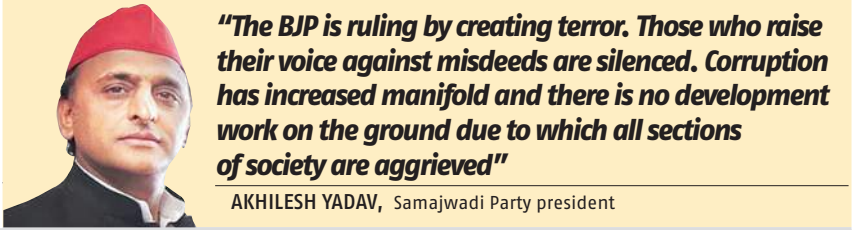


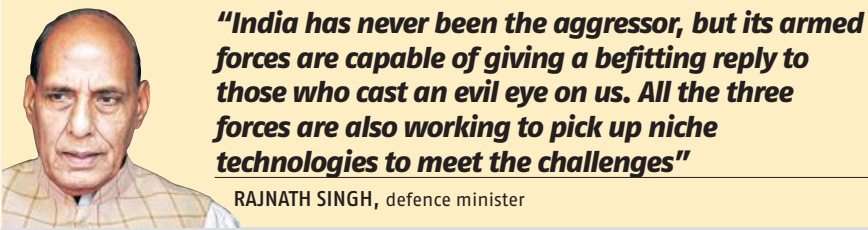
**"I dont know why (BJP is winning), they are misusing EVMs is what I feel... The Election Commission of India is under them and functions according to their instructions, like the CBI and ED are being misused"**

SIDDARAMAIAH, former Karnataka chief minister



**"The BJP is ruling by creating terror. Those who raise their voice against misdeeds are silenced. Corruption has increased manifold and there is no development work on the ground due to which all sections of society are aggrieved"**

AKHILESH YADAV, Samajwadi Party president



**"India has never been the aggressor, but its armed forces are capable of giving a befitting reply to those who cast an evil eye on us. All the three forces are also working to pick up niche technologies to meet the challenges"**

RAJNATH SINGH, defence minister

# ‘PM joked that media trying to trap me by saying anti-Modi things’

Prime Minister calls meeting with Abhijit Banerjee excellent; professor thanks Modi for unique experience

NIVEDITA MOOKERJI  
New Delhi, 22 October

Abhijit Banerjee, this year’s Indian-born Economics Nobel Laureate, met Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi on Tuesday morning. Soon after, Modi tweeted that it was an excellent meeting and that “India is proud of his accomplishments”. Banerjee shared the Nobel with co-researchers Esther Duflo, who he’s married to, and Michael Kremer. Duflo, the youngest Economics Nobel winner, wasn’t present at the meeting with the PM.

“Excellent meeting with Nobel Laureate Abhijit Banerjee. His passion towards human empowerment is clearly visible. We had a healthy and extensive interaction on various subjects. India is proud of his accomplishments. Wishing him the very best for his future endeavours,” the PM wrote on his personal Twitter handle,

@narendramodi.

Banerjee was prompt to thank the PM, though not on social media. Speaking to the media later, he said, “Thank you, PM... that was a unique experience.” Responding to how the conversation with Modi had gone, Banerjee laughingly quipped he wouldn’t get into any controversial subject as he had been warned by the PM. But, the professor spilled the beans by saying the PM had started the conversation by cracking a joke on how the media was trying to trap him to say “anti-Modi things”. He went on to say, “The PM has been watching TV and watching you guys. And he knows what you are trying to do.”

On a more serious note, Banerjee described the meeting with Modi as “cordial” and “good”. “The PM was kind enough to give me quite a lot of time and to talk a lot about his



way of thinking about India, that was unique,” he said. He added that while “one hears about policies, one rarely hears about the thinking behind them”.

The two also spoke about the various aspects of governance. The emphasis was on “the structure of elite control over the process of governance”, that runs the risk of mak-

ing the government less responsive. “He (Modi) very nicely explained how he’s trying to reform the bureaucracy to make it more responsive...” the economist said, adding it’s important for India to have a bureaucracy that lives on the ground.

While claiming that he wouldn’t get into controversial turf,

Banerjee termed the banking crisis in the country as “critical and frightening”. While pointing out that there’s need to worry, he said, “We need some important and aggressive changes”.

He argued for reducing the government stake in public sector banks to below 50 per cent, so that there’s no interference from the

Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). Even as checks and balances are needed, CVC was allowing a rot in public sector banks, he said.

Banerjee and Duflo have been in India for the past few days to promote their book Good Economics for Hard Times: Better Answers to Our Biggest Problems. A professor at the US’ Massachusetts Institute

of Technology, Banerjee has said in his recent interviews that a cut in corporation tax rate might not boost demand. He has been advocating increasing the tax on the rich and making cash available for the poor to improve consumption at the time of an economic slowdown.

Some politicians in the current dispensation have been critical of Banerjee. Recently, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said Banerjee had a Left-leaning mindset and that his views had already been rejected by India. Some others in the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party had made personal remarks on Banerjee. To that he had reacted saying he was upset with such personal comments. Against that backdrop, Banerjee’s meeting with the PM was seen as significant.

Even as he has opposed the corporation tax rate cut as a way to boost economy, Banerjee has said that many other things that the current government has done, including many of its welfare schemes for the poor, are in the right spirit. Banerjee and Duflo have been awarded Nobel for their work on randomised controlled trials, or RCT—an experimental approach to alleviate global poverty.



Nobel Laureate Abhijit Banerjee with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the latter's residence, in New Delhi on Tuesday; (Left) With Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim

## IN BRIEF

### Tuhin K Pandey appointed disinvestment secretary

Tuhin Kanta Pandey, a 1987 batch IAS officer from the Odisha cadre, has been named secretary at the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam). Ashok Malik, Fellow at Observer Research Foundation, a private think tank, has been appointed policy advisor in the Ministry of External Affairs, with the rank of additional secretary. He was earlier press advisor to the President of India. Pandey will replace Anil Kumar Khachi, who will go back to his parent cadre of Himachal Pradesh, on personal grounds, stated the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet. It had, only last week, assigned additional responsibility for Dipam to Atanu Chakraborty, secretary at the Department of Economic Affairs. The government has set an ambitious target of ₹1.05 trillion from disinvestment for the current fiscal year. Only ₹12,357 crore has been realised so far. Some big-ticket ones are on the cards, including strategic sale of Bharat Petroleum Corporation. The Cabinet recently approved a policy to make Dipam the nodal department for disinvestment. In other changes, Sanjeev Nandan Sahai, a 1986-batch IAS officer with the Uttarakhand cadre and hitherto special secretary, power, was promoted to secretary of the department. He will succeed Subhash Chandra Garg, who retires this month-end. Pankaj Kumar, additional secretary in the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, will be chief executive officer of the Unique Identification Authority of India. Pramod Kumar Das, special secretary in the Department of Expenditure, will be secretary in the Ministry of Minority Affairs. Nagendra Nath Sinha, chairman, National Highways Authority of India, was named secretary, border management, in the Ministry of Home Affairs. **INDIVIAL DHASMANA**

### ED attaches assets of EPFO officials in PMLA case

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth ₹2.89 crore of four Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) officials in a money laundering case registered against them. The agency said it had issued a provisional order for attachment of assets under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act against the officers, including Assistant Provident Fund Commissioner Ramesh Chandra Singh. The other officers are Samiran Kumar Mondal, Deepak Bhattacharya, and Sukumar Shaw. **PTI**

### India, B'desh should join hands to improve connectivity: V K Singh



Union minister Gen (Retired) VK Singh on Tuesday said India and Bangladesh should seriously look for joint ventures to improve connectivity in the region. Both the countries must integrate to ensure joint ventures for improving infrastructural connectivity so that it is mutually beneficial, the Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways said. **PTI**

# ‘No flight risk’, SC grants bail to Chidambaram

INX Media case: Congress leader told not to leave country without permission

AASHISH ARYAN  
New Delhi, 22 October

The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to former finance minister P Chidambaram in the case filed by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the alleged irregularities in the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) approvals for INX Media. The former union minister can be released, provided he is required in any other case, the apex court said.

Asking Chidambaram to be available for interrogation as and when required by the probe agencies, a three-judge Bench of Justices R Banumathi, A S Bopanna, and Hrishikesh Roy said Chidambaram shall deposit his passport with the special court and not leave the country without permission from the Special CBI court.

In a 27-page judgment on Tuesday granting bail, the Bench pulled up the CBI, saying that it could not see as to how Chidambaram was a flight risk. Agreeing with the submissions made by senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Abhishek Manu Singhvi, the court said as the former home minister was a Member of Parliament and a senior member of the Bar, who had strong roots in the society, and as he had already surrendered his passport, there was no possibility of him fleeing away from the country.



Chidambaram is unlikely to get any reprieve as he is in the custody of the Enforcement Directorate in a related case

The court also said the contention of CBI that ‘flight risk’ of economic offenders should be looked at as a national phenomenon and be dealt with in that manner merely because certain other offenders have flown out of the country, could not be accepted.

“The same cannot, in our view, be put in a straitjacket formula so as to deny bail to the one who is before the court, due to the conduct of other offenders, if the person under consideration is otherwise entitled to bail on the merits of his own case,” the court said.

The judgment also noted that in the remand applications filed by the prosecuting agencies so far, there was no “whisper that any material witness has been approached not to disclose information about the appellant and his son (Karti

Chidambaram)”. The court, thus, could not accept the contention that if released, the former Union minister could influence witnesses or tamper with evidence. The former minister, however, is unlikely to get any reprieve as he is in the custody of the Enforcement Directorate in a related case.

The former finance minister had been arrested by the CBI on August 21 claims by probe agencies that he was evading arrest. That day had, however, culminated with Chidambaram showing up at the Congress headquarters to address the media. Though CBI sleuths had reached Congress headquarters too to arrest him from there, the former minister managed to reach his residence in South Delhi, from where he was arrested later in the night.

Earlier on August 20, a sin-

### Bombay HC seeks ex-FM's response on 63 moons suit

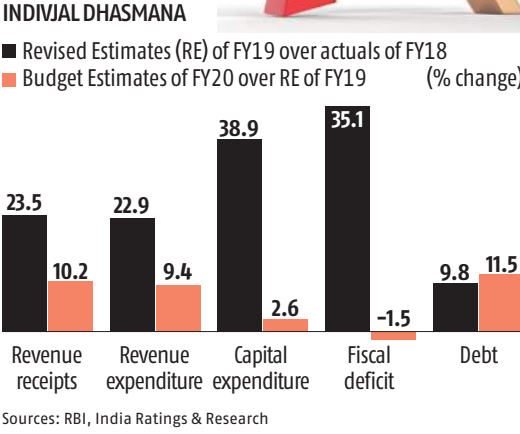
The Bombay High Court on Tuesday directed former finance minister P Chidambaram and two bureaucrats — Ramesh Abhishek and K P Krishnan — to file reply in eight weeks in the ₹10,000-crore defamation suit filed by 63 moons.

Hearing the case, Justice A K Menon warned that 63 moons would be at its liberty to apply for ex-parte order if these three individuals fail to reply in two months. The case pertains to ₹5600-crore payment default at 63 moons subsidiary, National Spot Exchange. **BS REPORTER**

gle-judge Bench of the Delhi HC had denied Chidambaram anticipatory bail and protection from immediate arrest in the case. Terming the INX Media case involving Chidambaram a classic “case of money laundering”, the Bench had in its judgment said granting bail in such cases would send a wrong message to the society. The HC had also noted that as the senior Congress leader was evasive in his replies to the probe agencies, custodial interrogation was required for an effective investigation in the matter.

### STATES TO MISS DEBT TARGET ON SLOW GROWTH: IndRa

India Ratings & Research (Ind-Ra) has attributed widening of fiscal deficit in states in 2018-19 to slippage on the non-capital expenditure by them. Earlier, the Reserve Bank of India data showed that fiscal deficit of states rose to 2.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in their Revised Estimates, from 2.6 per cent in their Budget Estimates for FY19. On the other hand, capital expenditure was lower than budgeted, but it maintained a healthy trend. The rating agency believed that meeting the N K Singh panel's recommended level of aggregate debt burden at 20 per cent of GDP by 2022-23 by states will be a challenge in an economic environment characterised by slow growth and weak demand. **INDIVIAL DHASMANA**



### Centre relaxes gift policy for staff, hikes monetary limits

The Government of India has increased more than threefold the threshold of the monetary value of gifts its employees can receive, officials said on Tuesday. Officials under Group A and Group B cannot accept any gift without the nod of the government if the value exceeds ₹5,000. The limit was ₹1,500. Similarly, Group C employees will be able to accept gifts valued up to ₹2,000 instead of ₹500 without taking government approval. Government employees under Group A are senior officials. Those under Group B could be gazetted or non-gazetted. **BS REPORTER**

# Sivakasi's industry divided over tie-up to make green crackers

While only 16% units have inked a deal with NEERI, others feel they will have no choice but to sign a pact in future

T E NARASIMHAN  
Chennai, 22 October

The nearly ₹2,000-crore firecracker industry at Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu is divided over joining hands with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's (CSIR)'s National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) to produce green crackers.

This development comes at a time when 165 of the 1,000-plus units have signed non-disclosure agreements to produce green crackers. The bone of contention of a section of the industry is that though the validity of the agreement is for two years, chances are that it may become mandatory for the industry to sign it again. Also, the units may have to depend on NEERI in the future.

NEERI has been involved in

firecracker emission control after the Supreme Court last year asked the Centre what steps it was taking to reduce pollution during bursting of firecrackers. Some manufacturers allege that NEERI is asking the units to sign a pact and pay a fee of ₹10,000 or above, depending on the size of the unit. This is to use an additive, for which the institute holds a patent and to undergo training to produce firecrackers as per the formulation prepared by the Institute among others.

Also, there is conflict of interest, considering that raw material and formulations are developed and patented by the same institute that is the agency to certify the pollution standards of the final product. However, not all manufacturers are making the allegation.

P Ganesan, president of Tamil Nadu Fireworks and Amorces



Manufacturers have been approaching the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation for final authorisation to manufacture green crackers since March 2019

Manufacturers Association (TANFAMA) and director of Vinayaga Sonny Fireworks Group, one of the largest fireworks manufacturers, said there is no such restriction and the companies can

purchase raw material from anywhere they want. “Different types of additives are there. We can import also, if needed,” he said.

The additive to be used is a nat-

ural substance that is available off the shelf across the country, said another manufacturer who added that the allegations of monopoly is total humbug. Responding to the allegations that signing the agree-

ment would result in a monopoly by the institute, a senior NEERI official said, “CSIR-NEERI has patents for the new formulations based on new hypothesis identified for targeting emissions reduction. Non-disclosure agreement signatories are required to undergo hands on training for better understanding of standard operating procedures for making of green crackers for which nominal facilitation charges have to be given by manufacturers.”

While industry representatives said manufacturers have produced most of the formulations using improved form of the prevailing formulation this year, NEERI said that presently the manufacturers are adopting new formulations only. The institute, along with sister labs, are working on developing green crackers for targeting higher emission reduction to the tune of 50-70 per cent, possibly in the coming year.

Nearly 230 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and 165 non-disclosure agreements have been signed with fireworks manu-

factures to facilitate a smooth transition. Close to 530 emissions testing certificates have been issued to fireworks manufacturers for new and improved formulations meeting the stipulated guidelines of green crackers.

Manufacturers have been approaching the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) for final authorisation to manufacture green crackers since March 2019. A NEERI official said that a list of 28 manufacturers, approved by PESO for making green crackers, has been released in Delhi and this information may be sought from PESO office Nagpur.

“We are expecting 700 more manufacturers to adopt the new formulations,” added the official. The over 1,000 firecracker manufacturers in Sivakasi employ around 800,000 workers, directly and indirectly. The fireworks industry in Sivakasi is finally seeing light at the end of the tunnel after business was impacted due to the regulations and the Supreme Court orders in the last couple of years.