

North American heatwave a warning to the world

GOVIND SINGH AND
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The recent heat wave in the Vancouver area of Canada killed scores of people. The thermometers in Canada hit almost 50°C, breaking all past temperature records. This abnormal increase in temperature is accompanied with an increase in the number of heat days. Exposure to excessive heat for days together has been fatal for many individuals and disastrous for the affected communities.

The situation is not very different in the adjoining United States. The US northwest is experiencing record high temperatures to the extent that state authorities are setting up emergency "cooling shelters." The temperature in the city of Portland reached a record high of 44.5°C. The unprecedented heat wave resulted in mass purchase of air conditioners and other cooling devices until stores exhausted their stock.

The intense heat wave in northwest US and Canada is attributed to a heat dome-like condition created by atmospheric high pressure. The heat dome keeps hot air trapped. The intensity of heat depends on local factors as well as any background warming. The US and Canada are reeling under an extreme and rare heat dome which is threatening the lives of many people, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Climate projections in the last three decades have consistently warned of extreme weather conditions and freak weather events. The US-Canadian heat wave must therefore be seen as a warning for all nations. The heat wave has already created new temperature records in the US and Canada. This was preceded by a record decline of the water level in the Hoover Dam, which is the US's largest reservoir. The US-Canadian heat wave is an extreme weather event; the world must prepare to face more such extreme events in the near future.

Climate change continues to be the greatest challenge faced by humanity today. Unfortunately,



measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change do not correspond to the pace with which change is happening. The warming of the planet is directly related to the increased concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The global carbon dioxide concentration crossed the 400 ppm mark in 2013 for the first time since measurements began in 1958. The global carbon dioxide concentration is consistently rising and reached 416 ppm by May 2021.

2020 was the warmest year on record; 2021 will most likely replace it. Each passing year is breaking the record of the previous year. The last seven years are the warmest seven years on record and their impact on

the global environment is now clear. In May 2021, a larger chunk of ice calved from the Antarctic ice sheet and became the world's largest floating iceberg. Named A-76, this iceberg is three times the size of Delhi. A-76 may not directly contribute to sea level rise, but it is certainly a hazard to maritime trade.

The 2021 US-Canadian heat wave may not be a milestone event for anthropogenic climate change. However, it should be seen as a global warning for all nations: To begin with, the US-Canadian heat wave makes it clear that all nations are vulnerable and must work together to mitigate climate change. This message should resonate loud and clear now, and should alarm the del-

egates at the climate conference in Glasgow later this year.

More than 1,500 people lost their lives across Europe in the intense heat wave of 2003. If we don't realize the importance of collective global cooperation in mitigating and adapting to climate change, it will cost many more lives in the future. The world needs to be united if we are serious about tackling climate change.

Within each nation, the US-Canadian heat wave should serve as a warning to prepare, improve and adequately implement national and local actions plans for climate change. This must take centre-stage in the functioning of all governments. Climate change adaptation

measures must immediately be put in place. The US-Canadian heat wave has made it clear that the deleterious impacts of climate change will not announce themselves before appearing. Preparation is the key and time is of the essence.

With climate change now becoming a climate emergency, the corporate sector must also play its part. The transition to a green economy is not possible without the active involvement of big oil and gas companies. Inaction is no longer an option. The fate of the present and future generations is at stake.

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NOW AND AGAIN

Hush after a storm

TIRTHANKAR MITRA

I never did like to study. Small wonder, I never let go any distraction that came my way using it as an excuse to leave my books behind.

So when a heated altercation broke out beneath our window, I was all ears.

It was that time of my life when the stoop below our window was a site where debates broke out, sometimes to end in fisticuffs. It was a time which the city had never gone through earlier; nor had such times followed when parents worried whether their young son who had gone to college would return home.

And it was under such a street light, recently wrapped with red transparent paper marking the electoral triumph of an ideology, that the debate was raging. But the subject apparently had little to do with any ideas or ideology.

The topic of hot debate were the merits and shortcomings of a film released recently, Sagina Mahato

I heard the names of Dilip Kumar, the film's principal protagonist and its director, Tapan Sinha being loudly discussed. While one group was all praise for both men, the other was denouncing them for not portraying reality.

As the supporters of Kumar pointed out that it had indeed earned the people's acceptance, opponents were quick to say it was an escapist film.

But I remained glued to the spot as the increasing decibel levels down below was the perfect distraction from studies. But my interest started to wane as accusations of being opponents of the class struggle were hurled at Kumar and Sinha.

I did not immediately discern a hush that descended on the slanging match. Just then a quiet voice broke in.

"I have not seen the film; but you seem to have overlooked that both the hero and the director have portrayed their empathy for the common man," the voice said. I saw the man in crumpled dhoti kurta before whom many in the locality genuflected.

His verdict pronounced about a thespian and an ace director, Ganesh Ghosh, the hero of the Chittagong armoury raid walked away. All was quiet once more.

100 YEARS AGO

GOVERNMENT SECURITIES

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - I read with a ray of hope the suggestive letter Now or Never in The Statesman on Government securities. As your correspondent rightly points out, most of the holders of these securities are poor people, widows and orphans, whose only income comes in the shape of interest on these securities. I know it from personal experience, as well as otherwise, that most Indians who want to provide for their helpless relatives generally go to these securities as the safest possible investment. The people in general till quite recently put implicit faith in them, and this popular faith was a great asset to the credit side of the Government. I know of people who have sold their houses with decent rentals and invested their money, sometimes all they had, in these securities as affording the safest possible custody. The best thing for the Government would have been to allow the holders to convert them into securities with higher interest.

SUNIT KUMAR TAGORE.
Benares Cantonment.

SMOKING IN TRAMS

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - The Calcutta Tramway Company have a notice board fixed in all tram cars in which it is stated that "passengers are respectfully requested to refrain from smoking in the two front rows of seats," but from the number of people frequently found smoking in these seats, it is clear that the practice is allowed to continue unchecked. Practically every morning for the last six months I have happened to occupy a front seat at the starting point of the Wellesley tram-car. Invariably I find before the car proceeds a hundred yards that a gentleman enters and in quite an unconcerned manner lights up a cigarette, a cigar or a pipe which he continues to smoke although he has this notice staring him in the face all the way he travels. If the tramway company put up a notice prohibiting smoking it is up to them to enforce it.

A LADY NON-SMOKER.
Calcutta.

RAILWAYS AND COAL SUPPLIES

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - I notice from the Eastern Bengal Railway Notice dated April 12 appearing in The Statesman of date that, in consequence of the short supply of coal by certain collieries, the running of one mail train, and 8 passenger trains are to be cancelled on and from the 18th instant. The reduction of so large a number of trains cannot help but seriously inconvenience the travelling public. If supplies of coal contracted for from certain collieries are not obtainable it ought to be possible to purchase odd lots from collieries that have stocks, in order to maintain these services. If supplies of coal were not obtainable at all, but to curtail train services because supplies of coal cannot be obtained from certain collieries seems to indicate that the authorities responsible for the maintenance they may cause the travelling public, by reason of their not purchasing other coal to keep the trains running.

SUFFERER.
Calcutta.

POLITICAL DIARY | KALYANI SHANKAR

Congress struggles to contain dissent

The Congress high command faces a Hobson's choice with the growing political crises in the states ruled by the party - Punjab, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh. Internal quarrels have surfaced again in the three States. The dissidents are up in arms against the incumbent chief ministers. Senior Congress leaders are testing the patience of the high command.

Part of the crisis is created by the Gandhi family itself. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi, who is the general secretary, prefer to have younger leaders as chief ministers and have zeroed in on Sachin Pilot (Rajasthan) and Navjot Singh Sidhu (Punjab).

The Congress has always believed in propping up dissidents against chief ministers to keep them in check. A strong leader like Indira Gandhi could get away with these tactics. But the weakened Congress is unable to steamroll its will.

While Rahul Gandhi is functioning as the de facto Congress president taking decisions in the party, Priyanka Gandhi has become a crisis manager. It was she who intervened last year to mollify dissident leader Sachin Pilot. The party worked out a formula that saved the situation temporarily. But the chief minister has not implemented the formula. It is no surprise that Pilot is losing patience.

In Punjab, the three-member a



committee set up to resolve the crisis had summoned Captain Amarinder Singh to Delhi recently. The dissident legislators led by former cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu were also called to Delhi. A peace formula was thrashed out. The captain is a strong man and could stand up to the high command. It is Priyanka and Rahul who back Sidhu.

Seeing all these, Rajasthan chief minister Gehlot does not want to face the humiliation of being summoned to Delhi. He has found a convenient way of keeping himself iso-

lated for a month after being infected by Covid.

Gehlot has been the most vocal supporter of the family and remained steadfast in his devotion. Leaders like the late Ahmed Patel also backed him to the hilt.

The Captain is said to have told the Gandhis that it is up to the family to decide whether they want him or Sidhu. Allowing Sidhu and the chief minister to continue their bickering in public would only harm the party. Appointing Sidhu as the state party chief would further

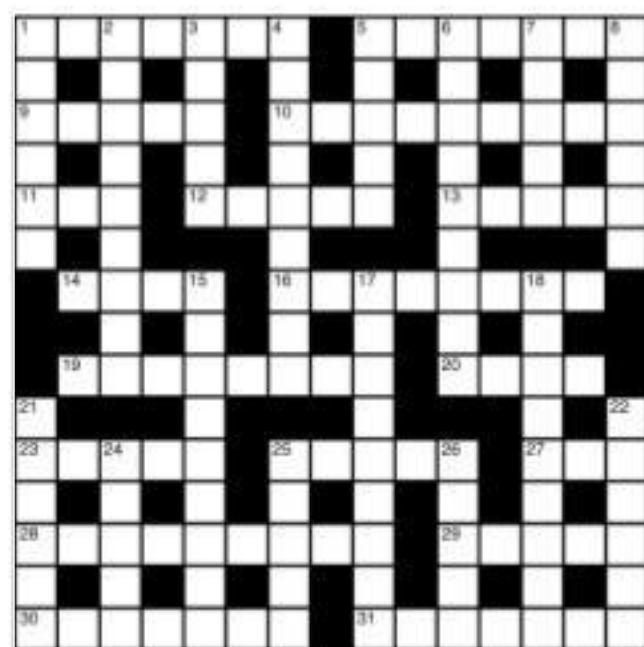
muddy the waters for the party in Punjab. The Chief Minister suggests that the party's state chief should be a Hindu, as he and Sidhu are both Jat Sikhs.

The opposition in Punjab is weak. Akali Dal, the long-term ally of the BJP has severed its alliance last year on the farmer's agitation and is planning to go it alone. In a multi-cornered contest, the Congress is in a position to return if it tackles the crisis.

TS Singh Deo, health minister from Chattisgarh, is another dissident

CROSSWORD

NO 28969



SOLUTION FOR 04 JULY



ACROSS

- State proponents of aggressive action styles (7)
- Murderer kidnaps prone officer (7)
- Falsify papers for firm (5)
- Organised Sue tours a bridal store (9)
- Stan maybe rejected slippery character (3)
- Deserving world leader and king in hot mess (5)
- With urge to fascinate (5)
- Nasty bug lying concealed (4)
- Cringe at sloppy serving (8)
- Incentive from drug carriers trading ecstasy for uranium - it's back to front (8)
- Dispatched team leader after three

points (4)

- Carrying American, unfinished boat possibly rolls (5)
- Bishop on a weekend getaway (5)
- Not a fan of short hill-dweller (3)
- Type of craft pint, way behind bar (9)
- Gun man (5)
- President of Aruba corrupted in Milton Keynes (7)
- Cherry pit allowed (7)

DOWN

- Miracle realm built around Midhaven (6)
- Cancel loser (5)
- British capital deficit creates this sort of market? (5)
- Opportunity to ditch name for surviving woman (5)

- Like The Onion, CIA trials collapsed (9)
- The clergy's destiny lies in the church (5)
- Old man's weapons - they are needed for access (9)
- A section expert (5)
- Newton should love (6)
- OK, rip up my comic fast! (3,6)
- Does Covid make you this crass? (9)
- Ideal open air frolic in Holland (9)
- Crowded and comparatively friendly (6)
- Verify a dry zone in Georgia (6)
- Cancel loser (5)
- British capital deficit creates this sort of market? (5)
- Character in Greek apparel (5)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

