This is the reason the AR6 says that such conditions are rarely observed nowadays. Wet bulb temperatures in excess of 35°C have been observed in Sindh in Pakistan, but such conditions occur once every three to four years, and probably for a few hours. This fails to meet the criteria of "sustained exposure".

Just because we don't observe such conditions in the current climate does not mean that they will be as rare in future climates. However, the research that backs the AR6 also suggests we are unlikely to experience sustained exposure to wet bulb temperatures beyond the threshold of survivability.

The hype around survivability thresholds



and wet bulb temperatures obscures deeper issues, both physiological and political. Firstly, the inability of the body to stabilise its core temperature can have multiple reasons. For instance, increased strain on the heart during periods of elevated temperature could be fatal for those with pre-existing cardiac conditions and is in fact the leading cause of deaths

during heatwaves. Pre-existing respiratory problems and diabetes too are potential causes of death. Such conditions impair the body's ability to efficiently transfer heat to the environment.

A less obvious issue is that of dehydration. Many labourers, especially women, intentionally keep themselves dehydrated due to the lack of toilets in workplaces. Dehydration can lead to decreased sweat production and therefore increased vulnerability to heat stroke during heatwaves. Such public health factors can dramatically reduce the survivability thresholds and underestimate the actual vulnerability of the population.

Global and local

There is also a political issue here that often goes unnoticed. A singular focus on increasing wet bulb temperatures subtly shifts the responsibility of action from the local to the transnational arena. Increasing wet bulb temperatures are the byproduct of global climate change, and therefore keeping our population safe becomes the responsibility of international negotiators at conferences such as COP26. Very little can be done at the local level to keep wet bulb temperatures from ris-

ing if the factors controlling them are global. On the other hand, understanding the factors that increase vulnerability to heatwaves puts the onus on local actors, who have to provide better sanitation facilities, protect the elderly and those with cardiac conditions, and reduce the incidence of diabetes in the population. Such a focus will increase the pressure to improve our national health infrastructure, whose fragility has become increasingly clear to everyone over the past two years.

In summary, the recent focus on increasing temperature and humidity is a welcome step in building awareness about the impacts of climate change. However, it is important to realise that our vulnerability to heatwaves is a systemic problem that has existed for a very long time, and is not dependent only on increasing greenhouse gas emissions. Refocusing our priorities to highlight critical gaps in our urban and health infrastructure that repeatedly fail to protect the most vulnerable among us will allow us to build a more climate-resilient nation.

Joy Merwin Monteiro is a Climate Scientist working at the Department of Earth and Climate Science at IISER, Pune.

12 ECONOMY

DIESEL ENGINES' SHARE IN PVs DOWN, BUT ACCOUNT FOR 50% OF SUV SALES

In the SUV sweepstakes, a petrol vs diesel face-off

Korean cos relying on 'engine downsizing' in petrol segment; Japanese counter focussed on petrol-only

PRANAV MUKUL & ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE MID-RANGE sports utility vehicle (SUV) space, the fastest growing segment in the country's car market, is bracing for a technological face-off. The South Koreans currently dominate this space, with Hyundai Motor — India's second largest carmaker — and its sister concern Kia Motor, between them, packing in multiple models that run on both diesel and petrol mills.

The Japanese counter, led by passenger vehicle (PV) market leader Maruti Suzuki India and Toyota Motor, is focussed on a petrol-only strategy, riding purely on petrol-powered engines mated with hybrid systems. Two new Suzuki-Toyota SUVs, both powered by petrol engines with hybrid drive units, promise to deliver higher power and considerably better fuel economy to stay in the fight with the diesel options offered by the others.

Both the Maruti-Toyota SUVs — code named 'D22' for the Toyota version and 'YFG' for the Suzuki version — are likely off the blocks later this year and could take on the diesel advantage that the South Korean duo, and others like homegrown carmakers Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors and the Europeans including Germany's Volkswagen and its Czech sister concern Skoda alongside France's Renault enjoy.

While the share of diesel engines in India's PV segment has dropped from over 60 per cent in FY14 to around 16 per cent, the diesel option still accounts for 50 per cent of the sales in the SUV segment, where Maruti Suzuki and Toyota are intent on cancelling out the diesel advantage enjoyed by others with their petrol-hybrid offerings.

The Japanese strategy is focussed on jettisoning the diesel option for this segment by overcoming the obvious advantages of the diesel mill through their focus on petrol engines combined with hybrid powertrains. What helps

SOUTH KOREAN, JAPANESE PLAYERS LAYING OUT PLANS

■ South Koreans currently dominate this space, with Hyundai Motor — India's second largest carmaker — and its sister concern Kia Motor, between them, packing in multiple models that run on both diesel and petrol mills

■ The Japanese strategy, led by Maruti Suzuki and Toyota, is focussed on jettisoning the diesel option for this segment by overcoming the obvious advantages of the diesel mill through their focus on petrol engines combined with hybrid powertrains



File

in this game plan is that Toyota is a global leader in hybrid technology, with Maruti Suzuki expected to pitch in with its supplier base to increase localisation and thereby make the hybrid offerings more cost-effective.

The localisation effort is being seen as a counter to the tax relief on hybrids, which Toyota has been lobbying hard for, albeit unsuccessfully so far. The bet is also that as the BS-VI emission norms get tighter, the diesel mill will progressively get even priced out.

Both the Japanese players are in the process of attempting to bring hybrids down from the pricier, more premium segments of the car market to lower down the price points.

For Maruti Suzuki, this comes at a time when it has seen its market share drop to around 43 per cent in FY22 from nearly 48 per cent in FY21, and well over 50 per cent in the previous two years. The plan to bring in multiple petrol-powered SUV products mated to hybrid powertrains in order to enhance fuel efficiency heralds the clear intent of not making a comeback in the diesel segment. The company is also focussing on increasing its play in the CNG segment to bring in additional volumes. Incidentally, in the non-SUV segment, Maruti Suzuki's market share continues to be at over 65 per cent, with leadership positions in both the hatchback and MPV (multi-pur-

pose vehicle) segments. The lack of products in the fast growing SUV segment, however, had impacted its overall market share.

The extent of reversal of the Maruti stance is evident from the fact that its two primary offerings in the SUV segment — the Vitara Brezza and the S-Cross — were only offered with diesel engines for over four years into their launch, without a petrol option. The automaker's plan to wean away from diesel came after the new BS-VI emission norms were rolled out two years ago and the company has ruled out getting back into the diesel segment as it feels the sale of such vehicles would further come down with the on-set of the next phase of emission norms in 2023 that would further jack up the cost of diesel vehicles.

Incidentally, carmakers such as the Koreans, alongside their diesel push, are also increasingly relying on "engine downsizing" in the petrol segment, with a turbocharged petrol engine option among the variants.

These engines use a turbine that is powered by the engine's exhaust gas to subsequently force that extra compressed air into the combustion chamber, leading to more efficient combustion of the air-fuel mixture.

The result is these smaller turbocharged engines produce more power than a bigger engine, while consuming less fuel.

The primary difference be-

tween the petrol and diesel engines is that petrol engines use spark plugs to ignite the air-fuel mixture, while diesel engines rely on heavily compressed air without any spark plugs.

Diesel engines are thereby more efficient and use 15-20 per cent less fuel translating into lower running costs, and also boast of higher low-end torque that provides for a better driving experience with higher loads or on inclines, thereby making them the primary choice for SUVs.

However, they usually cost more than petrol vehicles as diesel technology is more expensive and their servicing and maintenance costs are higher.

A hybrid system typically comprises a petrol engine that is paired to an electric motor and a NiMH (Nickel-metal Hydride) battery pack that enables the vehicle to be driven on a pure electric mode for short distances. The battery pack is recharged by the engine or through regenerative braking. Cars with the hybrid system can be driven for stretches on electric power alone, using the internal combustion engine to top up the battery while running. With this hybrid set-up, the powertrain can deliver a 40-80 per cent jump in fuel efficiency over its non-electrified counterpart, thereby obviating range anxiety typically associated with EVs. But this comes at a higher price, given that they incorporate the electric motor and

battery pack, alongside the combustion engine. This hybrid system being deployed by the Maruti Suzuki-Toyota combine would be similar to the one used in the recently unveiled Honda City e:HEV hybrid or the Toyota Camry, but will come in at a lower price point.

Alongside the hybrid powertrain partnership, Maruti Suzuki and Toyota are already working on a pure-play battery electric vehicle (EV). Suzuki Motor Corp, the parent of Maruti Suzuki, has said it would invest Rs 10,440 crore to build a new EV factory and a battery facility in India.

The announcement by Suzuki marked the first concrete commitment on electrification by Maruti, which has maintained that the Indian car market is not yet prepared for a mass shift towards BEVs (battery electric vehicles) and that the pace of development of the supporting infrastructure such as charging points is less than adequate.

Tata Motors and Hyundai Motor have taken a lead in this segment, with strong plans for an electrification of their product offering, at a time when passenger EVs have seen a sharp jump of well over 50 per cent in sales in 2020-21, albeit over a relatively small base.

While Maruti Suzuki has been treading cautiously on the EV track, there was an expectation that the EV version of the WagonR would have been the company's first battery-electric model for India. A prototype of the WagonR EV was showcased in September 2018 and road testing of some 40-odd prototypes was also underway. But pricing seems to have been a deciding factor in the WagonR EV project being put on the backburner.

Instead, an SUV is being readied in partnership with Toyota, which with Suzuki has a global partnership agreement, and the product is targeted to hit the markets in three years from now. The vehicle is likely to be produced under both the Suzuki and Toyota badging, with the Maruti Suzuki version reported to be code-named 'Y8'.

MARKET WATCH

TOP-10 VALUED COS' M-CAP DIVES

New Delhi: The top-10 most valued firms suffered a combined erosion of Rs 2,85,251.65 crore from their market capitalisation (m-cap) last week, mirroring an overall weak broader market trend, with Reliance Industries emerging as the worst-hit. PTI

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL TRADE, AMAZON

'Mission is to help transform buying & selling; look forward to engaging with ONDC'

FOR DOMESTIC exporters enrolled with Amazon's worldwide selling programme Global Selling, the opportunity to cash in on festive sales comes more than just from Diwali. It is one of the reasons why the e-commerce conglomerate has doubled its target of exports from India to \$20 billion instead of \$10 billion by 2025, said ABHIJIT KAMRA, the Director of Global Trade at Amazon in an interview with AASHISH ARYAN. Edited excerpts:



Abhijit Kamra via LinkedIn

Amazon has doubled its export target from India. Are you not worried that the target could put pressure and lead to fall in quality?

\$20 billion is a very large number. It will have to be all the categories adding up and then the new categories that entrepreneurs are experimenting with. On the geography side, what we do is that the moment a new marketplace opens, we open that for Indian exporters also so that they can benefit from it.

The seller community has evolved significantly over the last few years and now they understand the value of good customer experience. It is also linked to the brand identity. If you put a good product in the customers' hands, they are going to reward you with good sales. The second thing is that there are very transparent mechanisms which encourage good behaviour. And one of the simplest examples of that is customer reviews. If you are doing bad quality product, the customer is going to give you a bad review so the next buyer knows not to buy from you.

That is a very transparent way to encourage natural selection, and encourage sellers to up their customer satisfaction game. We are seeing a lot of people respond to that because they now understand that this is a long-term game and they are building long-term brands. The sellers are responding constructively.

How much of a challenge will the Open Network for Digital Commerce prove to be?

Our mission is to help transform buying and selling in India and digitise local mom-and-pop stores, micro, small & medium enterprises, and small & medium enterprises. Any initiative which helps in digitising these stores across India, either by simplifying technology adoption or otherwise, is an important initiative. We look forward to engaging with the ONDC to see what role we can play in serving Indian customers.

What are the key product

We are on track this year to hit \$5 billion cumulative exports from India. In 2020, when Jeff Bezos was here, we had taken a pledge of \$10 billion by 2025 and are now doubling it to \$20 billion in the same time frame."

categories and cities that have seen growth since the Global Selling programme began?

We are on track this year to hit \$5 billion cumulative exports from India. In 2020, when Jeff Bezos was here, we had taken a pledge of \$10 billion by 2025 and are now doubling it to \$20 billion in the same time frame.

So if you think about north India, we have Delhi which is doing well. But we also have Jaipur, Noida, Jodhpur where a lot of exporters are coming from. And the typical categories include pet products, toys, office products and accessories, and leather bags.

In southern India, again the usual Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad are there. But then there is also a lot of action from Coimbatore, Trichy, and Madurai. The products that are doing well here are home apparel, kitchen products and others. Home entertainment and sports products are also starting to do well.

Poonawalla woos Musk to invest in making Tesla cars locally

New Delhi: Serum Institute of India (SII) CEO Adar Poonawalla on Sunday wooed Elon Musk to invest in India to manufacture Tesla electric cars, saying it will be the best investment he would have ever made. Musk, who has made a successful \$44 billion acquisition bid for Twitter, had in the past asked India to reduce import duties to sell Tesla electric cars but the government has insisted on local manufacturing.

In a post on Twitter, tagging Musk, Poonawalla said, "... just in case you don't end up buying @Twitter, do look at investing some of that capital in INDIA for high-quality large-scale manufacturing of @Tesla cars." He further said, "I assure you this will be the best investment you'll ever make." Last month, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari had said if Tesla was ready to manufacture its electric vehi-

cles in India then there was 'no problem' but the company must not import cars from China.

Last August, Musk had said that American electric vehicle maker Tesla may set up manufacturing unit in India if it first succeeds with imported vehicles in the country. He had said Tesla wanted to launch its vehicles here "but import duties are the highest in the world by far of any large country!" PTI

DoT axes NOCC levy for telecom licence holders; satellite broadband cos to benefit

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE DEPARTMENT of Telecommunications (DoT) has abolished the network operation and control centre (NOCC) charges that are levied on use of space segments by telecom service providers for satellite telephony, broadband, etc. This is expected to provide a fillip to upcoming satellite broadband companies.

The NOCC levy regime was introduced in 2003, and the DoT levied Rs 21 lakh per transponder every year for a 36 MHz of spectrum on a pro-rata basis. Additionally, the government also

EXPLAINED
E Sector to be more viable

WITH THE removal of the NOCC charges for telecom service providers, the Indian satellite broadband space — which is attracting foreign entrants as well as established domestic players — could increase in viability.

charged Rs 6,000 for every trial of antenna that is used for receiving and transmitting signals.

"There shall be no NOCC charges for use of space segment for all DoT licensees for commercial and captive VSAT services, GMPCS (satellite phone service), NLD (national long distance) and other telecom licensees having unified licence or standalone licence. This order shall be effective from April 1, 2022," DoT said in an order dated May 6.

The Network Operations & Control Center was created under the DoT to control the transmissions from ground segment, or satellite earth stations, along with the master control facility under Department of Space to manage the operation of satellites in orbit.

Responding to the move, AK Bhatt, Director General, Indian

Space Association, said: "We believe that these progressive policy steps are in the right direction and showcase the government's commitment in supporting the growth of digital communication by leveraging the potential and capability of satellite communication industry".

Currently, Sunil Bharti Mittal's OneWeb and Elon Musk's Starlink are the providers planning to launch satellite broadband services in India using low-earth orbit satellites. In February, Reliance Jio had announced that it has formed a joint-venture with Luxembourg-based content connectivity solutions provider SES, and plans to deliver satellite broadband services across India.

'FPI ownership in equities falls to lowest since Mar 2019'

FPI ownership in Indian equities fell to pre-Covid level to a multi-year low of 19.5% this March in NSE500 companies valued at \$619 billion, as per BofA Securities India report



21.4% Foreign funds' peak ownership in domestic equities, in December 2021

Of the \$619 billion of FPI ownership, highest incremental allocation were in energy stocks with 16.2%, followed by IT at 14.8%, and

communication services at 4%

Share loss of FPIs has been well corrected by rising ownership of the stocks by domestic funds, who put in \$6 billion in March and \$14.6 billion in FY22

Source: BofA Securities India/PTI

Amid policy rate hikes, FPIs remain net sellers in equities in May so far

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

IN A month that saw the Reserve Bank of India and the United States Federal Reserve raised interest rates, foreign investors pulled over Rs 6,400 crore from domestic equity markets in the first four trading sessions of May.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) remained net sellers for the seventh straight month till April, as they withdrew more than Rs 1.65 lakh crore from equities.

This was mainly on account of the anticipation of a rate hike by the US Fed and the deteriorating

geopolitical environment following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

After six months of selling spree, FPIs turned net investors in the first week of April amid correction in the markets and invested Rs 7,707 crore in equities. However, after a short break, they again turned net sellers during the holiday-shortened April 11-13 week, and the sell-off continued in the succeeding weeks too.

In May till date, FPI flows continue to remain negative as they sold nearly Rs 6,417 crore during May 2-6, data released by depositors showed. The trading in market was closed on May 3 on account of Eid. WITHPTI

BRIEFLY

'SCI sale bids'

New Delhi: The Centre is likely to invite financial bids for Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) by September, after the process of demerger of non-core assets is completed, an official said. As part of the strategic sale, the Centre is hiving off Shipping House and the training institute in Pune and some other non-core SCI assets.

LIC IPO day 5

New Delhi: Life Insurance Corporation's (LIC) IPO was subscribed 1.79 times on the penultimate day of the offer on Sunday. As per data on bourses posted at 7 pm, for 16,20,78,067 shares on offer, 29,08,27,860 bids were received. PTI

Joshi takes over as CMD of Hindustan Petroleum

New Delhi: Pushp Kumar Joshi on Sunday took over as the new Chairman and Managing Director of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), the country's third largest oil refining and fuel marketing company.

"Prior to this Dr Joshi was Director-HR of the Corporation from August 01, 2012," the company said in a statement. Joshi, the senior-most director on the HPCL board, was in January picked by the government headhunter Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) to replace Mukesh Kumar Surana. Surana superannuated from services on April 30, 2022, but in absence of a formal order from the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) headed by the Prime Minister, Joshi was named interim head.



Pushp Kumar Joshi, the new Chairman & Managing Director of Hindustan Petroleum. via Twitter @HPCL

The ACC confirmation of his appointment has now come and he has formally taken over as the chairman and managing director of HPCL. Joshi is also holding the additional charge of Director—Marketing of HPCL. PTI

Chaos at Apple supplier Quanta shows strains of Shanghai Covid lockdown

REUTERS
SHANGHAI, MAY 8

QUANTA SHANGHAI Manufacturing City would seem like an ideal site to implement China's "closed-loop" management system to prevent the spread of Covid-19 that requires staff to live and work on-site in a secure bubble.

Sprawled over land the size of 20 football fields, the campus houses factories, living quarters for 40,000 workers, some living 12 per room, and even a supermarket. But as Covid breached Quanta's defences, the system broke down into chaos Thursday.

Videos posted online showed more than a hundred Quanta workers physically overwhelm-



Workers take Covid rapid antigen tests in Shanghai. Reuters file

ing security guards in hazmat suits and vaulting over factory gates to escape being trapped inside the factory amid rumours that workers on the floor that day tested positive for Covid.

The turmoil at Quanta under-

scores the struggles Shanghai faces to get its factories, many of them key links in global supply chains, back up to speed even as much of the city of 25 million remains locked down under China's "dynamic-zero" Covid policy.

'April: Overall biz confidence of India Inc improves'

New Delhi: The latest round of industry body FICCI's Business Confidence Survey reported an improvement in the confidence level of India Inc, with the Overall Business Confidence Index at 67.6 in the recently conducted April 2022 round against 63.9 earlier.

The survey by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) found an improvement in both current conditions and expectations of Indian companies in its latest round. The Current Condition Index improved to 66.1 from 62.6 in the last survey, while the Expectations Index improved to 68.4 from 64.5.

The survey gauges the respondents' expectations for the period April to September 2022. ENS

A gentle giant starts learning to hustle

Geethu Anna Jose, the former India captain and centre, is rediscovering the joys of the crossover, speed dribble and the swish as the mother of two makes a comeback at 36 in the super fast but physical 3X3 version

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, MAY 8

A PEACH chiffon sari trailing, hair let loose and flowing in slow-mo, sun setting over the basketball court on the picture-perfect horizon of the summer camp. It's how her favourite movie, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai showed comebacks in basketball. Geethu Rahul nee Geethu Anna Jose did not expect a basketball court scene where a teammate was straight slapped and went down wincing in pain, while the opposite team gnashed teeth and gleefully completed a basket with loud cackles, on her own return to the sport from motherhood at age 36.

"The referees didn't even care!" Geethu recalls amidst horrified giggles, adding after another bout of laughter, "only if someone kills you, will they probably give a foul in 3-by-3 basketball!"

A mother of two children now, Geethu jokes that her kids are going to end up watching a 'rowdy player version' of their mother on court in the 3x3 format, adding she has no choice but to adapt to the rough, physical manifestation of basketball, a sport where the 6'2" was India's best in 5X5 till 2013. One of the cleanest rebound defenders of her time - some might say far too gentle in her bearing on court which went against her in a demanding WNBA trial in the US - the 36-year-old is fending the cultural shock of free-for-alls of the 3X3 format, learning the tricks of the licks.

Stopping some elbows and palms flying about at each other apparently breaks the players' flow of 3x3 play, so refs let them get on with it, as long as the tempo is ceaselessly continuous. Geethu took a week to gulp down the 'sacrilege' she witnessed.

"In my 20 years of playing 5x5, I never saw anyone get away with slapping an opponent and the ref casually carrying on. The first 3-4 rounds I was zapped," says the former top-scorer of the Asian Championships in a field of Chinese and Korean giants, after she turned out for Kochi Stars in the 3x3 franchise league 3BL last month. "But I realised anyway refs are not calling fouls, so I'll also start doing the same and whack about anyone stopping me," she says feigning menace. "There's no respect anyway, so these young girls will help me become rough," she continues, amused. Aryan, 7 and Aradhna, 5 are about to find out that Mummy who returned from a tournament in Chandigarh, has quite literally learnt to brawl without compunction.

Basketball and Bollywood

A Bollywood buff all her life, she would



(top) Geethu is back on the court after a gap of nine years; (R) With hubby Rahul and kids Aryan and Aradhna. 3BL



be delirious if any movie of the 90s and noughties, referenced the sport she was India's best at. "I was a huge Shah Rukh fan after Kuch Kuch Hota Hai."

Geethu even named her children with filmstar-kid names. "See, you don't really see a lot of basketball in Indian pop culture, except for the movie scenes. But I'm an even bigger Abhishek Bachchan fan because he played the sport in real life. So my first-born son was Aryan, and instead of Aradhya, I named my daughter Aradhna," Geethu says. "We are Christians, so we never had such names. But I was a big movies fan, so it had to be these ones."

She married a former state-level tennis player and now dentist, Rahul, who told her she'd had enough years sitting at home being a mother. And that she should get out of the house and resume playing basketball since she had been so good at it and loved it to bits. "His name being Rahul, like in the movie, might or might not have firmed up my decision to marry him!" she giggles, "but he's the reason I seriously considered returning to the sport. I was a little hesitant. As someone who played sport he understood how hard it must be to have reached that top level and then suddenly quit." Quit on a dream she indeed had, when she met Rahul circa 2011 after India had defeated China for a gold medal in 3x3 at Qatar. "See, marriage and kid, everything is blissful. My jersey

number was 14 and I became a mother in 2014 and I was content. But whenever I saw girls playing on the court, I'd get this very bad urge to play. When I asked him, he said I must go ahead and leave the kids to him. My mother helped out. I do feel terrible when the kids call up and ask 'amma, when are you coming home?' But the game never leaves you," she says.

Post-childbirth, she needed to lose weight though it seriously only started to happen when Aryan, 7, started packing her gym bag and told her, "Don't you have to go to the office? Why are you being so lazy? Come let's go. They have become my strictest trainers. They once heard their father and now lecture me about how I need to go to the gym so I can fit to play on court. They look at my plate and make me eat veggies. It's all reversed. I've just introduced them to basketball. Let's see," she says. It wasn't that Geethu didn't have a fulfilling India career, though the WNBA trials not working out - for it would've been a breakthrough - is something she'll wonder about for years. "I finally won the Arjuna award and thought it was time to leave," says India's centre for a dozen years - the star that the rest of the Indian team revolved around.

Yet, at a time when all other sports were witnessing franchise leagues take off, basketball just didn't get moving back then. And it gnawed at her. Marriage after two years of

courtship seemed like the logical next phase of life. "You know I kept waiting for a basketball league to happen, but it just never did. So when I saw the promos of the 3X3 early in March with Rohit Bakshi as promoter I knew I couldn't miss this chance. There was a tingle in my spine that said no matter what I want to be part of this and I can't stay away from basketball any longer. Still it took a week to get into training. I'm gonna be 36-37, so I'm just happy I could finally be a part of a professional league. Both foreign and Indian players were given the same respect and treatment," says the former Indian Railways mainstay.

It was also a merry gathering of her contemporaries, creaking joints, luminous brains, rimless three-Ps and all. "I felt the same excitement we used to when Railways travelled to the North for Nationals, and initially it was tough to say Bye to my children. But I got into game-mode as soon as I saw the court," she says. 3x3 might be a faded-past blur, but Geethu reckons the Daddies & Mummies still had it in them to match step, even if the pushing and slapping took some learning.

"There were 4 of us mothers there - Smriti, Steffy, me. Even in the men's teams, it was nice to catch up with old players, they're all fathers now - Vishesh (Brughavanshi), Jagdeep (the stylish Punjab player who never joined a pro team and stayed loyal to the state), and Aravind. Of Course we've all changed. Yes, the speed took time, but we have maturity and can control the tempo of the game. A good mix and match of young and old makes for great 3X3. It's fast and great to watch," she gushed.

Breathless but happy

Geethu wasn't quite prepared for the exertions initially when she began training, thinking it's just 10 minutes with substitutions aplenty. "A 12 second clock for touch, rebound, attack and shoot with no individual fouls and just 5 fouls on the team. How tough could it be? But, nah. The physicality and speed killed me. But it's breathless and exciting once you get into it," she says.

3Ps are counted as 2 on the half-court format and there's 1 point inside the perimeter. "You know I enjoyed defense and taking rebounds gave me the most exhilaration," Geethu says like a classical player who knows defense is more satisfying in basketball than shooting.

Returning to Chandigarh was another high point. "There's beautiful memories of playing basketball in Punjab. People there just love the game, and it's very different from anywhere else. The hospitality was great, and I could relive my youth," says the former star, who easily tallied 30+ points individually in her heyday, and was known for her fadeaway hook shot.

Geethu stresses that 3x3 doesn't lend itself to rewinding and threadbaring like the 40-minute domestic classics against Delhi or Chhattisgarh or Kerala used to when she led Railways, and later India. "It's all over in 10 minutes or first to 21 points, so you don't sit and dwell. If you ask me exactly what happened, I won't be able to tell you! But I felt like I was back on my court. I'd think of Aryan and Aradhna as soon as I stepped out. But in those 10 minutes it was just like old times," she says.

For someone who followed rules assiduously and rarely got into foul trouble, she returned home to her children in Kochi, with plenty of tales of flapping arms, that might or might not have struck an opponent, all told with a wink and a wicked smile.

Women's 4-1 win needlessly exciting in TUC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 8

INDIAN MEN wobbled to a 5-0 start in their opening tie against Germany at the Thomas Cup as the Europeans stretched two matches into deciders, jolting the 5-0 margin a tad. The Uber Cup team made heavy weather against lower-placed opponents, albeit holding nerves to eke out a 4-1 win against Canada.

India's women's singles players though hogged all the excitement as first Aakarshi Kashyap and later Ashmita Chaliha shrugged off indifferent erratic starts to hold their nerves at the clutch in three-setters against Canada and give the Uber Cup team a 4-1 win. Playing against an opponent from a country that is not traditionally known to throw up a bunch of top players, Chaliha in fact woke up mid-match from a set and 4-8 down and went on a 9-point rampage to win the final singles tie 12-21, 21-11, 22-20 showing decent temperament against Rachel Chan. Kashyap had earlier fought back from 17-21 and 7-12 down to pounce on Canadian Wen Yu Zhang's errors and win 17-21, 21-18, 21-17, a 4-point rally from 17-18 down in the decider to close out the match was impressive in an otherwise laborious game where the Indian had more grit than finesse in her licks.

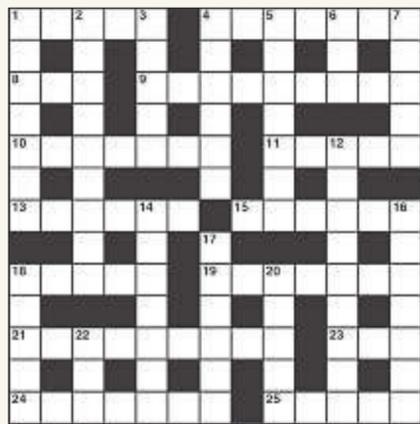
PV Sindhu had given India a good start beating potential CWG obstacle Michelle Li 21-17, 21-10. Tanisha Crasto and Treesa Jolly, playing India's second doubles, were mighty impressive against Catherine Choi and Josephine Wu winning 21-9, 21-15 in 29 minutes, though the other scratch pair - Shruti Mishra-Simran Singhi went down 19-21, 12-21.

Men shrug off rusty start

India's No 1 singles player Lakshya Sen began comfortably against Max Weisskirchen winning 21-16, 21-13 in 36 minutes. But that was followed by two rusty openers - Satwiksairaj Rankireddy-Chirag Shetty dropping a set against unheralded Jones Jansen and Marvin Seidel, 21-15, 10-21, 21-13. Kidambi Srikanth gave one right scare, when Kai Schaffer took the opener 21-18, as the German took off from 16-all. The next two sets were a cakewalk with some delectable strokes, but Srikanth would need to eschew these poor starts in coming days.

MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila pulled out a thriller 25-23, 21-15 against Bjarne Geiss and Jan Voelker after holding three set points and facing two in the opener. HS Prannoy was fortunately undramatic in a reassuring 21-9, 21-9 win against Matthias Kicklitz. India play Canada in Thomas Cup on Monday, where Bryan Young vs Lakshya Sen will be the interesting match of young guns.

CROSSWORD 4735



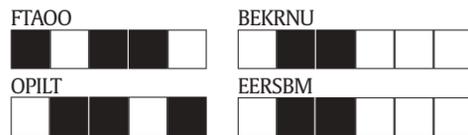
- ACROSS**
- Exceptionally speechless player (5)
 - He has a taste for a bit of embroidery (7)
 - Look round the cathedral (3)
 - Examine in detail a total failure (5,4)
 - It's overlooked by some Moslem women (7)
 - Poor Swede regularly pulled out of bed (5)
 - Union leader caught in a frock gets imprisonment (6)
 - Circumvent with the aid of a permit (6)
 - She will show a dress pattern (5)
 - Record suppressed by force (3,4)
 - Over and over it goes (9)
 - A pound could be a good investment (3)
 - Is in the way of progress (7)
 - Three points go to my opponent (5)
- DOWN**
- Tried to change sad eyes (7)
 - Walk about certain to be highly esteemed (9)
 - Records book (5)
 - Sort of snakes that creep furtively? (6)
 - Give ground for road construction (4,3)
 - Card players play it in the saloon (3)
 - Foreign money held by grandson (5)
 - Are able to make simple converse (9)
 - Hurried to include a song that's turned out (7)
 - He is said to exemplify happiness (7)
 - Films may be about raising warships (6)
 - Mohammedan lawyer in plain clothes (3)
 - Let it be put right (5)
 - Traveller in cloth? (3)

Solutions Crossword 4734: Across: 1 Close shave, 8 Recur, 9 Epigram, 10 Squeeze, 11 Afton, 12 Scribe, 14 Hoarse, 17 Apply, 19 Emerges, 21 Cleaner, 22 Guess, 23 Enterprise. Down: 2 Lacquer, 3 Sprea, 4 Skewer, 5 Agitato, 6 Egret, 7 Amanuensis, 8 Resistance, 13 Bayonet, 15 Regrets, 16 Terror, 18 Piece, 20 Elgar.

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.

Why not go _____? Isn't that where the fruit is? - Frank Scully (3,2,1,4)



ANSWER: Why not go on on a limb? First 1 that where the fruit is? - Frank Scully SOLUTION: AFOOT, AFOOT, EMBERS

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



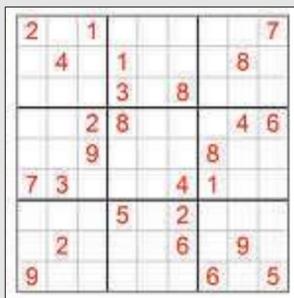
MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4829

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 4828



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

There's no need to remind you just how necessary it is to guarantee that other people are happy with your progress. Right now you need some reassurance that family members are content with your plans, especially if an upheaval is in the pipeline.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Your daily schedule over the next few weeks will be profoundly affected by the fact that you're entering a new and distinctly serious phase of your life. Like anyone else, you need the chance to lead a more orderly routine. But the next couple of weeks will give you the opportunity to find out if that's what you want.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Venus, the planetary ruler of partnerships, is still encouraging you to tell others how you really feel, but it is up to you to take their wishes into account much more than in the past. You'll also soon have a welcome chance to settle an outstanding dispute.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Even delays, difficulties and obstructions will have their place in the scheme of things over the coming period. Your skills, experience and confidence will all benefit as a result of coping with challenging circumstances. That suggests that you'll turn difficulties to your advantage.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

The time for making important decisions is fast running out. There's no need to panic just yet, but you should gather whatever additional information is necessary to make the best choices. Yet again, your greatest asset is your irresistible charm.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Although as a Virgo you thrive on love and affection, there's something in you that resists being the centre of attention for too long. As a result you may find current emotional opportunities slightly hard to handle. That's why you might be tempted to cut yourself off from a number of contacts.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

You must be aware by now of strong undercurrents in your family life, or at least of the possibility that people have big plans for your future. Don't worry if there are delays now, as the end of the week will bring swift solutions.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

A build-up of planets in lively regions of your chart indicates that you've every reason to celebrate. This is traditionally a time when you show off all your natural skills and advantages to their best. A word for those of you pursuing professional ambitions: make the most of all social offerings and openings.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

You're bound to feel a little more secretive, especially as friends will be pestering you over matters which are really none of their business. You'll be on safe ground just as long as you are discreet when necessary. Also, how about occupying the moral high ground?

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

It would be a gross understatement to say that as far as several of your major ambitions are concerned, this is a make-or-break period of your life. Press ahead with all the determination for which you are renowned - and set your sights on victory at the end of the week.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Your personal, emotional and romantic trends are looking decidedly lively. But the last thing you should be doing right now is ignoring the vital necessity of hard work if you want to advance in your career. If you're on the brink of a major breakthrough, one last push may be needed.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Not for the first time the planets have taken up a configuration which holds out superb possibilities as far as all your long-range goals are concerned. Try to plan as far ahead as possible. Everything depends on your ability to combine a grasp of detail with a sweeping vision of the future.

Royal revenge

Dismissed by SRH for 68 in an earlier match, RCB turn the tables to win by 67 runs in the reverse fixture

SYNOPSIS: A century stand between Faf du Plessis and Rajat Patidar followed by another strong finish from Dinesh Karthik set up RCB's massive win as Wanindu Hasaranga ran through Sunrisers with 5 for 18



RCB spinner Wanindu Hasaranga ran through the SRH batting line-up. Sportzpics for IPL

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
MUMBAI, MAY 8

AFTER DISMISSING Royal Challengers Bangalore for 68 at Brabourne Stadium for a nine-wicket win a fortnight ago, Sunrisers Hyderabad have been on a losing streak. And RCB extended Sunrisers' winless phase to four games as they handed them a 67-run hammering at Wankhede Stadium. The win took RCB to 14 points with two games left, and Sunrisers are stuck on 10 with three matches to play.

Another stirring DK finish

In the 19th over of the RCB innings, the DJ exhorted the Wankhede crowd to shout 'Tyagi, Tyagi.' The Sunrisers pacer had just bowled successive dot balls to new batsman Dinesh Karthik. He was keeping the ball outside off and taking the pace off, and Karthik had just tried a reverse-hit and failed to connect. But after a moment or two of silence, as if they were considering what to do, the fans began chanting 'DK, DK' instead. And Karthik, who'd walked out to those shouts moments ago, proceeded to spoil what had been an excellent over; he moved across, stood outside off behind the line where Tyagi had been operating and slog-swept him over deep midwicket.

Fazalhaq Farooqi, the left-arm seamer from Afghanistan, had bowled three steady overs for only 22 runs on his IPL debut. He'd taken treatment for a leg issue at the start of his third over, and been hit on his leg the very next ball by a strike from Faf du Plessis. Through the pain, Farooqi had even managed to smile at his misfortune. He'd have had reason to feel genuine happiness if Rahul Tripathi had caught Karthik on the deep square-leg boundary.

Karthik had just come back on strike with four balls left in the last over, and had swung Farooqi straight to Tripathi. The white ball came flat at an awkward time; the setting sun was straight in Tripathi's eyes. It burst through his hands and fell on the rope. Karthik took the remaining three balls of the innings for six, six and four, making it 25 runs off the over and ruining Farooqi's figures too. Farooqi alternated between full and short lengths; Karthik just cleared a jumping long-on, walloped the next over midwicket and ended the RCB innings with a straight hit.

He had taken 30 off only eight balls, and had given RCB the big over that hadn't arrived until then during the death phase. It was his eighth unbeaten effort out of 12 innings this IPL, and his season strike-rate is back at 200.

Sunrisers' disaster start

Karthik's surge had propelled RCB to 192 for 3 but Rajasthan Royals had comfortably chased down 190 at Wankhede the previous afternoon against Punjab Kings. An opening stand of 46 in four overs had set RR on their

way. But Sunrisers would lose both their openers before the first over was done. Skipper Kane Williamson, going for a pretty tight single, was run out for a diamond duck with a direct hit from short extra cover by Shahbaz Ahmed. Four balls later, Abhishek Sharma swung all over an utterly normal delivery from Glenn Maxwell and was bowled for a duck. So in the space of nine deliveries, RCB had wrested the momentum completely.

Hasaranga runs through 'em

On a surface where it hadn't been easy to swing pitched-up deliveries across the line, Sunrisers had served up extra pacer through Tyagi and Umran Malik to make it more straightforward for RCB. The duo conceded 67 off a combined six overs, and Malik was restricted to just two overs after his opening one was taken for 20 by du Plessis and Rajat Patidar. On the other hand, six overs of spin from J Suchith and Abhishek went for only 43.

RCB saw that and used as many as nine overs of spin. Four of those were from the leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga, and he ran

IPL TABLE

TEAM	M	W	L	PT	NRR
LSG	11	8	3	16	0.703
GT	11	8	3	16	0.120
RR	11	7	4	14	0.326
RCB	12	7	5	14	-0.115
DC	10	5	5	10	0.641
SRH	11	5	6	10	-0.031
PBKS	11	5	6	10	-0.231
KKR	11	4	7	8	-0.304
CSK	10	3	7	6	-0.431
MI	10	2	8	4	-0.725

through a line-up way behind on the asking rate with 5 for 18. He broke a 50-run third-wicket stand by having Aiden Markram caught at deep midwicket by Virat Kohli, who'd gone first ball of the match, popping Suchith straight to midwicket for his third golden duck of the season, and second against Sunrisers.

In his second over, Hasaranga took out the dangerous Nicholas Pooran, luring the West Indies captain into a slog-sweep with a tossed-up googly that took the edge to short third man. It was an excellent diving-forward take by Shahbaz.

Two drops in three balls

Malik had put down a similar chance at the same position off Patidar, two balls after Tripathi failed to hang on to a difficult opportunity at midwicket off du Plessis. The second-wicket RCB stand was worth 67 then, it would cost Sunrisers 38 more, and du Plessis would go on to anchor the innings until the very end.

BRIEF SCORES: Royal Challengers Bangalore 192/3 in 20 overs (Faf du Plessis 73 not out, Rajat Patidar 48, Dinesh Karthik 30 not out; J Suchith 2/30) bt Sunrisers Hyderabad 125 all out in 19.2 overs (Rahul Tripathi 58; Wanindu Hasaranga 5/18) by 67 runs

DC lose to CSK by 91 runs, playoff chances take a hit

SYNOPSIS: Conway, Gaikwad play connoisseur's cricket. Moeen does bowling star turn

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
MAY 8

DAVID WARNER glared at Nitin Menon as he walked past him, livid that the umpire's call didn't go his way. Maheesh Theekshana's leg-before appeal was very confident and the DRS showed that Menon was right. Delhi Capitals desperately needed two points from this game to keep their playoffs hopes alive and against Chennai Super Kings' 208/6, Warner was the team's best bet. The batsman's anger captured the frustration of a failed reverse sweep attempt.

In the end, DC folded up for 117 to lose by 91 runs, a serious blow for them with just three group matches remaining. For CSK, they will take this win and hope against hope.

Connoisseur's cricket

Rituraj Gaikwad and Devon Conway batting in a partnership is connoisseur's cricket. CSK missed a trick by not allowing the partnership to bed in during the early phase of the tournament. Conway was given a game upfront before being dropped. Belatedly, when he was brought back to the fold, he instantly got into the groove and added meat to the CSK top-order in conjunction with Gaikwad.

This has been an underwhelming season for the four-time champions. But a successful franchise like CSK will deal with one bad year. The Conway-Gaikwad opening combination offers hope for the future. They score runs playing orthodox cricket. And when they press the accelerator in the shortest format without compromising on their batting principles, cricket becomes very enjoyable.

CSK by and large have failed to make the Powerplays count this term, which also muddled their middle-overs batting. Today, they raced to 57 for no loss after six overs. The release shot came from Gaikwad in the third over against Anrich Nortje, when the batsman danced down the track and treated the tear-

away quick like a spinner. Gaikwad's balance, head position, the straightness of the bat - everything was copybook. The ball sailed over the long-on boundary for a six. Gaikwad had a slow start to the season. But now he has regained his touch and from that perspective, he would rue his dismissals in the 30s and 40s. A Nortje bouncer got the better of him.

Conway made light work of Kuldeep Yadav. He used his feet to hit a six off a length ball before sweeping the next one to clear the deep square leg boundary. When a batsman is using his feet and at the same time, sweeping with aplomb, it becomes very difficult for the bowler. Before taking Kuldeep to the cleaners, Conway had accounted for back-to-back sixes against Axar Patel. Conway and Gaikwad's 110-run partnership came in 11 overs. They now have two 100-plus associations in three games. Conway departed for a 49-ball 87. Shivam Dube and MS Dhoni's cameos ensured that CSK would cross the 200-run mark.

Nortje was DC's most successful bowler with 3/42, including the wickets of Moeen Ali and Robin Uthappa in successive deliveries in the final over. Khaleel Ahmed was the most economical, 2/28. Kuldeep conceded 43 runs in his three overs.

Bowling star turn

Rishabh Pant's response to Warner's dismissal was spectacular. He hit Theekshana for three consecutive fours, the first one being a falling lofted straight drive. The DC captain and Mitchell Marsh were going great guns until Moeen intervened.

Marsh was his first victim, a mistimed slog-sweep finding Gaikwad at long-on. Pant was done in by a skidder, the batsman chopping it on to the stumps. Three balls later, Ripal Patel was beaten in the air and was hauled out to deep mid-wicket. Moeen's figures after two overs read: 2-0-9-3. DC slumped to 81/5 and soon they were 85/7 after Rovman Powell's dismissal. The game was done and dusted.

BRIEF SCORES: CSK (Devon Conway 87, Rituraj Gaikwad 41, Shivam Dube 32, MS Dhoni 21 not out; Anrich Nortje 3/42) bt DC 117 all out in 17.4 overs (Mitchell Marsh 25; Moeen Ali 3/13) by 91 runs

BRIEFLY

Tough draws for Indian boxers

Istanbul: Indian pugilists were handed tough draws for the Women's World Boxing Championships, to be held in Istanbul from May 8 to 20. Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain (70kg) will kickstart India's campaign on Monday but she got a tough draw as she will be up against the former world champion Chen Nien-Chin who she beat in the quarter-finals of the Tokyo Olympic Games. Two-time Asian Champion Pooja Rani (81kg), Nandini and Nikhat Zareen have also been handed tough draws in their respective categories.

EPL: Man City open up three-point lead

Manchester: Manchester City reclaimed top spot in the Premier League with a 5-0 drubbing of Newcastle United that allowed the reigning champions to open up a three-point lead over Liverpool. Raheem Sterling scored twice for the hosts with Aymeric Laporte, Rodri and Phil Foden also on target. City have 86 points to Liverpool's 83 with both sides having three games remaining. Liverpool face Aston Villa on Tuesday with City up against Wolverhampton Wanderers a day later.

Indians continue to shine at Deaflympics

New Delhi: Dhanush Srikanth teamed up with Priesha Deshmukh to win the 10m air rifle mixed team competition and extend Indian shooters' gold rush at the 24th Deaflympics in Caxais do Sul, Brazil. Shooting on competition day six, Dhanush and Priesha beat Germany's Sebastian Herrmann and Sabrina Eckert 16-10 in the gold medal match. This was Dhanush's second gold of the Games after having won the individual men's 10m air rifle.

Indian GP shifted to Bhubaneswar

Bhubaneswar: The Indian Grand Prix 3 and 4, which were originally scheduled to be held in Madurai, will now be organised here on May 21 and 24, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) said. This is the second time the venue of the two one-day events has been changed. "Earlier these meets were to be held at Madurai. The Grand Prix Meets have been shifted to provide better facilities to the athletes," the AFI said.

PTI & REUTERS

Annu dominates, sets another nat'l record with a throw of 63.82m

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MAY 8

SEASONED THROWER Annu Rani lit up the Javelin Nationals in Jamshedpur with a national record-breaking effort of 63.82m on her very first attempt. The Uttar Pradesh athlete has been India's best woman thrower by a distance for almost a decade now. Sunday was the ninth time she broke the national record as she improved on her previous mark of 63.24m set last year at the Federation Cup in Patiala. Annu's next three throws yielded 60.10m, 56.60m and 58.13m before she passed on the last two attempts.

The gulf between Annu and her competitors in Jamshedpur was quite large. The silver medal went to Sanjana Choudhary for 53.87m - almost 10m behind Annu's gold-winning attempt. Annu has been consistently improving on her own national mark since first breaching it in 2014 with 58.83m.

Annu had had a quiet season until now after the disappointment at the Tokyo Olympics where she finished 14th in the qualifying round. Despite another record-breaking throw, Annu's hunger to go further won't be satisfied. The 30-year-old thrower

had worked closely with German biomechanics expert and Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra's coach Klaus Bartonietz in the run-up to the Tokyo Games.

In the men's U-18 (700g javelin) category, Yash Saini of Haryana finished on top with a best attempt of 67.42m. Saini, taking part in his first national-level meet, produced a string of consistent throws of 65.21, 63.24, 64.05, and 65.46m on Sunday. The 17-year-old was, however, not pleased with his results as he feels he belongs in the 70m club.

"I was hoping to throw with an international javelin. I have thrown 72m in training and would have been happy if I had matched that, but considering the slight wind blowing towards us and my niggle, I am happy that I won gold on debut. I have been training for three years, but it is only now that my coaches Arvind Kumar and Dharmender believed I was ready," the youngster said.

In the men's U-20 category, which had only five participants, Vivek Kumar of Madhya Pradesh took top spot with a best throw of 68.67m. The results don't augur well with the U20 World Championships just three months away. India is yet to see another javelin thrower on the podium in the Junior Worlds since Chopra's gold in 2016.

The future is here: Alcaraz beats Zverev, clinches Madrid Open title

REUTERS & AP
MAY 8

SPANISH TEENAGER Carlos Alcaraz won his second ATP Masters 1000 title at the Madrid Open after defeating defending champion Alexander Zverev 6-3 6-1 in front of his home crowd on Sunday.

Alcaraz looked dangerous throughout his run at the claycourt tournament, where he stunned world number one Novak Djokovic and 21-times major winner Rafa Nadal before cruising past world number three Zverev in the title clash. The 19-year-old is the youngest player since start of the ATP Tour in 1990 to defeat three top-five players at the same event. Alcaraz made the first move as he broke Zverev to love for a 4-2 lead before comfortably closing out the set on his own serve.

The home favourite broke to love again for a 2-1 lead in the second set as Zverev began to grow frustrated, failing to find ways to stop Alcaraz. Cheered on by the home fans, the sublime Alcaraz found the double break at 4-1 and won the next two games to wrap up the match in just about an hour. The Spaniard got the crowd at the Manolo Santana Stadium on their feet with his variety of shots and relentless hitting as he earned a seventh straight top-10 win and tour-leading fourth title of the year.

Ranked 120 in the world just a year ago, Alcaraz will rise to a career-high no. 6 in the new rankings on Monday.



Carlos Alcaraz reacts after beating Alexander Zverev in Sunday's final.

Djokovic optimistic

Novak Djokovic is optimistic about his game going into the French Open despite going another week without a title.

The top-ranked Djokovic is yet to win a trophy this season while trying to regain his best form after not being allowed to play in the Australian Open because he was not vaccinated for COVID-19. Djokovic lost to Alcaraz in three sets in the semifinals of the Madrid Open on Saturday, when he was trying to make it to his second consecutive final after losing to Andrey Rublev in Serbia last month.

Despite the loss, Djokovic said he leaves Madrid feeling good about his preparations for the upcoming French Open, where he will defend his title.

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— JOURNALISM OF COURAGE —

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