

India's medal haul on track: Gold in steeplechase, shotput

Sable sets new Asian Games record; Toor retains title; Yarraji, Bains, Sreeshankar and Saroj win silver medals



EXPRESS AT ASIAN GAMES

MIHIR VASAVDA
HANGZHOU, OCTOBER 1

THE EUPHORIC wave, he knew, wasn't for him. Avinash Sable saw himself on the big screen, heard the roar that echoed inside the giant bowl that the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre is, and glanced towards Jianan Wang, the Chinese long jumper for whom the packed stands cheered.

As he waited for his race to begin, Sable was in no illusion about his fame. But he was self-assured about his prowess. "I knew I was faster than all my competitors, and I wanted to run a fast race," he said.

And fast he was. By a country mile.

The Indian steeplechaser ran a Games record time of 8 minutes, 19.5 seconds to win India's



Avinash Sable celebrates after winning the steeplechase gold medal in Hangzhou. PTI REPORTS, PAGES 17 & 18

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In Kargil's first council polls since 2019, it's BJP vs others

NAVEED IQBAL
KARGIL, OCTOBER 1

BATTLELINES HAVE been drawn for the 5th general election to the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) in Kargil on October 4, the first such polls here since 2019. While the elections are being fought around the issue of development in the Kargil region, keeping the BJP out of the 30-member council is the key objective for all other parties.

Lodged between Srinagar and Leh, where the last council polls were held in 2020, Kargil is affected by the politics of both regions and its population of over 1.40 lakh (majority Shia) has been struggling to find alignment in either since its split from the former state of Jammu and Kashmir after the revocation of Article 370.

In the last council in Kargil, the BJP had three members, only one of whom was elected on its ticket. The other two had switched allegiance from the PDP. This time, the party has fielded 17 candidates.

The 30-member council has 26 elected and four nominated

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Afghan Embassy shuts ops in Delhi, cites 'lack of diplomatic support'

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

OVER TWO years after the Taliban captured Afghanistan and the Ashraf Ghani government collapsed, the Afghanistan Embassy in New Delhi has said that it is ceasing its operations from Sunday (October 1), citing "lack of support from the host government", failure to "meet expectations... to serve the best interests of Afghanistan", and paucity of resources and personnel.

The Indian Express had reported on September 29 that the Afghanistan Embassy was likely to shut its operations.

"It is with profound sadness, regret and disappointment that the Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi announces this decision to cease its operations," the Afghanistan Embassy said in a statement late on Saturday night.

It said the decision was taken after careful consideration, tak-

EXPLAINED
E Diplomatic tightrope walk

WHILE INDIA has a technical team in Kabul, where it is coordinating with the Taliban regime for delivery of humanitarian aid, the Taliban would now want to post their representative in Delhi. Since India has not recognised the Taliban regime, it will have to diplomatically negotiate the next steps.

ing into account the historic ties and longstanding partnership between Afghanistan and India. Listing the primary reasons for the "unfortunate closure", it alleged "lack of support from a host government" which, it said, hindered its ability to carry out duties effectively.

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PM LEADS CLEANLINESS DRIVE

On the eve of Gandhi Jayanti, Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes part in a cleanliness drive with fitness influencer Ankit Baiyanpuria, in New Delhi on Sunday. Sharing a 4-minute video on his X account, PM Modi posted: "Today, as the nation focuses on Swachhata, Ankit Baiyanpuria and I did the same! Beyond just cleanliness, we blended fitness and well-being also into the mix. It is all about that Swachh and Swasth Bharat vibe!". PTI REPORT, PAGE 8

Four held for killing of 2 in Manipur, taken to Assam; Kuki groups protest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
IMPHAL, GUWAHATI,
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

ANNOUNCING THE arrest of four persons by the CBI for their alleged involvement in the killing of two Imphal residents, Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh said on Sunday that the accused had been taken to Guwahati by a special flight.

His announcement triggered protests by Kuki-Zomi organisations, which referred to the arrests as "abduction". The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum declared an indefinite

shutdown starting from 10 am on Monday.

Hijam Linthoingami (17) and Phijam Hemjit (20), both Meiteis, went missing on July 6 this year. Photos of their bodies surfaced on September 25, leading to violent protests.

The four who have been arrested are all Kukis. "We have arrested four persons identified as Paominlun Haokip, S Malsawn Haokip, Lhingneichong Baite and Tinnelthing Henthang. CBI had registered two cases on August 23 on the request of the Manipur government and took over the investigation of these cases earlier registered by the

State police on the complaints of parents of minor victim. During the investigation of these cases, four persons have been arrested," a CBI spokesperson said.

"The arrested accused will be produced before the competent court in Guwahati. Two minor children, who accompanied one of the arrested accused (who is their mother) during transit from Imphal to Guwahati, have been handed over to the district child protection officer, Kamrup, for their welfare, protection and care. No legal action has been taken against the minors," the spokesperson said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

AMID INDIA-CANADA ROW

India-US ties at all-time high, will touch moon, says Jaishankar

Says both countries see each other as 'very desirable, optimal' partners



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu at a diaspora event in Washington. PTI

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

DISPELLING APPREHENSION that the India-Canada diplomatic row may cast a shadow on India-US ties, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has emphasised that Delhi's relationship with Washington is at an "all-time high", and the two countries have moved to a position where they see each other as "very desirable, optimal and comfortable partners".

Addressing Indian-

Americans at the India House in Washington DC on Saturday, Jaishankar said that like the Chandrayaan mission, India-US ties "will go to the Moon, maybe even beyond". "India and the US earlier used to deal with each other, and now they work with each other," he said.

"There is one clear message today, that our relationship is at an all-time high. But as they say in America, you ain't seen anything yet. So, we are going to take this relationship to a different level, to a different place," he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



Storing energy in blocks: How gravity may solve green power's problem

After US & China, energy company in talks with India firms

ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

GRAVITY IS emerging as the best bet in solving renewable energy's biggest problem — intermittency. As countries step up renewable energy capacity addition, there is growing urgency to develop long-duration energy storage systems that could be installed alongside green power generation to balance out the variability in renewable power, given that green generation is

not always in sync with the electricity demand cycle.

Energy Vault, a developer of utility-scale storage technology backed by Japan's SoftBank Group and the venture arm of Saudi Aramco, is offering a solution that promises to deploy utility-scale energy storage solutions, including proprietary gravity-based storage, to plug this gap.

Mimicking the broad attributes of pumped hydroelectric plants, which use moving water to store and discharge power,

Energy Vault's proprietary 'EVx' platform utilises gravity and a mechanical elevator system to stack 35-tonne blocks made of a composite material at the top of a towering structure.

When the electricity demand is low, the elevator uses surplus electricity from the grid or electricity generated by renewable plants, to raise these blocks and line them up at the top of the structure. When electricity demand picks up, the blocks are then lowered one by one, releasing

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31 yrs later, TN village gathers to recall day of horror, find closure after HC verdict

PAGE 1
ANCHOR

ARUN JANARDHANAN
VACHATHI (DHARMAPURI),
OCTOBER 1

THE WOUNDS on their bodies may have healed but memories of their ordeal on June 20, 1992, when a large contingent of police, forest and revenue officials swooped on their village and unleashed terror — raping their women and destroying their



Vachathi residents at the banyan tree near which the village's women were rounded up on June 20, 1992. Arun Janardhanan

homes — are still fresh.

On Friday, the Madras High Court dismissed all appeals and upheld a sessions court order that found 215 people, mostly from the police and forest departments, guilty of the atrocities, including rape of 18 women, during a raid in Vachathi, a tribal village located in a forest area of Dharmapuri district, around 300 km from Chennai.

A day after the verdict, the village gathered under a generations-old banyan tree, a silent witness to the atrocities and the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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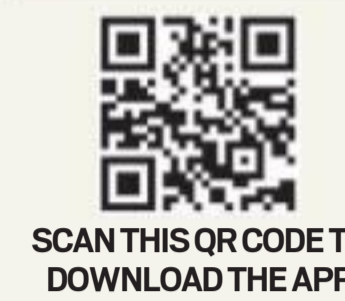
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FROM CHAOS TO VICTORY: THE BATTLE OF CAMPERDOWN'S ENDURING IMPACT AND DEBATE ON HISTORICAL ACCURACY

On Oct. 11, 1797, off the Dutch coast, saw Admiral Duncan's British Fleet against Vice-Admiral de Winter's Batavian Navy. How does Philip James de Loutherbourg's painting prompt relevance and accuracy questions?

ENTERTAINMENT



THE ANATOMY OF KG GEORGE'S IRAKAL

Exploring how wealth, patriarchy, power and crimes are inseparable



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EXPRESS AUDIO

Gautam Bhatia on the state of top courts under the Modi era

In *The Sandip Roy Show*, the host speaks to lawyer and constitutional scholar Gautam Bhatia regarding his latest book, 'Unsealed Covers,' and what the past decade of India's top court decisions reveals about the country's trajectory.

FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

● Kargil's first council polls since '19

members. In the outgoing council, while the NC had 10 members, the Congress had 8 and Independents 5.

"BJP ne kya nahin toda," said Akhooon Shujaat, owner of a tea stall in the main market at Drass, referring to the splitting of the former state into two UTs "and the state of the rest of the country".

This year, there are 85 candidates in the fray for the 26 constituencies, the voting for which will be conducted through EVMs — in a first for the council elections.

After a long-drawn court battle over retaining their party symbol, which delayed the polls originally scheduled for September, 17 candidates from the NC have filed nominations. While the Congress has 22 candidates in the fray, the AAP has four candidates. Also in the contest are 25 independents.

While the NC and Congress have a seat-sharing arrangement in the region, members of both parties said it has been limited to areas where there is a tougher contest with the BJP while in other areas they have fielded their respective candidates.

The biggest grouse for Kargil at the moment is a weakening of its administrative set-up and the diminishing role for its autonomous hill council.

Mubarak Shah Nagvi, the NC councillor contesting for a second term from Ranbirpora seat in Drass, said in the past while the councils drew and monitored all developmental plans, they also executed central schemes for the Government of India. "Now, with the UT administration becoming the overarching authority for all

developmental works, funds that were earlier carried on or could be kept aside from one financial year to the next, are lapsing year after year," he said.

Nagvi said while Leh has made inclusion under the Sixth Schedule the main focus of its politics, "the people of Drass want statehood, ideally, statehood as it existed on August 4, 2019, with Ladakh as part of the state of J&K".

For three years since 2019, protests have dominated the streets of Kargil. After the initial outpouring, the protests became a regular feature every Friday, demanding a rollback of the bifurcation of J&K. The Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) was constituted in 2020 as a socio-political group to represent the people of Kargil. The KDA and Leh-based Apex Body have come together to negotiate the region's demands with the Centre. "Development with dignity and identity is the main focus for us in this election," said Sajad Kargili, a member of the KDA.

In his campaigning, BJP MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal has touted the success of central schemes in Ladakh as well as the infrastructure push by the Centre.

Former CM Omar Abdullah, who is leading the NC's campaign, said on Saturday that this election is an opportunity to "accept or reject" the decisions of August 5, 2019. "What was given to Kargil after 5th August 2019? I laid the foundation stone of Zojila tunnel with Rahul Gandhi, transmission line, power house and whatever other projects there are, they are all before 2019. After 2019 nothing new came here but only loss."

● 4 held for killing of 2 in Manipur

Earlier in the day, briefing the media on the arrests, the Chief Minister had said the accused were nabbed from Henglep area of Churachandpur district in a joint operation by the CBI and a team of state and Central forces.

"Since violence rekindled across the valley district, a team led by CBI special director, with the help of state and Central forces, had been conducting a series of operations to nab the culprits. The State will not leave any stone unturned to track down others who may be involved in the students' killing, and ensure that a befitting punishment is given to all," he said.

Meanwhile, Kuki-Zomi organisations demanded the release all the arrested within 48 hours. They threatened a "more intense agitation" in "all hill districts of Manipur" if the accused are not released.

The Joint Students' Body — a

federation of various Kuki-Zomi student organisations — claimed that the accused had been "abducted" from the area between Kangvai and Molhoi villages while they were on their way to Churachandpur on Sunday morning.

They threatened that "in the future, any person with arms and moving around in plainclothes will be stopped and action will be taken against them", and appealed to the public to "take action... as they see fit" if they see people in plainclothes "behaving in a suspicious manner."

"We would also like to voice our frustration at the selective targeting of Kuki-Zomi-Mizo people in the investigation of cases by even central agencies. We will oppose the biased selection of police cases involving our people while the numerous cases of heinous crimes against our people are left behind," they said.

● 31 years later, Tamil Nadu village gathers to recall day of horror, find closure after High Court verdict

struggle that followed, to recount their emotional journey, and to mark a sense of closure although it took over 31 years to come.

According to the villagers, the raiding party entered the village under the pretext of a crackdown on sandalwood smuggling.

"Around 11 am on June 20, 1992, they entered our village, damaging homes and contaminating our water. By 5 pm, they gathered about 200 women under the banyan tree, and hand-picked 18 of us and led us to the nearby lake, under the pretext of retrieving hidden sandalwood logs," one of the rape survivors told *The Indian Express*, standing under the same tree.

"They stopped the women of-ficers who volunteered to come with us. The abuse lasted till around 9 pm near the lake. Subsequently, we were taken to Salem Central Prison, where we spent three months," she said, her voice trembling with years of stifled pain.

Although it took years, the High Court's verdict has come as a

ray of hope for some. "With this verdict, there's a new-found purpose in our lives. Perhaps, we fought this battle for our future generations, to uphold their dignity," said another rape survivor.

In his order, Justice P Velmurugan also directed the Tamil Nadu government to immediately release Rs 10 lakh compensation to each of the rape survivors as ordered by a division bench in 2016, and recover 50% of the amount from the convicts.

The long journey to justice, to see the perpetrators being held accountable, however, has had its effect. One of the survivors said: "What is justice? That idea probably helped us fight the case. But is that really a true word, truly authentic?"

"Of the 18, 15 of us were not married, in our tender age of 16 or 17... we faced severe societal prejudice. The village got a stigma. Eventually, we got married to close relatives," she said.

She also spoke about the delayed medical examinations, which were conducted "two years

India-US ties at all-time high, says Jaishankar

"In this changing world, I would say today that India and the US have moved to a position where we see each other as very desirable, optimal and comfortable partners with whom it's a natural instinct today to pick up the phone, or if you meet someone, and have a natural conversation," he said.

He said the human bond between the two countries makes the bilateral relationship unique. "Countries do business with each other. Countries do politics with each other. They have military ties, they do exercises, and they have cultural exchanges. But when two countries have that deep human bonding, that's a completely different ballgame. That is today the defining characteristic of our relationship," he said.

He said while people remember the US visits of former Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi in 1985 and Manmohan Singh in 2005, as well as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's several visits in the past, Modi's state visit in June was "different". "It was different in optics, and if you ask me what has changed, I would say India and the US earlier used to deal with each other and now they work

with each other," he said. Jaishankar's comments hold significance amid the recent developments.

First, India-US ties have survived the strain since the Russia-Ukraine war, with the two sides cooperating to arrive at a joint communiqué at the G20 leaders' summit last month.

Jaishankar said the success of the G20 Summit could not have been possible without the support of the US. "As the host, when things go well, the host always gets the credit. It's reasonable. But, the G20 could not have come together if all the members did not work for its success," he said.

"The contribution, support and understanding that we got from the US to make a successful G20, I think that is something I would certainly like to recognise in public in Washington DC," he said, amid applause from the audience.

"So, it may have been our success in a literal way, but I think it was the G20 (countries)' success. To me, it was also a success of the India-US partnership... please keep giving this partnership the support it needs, the support it deserves and the support it expects. And I can promise you that

this relationship, like the Chandrayaan, will go to the Moon, maybe even beyond," he said.

Second, the India-Canada diplomatic row had threatened to put a strain on India-US ties, but Delhi and Washington have been careful about not talking at each other — unlike what has been happening between Delhi and Ottawa.

While Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has alleged a "potential link" between the Indian government and the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, India has rejected the allegation as "absurd" and "motivated".

Ever since the diplomatic standoff began, at least five senior US officials and diplomats — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby, US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti and US Ambassador to Canada David Cohen — have made measured public statements, with a nuanced message for both sides. In short, asking Delhi to cooperate, but also asking Ottawa to not jump the gun.

● Storing energy in blocks: How gravity may solve green power's problem

kinetic energy that is used to rotate a motor and generate electricity, which can then be pumped back to the grid.

While it does have similarities to a high school science project, this type of energy storage could be an innovative solution for countries, including India, that are transitioning to clean energy, as it can solve the biggest impediments to wider deployment of renewable generation — the ability for power companies to store energy for use by consumer when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing.

The NYSE-listed company, dual-headquartered in Westlake Village, California, and Lugano, Switzerland, is currently in the process of installing its EVx long-duration gravity-based energy storage solutions in China and the US. It is in talks with NTPC Ltd, India's biggest generation utility, Mumbai-based Tata Power and green energy company ReNew Power for collaborations.

From a focus on long-term storage, the company has shifted sights on short-term storage too, alongside a focus on utilising eco-friendly materials with the ability to integrate waste materials for beneficial reuse, that could facilitate the shift to a circular economy while ensuring clean energy

transition, Robert Piconi, Chairman, Co-Founder and CEO, Energy Vault told *The Indian Express*. Alongside its gravity-based systems, it is also offering battery storage for short-term storage use, and green hydrogen energy storage technologies in the longer term.

NTPC had signed an MoU last year for a long-term strategic partnership for the deployment of Energy Vault's EVx energy storage technology and software solutions. Piconi said that Energy Vault's mission "is to make sustainable, carbon free energy a reality", and so an expansion into India, one of the largest global markets for energy, was inevitable. He also said that India's push for deployment of largescale renewable power makes storage a prerequisite to support this expansion. The company is in the process of establishing a base in Bengaluru.

While attempts are being made to repurpose lithium-ion batteries to meet some of the need for storage, including Tesla's famed Powerwall prototype, largescale deployment of these batteries for energy storage poses multiple problems. So entrepreneurs around the world have been looking for alternatives, which, apart from the innovation

by Energy Vault, include ongoing work on reversible sulfur power-plants, projects involving water being pumped underground, and leveraging cryogenic technology — all with the objective of storing surplus renewable energy. But most of these are in the early prototype stage or still on the drawing boards.

Currently, about 96 per cent of the world's energy storage comes from pumped hydro — a hydroelectric project where excess energy on the grid is used to pump water uphill to a high elevation reservoir and when there is energy demand, the water is released, driving a turbine as it flows into a reservoir below.

In India, grid managers are already grappling with the challenge of operationally sustaining a massive monthly addition of an average 1,000 megawatt — almost five times the amount of power a 250 MWe nuclear plant produces — from renewables to the electricity grid.

Policy makers are of the view that New Delhi needs to expeditiously work on developing viable energy storage options in a country that is the world's third largest producer of renewable energy; nearly 40 per cent of installed electricity capacity comes from non-fossil fuel sources. This green

push has resulted in a 24 per cent reduction in emission intensity of GDP between 2005 and 2016, but it has also thrown up challenges of a grid being increasingly powered by renewables.

There are two alternatives being considered by the government for now: hydrogen and hybrid generation models blended with off-stream pumped storage. In 2023, as the hidden challenges of the renewable energy transition are likely to manifest more concretely, the government is making a renewed push on both technologies.

In September, Union Power Minister R K Singh said the government will soon accept bids for the construction of a 100MW round-the-clock clean energy system, backed by storage. A policy for stepping up green hydrogen production and tapping into its potential as a fuel was cleared by the Cabinet last year. The Union Power Ministry had also wrapped up a survey of all pumped hydro sites, and hydro PSUs had been given a target of taking up pumped hydro schemes.

The ministry had also written to the Union Coal Ministry to consider the option of opencast mines as potential sites for pumped hydro in the future.

● India's medal haul on track

first athletics gold medal of the Hangzhou Asiad, a staggering 4.25 seconds faster than the second-placed Japanese Aoki Ryoma.

Sable's gold was the first of a busy yet glorious evening where Indian athletes finished on the podium in each of the 8 medal events that took place.

Track and field on a Games night is like an orchestra where the sounds of instruments, each sounding so different, blend beautifully to form the perfect symphony. Rich, expressive and full of emotions. The stage for this musical is the sprawling field of play. The instruments, athletes. Jumpers stretching their limbs and lunging in one corner; throwers rolling their arms; distance runners and sprinters jogging up and down the track. All warming up for their act to begin.

On China's National Day, the Indian anthem played twice as shot putter Tajinder Toor defended the title he won five years ago with some flourish.

"My wife asked me to bring her gold," he laughed. "Only gold." He very nearly could not. Favourite to win the title, Toor had a wobbly start. He could not land a legal throw in his first two attempts, as Bahrain's Mahmoud Abdelrehman raced into the lead with a first throw of 19.67m.

When Saudi Arabia's Mohamed Daouda Tolo and China's Liu Yang managed bigger marks of 19.93m and 19.97m in their third and fourth attempts, respectively, it looked game over for Toor, especially after he fouled his fifth throw. But in his last attempt, he mustered all the strength he could to hurl the iron ball a massive 20.36m away to win the gold.

India clinching the first two gold medals of the evening got the Chinese spectators restless and their athletes responded to pressure, winning four titles — in men's long jump, women's discus throw, heptathlon and women's 100m hurdles.

The Indians made their rivals work hard. Murali Sreeshankar, who like Toor was slow off the blocks, recorded a jump of 8m or more in each of his four valid attempts to keep pushing Jjianan

Wang before settling for a silver. In discus, Seema Punia finished behind two Chinese throwers who were a class apart, especially gold medalist Feng Bin, who threw a Games record 67.93m, nearly 10m more than Punia whose best was 58.62m.

As the action kept alternating between track events and field, Ajay Saroj exploded in the final 200m of an exhilarating 1,500m run to beat his teammate Jinson Johnson in the race for a silver medal. Saroj lay flat on the track after his sprint to the finish line as the Indian duo managed a silver-bronze finish.

Like Saroj, Harmilan Bains shifted gears towards the end to claim the 1,500m women's silver while Nandini Agasara won the heptathlon bronze. The night ended with Jyothi Yarraji's controversial but scintillating run to clinch the 100m hurdles silver.

Few, though, dominated their event from start to finish as strongly as Sable. Often falling into the trap of running the race set up by his opponents in terms of pace and strategy, and with the World Championship failure still haunting him, Sable course-corrected in a field where he was the tallest figure. Moments after the race began, he went around the outside to overtake the pack and ran the race on his terms.

"I did not want to repeat the same things I had done before," he said. And so, he took off. By the half-way stage of the 7-lap race, Sable had opened up almost a 200m gap between him and the rest. He realised how far he'd run ahead of the others only when he looked at the giant screen after five laps. "I noticed I had a big lead. That's when I relaxed a little."

He strolled past the finish line with a time that was way below his national record of 8 minutes, 11.40 seconds. But Sable wasn't obsessed with that mark. He came into the race with the goal of winning it, timing being secondary. As he crossed the tape, the chant, "Indo, jiyau!" — "Come on, India!" reverberated around the stadium.

He looked at the big screen. The euphoric wave, he knew, was for him.

● Afghan Embassy shuts ops in Delhi

"We acknowledge our shortcomings in meeting the expectations and requirements necessary to serve the best interests of Afghanistan and its citizens due to the lack of diplomatic support in India and the absence of a legitimate functioning government in Kabul," it said. "The lack of timely and sufficient support, from visa renewal for diplomats to other critical areas of cooperation, led to an understandable frustration among our team and impeded our ability to carry out routine duties effectively."

The statement also said that due to unforeseen and unfortunate circumstances, there has been a significant reduction in both personnel and resources available to it, making it increasingly challenging to continue operations. Given these circumstances, "it is with deep regret that we have taken the difficult decision to close all operations of the mission with the exception of emergency consular services to Afghan citizens till the transfer of the custodial authority of the mission to the host country," it said.

The Afghan Embassy said it was taking this step in the best interest of the people of Afghanistan. In accordance with Article 45 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961), all property and facilities of the Embassy will be transferred to the custodial authority of the host country, it said.

Earlier, while saying that the Afghan Embassy had issued a communication on shutting down its operations, sources in the Indian government had pointed to "the Ambassador being out of India for the past many

months, steady departure of diplomats to third countries reportedly after receiving asylum, as well as reports of infighting amongst Embassy personnel".

In its three-page statement on Saturday, the Afghan Embassy denied "baseless claims" regarding internal strife or discord amongst its diplomatic staff, and diplomats using the crisis to seek asylum in a third country. "Such rumours are unfounded and do not reflect the reality of our mission," it said.

It said it would like to verify the "authenticity" of an earlier communication with India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) regarding the intent to close the mission. "This communication accurately represents our decision-making process and the factors leading to the closure," the statement said.

"We request the Government of India to give serious consideration to the four requests outlined in the official note verbally submitted earlier. Specifically, we emphasise the importance of permitting the hoisting of the Afghan flag over the properties of our premises, as well as facilitating the smooth transition of the mission's buildings and assets to a legitimate government in Kabul in the future," it said.

The development comes months after a power struggle began at the Afghan Embassy in Delhi, as Ambassador Farid Mamundzay, appointed by the previous Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, battled to remain in office, in defiance of the Taliban-run Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul. The Taliban regime has taken control of at least 14 missions abroad, but Delhi is not one of them yet.

AT PARK IN GHAZIABAD

Out with fiancée, woman 'sexually harassed' by three men, including cop

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GHAZIABAD, OCTOBER 1

A 22-YEAR-OLD woman who was out for a walk with her fiancée at a park in Ghaziabad was allegedly sexually harassed and threatened by a constable, a home guard and an unidentified man last month, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place on September 16 around 12 pm, when two people reached the park in a Police Response Vehicle (PRV) and threatened the couple, slapped the man, and demanded money from the woman, a senior police officer told mediapersons.

An FIR was registered on September 28 on the basis of the woman's complaint, the officer said. The police identified two of the accused as Digamber (consta-

2 people who came in a police bike allegedly threatened the couple, slapped the man, and demanded money from the woman

ble) and Rakesh Kumar (home guard).

A search is on for all the three accused, he added.

In her complaint, the woman said, "Two policemen and another person in plain clothes came on a PRV bike and started threatening us. They slapped my fiancée and demanded Rs.10,000 from us. We apologised and even bowed down at their feet, but to no avail."

"One person tried to force me to have a physical relationship

with him. The third person demanded Rs 5.6 lakh. They forced us to stay there [at the park] for three hours, said inappropriate things to me and touched me inappropriately. They forced me to send Rs 1,000 through an online transaction. On September 19, I received a call from one of the accused (Rakesh Kumar) and have a recording of that conversation," she told the police. She added that on September 22, two of the accused reached her residence and returned Rs 1,000.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Kotwali Range) Nimish Patil said, "Constable Digamber has been suspended. The police have written to the department seeking action against home guard Rakesh Kumar."

A case under various IPC sections has been lodged.

Thousands protest at Ramlila Maidan to demand restoration of OPS; find support in Opp parties

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

WITH ASSEMBLY polls scheduled in several states and Lok Sabha polls next year, thousands of government employees from Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, and other states gathered at Ramlila Maidan Sunday urging the BJP-led Centre to reinstate the Old Pension Scheme before the polls, "else it will lose several voters".

Thousands of government employees — teachers, doctors, clerks, peons — and those working in PSUs participated in the "Pension Shankhanaad Rally", organised by National Movement for Old Pension Scheme (NMOPS).

Suresh Singh Baghel, a headmaster, from Bhadohi, UP, said last elections, several BJP leaders sought votes on the basis of implementing the OPS, but it was not brought back. "My salary is Rs 70,000 per month and post-retirement, I would get 50 percent of my salary as a monthly pension



At the 'Pension Shankhanaad Rally' on Sunday. Amit Mehra

But under the new scheme, we will get Rs 2000-2500 only."

Another UP teacher Dinesh Chandra Yadav said, "The NPS scheme is nothing but privatisation. We work for the government all our life and expect to get what

is our right...My vote will be purely based on the re-implementation of the OPS."

The rally also saw people from Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh where the Congress government has reverted to the Old scheme.

Supporting the rights of employees, Opposition members from the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party, who are part of the INDIA Block, extended their support to the protest.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

posted on X (formerly Twitter), "We strongly support the demand of government employees to bring back OPS...We have implemented OPS in Punjab and have written to Centre for implementing it for Del govt employees..."

The Congress, which won the Himachal elections and promised to bring back the OPS, wrote on X, "Old pension is the right of the employees. Congress government has restored the old pension. Our policy regarding this is very clear. Employees must get their rights..."

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) chief Arvinder Singh Lovely assured the protesters of his party's support. "This ground has seen several revolutions and the Congress has and will support government employees. There are governments that have sought votes on the basis of bringing back the OPS, but they forget the promise...But Congress stood by its promise and reversed the policy in HP, Karnataka and other states..." he said. He also promised to regularise the contractual teachers.

10 years after wife's suicide, man acquitted in dowry case

NIRBHAY THAKUR
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

ALMOST 10 years after his wife died by suicide, a Delhi court acquitted a doctor charged with death due to dowry demands, and cruelty.

"In view of the material inconsistencies in the testimony of the prosecution witnesses and due to the lack of cogent evidence...this court is of the view that the prosecution has miserably failed to prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt," said Additional Sessions Judge Vishal Pahuja of Saket Court while acquitting the accused on September 27.

The father of the deceased had alleged that his daughter was being harassed for "bringing insufficient dowry". He further alleged that the groom's mother and sis-

ter also demanded dowry from him.

The Additional Public Prosecutor argued the prosecution witnesses had proved a case of offences under section 498A/304A/306 IPC beyond doubt. The counsels of the accused, though, argued the woman was "not over her previous relationship", adding she was facing issues with impulsivity, adding she had been prescribed medication by a psychiatrist for the same.

According to the court, the prosecution was required to establish that the woman was subjected to cruelty or harassment in relation to the demand for dowry. It further had to prove that the death occurred due to unnatural circumstances within seven years of marriage. While the prosecution was able to prove the latter, the former couldn't be proven.

'Rs 30 cr overspent': Atishi directs graft probe in construction of Covid Centre

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

VIGILANCE MINISTER Atishi has directed the Chief Secretary to undertake an investigation into a matter of alleged corruption pertaining to the construction of Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre, stating that Rs 30 crore were overspent to construct the temporary hospital during the pandemic.

In her note to CS Naresh Kumar, who is also the chief vigilance officer, Atishi stated that it is clear there is some form of collusion between the private company, PWD officers and revenue officials.

Citing a writ petition filed in the matter in the Delhi High Court between the Contractor Balaji Exims versus the Public



Atishi said HC directed the CS to examine the matter

Works Department (PWD), GNCTD, the Minister in her note to Kumar said, "A detailed perusal of the records of the case raises strong suspicion of corrupt practices, underhand transactions, and cronyism which are completely antithetical to good governance. It appears that the petitioner firm and senior officials of the GNCTD have colluded in the

matter of setting up of a makeshift COVID care facility, and a strong suspicion arises that the officials may have received kickbacks from the firm for awarding it the tender to carry out the concerned works."

She also mentioned that while hearing the writ petition, the HC in March had directed the CS to examine the matter, following which a committee of three senior officers, submitted its findings and recommendations in a report dated April 4, 2023, which took into consideration statements by various officers/officials, WhatsApp chat transcripts, photographs, etc. "I have perused the report and found some glaring discrepancies in the entire process, which raise serious questions regarding engagement of the firm....," read her note.

गांधी स्मृति
(तीस जनवरी मार्ग)
महात्मा गांधी की 154वीं जयंती
अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय अहिंसा दिवस
2 अक्टूबर, 2023, सायं 3 बजे
सर्वधर्म प्रार्थना सभा एवं विद्या शाह द्वारा भक्ति संगीत
मुख्य अतिथि: भारत की राष्ट्रपति श्रीमती द्रौपदी मुर्मू
सानिध्य: भारत के उपराष्ट्रपति श्री जगदीप धनखड़
निवेदक: विजय गोयल
उपाध्यक्ष, गांधी स्मृति एवं दर्शन समिति
पुर्व केन्द्रीय मंत्री
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(प्रवेश निशुल्क पर है)

2 October
Nation pays tribute to
Gandhi ji
and
Shastri ji
on their Birth Anniversary

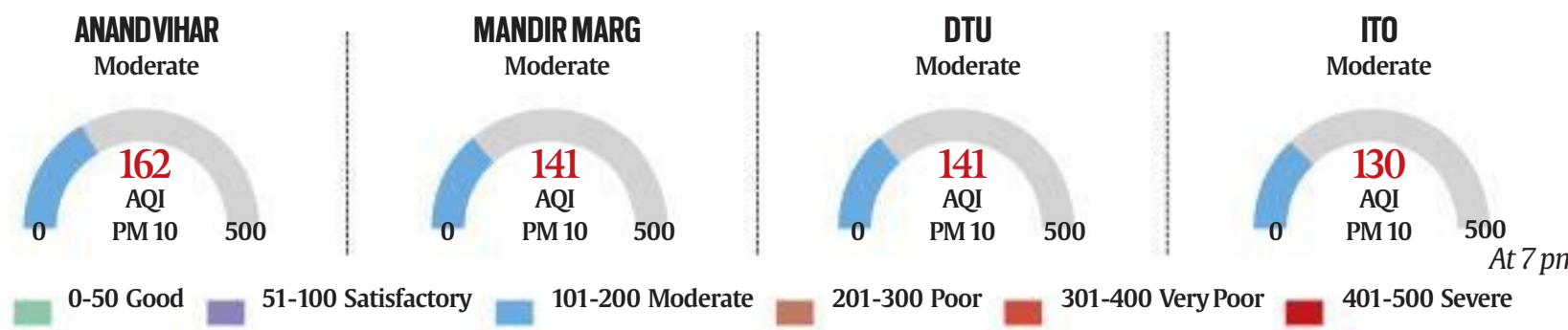
Mahatma Gandhi ji's thoughts have inspired the entire world. Bapu's speciality was to connect with people and make them connected with him. In the same way, Lal Bahadur Shastri ji will always be remembered for his tough leadership at a very crucial time of our history.
- Narendra Modi

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4 THE CITY



SKY WATCH

FORECAST: October 2
Mainly clear sky. Mist in the morning.

MAX: 35 | **MIN: 22**
0.3°C above normal | 1.3°C below normal

BRIEFLY

2 men killed, others injured during fight in Bhalswa Dairy

New Delhi: Two men were killed, while another suffered injuries in a gang war in Outer Delhi's Bhalswa Dairy area. The Delhi Police said that the two parties fought over a conversation with a girl. No arrests have been made in the case. As per the police, they received a call about the incident on Saturday night around 9.45 pm. Police rushed to Samta Vihar and found a man's body lying near a drain. The man was identified as Himanshu (21). Police said two other injured men were found lying nearby. All of them were taken to BJRM Hospital. Ravi Kr Singh, DCP (Outernorth) said, "The investigating officer reached the hospital where it was found that one of the injured, Azad (18), also succumbed to his injuries. His elder brother, Virender (21) who was also injured was undergoing treatment." Vinod later told the police that his brother Azad fought with a boy named Hemu on Friday. **ENS**

Woman killed in Noida home

Noida: A 23-year-old woman was found dead on Sunday morning, with serious injury marks on her head in Habibpur village of Ecotech-3 police station area in Gautam Buddha Nagar. The deceased has been identified as Pinky, a resident of the same village where the incident took place. "In the morning, we received the information that a woman has been murdered in Habibpur village. Other officials and field units reached the spot. The family members were also sleeping in the same room. We have recovered the body and it has been sent for the postmortem, after which the actual reason for the death will be clear," said Suniti, DCP (Central Noida). She further said the neighbours and tenants are being questioned. **ENS**

Rally against animal cruelty

New Delhi: People from different walks of life participated in a rally to raise voice against cruelty to animals at Jantar Mantar on the eve of the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. During the rally, signatures for a petition addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his attention on the issue were also collected, an official statement from the organisers said. The rally was organised by India Unites For Animal Rights, a citizen-led movement. As many as 43 NGOs and animal rights groups were part of the event. **PTI**

REMAINS RECOVERED IN OUTER DELHI

Two yrs after she went missing, cop held for murder of former constable

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

TWO YEARS ago, a 28-year-old former Delhi Police constable left her Paying Guest accommodation in Mukherjee Nagar presumably to meet someone. That was the last anyone saw of Monica Yadav, who had resigned from the Delhi Police to prepare for UPSC exams.

For more than a year after that, her family members were contacted on different occasions by a man claiming to be her boyfriend, Arvind, who told them that they had eloped and that Monica did not want to meet them. They could even hear Monica saying 'I don't want to meet you' on the call. But after a few months, they grew suspicious. In February 2023, Monica's sister approached the Delhi Police Commissioner during a Jan Sunwai session after which a case of kidnapping was registered and the matter transferred to Crime Branch. On Thursday, police arrested another constable, 42-year-old Surender Singh Rana in connection with the case. On Saturday, Rana led police to the spot in Outer Delhi where Monica's skeletal remains were found under a bed of rocks.

Rana had allegedly killed and dumped Monica's body near a drain in Pusta area, Alipur, after she rejected his overtures to enter into a relationship with him, police said. Rana was already married and suspected that Monica would tell his wife about his proposal, they added. Police said Monica considered Rana to be a "father figure".

HOW THE ACCUSED PLANNED AN ALMOST 'PERFECT MURDER'

THE ACCUSED
SURENDER SINGH RANA, 42, a constable with Delhi Police

THE VICTIM
Monica Yadav, 28, a former Delhi Police constable who had resigned to prepare for UPSC. She had also cleared the UP Police exam to become a sub-inspector

THE MOTIVE
Rana wanted Monica to start a relationship with him and was pressuring her into moving in with him. He was worried that Monica would reveal Rana's intentions before the latter's wife, said police.

THE PLAN
Rana invited Monica over on the pretext of meeting his family. They boarded an auto-rickshaw and got down at a deserted location in Alipur. Here, he strangled her and buried her body under small rocks.

THE COVER-UP

The most shocking part of the case is the lengths that Rana went to to throw police, and Monica's family members, off the scent:

ELOPEMENT: Rana concocted a story that she had eloped with her boyfriend, Arvind. Rana roped in his brother-in-law, Ravin, to pose as Arvind. Ravin would call Monica's family from different locations and inform them that she didn't want to meet them.

VOICE-RECORDING: Rana had a voice-recording of Monica saying 'I don't want to talk to you', which he

handed over to Ravin. It is this recording that Ravin would play each time Monica's kin expressed the wish to talk to her

HOTEL STAY: Ravin would hire different women to accompany him to different hotels in

Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh and pose as Monica. This way, the staff could also confirm

with the police that a young couple had stayed there.

FAKE AADHAAR: Ravin would leave fake Aadhaar copies of Monica and Arvind at the hotels for the police to find later.

COVID CERTIFICATE: Rana even managed to get a Covid vaccine certificate from a Delhi hospital to prove to the family that Monica was alive.

To throw Monica's family members and the police off the scent, Rana had chalked out an elaborate plan for which he roped in his brother-in-law Ravin. It was Ravin who posed as Monica's boyfriend, Arvind, and called her kin from different states, said police.

On September 8, 2021, Rana invited Monica over on the pretext of meeting his family.

An officer said, "He picked her up from her PG hostel... However, he took her to Alipur and asked the auto driver to drop them at a

deserted location. He then strangled her to death. To hide her body, he went near a drain and placed the body under a bed of rocks."

While the family lodged a missing report on September 20, Rana convinced them that she

had fled with Arvind.

Ravin, meanwhile, would hire women and take them to Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh, and make them pose as Monica, Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Ravindra Yadav said. "Rana had already provided Ravin with an old voice recording of Monica in which she can be heard as saying 'I don't want to talk to you'. They would play the recordings and pretend that Monica had fled with a man named Arvind and won't come back," said Yadav.

"Ravin would leave fake Aadhaar copies of Monica and Arvind at the hotels. When the police would come to check, they would find Monica's documents. The staff would also confirm that a young couple had stayed there," said Yadav.

However, what proved to be Rana's undoing was Monica's sister approaching the Delhi Police Commissioner.

A team formed under DCP Sanjay Bhatia found that Rana was in touch with the victim before she went missing. "The team looked into all the calls made to the deceased... One of these calls was traced to a SIM card which was issued on a fake name but carried the photo of a man named Rajpal. We found that Rajpal (33), a resident of Jhajjar, had got the SIM card using fake documents. He was caught from his residence," said the officer quoted above. During interrogation, Rajpal confessed that he had got a fake SIM card issued at the instance of Ravin. Police then picked up Ravin who pointed the cops towards Rana.

How a sister's resolve led police to the 'killer'



Police officials with accused Surender Singh Rana and his two accomplices. *Express*

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

UNTIL TWO years ago, Poornima Yadav led a regular life, working as a teacher at a government school in Hyderabad where she lived with her husband. But her life upended in September 2021, when she learnt that her younger sister, Monica, had gone missing. Soon, Poornima left her life behind and moved to Noida.

In the next two years, Poornima travelled across five different states, changed her job, suffered a miscarriage, and ultimately separated from her husband. What remained unchanged, though, was her dogged determination to find her sister. And it was this resolve that led Poornima to a Jan Sunwai where her appeal to the Police Commissioner led to the transfer of the case to the Crime Branch and the subsequent arrest of the main accused - Constable Surender Singh Rana, whom Monica fondly referred to as "Dadda" (father-figure).

Poornima said, "Monica was always a topper... She was highly educated with MA and B Ed degrees and JRF-NET qualification. She even cleared a UP Police exam

but left it all behind to pursue her dream of becoming an IAS officer."

Driving Monica's ambition was the desire to make her father, a UP Police officer who had lost his life in the line of duty a decade ago, proud. Poornima said Monica wanted to explore the world with her mother and siblings - two elder sisters and a younger brother. The family hails from Bulandshahr in UP.

Poornima said Monica was "obsessed" with her goal and would write "IAS Mona" wherever she could - be it a notebook or a poster on the wall.

After Monica went missing, Poornima began following any lead she could find, which, she said, took a toll on her health, causing a miscarriage.

The purported phone calls from Monica, in which she could be heard saying that she did not want to talk to her family, after her supposed elopement did not sit right with Poornima. "We would hear Monica's voice on the calls but she sounded angry and upset," said Poornima. Monica and Poornima's brother-in-law, who is married to their eldest sister, said, "We were always suspicious of him (Rana) because we knew Monica wouldn't sever ties with us over some boy."

Lead-acid batteries, passenger overload: Issues that plague Capital's e-rickshaws

MALLICA JOSHI & JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 30

OUT OF the nearly one lakh e-rickshaws that continue to mushroom across the capital unabated, a majority are running on old and relatively unsafe lead acid batteries, according to officials in the Delhi government.

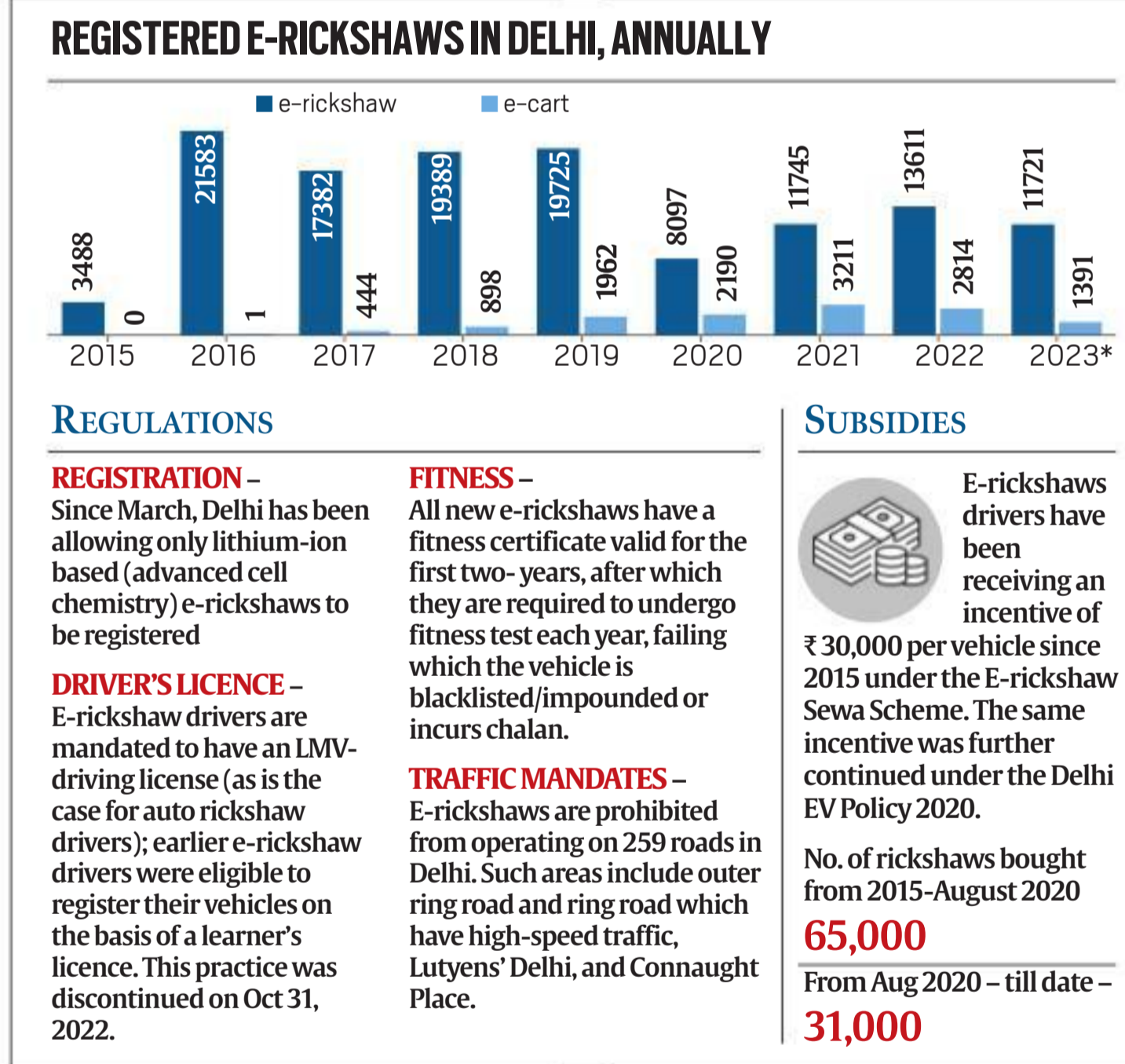
A preferred mode of travel for last-mile connectivity, e-rickshaws are marred by several issues including overloading and non-adherence to laws, agencies such as Transport Department and Traffic Police said.

Two weeks back, a woman died of burn injuries after the e-rickshaw she was travelling in burst into flames following a suspected battery malfunction.

According to sources in the Delhi government, the case underscored the need to rein in such vehicles, especially in light of estimates that only a little over 20% of the e-rickshaws registered in 2023 operate on lithium-ion batteries, which are considered safer than the lead acid variety.

From just 3,348 in 2015, the total number of e-rickshaws registered in the city over the last almost nine years stands at over 1.26 lakh, as per Transport Department records. Due to various violations, as many as 32,000 such vehicles were de-registered during the same period, still leaving almost 95,000 of them to ply on most of Delhi's streets.

E-carts have, in step with e-rickshaws, proliferated as well with almost 13,000 currently reg-



istered and operating in the city. According to government sources, these too function predominantly on lead acid batteries.

Senior Delhi government official said the Vaahan Dashboard, which is the Government of India's official portal to track vehicle registrations, doesn't capture the data on the battery type of the e-rickshaw. "However, based on conversations with a few leading

e-rickshaw manufacturers, it can be learned that the registration of lithium-battery e-rickshaws was a meagre 2% in 2020, about 4% in 2021, and 7-8% in 2022. So far, for 2023, the share of lithium e-rickshaws is over 21%," the official said.

Sources from the Traffic Police said the relatively unsafe lead acid batteries, which a majority of e-rickshaws were operating on,

SUBSIDIES

E-rickshaws drivers have been receiving an incentive of ₹ 30,000 per vehicle since 2015 under the E-rickshaw Sewa Scheme. The same incentive was further continued under the Delhi EV Policy 2020.

No. of rickshaws bought from 2015-August 2020: **65,000**
From Aug 2020 - till date - **31,000**

'Swachhhta Hi Sewa': Cleanliness drive held in over 500 locations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

CLEANLINESS DRIVES were carried out in over 500 locations on Sunday as part of "Swachhhta Hi Sewa" campaign which saw several MPs, MLAs, and area councilors joining members of Residents Welfare Associations (RWAs) along with market and traders' bodies to clean their surroundings.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) organised an hour-long 'shramdaan' from 10 am to 11 am, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for "Ek Tareekh, Ek Ghanta, Ek Saath".

Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena also participated in the drive, starting from East Delhi's Shahadra drain. He was accompanied by the Chief Secretary, MCD Commissioner, and Secretary, Irrigation and Flood Control Department.

Saxena said the work to clean

and beautify Delhi will continue along the lines of the revamp that took place in the run-up to the G-20 summit.

The L-G started the cleanliness drive by removing silt from the Shahadra drain. He then inspected other areas such as Kanti Nagar-Bihari Colony to Bholanath Nagar, Farsh Bazar, Vishwas Nagar, East Azad Nagar Metro Station, and Krishna Nagar Metro Station.

All wings of the MCD participated in the hour-long activities, as part of the mega cleanliness drive being undertaken across the nation, on the eve of the 154th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Various cleanliness activities were held across all 12 zones and schools, hospitals and other establishments. Principals, teachers, safai karmacharis and other staff of all 1,534 MCD schools participated in 'shramdaan' activities, within school premises, a statement issued by MCD said.

Metro Morphosis: A transit system that became synonymous with Delhi

UPASIKA SINGHAL
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

NITIKA ARORA recalls how her relationship with Delhi has blossomed over the years. The way she looks at her career and even how she spends her leisure time in the city is closely correlated with the expansion of the metro system in the city.

"In 1998, when I was still a college student, I wanted to take up an evening course in Mandi House," Arora recalls. "But I had to ultimately drop the plan. The classes would end late and it was too unsafe to travel," she said. When the Metro began its operations in 2004, Arora recalls how



While Metro has brought about growth to the city, it has done so, in some cases, at the cost of Delhi's long history and legacy.

taken back by the efficiency of everything - the lines, the officials, the trains. Even the project had

people of Delhi more civil over time.

Yet, the metro did much more. It connected parts of the city considered too remote, and also acted as a social leveler. Women, too, feel safe to wear clothes otherwise considered too risqué for other modes of public transport. Arora shows a small clip from the movie Delhi-6 where Abhishek Bacchan walks around freely in the city, juxtaposed with Sonam Kapoor's brisk walk to the metro in her demure salwar-kameez. But the moment she reaches the metro station, she dons a backless, sleeveless top, a bandana and a glittery belt showing off her torso.

However, while the metro has

brought about development and growth to the city, it has done so, in some cases, at the cost of Delhi's long history and legacy. The New Amar Talkies, a famous cinema hall near Ajmeri Gate was razed to build Chawri Bazaar metro station in its stead. New Amar was an essential part of Old Delhi's history where sex workers frequented to see movies. According to Arora, the cinema would see record crowds on days it would screen movies with strong female leads such as Mother India.

Similarly, in 2010, when the Violet Line was being constructed it was met with raucous protests by RWAs in the area. Their concern was that with the line and

the stations running so close to their housing complexes, it would lead to people being able to peek into their drawing rooms. It would also lead to the densification of traffic, with autos and e-rickshaws crowding near the metro gates. While the metro authorities would not be able to fix the densification, they did erect high barriers on all elevated Violet Line stations to prevent people from looking out into people's homes.

The metro also purportedly

almost obstructed the view of the Qutub Minar on the city's skyline. According to Sadana, the Delhi Urban Art Commission had appealed to the Archaeological Survey of India to order the DMRC to reroute the elevated line. The DMRC first dug its heels in but when shown how the Kolkata Metro had destroyed the historic Chowringhee Lane, the metro body relented. And the result? A reroute costing the project an extra 300 crore rupees and giving the commuters a beautiful, unobstructed view of the Ghurid minaret.



ADVERTORIAL



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Redressal of complaints against entities regulated by RBI

Reserve Bank – Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2021
Reserve Bank – Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2021 (RB-IOS; Scheme) covers banks, non-banking financial companies, non-bank system participants and Credit Information Companies (CICs)*.

The RB-IOS provides cost-free alternate grievance redress of customer complaints involving deficiency in services rendered by the Regulated Entities (REs) of RBI, if not resolved to the satisfaction of the customers or not replied within a period of 30 days by the RE.

Receipt of complaint has been Centralised. Complaint against an RE can be filed through one of the following modes:

- i. Online - through the Complaint Management System (CMS) portal of RBI on <https://cms.rbi.org.in> → File a complaint
- ii. Physical complaint (letter/post) in the form as specified in Annexure 'A' in the RB-IOS to "Centralised Receipt and Processing Centre, 4th Floor, Reserve Bank of India, Sector -17, Central Vista, Chandigarh – 160017"

For more information including names of entities covered under RB-IOS, please visit <https://cms.rbi.org.in> or contact on toll-free number – 14448 (8.00 am to 10.00 pm for Hindi and English and 9:30 am to 5:15 pm for 10 other regional languages i.e., Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil and Telugu), available on all weekdays except national holidays.

Important Information

1. Before lodging any complaint under the RB-IOS, the complainant must approach the concerned bank/NBFC/Payment System Participant/CIC (together known as RE) with the grievance.
2. If the grievance is not redressed within 30 days or if complainant is not satisfied with the reply given by the RE, he/she can approach the RBI-Ombudsman.
3. The complainant MUST indicate his/ her name, address and present contact number and email in the written complaint.

*Complaints received at RBI against the REs not covered under the RB-IOS are redressed by the Consumer Education and Protection Cells (CEPCs) of RBI.

Indian Outbound Travel Boom: VFS Global Alerts Applicants About Visa Frauds

SCAMSTERS AND FRAUDULENT ENTITIES EXPLOIT TRAVEL SURGE, LURE INNOCENT TRAVELLERS INTO VISA SCAMS

ISSUED IN PUBLIC INTEREST

The meteoric surge in outbound travel from India has opened a gateway for not just globe-trotting Indians but also for a shadowy underbelly of scam artists. As more Indians give in to their wanderlust in what's termed as 'revenge travel', many find themselves at the mercy of fraudsters preying on the increased demand for visa appointments.

Given this context we spoke to a spokesperson from VFS Global, which is one of the world's largest outsourcing and technology services specialists for governments and diplomatic missions, on ways to stay clear of scams such as selling appointments, issuing fake appointment letters, claiming to influence positive visa decision, etc.



payments to personal accounts to expedite your visa application process, you may be interacting with a scamster. We urge applicants to guard against sharing personal details unless the authenticity of the requester is confirmed. Payments should only be made through our official website (www.vfsglobal.com) or at our Visa Application Centre.

Q6. Does VFS Global offer immigration and job services?
No, we do not provide immigration and job services. Applicants are advised to be cautious of scammers offering spurious job or immigration opportunities for money.

HERE'S A QUICK GUIDE TO MITIGATE FRAUDS.

Q1. Is there a fee to book visa appointments?

We do not charge any payment for scheduling visa appointments for countries we serve. Appointments are gratis and can be booked only on www.vfsglobal.com. There could be a nominal service fee to prepay for select countries.

Q2. Does VFS Global play any part in visa decision-making?

The decision on visa applications, the visa tenure, and timelines to process

them lie solely in the hands of the respective embassies or consulates. VFS Global simply handles the administrative and non-judgmental aspects of the visa application process. We have no role or influence on the decision of your visa application.

Q3. Does VFS Global associate with third-party entities for visa facilitation?

No, we do not work in association with any third-party entity. Applicants should beware of scammers and fraudulent entities who claim to be associated with us in any capacity or pose as VFS Global to dupe them. We are also working very closely with travel agent associations to educate and create awareness among

travellers to beware of such kind of visa related frauds.

Q4. Where should one head to book visa appointments?

www.vfsglobal.com is the only official website to book visa appointments for the countries we serve. While the appointments are free of cost, there could be a nominal service fee to prepay for select countries.

Q5. Does the company seek personal information or upfront payment via social media, emails, SMS, or calls?

We never ask visa applicants to share their personal information or make an upfront payment via any social media message, email, SMS, or calls. If you have been asked to make

By staying informed and following the guidelines provided by VFS Global, applicants can safeguard themselves from falling victim to visa frauds and ensure a smooth and legitimate visa application experience.

To report any suspected fraudulent activity, applicants/travellers can scan this QR code.



Issued in public interest by VFS Global

THE SOUL THAT SURVIVED

by **Discovery CHANNEL**

UNVEILING THE ENIGMATIC ROCK ART OF MADHYA PRADESH

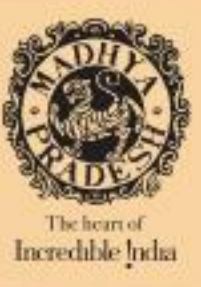
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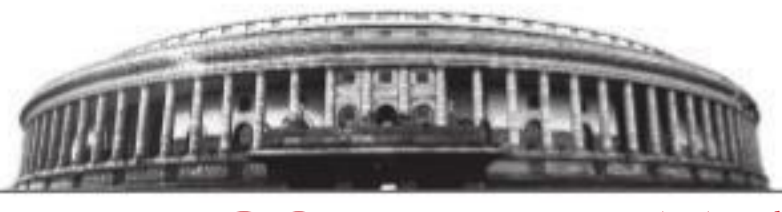


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IN ABSENTIA

TMC LEADERS and workers have started reaching the national capital to take part in the protest against the Centre over the 'pending' NREGS and PMAY-G grants. However, Union Rural Development Minister Giriraj Singh, under whose ministry these two schemes come, will be in Begusarai on Monday. In April, too, when a TMC delegation led by Abhishek Banerjee had reached Krishi Bhawan, Singh was not present. In Singh's absence, there was some commotion outside the minister's office when the protesting MPs threatened to sit on a dhama.

PAEANS TO PM

SONGS PLAYED at political rallies add colour to the occasion. BJP organisers across poll-bound states are taking songs addressing Prime Minister Narendra Modi very seriously. The song played in Bhopal recently was different from the one played in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur. However, both were addressed to the PM. In Bilaspur, before Modi arrived on stage, a state BJP functionary was heard handing out instructions about two songs to be played, in a particular order, when the PM arrived. The same was accomplished when Modi came.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

WITH THE successful landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the Moon that created a fervour of national pride in the country, an RSS-linked organisation will on Monday honour ISRO and 17 other organisations for their contribution to the nation. MoS PMO and Science and Technology Jitendra Singh and senior RSS leader Suresh Bhaiyaji Joshi are expected to present the awards.

TRIBAL UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCED

PM launches projects worth Rs 13,500 crore in Telangana

SREENIVA JANYALA
HYDERABAD, OCTOBER 1

ON A visit to Telangana on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched and inaugurated several projects worth Rs 13,500 crore, and announced that a Central Tribal University would be established in Mulugu district.

After arriving in Hyderabad, the PM travelled to Palamuru in Mahabubnagar district, where he said at a public meeting that the BRS government in the poll-bound state would lose sleep over these projects.

The PM flagged off the first train service on the new railway line between Jakkair and Krishna, inaugurated another new train service between Kacheguda and Raichur, inaugurated the four-lane Suryapet-Khammam highway, and laid the foundation stones for the road and rail projects. He also dedicated the Hassan-Cherlapally LPG pipeline, built by HPCL at a cost of Rs 2,166 crore, to the nation. This pipeline will enable 37 lakh more consumers to access LPG.

Addressing a large crowd in Mahabubnagar, Modi said the Central Tribal University in Mulugu district would be established at a cost of Rs 900 crore,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Union Minister and Telangana BJP chief G Kishan Reddy at a rally in Telangana's Mahabubnagar district on Sunday. PTI

and that it would be named after the tribal deities Sammakka and Sarakka. The PM also announced the establishment of the National Turmeric Board for the benefit of turmeric farmers of Nizamabad district.

Speaking about infrastructure in the state, he said: "Many national highways have been constructed in Telangana... The connectivity between Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh will increase with the projects undertaken at present," he said. "One of the five

textile parks to be built in the country has been allotted to Telangana. The textile park to be built at Hanamkonda will increase employment opportunities for the people of Warangal and Khammam," he added.

Targeting the BJP's political opponents in the state, he said: "The BRS government has only indulged in corruption in irrigation projects. The steering wheel of BRS's car (the party's election symbol) is in the hands of others." "Telangana wants change, and the BJP is ready to bring it.

People do not want false promises, they want work to be done on the ground. They do not want a corrupt government, they want a transparent and honest government that only the BJP can provide. Two family parties have ruined Telangana," he said, hinting at BRS and AIMIM.

The PM said the BJP was working towards the benefit of farmers. "We are providing the correct price for their crops and work and money is going directly into their bank accounts, eliminating middlemen," he said.

Rajnath: Need stronger armed forces to become a developed nation by 2047

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

INDIA NEEDS stronger armed forces with modern equipment in order to become a developed nation by 2047, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Sunday.

"There should be a fine balance between the demands of services and the allocation of available resources," he said in Delhi during the launch of several digital initiatives of the Defence Accounts Department (DAD) during its 276th annual day celebrations.

He said the DAD is the guardian of defence finance and said there is a need to boost the internal vigilance mechanism to immediately detect and review any suspicious activity, which will help in dealing with the problem quickly while increasing the trust of the people in the department.

The Defence Minister suggested the creation of an in-house standing committee that can research and study market forces to provide high-quality market intelligence to field officers, while appreciating the organisation's efforts towards enhancing the country's defence capabilities through a transparent and efficient financial system.

"Big banks and financial institutions develop in-house economic intelligence and research teams. On similar lines, the DAD needs to develop an in-house team for market research and intelligence," he said.

"Our wants are unlimited, but the available resources are limited," he said.

No compromise on ideology, those with BJP can't be in NCP: Sharad Pawar

MANOJ MORE
PUNE, OCTOBER 1

AMID SPECULATION over the two factions of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) reuniting, party chief Sharad Pawar Sunday made it clear that "those who join hands with BJP cannot remain in his party".

"Those who are with BJP cannot be with NCP. If today anyone is ready to compromise and tie up with BJP, we will not accept them. This is because people had voted against BJP and voted for us in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections," Pawar said at a press conference in Junnar city on Sunday.

On the dispute before the EC, Pawar said: "I have received summons from the EC to remain present on October 6. We will present our stand there."

Pawar said "there is no law which says a party should have support of two-third of the total MLAs to claim ownership of the party". Meanwhile, constituents of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Sunday reacted strongly to a claim made by an independent MLA, close to BJP, that Sharad Pawar will join hands with the BJP in 15-20 days. The NCP on Sunday reiterated that Sharad Pawar would remain with INDIA bloc at the national level and with the MVA alliance in Maharashtra.

"Whoever claims that our chief will join hands with BJP does not warrant a response. He will remain with INDIA bloc and MVA. He is at the forefront in bringing all Opposition parties together, and they are heavily banking on him to rout the BJP. Our chief will not follow an ide-



NCP chief Sharad Pawar

ology dangerous for the nation. He is making all efforts towards ousting BJP in 2024 elections," Mahesh Tapase, spokesperson of Pawar senior-led NCP, told *The Indian Express*.

On Saturday, Rana, an independent MLA supporting BJP, said, "A strong BJP government will emerge in Maharashtra and at the Centre with participation of Sharad Pawar." He said that during the Ganesh Utsav, he visited several mandals to pray "before the Lord to have Sharad Pawar join hands with Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the country's sake." "Wait for the miracle over the next 15-20 days," Rana said.

Sena (UBT), part of MVA, meanwhile, rubbished Rana's claim. "Did Ravi Rana take permission from Devendra Fadnis before saying this? If this is true, then it is clear that BJP is indulging in breaking parties," said Sena (UBT) spokesperson Aher.

The Congress state unit also slammed Rana for his claims. "These are people paid by the BJP to make such statements. The formation of the INDIA bloc has shaken BJP, which is clueless about how to tackle the strong force," said Congress spokesperson Gopal Tiwari.

NCP leader Ankush Kakade, who is close to Sharad Pawar, said: "Ravi Rana has lost his mental balance. NCP will bear all expenditure for his treatment."



Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel in Raipur on Sunday. Express

Steel plant privatisation: Cong calls for bandh in Bastar on day of PM visit

JAYPRAKASH S NAIDU
RAIPUR, OCTOBER 1

THE RULING Congress party in poll-bound Chhattisgarh said Sunday that it was calling for a bandh in Bastar on Tuesday — the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Jagdalpur city in the district — as a mark of protest against the privatisation of the Nagamar steel plant.

At a press conference in Raipur city on Sunday, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel criticised Modi over the PM's speech in Bilaspur, where he had attended a public meeting on Saturday as part of the BJP's campaign in the state.

"Modi ji said he gave Rs 1

lakh crore for paddy procurement. In 2014, when there was a double-engine sarkar in the state, 10 quintals of paddy were bought. When their government was in power from 2014 to 2016, paddy procurement went down. (Modi) also refused to give bonus as per a 2014 order. Now you say you will buy every single grain of rice at MSP." Paddy procurement has always been a key election issue in Chhattisgarh.

State Congress chief Deepak Bajaj, an MP from the Bastar region, said during the press conference that there would be a bandh in Bastar district on Tuesday (October 3) to "show PM Modi that the people of Bastar are angry over the privatisation of Nagamar steel plant."



CLEANING SESSION

Workers at the old Parliament building as part of the nationwide cleanliness drive on the eve of Gandhi Jayanti on Sunday. PTI

TMC leaders to visit Rajghat today, protest at Jantar Mantar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

TOP TMC leaders, including party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, gathered at party MP Sougata Roy's residence in the national Capital Sunday to chalk out the plan of action for protests in the national capital over the next two days, sources said.

"All the TMC MPs as well as the other leaders were present in Sunday's meeting. We will have another meeting on Monday, after which we will decide our plans for October 3 and make an announcement," said Sougata Roy, adding that the

Trinamool leaders will sit on dhama at Jantar Mantar for two hours on Monday.

Following the meeting, senior TMC leader and MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay told the media: "We have decided that all our ministers, MPs, and MLAs will visit Rajghat at 1.30 pm on Monday. Thereafter, Abhishek Banerjee will address a press conference, followed by a meeting to discuss the October 3 protest."

Around 25 buses carrying Trinamool Congress volunteers set out from Kolkata on Saturday for the October 3 Delhi protest against the alleged withholding of funds by the Centre. It is expected that around 4,000 people

from Bengal will gather at Jantar Mantar to protest non-payment of the MGNREGA dues.

Meanwhile, blaming the Centre's freeze on PMAY funds for the death of three tribal children and an elderly woman in incidents of house collapse in West Bengal's Bankura district, Trinamool Congress has taken the victims' families to New Delhi to take part in the protest.

The BJP claimed the families were being taken to the national capital forcibly. "They tried their best to take them to Delhi forcibly. It's part of their cheap politics," said Leader of Opposition in Assembly Subendu Adhikari.

CIRCULATED TO STATES, UNION TERRITORIES IN 2021, ACT IS MEANT TO BALANCE INTERESTS OF TENANTS, LANDLORDS

2 yrs and many reminders later, just 4 states adopt tenancy law

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

OVERTWO years since the Union Cabinet approved the Model Tenancy Act for circulation to States and Union Territories (UTs), only four states have adopted the law that aims to balance the interests of tenants and landlords, despite reminders from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), *The Indian Express* has learned. The model law, which mandates rental agreements and caps a security deposit at two months' rent, was expected to free up the inventory of vacant houses in the rental market by safeguarding interests of homeowners. On August 24, the Ministry wrote to the chief secretaries of states and

other only by Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Meanwhile, other states had not replied to the reminders sent by the Ministry since 2021, added a senior official. In July 2022, the Ministry in a reply had informed the Rajya Sabha that only these states had adopted the Act. The officials said the number of states had remained the same till now.

Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh had enacted their laws before the final MTA was approved - in 2017 and 2018 respectively - as the Ministry had suggested repealing old rent control acts and enacting new tenancy laws when it launched the 'Housing for All' mission in 2015. Assam and Uttar Pradesh enacted their laws in 2021 after

the Model Act was approved. A senior UP government official said the state had set up rent courts (an officer of additional district magistrate rank) in all 75 districts, one of the provisions of the Uttar Pradesh Regulation of Urban Premises Tenancy Act, 2021. While the Model Act states that no property can be leased without informing the rent authority in writing, the UP Act makes it mandatory for leases of over 12 months. The official said since most leases are of 11 months, the state has so far received 206 applications for registering leases. An official of the Assam government said the process of getting the rules framed under the Act was on and the registration of leases would only start after that.

Anshuman Magazine, the chairman and CEO for India, South-East Asia, Middle East and Africa at real estate consultancy firm CBRE, said the rental housing market was expected to flourish in the coming years due to rapid urbanisation, relocation to workplaces and the rising costs of home ownership. He said the MTA was expected to streamline the segment by providing a legal framework. "Apart from the four states, the pace of adoption of the Act remains slow among others. The government's push to encourage states for a faster adoption of the MTA is critical to streamline this sector," he said.

The Model Tenancy Act mandates that properties should be rented after signing a rental

agreement that includes the period of tenancy, the agreed-upon rent increase and fixed security deposit (up to two months' rent for residential and six months' rent for non-residential premises). These agreements are to be submitted to the rent authorities (officers of deputy collector rank) for approval. The Act sets up rent courts, an officer of ADM rank appointed by the district magistrate, and rent tribunals, a district judge or additional district judge appointed by the state government in consultation with the high court, for disputes. In case of a dispute, the rent court can decide the revision of rent, eviction, application for taking possession of a premises etc. The order can be challenged before the rent tribunal.

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BSP to keep 'complete distance' from NDA and INDIA bloc: Mayawati

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 1

BSP CHIEF Mayawati on Sunday reiterated her stand to maintain "complete distance" from the ruling NDA and the opposition INDIA bloc for next year's Lok Sabha elections and said that the party has to move forward by working on its own strengths.

The former UP chief minister held a discussion with senior



BSP chief Mayawati

leaders on poll preparations. "During the discussion, she once again made it clear that BSP has to work by strengthening itself, while maintaining complete distance from the ruling NDA and the opposition INDIA bloc," the statement said.



PM Gati Shakti



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INS elects its governing body for 2023-24



Rakesh Sharma elected president

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

THE 84TH annual general meeting of the Indian Newspaper Society — an apex body of publishers of newspapers, magazines and periodicals in the country — was held on Sunday in which Rakesh Sharma (*Aaj Samaj*) was elected president for 2023-24.

He succeeds K Raja Prasad Reddy (*Sakshi*). M V Shreyams Kumar (*Mathrubhumi*) is the deputy president, Vivek Gupta (*Samrag*) is the vice-president, and Tanmay Maheshwari (*Amar Ujala*) is the honorary treasurer of the INS for the year 2023-24. Mary Paul is the secretary general of the society.

30 KG HEROIN SEIZED, TWO HELD IN JAMMU

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Sunday apprehended two people allegedly for carrying 30 kg heroin. Police said the accused were carrying the narcotics to Punjab when their vehicle was intercepted.

Arrested Manipur man also suspect in Kwakta bomb case, says NIA

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

A DAY after arresting 51-year-old terror suspect, Seiminlun Gangte, a private school teacher, from Churachandpur district in connection with a case of a trans-national conspiracy by Myanmar-Bangladesh based militant groups, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has also found his alleged involvement in a suspected IED blast case in Manipur's Bishnupur district, in which three persons, including two minor boys were injured on June 21.

Before the unrest in the state, Gangte was working as a teacher at VN Model School, Kwakta since 2018. After the violence in Kwakta, he left the town with his family and started living in one of the relief camps in Churachandpur. The owner of the school also had a hardware store in Churachandpur and Gangte was working there as a supplier for the last two months. He was procuring hardware materials and supplying to the customers in Churachandpur on commission basis. On Saturday, Gangte was caught near Torbung village in Churachandpur district by a team of NIA in a joint operation with Manipur police, when he was on his way to deliver the

hardware materials, according to sources.

An NIA spokesperson said that after his arrest, it has come to the fore that Myanmar and Bangladesh-based militant groups in a conspiracy with a section of militant leaders in India, are trying to indulge in incidents of violence with an intention to drive a wedge between different ethnic groups and to wage war against the Indian government.

On June 21, a stolen Mahindra Scorpio car, laden with IED, had blown up a part of the western side of a bridge adjoining Phougakchao Ikhai Awang Leikai and Kwakta area along Tiddim road in Bishnupur district. The police had filed an FIR on June 23 based on the complaint by Rajeev Kumar, Under Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs. The MHA then handed over the case to the NIA. The NIA traced the owner of the car who had filed a complaint of stolen vehicle, a month before the blast. During the probe, it was revealed that militants had deliberately planted the IED on the bridge to disconnect the two districts.

On Saturday, the Manipur police in a tweet said that Gangte, who was arrested "in a joint intelligence based operation with NIA... has been further taken to Delhi for production before Delhi Special NIA Court."

State BJP wants CM to lead Unified Command

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GUWAHATI, OCTOBER 1

IN ITS letter to BJP national chief J P Nadda, the party's Manipur unit has asked that Chief Minister N Biren Singh be given the leadership of the Unified Command which coordinates the multiple security agencies in the state.

The state BJP unit also flagged an ambiguity, writing: "Revoke Article 355 if there is anything as such imposed in the state..."

Article 355 empowers the Centre to take all necessary steps for a state's security. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has denied that it has been imposed but uncertainty still remains in the state over this issue.

Meanwhile, a youth collective from the Meitei-dominated valley region, 'Youth of Manipur', Saturday met a group of state ministers and MLAs camped in Delhi, demanding a change of chief minister. State government said its demand was found to be "unrelated to the core issues and, regrettably, unacceptable."

Widespread protests broke out in the valley areas last week

after alleged photos showing two missing Meitei youths dead, had emerged.

The letter to Nadda, signed by state BJP chief A Sharda Devi and seven other senior office-bearers, read: "Public anger and protest is now slowly turning the tide, putting the sole onus of this prolonged disturbances solely into the failure of the government in dealing with this situation," while stating that the government is working "unstopped day and night" to bring normalcy back.

In the letter, it has put forward eight points as general public demands. One of these points states that as a step to "re-establish full confidence and trust to the Government in dealing with the situation" the full command of the Unified Command in the state should be transferred to the CM.

Another appeal asked the central leadership to "persuade" the Prime Minister to give an appointment to the team of MLAs and ministers that has been camping in Delhi since mid-September.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had announced forming a Unified Command, at the end of his visit to Manipur in May.

Why do Parsis live longer? A genetics project seeks answers

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
PUNE, OCTOBER 1

WHY DO Parsis in India live longer than other communities? Why do they have relatively fewer cases of lung, head or neck cancer, but present an increased prevalence of Parkinson, Alzheimer and other neurodegenerative diseases?

Questions such as these saw Perviz Bhone, a retired English literature professor, sign up for the '10,000 Avestagenome Project' in 2008 to discover more about her genetic history. The 72-year-old recalls giving "blood samples and details of her family's medical history" to the project's researchers nearly 15 years ago.

The project, started by a Bengaluru-based life sciences firm, seeks to identify genetic risk factors within the Zoroastrian Parsi population that predispose individuals to cancers and diseases with high morbidity. While the genetic make-up of most humans is 99 per cent same, having an endogamous community (people who marry within their own community) like Zoroastrian Parsis as a reference population gives researchers the unique ability to understand how diseases occur in the general population.

The project has so far uncovered 217 unique variants linked to longevity and 41 associated

THE 10,000 AVESTAGENOME PROJECT



The Avestagenome Project

- Project started by Avestagen Ltd in 2008
- Seeks to collect 10,000 samples of Zoroastrian Parsis, a community known for longevity, to identify factors predisposing others to cancers, diseases
- 4,700 Zoroastrian Parsis are part of firm's biobank
- Genome analysis of 400 samples is complete

conditions like cancers, and neurodegenerative and rare diseases.

Fifteen years on, samples of 4,700 Zoroastrian Parsis are now a part of the project's biobank. Avestagen Ltd, the company founded by Dr Viloo Morawala-Patell, has completed the genome analysis of 400 samples in the hope of explaining why the median life expectancy of Parsis is higher than other communities in India. According to various epidemiological studies, the average Parsi in India lives till around 85, nearly 10 years more than members of other communities in the country.

The project researchers said Zoroastrian Parsis are the ideal control group for research into tobacco-related cancers since the community, which follows

Zoroastrianism, has historically abstained from smoking.

"Because of this social practice, the Zoroastrian Parsi genes can help us characterise biomarkers (genes showing the presence of specific biological conditions) that predict diseases caused by tobacco use, like lung, head and neck cancer. We are validating our results to develop a test for chain-smokers to understand their risk of developing lung cancer," Kashyap Krishnasamy, the project leader, told *The Indian Express*.

"The emphasis of the project is on the study of biomarkers and the molecular basis of longevity and age-related disorders," Krishnasamy said.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

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गांधी जयंती
2 अक्टूबर पर

राष्ट्रपिता महात्मा गांधी को कोटि-कोटि नमन
-योगी आदित्यनाथ, मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

स्वच्छता एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश

Haryana fitness influencer joins PM in cleanliness drive

SUKHBIR SIWACH
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 1

HE INVESTED his time and energy in fitness activities, and this self-discipline worked out well for him. Meet Haryana's fitness influencer Ankit Baiyanpuriya who joined PM Narendra Modi on Sunday in the mega cleanliness drive ('Swachhata Hi Seva' campaign) on the eve of Gandhi Jayanti.

Raised by labourer parents, 25-year-old Ankit — from Sonipat's Baiyanpur village — had initially joined wrestling in a village akhara to avoid beating by classmates during his school days.

Ankit started his fitness activities when he was just 10. Initially, he would just run, but for the past 13 years, he has been working out twice a day.

A graduate from Rohtak's Maharshi Dayanand University (MDU), Ankit has 5 million followers on Instagram and 1.82 lakh on YouTube where he keeps posting his workout videos. Sunday's video with Modi, which Ankit shared on Instagram, was liked by 3 million viewers.

Ankit says: "I studied in a government school where I was class monitor, but physically, I was a little weak. Children used to beat me up and I would always be terrified. Once a student even snatched my answer sheet during an exam and wrote his name on it. My family members wanted me to go to the akhara to become strong."

However, injuries to his body thrice during different wrestling events "tortured him mentally". "After these injuries, I used to think that life is over, nothing is left. I used to think that these injuries will harm me in future too. After my last injury — on my shoulder — during a village 'dangal' in 2022, my weight increased from 87 kg to 95 kg. But because of the support from the family, I gained fitness again," says Ankit.

His rise also didn't come in a day. The poor financial condition of his family had forced him to do menial jobs for eight years. "I used to go to marriage events with a 'halwai' to cut fruits as a daily labour for Rs 200-250 per day. I also worked in a rice factory for Rs 300 per day, apart from working as a construction worker, a helper in a gym and for a food delivery company." His most recent job was at a supplement store where he earned Rs 9,000 per month.

Ankit says reading Bhagavad Gita has stood him in good stead to stay mentally stable. "It's like meditation if it's read daily," he says. "If my videos change lives of even 10 people, I would feel my aim has been fulfilled," Ankit adds.

Kannada actor held over woman's death in road accident involving his vehicle

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, OCTOBER 1

KANNADA FILM actor Nagabhushana NS was arrested after he reportedly rammed into a couple in Bengaluru leading to the death of a 48-year-old woman. The accused was released on station bail late Saturday night.

The deceased has been identified as Prema Krishnappa, a resident of Bengaluru. Her husband Krishnappa (58) also sustained injuries who is recuperating in a private hospital.

The incident took place around 9.45pm, when Nagabhushana who was heading to his residence after an event rammed his car into the couple and later into an electric pole. Nagabhushana took them to the hospital in an auto-rickshaw.

By the time they reached hospital, Prema was dead and Krishnappa was admitted to treatment, said a police officer. Krishnappa and Prema had come out for a walk after dinner when the incident took place.

The couple's son has filed a complaint where he alleged that the accused knocked his parents as they were walking on a footpath. However, Nagabhushana in his statement said the couple had abruptly got down from the footpath to the road and he did not notice them.

Bengal Governor appoints interim V-Cs for six universities

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, OCTOBER 1

WEST BENGAL Governor C V Ananda Bose on Sunday appointed interim vice-chancellors (V-C) for six state universities. An official in the Governor's office said Bose has made the move in his capacity as the Chancellor of state universities in West Bengal.

The Governor named Professor Achintya Saha as the interim V-C of Murshidabad University, Professor BB Parida for MG University, Professor Nikhil Chandra Ray for Coochbehar Panchnan University and Professor Rathin Bandyopadhyay for Alipurduar University. Bose also appointed Professor Dilip Maity as interim V-C of Biswa Bangla University and retired IPS officer CM Raveendran as interim V-C of North Bengal University.

Earlier, Bose similarly appointed interim V-Cs for state universities which had triggered a political slugfest over the move.

Following the Governor's latest move, state education minister Bratya Basu questioned Bose's decision to appoint vice-chancellors at a time when the matter is in the Supreme Court.

Most medical colleges have ghost faculty, all fail to meet 50% attendance requirement, says NMC

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

NO MEDICAL college had adequate faculty members or senior residents and all failed to meet the 50% attendance requirement, according to the assessment of 246 colleges in 2022-23 by the Under Graduate Medical Education Board (UGMEB) under National Medical Commission (NMC), country's apex medical education regulator for granting recognition for running MBBS courses.

"Majority of the colleges had either ghost faculty and senior residents or had not employed the required faculty at all while none of the institutes met with the minimum 50% attendance requirement. Zero attendance was common," the letter from the NMC to the Associations of Emergency Physicians of India (AEPPI) said.

The attendance of the faculty members was monitored randomly during the working days for about two months, using the newly instituted Aadhaar Enabled Biometric Attendance system.

According to the board, there

were 134 colleges that had emergency medicine departments "on paper" whereas the ground reality was different. "We found out that no student goes to the emergency medicine department regularly because there is no one in the department to interact with them other than the casualty medical officer. The posting in the emergency medicine department is supposed to be a break period for the students," according to the letter, a copy of which is with *The Indian Express*.

The Associations of Emergency Physicians of India had written to NMC sharing their grievance regarding the exclusion of emergency medicine speciality as requirement for setting up new medical colleges. While medical colleges needed to mandatory have emergency medicine speciality 2022-23 batch onwards, the requirement was later done away with by medical commission owing to faculty shortage.

The number of medical college hospitals that have an emergency medicine department has increased from 45 to 134 in the last few years, the reply said.

90-year-old's long struggle for Mumbai maidan where he first saw the Mahatma

PRATIPACHARYA
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 1

FROM BEING the venue for rousing rallies held by Mahatma Gandhi during India's freedom struggle to being the preferred location for meetings of the Samyukta Maharashtra movement, the Gandhi Maidan near the Kurla (West) railway station in Mumbai is steeped in history. It had, however, been neglected by authorities in the decades since, and it took the persistent efforts of a group of senior citizens for the municipal body to finally take control of it and clear it of encroachments.

Earlier this year, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) started work to upgrade the maidan and turn it into a garden and playground.

While most of the activists involved in the decades-long struggle to preserve the maidan's legacy have passed away, 90-year-old Dinkar Martand Prabhu Desai remains to witness the fruit of their efforts.

Popularly known as *Anna* (elder brother) among local residents, Desai lives alone in his single-room at a chawl in Abdul Estate, located in one of the dingy lanes of a Kurla neighbourhood.



The under-construction Gandhi Maidan in Mumbai. Express

The Gandhi Maidan played an important role in the aftermath of Independence as well. During the Samyukta Maharashtra Andolan, which gave birth to the state of Maharashtra in 1960, several meetings presided by leaders such as Acharya Prahlad Keshav Atre, Senapati Bapat, SM Joshi and Prabodhankar Thackeray were held on this ground.

Up to the 1970s, the maidan continued to be a hub for political gatherings. Between 1972 and 1974, people who had migrated to Mumbai from villages around the state started setting up shanties in the ground, which did not have any compound walls.

"With time, we realised that the encroachment should be stopped immediately as the

legacy of this place needs to be protected. Through our organisation - the Jaishita Nagarik Sangh (JNS) - we started to write letters to local authorities to take action against encroachers," Desai said.

In 1986, authorities carried out the first survey of encroachers, and rehabilitated some of them at Mankhurd in the eastern suburbs after demolishing the shanties erected at the maidan.

However, a group of people who lived at the maidan moved the Bombay High Court, saying they were evicted without issuing any notice, and in response, the court appointed a court receiver to solve the issue at the local level.

The movement included participants, including Desai, going



Dinkar Martand Prabhu Desai

on hunger strikes. While this forced authorities to remove some of the shanties, they returned soon after.

The movement gained momentum in the early 2000s, said Anil Galgali, a social worker and local resident who joined the cause during that time.

In 2009, the activists started a major signature campaign and asked the chief minister to take action. In 2014, the case was reopened in the HC after the JNS, with another group called Gauri Shankar Krida Mandal (GSKM), issued a strongly worded letter to the administration urging them to take immediate action.

In 2016, the court directed the Deputy Collector's office to take permanent action against the encroachment, and all 29 shanties were removed in 2018. However, the activists wanted the BMC to take over the ground from the Collector's office - original owner of the plot.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

SHO among two Kaushambi cops shifted weeks after 3 of a Dalit family murdered

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 1

OVER TWO weeks after three members of a Dalit family were murdered over a land dispute in the Sandeepan Ghat area of Kaushambi district, the area station house officer and the outpost-in-charge were on Sunday removed and attached to the police lines, police said.

Sandipan Ghat SHO Dilip Kumar Singh and Har Raipur police outpost in-charge Anurag Singh have been attached to the police lines by the Kaushambi superintendent of police, they said.

Speaking with *The Indian Express*, Chyail Circle Officer Y K Narayan said, "Several police officers have been shuffled and the two officers were part of that list. Bhuvnesh Chaube will take over as Sandeepan Ghat SHO and Sub-Inspector Shailendra Kumar will take charge of the outpost."

On September 14, the victims were shot dead in their sleep outside their hut in Mohideenpur village under Sandeepan Ghat police station early morning allegedly over a property dispute.



LITERARY FETE

Film director Adoor Gopalakrishnan (right) felicitates Goa Governor PS Sreedharan Pillai, who has around 200 published works to his credit, during an event at the Press Club in Thiruvananthapuram. Express

In Patiala, a village that Dr Swaminathan made his lab for green revolution

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA
RAKHRA, OCTOBER 1

RAKHRA, A small village in Patiala, has carved a niche for itself in Punjab's agriculture sector, disseminating knowledge on modern farming practices and producing new and high yielding seed varieties.

Situated 18 km away from the district headquarters on the Patiala-Nabha road and home to 1,800 villagers, the village in the early 1960s was anything but green. It was a time when the farmers in the would struggle to wrench out crops from the saline and 'kallar' (infertile) land.

"In the mid 1960s, we received seeds of Mexican semi-dwarf wheat varieties - Sonora 63, Sonora 64, Lerma, and Rojo 64-A - from a young scientist at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), for multiplication," recalls Bhagwan Das Gupta, who was then a Block Development and Panchayat Officer (BDPO) in the Punjab Rural Development Department in the mid-1960s.

That "young scientist" was Dr MS Swaminathan, now referred to as the Father of Green Revolution in India. The seeds that he had sent to Rakhra village had been developed by Norman Borlaug, the Nobel Laureate American agronomist, considered as the Father of Green Revolution across world.

Behind Swaminathan's particular interest in Rakhra was the inception of a Young Farmers

Association (YFA) in the village. He was looking for young and progressive farmers who could multiply the precious seeds.

Gupta, who served as the Secretary General of the YFA since 1973, says the new seed varieties proved to be a godsend for the farmers. Their yield per hectare skyrocketed.

Dr Swaminathan last visited the village in 2008, introducing the paddy transplanter and emphasizing the need to diversify through Basmati varieties, says Gupta, adding that the YFA "has come a long way solely due to his support", growing from a handful of farmers to 10,000 members.

According to farmer Teja Singh (85), a member of the YFA since the late 1960s and resident of village Mimsa in Sangrur, Dr. Cheema would address farmers, who would sit on the ground, and tell them about the new wheat varieties developed by Dr. Swaminathan and about the new farming concepts.

The focus now is on multiplying 15 varieties of wheat, Basmati, and paddy on their farm.

YFA has introduced several paddy and wheat varieties only because of the support of Swaminathan, who used to invite YFA members to IARI for various training programmes, says Gupta.

"We are growing 500 quintals of seed for each rice and wheat variety, focusing on Basmati, as Dr Swaminathan also advocated diversification through Basmati," signs off Gupta. **FULL REPORT ON**
www.indianexpress.com



An undated picture of Dr MS Swaminathan's visit to Rakhra village in Patiala. Express

Remembering
The Father of Nation
Mahatma Gandhi
and
Former Prime Minister of India
Sh. Lal Bahadur Shastri
on the occasion of their
Birth Anniversary
October 2, 2023

“पूज्य बापू का जीवन और आदर्श देश की हर पीढ़ी को कर्तव्य पथ पर चलने के लिए प्रेरित करता रहेगा। इसी तरह, मूल्यों और सिद्धांतों पर आधारित शास्त्री जी का जीवन देशवासियों के लिए हमेशा प्रेरणास्रोत बना रहेगा।”
- नरेन्द्र मोदी

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WORDLY WISE
IF YOU HAVE TEN THOUSAND REGULATIONS YOU DESTROY ALL RESPECT FOR THE LAW.
— WINSTON CHURCHILL

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Religious and secular

Gandhi's veneration for other faiths made him more, not less, of a Hindu



VINAY LAL

A SOFTER TOUCH

Proposed changes in digital regulatory framework could vest more discretion with government, must be reconsidered

IN AUGUST, THE Digital Personal Data Protection Bill 2023 was passed by Parliament. This law is part of the regulatory framework being brought in by the government to govern the digital economy in India. The other elements of this architecture are the draft Digital India Bill, the draft India Telecommunication Bill 2022, and a policy to govern non-personal data. While the Digital India Bill is still to be finalised, reports in this paper have raised troubling questions over some of the changes in the current regulatory structure that are being considered in the Bill. As these changes would vest considerable power and discretion with the Union government, and given their far-reaching consequences, they warrant careful consideration.

Last week, a report in this paper outlined how the draft Bill could create greater space for the government to issue content-blocking orders to online platforms by "dropping language" that raises the legal guardrails around such orders. Under Section 69 (A) of the IT Act, orders to block content can be issued if it is "necessary or expedient" on account of national security and public order, among other things. The change being deliberated upon removes the phrase "necessary or expedient". Another equally controversial change could vest with the government the discretion to decide which social media platforms should receive safe harbour protection — the legal immunity provided to these intermediaries vis a vis the content posted on their platforms. As per another report, the government is also planning to "regulate the deployment of emerging technologies". It could bar new technologies if it perceives them to be a risk to users or to national security.

The consequences of each of these provisions, that are yet to be finalised, are troubling. Take, for instance, the matter of removing the legal guardrails around blocking orders. This comes at a time when there has been a dramatic expansion in takedown requests from India. As reported in this paper, government requests to social media platforms to take down content have risen from 471 in 2014 to 9,849 in 2020. Seen in conjunction with provisions that could deny the immunity afforded to social media platforms by default, it raises concerns over the possibility of the government exercising greater control. While these platforms themselves have much to answer for — their decision-making has often been accused of being opaque — discretion regarding who is afforded safe harbour protection, and who is not, will create space for misuse, and opens up the possibility of taking down content that may be deemed critical of the government. And is the government the best arbiter of the risks new technologies pose? Instead of providing a nurturing ecosystem for the development of new technologies, this approach could potentially rob the public of both the intended and unintended benefits stemming from their development and adoption. Just like the government reconsidered its approach on cross-border data flows, it must reassess the consequences of the proposed provisions of digital regulation and reexamine its position.

MOHANDAS GANDHI FORGED such a distinctive path in so many spheres of life that it should come as no surprise that his conception of secularism is also at odds with nearly every commonplace understanding of secularism. Indeed, as my argument unfolds, it will become amply clear that Gandhi's adherence to secularism entailed a deepening of religious belief; as he was to tell some English friends who came to see him on the evening of December 31, 1947, "what I want to do and what I have been eagerly doing for the last 60 years is *atmadarshan* (self-realisation)... I do not boast of my perfect success at it. But, little by little, I am inching towards it. And my every worldly (secular) engagement is carried out just from this perspective."

The adherents of a rigorous conception of secularism have long subscribed to the formula of the separation of "church" and "state". Whether such a conception of secularism has existed anywhere even in the West is doubtful, but certainly, as is widely recognised, secularism so understood never had any traction in India except among a minuscule number of people who self-consciously styled themselves atheists, rationalists, and sometimes, even humanists. What prevailed in India was not the view that the state might not promote religion, but rather that it was not to bestow favours on one religion at the expense of other religions. Many people have thought that such a view can fairly be said to characterise Gandhi's own position.

Some of Gandhi's pronouncements certainly appear to support the view that his secularism, to the extent that the word seems apposite for a man who remarked that not a leaf moved without the will of God, could not countenance the possibility that the state might concern itself with religious matters much less promote one religion. Writing in the pages of his journal *Harijan* in February 1947, as independence was imminent, he warned that the state ought not to "concern itself or cope with religious education". Shortly after the attainment of Independence, he firmly opined on the necessity of an Indian

The adherents of a rigorous conception of secularism have long subscribed to the formula of the separation of 'church' and 'state'. Whether such a conception of secularism has existed anywhere even in the West is doubtful, but certainly, as is widely recognised, secularism so understood never had any traction in India except among a minuscule number of people who self-consciously styled themselves atheists, rationalists, and sometimes, even humanists. What prevailed in India was not the view that the state might not promote religion, but rather that it was not to bestow favours on one religion at the expense of other religions.

"government for all. It is a 'secular' government, that is, it is not a theocratic government, rather, it does not belong to any particular religion." There can be no doubt that he would have found the idea of a Hindu Rashtra utterly repugnant.

However, the question of Gandhi's secularism calls for interrogation from other perspectives. Some scholars hold to the view that the more palpable demonstration of his secularism resides in establishing that for him religion was in no way incompatible with reason. His views on Hindu scriptures may be summoned as an illustration: His unflinching admiration, even reverence, for Tulsidas' *Ramcharitmanas* did not stop him from rejecting one of its verses as misogynistic, and thus, reprehensible. He took a similar view in regard to Islam and was critical of a Muslim clergyman who defended the stoning to death of Ahmadis on the grounds that it was sanctioned in the Quran. As Gandhi averred, "every formula of every religion has in this age of reason, to submit to the acid test of reason and universal justice if it is to ask for universal assent (*Young India*)."

Gandhi had from the outset advocated for a position that is often described as "religious politics". In the concluding chapter of his autobiography (1927-29), he observes that he was drawn into politics owing to his "devotion to Truth", and that "those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means." He had declared as much when he accepted the presidency of the Indian National Congress in 1924, adding the caveat that he had in mind "not the religion of the superstitious and the blind, religion that hates and fights, but the universal Religion of Toleration. Politics without morality is a thing to be avoided (*Young India*)."

The present turn in Indian politics, with the demonstrable rise of an ugly and xenophobic Hindu nationalism, suggests, however, the perils of invoking "religious politics" — even with the caveats that Gandhi had put forward repeatedly and his plea for a "universal

Religion of Toleration". It is tempting to think that as Gandhi saw India increasingly slipping into communal violence from the late 1920s onward, he may have stepped back from the "religious politics" that he had advocated. His "secularism" is often ascribed to this very set of circumstances, and the liberal interpretation that he eventually came to adopt something like the bourgeois conception of secularism as a political ideology that was supremely respectful of individual rights.

In plain English, Gandhi, on this reading, increasingly thought that religion was strictly a private affair and should nowhere be dragged into the public. But Gandhi never adhered to the idea of the private and public as distinct and discrete spheres of life. It is critically important, as well, to recognise how his evening public prayer meeting evolved over the decades. It may be argued that what is more representative of his outlook is the stupendously radical idea that if the Muslim prays, he should pray not that the Hindu should become a Muslim but rather a better Hindu; that if the Hindu prays, he should pray not that the Muslim should return to the Hindu fold but rather become a better Muslim; and thus with the Christians, Sikhs, and others.

In addressing a gathering of Buddhists on Buddha Jayanti in 1925, Gandhi recalled that Muslims often mistook him for a Muslim, the Jains for a Jain, and his Christian friends for a Christian. It is Gandhi's profound religious belief and sensibility that made him resolutely secular; his secularism, and his worldly obligations, each of which was but an attempt to strive for self-realisation, deepened his religious belief. His veneration for other faiths made him more, not less, of a Hindu. The advocates of a militant and muscular Hindu nationalism are, in this matter, entirely clueless — scarcely surprising, given their ferocious disdain for self-reflexivity or anything that may remotely be called thought.

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RHYME AND REASON

Mizoram government's decision to ignore Centre's directive on collecting biometric data of refugees shows good judgement

THE ZORAMTHANGA GOVERNMENT'S non-compliance with the Union Home Ministry directive to Mizoram and Manipur — to collect biometric details of refugees arriving from Myanmar — stems from the practicality of electoral compulsions as well as from a place of compassion. The Mizoram government, which had earlier refused to close its borders to incoming Chin refugees displaced by the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, is due for elections by the year's end. The Mizos share a common ethnicity with the displaced Chins and believe that the data may be used to "other" the incomers.

This is in stark contrast to the conduct of the N Biren Singh government in Manipur, where ethnic tensions between Manipur's main tribes, the Kukis and the Meiteis, continue to simmer. Manipur started the process of biometric data collection in July, calling for a year's extension only recently, citing unrest in the state. Through these troubled six months, the erosion of the Chief Minister's credibility, his inability to douse the fires in his state, has been glaring. The schism between the primarily Kuki-Chin hill tribes of Manipur and the Meiteis who dominate Imphal's valley area has deepened also because of distrust in the impartiality of the administration. Singh has framed the unrest as a fallout of the state's illicit narco-economy, pinning the blame on "illegal" immigrants from across the Myanmar border, with whom Manipur's hill tribes, too, share a common ethnicity. The crisis in trust has been magnified by Singh's decision to extend AFSPA for another six months in the hill areas of the state and his request to the Centre to end the free movement regime along the Indo-Myanmar border, which has been in place since 2018.

In the Northeast, borders that separate a refuge from a refugee run through homes and homesteads that were once common ground and have now congealed into fractious identities. The tug of kinship is hard to ignore in times of hyper nationalism and political chum. But while solidarity is a strong motivation, Zoramthanga's decision also reflects his growth as a leader. In the aftermath of the pandemic and the NRC protests, he has emerged as a leader not just of all the tribes in his state, but also of the larger Kuki-Chin community, including those fleeing the junta in Myanmar and those escaping violence in neighbouring Manipur. The bogey of the outsider-infiltrator has been a convenient alibi for the Biren Singh government. Zoramthanga's righteous resistance offers a study in contrast.



ADITI NAYAR

A SLOWING MOMENTUM

Economic activity in India is likely to lose pace in the second half of the year

A MONTH has passed since the GDP data for India for the first quarter was released, allowing commentators sufficient time to analyse. With another quarter on the verge of completion, it is appropriate to look ahead and glean what the rest of the year holds for the economy.

Looking back, the economy grew at 7.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2023-24, up from 6.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2022-23, amid a supportive base and robust domestic demand. Regardless of the debates, the country was the fastest growing major economy in the world in that quarter. While we expect India to retain this tag, there are a few reasons why the pace of growth will moderate over the next few quarters.

The first is the base effect. This will outweigh the healthy momentum in economic activity that has been visible in the first two months (July-August) of the second quarter. For instance, the year-on-year growth in the ICRA Business Activity Monitor, our in-house composite index of high frequency indicators, had risen from an average of 7.2 per cent in the first quarter to 8.1 per cent in July and further to a six-month high of 10.7 per cent in August. Early data in September also suggests a continuation of these positive trends. We expect India's GDP growth to print at around 7 per cent in the second quarter, exceeding the Monetary Policy Committee's estimate of 6.5 per cent. In our assessment, the anticipated fall from the 7.8 per cent in the first quarter is largely on account of the dissipation of the favourable base.

However, these robust growth prints are unlikely to sustain in the second half of the year. ICRA expects the GDP growth to slow

down to around 4.5-5 per cent in the second half, well below the MPC's estimates of 5.7-6 per cent. In addition to a further normalisation of the base, this will be led by a multitude of factors, some of which are exogenous.

The monsoon has been particularly erratic this year with temporal and spatial deviations manifesting into an unevenness in kharif sowing across various crops, with critical lags in items such as pulses. Moreover, a dry August may impact yields and thereby, kharif output and farm incomes, and have consequences for the food inflation.

The sub-par monsoon has dampened reservoir levels well below their historical averages. This does not augur well for the timely onset of rabi sowing activity, which would influence yields of the next crop as well. As a result, rural demand is expected to be cautious in the months ahead, reversing the signs of nascent improvement in recent months.

After several quarters of steady improvement, urban consumer sentiment has levelled off as per the RBI's latest survey. We think that food inflation will play a pivotal role in guiding festive spending this year, unlike 2022, which had seen a more widespread demand for festivities after two years of the pandemic. Further, the impact of the cumulative monetary tightening by the RBI is likely to weigh on discretionary spending of borrower households, and the growth prospects in the second half of the year. In addition, consumer spending is likely to remain uneven, with relatively robust demand for services and discretionary items for those in the higher income brackets, amidst more circumspect spending by other income groups.

Amidst patchy demand, narrowing differ-

entials with year-ago commodity prices are estimated to impact the growth in value added terms. Global commodity prices had spiked immediately following the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the first five months of 2022-23, before cooling off gradually thereafter. This is expected to have boosted the growth in value added in the first half of 2023-24. However, as the year-on-year gap is likely to narrow in the second half, and along with the recent spike in crude oil prices, the benefits of commodity prices on margins will compress.

India's merchandise exports had contracted during the first quarter of 2023-24, and growth in services exports slowed down sharply. We project total exports (merchandise and services) to witness a contraction in the second half because of tepid external demand. This implies that the drag on GDP growth on this account will sustain.

The central and the state governments have been prescient in front-loading capex. This has supported economic activity in the first half. However, we are apprehensive that the momentum of capex and project execution may undergo a slowdown as we approach the general elections. This would weigh on GDP growth, particularly towards the end of the fiscal.

We expect India's GDP to expand by 6 per cent for the full year, and our baseline estimate places growth at 6.2 per cent in 2024-25. In addition to the usual triggers such as monsoon, commodity prices and geopolitics, much will depend on the outcome of the next election.

The writer is Chief Economist, Head - Research & Outreach, ICRA Limited

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



OCTOBER 2, 1983, FORTY YEARS AGO

EXCISE SUBSIDIES

THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED substantial reduction in excise duties on certain sizes of motor tyres, household electrical appliances and commercial vehicles with a view to stimulating production. The concessions would cost the exchequer about Rs 46.2 crore up to the end of February next year. The government hopes that the reduction would lead to lower prices for the consumer and production would pick up as a result of spurt in demand.

LOK DAL-BJP OPT OUT

THE LOK DAL and the Bharatiya Janata Party

decided not to attend the Srinagar conclave of the opposition leaders and non-Congress (I) chief ministers scheduled to discuss Centre-state relations. The decision was taken by the co-ordination committee of the National Democratic Alliance and announced by V K Malhotra, the committee's convener.

PM ON PAK ARMS AID

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi voiced India's deep concern at Pakistan "jumping a decade ahead of us" in sophisticated weaponry as a result of the United States' arms aid. In a "meet the press" programme with the NBC TV network, Mrs Gandhi said the US was

extending this arms aid even though Pakistan appeared to be "going ahead with its nuclear programme which is said to be one for weapons."

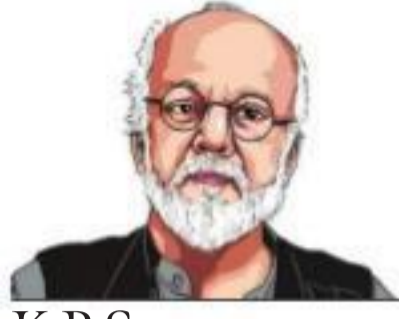
DHAKA PROTESTS

THE 18-MONTH-OLD MILITARY government of Lt-Gen HM Ershad met with an open challenge for the first time when opposition parties publicly demanded withdrawal of martial law and other steps to let the people's representatives rule the country. Public meetings and processions are banned under martial law but the government overlooked the mass rallies held to observe Demands Day.

11 THE IDEAS PAGE

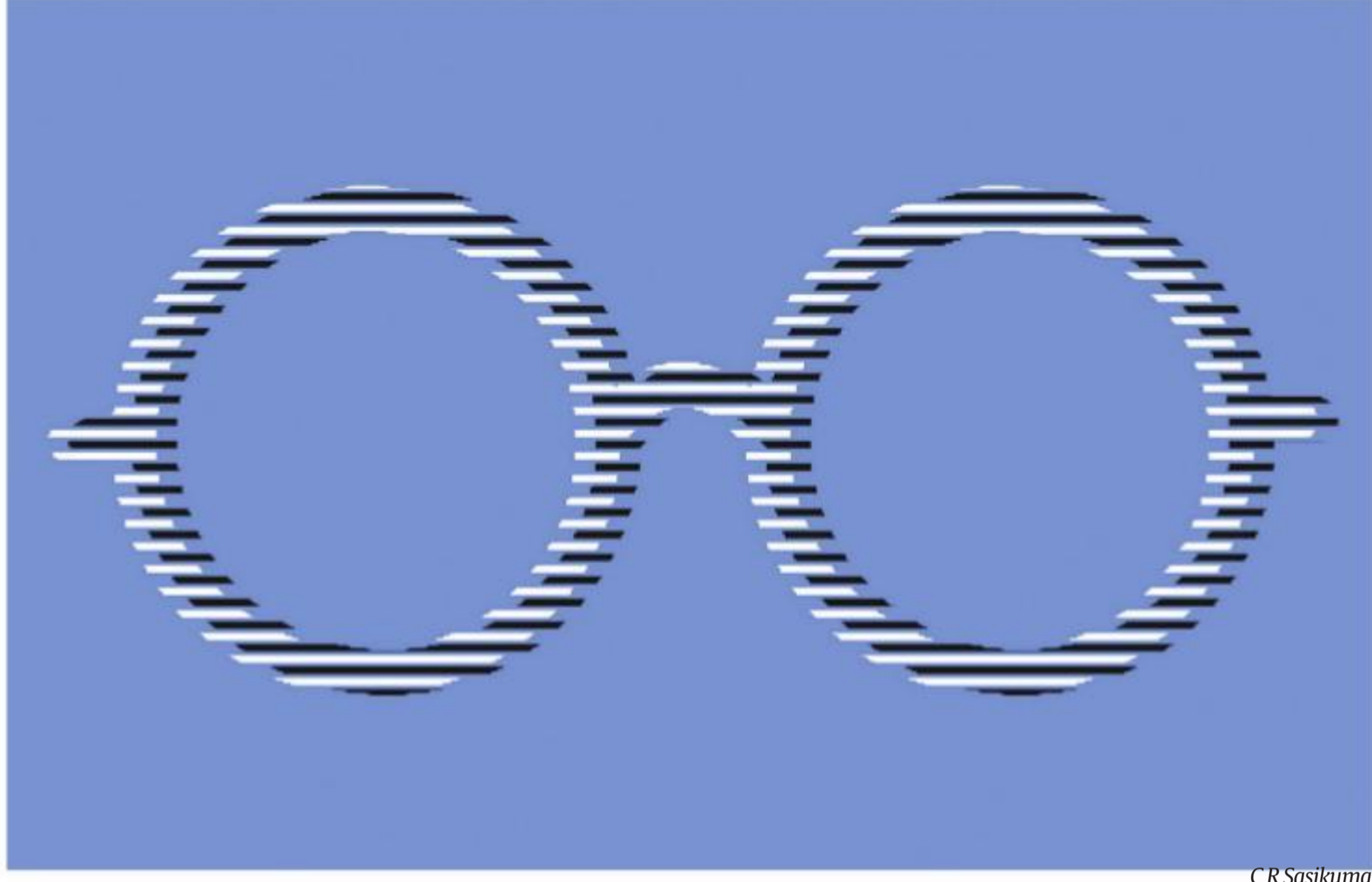
The Mahatma's Dharma

Gandhi described himself as a Sanatani Hindu and his tragic failure to ground it in an ethical foundation is mainly because of his colleagues' failure to understand the Mahatma



K P SHANKARAN

IF I AM not mistaken, the first appearance of the phrase "Sanatan Dharma" occurs in the Manusmriti (2nd or 3rd CE). Initially, I believe "Sanatan Dharma" was used as an identifier to distinguish practices related to the Vedas, such as Sruta rituals and Yajnas/Yagas, from the practices of the Sramana tradition. The concept of "Sanatan" means "eternal" and it was associated with the presumption that those practices also have eternal significance because they are rooted in the eternal Vedas. I won't delve deeper into the development of this identification tag here. By the time Gandhi was compelled to adopt it for self-identification, after his first visit to Kerala in August 1920, he aimed to counter the claims of Malayali Namboodiri Brahmins that untouchability was an integral part of Sanatan Dharma. However, by then, "Sanatan Dharma" had transformed into an ideology dominated by Brahmins.



CR Sasikumar

In an article in *Young India* on October 6, 1921, Gandhi described himself as a Sanatani Hindu. This text later became a point of contention for the Dalit Panthers, who vehemently criticised Gandhi. In the beginning of the text, Gandhi states:

One, I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, and all that is considered Hindu scriptures, including avatars and rebirth.

Two, I believe in the varnashrama dharma in a sense that is strictly Vedic but not in its present popular and crude sense.

Three, I believe in the protection of cows in a much broader sense than what is popularly understood.

Four, I do not disbelieve in idol worship. Upon closer examination of the five paragraphs that follow these assertions, one might conclude that Gandhi was not a Sanatani Hindu but, in the technical vocabulary of the Mimamsakas, a nastika — one who questioned the authority of the Vedas.

He states, "My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired" and "I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned it may be if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense. I do most emphatically repudiate the claim (if they advance any such) of the present shankaracharyas and shastris to give a correct interpretation of the Hindu scripture". These statements alone would have led the Mimamsakas to disqualify him as an astika and consider Gandhi a nastika, much like they referred to the Buddha.

Gandhi's second point for self-describing as a Sanatan Hindu was his belief in "varnashrama dharma in a sense." Note the phrase "in a sense". Gandhi was not a follower of Manu's hierarchy-based varna system. In his version, there was no distinction between a Brahman and a Dalit in terms of purity. Initially, he advocated this somewhat unorthodox theory to convince the Sanatanis that the Bhagavad Gita allowed for a non-hierarchical varna system. In this claim, he was entirely correct, as the Gita speaks of Krishna engendering the varna system but does not specify a hierarchical order. Later on, Gandhi

abandoned this model as well. However, this "Sanatan Hindu" never practised the varna system in his personal life or in his ashrams. Can a person truly be a Sanatan Hindu if they don't adhere to the varna system prescribed by Manu and other dharma shastras?

The third point Gandhi made was significant. He stated that he believed in the protection of cows "in its much larger sense" than was popularly understood. What did he mean by this larger sense? In *Young India* on September 8, 1921, he wrote, "The cow, to me, means the entire sub-human world." He saw the cow as a symbol of the sub-human world, and cow protection, to him, meant compassionate treatment of all living beings. He further emphasised, "I would not kill a human being to protect a cow, just as I would not kill a cow to save a human life, no matter how precious." Let me add the following without comments: "My ahimsa is my own. I am not able to accept in its entirety the doctrine of non-killing of animals. I have no feeling in me to save the life of those animals who devour or cause hurt to man. I consider it wrong to help in the increase of their progeny. Therefore, I will not feed ants, monkeys, or dogs. I will never sacrifice a man's life in order to save theirs."

"Thinking along these lines I have come to the conclusion that to do away with monkeys, where they have become a menace to the well-being of man, is pardonable. Such killing becomes a duty. The question may arise as to why this rule should not also apply to human beings. It cannot because, however bad, they are as we are. Unlike the animal, God has given man the faculty of reason." (*Harigan*, 5-5-46, p. 123)

The last point is self-explanatory. Gandhi himself was not an idol (*vigraha*) worshipper, as he mentioned, "an idol does not excite any feeling of veneration in me." But he did not have any objection if others worshipped idols.

The four points mentioned in the beginning get totally deconstructed if one reads Gandhi's article carefully. The emphasis on a careful reading is intentional. Without such reading, most readers are likely to miss several key insights that Gandhi's writings have

to offer. Most of the people who talk about Gandhi do not either read Gandhi enough or only read him not with the aim of understanding him, but like the Dalit Panthers, to abuse him. We must also realise that Gandhi was, for a long time, the only non-Eurocentric writer. On the other hand, most of the once-colonised are Eurocentric. This dichotomy between Gandhi and his readers creates problems in understanding him.

It is my contention that by no stretch of imagination can one consider him a traditional "Hindu". He was a nastika like the Buddha. He used the Sanatan Dharma/Brahminical/Hindu vocabulary largely because he believed he had a mission to ground the Sanatan Dharma/Brahminical religion and its affiliates in an ethical foundation. He knew from the very beginning that what was referred to as either Hinduism or Sanatan Dharma in his lifetime was an obnoxious manifestation of religious behaviour. Since he was born into this tradition, he tried to transform it into an ethical religion. Alas, he, like the Buddha, failed miserably.

This tragic failure of Gandhi to convert what is called Sanatan Dharma into an ethical religion is, in a significant sense, due to his colleagues' failure to understand Gandhi. How many of us saw in Gandhi's introduction to his translation of the Gita, titled 'Anasaktiyoga', his attempt to purify the Gita of its violent teachings? How many of us saw his shift from "God is Truth" to "Truth is God" as anything other than an eccentric slogan? How many of us recognised that Gandhi was fighting against the utterly unethical policy of the British government's "divide and rule"? How many of us took him seriously when he expressed reservations about parliamentary democracy? He had warned against the dangers of substituting an Indian rule that was built on the edifice of the British system. The warnings went unheeded and the results are for everyone to see. Today we stand confronted by a majoritarian rule that is eroding the secular and federal fabric of our country.

The writer taught Philosophy at St Stephen's College, Delhi University

Gandhi was not a Sanatani Hindu but, in the technical vocabulary of the Mimamsakas, a nastika — one who questioned the authority of the Vedas. He states, 'My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired' and 'I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned it may be if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense. I do most emphatically repudiate the claim (if they advance any such) of the present Shankaracharyas and shastris to give a correct interpretation of the Hindu scripture'.

An article of faith

Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam will set the tone for women-led development



ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL

IN A democratic setup, a consensual decision carries a special significance for any remarkable change. It reflects the collective spirit of the transformational journey. Recently, Bharat has witnessed historic decisions of global resonance — one is the building of consensus on the Delhi Declaration as part of the G20 presidency, the other is the passing of Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. At a time when global geopolitics is beset with multi-pronged turmoil, these are jewels in the crown of the mother of democracy.

The first legislative agenda of the new Parliament building has set the tone for women-led development as a way forward for the nation. The Modi government has shown zeal to turn this sankalp into siddhi.

This has been a 27-year-long journey to give women their due share in representative democracy. In a very simplistic manner, the existing minimal share of nari shakti, which constitutes half the population, was a lacuna. Social dynamics had made women a mere decision-adherer rather than a decision-maker to some extent. Numerous exceptions are there to counter this view: Women have broken the glass ceiling and have made the nation proud in every sphere. Now, the Narendra Modi government has prioritised this moral choice and showcased a strong will to correct this historical lacuna. The gender justice proposed by the Nari

Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam in the legislative domain will provide impetus to balanced policy formulation.

It is ironic that the US took 144 years to give equal voting rights to women after its independence. It took nearly a century of persuasion, protest and a World War to facilitate women's suffrage in the UK. Our forefathers were visionary and ensured women's voting rights immediately after Independence. Now, after the 75th year of Independence, marking the era of Amrit Kaal, Bharat has taken a forward leap from that right to vote to extend women's share of the right to represent in Parliament and legislative assemblies.

During the historic November 25, 1949, speech, Dr BR Ambedkar categorically asked how long one would continue to live a life of contradictions. He cautioned about social and economic inequalities. Over the last nine years, pro-poor and people-centric moves have resolved those contradictions. A testimony to this is the fact that more than 13.5 crore people have come out of poverty. The historic Nari Shakti Vandan Bill is another step to realise the spirit of one person, one vote and one value.

From another perspective, Indian philosophical values say that the perfect balance of feminine and masculine traits leads to a state of self-actualisation by bringing internal peace, harmony and individual fulfilment. It

is up to us to utilise the natural potential of female sorority for the collective fulfilment and welfare of humanity. Women's innate qualities of perseverance, creativity, sacrifice, dedication, resilience and trust make the best ingredients for a leadership role without even taking leadership course certification from top management schools and universities. Just letting them have their rightful space will lead to enormous capacity-building and be a perfect model for others to emulate.

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Amendment) Act is not a political step for the Modi government, but it is an article of faith. In July 2003, the BJP passed a resolution for women's reservation in Parliament and state legislature at its national executive committee meeting at Raipur. Later, the Party executed this at the organisational level, and included it in its manifesto. Now, it has become an instrument of change for the entire nation. Calling a special session of Parliament and onboarding all political parties for a consensus-based decision was a Herculean task, which the government has done meticulously. For a few parties, who had opposed this noble cause earlier, their nod to it is not by choice but out of their political compulsion. The old Parliament building witnessed the Constitution-making exercise and transfer of power from the British, this new temple of democracy has marked further pro-

gressive sharing of that power under the umbrella of our Constitution.

The recently concluded G20 presidency has proved that Bharat matters a lot in amicable resolving global challenges. India is on the verge of becoming the third largest economy in the world and, parallelly, the nation will surpass the global average (26.7 per cent) of the percentage of women in national Parliament. Increasing their share from 15 per cent to 33 per cent will take it far ahead of many developed nations. Such profound measures will re-orient the nation's outlook to become a women-led 21st-century leader.

For the implementation of provisions of this Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, the prerequisite constitutional obligation under Article 82 mandates prior census and delimitation exercise to identify women-led constituencies. The Modi government is committed to implementing it in accordance with this constitutional spirit. However, the pulse of change is being felt across the nation. The much-needed shift from a patriarchal mindset has gained currency. Let's embrace this brighter era of thriving nari shakti leadership for building a developed Bharat.

The writer is Union Minister of State (I/C) for Law and Justice, Minister of State for Culture and Parliamentary Affairs, and Lok Sabha MP from Bikaner

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Peace is essential for free and fair elections, and militant actors will try to derail a smooth transition from a caretaker set-up to an elected government. Therefore, the caretaker administration must devote all its energies to ensuring peaceful polls, and checking the militant menace." — DAWN, PAKISTAN

The Rajghat Consensus

Mahatma's moral compass brought world leaders together at G20 summit. His experiments with truth continue to help us find our way



NANDITESH NILAY

THE NEW Delhi G20 Declaration was the result of a remarkable diplomatic spadework led by India that got Russia, China and the West to agree to sign on a statement at a time when they agree on practically nothing. But there was another consensus the very next morning that was powerful and resonant — The Rajghat Consensus, the agreement, among all leaders who stood in respectful silence, that Mahatma Gandhi's values matter in 2023, more than 150 years after he was born. That they matter today more than ever and that although these values are universal, there is also a unique, distinct Indian-ness about them.

Whether you prefer Bharat or India, the indisputable fact is that any discourse that attempts to reclaim our "civilisational ethos," the Indian-ness of India or the Bharatiyatva of Bharat, the principles enshrined in our ancient texts and scriptures, the Vedas and the Upanishads, including the Gita, all find their highest and most complete expression in the Mahatma's values. In effect, the Mahatma is Bharat and Bharat is Mahatma, the Mahatma is India and India is Mahatma. Gandhi Jayanti is also our Bharat Jayanti.

The Mahatma would certainly not have approved of this equating the nation with the individual. For him, self-effacement was part of the cause itself. However, the best of Bharat or India, the best of our humanity is what is epitomised by the Mahatma. No celebration of Bharat or India is, therefore, complete without standing in tribute at Rajghat because not only did the Mahatma navigate us towards freedom, but his idea of the individual's role in society, the frailty of what it is to be human, and the moral power of doubt, are the enduring principles that define leadership and public service.

Consider the big questions of today between the lines of the New Delhi Declaration: How do we work to spread prosperity? What's the tension between fundamental rights and duties? How do we balance our need to consume versus the need to conserve? What responsibility do we have to the future? How do we learn to respect those who don't pray to the same God or speak the same language? How do we blend modernity and our ancient ethos? How do we reduce our greed to ensure climate security and biodiversity? And the fundamental question: Who are we as a nation? Is being Indian about "I" or "We"? Who is "Us" and who is "Them"?

Each of these questions can have a million or a billion answers and the Mahatma's experiments with truth give us the perfect compass to find our way. The Mahatma grappled with these questions, surrounded by self-doubt, accepting that he was flawed, that he was neither an ideal husband nor a father nor even a politician. That's why his soft, tentative voice, finds an echo down the ages, in ahimsa, peace, truth, swaraj, sarvodaya, and even sarva shiksha.

French writer Romain Rolland talks about how the Mahatma's manner was gentle and courteous even when dealing with adversaries. "He is modest and unassuming... Yet you feel his indomitable spirit. He makes no compromises and never tries to hide a mistake... nor is he afraid to admit having been wrong... he is happiest when, in meditative solitude, he can listen to the small voice within."

This is what made the Mahatma the consensus builder — uncompromising in his integrity, yet deeply aware that he needed to bring warring sides together. No wonder then that PM Modi's formulation, "This is not an era for war," finds such an echo because it draws strongly from the Mahatma's code of non-violence.

When India was celebrating her independence, the Mahatma was missing that day. Communal riots and mutual hatred had broken him and pushed him to the brink. He was searching for himself roaming through the heartland and trying to figure out his dharma of humanism. One day, a middle-aged man approached him and said: "I do not want to take the sin of your death on my head, please eat some bread." And then suddenly he started crying, "If I die, then I will go to hell!" "Why?" the Mahatma asked. "Because I killed an eight-year-old boy." "Why did you kill him?" "Because they killed my innocent child," said the man crying.

The Mahatma thought for a while and then said, "I have a solution." The man looked at him in surprise. "Find a boy of the same age who lost his parents in the riots and raise him like your own." This was the Mahatma's redefinition of truth.

Do we listen to him today? Do we accept our mistakes? Do we feel the pain of others? Do we find real followers in place of our virtual following? Today, we are more consumers than citizens. Our algorithms are designed to make us argue, and put each other down. This is where the Mahatma comes in, his non-violence was not only external action but internal too. It called for peace within. Manasa, vachana and karman were always aligned and in rhythm with the Mahatma.

This is the Mahatma's moral compass that brought all world leaders together last month in New Delhi. This is the compass that Albert Einstein, who best understood the connection between science and our humanity, described so well: "A leader of his people, unsupported by any outward authority, a politician whose successes rests not upon craft, not mastery of the technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality, a victorious fighter, who had always scorned the use of force... a man who has confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the simple human being... Generations to come... will scarce believe that such a one as this even in flesh and blood walked upon the earth."

This Gandhi Jayanti, he does walk upon the earth — inside each one of us, pushing us to be our best as human beings, as Indians. We can afford to ignore Mohandas but not the Mahatma. He is us.

Nilay is the author of Being Good, Aaiye, Insaan Banaen & Ethikos. He teaches and trains courses on ethics, values and behaviour. He is also a doctoral fellow in Gandhian Studies from ICSSR

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONSENSUS NEEDED

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Cauvery's people' (IE, September 30). Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are at loggerheads again. A history of agitations over the sharing of the Cauvery water in both states has shown their inability to resolve the issue amicably. The river water, especially during a rainfall deficit, has to be shared so that riparian states can benefit equally. This dispute has to be solved not through courts but by creating an understanding between each other. The political leadership of both states should take initiative to discuss the finer details and reach a mutually acceptable solution.

Atul Thakre, Nagpur

IMPLEMENT AND ACT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Law is not enough' (IE, September 30). Following the president's approval, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam will provide 33 per cent reservation for women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies. But among the prerequisites for it to be implemented are conducting a Census, which has already experienced two years of delays, and redrawing India's electoral boundaries, essentially a constitutional mandate called delimitation, to fix the uneven number of electoral seats and voters at various constituencies. But these are drawn-out processes; the last delimitation panel took five years to give its final report.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

EQUALITY IN POLITICS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Parliament to workplace' (IE, September 29). With greater participation of women in Parliament, their collective voices will also have more conviction in bringing different issues to the table. Seeing more women take on political roles may encourage others to opt for the same — and spur greater success in other fields predominantly been occupied by men. More importantly, such elevation of women in politics will dismantle family barriers that constrain women from entering the market. But, this will only be possible if women are treated as equals and with respect and grace.

Y G Chouksey, Pune

POLITICS IS POWER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Who needs allies' (IE, September 27). BJP's rise has been through the image of PM Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah's school of election management. However, the expansionist approach of the neo-BJP, which has a tendency to absorb regional parties, is dissimilar to that of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L K Advani. The current crisis for BJP is that it does not have any powerful leader like PM Modi, and allies who shared a bonhomie with Vajpayee are now opponents of BJP. This is an indication that the BJP moved away from coalition politics. Today, the basis of politics is in maintaining power.

Nischai Vats, Sultanpur

12 THE WORLD

AS ARMENIAN EXODUS NEARS END UN MISSION ARRIVES IN KARABAKH

A United Nations mission arrived in Nagorno-Karabakh on Sunday, as a mass exodus of ethnic Armenians began drawing to a close. The mission is the global body's first access to the region in about 30 years. **REUTERS**



Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy (centre), speaks to media just after the House approved the funding bill. **Reuters**

US averts govt shutdown after Congress passes stopgap Bill

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 1

THE US Congress passed a stopgap funding bill late Saturday with overwhelming Democratic support after Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy backed down from a demand by his party's hardliners for partisan bill.

The Democratic-majority Senate voted 88-9 to pass the measure to avoid the federal government's fourth partial shutdown in a decade, sending the bill to President Joe Biden, who signed it into law before the 12:01 a.m. ET (0401 GMT) deadline.

McCarthy abandoned party hardliners' insistence that any bill pass the House with only Republican votes, a change that could cause one of his far-right members to try to oust him from his leadership role.

The House voted 335-91 to fund through November 17, with more Democrats than Republicans supporting it.

That move marked a profound shift from earlier in the week, when a shutdown looked all but inevitable.

A shutdown would mean that most of the government's 4 million employees would not get paid - whether they were working or not - and also shutter a range of federal services, from National Parks to financial regulators.

Federal agencies had already drawn up detailed plans that spell out what services would continue, and what must shut, including scientific research and nutrition aid to 7 million poor mothers.

'Facing ouster threat'

McCarthy said on Sunday he expected to survive a threat to his speakership after a hardline critic within his party called for his ouster following the passage of a stopgap government funding bill that drew more support from Democrats than Republicans.

Republican Representative Matt Gaetz told multiple US media outlets he would file a "motion to vacate," a call for a vote to remove McCarthy as speaker, testing McCarthy's support in the House of Representatives, which his party controls by a narrow 221-212 margin.

It was not clear how much support McCarthy would have in such a vote, or if any Democrats would back him. McCarthy angered Democrats last month by launching an impeachment inquiry of Joe Biden.

Slovakia ex-PM who vowed to end aid for Ukraine wins polls

JAN LOPATKA
BRATISLAVA, OCTOBER 1



SMER-SSD party leader Robert Fico
Reuters

SLOVAKIA'S ROBERT Fico, who won an election after pledging to end military aid to Ukraine, was in pole position to start talks on forming a government on Sunday while a liberal rival vowed to seek partners to prevent the former leftist prime minister's return to power.

With 99.98% of voting districts reporting in the Saturday election, Fico's SMER-SSD party scored nearly 23% of vote, followed by 18% for Progressive Slovensko (Progressive Slovakia, PS) party.

The winner is expected to be given a political mandate by President Zuzana Caputova to try to find a majority, and form a government if successful.

A government led by Fico and his SMER-SSD party would see NATO member Slovakia joining Hungary in challenging the

European Union's consensus on support for Ukraine, just as the bloc looks to maintain unity in opposing Russia's invasion.

The result - with SMER-SSD in need of coalition partners to rule - sets up third-placed leftist HLAS (Voice) as kingmaker.

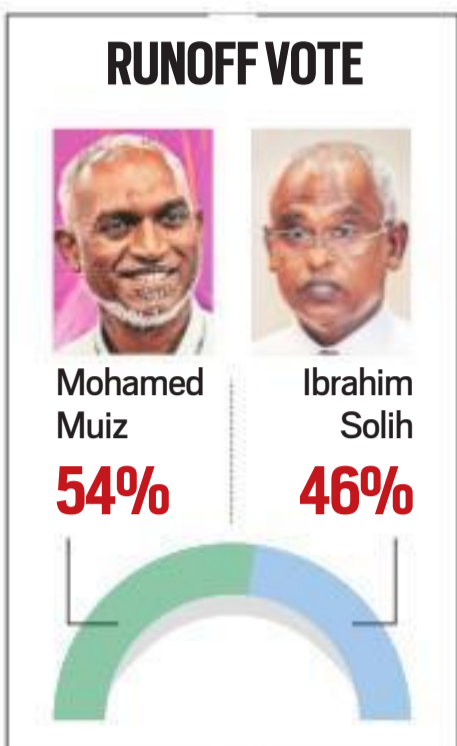
HLAS leader Peter Pellegrini, who has said his party leans closer to SMER-SSD on policy, said Sunday that the chance for a stable coalition and agenda priorities would guide negotiations.

As the party with most votes, SMER-SSD is expected to be given first chance to form a government, and it is likely to turn to the pro-Russian Slovak National Party and HLAS to gain majority. **REUTERS**

COULD HERALD TILT TOWARDS BEIJING IN INDIAN OCEAN REGION

Pro-China Opp candidate wins Maldives presidency, defeats 'India-first' leader

Former president transferred from jail to house arrest on Muiz's request



MOHAMED JUNAYD
MALE, OCTOBER 1

OPPOSITION CANDIDATE
Mohamed Muiz has won the Maldives presidential election, beating President Ibrahim Solih in a second-round runoff that could herald a pro-China shift for the Indian Ocean archipelago, from traditional partner India.

With nearly all votes counted, Elections Commission of the Maldives said on its website that Muiz had received 54% of the ballots in Saturday's vote, with 46% for Solih.

About 85% of 282,000 eligible voters in the Maldives, known for its pristine beaches and high-end resorts, turned up at more than 586 polling stations across 187 islands.

Solih, who championed an "India First" policy during his time, will remain president until Muiz's inauguration on November 17.

The coalition backing Muiz has supported Chinese loans and investment projects in the past.

Former President Abdulla Yameen, who has close links to Muiz, is serving an 11-year prison term for corruption and money laundering.

He was transferred from prison to house arrest Sunday, fulfilling campaign promise of his party candidate who won the election runoff.

"With today's result we have got the opportunity to build the country's future. The strength to



Mohamed Muiz (right) with a supporter of People's National Congress. **Reuters**

ensure the freedom of Maldives," Muiz said in a statement after his victory. "It's time we put our differences aside and come together. We need to be a peaceful society."

India's PM Narendra Modi sent a congratulatory message to Muiz after the announcement of his victory. "India remains committed to strengthening the time-tested India-Maldives bilateral relationship and enhancing our overall cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region," Modi said in a post on X. **REUTERS**

EXPLAINED The fight between factions — pro & anti

SOLIH, SEEKING a second five-year term, had championed an 'India-first' policy during his time in power. The coalition backing Muiz has launched an 'India out' campaign, promising to remove a small Indian military presence of several surveillance aircraft and some 75 personnel. Muiz entered the fray with support from pro-China former President Abdulla Yameen, who was banned from contesting the election by the Supreme Court in August following a conviction for corruption and money laundering.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Firefighters work to control flames inside a nightclub in Murcia on Sunday. **Reuters**

SPAIN

At least 13 killed as blaze engulfs nightclubs

Madrid: At least 13 people have been killed in a fire in adjoining nightclubs in Murcia in south-east Spain, emergency services said on Sunday, adding that rescuers were still searching for people unaccounted for after the blaze. Outside the club, young people hugged, looking shocked as they waited for information after the fire that broke out in the early hours in Atalayas, on the outskirts of the city. The identification of the bodies would take time, officials said. **REUTERS**

PAKISTAN

16 held for trying to travel to Saudi for begging

Lahore: Sixteen alleged Pakistani beggars disguised as pilgrims were offloaded from a Saudi Arabia-bound flight and arrested for trying to travel to the Gulf Kingdom to indulge in begging, according to a media report on Sunday. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) offloaded the beggars from the Saudi-bound flight in Multan in Punjab province two days back, the Dawn newspaper reported. According to the FIA, the group comprising 16 persons was travelling on Umrah visas. **PTI**

NEW ZEALAND

PM tests Covid positive 2 weeks before elections

Sydney: New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins has tested positive for Covid-19 and will work remotely while isolating, his office said on Sunday, just two weeks before a general election in which his Labour party is struggling. The positive test will temporarily sideline Hipkins in the campaign for the October 14 election. Labour has been sliding in the opinion polls, with the centre-right National party leading by 31.9% to 26.5% in a recent survey. Hipkins has cold and flu symptoms that began on Saturday and will isolate for five days or until he returned a negative test. **REUTERS**

Indonesia set to launch SE Asia's first high-speed railway

NINIEK KARMINI
JAKARTA, OCTOBER 1

INDONESIA IS launching Southeast Asia's first high-speed railway, a key project under China's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative that will cut travel time between the capital and another major city from the current three hours to about 40 minutes.

The project has been beset with delays and increasing costs, and some observers doubt its commercial benefit, but President Joko Widodo has championed it and will be inaugurating the 142.3 km railway as it begins commercial operations Monday.

The Chinese-made bullet train, called "Whoosh," will connect Jakarta with Bandung, the heavily populated capital of West Java province. Widodo, with other high-ranking officials, is expected to ride Whoosh from its first station, Halim KCBJ in eastern Jakarta to Bandung's Tegalluar station, the last of the line's four stations.

The \$7.3 billion project, largely funded by China, was constructed by PT Kereta Cepat Indonesia-China, known as PT KCIC, a joint venture between an Indonesian consortium of four state-owned companies and China Railway International Co. Ltd. The joint venture said the trains will be the fastest in Southeast Asia, with speeds of up to 350 kph.

Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, the coordinating minister for maritime and investment, said China Railway has agreed to transfer its technology so that in the future country's high-speed trains can be made domestically. **AP**



Members of the Turkish Police take cover as an unexploded bomb is detonated in front of the Interior Ministry following a bomb attack in Turkey's capital of Ankara on Sunday. **Reuters**

Suicide blast near Turkey govt buildings hours ahead of Parliament's reopening

SUZAN FRASER
ANKARA, OCTOBER 1

A SUICIDE bomber detonated an explosive device in the heart of the Turkish capital, Ankara, on Sunday, while a second assailant was killed in a shootout with police, the interior minister said.

The attack occurred hours before Parliament was set to reopen after its three-month summer recess with an address by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Two police officers were slightly injured during the attack near an entrance to the Ministry of Interior Affairs, minister Ali Yerlikaya said on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter. The attack was conducted by assailants who arrived at the scene inside a light commercial vehicle, he said.

"Our heroic police officers, through their intuition, resisted the terrorists as soon as they got out of the vehicle," Yerlikaya later told reporters.

"One of them blew himself up while the other one was shot in the head before he had a chance to blow himself up."

"Our heroic police officers... resisted the terrorists as soon as they got out of the vehicle... One of them blew himself up while the other one was shot in the head before he had a chance to blow himself up"

ALI YERLIKAYA
MINISTER OF INTERIOR AFFAIRS



President Tayyip Erdogan addresses Parliament members in Ankara. **Reuters**

The minister did not say who was behind the attack and there was no immediate claim of responsibility, Kurdish and far-left militant groups as well as the Islamic State group have carried out deadly attacks throughout the country in the past.

In his speech in parliament, Erdogan called the attack "the last stand of terrorism."

"The scoundrels who targeted the peace and security of the citizens could not achieve their goals and they never will," he said.

The president reiterated his government's aim to create a 30-kilometer safe zone along its border with Syria to secure its southern border from attacks.

The State-run Anadolu Agency reported that the two attackers on Sunday had seized the vehicle in the central province of Kayseri from a veterinarian.

The pro-government daily Sabah reported that they shot the man in the head and threw his body into a ditch by the side of the road. They then drove the vehicle to Ankara, roughly 300 kilometers away. **AP**

MOVE REFLECTS WIDENING LINGUISTIC SHIFT IN FORMER FRENCH COLONIES THROUGHOUT AFRICA

Algeria expands English-language learning as influence of France ebbs

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ALGIERS, OCTOBER 1

MORE THAN a year after Algeria launched a pilot program to teach English in elementary schools, the country is hailing it as a success and expanding it in a move that reflects a widening linguistic shift underway in former French colonies throughout Africa.

Students returning to third and fourth grade classrooms this fall will participate in two 45-minute English classes each week as the country creates new teacher training programs at universities and eyes more

transformational changes in the years ahead. Additionally, the country is strengthening enforcement of a preexisting law against private schools who operate primarily in French.

"Teaching English is a strategic choice in the country's new education policy," Education Minister Abdelkrim Belabed said last week, lauding the move as an immense success.

English is the world's most widely spoken language, accounts for the majority of content on the internet and remains a lingua franca in business and science. And as France's economic and political influence

wanes throughout Africa, Algeria is among a longer list of countries gradually transitioning toward English as their main foreign language.

This year, neighboring Mali changed its constitution to remove French from its list of official languages and Morocco made English classes compulsory in high schools.

Algeria has more French speakers than all but two nations - France itself and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nearly 15 million out of the country's 44 million people speak it, according to the International Organization of the



Children attend a class in Algeria's capital of Algiers. The country launched a pilot programme over a year ago to teach English in elementary schools. **AP**

French Language.

Its officials frame English classes as a practical rather than political shift, noting the language's importance in scientific and technical fields.

But questions about French's position in Algerian society have long been polarizing, as teachers and former education policy officials acknowledge.

Retired high school principal Mohamed Arezki Ferdi believes Algeria should have begun the shift to English decades ago. The current initiative was launched by Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, who came to power in 2019. Previous leaders also tried

to expand English but failed to overcome the French-educated elites who have long wielded power in the country.

The expansion of English language learning comes as tensions increasingly flare between France and Algeria. The two share security interests over the political upheavals shaping contemporary West Africa.

However, in recent years they have sparred repeatedly over immigration, extradition and how each country memorializes colonialism and the brutal war that resulted in Algeria's independence in 1962.

Algeria plans to expand its

current program to fifth grade next year. It will continue to instruct students in French for three hours each week in elementary schools.

When English-language learning was introduced last year, Algerian officials reaffirmed their commitment to French and said it would continue to be taught widely.

But in remarks this week at the beginning of the school year, Kamal Bedari, Algeria's minister of Higher Education, said expanding the program was to enable elementary school students to take technical courses later on in English - not French.



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

In alarm over Conocarpus, echo of faulty policies on invasive exotics

EXPERT EXPLAINS
SURESH BABU

CONCERNS OVER the management of the invasive *Conocarpus* species of trees has recently led Gujarat and, last year, Telangana, to ban their use. Several other states could follow suit — which is likely to discourage horticulturalists and nurseries from multiplying the species and using lakhs of its saplings in afforestation and landscaping projects across the country over the next year. This has brought fresh attention to the process of selection of species in urban landscaping projects in particular, which favours the use of exotics for beautification and greening.

Problem with exotics

It has been shown repeatedly that many species that were introduced to India previously for greening or ornamental projects

eventually turned invasive. Native species that failed to compete for space and soil resources were driven to extinction, and significant costs were incurred to ensure the management of the invasive species.

The list of these species is long — among the notable stories are those of *Eucalyptus*, *Prosopis juliflora* (vilayati kikar), *Acacia mangium*, and *Lantana camara* — and they continue to be used until considerable focus is brought on to their invasive characteristics.

There are two species of *Conocarpus* (buttonwood) trees, with several varieties and hybrids — *Conocarpus erectus*, which is more widely used in India, is native to South America, and *C. lancifolius* is native to East Africa. They are easily propagated and multiplied in nurseries through stem cuttings.

Serious pollen allergies and respiratory problems have been reported in the vicinity of their plantations, which has led to civic agencies taking action to ban them. The problems had already been noted in Kuwait and other parts of the Middle East, as well as in Karachi and Faizabad in Pakistan, when they started being used in



Conocarpus trees in Ahmedabad.

Express

greening projects in India.

India's losing battle

So while banning *Conocarpus* plantations seems to be the right thing to do, what is being done to address the root cause of this kind of problem?

It is *Conocarpus* today, it could be *Leucaena* tomorrow, and *Mangium* the day after. As is the case with exponential growth,

by the time adverse impacts are visible to the public, it's already too late.

Conocarpus can hopefully still be managed, but we have certainly lost the chance to manage *Prosopis juliflora* and *Lantana camara* on public lands and commons. We can also no longer manage *Leucaena leucocephala*, which is battling it out with vilayati kikar for dominance in the urban woodlands of Delhi while nearly extinct native species gradually perish.

Short-sighted policies

Why do urban greening initiatives end up deploying these exotics in the first place?

The non-native species, in a biogeographic sense, often face very few or no pests or pathogens in new habitats, which makes their proliferation easy. Often, these species may require very little aftercare. Some species like *Conocarpus* are not browsed by livestock, and are thus favoured for horticultural or landscaping projects.

The problems surface only slowly and often much later.

The human population gets familiar with the local pollen calendar and, to a large ex-

tent, their immune systems coevolve. People in cities are exposed to a spectrum of allergens in any case, and respiratory allergies are common. Into this already precarious landscape come plantations of exotics, which are ironically brought in often to improve urban air quality and aesthetics.

What can be done

Almost all horticultural species are well studied, and propensities, including phytochemical volatiles and allergies, are well known. It is certainly possible for landscape managers to choose from among native species pools, species that are ecologically appropriate and also meet aesthetic needs. Tragically, urban landscaping and agroforestry projects often do not even refer to existing information on these species before taking up their large-scale use.

Based on available research, it is almost unanimously recommended by scientists that urban greening projects should use native species for long-term sustainability. The avenue trees in Lutyens' Delhi are of species from Central India and the Gangetic plain, and they have served the city well both in terms

of aesthetics, and by harbouring a large number of native bird species and other dependents. Doing so may marginally increase the costs and effort, but will add immense value in terms of ecosystem services in the medium to long term. Furthermore, the value of carbon sequestration by urban greens has been highlighted by recent research to contribute significantly to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, thereby contributing significantly to the green GDP of a country.

The import and use of horticultural plants need to be monitored by maintaining a watch list of plants that are known to harm native species and ecosystems, and raise public health concerns. The numbers of mega greening projects are likely to increase in the coming years in step with India's climate commitments, and landscape planners and land managers need clear guidelines outlining these principles.

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EXPLAINED HISTORY

HOW GANDHI'S IMAGE APPEARED ON INDIAN CURRENCY NOTES

VANDANA KALRA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

THOUGH HE was photographed by several stalwarts throughout his life, perhaps one of the most widely circulated images of Mahatma Gandhi is his portrait on Indian currency notes.

As the Father of the Nation, he might seem an obvious choice to appear on national currency after Independence, but it was only in 1996 that he became a permanent feature on legal banknotes issued by the Reserve Bank of India.

How was the image selected?

The portrait of Gandhi that is now visible on every Indian legal banknote is a detail of a photograph taken in 1946, where the Indian leader is standing with British politician Lord Frederick William Pethick-Lawrence. Attributed to an unknown photographer, this shot is believed to have been selected because it had the most suitable expression of Gandhi smiling.

It is not publicly known who short-listed the image of Gandhi that appears on the banknotes. The responsibility of working on the design of the rupee note is with the Department of Currency Management of the RBI. It shares the design with the RBI and the central government for approval.

When did Gandhi first appear?

Gandhi first featured on Indian currency in 1969, when a special series was issued to commemorate his hundredth birth anniversary. Bearing the signature of then RBI governor LK Jha, the notes depicted Gandhi with the Sevagram Ashram in the backdrop. In 1987, a series of Rs 500 currency notes featuring Gandhi was launched in October.

Who appeared before him?

For a few months after August 15, 1947, the RBI continued to issue extant notes featuring King George VI. The government of India brought out its new Re 1 note in 1949. In the watermark window, King George was replaced with a symbol of the Lion Capital of Ashoka Pillar at Sarnath.

The RBI museum website says, "Symbols for independent India had to



Gandhi became a permanent feature on banknotes in 1996. File

be chosen. At the outset it was felt that the King's portrait be replaced by a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi. Designs were prepared to that effect. In the final analysis, the consensus moved to the choice of the Lion Capital at Sarnath in lieu of the Gandhi Portrait. The new design of notes were largely along earlier lines."

Consequently, in 1950, the first Republic of India banknotes were issued in denominations of Rs 2, 5, 10 and 100. All of them bore the Lion Capital watermark.

Over the years, legal tenders of higher denominations were introduced, and the motifs on the back of the notes transitioned — from fauna motifs such as tiger and sambar deer in the early years to motifs depicting agricultural endeavours in the '70s. The 1980s saw emphasis on symbols of scientific and technological advancements and Indian art forms. Thus, the Aryabhata satellite featured on the Rs 2 note, farm mechanisation on Rs 5, and the Konark Wheel on Rs 20, among others.

Since when has Gandhi's portrait featured on every banknote?

By the 1990s, the RBI felt that the traditional security features on currency notes were inadequate considering the advancements in reprographic techniques. It was believed that inanimate objects would be relatively easier to forge than a human face.

Gandhi was chosen as the face because of his national appeal, and in 1996, a new Mahatma Gandhi Series was launched by the RBI to replace the former Ashoka Pillar banknotes. Several security features were also introduced.

LONGER VERSION

indianexpress.com/explained

EXPLAINED POLICY

Protecting protected monuments

A Parliamentary Committee report has recommended pruning the list of centrally protected monuments. If the suggestion is accepted, on what basis will monuments be dropped? What else did the report say?

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

A PARLIAMENTARY Committee report tabled during the recent Special Session aims to prune the list of protected monuments in India. If the recommendations are followed, it will be the first time in the 75-year history of Independent India that monuments will be dropped from the prestigious list.

The 359th Report on Functioning of Archaeological Survey of India was prepared by the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture.

What did the report suggest?

Observing that many of the 3,691 centrally protected monuments (CPMs) are "minor" monuments with no national significance, the report recommended that the list should be "rationalised and categorised" on the basis of the structure's significance and architectural/heritage value.

It is estimated that this applies to at least a quarter of the CPMs. For instance, the list includes 75 graves of colonial-era soldiers or officials, which may not hold significant heritage value in the present time, the panel said.

So, what would be dropped?

While the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Ministry of Culture, under whose aegis ASI operates, are yet to draw up a list, the report is indicative of what kind of monuments are set to be excluded.

A small brick wall enclosure containing graves of two British officials in Karnataka's Kumta is a protected monument, the report pointed out. The structure has no architectural value and the individuals were of no historical significance. Yet, they are supposed to get the same level of protection as the country's most cherished monuments such as the Red Fort or the Taj Mahal, it argued.

Can monuments be dropped from the protected list?

Dropping monuments from the list may be easier said than done, because this is regulated by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Rules, 1959 (or AMASR Act, 1959). The Act protects monuments and sites that are more than 100 years old, including temples, cemeteries, inscriptions, tombs, forts, palaces, step-wells, rock-cut caves, and even objects like cannons and mile pillars (*kos minars*) that may be of historical significance.

The Act only provides for de-notification of a monument if it ceases to be of national importance. So if one were to drop certain monuments from the list of 3,691, it can only be done by amending the AMASR Act in Parliament, and perhaps by redefining the



The ASI's sprawling mandate includes the protection of some of the world's most exquisite pieces of architecture as well as some roadside structures of no great historical significance. In pic: (Left) the Taj Mahal in Agra, and a Kos Minar at the National Zoological Park, New Delhi. Praveen Khanna, Wikimedia Commons



terms 'monument' and 'national importance'.

Officials told *The Indian Express* that one viewpoint is to pass on the upkeep of these de-notified monuments to the respective state governments or district administrations, and not completely abandon them.

In that case, the ASI can spend its Rs 1,100 crore annual budget on more important aspects of heritage.

What did the report say about ASI's functioning?

The panel has also raised questions about the functioning of the ASI, in terms of its administration, security, restoration work and general upkeep of the sites. The committee — headed by YSRC's Rajya Sabha MP V Vijaisai Reddy, with more than a dozen LS and RS MPs across political parties as its members — made several suggestions.

Till date, 531 monuments, about 14.4% of the total CPMs, have been encroached upon. However, encroachments from only nine monuments have been removed since 2015, as per an ASI submission. The Committee recommended that the ASI should provide support to families affected in the process of encroachment removal and help them transition to alternative livelihoods.

It also advocated the use of advanced technologies such as LIDAR, ground-penetrating radar, and 3D scanning for enhanced accuracy and efficiency of excavations.

These tools can aid in non-invasive site analysis and data collection. Some of these

techniques were recently used inside the Gyanvapi complex in Varanasi by the ASI for its court-mandated survey, the report of which is yet to be made public.

What did it say about bifurcating the ASI?

The report advised bifurcation of the ASI on the basis of cerebral and managerial functions. While the ASI can look after the core mandate — exploration, excavation and conservation aspects — the India Heritage Development Corporation (IHDC) can deal with the revenue aspect, such as ticket collection, auctions, issuing licences, running cafeterias, selling mementos and running sound and light systems, it suggested.

What about restrictions on monuments?

The provision of a 100-metre prohibited area and 300-metre regulated area around all ASI protected monuments leads to public inconvenience, the report said. This provision was introduced in 2010 through an amendment in the AMASR Act, 1958, and prohibits and regulates all activities like mining and construction around the stipulated area of all protected monuments.

The report said in some cases, an entire village is within a radius of 300 metres from a monument, which makes it difficult for residents to repair their houses.

Is amending the rules feasible?

The government is already working to

amend these rules. In recent times, officials said, there have been many instances where this rule came in the way of infrastructural projects and real-estate development, as it applies equally to significant and insignificant monuments.

It is expected that the rules will be relaxed for smaller monuments like statues, cannons, etc., but retained for UNESCO World Heritage Sites, of which India has 42.

What about Monument Mitras?

Of the 24 agreements signed with various Monument Mitras (under Adopt a Heritage scheme), effective engagement took place only under four MoUs. The committee said concerns have been raised about the lack of prior experience of the private firms involved in restoration and conservation.

Adopt a Heritage 2.0 — launched earlier this month — incorporates a host of changes to the programme. As many as 1,000 more monuments have been added to the list for adoption.

Launched in 2017 under the Ministry of Tourism, the scheme invited corporate players to adopt protected monuments across the country. While it did not meet with an enthusiastic response, it also created a controversy, with the word spreading that the Red Fort "had been leased" to the Dalmia Group. In the updated programme launched by the Ministry of Culture, permissible activities have been clearly stated as per the AMASR Act.

Why onion traders in Nashik are on strike, and how it will affect prices

PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS
PUNE, OCTOBER 1

ONION TRADERS and commission agents of the 15 wholesale markets in Nashik, on strike since September 21, Saturday decided to extend the strike indefinitely.

Nashik is home to Lasalgaon, the largest onion wholesale market in India.

Why are traders on strike?

They are protesting the government's "interference" in the onion trade, including imposition of a 40% export duty last month and agencies like the National Cooperative

Agricultural Marketing Federation (NAFED) and the National Cooperative Consumer Federation (NCCF) being allowed to sell their procured onions in the wholesale markets in retail destinations. The traders also want a reduction of the market cess.

Unlike government agencies NAFED and NCCF, traders said, they can't cut costs and thus are unable to compete in terms of prices. Market cess is levied on the trade by the wholesale markets for services extended to the traders. However, traders said the cess levied in Nashik — 1 per cent of the transaction fee — was too high.

Multiple levels of talks, with state ministers and Union minister Piyush Goyal,

have been held on the issues, to no avail.

Government officials said the demand that NAFED and NCCF not offload their wares in the open market was untenable. "Our decision was taken to control high prices. Also, we do not have any separate retail channels to offload our procured onions," said an official from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs.

The 40% export duty, government officials said, was meant to ensure enough availability of onions in domestic markets. This is important given the lower-than-normal stock available, as earlier in the year,

around 40 per cent of the onions meant for storage were destroyed due to untimely rain and hailstorms. Onion acreage has dipped, with the country reporting 2.31 lakh hectares of sowing this year as against 2.53 lakh hectares of last year.

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

What would be the immediate effect of the strike?

For traders, the decision to boycott the auctions in Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis does not mean the end of business. The Devendra Fadnis-led government had unregulated onion from the list of Agricultural

APMC commodities, and thus traders can buy onion directly from the farmers. This, traders said, was a more feasible option for them as they would be spared the 1% market cess at APMC mandis.

On the other hand, the mandis would lose out on cess, their only source of income.

How has the strike affected onion prices?

Retail prices of onions have not seen much difference due to the strike. Traders cited two main reasons for this. The strike is only in the Nashik district, which feeds the retail markets of North and North East India. At present, stored onions from

Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and other states are feeding these markets. Retail markets in South India are being fed by onion growers from Pune, Ahmednagar and Karnataka. Exports, however, have come to a grinding halt.

But if the strike extends for long, there might be reasons to worry. This crop which was supposed to be planted in June was a month late this time and thus would arrive only towards the end of November. By then, the stored onions in all other states would be over and only the Nashik farmers would have some stock left. That being so, price escalation cannot be ruled out till the time the new crop arrives in the market.

14 IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

It's a voice of moderation. It's a call for peace. It demonstrates very clearly that the eventual solution will lie in diplomacy. It will not lie in military offensives... India's G20 presidency is really a voice for multilateralism



WHY AMITABH KANT

Riding on the back of a communique with complete consensus, the New Delhi G20 Leaders' Declaration makes India's G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant the man of the moment. With an incredible four-member team of Indian diplomats, 200-odd bilateral meetings and 16 formal meetings with member countries, and many sleepless

all-nights, Kant delivered a communique with a range of deliverables including accelerating progress on SDGs and building a framework for DPis. His four-decade career with the government, stint at NITI Aayog and being at the helm of the ambitious DMIC have given him a broad canvas to be a tough negotiator.



I think our G20 was very, very different from any other country. It was PM Modi's stature and standing that ensured the complete consensus. He had directed an inclusive, action-oriented and consensus-driven G20

Shubhajit Roy: This G20 summit adopted a joint communique with consensus. What happened in the last 72 to 96 hours before the summit declaration was adopted?

We were very clear that we should have a consensus-based document. By the time we had gone in for the final round of the Sherpas' meetings, we had agreed on a substantial amount of text. We did this almost 60 km away from Delhi, in Manesar. On September 4, we started discussing the geopolitical paragraph on Russia-Ukraine. That was the most complex... We kept the meeting on the morning of September 8 in Sushma Swaraj Bhavan, because, by then, the leaders started coming in. We gave them one draft, to which there were different viewpoints. We modified that and it went to Moscow and came back with many comments, and then we finally worked on that late evening. Then at 11.30 at night, we had our last round of Sherpa meetings, and said this is the final draft. I also told them that this would not be discussed anymore at the Sherpa level. If anyone wants to challenge this, their leader can discuss it with my leader, my prime minister... We were negotiating an agreement which even the United Nations Security Council was not able to achieve. We have a consensus language, which we feel is very strong. It moves the debate towards diplomacy and dialogue. It happened over 200-odd bilateral meetings and 16 formal meetings, through tough, brutal negotiations.

Shubhajit Roy: The UN Secretary-General recently said that it was a compromise document. It's a formulation of a compromise — Russia has not been condemned and has not been called out for aggression.

The important thing was to get everybody on the table. Russia was asking for many other things. The US and G7 were asking for other things. But we made everybody step back. This is what India was able to do. India was able to bring G7, emerging markets, Russia, China and everybody to the table to agree. We moved in to say that the final solution has to be a diplomatic solution, not a military one. Everybody stepped back for peace, security and for food supplies to resume. This is a far tougher language than Bali. Bali did not say that you will not use territorial acquisition nor (did it) focus on territorial integrity, and it did not talk about sovereignty or political independence. This is the first time these basic principles of the UN Charter have been used in the first paragraph itself.

Shubhajit Roy: What changed China's mind because there was a sense that consensus could be elusive since President Xi Jinping was not coming?

Whatever the bilateral challenges, China is a big-time multilateral player and it plays multilateral games in international forums. Once they realised that there are 19 countries supporting us on *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and women-led development, you could bilaterally talk to them. China joined us in saying that all emerging markets should work towards a consensus... We worked on our terms and got everybody around because we spoke the voice of the Global South and of the developing countries. This is one document which talks about developing countries from the preamble to the last.

Shubhajit Roy: How did the government arrive at this Global South construct and the African Union's inclusion?

The Prime Minister had started the G20 with a meeting of the voice of the Global South. Of the 125 countries that participated, we listened to all of them. Each one of our priorities was based on accelerating strong, sustainable and inclusive growth... After the Prime Minister had written to all the leaders about making the African Union a permanent member of G20, there was an overwhelming response. There were other regions and other associations, which also wanted to become a part of this.

Shubhajit Roy: There was a sort of expectation from some of the countries, mostly G7, that Ukraine would be invited as a guest country. How did that play out?

There was a lot of pressure. We just held firm. India was absolutely clear that it should be a meeting of G20.

Shubhajit Roy: When you have nine countries as invitees, why not?

The issues of growth and progress for all developing countries in the Global South are far more important than getting sucked into the Russia-Ukraine war. That's not a creation of the developing countries. We got sucked into World War I and II. We should try and avoid getting into the

'The IMEC needs to be projectised, de-risked and private sector brought in. It has huge strategic, economic advantage'

India's G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant on drafting the joint communique which got 100 per cent consensus, delivering a win-win on the Ukraine question, and the green development pact. The session was moderated by Shubhajit Roy, Diplomatic Editor, *The Indian Express*



India's G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant in conversation with Shubhajit Roy, Diplomatic Editor, *The Indian Express* Gajendra Yadav

Russia-Ukraine war.

Shubhajit Roy: Will this particular paragraph formulation have an impact on the negotiations for the war?

It's a voice of moderation. It's a call for peace. It demonstrates very clearly that the eventual solution will lie in diplomacy. It will not lie in military offensives... India's G20 presidency is really a voice for multilateralism. We've tried to move away from it being driven into one single issue, of Russia-Ukraine.

Shubhajit Roy: What are the two or three big takeaways from this document?

The green development pact is very important. It brings the focus on tripling renewable energy, circular economy, ending plastics and disaster-risk resilience. Secondly, we've used the G20 presidency to create an alternative model from big tech, to give a definition and framework for DPis (digital public infrastructure). Thirdly, no document of any multilateral institution has had such a huge focus on women empowerment, gender equality, and women-led development as this document has.

Shubhajit Roy: Did S Jaishankar have a role in this?

Of course. He's a brilliant external affairs minister, a great strategist. I was constantly taking his advice. He's been a big help. He's my senior from JNU.

Harikishan Sharma: One of the initiatives in the food and nutrition sector was the Deccan High Level Principles on Food Security and Nutrition. How do you see these principles translating into action?

There is a huge Indian narrative in this, one of which is the Deccan High Level Principles. Secondly, what India has brought to G20 is the focus on education, health and nutrition. Post-COVID, 200 million people have gone below the poverty line and 100 million people have lost their jobs. We've brought in a complete action plan for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which is really the job of the United Nations. The virtual summit in November (which India will hold) will be a stocktaking of the implementation of what has been accepted by the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration.

Shubhajit Roy: Are there any big things you have in mind under India's presidency till November?

We are looking at several things including how the Jan Bhagidari part can still

carry on. There's a lot we want to do on women-led development.

Aanchal Magazine: We believe China had opposition to any debt package having climate-resilient features. Saudi Arabia also had objections, and the word 'climate' was dropped. How are those negotiations done?

The important thing is to push for renewables. It was for the first time that we've talked about tripling renewable energy, about the requirement of scaling up financing, which has come into the preamble of the green development pact.

Vandita Mishra: This G20 consensus declaration brings two things into sharp relief. One is this emphasis on consensus abroad, while that seems to be very much missing at home. The other is this whole casting of the G20 as a much wider political public event than it has ever been so far.

India has done its G20 presidency very differently from other countries. The Prime Minister was very clear that you have to make it a people's presidency; not restrict it to Delhi, but hold it in every state. So, we held it in 60 cities of India. We used that opportunity to clean up the drainage, the sewer, the solid waste, and improve infrastructure. We've allowed states to build up their brand... So, I think our G20 was very, very different from any other country where it has been restricted to a capital or second city...

It was PM Modi's stature and standing that ensured the consensus. He had directed an inclusive, action-oriented and consensus-driven G20. We've demonstrated that G20 is not about developed countries, but it's about growth and progress, about social sectors, about sus-

tainable development goals.

And about your first question, I'm not a politician. So, I don't want to respond to it.

Shubhajit Roy: Ukraine president's presence was one of the red lines, but were there any others?

There were many other red lines. Every country had one. Some on nuclear; Russia too had a red line. But, we pushed everyone towards a common language. This is a far stronger language than Hiroshima plus partners' language of the G7.

Aakash Joshi: You mentioned DPI many times, but critics have often pointed out that it somehow doesn't square with the fact that we are the country with the highest number of internet shutdowns. How do you square these two things?

First, let me talk about DPis because it's important to delink them. They are two separate issues. One is the fact that everybody in India has a digital identity. Secondly, it's important to understand that between 2015 and 2017, India opened more than 500 million bank accounts, which was 55 per cent of the bank accounts opened across the world. And every second bank account that was opened, was seeded with Aadhaar and a mobile number. That brought down the cost of customer acquisition very low; from about \$150 to almost \$1 per customer. It led us to fast payments; we are today doing 11x more payments than what USA and Europe do, and 4x of what China does. As a consequence, many startups started giving credit which is paperless and cashless. Startups then took the stock market into rural areas. You now have a number of new-age startups which are unicorns, which are enabling insurance in less than a

minute... On the question about the internet shutting down, I think we should improve over a period of time. I'm a believer that it must improve.

Shubhajit Roy: Were there concerns when the meetings were in Kashmir?

We had excellent participation. G20 in Kashmir has been a remarkable success story. I think the city has improved radically. The smart-city concept in Srinagar has been brilliantly executed.

Sukalp Sharma: The elimination of fossil fuels was missing in the declaration. What is India's stance?

India's stance was that the world must move towards green hydrogen. See, even if we have 100 per cent of our electricity as renewable, it's only 20 per cent of energy. The balance 80 per cent is all hard-to-abate sector — refineries, fertiliser, steel, cement — that needs to be decarbonised.

Sukalp Sharma: And how do you see the declaration feeding into COP28, considering that G20 countries account for 80 per cent of global emissions?

Many things, especially green hydrogen, biofuel alliance, and tripling of renewable energy will get accelerated in COP28.

Amitabh Sinha: Do you see the Global Biofuels Alliance shaping up on the lines of the International Solar Alliance? Would you also want the Biofuels Alliance to be housed in India?

So, Biofuel Alliance is likely to be housed in India. It's very ambitious. It's almost on par with the International Solar Alliance, where USA-Saudi, USA-Brazil, which is a major biofuel producer, have collaborated with India to push this Biofuel Alliance. But, it is still a work in progress.

Amitabh Sinha: Some of the language is specifically on tripling of renewable energy and the global biofuels. Is India going to push for the inclusion of a similar kind of language in COP28?

Well, I don't want to prematurely talk about COP28... Our calculation shows that by 2030, we should be able to do much more than tripling of renewable energy. We are the only country in the world which has achieved 185 gigawatt of power.

Amitabh Sinha: We should be able to do tripling from what base?

From the original base. The only other country which has a similar climatic condition as India, or probably better, is Saudi. Saudi should move towards cleaner forms

of fuel rather than fossil fuels.

Shubhajit Roy: In Para 78, there's a very strong line about deploring all acts of religious hatred. How did this come about?

This came in because of Saudi and Indonesia; many countries wanted this in. That's how the para which we wanted on counterterrorism and not providing safe haven came in.

Anil Sasi: On the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), what are the next steps?

It's a work in progress. It needs to be fully projectised and de-risked. Then, the private sector needs to be brought in. It's big in its concept, and has a huge strategic and economic advantage for India.

Shubhajit Roy: It's a very ambitious project, but people who've analysed it say that economics and connectivity probably don't support it as yet.

I've worked on this Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, the DFC... These are projects which have to be ambitious in nature, but they start acquiring a life of their own. It will radically transform the region, and India will be a very big beneficiary.

Aanchal Magazine: Artificial Intelligence has found a mention in the declaration. Were there larger concerns raised by leaders?

Many leaders raised that issue on how AI must not be used for human harm. Some leaders spoke of how it can be transformational for social sectors, while other leaders felt that it's still at an evolutionary stage. There were many views on this.

Shubhajit Roy: Is this the toughest job that you've had in the last 40 years?

Undoubtedly, this was very tough because you were negotiating with 29 countries, 43 leaders, plus all international organisations. And all top-class professionals, all really brutal negotiators. It's not easy.

Shubhajit Roy: So what next? Cabinet minister?

No, I am not interested in politics. I just want to travel around India, read and write.

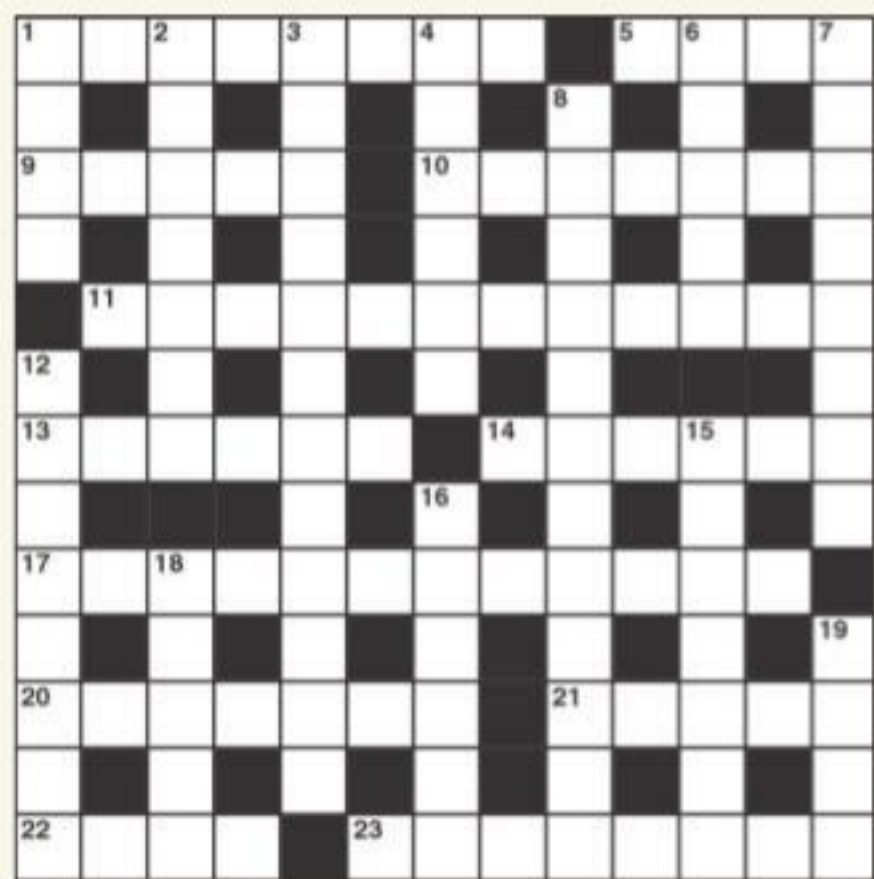
Harikishan Sharma: Modi believes more in bureaucrats than his political leaders. So, do you see a bigger responsibility for you?

I've had a very long innings in government. I've been working for almost 44 years now. So, I have no ambition to get into politics or any such thing.



We got sucked into World War I and II. We should try and avoid getting into the Russia-Ukraine war... The issues of growth and progress for developing countries in the Global South are far more important

CROSSWORD 5171



ACROSS

- 1 A way to spoil fish (8)
- 5 Article is itself sent back from the continent (4)
- 9 It's even reversible (5)
- 10 Press it, being resolved (7)
- 11 Chippendale for prime minister (7-5)
- 13 Flag officer? (6)
- 14 Walk a short way and turn (6)
- 17 Only just obtained freedom? (6,6)
- 20 New names it provides for the residents (7)
- 21 Lad that is treated right may become perfect (5)
- 22 See a new kind of relief (4)
- 23 Supports and awaits instructions (6,2)

DOWN

- 1 An outlaw let out of the bag (4)
- 2 Disclosures that several changes need to be made (7,5)
- 3 Official crossing place (7,5)
- 4 The master has no head for fish (6)
- 6 Smooth film of oil (5)
- 7 Nevertheless desirous of obtaining a monopoly? (5,3)
- 8 An actor may take it when at a loss for words (6,6)
- 12 For the moment it may be Greenwich (8)
- 15 He pours out music from his lyre (7)
- 16 Afternoon service? (3,3)
- 18 About to sum up the brother of Romulus (5)
- 19 Scope for amusement (4)

Solutions Crossword 5170 Across: 1 Margarine, 8 Niobe, 9 Sunrise, 10 Talent, 11 Ashlar, 12 After all, 15 Hacienda, 18 Narrow, 20 Narrow, 21 Zealous, 22 Minus, 23 Tactician Down: 2 Abuts, 3 Girdle, 4 Restrain, 5 Engage, 6 Nosegay, 7 Gentility, 11 Arch-enemy, 13 Transept, 14 Scoring, 16 Epitost, 17 Garlic, 19 Laura

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLLED 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.

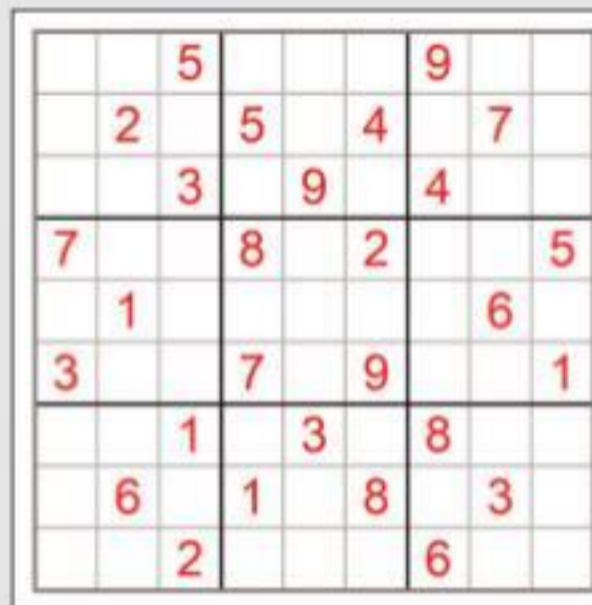
If you want to know who your friends are, get yourself a _____ - Charles Bukowski (4,8)

IREEE AEPLNT
 ADITS EITCJN

SOLUTION: EERIE, EERIE, STAIR, PLANE/P/PLAINT, INJECT
 ANSWER: If you want to know who your friends are, get yourself a jail sentence. - Charles Bukowski

SUDOKU 5338

Difficulty Level 3s
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 5337



SALUTE THE SOLDIER

20 JAN 1977 - 02 OCT 2002
 Capt Dilip Kumar Jha, Kirti Chakra laid down his life while fighting against an infiltrating terrorist column during "OPERATION RAKSHAK" on the Line of Control in J&K while on attachment with 7 JAT. In the truest tradition of the Indian Army, Capt Dilip Kumar Jha led from the front displaying exemplary courage and conspicuous bravery by killing three terrorists before making the supreme sacrifice. He will always be remembered and missed by all of us in the Army Ordnance Corps for his supreme sacrifice and gallant act. **DG OS & Sr Colonel Commandant and all rks of the AOC**

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. P.C.
 Where as complaint has been made before me that accused **Vikas S/o Sh. Sunil, R/o- H No. 219, Nimri Colony, Ashok Vihar, Delhi** has committed (or suspected to have committed) the offence in case registered vide **FIR No. 225/15 U/s 279/338 IPC P.S. Moti Nagar, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused **Vikas** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Vikas** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
 Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Vikas** of case **FIR No. 225/15 U/s 279/338 IPC P.S. Moti Nagar, Delhi** is required to appear before this court (or before me) to answer the complaint on or before the day of **03.11.2023**
 By Order,
Ms. Shagun
 Metropolitan Magistrate-04,
 West, Room No. 268,
 Tis Hazari Court, Delhi.

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, RAJNI D/o Rajbir Singh R/o H No-73, Block-O, Krishan Vihar New Delhi-110086 have changed my name to Rajni Singh
 0040691677-1

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client KALURAM AHIRWAR S/O RAMDEEN AHIRWAR & MAMTA W/O SHRI KALURAM AHIRWAR R/O G-6/338, GROUND FLOOR, SECTOR-16, ROHINI, DELHI, have served all relations from their son KARAN AHIRWAR and Daughter-in-Law PARWATI AHIRWAR and their legal heir will not right, title, interest and claim, in their movable or immovable properties. If any body any kinds of deals with them shall be treated as null and void and my clients and their legal heirs shall not be responsible.
K. K. SHARMA (Advocate)
 828, 8th Floor, Layers Chamber Complex, Rohini Court, Delhi-85

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, DEEPIKA Prasad, D/o Sh. Shambhu Nath Prasad, R/o 464, Sector-8, R.K. Puram, New Delhi-110022 do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I have changed my name from Deepika Kumari to Deepika Prasad vide affidavit at Delhi Court dated 28-01-2022 for all purposes.

KALYANA KARNATAKA ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION

Stores & Purchase Department, Central Offices,
 Sarige Sadana, Main Road, Kalaburagi-585 102.
 Tel. & Fax No. 08472-260502, Mobile No. 77606 86172 (COSP), 77609 92029 (S.O).
 No. KKT/CO/COSP/ 504 /2023-24 Dated: 30.09.2023

NOTICE INVITING SHORT TERMS TENDER

(THROUGH KPP PORTAL MODE ONLY)
 Tenders through e-procurement portal (pre-qualification & commercial) are invited for supply of following items:
 1) No. & date : **G-11/30.09.23**, 2) Tender nomenclature : Supply of ETM Thermal Paper Rolls,
 3) Value : **Rs. 99.00 lakhs**, 4) Last date for online submission: **09.10.2023**
 All the details of Tender, Registration, Tender form documents etc. are available at **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/#/portal/portal-home**. Mail to **cospnkrct@gmail.com** or **support@eprocelpdesk.com** for further information if required. Further, any addendum / corrigendum related to changes in terms and conditions of tender, specification and calendar of events etc. will be uploaded only through KPP portal.
Sd/- Controller of Stores and Purchases (Tender Inviting Authority)
 DIPR/Kalaburagi/334/KSMC&A/2023-24

UJVN Limited

(An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprises)
 H.O. "UJJWAL" Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun.-248006
 Telephones: 0135-2763808, Fax: 2736508
 CIN No.: U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvn.com

RO. No. 939 **CORRIGENDUM NO.-01** Date: 30.09.2023
 In Tender No: 11/EE(E&M)/MB-II/BARRAGE/2023-24 for "Repairing and Rewinding of various pumps and motors at Joshiyara Barrage, MB-II, Uttarkashi" invited by office of Executive Engineer (E&M), Joshiyara barrage, Uttarkashi, the first sentence at S.No. 15 Completion Period of "SECTION-3: SPECIAL CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT" should be read as follow:
"The supply/work shall be completed during 12 months from the date of start"
 Other conditions of tender shall remain same. For eligibility & further details, kindly visit Nigam website **www.ujvn.com**.
 Executive Engineer (E&M)
"AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"

State Bank of India भारतीय स्टेट बैंक

Local Head Office, Bhopal स्थानीय प्रधान कार्यालय, भोपाल

Shri Parveen Kumar
 Dy. Manager (PF Index-5692024)
 G-161, Sector-10, DLF Faridabad, Haryana Pin code - 121006

VOLUNTARY VACATION OF SERVICE : ORDER UNDER RULE 40(3) of SBIOSR, 1992
 It is to mention that you have remained absent from Bank's duty without submitting an application for leave since 27.02.2023. Accordingly vide our speed post notice dated 12.06.2023, you have been instructed to report for duty and to explain reasons for your absence within 30 days of the notice and you were also advised about consequences of not complying with said notice.
 2. In spite of receipt of said notice you failed to report for duty within notice period. Thereby Competent authority passed an order dated 31.08.2023, that it is deemed that you have voluntarily vacated from services of the Bank w.e.f. 20.07.2023. Copy of said order was already communicated /sent to you by Bank on your e-mail id parveen8389@gmail.com as well as through registered post at your last known address and permanent address as per service records. Please take notice of the said order.
 3. You are hereby requested to pay 3 month's emoluments within 15 days of the receipt of this notice, failing which the Bank will be constrained to set off the same against your terminal dues and any other amount payable to you without prejudice to recovering the full amount or part thereof by suit.
 Place : Bhopal
 Date : 31.08.2023

APPOINTING AUTHORITY
 General Manager
 Local Head Office, Bhopal

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Adv. No.- BCECEB(PGMAC)-2023/14 Dated : 01.10.2023 **bceceboard.bihar.gov.in**

Notice related to Round-3 Online Counselling

विज्ञापन संख्या- BCECEB(PGMAC)-2023/11 & 2023/12 दिनांक 24.09.2023 एवं 2023/13 दिनांक 26.09.2023 के क्रम में PGMAC-2023 से सम्बन्धित सभी अभ्यर्थियों / संस्थानों / सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि PGMAC-2023 के वैसे अभ्यर्थी जो Round-2 Counselling के आधार पर आवंटित संस्थान में नामांकित हैं अथवा Round-3 Counselling के लिए Upgradation "Yes" का विकल्प दिये हैं तथा Reporting Centre पर उपस्थित हो कर Document Verification करा चुके हैं एवं AIQ द्वारा प्रकाशित Round-3 का Seat Allotment Result में Seat allotment हुआ है और उक्त सीट पर नामांकन हेतु वे अपने PGMAC-2023 के Admitted / Allotted Seat छोड़ना (Resign) चाहते हैं वैसे सभी अभ्यर्थी दिनांक 02.10.2023 (10.00 a.m.) से 04.10.2023 (2.00 p.m.) तक को अवधि में Forfeiture of Security Deposit Amount के साथ Resign कर सकते हैं, परन्तु वे PGMAC-2023 के Stray Vacancy Round Counselling के लिए पात्रता-प्राप्त नहीं होंगे। Resign करने हेतु अभ्यर्थी को अपने आवंटित संस्थान में उपस्थित होना अनिवार्य होगा। सम्बन्धित अभ्यर्थी, आवंटित संस्थान से Resign करने के उपरान्त वे Online Counselling Portal के माध्यम से generated "Resignation Slip" तथा अपना मूल अभिलेख (यदि जमा है) को प्राप्त करना सुनिश्चित कर लेंगे। अभ्यर्थी यह सुनिश्चित करेंगे कि वे अपना Resignation letter online, बोर्ड द्वारा उनके आवंटित संस्थान को प्रेषित द्वारा उपलब्ध कराये गये portal से generate कर प्राप्त करेंगे।
 2. वैसे अभ्यर्थी जो Round-2 Counselling द्वारा आवंटित संस्थान में उपस्थित हो कर निर्धारित अवधि में Document Verification करा चुके हैं एवं साथ ही Round-3 Counselling हेतु upgradation "Yes" का विकल्प दिये हैं, परन्तु अगर वे निर्धारित तिथि दिनांक 02.10.2023 (10.00 a.m.) से 04.10.2023 (2.00 p.m.) तक को अवधि में संस्थान में उपस्थित होकर Resign नहीं करते हैं तो वैसे स्थिति में उन्हें PGMAC-2023 को Round-3 Counselling हेतु इच्छुक मान लिया जायेगा एवं Round-3 Counselling द्वारा आवंटित सीट (Upgrade / Retained) पर नामांकन लेना अनिवार्य होगा, अन्यथा उनको Security Deposit Amount forfeit कर लिया जाएगा तथा Stray Vacancy Round Counselling के लिए पात्रता-प्राप्त नहीं होंगे।
 3. Resign करने से सम्बन्धित कार्यक्रम निम्नवत् है:
Resignation with Forfeiture of Security Deposit : 02.10.2023 (10.00 a.m.) to 04.10.2023 (2.00 p.m.)
 4. पूर्व प्रकाशित विज्ञापन संख्या-BCECEB(PGMAC)-2023/11 & 2023/12 दिनांक 24.09.2023 एवं 2023/13 दिनांक 26.09.2023 को अन्य शर्तों तथा कॉन्डिशनिंग कार्यक्रम पश्चात् रहेगी।
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16 ECONOMY

MARKET WATCH

MCAP OF 5 OUT OF 10 DECLINES

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of five of the top 10 most valued firms declined by Rs 62,586.88 crore last week, with IT majors Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys taking the biggest hit, amid an overall bearish trends in equities. **PTI**

IMPORT OF RUSSIAN, IRAQI OIL TO INDIA STEPPED UP IN SEPTEMBER

India's crude oil imports - Russia, Iraq gain at Saudi Arabia's expense

SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

AFTER FALLING in August, India's imports of Russian and Iraqi oil recovered in September, most likely due to their price advantage over comparable Saudi Arabian crude grades, even as India's overall crude oil imports slumped to their lowest this year as the refinery maintenance shutdown season kicked in, shows an analysis of data from commodity market analytics and intelligence firm Kpler.

India's Russian oil imports had fallen to a seven-month low of 1.55 million barrels per day (million bpd) in August. In September, however, it jumped 18.3 per cent sequentially to 1.83 million bpd. As for India's oil imports from Iraq, September volumes were higher by 7.4 per cent over August at around 916,690 bpd. The share of Russia and Iraq in India's September oil imports stood at around 43 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively. In August, Russia's share was 35.4 per cent, while Iraq's was 19.5 per cent.

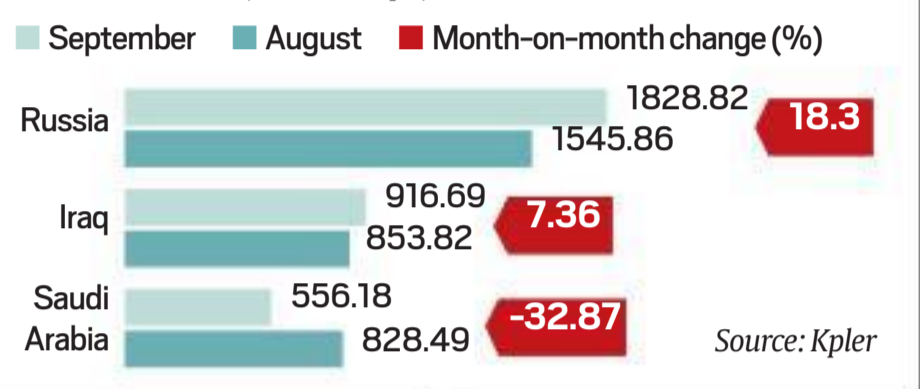
Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, saw its market share contract to around 13 per cent in September from nearly 19 per cent in August. India's oil imports from Riyadh in September were at around 556,185 bpd, down nearly a third from August volumes. Between January 2022 and August 2023, the import volumes averaged at over 750,000 bpd.



Saudi Arabia is the third-biggest supplier of crude oil to India, behind top supplier Russia, and Iraq in the second spot. *File*

SUPPLYING CRUDE OIL

OIL IMPORTS (thousand bpd)



Currently, Saudi Arabia is the third-biggest supplier of crude oil to India, behind top supplier Russia, and Iraq in the second spot. Traditionally, Riyadh used to be New Delhi's second-biggest source of crude after Baghdad. But after the war in Ukraine broke out, Russia displaced Iraq and Saudi Arabia as India's largest oil supplier by offering deep discounts

on its crude. Prior to the war, Russia was only a marginal player in India's oil trade.

"Price competitiveness favours Russian crude and if the Indian refiners want to take term volumes from the Middle East, they seem to prefer Iraqi barrels as Basrah Medium continues to be some \$2 per barrel cheaper than (the competing Saudi

Arabian crude grades) Arab Medium or Arab Light," Kpler's Lead Crude Analyst Viktor Katona said. Indian refiners mostly purchase Russian crude from the spot market, while West Asian oil is predominantly bought through term contracts. A narrowing of discounts on Russian crude was seen as one of the primary reasons for the fall in India's oil imports from Moscow in August. Industry insiders suggest that discounts started expanding after Indian refiners reduced purchases of Russian oil, which is likely to have played a role in the rebound seen in September.

The recent rise in prices of Saudi Arabian crudes—like Arab Light and Arab Medium—vis-a-vis competing medium-sour grades like Oman, Dubai, and Basrah Medium from the region has led to a reduced appetite for the former. Russia's flagship grade Urals, which accounts for the lion's share of India's Russian oil imports—is also a medium sour crude. According to Katona, while prices of medium sour grades have generally risen in the wake of Riyadh's voluntary production curbs and Russia's export cuts, those of the Saudi Arabian grades have climbed more and are trading at a premium. As reported earlier by *The Indian Express*, India's Saudi Arabian oil imports in September were expected to fall considerably due to the price advantage of competing crude grades from other countries in the wake of pro-

duction cuts by Riyadh, and impending maintenance shutdown of some units at the Jamnagar refining complex of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), the biggest Indian buyer of Saudi Arabian oil. As per Kpler's analysis, RIL accounts for around 35 per cent of India's oil imports from Riyadh.

In fact, the maintenance shutdown at RIL along with similar activity at a few units of public sector refiners also resulted in India's crude oil imports falling to an 11-month low of 4.26 million bpd, according to Kpler data. India is the World's third-largest consumer of crude oil and depends on imports to meet over 85 per cent of its requirement. The country's overall crude oil refining capacity stands at over 5 million bpd.

"With September crude imports into India coming at the lowest level of 2023, the stage is set for the lowest month of refinery runs, which should be in October. In October, 550,000 bpd of refinery capacity will be offline (due to maintenance shutdowns). So, even if refiners run above 100%, as has been the case for many months in 2023, they still would not be able to ramp up runs above 4.8-4.9 million bpd," Katona said.

He expects a rebound in Indian arrivals of crude from the second half of October given that most maintenance shutdowns should be completed by the early November, and crude oil is usually imported a few weeks before the refining process.

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

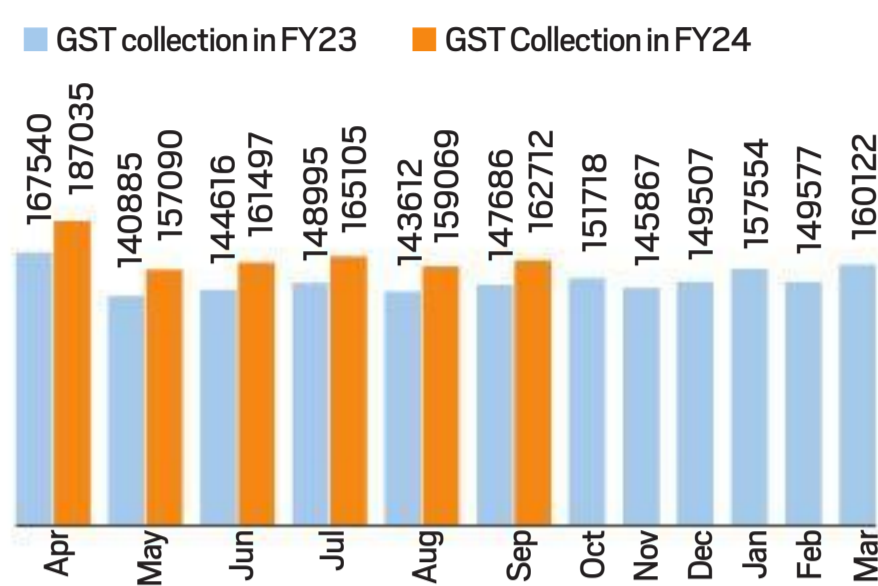
GROSS GOODS and Services Tax (GST) collections grew 10.2 per cent to over Rs 1.62 lakh crore in September (for sales in August), crossing the Rs 1.6 lakh crore mark for the fourth time in the current financial year, data released by the Finance Ministry on Sunday showed. Pickup in consumption and economic activity along with settlement through payments by businesses before the limitation deadline of September 30 for notices related to financial year 2017-18 seems to have aided the rise in GST collections.

In August, the GST collection was Rs 1,59,069 crore. The total GST collections stood at Rs 1,62,712 crore in September, out of which Central GST—the tax levied on intra-state supplies of goods and services by the Centre—was Rs 29,818 crore, State GST—the tax levied on intra-state supplies of goods and services by the states—was Rs 37,657 crore, Integrated GST—the tax levied on all inter-state supplies of goods and services—was Rs 83,623 crore (including Rs 41,145 crore collected on import of goods) and cess was Rs 11,613 crore (including Rs 881 crore collected on import of goods).

Revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) were 14 per cent higher than revenues from these sources during the same month last year, the Finance Ministry

MONTHLY GROSS COLLECTION

GST COLLECTION (Rs in crore)



said in its statement. "The gross GST collection for the first half of the FY 2023-24 ending September, 2023 [Rs 9,92,508 crore] is 11 per cent higher than the gross GST collection in the first half of FY 2022-23 [Rs 8,93,334 crore].

The average monthly gross collection in FY 2023-24 is Rs 1.65 lakh crore, which is 11 per cent higher than average monthly gross collection for first half of FY 2022-23 where it was Rs 1.49 lakh crore," the ministry said.

With the recent spate of notices being sent by the GST authorities for recovery of tax not paid or short paid or input tax credit wrongly availed or utilised for the financial 2017-18, tax experts said the end of the limitation period on September 30

could also have prompted some businesses to settle their pending dues before the deadline and thus, would have added to the revenues.

"With the normal period of limitation for FY17-18 ending on 30th September, some of this increased collection could be linked to businesses having settled issues with payment of taxes for the said period. While 1.6 lakh crore plus seems to be the new normal, this could see a further uptick with the festive season round the corner," Abhishek Jain, Indirect Tax Head & Partner, KPMG said.

Some other tax experts noted that the pickup could also be attributed to the beginning of the festive season.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Festive demand steers PV wholesales to record high in Sept

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

PASSENGER VEHICLE wholesales in India rose to record levels in September as automakers dispatched stocks to dealers in order to cater to the robust demand in the ongoing festive season.

The industry dispatches stood at 3,63,733 units last month, the best ever in a month. The previous best was reported in August 2023 with dispatches of 3,60,700 units.

"This is the highest ever September of course, in any year in the Indian passenger vehicle history. It is also the highest ever in any month so far," Maruti Suzuki India Senior Executive Officer (Marketing and Sales) Shashank Srivastava told reporters in a virtual press meet.

He noted that dispatches rose in September as the dealers prepared for the festive season which kicks in a big way from October 14.

Last month also witnessed robust demand in western and southern states due to various festivals which see increase in car sales, Srivastava said.

Another reason is better avail-

ability of cars due to chip supplies stabilising, he added.

Last month Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and Toyota reported their best ever monthly wholesales as they ramped up supplies to dealers in order to cater to the robust demand owing to the ongoing festive season.

Mahindra & Mahindra also reported the highest ever wholesale of SUVs at 41,267 units last month, a growth of 20 per cent over 34,262 units in September 2022.

Srivastava said the wholesales were also the best ever for the passenger vehicle industry in the April-September quarter.

"And it is the first time that in nine months till September, the industry passenger vehicles sales have crossed the 30-lakh unit mark, which means that we are on course to reach 40-lakh unit mark both for the financial year as well as the calendar year," he noted.

Srivastava said it is for the first time ever that the industry has breached the 20-lakh unit sales mark in the April-September period. MSI said its total wholesales increased 3 per cent year-on-year to 1,81,343 units in September, its best ever in a month.

FPIs turn net sellers after 6 months of investment

FPIs SELLING SHARES

₹14,767 cr
SEPTEMBER

₹12,262 cr
AUGUST

₹1.74 lakh cr FPIs bought shares from March to August

TOTAL INVESTMENT BY FPIs IN 2023

₹1.2 lakh cr: Indian equity
over Rs 29,000 cr: Debt market



REASONS FOR SELLING

- Rising US interest rates
- Economic uncertainties in the US and Eurozone regions
- Steady dollar appreciation
- Steady rise in the US bond yields
- The spike in Brent crude

Source: PTI

Resolutions under insolvency law likely to touch 300 this fiscal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

THE NUMBER of resolutions of stressed assets under the insolvency law is likely to touch 300 this financial year, after rising 80 per cent in the last fiscal, and efforts are on to speed up the process for faster resolutions, senior officials said on Sunday.

Corporate Affairs Secretary Manoj Govil said the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

ecosystem needs to be prepared to deal with 1,000 resolutions.

Under the IBC, which provides for a market-linked and time-bound resolution process of stressed assets, creditors have witnessed recoveries of nearly Rs 3 lakh crore so far and the recovery amount stood at more than Rs 51,000 crore in 2022-23 financial year.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India Chairperson Ravi Mital said the number of resolutions rose 80 per

cent to 180 in the last financial year and is likely to touch 300 this year (2023-24 fiscal) and added that till August 2023, the resolutions stood at around 135. Further, he urged insolvency resolution professionals to speed up their efforts in resolving the cases.

Speaking at the event in the national capital to mark the seventh annual day of the IBC, a key institution in implementing the IBC, Mital said the law is a factor in the reduction of non-performing assets.

ATF price hiked to highest level in 11 months; could push up airfares

SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

AVIATION TURBINE fuel (ATF) prices for domestic airlines have been hiked by 5 per cent to their highest levels this year. The monthly price hike, the fourth straight one due to the spurt in international prices of crude oil and jet fuel, is expected to put additional pressure on airlines and might result in higher airfares during the upcoming festival season that usually sees a surge in travel demand.

ATF, or jet fuel, is the single-biggest cost for airlines and for Indian carriers, it accounts for over 40 per cent of their operational expenses. Jet fuel prices have risen by over 32 per cent since June and the current price levels are the highest since November of last year.

Industry insiders suggest that travel demand in the festival season is seen as much higher than last year, while airlines have not been able to add capacity significantly. Given the situation, high jet fuel prices could force flyers to shell out even more.

With the latest price hike, jet fuel is now priced at Rs 1,18,199.17 per kilolitre (kl) in Delhi, Rs 1,10,592.31 per kl in Mumbai, Rs 1,26,697.08 per kl in Kolkata, and



ATF accounts for over 40% of operational expenses. *File*

Rs 1,22,423.92 per kl in Chennai, as per information provided by the country's largest fuel retailer Indian Oil Corporation (IOC). ATF prices vary across the country due to differences in levies charged by states.

IOC takes the lead in announcing jet fuel prices at the beginning of each month, and the other two public sector fuel retailers—Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL)—usually follow IOC in fuel pricing.

Global benchmark Brent crude is trading at over \$95 per barrel, up around 14 per cent from a month ago and around 28 per cent from three months ago. Along with crude oil, which is the raw material for petroleum fuels including ATF, margins on various

fuels have also been firming up in the international market.

The outlook for ATF margins has been particularly robust, given the rising global demand for the fuel as air travel normalises to pre-pandemic levels.

Earlier this month, Brent crude breached the \$90-per-barrel mark for the first time in 2023.

The latest uptick in oil prices came after major oil producers Saudi Arabia and Russia surprised the world by announcing an extension of their voluntary supply cuts—totaling 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd)—fill the end of 2023.

The two oil-rich countries are leading the cartel of major oil producing nations in efforts to prop up crude oil prices by reducing supply despite expectations of a rise in global oil demand.

BRIEFLY

Sanjay Swarup assumes charge as CONCOR CMD

New Delhi: Sanjay Swarup on Sunday took over as the Chairman and Managing Director of Container Corporation of India Limited (CONCOR). In his three-decade career, Swarup has held leadership roles in various public sector enterprises and government organisations. **ENS**

KPM Swamy takes charge as NBCC India CMD

New Delhi: K. P. Mahadevaswamy assumed the charge of Chairman & Managing Director of NBCC (India) Ltd with effect from October 1, 2023. **ENS**

L&T group Chairman steps down

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 1

LARSEN & Toubro's A M Naik on Saturday stepped down as the group's chairman and handed the reins of \$23 billion conglomerate to S N Subrahmanyam, the present Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer.

Naik, 81, will now be the chairman of its IT companies and the employees trust along with the continuous focus on scaling up the many philanthropic initiatives that he has been undertaking for the past few years.

Naik had joined L&T in 1965 as a junior engineer and went on to become its group Chairman. In the near three-decade that he spent in leadership roles, Naik helped L&T grow to its present size and stature. Between 1985 and 1995, L&T set up a world-class heavy engineering and manufacturing facility at Hazira, now rechristened the A M Naik Heavy Engineering Complex.

RBI policy: Why MPC is likely to maintain a repo rate pause?

HITESH VYAS
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 1

THE SIX-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which will be meeting from October 4 to 6, is expected to keep the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent for the fourth consecutive time, as consumer price index (CPI) based inflation continues to remain sticky. The central bank is also likely to maintain its 'withdrawal of accommodation' stance in the policy, economists believe.

Why will RBI maintain a status quo?

The six-member rate-setting panel will meet against a backdrop of growing domestic as well as external economic challenges. These domestic challenges encompass growing risks to consumption demand amid soaring food inflation, an uneven monsoon adversely affecting kharif crops, higher interest rates and rising global crude oil prices, a Care Ratings report said.

Bank of Baroda Chief Economist Madan Sabnavis said



The RBI is unlikely to change its GDP forecast in upcoming monetary policy, said economists. *File*

the credit policy will most likely continue with existing rate structure as well as policy stance. The repo rate, the rate at which the RBI lends money to banks to meet their short-term funding needs, currently stands at 6.5 per cent.

"Inflation is still high at 6.8 per cent and while we do expect it to come down sharply in September and October, there is still some pessimism on Kharif output especially relating to pulses which has potential to push up prices further," Sabnavis said.

Last month, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the frequent incidences of recurring food price shocks pose a risk to anchoring of inflation expectations, which has been underway since September 2022. The RBI will remain watchful of this situation, he had said.

Consumer price index (CPI) based inflation, or retail inflation, eased to 6.83 per cent in August from a 15-month high of 7.44 per cent in July. It continues to remain

above the RBI's comfort zone of 2-6 per cent.

"...food inflation risks along with rising crude oil prices remain a concern. We, therefore, expect the MPC to maintain a hawkish pause," said Upasna Bhardwaj, Chief Economist, Kotak Mahindra Bank.

Since the August 10th policy, international crude oil prices have averaged nearly \$89 per barrel, sitting above \$85 per barrel factored into RBI estimates (April 2023 policy briefing). In fact, since September 8, prices have hovered above \$90 per barrel. At the time of the last RBI policy, oil prices averaged around \$79 per barrel, implying a 12.6 per cent jump in prices since the previous policy, a Bank of Baroda's recent report said. The recent spike in crude oil prices and global bond yields shall keep MPC vigilant on inflation-growth dynamics. The MPC is expected to maintain status quo on rates and stance at the upcoming October meeting," said Parijat Agrawal, head-fixed income, Union Asset Management Company.

Will there be a change in GDP growth forecast?

The RBI is unlikely to change its GDP forecast in the upcoming monetary policy, economists said.

"With the prevailing economic headwinds, we expect the RBI to retain its growth projections at 6.5 per cent for FY24 as the RBI will likely adopt a 'wait and watch' approach, seeking better visibility on festive demand trends and estimates of kharif production before making any adjustments," Care Ratings said in the report.

The growth fundamentals still remain strong but the key uncertainty remains around the impact of weak monsoon on agriculture production, the BoB report said. It expects GDP growth to moderate to around 6.3 per cent in FY2024, slightly lower than the RBI's projection of 6.5 per cent. The lower estimate is based on the expectation of continued slowdown in Europe and China, weaker exports, and risks to rural demand on the back of weak monsoon activity this year, BoB's economist Sonal Badhan said in the report.

The RBI will not revise its GDP

forecast for the time being, as it may await final agriculture production estimates and data on festive spending before tweaking the numbers, she said.

Can inflation projection be revised?

Analysts expect revision in inflation projections for the second quarter and for FY2024 but not in a significant manner.

In August, retail inflation moderated to 6.8 per cent from a high of 7.4 per cent in July. While the volatile component of the food basket has cooled significantly, price pressures persist in cereals, spices, and pulses, Care Ratings said.

The slowing of pulses has lagged by approximately 4.6 per cent in this Kharif season, and high-frequency retail prices suggest a sequential uptick in the prices of pulses in September.

However, the rating agency expects food inflation to moderate going ahead with average inflation in the food basket slowing from 6.9 per cent in Q2 to 5.6 per cent in Q3 and 5.1 per cent in Q4 of FY2024. **FULL REPORT ON**
www.indianexpress.com

Shadab: Need ace bowling attack to win World Cup

TANISHQ VADDI
HYDERABAD, OCTOBER 1

PAKISTAN VICE-CAPTAIN Shadab Khan believes a team will need a potent bowling attack to have any hope of winning the World Cup.

The Men in Green have lost young speedster Naseem Shah in the lead-up to the tournament, but with the likes of Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf in the mix, Shadab believes Pakistan have enough firepower in their tank to challenge for the big prize.

"The team which has a good bowling attack will win the tournament. In these conditions, containing batsmen and picking wickets is difficult. Wickets here are flat and boundaries short, so whichever team bowls well will win the tournament. We too have world-class bowlers and if we do well, we can win the tournament," Shadab told a press conference on Sunday.

Mohammad Wasim Jr too can crank up the speed gun on a regular basis while Hasan Ali, Naseem's replacement, is an experienced campaigner as well.

However, a major area of concern for Pakistan heading into the tournament is their spin bowling department, which struggled to pick wickets in the middle overs during the Asia Cup even in subcontinental conditions. Shadab himself managed six wickets in five games at an average of 40.83. "My form hasn't been good recently. A player gets mentally down due to unsatisfactory performance. However, a break has given me a chance to recover and I look forward to performing well in the World Cup," the leggie said.

As far as Pakistan's batting is concerned, opener Fakhar Zaman is under pressure after a horrid run of form in recent times. In five Asia Cup outings, the left-hander managed 65 runs at an average of 16.25. But Shadab backed his teammate to produce match-winning performances.

"He is a big and impactful player, even if not in every game. Players like these are not consistent. The three tons he has made this year have come in a winning cause. Every team would like to have a world-class player like him. We want to give him the mental space. We don't have as many impact players as Fakhar. Those kinds of players would always be supported. When he performs in big games, the team wins," Shadab said.

India will remember Zaman because of the match-winning century he hit against them in the 2017 ICC Champions Trophy final.

Shadab also expressed admiration for fellow wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav, who had a five-wicket haul in his last outing against Pakistan, and said India skipper Rohit Sharma is one Indian batsman he enjoys watching.

"I am a leg-spinner so I will pick Kuldeep Yadav because of the kind of form he is in. In these conditions, it is very difficult for spinners to do well," he said.

"I like Rohit Sharma as he is one of those batsmen who once he gets himself in, it is very difficult to get his wicket and he becomes very dangerous."

Shadab also expressed admiration for fellow wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav, who had a five-wicket haul in his last outing against Pakistan



Shadab Khan during his press conference on Sunday. AP

As the World Cup caravan is set to roll, a question arises: **How does a place and its social milieu shape a cricketer and influence their game?** Could Virat Kohli have been the same player were he born in Guwahati East and not in West Delhi? Or what would have happened to Kuldeep Yadav had he been from Colaba in Mumbai? We find out over the next few days

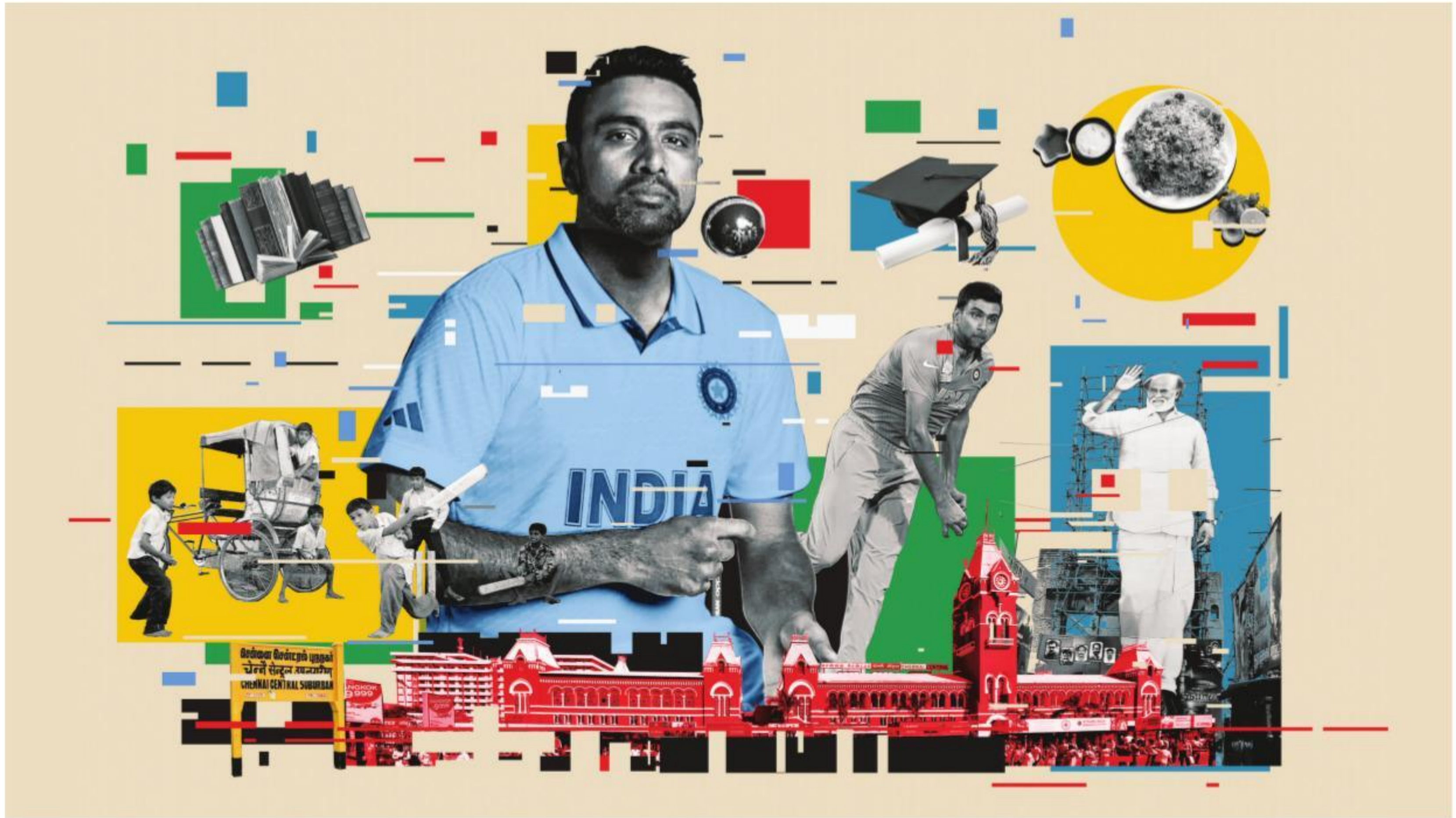


Illustration: Suvajiti Dey

Chennai's Ash-anna

Always comfortable in his own skin and confident of his ability, the master off-spinner, who is also an engineer, is representative of the people of the city who have an eternal feeling of not getting their due, but are ready to fight back when pushed to a corner

VENKATA KRISHNA B

'DHIL' (GUTS) is a popular Chennai trait in vogue for a few decades now. "Dhil venum machi" (You need guts, mate) - is something you keep hearing. Of late, the ever-popular 'machi' has given way to the more ubiquitous 'bro' and 'ji' among the youth but that characteristic essence is one of the primary traits that Tamil director Gautham Vasudev Menon infuses in his male protagonists.

Gautham is a modern director who makes Chennai-centric movies. His lead characters are mostly educated, opinionated, liberal, secular and those with dhil. That's what actors R Madhavan and Abbas were on screen in his maiden directorial film *Minnale* that was remade in the 2001 Saif Ali Khan-starrer *Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein*.

"No matter where you are, Chennai boys are always considered an underdog, someone who is unassuming and can be written off. And ultimately when we get an opportunity, we go the extra mile. A Chennai boy has that dhil. He is gutsy, keeps trying, keeps searching for something new. When you study in colleges here, you pick it up because it hardens you like anything. *Namaku extra va oru dhil iruku* (Our boys are a bit more courageous)," Gautham tells *The Indian Express*.

It doesn't matter if his lead character plays a lover boy or a police commissioner, sales representative, wannabe movie director, Army major, biker, or college student, they all have Dhil. Often, his hero is an engineering student. Like Ravichandran Ashwin.

It's a city where almost every household already has an engineer and even the next generation follows in the footsteps by enrolling in one of the numerous engineering colleges. In a state where the reservation system has helped in uplifting lives through ed-

ucation, there is competition from all quarters. Everyday numerous youths from other parts of the state get down at Chennai Central railway station or the Koyambedu bus depot in the hope of carving out a life in the state capital - and there is always this one striking aspect that they often see among their peers from Chennai. "You will not find insecurity in those boys," Gautham avers.

That last trait, in many ways, depicts Ashwin. Right from the time he broke into the senior state side, Ashwin has been confident of his own skills, capable of going the distance. From asking Mahendra Singh Dhoni to hand over the ball to deliver the Super Over in the Indian Premier League to bowling in the Powerplay with just two fielders in the deep for cover, Ashwin has shown a tendency to relish challenges and grab whatever opportunities that come his way. W V Raman, a former India women's coach and one who coached Tamil Nadu when Ashwin broke into the senior set-up, uses the same words that Gautham used to describe the 37-year-old off-spinner.

"Ashwin has always been different in having the freedom of speech. He is free-spirited in terms of his actions and what he spoke and that is because he comes from a background where he is encouraged to talk. He is a bit of a seeker, be it knowledge or anything. He is not satisfied with what he has learnt today. He doesn't have the insecurity that you normally have in cricket. That is because he has always had the confidence that if not cricket, he can do something else," Raman explains.

Chennai boys are always considered an underdog, who is unassuming and can be written off. So you are ultimately waiting for an opportunity or an opening and when we get it, we go the extra mile.

GAUTHAM VASUDEV MENON
FILM DIRECTOR

The 2007 released movie 'Chennai 600028' was probably the first cricket-based movie that wasn't about an individual's quest, but which had the city as its main character. In particular, the concept of 'mamma area' (our area, our neighbourhood, our gully) was a theme that ran through the movie. If maidan cricket is for Mumbai and tape-ball cricket for Pakistan, for Chennai, it is the gully cricket. In every nook and corner, it is easy to spot a bunch of kids playing



Ashwin has always been different. He doesn't have the insecurity that you normally have in cricket. That is because he has always had the confidence that if not cricket, he can do something else.

WV RAMAN,
FORMER INDIA CRICKETER

cricket with a tennis or a rubber ball. Most of Ashwin's uniqueness as an off-spinner is rooted in Chennai gully/street cricket. The carrom ball is the 'suduku' ball in the streets of West Mambalam where he still plays. The batsmen most romanced in the streets are the unconventional openers. No wonder the likes of Kris Srikkanth, VB Chandrasekar, S Ramesh and M Vijay, with his fluid wrists, have emerged from this city. There is an originality and strength of character that's the Chennai hallmark. Be it

the inventiveness in Ashwin, or the strong-mindedness in S Venkataraghavan, or the nonchalant swagger of Srikanth or Chandrasekar. 'Mankading', suduku, side-arm throws, and chuck-fast balls are all part of street cricket. Footwork isn't quite a trait in Chennai batsmen as they all reared on facing speedy-chucked throws from a short distance (Chennai gully pacers don't run in and bowl; they stand and fiercely chuck), which has honed their eye-hand coordination.

If there is a trait that can be found among the Chennai players who have made it big, it's that they are all true originals. Nothing traditional or conventional or meek about them. They mould the sport in their own style. Even Ashwin's 'mankading'. One can romantically stretch the concept of 'mamma area' to how he takes ownership of his crease, but the strength of the character to soak in the immense criticism that comes his way and keep doing it is quite something. "Dhili-venum, bro".

It is just like the lead figure in Gautham's movies, where the hero, who otherwise comes across as a polished boy, suddenly becomes street-smart when pitted against a tough antagonist. "You find it commonly here, don't you?" Gautham asks.

"He will come across as a very eloquent boy in English, but if he is pushed to a corner, he will show his other side and bring out the originality by speaking in Tamil. It is just showing that I can pull off both the things...*enala keela erangiyum adika mudiyum*. (I can swoop down to punch blows).

For decades, Chennai and Tamil Nadu in general continue to live with the feeling that they always got marginalised or sidelined despite possessing a wealth of resources. While the language barrier is one that's allied to fiercely-proud Tamil subnationalism, talk to anyone on the streets of Chennai, and they will talk of being victimised and denied opportunities. From NEET to important ministries at the Centre, it is a never-ending topic that *Tamizhs* don't get an extended stay at the top and have to keep proving themselves all the time.

Director CS Amudhan, who has made satirical movies in the past, and is busy getting censorship certificate for his upcoming one, feels that even with Ashwin, you get the same feeling of being overlooked.

"He has been India's biggest match-winner since Anil Kumble. But every match, he has to prove himself. If a batsman cannot be dropped based on the conditions, why shouldn't the same apply to a bowler? No team will bench a player like Ashwin and play someone else... If you look around, he is head and shoulders above the rest. Although it is the conditions and combinations ultimately that decide the XI, each time it happens only with Ashwin in Tests. It makes you wonder if this treatment would be meted out to anyone else," Amudhan asks.

Having made India's World Cup squad as a last-minute entrant, Ashwin could end up featuring in their first match against Australia at Chepauk on Sunday. Having played only four ODIs since 2022, opinions are divided as to whether Ashwin is undercooked or not. Gautham, though, has the final say.

"Remember, he is an engineer too. When you finish your course and step out of college, it gears you up for all sorts of challenges in life. It doesn't matter whether you are pursuing engineering or not. We can do anything."

ASIAN GAMES SHOOTING

In India's first medal in women's skeet, daughters of fisherman, dry-cleaner & a royal



EXPRESS AT ASIAN GAMES

MIHIR VASAVDA
HANGZHOU, OCTOBER 1

THE TRAP shooting podium on Sunday demonstrated sports' unique ability of being a great leveler.

At the centre was the daughter of a humble fisherman who developed the patience and synchronization to shoot down flying targets by living a piscatory life. To her right was the daughter of the scion of Patiala royal family. And on the left was the daughter of a dry-cleaner from Itarsi in Madhya Pradesh who is one of the youngest women's shooting recruits in the Army.

In Hangzhou, their different worlds came together.

Manisha Keer, Rajeshwari Kumari, and Preeti Rajak teamed up to win India's first-ever Asian Games medal in women's skeet, a silver. It was one of the three medals India won on the ranges of the Fuyang Yinhu Sports Centre, along with a men's team trap gold and Kynan Chennai's individual trap bronze.

And also, the one they very nearly missed. Due to reasons not made public, Rajak and Keer were not initially named in the Asiad squad. Then, just days before the opening ceremony, their names were included, once again without any explanation. The reasons for the selection flip-flop might not have been officially revealed but the shooters proved their naysayers wrong with the medal.

Especially Keer, who shot down each of the 25 targets in the fourth series to propel India towards the podium. The 24-year-old was also the only Indian to reach the final, but exited in sixth place.



(From left) Rajeshwari Kumari, Manisha Keer and Preeti Rajak won India's first-ever Asian Games medal in women's skeet on Sunday. PTI

But with the final appearance and a team silver, Keer achieved a lot more. In shotgun shooting, considered a sport of the royalty, she's

a commoner fighting for her place. A prodigy of Indian shooting legend Mansher Singh, Keer's initiation to shooting

was accidental. As a child, she used to accompany her father to catch and sell fishes. A chance meeting with Mansher changed her life forever. An Olympian and Arjuna Awardee, Mansher has been on a mission to make the sport more accessible to those from lesser privileged backgrounds. During a trial in Bhopal for the MP State Academy, he saw Keer standing idly in a corner and offered her an opportunity to shoot. From that moment on, Keer hasn't looked back, transforming into one of India's finest women shotgun shooters.

Like Keer, 20-year-old Rajak, too, is a product of the MP State Academy who later went on to become one of the youngest women shooters at Mhow-based Army Sports Institute.

Meanwhile, for 31-year-old Rajeshwari, who recently also earned a quota for the Paris Olympics, shooting was the most natural thing to have happened. Born into a family of athletes and shooters, her father Randhir, whose uncle Yadavindra Singh was the last Maharaja of Patiala, represented the country at five con-

secutive Olympics between 1968 and 1984.

"She took it up naturally," says Randhir, the acting president of the Olympic Council of Asia. "She didn't quite like the sound of the cartridges initially, she never liked loud sounds. Suddenly, though, she started shooting. The legacy is very old - from my great grandfather, grandfather, uncle, me and now down to Rajeshwari. She works much harder than I did."

For Randhir, the medal was special not just because it was his daughter who won. On the podium, history too repeated itself. When he won the gold medal at the 1982 Asian Games, Randhir got the medal from his father, Bhalindra Singh, who was the president of the Asian Games Federation. On Sunday, it was Randhir who presented the silver medal to his daughter. "So history is repeating itself and the legacy for the family in the sport continues," Randhir says.

And while Rajeshwari carries on her family's legacy, her teammates continue to chart their own path.

Silver rallies on Sunday

Jyothi Yarraji ran after a protest, her bronze medal upgraded after China's second-place finisher Yanni Wu was disqualified after the race; Aditi, Harmilan add to burgeoning medal tally

MIHIR VASAVDA
HANGZHOU, OCTOBER 2

JYOTHI YARRAJI might not have noticed it, but on an evening where she was involved in an almighty battle against the Chinese sprinters, successfully protested the decision to reinstate the home-favourite and faced a barrage of questions from the state media over the controversy, the young Indian sprinter got support from the unlikelyst of sources – the gold medal winner from China, Lin Yuwei.

In an auditorium brimming with Chinese journalists, Yarraji was pressed about her decision to challenge the technical officials' call to disqualify her from the 100m hurdles final for an alleged false start.

They even probed her about the protest that followed, which saw the fastest hurdler in the line-up and gold medal favourite Yanni Wu getting disqualified after the race finished.

Yarraji quipped: "It is important for every athlete to stand for herself. So I did that."

Sitting to her left, Lin Yuwei looked at Yarraji, smiled and broke the tension-filled air with an applause. It was a rare moment of camaraderie after an evening of confusion, controversy and tempers flying from both sides. First, Yarraji and Wu were disqualified from Sunday's showpiece event, then got reinstated. A frenetic sprint followed, where the Chinese athlete 'won' the silver before she got officially disqualified, and the Indian – who originally finished third – got upgraded to second spot.

"I could have ran faster," Yarraji said. "But the controversy threw me off a bit."

The drama started after Wu, starting in lane 4, jumped the gun at the start of the race. She was shown a red card but to Yarraji's astonishment, even she was given the marching orders.

According to World Athletics rule 16.8, "any athlete responsible for a false start shall be disqualified," with a note adding that "when one or more athletes make a false start... the Starter should warn or disqualify only such athletes who, in their opinion, were responsible for the false start. This may result in more than one athlete being warned or disqualified."

However, Yarraji argued that her hands were firmly on the ground when the Chinese athlete took off the blocks and hence, it did not classify as a false start. She presented her case forcefully to the technical officials and after nearly 10 minutes of arguments, it was decided to allow both athletes to run under protest.

The hushed silence inside the stadium turned into wild celebrations when the crowd



Jyothi Yarraji (L) argues with officials after they wrongly attributed the false start in the 100m hurdles to her. AP

saw Wu returning to her mark. What followed was a race that lived up to the hype. The 100m hurdles is one of the strongest events in Asia and nearly half of the starters have run a sub-13 race, indicating the level of competition.

The battle for the podium places was always going to be between Yarraji and the two Chinese runners, with just 0.3 seconds separating them from their season best times – Wu has clocked 12.76 seconds this season, Yarraji has 12.78 while Yuwei's best is 12.79.

There were no false starts when the gun sounded the second time and the Indo-Chinese runners began gingerly. Yuwei's reaction time was slowest, at 0.161 seconds, with Yarraji, too, being slow off the blocks. But while Yuwei burst forward, the Indian was fourth around the half-way mark but then got into her stride. James Hillier, Yarraji's coach had pointed out before the race that the 24-year-old's strongest suit is her endgame. Yarraji's 'naturally good tendons, speed endurance and hurdle-rhythm endurance' give her an advantage towards the end of the race. "She has

The rule says whoever is leaving the ground first will be disqualified. Jyothi was still on the ground (when Wu dashed off), so they cannot say Jyothi left the ground. The other girl was almost one and a half step ahead of her."

ANJU BOBBY GEORGE
AFI VICE PRESIDENT

longer legs, too. The shorter girls are better at the start because they are quick with the legs so just her natural qualities allow her to be better at the end of the race. If she keeps close till the end, I have full confidence that she will win a medal," Hillier had said.

His prophecy came true. Yarraji's strides got longer and the rhythm got better as the race progressed. By the time they reached the penultimate hurdle, she had closed down the gap with the leaders and beat the Japanese sprinter Yuki Tanaka for what, at that point, felt

like a bronze medal.

Within minutes of the race concluding, the Athletics Federation of India lodged a written protest with the organisers, demanding that Wu be disqualified as she had false started.

"The rule says whoever is leaving the ground first will be disqualified, Jyothi was still on the ground (when Wu dashed off), so they cannot say Jyothi left the ground. The other girl was almost one and half step ahead of her," Anju Bobby George, a World Championship medalist who is now the federation's vice-president, said.

Soon after, Wu was disqualified and Yarraji promoted to the silver medal spot. Curiously, Wu and the rest of her teammates seemed oblivious to the decision. It was only when the athletes came forward for the medal ceremony did the people inside the stadium get to about the last-minute reversal.

Standing on the podium with the silver medal in her hands, Yarraji could finally afford to smile. She knew she'd have to fight for this medal. And she did, literally.



Aditi Ashok with the silver medal she won in Hangzhou on Sunday. PTI

I wish I could have won gold, says Aditi

RAHUL SADHU
KOLKATA, OCTOBER 1

AT 18 YEARS and four months, India's Aditi Ashok was the youngest golfer at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Seven years later on Sunday, she won the silver medal in the Asian Games in Hangzhou.

For the 25-year-old, who took up the sport at six and turned professional in 2016, the silver medal was a consolation because gold was undoubtedly on the offering.

"I wish I could have won a gold, but maybe in a week or two, this silver will feel better," she admitted in a chat with The Indian Express.

But looking at the silver lining, she said that after finishing fourth at the Tokyo Olympics, ending up in the second spot here is a positive. Her performance on the final day was a stark contrast to her first three rounds, where she had played brilliantly.

Aditi carded a dismal five-over 77 and missed several chances that would have helped her extend her lead. She also made a few costly mistakes, such as a double bogey, to finish with a four-day aggregate of 17-under 271.

"At 16, I felt I was in it. It was just one or two shots in the lead, but that one shot threw me out. When you hit the water, there's no way of returning from it. That was definitely where it unravelled," she said while explaining where it all went wrong.

But going into the last day, was there some pressure or a change in mindset? "I was just trying to keep it in play or stay in position, but somehow I missed many drives. I couldn't fix it or figure it out." Ashok's poor performance on the final day doesn't take away from her overall achievement at the Asiad. After all, she became the first Indian woman to win a medal in golf at the games.

There are a few possible explanations for why Ashok struggles on the final day. One possibility is that she was putting too much pressure on herself. "I was thinking of winning the tournament and the goal from the first day was to win gold. My mindset did not affect the outcome. Maybe it was just that I shot 11 under and then a 5 over, which I don't think I have done all season."

Another possibility is that fatigue factor as Ashok had played a lot of golf in the weeks leading up to the Asian Games, and she may have felt the physical and mental effects of that.

Ashok who had a 7 shot lead going into the last round admitted that she could have won the gold. "It was definitely a golden loss for me. I was leading by six or seven. Seven is worse. Definitely, anybody would see it as a loss, and it was my tournament to lose, and I basically did that," said Ashok.

In Rio 2016, it was her father Ashok Gudlamani, who was her caddie and then her mother caddied for her at the Olympics. But they were not present this time and she had to carry a local caddie.

"Local caddies are the same for everybody. Generally, you can learn from caddies, but it was the same for everyone," she explained.

Harmilan on podium, parents moved to tears

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 1

BACK IN 1997, when Madhuri Saxena Bains was asked to appear in trials for a job in the Punjab State Electricity Board at Patiala, Madhuri was pregnant with her first child. Accompanied by her husband, the international athlete Amandeep Singh Bains, who was initially not keen on his pregnant wife running

the trials, the 800m and 1500m athlete secured the job with her performance in the trials. Seven months later, Madhuri would give birth to a daughter, which the couple named Harmilan, and four years later, Madhuri won the silver medal in women's 800m race in the Busan Asian Games in 2002. On Sunday evening, as Harmilan Kaur Bains equalled her mother's feat by winning the silver medal in women's 1500m final at the Hangzhou Olympics Centre in Asian Games, the Bains couple tried their best to hold back their tears.

"Harmilan ne tan mere pait to hi daudna sikhya hai (Harmilan has learnt running from my womb). My husband would tell me not to

give the trials as I was pregnant at that time. But I wanted to run. When Harmilan was born, we prayed to god that she would become a runner like the two of us. To see her win an Asian Games medal today has brought back all the memories of myself winning the medal in Busan Asian Games," shares the proud mother and former Indian athlete while talking with The Indian Express.

While Madhuri hailed from Balamu in Uttar Pradesh, the Bains couple worked in Patiala, a city where Harmilan took her first steps on the athletics track. Father Amandeep is a 1500m 1996 South Asian Games medalist and it was his wish to make Harmilan practice for both 1500m as well 800m events. "Harmilan was very young when both I and my wife still competed at the international level. When Madhuri returned with the silver medal in Busan Asian Games, a young Harmilan would not leave the medal and play with it for hours. When she showed her interest in sports, we decided to let her train in 800m as well 1500m events and there has

been no looking back for her," shared the father. "While Madhuri finished fourth in the 1500m in Busan, we often joke that the 1500m

"When Harmilan was born, we prayed to god that she would become a runner like the two of us. To see her win an Asian Games medal today has brought back all the memories of myself winning the medal in Busan."

MADHURI BAINS
HARMILAN'S MOTHER



Harmilan Bains' mother had also won a silver at the Asian Games in 2002. PTI

is my event and that's where Harmilan is breaking records," Amandeep laughs. "But to be frank, competing in both the events has benefited her a lot. She understands the pace required for the 800m event as well the endurance level required in the 1500m event. Maybe it's due to the genes of both me and my wife present in her! But she knows how to balance between the two and it has benefited her a lot," says Amandeep, who now runs a marriage banquet hall 'Milan Palace', named after his daughter in Mahilpur in Punjab.

A silver medal each in the 800m and 1500m at the U-18 nationals at Ranchi in 2015 was followed by a bronze medal in the 1500m in the Junior Asian Championships in Vietnam in 2016. The Punjab youngster first broke the 4 minutes and 22 second mark in

1500m at the Inter State Championships at Guwahati in 2018. In 2021 Harmilan breaking her mother's – team-mate and competitor Sunita Rani's 16-year-old national record of four minutes and 6.03 seconds with a timing of four minutes and 5.39 seconds at the National Open Championships in Warangal. The youngster also achieved her personal best timing of two minutes and 2.57 seconds in the 800m in the same year.

On Sunday evening, Harmilan clocked a timing of four minutes and 12.74 seconds to finish behind gold medalist Mutile Yavi of Brunei (4:11.65). "Harmilan had suffered a knee injury last year and the way she has recovered after the injury speaks about her talent," said Indian deputy chief athletics coach Dr Kalyan Chaudhary.

TODAY'S SCHEDULE | INDIA WATCH FOR DAY 9

SUTIRTHA / AYHIKA IN TT SEMIFINAL

Here's a look at the other main Indian athletes to track on Monday at the Hangzhou Asian Games



Jyothi Surekha will start her campaign in compound archery. File

WOMEN'S KABADDI:
INDIA VS CHINESE TAIPEI – PRELIMINARY ROUND – 1:30 PM

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL:
INDIA VS DPR KOREA – QUARTERFINAL – 1:30 PM

SEPAKTAKRAW:
MEN'S & WOMEN'S QUADRANT GROUP STAGE (7:30 AM ONWARDS)

KURASH:
JYOTI TOKAS, YASH KUMAR CHAUHAN (7:00 AM)

KAYAKING & CANOEING:
07:40 AM ONWARDS

ROLLER SKATING:
06:45 AM ONWARDS

DIVING:
LONDON SINGH, 1M SPRINGBOARD – 4:30 PM

ARCHERY:
RECURVE COMPOUND MIXED TEAM ELIMINATIONS (6:30 AM ONWARDS), COMPOUND WOMEN'S, MEN'S TEAM ELIMINATIONS (7:30 AM ONWARDS), RECURVE WOMEN'S, MEN'S TEAM ELIMINATIONS (8:40 AM), COMPOUND MEN'S, WOMEN'S INDIVIDUAL ELIMINATIONS (11:05 AM ONWARDS), RECURVE MEN'S, WOMEN'S INDIVIDUAL ELIMINATIONS (12:55 PM ONWARDS)



SQUASH: MIXED, SINGLES EVENTS

ABHAY SINGH & ANAHAT SINGH, MIXED DOUBLED 1ST ROUND, TEAM POOL MATCH – 10:00 AM; TANVI KHANNA, WOMEN'S SINGLES ROUND OF 16 – 12:30 AM; JOSHANA CHINAPPA, WOMEN'S SINGLES ROUND OF 16 – 1:30 AM; MAHESH M, MEN'S SINGLES ROUND OF 16 – 3:30 AM; SAURAV GHOSAL, MEN'S SINGLES ROUND OF 16 – 3:30 AM

EQUESTRIAN: EVENTING JUMPING INDIVIDUAL FINAL, APURVA DABHADE, VIKAS KUMAR (7:00 AM ONWARDS)

BADMINTON: INDIVIDUAL ROUNDS BEGIN
After the team events came to a close on Sunday, attention turns to the individual categories where Satwik-Chirag will be among those in action.

ATHLETICS: MORE MEDALS ON THE CARDS

After Avinash Sable's gold on Sunday, it will be over to Parul Chaudhary in women's 3000m steeplechase where she will also be joined by Priti. Shaili Singh and Ancy Sojan are in women's long jump final, while the mixed 4x400m relay team will look to impress too. Pavithra in women's pole vault and Amlan Borgohain in men's 200m are the other athletes in medal events.

MEN'S DECATHLON- TEJASWIN SHANKER – EVENTS THROUGH THE DAY FROM 6:30 AM
MEN'S HIGH JUMP (QUALIFYING) - SARVESH ANIL KUSHARE, JESSE SANDESH – 06:40 AM
MEN'S 800M ROUND 1 (HEATS): KRISHAN

KUMAR, MUHAMMED AFSAL – 07:17 AM
MEN'S 400M HURDLES ROUND 1 (HEATS): SANTHOSH KUMAR, YASHAS PALAKSHA – 07:45 AM
WOMEN'S 400M HURDLES ROUND 1 (HEATS): VITHYA RAMARAJ, SINCHAL KAVERAMMA – 8:10 AM
WOMEN'S POLE VAULT (FINAL): PAVITHRA VENGATESH – 4:30 PM
WOMEN'S LONG JUMP (FINAL): SHAILI SINGH, ANCY SOJAN – 4:40 PM
WOMEN'S 3000M STEEPLCHASE: PARUL CHAUDHARY, PRITI LAMBA – 4:50 PM
MEN'S 200M FINAL: AMLAN BORGOHAIN – 5:25 PM
MIXED 4X400M RELAY: TEAM TBA – 18:10

TABLE TENNIS: WOMEN'S DOUBLES SEMIFINAL
After their stunning win over world champs Chen Meng and Wang Yidi to be assured a horic medal, India's Sutirtha Mukherjee and Ayhika Mukherjee will be hoping to go one step higher on the podium.