Onion exports turn out to be a damp squib

PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS PUNE, MAY 25

A CRASH in international prices and steep export duty have re-sulted in export of onion from sulted in export of onion from India being a non starter. The Centre had lifted the blanket ban on onion earlier this month just before the onion belt of Mahars-shtra had voted on May 12. Export of the kitchen staple

were banned since October last year, because lower-than-ex-pected production had squeezed supplies. For farmers this export ban resulted in lower prices which led them to protest. The export ban might have been lifted, but a steep Minimum Export Price (MEP) of \$550/tonne and an export duty of 40 per cent was kept in place. India has reported a sig-nificantly lower than expected production of onion mainly ow-ing to moisture stress due to the

failure of the monsoon.
Traders of Nashik, while speaking to The Indian Express, said consignments to United Arab Emirates—the biggest destination of Indian onions— have become non viable due to a sudden drop in prices there. "Before the ban was lifted, landed prices of onion in Dubai was 2 Dirham, which has now dropped to around 1 Dirham," the trader said. (1) Dirham equals Rs 22.65). Export quality onions, at most wholesale

markets is between Rs 2,000 and 2,200/ quintal, and the total FOB price inclusive of packing and transport cost for consignments to Dubai works out to be around Rs 40-45/kg. Present prices thus are not conducive for export. During the last financial year i.e., 2022–23 India had exported 25.25 lakh tonnes of onion of which 4 lakh tonnes were exported to the UAE.

The drop in Dubai prices traders said was due to availability

of onion from China, Egypt and Pakistan. Indian exporters have said that till export duty is not re-duced they would wait, rather than run up losses. "Due to almost nil exports, domestic prices have remained more of less as they were before the ban was lifted were before the ban was lifted," traders said. At present the average traded price of the bulb at Lasalgaon's wholesale market is between Rs 1,400–1,500 /quintal. Traders have ruled out any rise in prices till exports improve.

PUNE.MAY'25 THE CANNES International Film Festival, 2024, came with a big win for Independent Indian cinema. In erterat, a film by Masiam Ali, debutant filmmaker with a huge lack of resources, was screened at the ACID Cannes sidebar programme. It was the first time, since its inception in 1993, that an Indian film was creened in the section. A total of 14 filmmakers had viewed several hundreds of films and finalised nine from different countries.

RAVINA WARKAD

films and finalised nine from dif-ferent countries. "In this section they do more unconventional fragile films, the ones that need support. Such films, their existence is very frag-ile, you don't make money out of

films. their existence is very fragile, you don't make money out of them, in that sense it's very important to place value on something like that," said Aliabout the selection, as he is keen on malking more personal and poetic cinema than the one building grand narratives. His film, "In retreat," in the words of the director himself, "follows the footsteps of a man into the crossing of a night. Somewhere between the end of autumn and the start of winter, the absent one returns home to a small town in the mountains. Now in his 50s, always away and late, having missed his brother's funeral, he lingers at the threshold of the old home-whatelsecan more inglift of his arrival." As intriguing as it sounds, a lot went into the making of this film. There's also much more to Ali's here in the continuous and the continuous more instructions.

went into the making of this him. There's also much more to Ali's journey as a filmmaker and his ideas of making films that are closer to life. Born in Iran, he spent his formative years in Ladakh, and went from being an engineering went from being an engineering student to one at FTII. He talks to student to one at FIII. He talks to The Indian Express about his film and the challenges in its making, what drives him to risk making in-dependent cinema, what the milestone at Cannes means, his time at FIII and much more.



Maisam Ali, FTII alumni, who is creating space at Cannes for

> THE EXPRESS INTERVIEW

and the conflicting feelings of loss and belonging have been a recurring one in literature and cinema. Do you think the choice of the theme played a role in the recognition it got?

The plot or the theme doesn't determine the whole thing. It is always an artwork in its entirely and

determine the whole enting, it sal-ways anartwork in its entirety and how you experience the whole of it. Especially in these kinds of films, which are intimate and per-sonal, where the plot doesn't give away anything about the film. You can talk about a drama film, through its plot, but my kind of films, when you watch them inits entirety, the viewer will have some kind of an experience. It is an experience even for the film maker. It is more of fragmented work, which I have pieced to-gether like a painting. So the theme doesn't matter.

I gather you were an engineering student. So was filmmaking always an interest, or was it something you found eventually?

you found eventually?

I was studying engineering like somany people who go to engineering and then wish to do something else. I got interested in filmmaking. When I tried making something, it became a serious project. I thought I should study it and then found out about FIII, so Uwent there For me it was like re-

an art school feel, where you dis-cuss and experiment and you get the freedom to do whatever you want to do. And that freedom is want to do. And that freedom is very important to me. Even in my film there is no particular struc-ture. So it became a place where I discovered my inner world and now I am just trying to do more personal and poetic cinema.

What kind of work did you produce at the FIII as part of your assignments?
We had to make short films every year — liction and non-fiction. It's a very serious work we do there. During my time at the institute, I made a film tittled, 'Fari n Night'. It is just about the journey of a small group of adolescent football players, a school team goine for a match. school team going for a match you just see a day, and a half night of the journey.

What were the challenges in the making of 'In Retreat'? There was a severe lack of re-

sources. We were very short of funds and manpower. I was tak-ing help from friends, just persisting, persisting, persisting, and believing in myself and training Infilmmaking also, one has to understand there are many stages. If at some stage something is not going well, at the other stage you can try your best

What does Cannes feel like? Is it a measure of success, or is it something else?

Is a measure of success, or is to smething elseing for me is just to be able to do the kind of work I want to do. And if that means, it has to come to France from where it can get recognition, and I can do some more projects, then that's that. It's just that here people are more interested in arthouse films, it is called the Mecca of cinema, and independent and world cinema is celebrated at the Cannes Film Festival.

FULL REPORT ON

From punishment to education: How views on treatment of juvenile delinquents changed, shaped a Pune institution

MARY CARPENTER, the pioneer-ing educationist evangelist and MAKY CHATESTER, us, possing educationsis, evangelist and social reformer, known for her work of establishing the famous Red Lodge reformatory in Bristol, visited India in 1866. During her six-month stay, she travelled widely speaking with Indian elite and reformers and advocating, among other thines, for the set-

widely speaking with Indianellie and reformers and advocating, among other things, for the setting up of reformatory institutions for juvenile delinquents. "The subject of reformatories not having yet engaged publicatention in India, as it has in England, the nature and working of such institutions, as they exist in England, the nature and working of such institutions, as they exist in England, France, and Germany, does not appear to be understood here." Carpenter wrote in her travelegue published soon after she returned to Bristol. She noted that there was opposition to the idea from some government quarters owing to the general policy of "non-interference" in religious matters and as moral education in such reformatories in England heavily relied on Christian teaching, it may assume a proceptical production of the production o jections. Nevertheless, she held consul

Nevertheless, she neidconsulations with several government officials as well as community leaders in the country proposing that "two or three such reformatories, established in different parts of the country, where the greatest

The reformatory was notified as an observation home for juveniles in conflict with law in 2009. Express

facilities present themselves, and

facilities present themselves, and where they can be under the superintendence of some gentleman interested in the object would serve as model schools." Many Carpenter, however, was impressed with an existing reformatory in Bombay and was confident that it may serve as a model for others to come.

Initiative, philanthropy

Initiative, philanthropy
In 1843, a philanthropist by
the name Dr E Buist started a
Ragged School' on the European
lines in Sewri in Bombay.
It operated for over a decade
through personal funds of Dr Buist
and public contributions. In 1857,
when the school faced grave financial constraints, David Sassoon
offered to mergide a new building offered to provide a new building to house the reformatory at

fered cash of Rs 30,000 on condi

fered cash of Rs 30,000 on condi-tion the government matched his contribution and also appointed staff to manage the reformatory. The offer was accepted by go-ernment and the institute became known as David Sassoon Industrial and Reformatory Institution. For decades, it was the only such institution in Bombay Presidency.

Reformatory in Pune

Until 1876, there was no spe-cial legislation in India to deal with juvenile offenders who were kept in general jails with adult convicts and habitual criminals. After Carpenter's efforts there were dis-cussions between 1866 and 1868 to enact a special law to deal with young offenders, but these came



to fruition only in 1876 when the to fruition only in 1876 when the Government of India passed the Reformatory Schools Act. The act empowered the state govern-ments to establish reformatory schools for young, male offenders. "This legislation, therefore, im-plied the first official recognition "This legislation, therefore, implied the first official recognition of the principle that juvenile of-fenders need to be "educated" rather than punished and that they should be completely separated from the older and more hardened criminals," observes SS Bhandarkar in his "A Review of Education in Bombay State".

The first such institution to come un under the new law was

come up under the new law was in Yerwada in Pune in 1889, with an infrastructure to train inmates in Yerwada in Pune in 1889, with an infastructure to train immate in industrial trades. In the first year the reformatory had received 60 immates. In many aspects, however, the reformator y school was like a jail as many in the government believed that a reformator yet only a jail for younger criminals in a new name "... the school site was selected near a general jail and the pala of its buildings was so drawn up that it

looked more like a jail than a school," observes Bhandarkar, adding that corporal punishment such as caning and flogging was common, so were long confinement, detection and penal diet. In 1897, the reformatory schools law was revised as 'The Care and Education of Socially Handicapped Children, 1897' which envisaged a better understanding of the education of juvenile delinquents, it was observed that of allthe reformatory schools that were present in British India at that time, only one in Madras's Chengalpattu was under the education department and it had borne better results.

In 1900 the transfer finally took place leading to 'real improvement in their tone and discipline' making them resemble residential educational institutions. In 1936, the reformatory was redesignated as 'Yerawada Industrial School Poona' and February 1990 it became s Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Udyog Kendra and turned into a care home for destitute children. In 2009, it was Jawaharial Nehru Udyog Kendra and turned into a care home for destitute children. In 2009, it was notified as an observation home for juveniles in conflict with law in 2009. It now has a sanctioned capacity of 100 children under capacity of 100 children under three heads – observation home for children detained for various crimes with a capacity of 50; a special home for children held for serious crimes with a capacity of 25; and a care and protection home for destitute children with capacity of 25.

Khelo India Sports Hostel, Army Girls Sports Company inaugurated in Pune

SHUBHAMTIGGA PUNE, MAY 25

CHIEF OF Army Staff (COAS) General Manoj Pande Saturday lauded the girl athletes selected for the Army Girls Sports Company (ACSC) in Pune, calling Subedar Preeti Rajak and Jasmine Lamboria role models for young

alents.

The COAS was inaugurating the AGSC and Khelo India Youth Hostel at the Army Sports Institute ASI) in Pune. The event was

(ASI) in Pune. The event was jointhyoganized by the Army and Sports Authority of India (SAI). Out of the 2,500 girls who applied in the selection process, the Army selected 35 girls from 16 states. Out of all, three have already been selected for the Junior National Boxing Championship. The ASI offers training in seven different sports; weetling diving boxing, weightlifting, archery, fencing, and althetics.

While addressing the athletes.

Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande congratulates the athletes at the Army Sports Institute in Pune. Express COAS said that the Indian Army is

COAS aid that the Indian Army is known for dedication, devotion, and integrity, whether it is on the border or in the field of sports. "The Army has always been at the forefront, producing players like Major Dhyan Chand, Milkha

Indian Army has given us 55 Olympians, 58 Commonwealth Games winners, 73 Asian Games winners, and 25 Arjuna Awardees," he said. Talking about the institute, he mentioned that ASI has state-of-

Vice Admiral Gurcharan Singh takes

alties from 2002 to the present. offering world-class training equipment, modern facilities, sports medicine centre and many more. 'Th was conferred with the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar in 2020 by the then President of India,' Pande said. General Pande met some young athletes aged 14 to 16 from different states and assured them that all their needs would be facilitated. He also mentioned that Mary Kom would visit the institute to encouse them.

Many Kom would visit the insti-tute to encourage them.
Sandeep Pradhan, Director Ceneral of SAI, while recounting India's achievements in sports, said that India has seen a growth of 52.8 percent invinning metals since 2022. Along with other dig-nitaries, Anju Bobby George, Senior Vice President of the Athletics Federation of India (API), was also present at the event. She congartulated the athletes and wished them success in their fu-ture efforts.

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EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

VICE ADMIRAL Gurcharan Singh

VICEADMIRAL Gurcharan Singh assumed Charge as Commandant of National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasa, on Saturday from Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar. An alumnus of the NDA, Singh was commissioned into Indian Navy in Jul 1990. The Flag Officer has held several appoint-ments, both afloat and ashore. As aspecialist in pumpery and misments, both afloat and ashore. As aspecialist in gunnery and mis-siles, he has served on hoard Indian Naval Ships Ranjit and Prahar. He holds the distinction of being part of commissioning crew of three Indian constructed warships, INS Brahmaputra as gunnery officer, INS Shavilla se executive officer, and INS Kochi as commanding officer. He has also commanded INS Vidyut and INS Khukri and

Vidyut and INS Khukri, and served as instructor at INS Dronacharya (Gunnery School) and deputy commandant of Naval War College, Goa. His staff



Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar with (right) Vice Admiral Gurcharan Singh. Express

assistant chief of personnel (HRD), Directorate of Naval

(HRD), Directorate of Naval Intelligence. In Nov 2022, he took over as flag officer commanding Eastern Fleet, during which the fleet maintained high tempo of oper-ational preparedness with a laser sharp focus on the mission of 'Ordnance on Target'. On ele-vation to the rank of vice admiral in Jan 2024, the flag officer was

appointed as controller person-nel service. Under his command, INS

Under his command, INS
Minist was awarded the chief of
naval staff 'Unit Citation' in Dec
2011 for overall operational effectiveness and successful conduct of anti-piracy operations.
He has also been awarded the
FOC-in-C Commendation
(2002), the Nao Sena Medal
(2020), and Afi Vishisht Seva
Medal (2024).