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(AIR 5)



VARUN B R
(AIR 7)



KANKANALA ANIL
KUMAR
(AIR 8)



SHIKHAR
CHOUDHARY
(AIR 9)



SHINDE PRASAD
SITARAM
(AIR 10)



PRANAV JAIN
(AIR 12)



YOGEESHA C K
(AIR 14)



RAMYA R
(AIR 15)



VISHNU DAS
(AIR 16)



SACHIN HANAMAPPA
NADAGADDI
(AIR 17)



S KRITHIGA
(AIR 18)



MANDAR UMESH
JEWARE
(AIR 19)



DEVARAJ P
(AIR 21)



MUTHUS
(AIR 23)



ABHISHEK
AGRAWAL
(AIR 27)



EBIN BENNY
ABRAHAM
(AIR 29)



T SHESHIDHAR
REDDY
(AIR 31)



MUKUL JAIN
(AIR 33)



KRISHNA KUMAR S
(AIR 37)



SHIKHAR PRADHAN
(AIR 38)



BHOSALE AKSHAY
DINKAR
(AIR 39)



KALAIYANAN R
(AIR 41)



AMITHA K B
(AIR 43)



SHUBHAM SINGH
(AIR 44)



MEENA
AVDHESHKUMAR
SHIVKUMAR
(AIR 45)



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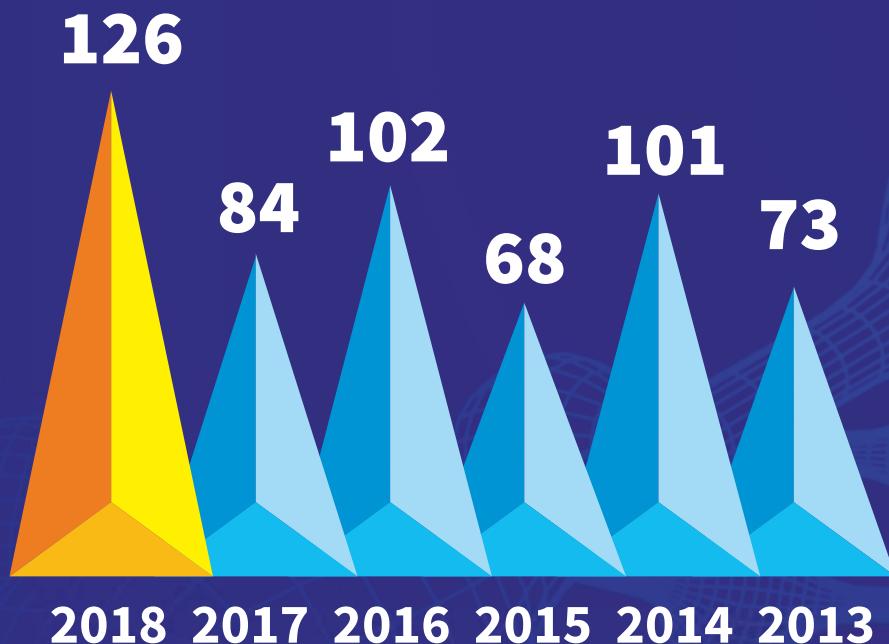
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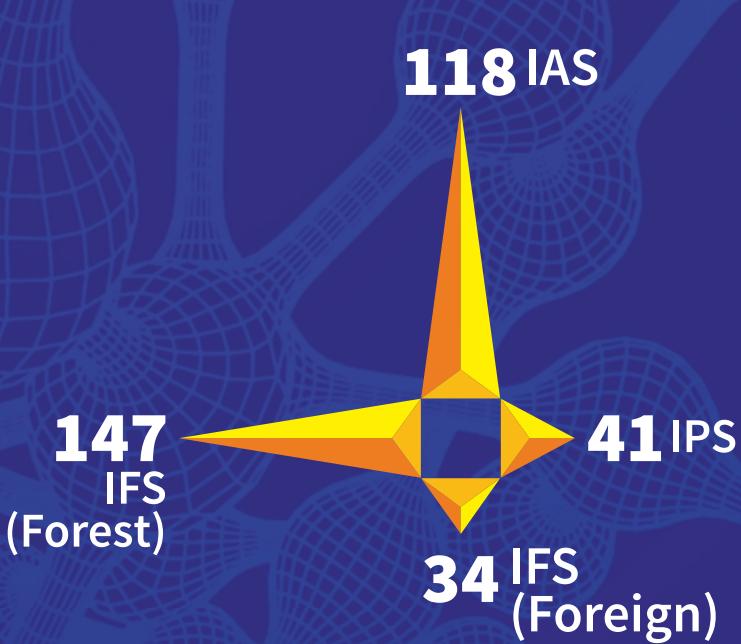
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India no longer a showcase of liberal democracy: Manmohan
Exclusive on Editorial Page



Fugitive diamantaire Nirav Modi's assets sale garners ₹53 cr. for ED
page 13



After Super Tuesday rout, Elizabeth Warren ends presidential bid
page 14



India enters final after semifinal washout against England
page 18

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NEARBY



Bimal Jitka to be sworn in as CIC today

NEW DELHI
Bimal Jitka will be sworn in as Chief Information Commissioner by President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday, more than two weeks after he was selected by a committee chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The appointment of Sanjay Kothari as Chief Vigilance Commissioner, which was decided by the panel at the same meeting on February 18, is yet to be notified.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 13

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FRIDAY REVIEW ▶ 4 PAGES

EPFO lowers interest rate to 8.5% for 2019-2020

Employees set to get 0.15% less interest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Salaried employees are set to get 0.15% less in interest on Provident Fund deposits for 2019-2020, with the Central Board of Trustees of the Employees' Provident Fund on Thursday reducing the interest rate from 8.65% to 8.5%.

At the meeting of the Board, chaired by Minister for Labour and Employment Santosh Kumar Gangwar, the "Central Board recommended crediting of 8.5% annual rate of interest on the EPF accumulations in the EPF members' ac-

SC to step in if Nirbhaya convicts are not hanged on March 20

It will decide govt. appeal for nod to hang them separately

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday made it clear that any delay in the execution of the death sentence of the four Nirbhaya gang-rape case convicts on March 20 will see the court itself step in on March 23 to decide the government's appeal for permission to separately hang them.

The assurance from a three-judge Bench, led by Justice R. Banumathi, came while it was addressing the government's apprehension that chances were high that one or other of the convicts might turn up in court before March 20 with a new plea and further delay the execution.

No astrologer'
"I am no astrologer... but they [the convicts] will find something to delay the



Nearing justice: Asha Devi, mother of the victim, coming out after the hearing on Thursday. ■ BIBEK CHETTRI

March 20 execution... I am not in a hurry to execute them, but the system is suffering when the punishment keeps getting postponed. The convicts have been taking the system for a ride...

Even now, it has been over two years since their review petitions were dismissed by the Supreme Court," Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta submitted.

At this juncture, Justice Banumathi turned to the convicts' lawyers to come prepared on March 23 as the court would not entertain any request for adjournment.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Standing in awe



Bidding adieu: Advocates at the farewell of Justice S. Muralidhar (not in picture) at the Delhi High Court on Thursday. ■ PTI (REPORT ON PAGE 3)

A father's long wait: 13 days and counting

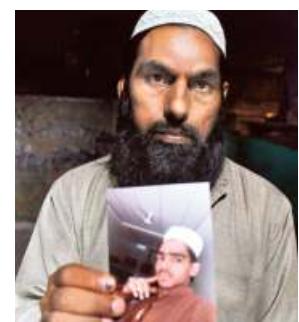
Hujefa, 18, missing since he stepped out for tuition class on February 22

NIKHIL BABU

NEW DELHI

A 42-year-old man has been doing the rounds of city hospitals hoping against hope. Mohammad Haroon has visited mortuaries of three hospitals and seen bodies of more than 25 victims, but there's no news on his 18-year-old son, Hujefa, missing since February 22. The death toll from the communal violence in north-east Delhi continued its upward march, touching 53 on Thursday.

'Police not helping'
Fishing out a brown envelope from his pocket in which he kept a photo of his son, Mr. Haroon, an Urdu teacher,



Mohammad Haroon showing the photograph of his missing son. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

said his wife has been distraught since the day Hujefa went missing. "Police are not even tracing his mobile number. Please help us," he said.

Around 10 a.m. on Saturday, February 22, Hujefa, sporting a brown salwar kameez, left for a tuition class about 500 metres from their Mustafabad home. The family has not heard from him since and his cell phone is switched off.

"He said he would attend a religious event in Old Delhi after tuition, but we do not know what happened," Mr. Haroon said.

As the situation calmed down a little, on February 29, Mr. Haroon went to Guru Teg

Bahadur Hospital. "They had said that there was a body that could be my son's. I went inside the mortuary to check, but it was not him," he said.

On March 1, he went to the police station and to RML Hospital and LNJP Hospital the next day.

While the Delhi High Court on Thursday directed the police to publish on its website details and photographs of all unidentified victims brought to government hospital mortuaries. Mr. Haroon is still clutching at straws, leaving for Uttar Pradesh to meet a tantric. "I don't know what to do," he said.

Meenakshi Lekhi, who was in the chair, named Gaurav Gogoi, T.N. Prathapan, Dean Kurikose, Manicka Tagore, Rajmohan Unnithan, Benny Behanan and Gurjeet Singh Aujla.

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 2 & 3

LS suspends 7 Cong. MPs for rest of session

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Thursday suspended seven Congress members for the remaining period of the Budget session for "gross misconduct and utter disregard" for House rules after Opposition MPs snatched papers from the Speaker's table.

Meenakshi Lekhi, who was in the chair, named Gaurav Gogoi, T.N. Prathapan, Dean Kurikose, Manicka Tagore, Rajmohan Unnithan, Benny Behanan and Gurjeet Singh Aujla.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 12

NPR data useful for welfare schemes, says Home Ministry

It tells parliamentary panel that date and place of birth of parents will complete data for all households

VIJAYITA SINGH

NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has informed a parliamentary panel that it proposes to collect details on additional questions such as "date and place of birth of parents" in the National Population Register (NPR) to "facilitate back-end data processing and making the data items of date and place of birth complete for all households".

The Ministry said there was a need to update the NPR to "incorporate the changes due to birth, death and migration". "Aadhaar is individual data, whereas NPR contains family-wise da-



Mandated by law: People waiting to enrol their biometric details for the National Population Register, 2013. ■ FILE PHOTO

it is proposed to collect data on some additional items like place of last residence, mother tongue, Aadhaar number (voluntary), mobile number, passport (Indian passport holder), voter ID card, driving licence number, date and place of birth of father and mother".

The submission was made in response to a question by parliamentary committee members on the new questions in the form.

West Bengal, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Puducherry, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Delhi have de-

manded that either the NPR be scrapped or the update be done using the 2010 form.

The Centre has proposed that the next phase of NPR will be conducted along with the house listing and house census exercise between April and September.

Ministry officials said, "The date and place of birth of parents were collected in NPR 2010 as well for all parents who were enumerated within the household. For parents living elsewhere or expired at the time of enumeration, only the names were collected..."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Yes Bank under moratorium till April 3

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Private sector lender Yes Bank has been placed under moratorium till April 3 by the government after severe deterioration of its financial

position. The Reserve Bank of India has superseded the board of the bank and has appointed Prashant Kumar, deputy managing director and chief financial officer of the State Bank of India, as the administrator.

Depositor withdrawals have been capped at ₹50,000, but exceptions will be made for depositors who need money for unavoidable emergency.

FULL REPORT ON ▶ PAGE 15

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M ND-NDE

IN BRIEF

BJP to provide financial aid to riot-hit people

NEW DELHI
Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari on Thursday said that the BJP would provide financial assistance of ₹5,000 each to riot victims along with rations. He said that a relief committee will start distributing the ration and cash from 3 p.m. on Friday. Mr. Tiwari who is the north-east Delhi MP said that while inspecting his constituency, he appealed to people to maintain harmony. "We have seen an example of such unity in Gokulpuri village in which both Hindus and Muslims live and they protected the village from violence by cooperating with each other. All of us need to live like this so that hatred is not spread among the people for political gains," he said.

Kapil Mishra raises allegations against AAP

NEW DELHI
BJP leader Kapil Mishra on Thursday alleged over Twitter that a local AAP leader had brought a crowd which killed head constable Ratan Lal and attacked DCP Amit Sharma during the clashes in north-east Delhi. The AAP hit back by demanding Mr. Mishra to take down the tweet or face legal action. "Either you delete this tweet otherwise we will take appropriate legal action against you [sic]," AAP leader Durgesh Pathak replied to the BJP leader's tweet.

A small 'township' has sprung up at Idgah in Mustafabad

Advocates, doctors and college students do their bit to help victims

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

A pothole-ridden slushy road with open drains on both sides lead to the Idgah in Mustafabad, which has doubled up as the largest relief camp for riot-hit families of north-east Delhi.



Victims of violence at a relief camp in Mustafabad in the city.
• SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Inside the camp, a small town has sprung up: from counters to register the riot survivors to advocates who help in registering cases for free and doctors for medical aid. The camp also has a tinshted kitchen at the rear end and volunteers who organise painting classes for children. But a heap of waste was dumped openly inside the gate of the camp and temporary toilets set up outside the camp were on top of stinking garbage and open drains.

Ground report

At tent number 14, which is a medical camp, Shakeela Begum, 62, was lying on a wooden desk with an (IV) drip hung from the roof. "I was standing in the line to get my eyes tested when I fainted. I have hurt my teeth," said Shakeela.

Shakeela, a mother of four

and a widow, lamented that she has to marry off her 18-year-old daughter. "Look what happened. Our house was attacked and I have been here for four days and no one has filled up forms for us [for compensation]," she said.

Around 2.10 p.m., Rukhsana Chaudhry, a doctor who came to check on her asked, "Have you eaten anything?". Shakeela shook her head. The doctor gave her a packet of biscuit, 'frooti' and some medicines too.

Many people at the camp showed an ink mark on their

forefinger, which was done on the day they came to the camp to identify them. The authorities are now in the process of making ID cards.

By 2.15 p.m., hundreds of people sat on green mats spread on the ground for lunch. Though the cook said it was Matar Gosht (a curry of meat and green peas) and rice, many disagreed. "I am almost done eating and I didn't find any meat in it. In the morning, they gave us tea and rusk and I have been hungry for a long time. There is no dearth of materials here. It should be man-

aged better," said Hasmukhdeen, 50.

Painting classes

Around, 3 p.m., about 40 children, including 11-year-old Naveed, sat down on a white foam mat and started painting rabbits, frogs, hens and crocodiles on sheets of paper handed out to them by students from a college. "I had drawn a flag, a tree and a cloud in the morning," Naveed said.

"We wanted to take their minds off things happened back at their homes," said Jeevan Issac, a student at Vidyaya Jyoti College and a volunteer.

Outside the gates of the camp, two portables toilets stood on top of stinking garbage and their outlet pipes thrown into open drains in which blackish water flowed.

Delhi govt. response

When asked about it, a Delhi government spokesperson said the BJP-led MCD has not been sending people to collect the garbage and they have cleaned the area partly by Thursday evening with help from sanitation workers from government schools.



A view of the burnt Gokulpuri tyre market in north-east Delhi on Thursday • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

L-G visits north-east Delhi, listens to problems of riot victims

Baijal meets members of Aman Committees, reviews relief work

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal on Thursday visited violence-hit areas of north-east Delhi to stake stock of the relief measures and met members of the Aman Committees that have been formed.

Mr. Baijal was accompanied by Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Shrivastava and other senior officials who gave a hearing to representatives of Aman Commit-

tees about the problems being faced by the displaced people. Mr. Baijal instructed the District Magistrate to expedite the damage assessment and compensation the roof and repair the damaged/burnt installations at the earliest.

"Continued police presence, close community vigil, timely disbursement of relief and improved civic management in the affected areas with concerted efforts of civil society and govern-

ment machinery will restore peace, harmony, mutual brotherhood and normalcy," Mr. Baijal said.

The L-G also asked the public to refrain from spreading malicious rumours or unconfirmed news which can potentially disturb peace and harmony in the area. He advised members of Aman Committees to use social media constructively and Delhi Police to disseminate information and allay unfounded fear.

Police checking mobile data to identify outsiders' role

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
Delhi Police is collecting and scrutinising hundreds of video footage of last week's communal clashes in the north-east parts of the city and also gathering mobile call and data records to identify those involved in the violence, officials said on Thursday.

With several people from

riot-hit areas alleging the role of "outsiders" in the riots, two Special Investigation Teams of the Delhi Police's Crime Branch have been formed to probe the violence.

Mobile data and call records are being examined to ascertain who were present in north-east Delhi during the time of violence," a Crime Branch officer said.

At Al Hind camp, 23-year-old marries cousin to save family honour

Groom's side cancelled the marriage scheduled for March 3 as there was nothing left to meet their demands

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Having lost all their belongings in north-east Delhi violence, 19-year old Rukhsar's family found themselves helpless when the groom's parents cancelled the wedding as "there was nothing left to pay the dowry." It was then that 23-year old Feroze, who works with an app-based food deliv-

ery service, stepped in and agreed to marry his cousin to "save the family's honour."

The wedding was scheduled for March 3. But since the communal clash broke out, the groom's family snapped all contact with us. On March 1, when we somehow managed to get through, the groom's family asked about the dowry and refused

Since the communal clash broke out, the groom's family snapped all contact with us

FEROZE

Cousin of bride

to understand our situation," said Feroze, a resident of Krishna Nagar.

Feroze then readily agreed to marry Rukhsar and the wedding took place at the relief camp on the same date.

Sitting next to his newly-wed wife at the Al Hind Hospital relief camp, he added: "After the wedding got cancelled, it was important for someone to stand up as her family's honour was at stake. So I agreed to the proposal when my rela-

tives asked me."

Rukhsar's family was left homeless when their house in Shiv Vihar was torched by a mob on February 25. The family has been at the Al Hind relief camp since then.

A reason to smile
With the wedding, residents of the relief camp, which has been set up inside the hospi-

tal, now have something to celebrate as well.

Fatima, a resident of Shiv Vihar who took refuge at the relief camp, said, "The last 10 days have been very exhausting for us. We lost everything within minutes and are literally left with nothing. This wedding at least gave us a chance to smile for the first time in so many days."



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IN BRIEF

Over 98% attendance in Accountancy Board exam

NEW DELHI
Over 98% attendance was recorded in Class XII Accountancy exam in violence-hit north-east Delhi on Thursday, a CBSE official said. On Wednesday, 97.8% attendance was recorded in Class X exam for the Science paper. PTI

Police lend emergency help to woman in labour

NEW DELHI
A police patrolling team came to the rescue of a woman who was in labour, in Palam here, officials said on Thursday. The PCR received a call around 7.40 p.m. on Wednesday seeking immediate medical assistance, they said. A team reached the spot, sought help from another person in the area. The woman delivered a baby and was immediately shifted with her newborn to a hospital. They were later shifted to DDU Hospital. PTI

Cong. leader moves breach of privilege against police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
Congress leader in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, on Thursday moved a breach of privilege against Delhi Police for "obstructing a Parliamentarian from doing his work".

Mr. Chowdhury alleged a Delhi Traffic Police officer, posted at Vijay Chowk intersection, did not allow his car to enter the Parliament complex. Mr. Chowdhury contended that though his car had a sticker or an entry pass pasted on its wind screen that was valid till March 31, 2020, the vehicle was not allowed to enter.

Mr. Chowdhury, in his letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, claimed that he had entered the complex twice on Thursday before being stopped.

Schools in north-east release exam schedule; students recount horror

Deputy Chief Minister interacts with parents on second day of special PTM

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

For 12-year-old Samir, a resident of Khajuri Khas, the last 10 days at home have been anything but a usual holiday.

In the aftermath of the communal violence which erupted in north-east Delhi between February 23 and 25, schools in the area were shut and annual examinations got rescheduled.

"The exams were cancelled due to the violence. I have five more [exams] left and I want them to be over soon so that the tension gets reduced," said Samir.

While several students at Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya said that they were scared of stepping out on the streets alone, others said they were ready to "face it" now.

Nazra Bi, a Class IX student of the school, said: "It all started when my History exam was on. Around 5.30



Restoration work under way at a school in north-east Delhi on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

p.m., teachers escorted us and we went home with our parents. Everyone kept saying that shoot-outs had taken place and people were very scared."

Stating that almost all her neighbours have decided to return to their respective villages, Nazra said, "My mother also keeps saying that we

should go back to Moradabad. But what is the point? The NRC will be implemented in the village as well, right? So I don't find any logic in the statement that we will be safer there."

Special parent-teacher meetings (PTMs) were held in government and aided schools in north-east Delhi

for the second day on Thursday.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who is also the Education Minister, visited schools in the area and interacted with the parents.

"For days in a row following the incidents of violence, people were scared of stepping out of their houses. Now, as the students have started attending schools again, they have gathered courage. They have understood that the situation is under control and that they do not need to worry about anything," said Mr. Sisodia.

Morada, a housewife who attended the parent-teacher meeting, said: "Apart from releasing the new schedule for the examinations, the teachers also told us to ensure that we drop our children and pick them up from the school for the sake of their safety."

Unseasonal rain



A heavy spell of rain lashed Delhi on Thursday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

'Not a single FIR filed against alleged police atrocities'

First step to bring back normalcy is to ensure credibility of police to act impartially: Brinda Karat

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
CPI(M) Politburo Member Brinda Karat on Thursday said that Delhi Solidarity and Rehabilitation Committee of the party has found that not a single FIR has been filed against the alleged police atrocities in any of the stations in north-east Delhi.

Ms. Karat said that the first step to bring back normalcy in the area is to ensure the credibility of police to act in an impartial manner and alleged that the police were either absent during the riots or were mute spectators to the violence.

She also called out the Delhi government for its "slow" verification process for compensation filing and said that it was being "inefficient".

"Many are not able to go back to their houses fearing rejection of their compensation claims based on verification.

The government can't

sit in their offices and assume the distressed to come to them. They need to go to the affected areas," she added.

The party said that it has constituted four teams to conduct door-to-door survey of affected areas and reach out to the families of deceased and injured and aid them in filing FIRs and MLCs respectively.

"The team is doing a survey of the people affected, loss of livelihood and other

damages incurred. This was necessitated since the State government released a form to be submitted by victims for claiming compensation," the party said.

It added that the survey form of the government misses important information about socio-economic conditions of these families and does not capture full details of the violence and destruction that was unleashed on these households.

Ms. Karat also said that the party was doing a house-to-house campaign against the "politics of hate" which the RSS-BJP have been trying to rake up.

The campaign will expose the communal agendas of the Sangh Parivar, make people aware of the devastation caused by recent communal riots and appeal to them to defeat the agenda of hate and violence," Ms. Karat said.

Riots: govt. to increase compensation to victims

₹88.55 lakh has been disbursed so far

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government on Thursday said that it has distributed a total of ₹88.55 lakh as compensation to violence-hit families in north-east Delhi. It added that the Delhi Cabinet has now decided to increase the compensation to people whose houses have been damaged and the government will now treat each floor of a multi-storey building as one residential unit while paying the compensation.

Earlier, a compensation of ₹5 lakh was being provided in case of total damage - ₹4 lakh to the owners and ₹1 lakh to the tenants. However, during disbursal of compensation on ground, it was found that there were multiple owners and tenants living in the same building. Therefore, the Delhi government has now decided to treat each floor as a different residential unit," an official statement said.

Now, a compensation of ₹4 lakh will be provided to

IRDAI tells insurers to settle riot victims' claims

'Ensure payments are made in 15 days'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has asked insurance companies to expediently settle the claims of Delhi riot victims and make the payments within 15 days.

In a communication to all general, life and standalone health insurance companies, the IRDAI said the violence in north-east Delhi during last week of February have had a serious impact on people, property and business in the region.

"The authority is aware that general insurers, life insurers and standalone health insurers may have written policies that extend to lives and property pertaining to the affected areas. In this situation, all insurers are advised to act immediately for fair and speedy settlement of claims," the insurance regulator directed.

The IRDAI has asked them to engage adequate number of surveyors immediately in the affected areas to ensure that all claims are

promptly assessed and payments of claims are disbursed within 15 days.

The IRDAI, in a set of instructions to the insurers, has asked them to nominate a senior officer who would act as a nodal officer for Delhi, who would be coordinating the settlement of all the claims that are reported in the affected areas.

It has also asked them to publish in press, the contact details of offices/special arrangements set up for this purpose as well as to initiate immediate steps for quick registration of FIRs.

Insurers should create extensive awareness campaign in the affected areas duly highlighting the measures taken, the regulator said.

In order to gauge the magnitude of loss, insurers were advised to submit information about insurance claims related to the violence in north-east on weekly basis in a given format. The IRDAI also asked them to take urgent steps to co-ordinate with the Delhi government.

Justice Muralidhar clears the air on his transfer

'Feb. 26 was perhaps the longest working day of my life'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
Justice S. Muralidhar has said that February 26 was perhaps the longest working day of his life as a judge of the Delhi High Court, where he has spent 14 years on the Bench.

Justice Muralidhar, 58, who received a grand farewell on Thursday from a huge gathering including judges and lawyers amid a big round of applause, said he wanted to clear the confusion on his transfer and narrated the sequence of events from the time he received the Chief Justice of India's communication till February 26.

A controversy had erupted after the Centre issued Justice Muralidhar's transfer notification close to midnight of February 26 - the day a Bench headed by him had pulled up the Delhi police for failing to register FIRs against three BJP leaders for their alleged hate speeches which purportedly led to the recent violence in north-east Delhi.

He said it began at 12.30 a.m. with a sitting at his residence with Justice A.J. Bhambhani, under the orders of Justice G.S. Sistani, to deal with a PIL filed by Rahul Roy seeking safe passage of ambulances carrying the injured riot victims.

"When I received a call at my residence from the lawyer for the petitioner, I first called Justice Sistani to ask what should be done, knowing that the Chief Justice (CJ) was on leave. Justice Sistani explained that he too was of officially on leave the whole of February 26 and that I should take up the matter.

"This fact is stated in the order passed by the Bench after the hearing. Later that day, upon urgent mentioning, as the de facto CJ's Bench, Justice Talwani Singh and I took up another fresh PIL on the CJ's board seeking



Advocates attending the farewell party of Justice S. Muralidhar in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ PTI

um's decision was communicated to me by the CJI on February 17 by a letter which sought my response. I acknowledged receipt of the letter, I was then asked to clarify what I meant. As I saw it, if I was to be transferred from the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Justice Muralidhar said the notification which was issued close to midnight of February 26 did two things. "First, it transferred me to Punjab and Haryana High Court. Second, it appointed me to a position from where I can never be transferred, or removed and in which I shall always be proud to remain. A 'former judge' of arguably the best High Court in the country. The High Court of Delhi," he said, following a standing ovation by all the judges and the gathering, including his family members, former judges, lawyers, court staff and media persons.

Clearing the air over the controversy on his transfer from the Delhi High Court to the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Justice Muralidhar said it was an occasion which has come with a saddening effect and his absence will be felt institutionally as well as personally.

The Supreme Court Colle-

gium, headed by the CJI, had in a meeting on February 12 recommended the transfer of Justice Muralidhar to the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Justice Muralidhar was number three in the Delhi High Court, his parent High Court as a judge.

"In my case, the Collegi-

DDA told to form special purpose vehicle for Yamuna rejuvenation

NGT asks Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh to take action

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Thursday directed the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to constitute within two weeks a special purpose vehicle for rejuvenation of the Yamuna.

"The functions of such entity will include ecological restoration of the floodplain zones, setting up of biodiversity parks, artificial wetlands, phytoremediation of drains at the river mouth locations, maintaining the vigil land undertaking flow measurement, creating ecologi-

cal services, removing encroachments and undertaking other activities, including river front development," an NGT Bench said.

"It may also take steps to attract and educate the citizens and nature enthusiasts for activities, including building environmental temper amongst citizenry, without in any manner causing any damage to the floodplains," it said.

The Bench also directed the State governments of Delhi, Haryana and U.P. to take expeditious action per-

taining to sewage management, industrial pollutants and solid waste that gets discharged into the river.

The CPCB was directed to issue notice to entities that were accountable to pay compensation. In cases of non-compliance, the pollution monitoring body was asked to move the NGT.

The green panel also directed the Delhi government to set up an Integrated Drain Management Cell, to be headed by the Chief Secretary, for remediation and management of all drains in the city.

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STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government on Thursday said that it has distributed a total of ₹88.55 lakh as compensation to violence-hit families in north-east Delhi. It added that the Delhi Cabinet has now decided to increase the compensation to people whose houses have been damaged and the government will now treat each floor of a multi-storey building as one residential unit while paying the compensation.

Earlier, a compensation of ₹5 lakh was being provided in case of total damage - ₹4 lakh to the owners and ₹1 lakh to the tenants. However, during disbursal of compensation on ground, it was found that there were multiple owners and tenants living in the same building. Therefore, the Delhi government has now decided to treat each floor as a different residential unit," an official statement said.

Now, a compensation of ₹4 lakh will be provided to

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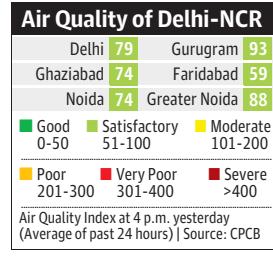
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RISE 16:58 SET 05:44

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26°C Few spells of rain and thundershower is likely. Rise in day temperature is likely.© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.**Primary schools to remain shut till March 31****SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday announced that all primary schools in the Capital will remain shut till March 31 as a precautionary measure to stop the spread of COVID-19. Mr. Sisodia announced the direction via a tweet.

The Directorate of Education (DoE) issued a circular that said that all government-aided, private and schools run by civic bodies have been directed to remain closed for their primary classes.

The circular from the DoE read: "In the interest of the health and safety of students of primary classes, all the government, government-aided, private recognised [unaided] schools of the Directorate of Education, and those run by local bodies [MCD, NDMC, & Delhi Cantonment Board] will remain closed with immediate effect for students up to primary classes till March 31 2020."

The DoE added that students of nursery and primary classes are too young to understand the risks associated with COVID-19 and thus, are more prone to infectious diseases as they mingle with classmates more often. Parents have been asked to train their wards about preventive measures to protect themselves from the virus at home.

DUTA protests against 'job vulnerability'**STAFF REPORTER**
NEW DELHI

The Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) on Thursday organised a demonstration at Mandi House against the "inhumane conditions" that plague the teachers of Delhi University and the New Education Policy (NEP).

"The abysmal condition of the Delhi University is perhaps best reflected by the state of qualified and eligible ad hoc and temporary teachers who have been endlessly waiting for permanent placements, in fact some for more than one decade," DUTA said.

It added that teachers have been churning out batch after batch of meritorious students each year but have been subjected to constant vulnerability of jobs. DUTA demanded a one-time regulation for absorption of all existing ad hoc and temporary teachers.

Firms promote work-from-home, suspend travel

Amid COVID-19 scare in country, smartphone makers cancel on-ground events for new product launches

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

Many events, including press conferences, internal company events and National Days, have been cancelled in the Capital to avoid public gatherings due to COVID-19 outbreak.

A large number of firms are promoting work-from-home among employees, while suspending foreign travel and limiting domestic travel for workers.

Precautionary measures

IT firm Tech Mahindra said it has issued a detailed employee advisory and are undertaking various preventive measures. "We have mobilised a panel of doctors on standby across all locations who are educating employees on the dos and don'ts. Restrictions have been imposed on domestic and international travel with immediate effect," Harshvendra Soin, Chief People Officer, Tech Mahindra, said.

The company has also postponed all internal events that required large gatherings and had advised everyone to leverage technologies like tele presence



People wear protective masks at Connaught Place on Thursday.

■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHAKAR

der and CEO Anshul Sushil said.

Likewise, PR firm Wizikey said 80% of employees are now working from home and those coming to the office are being provided with masks and sanitisers.

"We have put up an hourly reminder of 'WHO guidelines' for workspaces' like washing hands, avoiding touching mouth, eyes and nose, maintaining social distance, etc. We are checking body temperature in the morning for all our employees," Wizikey founder

"In light of current reports of

#coronavirus impact & related advisory by health officials to maintain social distance as a precautionary measure, I'm calling off our biggest event. Will still give live speech in stadium with you watching #realmel6series event online," Realmel India CEO Madhav Sheth had tweeted.

Similarly, Xiaomi vice-president and India Managing Director Manu Jain said the company won't be holding any launch events on-ground in March.

"While we have been planning for this launch for months, we believe this is an unprecedented yet extremely important step."

Mr. Jain said the decision was taken with the objective of reducing exposure risk to COVID-19 for Mi fans, media friends, partners and Xiaomi employees.

"We are operating out of abundant caution and our dedication to keeping all of you healthy," he said.

Embassy of Italy also cancelled their National Day event scheduled for March 17 in the Capital. Auto giant Mahindra & Mahindra, which was to host the 10th edition of Mahindra Samiddhi India Agri

Awards 2020 in New Delhi to honour the heroes of Indian agriculture, postponed the event "due to unavoidable circumstances".

Holi function

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Thursday announced that it will cancel its 'Holi event' scheduled for March 8 "in view of COVID-19 outbreak and the appeal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi".

"Experts across the world have advised to reduce mass gatherings to avoid the spread of COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus. Hence, this year I have decided not to participate in any Holi Milan programme," the PM had tweeted on March 4.

Not just in Delhi, but events in other parts of the country have also dropped. Amazon Web Services (AWS) cancelled its Mumbai Summit scheduled for April 7-9 "due to the continued concerns about COVID-19... We've reached this decision after much consideration, as the health and safety of our employees, customers, and partners are our top priority," a company spokesperson said.

"Hospitals are extremely crowded places with patients coming in with various kinds of infections. Now, with this extremely contagious virus we have to be careful. Hospitals should provide appropriate and adequate personal protective equipment at workplace without interruption in their supply and also make it compulsory to wear the same while on duty," said the Resident Doctors' Association of All India Institute of Medical Sciences in its letter to the administration.

Doctors and nurses have also demanded that hospitals should conduct awareness sessions for all staff to ensure that detection, isolation and treatment can be done with the least possible cross-infection.

Delhi govt. sets up isolation wards in 25 hospitals**BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN**
NEW DELHI

With 30 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country till now, Delhi government is setting up isolation wards in 25 hospitals, Health Minister Satyendar Jain said on Thursday. He added that 3.5 lakh N95 masks and over 8,000 separation kits for staff treating COVID-19 patients have been arranged.

lok Nayak Hospital has set up 11 separate rooms and isolation wards to treat patients, the Minister said.

Isolation ward consisting of 14 beds has been set up at Bara Hindurao Hospital, said North Delhi Mayor Avtar Singh. Nodal officers have been deputed at Hindurao and Kasturba Hospital to report COVID-19 cases. A core team was formed to review the situation, he added.

"A total of 3,000 N95 masks have been distributed in the hospital. At zonal levels, Deputy Health Officers have been given the charge of nodal officers," the Mayor said.

Meanwhile, front-line healthcare workers across both government and private hospitals are demanding adequate protective gears with the sudden escalation of COVID-19 cases.

"Hospitals are extremely crowded places with patients coming in with various kinds of infections. Now, with this extremely contagious virus we have to be careful. Hospitals should provide appropriate and adequate personal protective equipment at workplace without interruption in their supply and also make it compulsory to wear the same while on duty," said the Resident Doctors' Association of All India Institute of Medical Sciences in its letter to the administration.

Doctors and nurses have also demanded that hospitals should conduct awareness sessions for all staff to ensure that detection, isolation and treatment can be done with the least possible cross-infection.

Paytm staffers under watch after colleague tests positive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

A day after a Paytm employee at the company's office here tested positive for COVID-19, the samples of his four colleagues were sent for examination and the rest were kept under observation, said Chief Medical Officer, Gurugram, Jaswant Singh Punia.

Dr. Punia, along with a team of six doctors, visited the office of the online payment app late on Wednesday night. "While the samples of four employees working in a cluster with the person affected have been sent for examination to Ram Manohar Lohia hospital, the rest [86] are also under observation. Of

the 91 employees, 18 are from Delhi, and one each from Noida and Faridabad, and the rest from Gurugram. We are in touch with all of them and they will be under observation for two weeks. None of them is showing symptoms as of now," said Dr. Punia.

He said the affected employee

was aged 26 years and had gone to Italy for honeymoon when he contracted the deadly virus. "He was asymptomatic, but he still went for examination on March 2 and was tested positive. He has been admitted to AIIMS, Delhi," said Dr. Punia.

Meanwhile, the helplines set up by the district hospital to

take queries on COVID-19 are receiving around 100 calls per day. "The panic calls have increased over the last two days after a case was reported in Delhi. But we have been suggesting people not to get panicked since in more than 80% cases, the infection is cured in two weeks time," said Dr. Sudha Garg.

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RJD will implement domicile policy in Bihar, says Tejashwi

'90% reservation for local youths in government jobs'

AMARNATH TEWARY

PATNA

Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav on Thursday reiterated that if his party comes to power, it will implement a domicile policy to give 90% reservation to local youths in government jobs and educational institutions.

His party, the RJD, also announced its new national executive committee, deleting the name of imprisoned former Siwan MP Mohd. Shahabuddin from the list.

"The present double engine government of Nitish Kumar must give employment to 7 crore youths of the State or be ready to face them... when the RJD will come to power we'll implement the domicile police by giving 90% reservation to



RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav

local youths in government jobs and educational institutions," declared Mr. Yadav during his "Berojgari Ha-tao" (Remove Unemployment) yatra at Patori in Sa-mastipur district.

Nitish govt. slammed

Mr. Yadav also slammed the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government and said: "They [NDA] were saying it's a double engine government but look at what is the condition of education in the

Sate today... teachers are not getting salaries... schools are closed. The RJD will fight for the rights of teachers and improve the educational condition in the State."

Earlier, the Bihar government had clarified that there was no need for extending reservation up to 90% for the local people.

"If we stop other people from getting jobs in our State, they will also follow the same... you [Tejashwi Yadav] give in writing which State is giving how much reservation to their local people, then we'll consider it," Energy Minister Bijendra Prasad Yadav had recently said in the State Assembly.

The NDA leaders termed Mr. Tejashwi Yadav domicile policy plan a "political gimmick".

One stabbed in fresh violence in Meghalaya

Masked men damaged vehicles on streets

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Parts of Meghalaya witnessed violence on Thursday after a brief lull as masked men stabbed a non-tribal person in Shillong and went about damaging vehicles on the streets.

The person who sustained stab wounds was identified as Sanidul Islam, 21, from western Assam's Barpeta district. He was attacked in the Mawkhar area of the city.

East Khasi Hills district's Superintendent of Police Claudia A. Lyngwa said Mr. Islam was stabbed in the stomach by two unidentified persons about 2.30 p.m.

"He was attacked in a lane as he was going to a shop where he works. He is now out of danger after treatment in a hospital," she said.

Senior police officers said security forces were carry-

ing out round-the-clock vigil in areas of Shillong which have mixed population.

The attack happened when the curfew in the vulnerable areas of Shillong was relaxed for seven hours. It was preceded by miscreants damaging a car with stones on the outskirts of the city.

On Thursday, the violence spread to the adjoining Ri-Bhoi district with reports of minor clashes and an attempted torching of a vehicle after it was damaged.

Night curfew continues to be in force in parts of Shillong and other violence-hit areas of East Khasi Hills district. However, mobile Internet and messaging services suspended in six districts of Khasi and Jaintia Hills regions from the night of February 28 were restored on Thursday.

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Mob: 9728024311, 9728363311
E-mail : rdsoc@gmail.com & baljit192@rediffmail.com

PERSONAL

LOST & FOUND

LOST

It is notified for the information that my Original Qualifying Examination Certificate of Secondary School Examination of Year 2013 Roll No. 4195086, and Senior Secondary School Examination of Year 2015 Roll No. 4829112 issued by CBSE has been actually lost.

GAUTHAM M. Mythri Nagar : M/7 Devadathan, Thottungal, Palakkad-678014

Copy of these records forwarded sent to your respective Head of Department/RPD & Higher Courts have come back. The same have been sent through email too. The Enquiry further adjusted to 03/03/2020.

Please note that the final sitting of the Enquiry will be held on 20/03/2020 at 10.30 AM at the Corporate Office of Ambica Division, Danapur, Bihar.

If you fail to appear to the Enquiry on 20/03/2020, the Enquiry will be concluded against you.

Rs. S. Manjunath, Manager, The Himalaya Drug Company Makali, Bangalore - 562 162

Enquiry Officer, The Himalaya Drug Company Makali, Bangalore - 562 162

Enquiry Officer, The Himalaya Drug Company Makali, Bangalore - 562 162

Enquiry Officer, The Himalaya Drug Company Makali, Bangalore - 562 162

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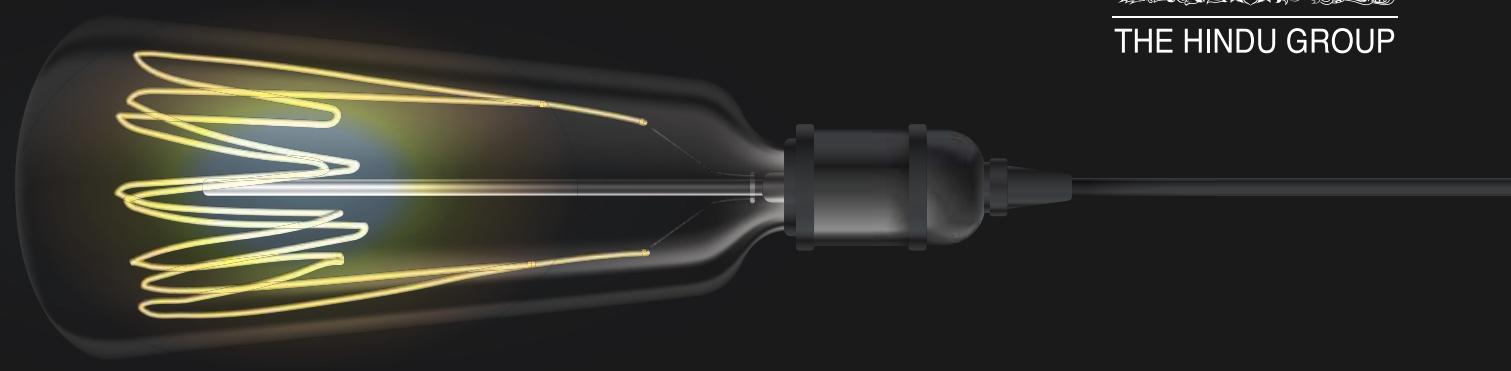
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IN BRIEF



TTD chief inauguates Padmavathi Nilayam

TIRUPATI TTD trust board Chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy inaugurated the pilgrim rest house complex 'Padmavathi Nilayam' on Thursday and formally handed it over to the A.P. Tourism Corporation for maintenance. Built by the TTD at an outlay of ₹74.70 crore in Tiruchanur, the abode of goddess Padmavathi Ammavaru, the building was developed in 4.26 lakh sq ft along the Chennai-Bengaluru National Highway.

Nari Shakti Puraskar for elderly learners

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM Two women from Kerala – 105-year-old Bhageerathi Amma of Kollam and her fellow equivalency learner 98-year-old Karthyayani Amma of Alappuzha – have been selected for the Nari Shakti Puraskar, a national award to recognise exceptional work for women empowerment, for the year 2019. The award will be presented by President Ram Nath Kovind on March 8.

Sachin Bansal accused of dowry harassment

Case registered against Flipkart co-founder and his close family members

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU
Flipkart co-founder Sachin Bansal has been accused of dowry harassment by his wife of more than 10 years. In her complaint to the Koramangala police on February 28, Priya Bansal alleged that her in-laws too had been harassing her mentally and physically ever since the marriage. She said the family started demand-

Karnataka Budget set to fuel rise in prices of essentials

Petrol, diesel to cost ₹1.6 and ₹1.59 more per litre

NAGESH PRABHU

BENGALURU The BJP government's first full-fledged Budget this term, presented by Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Thursday amidst "unprecedented economic difficulties" in the backdrop of economic slowdown, has hiked tax on petrol and diesel by 3% and excise duty on Indian-Made Liquor by 6%.

The measure is to compensate the sharp reduction in the State's share in the Central pool of taxes as well as allocation in the 15th Finance Commission.

Though the Chief Minister termed the Budget for 2020-21 "inclusive, balanced and development-oriented," it would translate to spike in prices of commodities and travelling with hike in petrol and diesel prices by ₹1.60 per litre (from 32 to 35%) and ₹1.59 per litre (from 21 to 24%) respectively, in a cascading effect.

Hike in fuel prices would come into effect from April 1, 2020, while new liquor prices would come into effect from July 1, 2020.

Searching for revenue

Karnataka CM B.S. Yediyurappa announced tax hikes for essential commodities while acknowledging revenue loss due to a ₹8,887 crore reduction in the State's share of Central taxes and a ₹3,000 crore deficit due to GST compensation

Petrol: Tax on petrol to be increased from 32% to 35%, a hike of ₹1.60/litre

Diesel: Tax on diesel to be increased from 21% to 24%, a hike of ₹1.59/litre

Liquor: Excise duty on Indian Made Liquor increased by 6%

Pay less for housing:
Stamp duty on first time registration of new apartments costing less than ₹20 lakh reduced to 2% from 5%



The hike in fuel and liquor prices is expected to mobilise nearly ₹3,000 crore to the State exchequer.

Cut in share

There would be a reduction of ₹11,215 crore in the State's share of Central taxes in 2020-21 following reduction in allocation by the 15th Finance Commission. Likely increase in expenditure of ₹10,000 crore for 2020-21 towards salary, pension, and interest on loans was another

reason cited for hike in fuel and liquor prices.

Cut in Central funds seems to have impacted the expenditure on subsidy to basic necessities such as food, electricity, housing, and education under various schemes.

For stimulating economic growth through various industrial and development projects, ₹55,732 crore has been set aside by the Karnataka government for the next fiscal year.

In her complaint, Ms. Bansal said her husband had physically assaulted her. "She said she married Sachin in February 2008. At the time, her parents spent ₹50 lakh on the wedding and gave the family ₹11 lakh in cash instead of a car," said a police officer, quoting from the FIR.

The police have registered a case under Section 498 A (husband's family inflicting cruelty). In her complaint, Ms. Bansal

stated that the accused but based on the complaint, they have filed an FIR charging Mr. Bansal, his father Sat Prakash Agarwal, his mother Kiran Bansal and brother Nitin for dowry harassment.

In her complaint, Ms. Bansal

2 test negative, but Telangana gears up to take on COVID-19

Minister says State fully prepared; team sent to Kerala to study possible steps

STAFF REPORTER

HYDERABAD

In a huge relief to people of Telangana, two women from the State whose swab samples were sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, have tested negative for coronavirus (COVID-19).

One of them is a software employee who works at a company in Raheja Mindspace. She has travel history to Italy. Another is a sanitation worker of Apollo Hospitals who came in contact with the index (first COVID positive) case from Hyderabad.

Holding the test reports issued by NIV in his hands, State Health Minister Eatala Rajender said, "Telangana people are lucky. The two samples tested negative for COVID-19. But we are not going to relax. Our efforts and committee's work will continue."



Protective gear: People wearing masks in the wake of COVID-19 threat in Hyderabad on Thursday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

no other sample from the State was sent to the NIV for tests."

People in the State, including government officials, were anxious for the past two days about the results of the samples. In fact, a software company in Hi-tech City sent emails stating

that an employee tested positive for the virus. Employees from at least four software companies were evacuated on Wednesday from the building. However, the messages proved to be false as she tested negative. Asked whether any action would be taken against the

company, the Health Minister said State IT Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan would deal with it.

Action plan

Quoting Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, Mr. Rajender said 10,000 beds in private hospitals would be allotted if the need arises. "If there is further need, then our double bedroom houses, which are all ready, can be used. Around 80,000 beds will fit into it," the Health Minister said.

To understand the steps taken by Kerala government for containment and prevention of coronavirus (COVID-19), a 12-member team from Telangana has left for Kerala on Thursday for one-day visit. The team would interact and attend classes on the steps taken to cure the three COVID-19 positive patients in that State.

Screening intensified at Beypore Port

STAFF REPORTER

KOZHIKODE

Stringent screening measures are in place at the Beypore Port here in Kerala in view of an increase in COVID-19 cases.

Though screening began in February, it has now been intensified. An isolation room is kept ready, says Port Officer Ashwin Prathap.

Authorities are also monitoring ships anchored off the Kozhikode coast.

Karnataka steps in to check exorbitant price of masks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Stepping in to check the "artificial" shortage of N95 masks created by some dealers, who are also selling the masks at exorbitant prices, the Karnataka government has warned them of strict action.

"If anyone finds that masks are sold above the maximum retail price, they can call 104 Arogyavani (helpline) and lodge a complaint with specific details. We will initiate action against the

dealers/medical store owners," said Health Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Pandey.

'Enough stocks' Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar urged people not to panic. "The State has adequate stock of masks – 40,000 N95 and four lakh triple-layered ones – apart from the required stocks of medicine," he said.

Five persons, who travelled from COVID-19-affected countries and showed

symptoms, have been admitted in hospitals in Bengaluru, Udupi and Bidar since Wednesday. These include an Iran national, who has tested negative. However, he is still under observation.

B.G. Prakash, State Joint Director (Communicable Diseases), said till date, 695 persons were identified for observation in the State. Of them, 225 persons have completed 28 days of observation and 461 persons are continuing under home quarantine.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

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नगर परिषद पलवल

कमांक

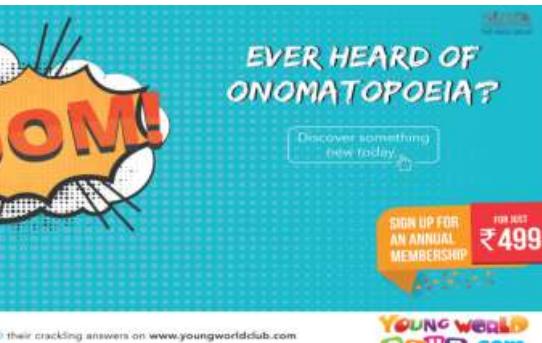
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COVID-19: RS erupts on cow urine claims

No controversy should be created on the sensitive issue: Venkaiah Naidu

SOBHANA K. NAIR

NEW DELHI

The government should come up with a clarification on various claims by some BJP leaders that cow dung and 'gomutra' (cow urine) can ward off COVID-19, NCP MP Vandana Chavan told the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. She was reacting to Health Minister Harsh Vardhan's statement on the steps taken by the government to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Assam BJP MLA, Suman Haripriya, told the State Assembly on Monday, "We all know that cow dung is very helpful. Likewise, when cow urine is sprayed, it purifies an area... I believe something similar could be done with 'gomutra' and 'gobar' to cure coronavirus."

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on the same day had said the virus could be eliminated by practising Yoga.

Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh suggested that thermal scanners be put up at different gates in Parliament. "People from many States and guests from foreign countries come here," he said.

"It is up to the people, we are not here to force anything on them," the Chairman

told her, leading to uproar from members. Mr. Naidu said no controversy should be created on such a sensitive issue. "It is your belief," he said. Speaking to *The Hindu* outside Parliament, Ms. Chavan said: "...The government should not allow any one to spread such misinformation."

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Precautionary measures: Maharashtra MP Navneet K. Rana wearing a mask in the Lok Sabha during the Budget Session of Parliament on Thursday. ■ PTI

Make action plan public: Rahul

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan's assurance to Parliament that the Union government is in full control of COVID-19 outbreak is like the Captain of the ill-fated Titanic telling passengers not to panic as his ship was unsinkable. It's time the government made public an action plan backed by solid resources to tackle this crisis," Mr. Gandhi said. Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury also raised the issue of rising prices of sanitizers and masks.

"The Health Minister say-

ing the Indian government has the coronavirus crisis under control is like the Captain of the Titanic telling passengers not to panic as his ship was unsinkable. It's time the government made public an action plan backed by solid resources to tackle this crisis," Mr. Gandhi said. Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury also raised the issue of rising prices of sanitizers and masks.

DMK MP Kanimozi said passengers should be quarantined closer to airports. Raghu Rama Krishna Raju of the YSRCP said the "Hindu culture of Namaste" is the best step in preventing the spread of COVID-19, inviting sharp reactions from MPs from Kerala, who forced him to change it to "Indian culture". Meanwhile, independent Maharashtra MP Navneet K. Rana spoke wearing a mask.

No shortage of pharma ingredients, says Minister

'Supply is enough for three months'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GANDHINAGAR

Amid reports of the COVID-19 outbreak in China affecting the Indian pharma industry, Union Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister S. Dandapani said there is no shortage of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) for at least three months. APIs are the raw materials required to produce medicines.

"There is no shortage of any APIs for next three

months. There is some confusion about the supply and availability of medicines," said Mr. Gowda, while speaking at the India Pharma 2020 here, the fifth international conference on pharmaceutical industry.

Initiatives are being taken to open API manufacturing parks in the country to reduce dependency on China, said Union Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers Mansukh Mandaviya at the conference.

Dabholkar murder case: CBI recovers firearm from creek

'Only a ballistic report can ascertain if it was used to kill him'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PUNE

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is probing the 2013 murder of rationalist Dr. Narendra Dabholkar, has recovered a firearm from a creek in Maharashtra's Thane district.

Sources said only a ballistic report from forensic labs would reveal if the weapon was the one with which the eminent rationalist was killed.

In April last year, the CBI had told the Bombay High Court that it was taking help from foreign experts and divers to salvage the murder weapon used to kill both Dr. Dabholkar and veteran Communist leader Govind Panare, who was shot in Kolhapur in February 2015.

In July 2018, the CBI had disclosed before a Pune court that Sharad Kalaskar – named as one of two assailants by the agency – had al-

legedly dismantled four country-made pistols and thrown the arms in the water in creeks in Greater Mumbai and Thane, while suggesting that one of the firearms among them could possibly have been the weapon used to kill Dr. Dabholkar.

Later, on May 25, 2019, lawyer Sanjeev Punalekar (who is counsel for the right wing Sanatan Sanstha) was arrested along with Sanatan Sanstha member Vikram Bhave by the CBI after the agency alleged that the duo had participated in the conspiracy to murder Dr. Dabholkar. Mr. Punalekar, who was later released on bail in July that year, was charged with destruction of evidence and for advising Mr. Kalaskar to allegedly destroy the murder weapon.

In his statement to the CBI in 2018, Mr. Kalaskar had allegedly said that Mr. Punalekar, known for his statements against Dr. Dabholkar, had asked him to destroy the weapons.

According to the CBI, Mr. Kalaskar had further revealed that it was the Thane-based Mr. Bhave who had allegedly planned the reconnaissance and had even pointed out Dr. Dabholkar to the assailants. The agency claimed that Mr. Bhave had also planned the getaway route for the shooters after the crime.



Narendra Dabholkar

'Missing' Cong. MLA resigns from Assembly

'My region's development ignored'

SIDDARTH YADAV

BHOPAL

Congress MLA from Suwasra Hardeep Singh Dang, who was among the four reportedly missing MLAs believed to be ferried to Bengaluru by the BJP, on Thursday tendered his resignation as a legislator claiming the Cabinet Ministers ignored his region's development and his complaints with the Chief Minister went unheeded.

Stating that he had heard the news of his resignation, Vidhan Sabha Speaker N.P. Prajapati pointed out that Mr. Dang had not tendered his resignation to him in person. Once he does so, the Speaker would take the appropriate step after considering it according to the rules.

Flagging that "middlemen and corrupt are sitting in the government", Mr. Dang wrote in his letter, "I am being continuously ignored in the Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha region. And no Minister is willing to work. Even to get the smallest work of party workers done, I have to make repeated trips to Bhopal and still work is not done."

"As a result," he wrote, "development works like ir-

rigation scheme, road construction, compensation in case of 100% damage to crops in floods, crop loan amount, bonus, self help groups, loan waiver, laptops to students, etc were not being completed."

Mr. Dang claimed that on request for the development of his region, "several times it was said that there is dearth of budget. Whereas in the areas of Ministers and their acquaintances development works are carried out without any obstacles".

He further wrote: "I consider myself a small man. My mistake has been that I have not been part of the Kamal Nath, the Digvijaya Singh or the Jyotiraditya Singh faction. I have been only with the Congress. That's why I have had to face so many difficulties."

Mr. Dang wrote that no one among the leaders listened to him despite several complaints.

In another letter addressed to Chief Minister Kamal Nath, he wrote: "With extreme sadness, I am writing that you didn't pay attention to what I said and didn't reassure me and neither your Ministers pay attention to my work."

Youth thrashed over cow slaughter rumour

Two persons have been held: police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh police on Thursday arrested two persons for thrashing two youth and spreading a 'false' story of cow slaughter in Bulandshahr.

The arrests came after a video, showing the two youth being hit with sticks by at least six persons in the Sikandrabad area on March 2, was widely circulated online. The two had claimed that the assaulters accused them of cow slaughter over payment at a hotel.

hurled communal abuses at them while referring to the Delhi violence.

Bulandshahr ASP Gopal Krishan Chaudhary said the accused knew of a dead cow lying near a ground and they "came up with a false story to spoil the atmosphere". Upon questioning, the arrested persons mentioned that they had some dispute with the two youths over payment at a hotel.

A police team reached the spot upon hearing about the incident, he said.

Indian team to screen people stuck in Iran, says Jaishankar

It will prepare them for evacuation to India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A team of Indian health workers and scientists will begin the process of screening nationals stuck in the Iranian holy city of Qom on Thursday, announced External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. The team will screen and prepare them eventually for evacuation to India.

"Our medical team for

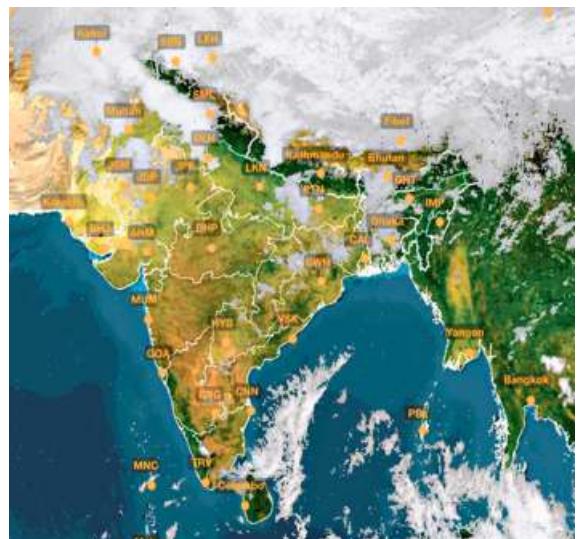
screening arrives in Iran today. Hope to establish first clinic at Qom by this evening. Screening process will start immediately thereafter. Working on logistics of return with Iranian authorities," said Dr. Jaishankar about the Indians nationals, a large number of whom are from Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

The stranded persons

have been demanding eva-

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/MD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Thunderstorm likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Andhra Pradesh.

CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

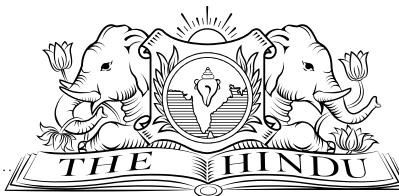
CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	33.0	18.0	Kozhikode	—	36.0	26.0
Ahmedabad	—	32.0	20.0	Kurnool	—	36.0	23.0
Aizawl	—	22.0	13.0	Lucknow	—	28.0	16.0
Allahabad	—	29.0	16.0	Madurai	—	38.0	24.0
Bengaluru	—	32.0	19.0	Mangaluru	—	35.0	24.0
Bhopal	—	32.0	14.0	Mumbai	—	29.0	18.0
Bhubaneswar	—	30.0	19.0	Mysuru	—	34.0	22.0
Chandigarh	—	25.0	13.0	New Delhi	4.2	27.0	14.0
Chennai	—	35.0	23.0	Patna	—	31.0	21.0
Chennai	—	35.0	23.0	Poornima	—	31.0	26.0
Coimbatore	—	36.0	25.0	Puducherry	—	32.0	24.0
Dehradoon	—	25.0	12.0	Pune	—	32.0	15.0
Gangtok	7.7	15.0	8.0	Rajpur	—	31.0	18.0
Goa	—	32.0	21.0	Ranchi	—	26.0	15.0
Guwahati	—	27.0	17.0	Shillong	2.4	18.0	9.0
Hubballi	—	33.0	17.0	Shimla	—	17.0	10.0
Hyderabad	—	34.0	20.0	Srinagar	1.1	13.0	3.5
Imphal	—	24.0	13.0	Thiruvananthapuram	7.9	33.0	25.0
Jaipur	0.4	28.0	15.0	Tiruchi	—	37.0	25.0
Kochi	8.6	32.0	26.0	Vijayawada	—	34.0	23.0
Kohima	—	21.0	14.0	Visakhapatnam	—	30.0	24.0
Kolkata	—	29.0	19.0				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday

CITIES SO₂ NO_x CO PM_{2.5} PM₁₀ CODE

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	68	35	24	84	114	■■■■■
Bengaluru	8.4	74	36	187</td		



Read them the riot act

Those responsible for dereliction of duty in the Delhi police should face action

As smoke thins out and facts emerge, the role of the Delhi police during the communal violence that gripped the north-eastern parts of the city from February 24 to 26 turns out to be disturbing and chilling. The circumstances and origins of the violence are important, but what is of utmost urgency for the rule of law is the behaviour of the police and other arms of the state. The catalogue of infractions by the Delhi police, unearthed by media platforms and civil society groups, is long and detailed. In one case, Faizan, a 23-year-old Muslim man, was seen in a video being beaten by the police who were forcing him to sing the national anthem. Illegally detained for over 36 hours, denied medical attention and released with his body turned blue, according to his mother, Faizan died. It took the intervention of the Delhi High Court for the police to give protection to victims as they were transported from an inadequate facility to a government hospital. Videos of personnel in uniform actively participating in violence, and smashing CCTV cameras installed by the Delhi government, have emerged. All these incidents require detailed investigation.

The Delhi police also came under attack by mobs; one of their men was lost, and several were injured. But that is no reason to excuse their failure to ensure public order in a riot situation. Even after the global spotlight on their blatant partisanship during the days of the ugly violence, the Delhi police have chosen to brazen it out. Not only have FIRs not been filed against four BJP leaders who were clearly instigating violence, there were more mobs roaming the heart of the capital city, unchallenged by the police in the days following the riots. Meanwhile, the police sought action against social activist Harsh Mander, whose speech on peaceful protest and communal harmony was presented to the Supreme Court as incitement to violence. Far from taking the officials to task and pinpointing individual accountability, the Central and Delhi governments have either remained quiet or come out in support of them. The responses of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to the violence emboldened the mob and condoned police partisanship. Had there been timely and impartial assertion of political or judicial authority over the police as they drifted from one excess to the more egregious next over the last three months, Delhi would not have fallen into this furnace. There can be no further loss of time in acting against the perpetrators of violence and those who miserably failed in their duty. India needs an assurance that its security forces will uphold the rule of law at all costs, and not allow themselves to be manipulated by those aligned with the ruling establishment.

Truly Malay

Attempts to privilege the Muslim majority over others will hurt Malaysia's pluralistic ethos

The drama behind the developments that catapulted Muhyiddin Yassin to Malaysia's premiership could go on, unless his predecessor Mahathir Mohamad decides to call it quits. But Mr. Mahathir, who resigned last week, seems no less determined to fight on than when he staged a spectacular comeback as Premier in 2018 after spending nearly two decades in political retirement. On that occasion, Mr. Mahathir forged the Pakatan Harapan (PH), a multiethnic coalition, with his erstwhile arch-rival Anwar Ibrahim. The sole mission of that alliance was to remove the government of United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), the party of Malay nationalism which was at the time embroiled in a multibillion-dollar scandal. But the PH collapsed last week when some splinter groups tried to form an alliance with UMNO, leading to Mr. Mahathir's resignation. But as soon as Mr. Muhyiddin, Interior Minister in the previous administration, was sworn in as the new Premier on Sunday, his ex-boss challenged the legitimacy of his appointment. While claiming the support of 112 MPs in Kuala Lumpur's 222 member legislature, Mr. Mahathir has also objected to Mr. Muhyiddin taking the support of the UMNO. Given the UMNO's overt assertion of Malaysia's majority Muslim interests, Mr. Mahathir's claim appeared to resonate among sections of the country's diverse ethnic minorities.

Meanwhile, the PH is organising roadshows to explain to supporters and voters the events that led to the breakup of the coalition, ahead of its attempt to move a vote of no confidence in Mr. Muhyiddin's leadership. But the plan could hit a roadblock following the Speaker's announcement on Wednesday of postponement of the next parliamentary session until May. But Mr. Mahathir's capacity to convert the coming weeks to his advantage cannot be underestimated. Few would have taken seriously his launch of a comeback bid in 2017, when he aligned with Mr. Anwar, his one-time protege whom he had incarcerated on politically motivated charges of sodomy in the 1990s. Crucially, the latter appears to stand by his mentor now, even though the promise of being handed the baton has not materialised so far. Conversely, gains from the by-elections last year are bound to renew the Opposition's hopes to consolidate its position. The prevailing uncertainty could also distract attention away from Malaysia's economic priorities. Equally, the revival of the old narrative to privilege the country's Muslim majority would prove detrimental to its plural ethos. As he constitutes a new Cabinet, Prime Minister Muhyiddin would do well to build on the inclusive legacy of the past two years. At the same time, Mr. Mahathir might ponder the democratic case in making way for a successor.

An unrest, a slowdown and a health epidemic

India has slid from being a global showcase of liberal democracy to a majoritarian state in economic despair



MANMOHAN SINGH

It is with a very heavy heart that I write this.

India faces imminent danger from the trinity of social disharmony, economic slowdown and a global health epidemic. Social unrest and economic ruin are self-inflicted while the health contagion of COVID-19 disease, caused by the novel coronavirus, is an external shock. I deeply worry that this potent combination of risks may not only rupture the soul of India but also diminish our global standing as an economic and democratic power in the world.

Delhi has been subjected to extreme violence over the past few weeks. We have lost nearly 50 of our fellow Indians for no reason. Several hundred people have suffered injuries. Communal tensions have been stoked and flames of religious intolerance fanned by unruly sections of our society, including the political class. University campuses, public places and private homes are bearing the brunt of communal outbursts of violence, reminiscent of the dark periods in India's history. Institutions of law and order have abandoned their *dharma* to protect citizens. Institutions of justice and the fourth pillar of democracy, the media, have also failed us.

Charred soul of the nation

With no checks, the fire of social tensions is rapidly spreading across the nation and threatens to

char the soul of our nation. It can only be extinguished by the same people that lit it.

It is both futile and puerile to point to past instances of such violence in India's history to justify the present violence in the country. Every act of sectarian violence is a blemish on Mahatma Gandhi's India. Just in a matter of few years, India has slid rapidly from being a global showcase of a model of economic development through liberal democratic methods to a strife ridden majoritarian state in economic despair.

At a time when our economy is floundering, the impact of such social unrest will only exacerbate the economic slowdown. It is now well accepted that the scourge of India's economy currently is the lack of new investment by the private sector. Investors, industrialists and entrepreneurs are unwilling to undertake new projects and have lost their risk appetite. Social disruptions and communal tensions only compound their fears and risk aversion. Social harmony, the bedrock of economic development, is now under peril. No amount of tweaking of tax rates, showering of corporate incentives or goading will propel Indian or foreign businesses to invest, when the risk of eruption of sudden violence in one's neighbourhood looms large. Lack of investment means lack of jobs and incomes, which, in turn, means lack of consumption and demand in the economy. A lack of demand will only further suppress private investments. This is the vicious cycle that our economy is stuck in.

Adding to these self-inflicted woes is the real threat of the COVID-19 epidemic that has originated in China. It is still unclear how far this global health hazard will spread and impact the world. But it is very clear that we should be fully prepared and ready to counter it. A health epidemic is one of the most dangerous threats that a nation can face. It is imperative that all of us collectively prepare to face this threat. We have not faced a public health crisis in contemporary times at the scale that the current crisis threatens to unfold. It is therefore important to launch a full-scale, mission-mode operation to counter this threat immediately.



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Dealing with COVID-19

Nations across the world have sprung into action to contain the impact of this epidemic. China is walling off major cities and public places. Italy is shutting down schools. America has embarked aggressively both to quarantine people as well as hasten research efforts to find a cure. Many other nations have announced various measures to address this issue. India too must act swiftly and announce a mission critical team that will be tasked with addressing the issue. There could be some best practices we can adopt from other nations.

Regardless of whether this virus will enter our shores on a large scale or not, it is now evident that

the economic impact of COVID-19 will be very big. International bodies such as the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have already pronounced a sharp slowdown in global economic growth. There are reports that China's economy may even contract, which, if it happens, will be the first time since the Cultural Revolution of the 1970s. China today accounts for nearly a fifth of the global economy and a tenth of India's external trade. The forecast for the world economy is quite dire. This is sure to impact India's economic situation too. Millions of small and medium businesses in India that account for more than three-quarters of all formal employment are part of the global supply chain. In such an integrated global economy, the COVID-19 crisis can further slow India's GDP growth by half to one percentage point, other things being constant. India's economic growth was already tepid and this external health shock is bound to make things much worse.

Bringing in reforms

It is my belief that the government must quickly embark on a three point plan. First, it should focus all energies and efforts on containing the COVID-19 threat and prepare adequately. Two, it should withdraw or amend the Citizenship Act, end the toxic social climate and foster national unity. Three, it should put together a detailed and meticulous fiscal stimulus plan to boost consumption demand and revive the economy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi must convince the nation, not merely through words but by

deeds, that he is cognisant of the dangers we face and reassure the nation that he can help us tide over this as smoothly as we can. He must immediately provide details of the contingency plan for the threat of the COVID-19 scare.

A moment of deep crisis can also be a moment of great opportunity. I recall that in 1991, India and the world faced a similar grave economic crisis, with a balance of payments crisis in India and a global recession caused by rising oil prices due to the Gulf War. But we were able to successfully turn this into an opportunity to reinvigorate the economy through drastic reforms. Similarly, the virus contagion and the slowing down of China can potentially open up an opportunity for India to unleash second-generation reforms to become a larger player in the global economy and vastly improve prosperity levels for hundreds of millions of Indians. To achieve that, we must first rise above divisive ideology, petty politics and respect institutional salience.

It is not my desire to offer a dire prognosis or to exaggerate fears. But I believe it is our solemn duty to speak truth to the people of India. The truth is that the current situation is very grim and morose. The India that we know and cherish is slipping away fast. Wilfully stoked communal tensions, gross economic mismanagement and an external health shock are threatening to derail India's progress and standing. It is time to confront the harsh reality of the grave risks we face as a nation and address them squarely and sufficiently.

Dr. Manmohan Singh was the Prime Minister of India from 2004 to 2014

China's high-tech battle against COVID-19

Technology is aiding the state's fight against the virus, and also helping people cope with the stresses of a quarantined life



ANANTH KRISHNAN

While the world grapples with the rapid spread of COVID-19, the tide seems to be turning in China, where the outbreak first began. On March 4, China reported 119 new infections – the lowest in six weeks – of which there were only four new cases outside of Hubei province, the epicentre. Earlier, on March 1, Hubei had for the first time reported fewer than 200 new infections.

If official Chinese statistics may not inspire confidence, there are other more tangible indicators that back up the numbers. In the city of Wuhan, where the epidemic began, authorities on March 1 closed the first makeshift hospital – one of the 16 that the government rapidly constructed – citing the recovery of all of its patients and the declining number of new infections. Fever clinics around the country are reporting a decline in patients.

Chinese officials are rightly cautioning that the fight is far from over. Risks remain when many of the 750 million people, who have been in some form of lockdown, return to work, as they will have to sooner rather than later, to aid an economy now at a standstill. Questions remain about China's initial response and the cover-up by Hubei authorities which resulted in

crucial time – and hundreds of lives – being lost between early December, when the first cases were reported, and the belated acknowledgement of a major outbreak on January 20.

Lockdown of Hubei

The response since late January has, however, underlined the two sides of the Chinese system. If the nature of an authoritarian system, that prides security above all else and stability at all costs, tacitly encourages the kind of cover-up seen in Hubei, it also enables a massive top-down response when the entire machinery is pressed into action. The response since, described by the WHO-China Joint Mission in a February

28 report as "perhaps the most ambitious, agile and aggressive disease containment effort in history", has begun paying dividends. The most prominent step was the January 23 lockdown effectively quarantining close to 60 million people, which slowed the spread outside of Hubei but also imposed untold costs on the people of the province.

For countries where mass lockdowns are too draconian to contemplate, other Chinese measures, particularly those employed outside of Hubei, may offer some lessons. As epidemiologist Bruce Aylward, who led the Joint Mission comprising 25 Chinese and international doctors, was quoted as saying, "I think the key learning from China is speed. The faster you can find the cases, isolate the cases, and track their close contacts, the more successful you're



going to be." Two other key steps, he noted, were ensuring free treatment and testing, as well as providing prescriptions for patients for three months rather than the usual one month, to ensure supply of medicines.

Apps for tracking and testing

What has particularly stood out is the role of technology in this effort. One example is a new COVID-19 app that tells people whether they have been in close contact with anyone confirmed infected, based on flight and train records. A government-run close contact detector platform allows companies to check if any employees have been in contact with those infected by checking their national identification numbers. The main telecom operators are sharing location data with authorities to help contact tracing. In the southern city of Wenzhou, which saw a burst of cases because of the city's traditional business links with Wuhan, more than 3,000 people who visited a noodle shop whose owners contracted the virus were traced through phone data. An app called Pingan Good Doctor, which has 300 million users and connects patients at home with doctors and pharmacies, has not

promptly assess CT scans to detect COVID-19 cases.

In Hangzhou, a city famous for its technology companies, e-commerce giant Alibaba's Alipay app has rolled out a health QR code system, assigning colour codes to citizens marking their risk level, drawing on their travel history and contacts. A green code means you can travel freely, yellow requires seven days of quarantine, while red requires a 14-day quarantine. This has been rolled out in Zhejiang, Sichuan, Hainan and Chongqing covering close to 200 million people, although the system is far from perfect. Chinese media have reported of numerous cases of wrong codes being assigned, preventing many low-risk citizens from using public transport or going to work. Then there are the privacy issues, with Chinese technology companies and mobile operators freely sharing users' information with the authorities and police without their consent in the effort to trace and track possible patients.

China, which has invested billions of dollars in new Artificial Intelligence technologies, is deploying some of them in fighting the outbreak. Beijing-based Face++ has come up with a sophisticated temperature screening tool that can work in crowded places and screen thousands of people. It is now deployed in some of Beijing's subway stations and government offices. In Sichuan province, doctors are using a new 5G telecom network to help remote hospitals – as well as overburdened doctors in the Hubei province epicentre –

to read more letters online, scan the QR code

Technology is also, in less direct ways, helping a hunkered down population cope with the many stresses of living amid an outbreak. While schools remain closed, classes haven't stopped, with millions of students receiving lessons every day through live-streaming apps.

Food delivery apps, enabled by a legion of delivery workers who are the unsung heroes of China's COVID-19 crisis, are delivering essentials on a daily basis, so much so that the Sun Art Retail Group, the country's biggest supermarket operator, said its revenues hadn't declined even though 80% of its outlets were closed. Food delivery app Meituan and e-commerce giant JD have deployed autonomous vehicles for "contactless" deliveries to hospitals and high-risk areas. While the outbreak has crippled much of China's economy, some businesses have thrived. Virtual classes are booming, whether for fitness, cooking or music. And one of the most popular selling items during China's COVID-19 crisis? Yoga mats.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

COVID-19 in India

It is understandable that the COVID-19 outbreak has instilled fear in the minds of the general population in India, as elsewhere. In the olden days, people perished in their thousands in pestilences. But the world is now in a better position to cope with the outbreaks of infectious diseases and minimise casualties. India cannot afford to be complacent. Transparency, as against secrecy, is vital. It will take time to develop a vaccine. As of now, what we can do is to take special care to avoid being exposed to the virus. The WHO has recommended simple measures like avoiding contact with infected

persons, keeping some distance from anyone coughing or sneezing and hand-washing with soap and running water. It is believed that in India, the hot weather may act as a defence and a deterrent against the virus and deny it the stage for its destructive dance, though this has not been conclusively proved.

G. DAVID MILTON,
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

■ With reports of at least 30 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in India, it is time the nation woke up to the stark truth that we are not immune to the deadly effects of new strain of virus. Though the threat has set alarm bells ringing and triggered panic

across the country, it is the manner in which the administration has been going about dispelling fears in the minds of countrymen that has added to the confusion. With no known antidote or vaccine to neutralise its effects, the halo of 'invincibility' the virus has earned for itself has had a paranoiac effect on the masses. The fourth estate, with its alarmist coverage about the 'progressive onslaught' of the rampaging virus, has only made people more apprehensive.

PACHU MENON,
Margao, Goa

Making it to the IITs
The seamy side of the IIT success story of Andhra Pradesh makes one wonder:

at what cost the parents are pushing their children towards the IIT goal (Editorial page, "Dark tales in Andhra Pradesh's IIT success story," Mar. 5)? The enormous mental pressure and physical strain of preparing the students from Class VI for the IIT entrance examination is a sure recipe for distorting the psychological wellbeing of the students for the rest of their lives. This is a very high price to pay, given the fact that as small as 3%-4% of the total students finally succeed. The rest are deprived of a normal healthy life during most of their teenage years. The only way to save these children from the clutches of these "corporate schools" is to

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,
Hyderabad

■ It is indeed saddening that students are put under immense pressure to join IITs. While many crack the exam, it is vital to

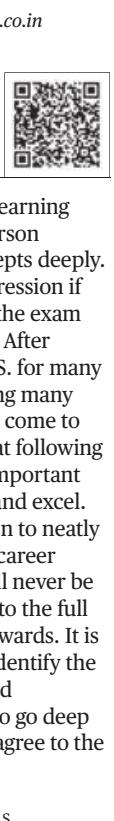
change the pattern of IIT and other entrance examinations every year and make them unpredictable. A normal, intelligent and hardworking student is always prepared to face any test of knowledge, whatever be the pattern. There could be an argument that such changes would put the rural students at a disadvantage. A way to address the issue is to strengthen rural education rather than make compromises detrimental to the larger good.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,
Hyderabad

■ It is indeed saddening that students are put under immense pressure to join IITs. While many crack the exam, it is vital to

understand rote learning never makes a person understand concepts deeply. Many go into depression if they fail to crack the exam after years of toil. After working in the U.S. for many years and watching many executives, I have come to the realisation that following one's passion is important for one to thrive and excel. By forcing children to neatly fit into identified career paths, parents will never be able to do justice to the full potential of their wards. It is prudent then to identify the child's passion and encourage them to go deep even if it doesn't agree to the society's norms.

VARAD SESHAJI,
Sunnyvale, California, U.S.



Should the sedition law be scrapped?

PARLEY

Given its frequent misuse, either the courts must strike it down or Parliament ought to revoke it

On March 2, a 43-year-old man was charged with sedition after he allegedly chanted pro-Pakistan slogans before the mini Vidhan Soudha at Kundapur in Karnataka's Udupi district. Last month, the police arrested a school principal and a parent in Bidar, Karnataka, for an allegedly seditious and inflammatory play against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). Over the last few months, many people protesting against the CAA have been charged with sedition across the country. In a conversation moderated by Jayant Sriram, Sanjay Hegde and Nandita Rao discuss why sedition still exists in the statute book, its misuse, and whether it should be done away with. Excerpts:

It is a matter of concern that a large number of sedition cases have been filed against people for protesting against the CAA. Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show that 194 cases of sedition have been filed since the CAA was passed on December 11, 2019. More cases of sedition have been filed since December 11 than in the last three years put together, according to NCRB data. The data also show that while the number of sedition cases filed has been going up every year (numbers for sedition cases started being recorded from 2014) in the last four years, only four cases actually resulted in conviction. So, how useful is the sedition law?

Sanjay Hegde: The point of the sedition law is essentially that of suppressing free speech and free thought, both of which are unpopular with the government. Where a critic can be silenced by the mere fact that there is a possible life sentence – that itself acts as a deterrent. These cases are often invoked against show-piece dissenters so that the rest fall in line. Governments are not really interested in convictions. In many of these cases, sanctions are also not given, but it is a useful tool in the hands of the local policemen who can first register a case. It's also a useful tool in the

hands of a local leader or the head of some faction who wants to shut down a particular dissenter in the locality. He can just rush to a police station, file a complaint, and urge them to take action. He then gets his nationalistic brownie points. And the speaker is often left wondering whether that case will proceed further. It has a chilling effect on people who think and speak freely. I don't think any government is interested in actual prosecution. Most cases that are filed would not end in conviction if Section 124A, as read by the Supreme Court in *Kedar Nath Singh* (1962), is actually applied – often the speech complained about does not result in any actual incitement to violence whatsoever.

Nandita Rao: Sedition is an offence which existed in our Indian Penal Code (IPC) before we got Independence because the colonial master wished to penalise anybody who was trying to overthrow the state. But the irony is that in independent India, of late, this provision is being used to bully and terrorise citizens. And in the Bidar case, where a parent and the principal of a school were charged with sedition for staging a play critical of the CAA, we saw that it was used – or rather misused – to bully and terrorise small children and a young woman. So, I think when the state begins to terrorise people with laws, then we are dangerously flirting with fascism.

The Supreme Court, in its interpretation of Section 124A, clearly says that it has to be against the state, not against the government. I can criticise the BJP, I can criticise the Congress, I can criticise Mamata Banerjee, I can criticise the Communist parties. That is not sedition. When I start criticising the constitutional state of India, that is when I invite the charge of sedition and even then the Supreme Court clearly says that there has to be a direct incitement to violence. So, sedition is a very specific and a very serious offence, and when it is used to silence and terrorise the ordinary citizen who is raising a grievance, it is terrorism by the state. I really think that the National Human Rights



Commission is duty-bound to map all these misuses of the sedition law. It should make the Commissioner of Police of that State personally responsible.

Sedition is a colonial relic and I think we can all agree that it's being misused widely. Why then has it not been repealed yet? Why has it survived in the IPC for so long?

SH: Sedition as a concept comes from Elizabethan England, where if you criticised the king and were fomenting a rebellion, it was a crime against the state. When they ruled India, the British feared Wahabi rebellion. They brought the [sedition] law in, and it was used against our freedom fighters as well. You must remember that both Mahatma Gandhi and [Bal Gangadhar] Tilak were tried under this law and sentenced. When we became free we thought this law would go.

Everybody promised that it would, but nobody actually did it. And they didn't do it because every administrator has this thought that dissent is okay, but beyond a certain point it gets dangerous and an administration must have the means to control it. Now we have to ask, who controls it? It's not a wise administrator who controls it or administers

it. It is administered from the police thana level. Previously policemen were much more independent. But since Indian independence, the independence of the police has also been severely compromised. So, any local leader can almost bully a policeman into registering a case. After a case is registered, its purpose is done because it may get government sanction to proceed to trial. Or it may not. Now, with the explosion of the media, the social media and with other pressures, people find it more convenient to just sanction the prosecution and say, let the courts take care of it. But what this has led to is a situation where the process itself becomes the punishment and the process itself becomes a demonstration.

The Congress party manifesto for the 2019 general election promised to do away with sedition. I've heard senior Congress leaders say, which idiot asked the manifesto committee to include this because it looks so 'anti-national' in the eyes of the voters. The average voter unfortu-

nately just thinks that if you say something against a government elected by any majority, you are speaking against the nation. I think we need to do away with this law as soon as possible if we are to be a truly free and independent country.

NR: I don't think one needs to remove this law. It falls on the judiciary to protect Articles 19 and Article 21 of the Constitution. Justice Kurian Joseph recently made some anguished remarks that the police is neither independent nor professional. My position is that the time has come for the judiciary to set up a search committee in every State, and a particular judge of the High Court has to suo moto check each sedition case being filed. And if it is baseless, if it has been used to only terrorise the ordinary citizen expressing his views, it must be quashed without putting the onus on the citizen to come to the court. It's true that the police have become totally politicised, but who is to stop this? Who is to guard us? It is the judiciary that has been charged with this job and they can't expect the ordinary citizen to always come to the court. Our legal aid system is just not as robust as it should be. The problem is not with the section, but with its abuse.

SH: I think the problem is with the section itself. As somebody correctly said, the essence of tyranny is in the making of harsh laws and then using those laws selectively against the people. The only current conviction which still stands under sedition, to my mind, is that of Binayak Sen and that was under the UPA government.

So, it's like this, administrators like this tool handy. Take away the tool and come back with specific laws on hate speech and speeches that incite violence. That is understandable, but to elevate ordinary dissent into an anti-national insurrection or uprising is certainly not on. The point is that if you keep a harsh law on the statute book, there will be misuse. And there's no sense applying ointment thereafter. This has been on the statute book for more than 100 years. Experience has shown that it does not actually work. Experience has shown that it has led to great abuse. It's time that we scrapped it and came up with something else.

NR: One thing here is that hate speech is a totally different offence from sedition. Hate speech is when you provoke violence between two communities. You are not abusing the state. You are not telling people to revolt against the state. When you challenge the constitutional scheme of India, that is sedition. But when you provoke violence against a particular community, that is hate speech. It's irrelevant which political regime has misused this. The question is, why has the guardian of our Constitution, the judiciary, with all its powers, failed to put an end to it and reassure the citizen that the right under Article 19 right is protected by the judiciary? So, any provision can be misused. If this law is removed, some other law will be misused. The judiciary really needs to start acting.

Will the impetus to repeal or change the law come from the judiciary or will it be Parliament that initiates the change?

SH: I don't think that there is a case for continuing this law, but there will never be political will to do away with it. Therefore, it just may be that the judiciary will have to relook its earlier judgments and say that these filters simply do not seem to be working with the passage of time. What we had earlier held to be constitutional with safeguards and riders is no longer constitutional. It may just be that if the politicians don't do it, then one day the judiciary in a Bench larger than five may have to take a fresh look at the sedition law and strike it down altogether. I don't know which process will be longer.

NR: I don't agree because our judiciary has always been pro-executive. Also, it is only Parliament that revoked a law like POTA [The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002], which was draconian and flagrantly misused. All these laws have always been upheld by the judiciary. It is only the parliamentarians, when they get a push from the public, who swing into action. So, I do have that little faith in Parliament.

It's just that today we have an authoritarian Parliament, which does not respect our Constitution. I correct myself, our constitutional freedoms.



Sanjay Hegde
is a senior
advocate of the
Supreme Court



Nandita Rao
is an advocate and
Additional Standing
Counsel,
Government of
Delhi



Scan the QR code to
listen to the full
interview online

Disabled and extremely poor

There is a link between disability, loss of employment and impoverishment in rural India

VANI S. KULKARNI & RAGHAV GAIHA

Of the world's population, 15% live with some form of disability. Are disabilities associated with economic hardships through loss of employment and consequent impoverishment in rural India? For lack of more recent data (the NSS does not cover disabilities) we tried to answer this question by using the two rounds of the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) data for 2005 and 2012.

We compared poverty outcomes in 2012 and the prevalence of disability in 2005. The sequence of analyses summarised below is first, factors associated with disability; second, the relationship between rural employment and disability; and third, between poverty/or a welfare metric and disability in rural India. The central argument resting on these building blocks is that disabilities are likely to rise; they are associated with loss of long duration of employment; and thus, with a rise in poverty.

Patterns of disability

The prevalence of disability was 9.70% in the rural population in 2012. Of the disabled, more than half (51.3%) suffered from two-four disabilities. Persistence was also largest in this range of disabilities (about 31% remained disabled between 2005 and 2012). The share of those suffering from one disability was largest in the age group 31-50 years, followed by 51-60 years. In the case of two-four disabilities, the largest share was found among those aged 31-50, 51-60, and then, among the older group, 61-70 years. The share of those suffering from more than four disabilities rose from those aged 31-50 years old to 61-70 years and then declined. Among the youngest (15-30 years), about 98% did not suffer from any disability. This declined among older age groups (just under 50% among the oldest, more than 70 years of age). In the 31-50 years age group, a vast majority did not suffer from any disability, and small proportions suffered from a single and multiple disabilities. A similar pattern was observed among those in the 51-60 years age group, with substantially lower proportions without any disability and larger proportions suffering from sin-

gle and multiple disabilities. Among those aged 61-70 years, the proportion without disability was considerably lower, but those with single and multiple disabilities rose (about 30% had more than four disabilities).

Employment in rural areas is disaggregated into categories: no employment, or less than 240 hours in the previous year (i.e., before 2012); part-time employment, or more than 240 hours; and full-time employment (at least 250 days and at least 2,000 hours). What is indeed striking is that among the disabled, the proportion of those not employed is just under half, and markedly lower in part-time and full-time employment.

Instead of using a poverty cut-off, we used terciles of per capita expenditure (at constant prices). The bottom tercile denotes extremely poor, the next middle class and the third affluent. As non-disabled households are a huge fraction, it is not surprising that their shares are highest in each tercile. In the non-disabled households, the proportions are almost equally distributed among the terciles. In the lowest disability group (<0.31), the proportion in the first tercile is lowest, and highest in the second and third terciles. The highest disability group (>0.60), however, offers a contrast. Their proportion in the lowest tercile is highest compared with other disability groups but slightly lower than the proportion in the second tercile. Their proportion in the third tercile not just within this disability group but also across all other disability groups is lowest. Thus, highly disabled are largely confined to extreme poverty. They face barriers to long-duration employment including discriminatory practices in hiring the disabled.

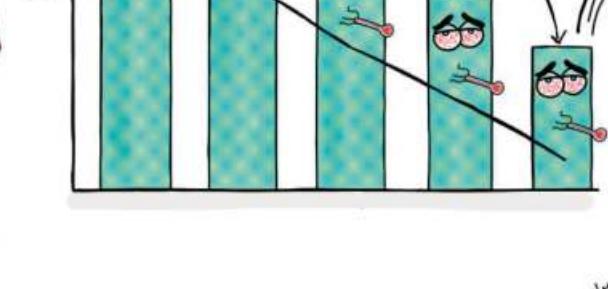
Ironically, while the SDGs assign high priority to preventing and overcoming disability, the Budget for 2020-21 is almost cruel to those experiencing persistent health deprivation by cutting the health outlay.

Vani S. Kulkarni is Lecturer in Sociology, University of Pennsylvania; and Raghav Gaiha is (Hon.) Professorial Research Fellow, Global Development Institute, University of Manchester, England, and Research Affiliate, Population Studies Centre, University of Pennsylvania

NIRMALA JI, FINALLY WE HAVE SOMEONE ELSE TO TAKE BLAME FOR THE MARKET!



Market



NOTEBOOK

The search for dignity in a neat little square

Tiny spaces mark zones of privacy for riot victims in relief camps

SUHASINI HAIDAR

anyone who visits to help find them.

I first remember seeing those squares when I was 11, and had gone to deliver clothes at Delhi's Lajpat Bhawan, where hundreds of victims of the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 had taken refuge. Lajpat Bhawan was run by the Servants of the People Society (SOPS), a civil society organisation started by Lala Lajpat Rai in the 1920s in his hometown Lahore, and then moved to Delhi post-Partition. Apart from providing other social services, SOPS would sell home-ground masalas, thus giving needy women a livelihood as well. The mob violence had affected both the rich and the poor. As relief trucks would come and dispense clothes, footwear and utensils, they would take them gratefully and then line their personal squares with them. Inside those squares the women would peel vegetables, make their children study, and try to re-

create a small sense of home for themselves, something the smell of masalas in the air helped with.

In 2002, in Gujarat, I saw those squares again, while reporting on the mob violence that killed more than a thousand people, as the police stood by. Outside the Shah Alam relief camp, the violence continued to rock parts of the State for months, but inside it, those squares gave people a sense of safety. Often when we would go to interview them, they would lead us to their square so as to speak to us from the privacy of their "home" about the horrors they had faced.

In 2004, after the tsunami, I saw the squares once again, when I met a young couple at a camp in Port Blair. They had been evacuated from Car Nicobar. Each day, Indian Air Force planes would bring in survivors to the main island, and the husband and the wife would take turns to go look for their daughter, and

who was missing, leaving the other to guard their square. As journalists, we are schooled not to get personally attached to stories, but this story couldn't but disturb. Their five-year-old daughter had gone to stay with her grandparents on the night of the tsunami, and there had been no word from her or their family since then. On our way back from the camps each day, my cameraman and I would stop at their square to check on them. When we found them both gone one evening, we were filled with foreboding. Fortunately, it turned out that their daughter had been found and they had gone running to see her, leaving their square unguarded for the first time in days. As they brought her back to their square, the whole camp cheered for that one moment of joy amidst all the sorrow. Taking a rare break from protocol, both my cameraman and I sat down and wept instead.

For this disease there are two different kinds of treatment practised. One of these is used by doctors trained in European medicine and the other by vaidas and hakims. In the European treatment the cloud or flower which lies inside the eye is completely taken out of the eye, whereas in the treatment by vaidas and hakims it is merely pushed away from the pupil into the deeper part of the eye, where it may and frequently does cause much injury, even though it can no longer be seen. Thus in one case the diseases part is entirely removed, whilst in the other it is only hidden in a deeper place where it may produce disease of other parts and often cause total blindness.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 6, 1970

NPT comes into force

The nuclear non-proliferation treaty came into force to-day [March 5] when the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain and other countries deposited the instruments of ratification in Moscow. The Soviet Premier, Mr. Kosygin, speaking at a ceremony here [Moscow], said nations that had abstained from joining the pact still would have to "reckon with this standard of international law". Notable abstainers among the nuclear powers are France and China. Mr. Kosygin called for steps to put an end to all nuclear armaments and said "the Soviet Government attaches great importance to the dialogue with the U.S. on strategic arms limitation which opened toward the end of last year." The treaty automatically comes into force with the depositing of the instruments of ratification in Moscow, London and Washington, the three originating nuclear powers. More than 43 nations now have ratified the treaty, thus bringing it into force. Almost 100 nations have signed it.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 6, 1920.

Dangers of 'Couching'

1. Cataract is a disease of the eyes which is very common in persons who are growing old. In this disease a thick cloud forms inside the ball of the eye and the person is not able to see through it. This cloud is often called a flower. When the flower has completely formed, the pupil or round black part of the eye can be seen to have turned white or grey, the remainder of the eye appearing healthy. As long as the cloud remains in the pupil the person will not be able to see; if it is removed from the pupil and he is provided with proper glasses he will see nearly as well as formerly.

2. For this disease there are two different kinds of treatment practised. One of these is used by doctors trained in European medicine and the other by vaidas and hakims. In the European treatment the cloud or flower which lies inside the eye is completely taken out of the eye, whereas in the treatment by vaidas and hakims it is merely pushed away from the pupil into the deeper part of the eye, where it may and frequently does cause much injury, even though it can no longer be seen. Thus in one case the diseases part is entirely removed, whilst in the other it is only hidden in a deeper place where it may produce disease of other parts and often cause total blindness.

FROM PAGE ONE

COVID-19: PM's visit to Brussels put off

The cases that India has reported so far include "three cases from Kerala, who have now been discharged. In addition, there are three cases from Delhi-NCR, [two with travel history from Italy, and one with travel history of Iran]; six contacts of the first Delhi case with travel history of Italy; one from Telangana with history of Dubai travel and Singapore contact; 16 Indians and one driver[Indian] who was with the Italian tourist group," the Ministry said.

The two suspected cases of Telangana have tested negative at NIV, Pune. Also, the 14 Italian cases, and all Indian patients are stable and being monitored, according to the Ministry.

Minister's statement

Making a *suo motu* statement first in the Rajya Sabha and then in the Lok Sabha on steps taken to contain the virus, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said a total of 6,49,452 passengers had been screened at airports till date from 6,550 flights.

In addition, there were 29,607 persons under the IDSP community surveil-

lance and contact tracing.

"With the increase in the number of cases in addition to visa restrictions already in place, passengers travelling from /having visited Italy or Republic of Korea and desirous of entering India will need certificate of having tested negative for COVID-19 from the designated laboratories authorised by the health authorities of these countries," the Ministry said. This would be enforced from March 10 and was a temporary measure until COVID-19 cases subside.

The Delhi government's health officials said five persons who came in contact with the Paytm employee had been tested and quarantined till their results come in.

Assuring that India has sufficient stock of active pharmaceutical ingredients – raw materials needed to make medicines – to last the next three months, Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda said he was heading a task force to increase API production with schemes for specific drug manufacturing parks.

SC to step in if Nirbhaya convicts not hanged

It would examine the government's appeal to hang them separately even if it involves an "extended hearing", she said.

It was hearing an appeal by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Delhi government for permission to separately hang those among the four who had exhausted their remedies.

The top court hearing came within an hour of a trial court issuing a fresh death warrant to execute the four men on March 20 at 5.30 a.m.

The death warrant was issued after the President rejected the mercy plea of Pawan Gupta, who was the last among the four convicts to seek pardon for the crime of brutally gang-raping a 23-year-old paramedical student in December 2012.

As of now, all the four – Pawan, Mukesh, Vinay and

Akshay – have exhausted their available legal and constitutional remedies. Pawan may, however, approach the Supreme Court to challenge the rejection of his mercy plea.

Exploitation of system' The Solicitor General argued how the convicts have "exploited the system" for all these years to delay their punishment. He found fault with the way the Sessions Court kept extending their execution dates.

He submitted that the Delhi High Court, on February 5, 2020, ordered the convicts to exhaust all their remedies within seven days. The convicts, in turn, defied this order by approaching the top court and the President.

The trial court towed along by deferring their execution dates.

Suspended AAP councillor arrested

"We are waiting for the forensic report of the materials seized from Hussain's building after the violence. The report on liquid-filled bottles and other materials is awaited," said the officer.

The officer added that the police obtained several videos in which people were seen throwing stones from the terrace of Hussain's house. They would gather

details of these people.

"When asked about Ankit Sharma, he claimed that he did not know Ankit was working for the IB and had no idea who killed him," the officer said. Hussain's mobile phone will be sent for a forensic examination to restore deleted chats and find out the details of WhatsApp groups that he was added to or that he managed.

In response to an unanswered question on Wednesday, the Law Ministry said "the matter is under consideration".

"In order to ensure preparation of an error-free electoral roll, and to prevent duplication of entries, a proposal to amend the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to

Lok Sabha suspends 7 Congress MPs for rest of Budget session

Action after 'gross misconduct and utter disregard' for House rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Thursday suspended seven Congress members for the remaining period of the Budget session for "gross misconduct and utter disregard" for House rules after Opposition MPs snatched papers from the Speaker's table.

As soon as the House reassembled at 3 p.m. following an adjournment, Meenakshi Lekhi, who was in the chair, named Gaurav Gogoi, T.N. Prathapan, Dean Kuriakose, Manicka Tagore, Rajmohan Unnithan, Benny Behanan and Gurjeet Singh Aujla.

Calling it "unprecedented", Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said the government was in favour of an inquiry committee on the incident and was even going to push for the termination of the Congress MP's membership who had actually snatched the papers meant for Rama Devi, the presiding officer at 2 p.m.

The reference is to Assam MP Mr. Gogoi as he is seen picking up a paper from the Speaker's table and throwing it away when the post-lunch commotion happened.

Mr. Joshi said that though the government had assured



Unruly scenes: Opposition MPs staging a protest when BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi was conducting the proceedings in the Lok Sabha on Thursday. •PTI

that a discussion on Delhi riots would be held on March 11, the Congress remained adamant and did not allow the House to function.

Open for discussion'

"The government had clearly said before the session that we want to clear two ordinances and the financial business, including demand for grants, and are open to discuss anything. The Delhi riots will of course be discussed and a date had been agreed upon by all," he told presspersons.

Earlier, the Minister moved a motion to suspend the Congress members from

the House until the end of the Budget session (April 3) as soon as the Lok Sabha reconvened at 3 p.m.

Ms. Lekhi said when the House was discussing the Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020, some members "forcibly snatched and tossed papers" from the Speaker's podium.

"Such an unfortunate incident has possibly happened for the first time in parliamentary history... I condemn this behaviour," she said, before putting the Minister's motion to vote. The motion was passed by voice vote amid protests by the Opposition and soon after,

the House was adjourned for the day.

The Lok Sabha witnessed multiple adjournments through the day, first over the Opposition's demand for an immediate discussion on Delhi riots and then for the suspension of Rajasthan's Rashtriya Loktantrik Party MP and BJP ally, Hanuman Beniwal, over his controversial remarks against Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her family members while talking about the 'spread of coronavirus from Italy'. This prompted BJP member Rajendra Agarwal to abruptly adjourn the House for the lunch break.

Om Birla keeps away from House

Speaker upset at repeated scuffles

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla kept away from the House for the second day on Thursday, reportedly upset at the repeated scuffles that have broken out on successive days, ever since the second part of the Budget session convened on Monday.

Mr. Birla was sitting in his chambers, but did not preside over the proceedings. When this was remarked upon by members on Thursday morning, Bhartruhari Mahtab of the Biju Janata Dal, who is part of the panel that presides over the House in the Speaker's absence, said, "Disrupting proceedings of the Lok Sabha does not bring credit to anyone, and Speaker Birla is saddened by the behaviour of some members."



Om Birla

MPs of the Congress and the BJP occurred, with a repeat on Wednesday. These were unprecedented scenes. This was after the Opposition assured the Speaker [of cooperation], a close aide to the Speaker said.

Whenever there were stand-offs of this kind in the past, other Opposition parties tried to broker peace. This time, however, the battle lines are clearly drawn.

Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh was one of the few who managed to meet Mr. Birla in the past two days. No one is sure how this stand-off is to be ended.

The suspension of seven Congress MPs and the constitution of a committee to go into the incidents that led to the suspension are only likely to harden stances across the Treasury-Opposition divide.

Dictatorial decision, says Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday alleged that the suspension of its seven members from the Lok Sabha was a "dictatorial decision" by the government to weaken the Opposition's demand for a debate on Delhi riots in Parliament.

Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said it was a "government decision" and not one taken by the Speaker. "This is dictatorship. Why did they not suspend me? I was also there," said Mr. Chowdhury.

The trial court towed along by deferring their execution dates.

Rajya Sabha adjourned for fourth day

Protests for immediate debate on riots continue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

For the fourth consecutive day, the Rajya Sabha on Thursday failed to transact any business, with the Opposition continuing its protest demanding a debate on the Delhi riots.

Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs V. Muraleedharan informed the house that a debate on the issue was scheduled to be held in the Lok Sabha on March 11 and in the Rajya Sabha on March 12. The House ran for an hour, the longest duration

since the second part of the Budget session began.

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan gave a detailed statement on COVID-19.

Leader of the Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad said regular announcements of dos

and don'ts should be made at railway and bus stations.

Trinamool Parliamentary Party leader Derek O'Brien said that while debate on COVID-19 victims was important, it was equally necessary to discuss the death of

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora, Election Commissioners Ashok Lavasa and Sunil Chandra and Legislative Department Secretary G. Narayana Raju when they had discussed pending electoral reforms.

One of the arguments being made in favour of the

move is that it may allow migrant labour and workers to vote even if they are away from their homes at the time of elections.

Former Chief Election Commissioner H.S. Brahma told *The Hindu* that the process of seeding Aadhaar with the voter ID card had started in 2012 during his tenure but was subsequently stalled because of a pending litigation on Aadhaar.

"This is a very good move as it will not only help us get rid of bogus voters but will also help easy movement of voters once the Aadhaar system and election data are linked," Mr. Brahma said.

The Congress claimed that though the BJP held some MLAs hostage in a five-star hotel in Manesar, Haryana, and tried to lure them, most of them voluntarily came back to its fold.

"The atmosphere created by the BJP in the country is to target and break Opposition leaders with threats of raids and force them to join or ally with it so that they can form a government," Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad told reporters at a press conference.

"In States where other parties have formed governments, the BJP's aim has been to destabilise them.

Anglo-Indians protest at Jantar Mantar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Action Council, a collective of Anglo-Indian associations, staged a demonstration at Jantar Mantar here on Thursday in protest against the 126th Constitutional Amendment that ended reservation for Anglo-Indians in Parliament and State Assemblies.

Speaking at the protest, Congress MP from Ernakulam Hibi Eden requested the government to reconsider its decision. He said the law was based on factually incorrect information.

EC mints linking Aadhaar with voter ID'

Law Ministry gets proposal to amend Representation of the People Act, 1951

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

C The move will not only help us get rid of bogus voters but also help easy movement of voters once Aadhaar system and election data are linked

H. S. BRAHMA
FORMER CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER

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"In States where other parties have formed governments, the BJP's aim has been to destabilise them.

BJP abducted 14 M.P. MLAs, says Congress

'It was done with an eye on RS polls'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday accused the BJP of "abducting" 14 lawmakers of the ruling coalition in Madhya Pradesh, and alleged that the ruling party's "fever" to destabilise Opposition-ruled State governments rises when Rajya Sabha elections are due.

The Congress claimed that though the BJP held some MLAs hostage in a five-star hotel in Manesar, Haryana, and tried to lure them, most of them voluntarily came back to its fold.

"The atmosphere created by the BJP in the country is to target and break Opposition leaders with threats of raids and force them to join or ally with it so that they can form a government," Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad told reporters at a press conference.

"In States where other parties have formed governments, the BJP's aim has been to destabilise them.



While both the Congress and the BJP are assured of one seat each with 58 first preference votes, a fight is on for the third seat.

Modi getting ready for Bengal battle

He has called BJP MPs for meetings to choose the issues to be highlighted

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI



Narendra Modi

the polls," said an MP who met him. "He also asked about the implementation of Central government schemes in the State as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has not implemented Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana or Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi," said the source.

PM's jibe at Trinamool

On his recent visit to Kolkata, Mr. Modi said at a public event that lack of "cun money" was probably the reason the Trinamool government was desisting from implementing the welfare schemes.

The Citizenship (Amendment)

Act is a major issue as the State shares a boundary with Bangladesh, and there are varying estimates of the number of people eligible for citizenship under the Act.

While the Bihar Assembly



APPEAL
Name of Patient: Yogith, M.S. 1 year.
Hospital Name: Christian Medical College.
Diagnosis: Sub-Aortic Ventricular Septal Defect with Infundibular Pulmonary Stenosis. He has been advised to undergo Intra Cardiac Repair at the earliest. The cost of operation would be Rs. 3,00,000.
We request Kind Hearted Philanthropists to save His Poor Lives and on the back of Cheque write Al/C Yogith M.S.
SIB Account No. 20000913487, State Bank of India, Raipur Branch, and IFSC Code:

IN BRIEF



Sangeet Som to be tried for 'provocative speech'

GAZIABAD
A Muzaffarnagar court framed charges against BJP MLA Sangeet Som on Thursday in connection with a "provocative speech" at Khatauli against Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackrey in 2008. Special Judge Ram Sudh Singh fixed April 15 for the next hearing.

CALCUTTA HC grants relief to Polish student

KOLKATA
The Calcutta High Court on Thursday stayed the "Leave India" notice issued by the Foreigners' Regional Registration Office (FRRO), Kolkata, to a Polish student. He was asked to leave last month after he participated in a protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

The panel of witnesses consisted of Brown Universi-

USCIRF hears witnesses on NRC, CAA

Denying citizenship to certain group can be understood by some as a signal to carry out attacks on it'

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC

A week after Delhi's riots, India and Myanmar were the subjects of discussion at a hearing in Washington organised by an independent bipartisan federal government commission, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

The hearing focused on the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

While there are no automatic legal outcomes, the hearing is another instance of the Modi administration's record on human rights, equal protection and the rule of law coming under persistent and increasing scrutiny from the U.S. Congress and parts of the U.S. administration.

The other witnesses were Azeem Ibrahim, an author and director at the Center for Global Policy, and Naomi Ki-



Taking stock: The USCIRF held a hearing on the CAA, the NRC and the mob-led communal riots in Delhi. • AFP

ty Professor and author Ashutosh Varshney and Aman Wadud, a human rights lawyer from Assam. They spoke entirely on the Indian situation.

The other witnesses were Azeem Ibrahim, an author and director at the Center for Global Policy, and Naomi Ki-

kolsaid. She said denying citizenship to certain group could be understood by some as a signal to carry out physical attacks on it.

Mr. Varshney said whether the NRC came into question or not, it created "an enabling atmosphere for violence". "Once you say a particular community is not fully Indian or its Indian-ness is in grave doubt, you begin to marginalise them in politics and you begin to generate a certain discourse against them in politics... about their loyalty, about their commitment to the nation...the way they raise their children, the way they marry."

To a question from USCIRF Commissioner Anurima Bhargava on the role of the judiciary in facilitating some of the processes in Myanmar and India, Mr. Varshney described a mixed history "full of ups and

downs" for the Indian judiciary.

He said there were doubts about whether it would act independently, but did not advise giving up on the judiciary.

India's answer

In the aftermath of the riots in Delhi, "unsubstantiated" comments should be avoided, said an official of the External Affairs Ministry.

"We are trying to say these are sensitive times and at this point of time irresponsible comments that are selective and not based on facts will do more damage and we expect and urge them to not make such comments. Focus at this point in time is on restoring normalcy," said Raveesh Kumar, External Affairs Ministry's official spokesperson.

(With inputs from Kalol Bhattacherjee)

fice. The critical comments coincided with Tuesday's large protest outside the Embassy of India in Tehran by several student groups.

India summoned the Ambassador of Iran Ali Chegeni on Tuesday, and described Mr. Zarif's comments as "selective and tendentious". It is yet to comment on Mr. Khamenei's remarks.

Mohammed Baqer Qalibaf, leader of the hardline block that swept the recent parliamentary election of Iran, also condemned the violence in Delhi. Mr. Qalibaf described the killings that took place in the Indian capital between February 24 and 26 as "heinous and brutal" and called upon the "revolutionary youth" of Iran and other countries to "reach out to the Indian Muslims and break the silence over it".

Nirav's riches fetch ₹53.4 crore at auction held by ED

Amrita Sher-Gil's work sold for ₹15.68 crore, M.F. Husain for ₹13.44 crore

KENNETH ROSARIO
MUMBAI

The Enforcement Directorate auctioned 15 paintings of fugitive businessman Nirav Modi and his wife, Ami Modi.

Topping the bid were Amrita Sher-Gil's Boys with Lemons, dated 1935, which was sold for ₹15.68 crore, and M.F. Husain's Battle of Gangga and Jamuna: Mahabharata I2 that fetched ₹13.44 crore. "It's a world record for Husain," said Dinesh Vazirani, auctioneer and co-founder of Saffronart, which conducted the bidding.

Over 112 items, including paintings, sculptures, cars, luxury watches and bags, were auctioned for ₹53.4 crore across two days on Wednesday and Thursday.

The live auction on Thursday in Mumbai featured 40 lots, including Raja Ravi Varma's Untitled, which was sold for ₹2.8 crore. Being national treasures, Sher-Gil and Varma's paintings are not allowed to leave India. Among the bids were V.S. Gaitonde's Untitled, which



High life: (Clockwise from top left) An untitled work of Raja Ravi Varma, Amrita Sher-Gil's Boys with lemons, an untitled work of Manjot Bawa, a Hermes Kelly bag, and a Patek Philippe watch were among the items auctioned. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

was auctioned for ₹9.52 crore, and Manjot Bawa's Untitled, dated 1992, sold at ₹6.16 crore.

Mr. Modi's Rolls-Royce Ghost was sold for ₹1.68 crore. Luxury watches dominated the auction with a Girard-Perregaux wristwatch being sold for ₹95.2 lakh, Audemars Grande Complication wristwatch for ₹78.4 lakh and Patek Philippe's gold and diamond wrist-

watch for ₹72.8 lakh.

The online auction on Wednesday garnered a sale total of ₹2.29 crore, generating four times the estimate price. "We saw competitive bidding across categories and countries, with well over 700 advance bids received prior to the auction's opening, making it one of the most successful online auctions to date," said Minal Vazirani, president and co-founder, Saffronart.

Bimal Julka will be sworn in as Chief Information Commissioner by President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday, more than two weeks after he was selected by a high-level committee chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

However, the appointment of Sanjay Kothari as Chief Vigilance Commissioner, which was decided by the panel at the same meeting on February 18, is yet to be notified.

Sabarimala first, CAA later, says CJI

140 petitions against CAA filed in SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde on Thursday clarified that the challenge raised against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act would have to wait till a nine-judge Bench of the court wrapped up hearing a reference made in connection with the Sabarimala case on the ambit and scope of religious freedom of multiple faiths across the country. The nine-judge Bench is expected to start hearing the Sabarimala reference on March 16.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal made an urgent oral mention before Chief Justice Bobde to list the CAA case before it became infructuous, especially with the National Population Register (NPR) exercise commencing in April.

Lawyers for the petitioners have argued that NPR data would be used to prepare a nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC). The NPR-NRC is considered a harbinger-cum-facilitator



for the operation of the CAA. Over 140 petitions have been filed against the CAA in the Supreme Court.

In January, the court responded to the apprehensions about the NPR-NRC-CAA link, with an assurance that the CAA was "uppermost in everybody's minds". The court then refused to stay the Act without hearing the government first. On Thursday, over a month later, the government is yet to file its response to the CAA challenge in the Supreme Court.

Conducting the NPR with the Census violates Clause 15 of the Census Act that bars anyone from accessing "any book, register or record made by a census-officer in the discharge of his duty".

It violates the provision in the same clause that "no entry in any such book, register, record or schedule shall be admissible as evidence in any civil proceeding other than a prosecution under this Act," the statement added.

Stop NPR data collection, say researchers

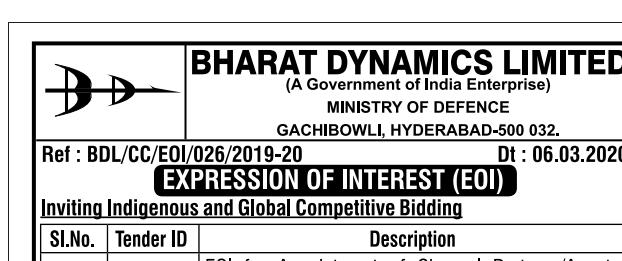
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A collective of economists and social scientists have published a joint statement demanding that collection of data to update the National Population Register (NPR) be stopped and it be de-linked from the Census.

There are concerns about the National Population Register and fears among substantial sections that investigators can determine whether a respondent's citizenship is "doubtful", the statement by nearly 100 researchers said.

Conducting the NPR with the Census violates Clause 15 of the Census Act that bars anyone from accessing "any book, register or record made by a census-officer in the discharge of his duty".

It violates the provision in the same clause that "no entry in any such book, register, record or schedule shall be admissible as evidence in any civil proceeding other than a prosecution under this Act," the statement added.



Ref : BDL/CC/EO/026/2019-20 Di : 06.03.2020
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)
Inviting Indigenous and Global Competitive Bidding

SI.No. Tender ID Description

1 61998 EOI for Appointment of Channel Partners/Agents Overseas for International Business of BDL Products.

Please visit website <https://bdltenders.abprocure.com> for further details. Bids should be submitted online only.

"Corrigendum if any shall be issued through our e-portal only and not in Newspapers".

Add. General Manager (Corp. Comm.)

Online Tender is invited from eligible contractors / firms for the works as follows: 1) e-tender No. : 2020_CSIR_45083_1;

2) Name of work : Providing labour for Management of Guest House including Catering and Housekeeping services at CSIR-IICB Guest House; 3) Estimated Cost : ₹ 26,50,000/- (Rupees twenty six lakh and fifty thousand only).

4) Publication Date & Time in CPP : 06.03.2020 at 3:00 p.m. For details visit our website <https://iicb.res.in/tenders> and <https://etenders.gov.in/e-procure/app> (Administrative Officer)

Office of the Superintending Engineer, Water Resources Circle, Jaipur

Sinchai Bhawan, J.L.N. Marg, Jaipur -302017 Date: 25-02-2020

No.: 223 INVITATION OF E-TENDER NO 1 YEAR 2019-20

On behalf of Government of Rajasthan invites e-tender from eligible contractor for civil works estimated cost of 3 works is Rs. 1545.22 Lacs. The details are available on the following websites:-

1. www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in
2. www.dipr.rajasthan.gov.in
3. <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>
4. www.water.rajasthan.gov.in/wrd

Superintending Engineer Water Resources Circle Jaipur

DIPR/C/1771

Stop massacre of Muslims: Khamenei

Iran's Supreme Leader condemns riots

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India should stop the "massacre of Muslims" to avoid isolation from Islamic countries, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran, said on Thursday.

The statement came two days after a similar condemnation of the riots in Delhi by Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, when he called upon the Indian government to look after all citizens without discrimination.

"We are trying to say these are sensitive times and at this point of time irresponsible comments that are selective and not based on facts will do more damage and we expect and urge them to not make such comments. Focus at this point in time is on restoring normalcy," said Raveesh Kumar, External Affairs Ministry's official spokesperson.

(With inputs from Kalol Bhattacherjee)

The critical comments coincided with Tuesday's large protest outside the Embassy of India in Tehran by several student groups.

India summoned the Ambassador of Iran Ali Chegeni on Tuesday, and described Mr. Zarif's comments as "selective and tendentious". It is yet to comment on Mr. Khamenei's remarks.

Mohammed Baqer Qalibaf, leader of the hardline block that swept the recent parliamentary election of Iran, also condemned the violence in Delhi. Mr. Qalibaf described the killings that took place in the Indian capital between February 24 and 26 as "heinous and brutal" and called upon the "revolutionary youth" of Iran and other countries to "reach out to the Indian Muslims and break the silence over it".

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY- DATE EXTENSION NOTICE

APPOINTMENT OF ACCOUNTS MEMBER IN KERALA WATER AUTHORITY

No. KWAIJB/E/2019/91/Part F File Dated, 04.03.2020.

E-TENDER NOTICE

Tender ID: 2020_AAICL_44187_1

AAI Cargo Logistic and Allied Services Ltd invites item rate tenders through the E-Tendering portal by Regional Manager AAICLAS Chennai on behalf of Chairman, AAICLAS Chennai for the work of "MO of Electrical & Mechanical Installations, AC, water coolers and sliding gates on air side at Integrated Air Cargo Complex at Chennai Airport, Chennai," at an estimated cost. Rs. 2,08,97,445/- (excluding of GST and other Components) with period of completion (02) Two Years. Last date and time of submission of e-bid document is 27.03.2020 at 11:30 hours. For detailed information log on to C P P e-Procurement portal reference <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app> or www.aai.aer. Further clarification / corrigendum if any will be notified through e-procurement portal at <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app>

KOCHI METRO RAIL LIMITED

(A joint venture company of Govt. of India & Govt. of Kerala)

4th Floor, JLN Stadium Metro Station, Kalar, Ernakulam-682017

Ph: +91-484-2846700

TENDER

1. Construction Of Terminals At Cheranallur, Elloor, Ferry Terminal (Willington Island), Kadakkady, Kumbalam, Paliyamthuruth, Mulavukad North, South Chittor For Water Metro Project

Tender ID: 2020_KMRL_346640_1; Last Date of Submission: 13.04.2020

2. Providing Maintenance Services To KMRL Telecommunication Systems

Tender ID: 2020_KMRL_347158_1; Last Date of Submission: 21.03.2020

Tender documents can be downloaded from www.etenders.kerala.gov.in / www.kochimetro.org

Further corrigendum & addendum will be published only on websites

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER(SW)II

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI

NEAR DWARKA, WTP, DWARKA, NEW DELHI-110043

NIT NO. 57(19-20)

S. N.	Name of work	Amount put to tender	EMD & TENDER FEE	Completion Period	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Last date/time receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
1	P/L SN 8 Sewer Line (250mm to 400mm) in LOP Portion of Kapashera village in AC-36 under EE(SW)-II (2020_DJB_189130_1)	Rs. 47,62,358/- & Rs. 500/-	120 Days	04.03.2020 5:00PM onward	23.03.2020 Up to 3:00 PM	

NIT along with all the terms & conditions is available on DJB Website <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER(SW)II

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD

(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)

49, East Wing , 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan, Race Course Road Bengaluru – 560 001. Phone No. 080- 22265383

website : www.kiadb.in, e-Mail: cfo@kiadb.in

No.KIADB/COF/E-Auction-09/16977/2019-20 Date: 05.03.2020

PAPER PUBLICATION

This is to inform that Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB), intends to invest its Surplus Funds in the short term deposits with Public Sector Banks. The details of the quantum of amount and period to be kept in short term deposits are as under:

S.No	Public Sector Banks	Days
1	Rs.500.00 Crores	184
2</td		

Virus leaves 290 mn students out of school

UNESCO says the outbreak's global scale and speed of educational disruption is unparalleled

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ROME
Almost 300 million students worldwide faced weeks at home with Italy and India the latest to shut schools over COVID-19 outbreak, as the IMF urged an all-out global offensive against the epidemic.

More than 95,000 people have been infected and over 3,200 have died worldwide from the virus, which by Thursday had reached more than 80 countries and territories.

The U.S. State of California declared an emergency following its first fatality – raising the U.S. death toll to 11 – and a cruise ship was kept offshore after passengers and crew members developed symptoms.

Switzerland reported its first death from the outbreak on Thursday, while Bosnia and South Africa confirmed their first cases and Greece's cases surged after 21 travellers recently returned from a bus trip to Israel and Egypt



Education at risk: Officials checking the temperature of students before letting them enter a school in Tangerang, Indonesia, on Thursday. ■ AFP

tested positive for the virus.

Most deaths and infections are in China, where the virus first emerged late last year, prompting the country to quarantine entire cities, temporarily shut factories and close schools indefinitely.

But it has quickly spread beyond China's borders.

Several countries have implemented extraordinary measures, with UNESCO say-

ing on Wednesday that school closures in more than a dozen countries have affected 290.5 million children.

In India, all primary schools in New Delhi will remain closed until the end of March to prevent the virus from spreading.

While temporary school closures during crises are not new, UNESCO chief Audrey Azoulay said "the global

scale and speed of the current educational disruption is unparalleled and, if prolonged, could threaten the right to education".

Italy on Wednesday ordered schools and universities shut until March 15, ramping up its response as national fatalities rose to 148.

South Korea – second to China in terms of infections with cases jumping past 6,000 on Thursday – has

U.K. airline Flybe shuts as demand drops over virus

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON
The struggling British airline Flybe collapsed on Thursday amid drops in demand caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, leaving passengers stranded and threatening the viability of regional airports across the country.

Flybe's fall highlights the damage that the outbreak has had on the airline industry, which has cut back on flights as people avoid flying out of precaution.

The British regional airline narrowly avoided bankruptcy in January but had continued to lose money.

Unions and the opposition attacked both the airline's owners and Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government for failing to act to save it.

"We're all a bit gutted – Flybe is a household name, we've been flying with them for 40 years and we really tried to do everything we could back at the turn of the year," Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said.

ELSEWHERE



Dubai ruler abducted daughters: U.K. court

LONDON
Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum ordered the abduction of two of his daughters and orchestrated a campaign of intimidation against his former wife, Princess Haya bint al-Hussein, a U.K. judge has ruled. REUTERS

Pakistan building collapse kills at least 11

KARACHI
At least 11 people, including seven women and three children, were killed and 22 others wounded when a five-storey residential complex collapsed in Karachi on Thursday, leaving many trapped in the rubble. AFP

Afghan war crimes probe to go on: ICC

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

THE HAGUE
Prosecutors at the International Criminal Court will investigate whether war crimes were committed in Afghanistan by the Taliban, Afghan military and U.S. forces after an appeals panel said on Thursday the "truth-seeking" inquiry should go ahead.

The ICC decision, which came days after the U.S.

agreed to pull its troops from the long-running conflict, opens the way for prosecutors to launch a full investigation, despite U.S. government opposition.

"The appeals chamber considers it appropriate to...authorise the investigation," presiding Judge Piotr Hofmanski said at the court in The Hague. He said prosecutors' preliminary examination in 2017 had found rea-

sonable grounds to believe war crimes were committed in Afghanistan and that the ICC has jurisdiction.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo quickly condemned the decision as "a truly breathtaking action by an unaccountable political institution, masquerading as a legal body."

"It is all the more reckless for this ruling to come just days after the U.S. signed a

historic peace deal on Afghanistan the best chance for peace in a generation."

Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda wants to investigate possible crimes committed between 2003 and 2014, including alleged mass killings of civilians by the Taliban, as well as the alleged torture of prisoners by Afghan authorities and to a lesser extent by U.S. forces and the CIA.

Turkey, Russia agree on ceasefire in Idlib

REUTERS

MOSCOW
Turkey and Russia agreed a ceasefire deal on Thursday in Syria's Idlib region, their two leaders said after lengthy talks in Moscow to contain a conflict, which has displaced nearly a million people in three months.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan agreed to establish a secure corridor near the M4 highway, which runs east to west through Idlib, and hold joint patrols along the road from March 15.

"I express hope that these

agreements will serve as a good basis for a cessation of military activity in the Idlib de-escalation zone (and) stop the suffering of the peaceful population and the growing humanitarian crisis," Mr. Putin said.

Mr. Erdogan told reporters the truce would come

into effect at midnight on Thursday. "We will work together to supply aid for the Syrians in need," he said, adding that Turkey retained the right "to respond to all (Syrian) regime attacks in the field." Russia and Turkey back opposing sides in Syria's conflict.

Warren ends presidential bid, says not endorsing anyone yet

She says will take more time to decide whom to back

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON
Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, once a frontrunner in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination, ended her campaign on Thursday, setting up a two-man duel between former Vice-President Joe Biden and Senator Bernie Sanders.

Schools have also shut in Iran, where 107 people have died from the disease – alongside Italy, the deadliest outbreak outside China.

Beijing is now concerned about importing cases, with 20 infections brought from abroad so far.

No kissing
Saudi Arabia has suspended the year-round Islamic "umrah" pilgrimage, an unprecedented move that raises fresh uncertainty over the annual hajj.

New measures in Italy – where 11 towns with 50,000 have been under quarantine – include a month-long nationwide ban on fan attendance at sports events, and advising people to avoid greetings like kissing on the cheek or shaking hands.



Elizabeth Warren

want to take a little time to think a little more."

Mr. Trump responded to Ms. Warren's withdrawal with a tweet mocking her and Michael Bloomberg, who quit on Wednesday after a disappointing Super Tuesday performance and endorsed Mr. Biden.

"Elizabeth 'Pocahontas' Warren, who was going nowhere except into Mini Mike's head, just dropped out of the Democrat Primary...THREE DAYS TOO LATE," Mr. Trump said.

"She cost Crazy Bernie, at least, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Texas," the President said of three of the States at stake on Super Tuesday.

"I'm suspending our campaign for President," the 70-year-old progressive lawmaker said in remarks to her campaign staff.

"I may not be in the race

for President in 2020, but this fight – our fight – is not over," Ms. Warren said. "And our place in this fight has not ended."

"We don't have to decide that this minute," she said. "I

Ms. Warren said she was not ready, as of now, to endorse either fellow progressive Mr. Sanders or the moderate Mr. Biden. "Not today," Ms. Warren told reporters outside her home in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"We don't have to decide that this minute," she said. "I

which suggests that a section of the electorate who favour this economic agenda have voted for Mr. Biden.

SRINIVASAN RAMANI

In a sudden burst of changed momentum, former U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden converted his strong victory in the South Carolina primary into a launching pad for successes in States that voted on "Super Tuesday".

Helped by a string of endorsements from withdrawn centrist candidates such as Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar and Beto O'Rourke, besides Democrat elders such as former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Mr. Biden managed to consolidate the hitherto divided support for the moderates and notched a series of impressive victories in the southern States and surprisingly even in liberal Massachusetts, Maine and Minnesota.

In more good tidings for Mr. Biden's candidacy, billionaire candidate Michael Bloomberg withdrew from the race and endorsed him.

With the Democratic party establishment firmly putting in its weight behind Mr. Biden and the Vice-President managing to draw support from the same coalition that catapulted Hillary Clinton as the Democratic nominee in 2016 – African Americans, elderly citizens (above the age of 60), college-educated white voters, a clear pathway seems to have opened up for the veteran politician who had failed in his previous two attempts for the nomination in 1988 and 2008. Meanwhile, with wins only in four States – importantly in the delegate-rich California – Senator Bernie Sanders could not carry forward the momentum he had gained after the victory in the Nevada caucus and is now relegated to an underdog rather than an insurgent frontrunner.



Bernie Sanders

But are the unabashedly democratic socialist Mr. Sanders' chances doomed? This doesn't seem to be the case. A consolidation of the moderate vote has created an arithmetic challenge to his candidacy, which has so far garnered roughly 30% of the total votes and 40% of the total number of delegates in the primaries across the States.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Had Elizabeth Warren remained in the fray, Mr. Sanders' support from the progressive and activist Democrats would have further been undercut, as it happened in Massachusetts and Minnesota. With Ms. Warren deciding to hang her boots, the Sanders campaign might get a boost.

The winning of the Democratic field to two candidates sharpens the contrast for Mr. Sanders against Mr. Biden and should bring Mr. Biden's candidacy into the limelight, that was hitherto shared between the moderates.

Exit polls have shown that core features of Mr. Sanders' agenda – Medicare for All, raised minimum wages, free public college tuition still gets more than majority support among Democrats,

which suggests that a section of the electorate who favour this economic agenda have voted for Mr. Biden.

Battle against Trump

This is likely due to concerns about Mr. Sanders' ability to win over the support of moderates and independents beyond Democrats in the electoral battle against President Donald Trump and here's where the weight of the party establishment and the multiple endorsements helped Mr. Biden's case. Polls show that undecided voters shifted onto the Biden bandwagon in large numbers not just on Super Tuesday but even in South Carolina.

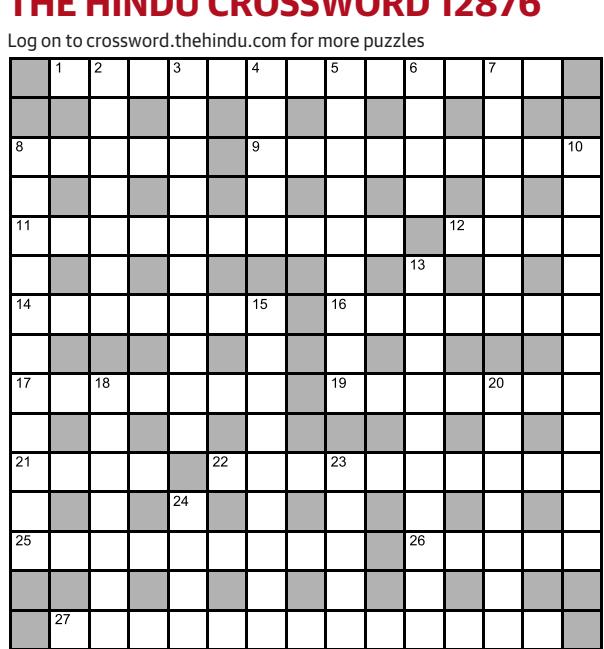
Meanwhile, Mr. Sanders' trump card – his steady base and support among the youth has not really given him the advantage he has sought despite their ability to raise funds and volunteers quickly, as actual turnout numbers from this section have remained relatively tepid.

If in the coming weeks, Mr. Sanders brings forth his contrast with Mr. Biden, who despite his experience has shown an increasing penchant for gaffes and rambling speeches on the campaign trail and during debates, he does stand a chance in reversing the momentum yet again. Voters in States like Arizona, Florida, Illinois (who get to vote on March 17) and New York and Pennsylvania (April 28) will get to answer the question on who poses the strongest challenge to the prospects of a return of the Trump presidency.

The battle for the Democratic presidential ticket between the two septuagenarians is far from over.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12876

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



ACROSS

- 1 Repent fling after wife enters place! Utterly perplexed (2,4,4,3)
- 8 Put hand around heartily merry maiden (5)
- 9 Determined about including son in projects (6,3)
- 11 Senior state official's haphazard record reviewed (10)
- 15 Fellow crossing limits is beginning to incite terrible disagreement (13)
- 20 Where tipsy islander wanting last drop of Guinness might be? (7)
- 23 Caught fish around river! Put in this? (5)
- 24 American city in Iowa, mesmerizing (4)

To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code

SUDOKU

4	6	1	9					
	7			5				
2		4	9					
7	5		2	4				
	3			1				
4	9			6	7			
9	7				5			
8		7						
	9	5	1	8				

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12875

M	A	G	Z	A	I	N	E	E	Q	U	A	L	S
A	O	A	E	J	U	D	T						
N	E	V	I	S	T	F	O	D	D				
R	E	R	T	A	T	I	E						
R	H	O	D	E	S	I	N	A	T	O			
H	O	D	E	S	C	O	N	Y					
O	T	E	R	T	S	O	N	Y					
O	T	E	R	T	S	C	O	Y			</		

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	38470	0.16
US Dollar	73.33	0.08
Gold	44250	-0.29
Brent oil	50.99	-3.57

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	349.15	3.20
Asian Paints	1874.45	26.50
Axius Bank	677.90	-4.30
Bajaj Auto	2703.65	-7.85
Bajaj Finserv	8879.90	80.20
Bajaj Finance	4330.70	44.30
Bharti Airtel	526.90	10.15
BPCL	418.40	-0.30
Britannia Ind	3127.15	64.10
Cipla	440.60	-7.05
Coal India	177.15	-0.95
Dr Reddys Lab	3184.45	13.10
Eicher Motors	17775.35	521.15
GAIL (India)	106.80	0.75
Grasim Ind	680.30	-9.20
HCL Tech	576.40	13.30
HDFC	2195.05	-11.00
HDFC Bank	1151.35	2.50
Hero MotoCorp	2063.90	17.55
Hindalco	155.50	-5.10
Hind Unilever	2218.00	42.15
ICICI Bank	504.50	-3.85
IndusInd Bank	1075.00	9.05
Bharti Infratel	214.70	-6.35
Infosys	754.60	-4.15
Indian Oil Corp	104.80	-1.80
ITC	188.05	0.55
JSW Steel	247.15	1.55
Kotak Bank	1651.35	43.40
L&T	1182.45	5.80
M&M	479.30	4.65
Maruti Suzuki	6365.95	-18.40
Nestle India Ltd.	16576.30	34.80
NTPC	107.85	-0.10
ONGC	92.60	-0.20
PowerGrid Corp	195.95	-1.10
Reliance Ind	1311.15	-28.55
State Bank	288.50	3.20
Sun Pharma	404.90	-0.55
Tata Motors	125.75	-0.45
Tata Steel	375.75	-1.40
TCS	2125.05	41.85
Tech Mahindra	756.10	-15.20
Titan	1259.15	8.20
UltraTech Cement	4205.55	32.75
UPL	516.05	4.45
Vedanta	117.10	-2.25
Wipro	229.70	0.85
YES Bank	36.80	7.50
Zee Entertainment	238.15	-13.60

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.11	73.44
Euro	81.83	82.20
British Pound	94.46	94.90
Japanese Yen (100)	68.40	68.71
Chinese Yuan	10.54	10.59
Swiss Franc	76.80	77.19
Singapore Dollar	52.76	53.00
Canadian Dollar	54.46	54.71
Malaysian Ringgit	17.56	17.66

Source: Indian Bank

BULLION RATES CHENNAI

March 05 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses	
Retail Silver (1g)	49.7 (50)
22 ct gold (1g)	4122 (4128)

NCLT allows reopening CG Power books

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Thursday allowed a government petition seeking to reopen CG Power and Industrial Solutions accounts from 2014-15 to 2018-19. The Corporate Affairs Ministry had filed an application in the NCLT seeking the appointment of an independent auditor to reopen the accounts of CG Power & Industrial Solution from 2014-15 to 2018-19. The ministry in its prayer had said the reopening of the books of accounts is needed to bring out the truth in the larger public interest.

The Mumbai bench also directed the government not to rely on the report by Vaish Associates, and asked them to conduct a separate investigation.

SEBI app for airing investor grievance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI
The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has launched a mobile application that will allow entities to lodge grievances against listed companies, market intermediaries and all categories of market participants.

The app is a mobile version of the SEBI Complaints Redress System (SCORES) launched in June 2011, and has received, on an average, 40,000 complaints every year.

Further, a total of 3.57 lakh complaints have been resolved using the SCORES platform. "The app has all the features of SCORES, which is presently available electronically, where investors have to lodge their complaints using the Internet medium," stated a release by SEBI.

Yes Bank put under moratorium till April 3

Deposit withdrawal capped at ₹50,000; board superseded by Reserve Bank of India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The government has put private sector lender Yes Bank under moratorium till April 3 and capped the deposit withdrawal at ₹50,000 after severe deterioration of the bank's financial position.

The decision was taken by the government after an application from Reserve Bank of India (RBI), a gazette notification said.

Following the moratorium, RBI superseded the board of the bank and appointed Prashant Kumar, the deputy managing director and chief financial officer of State Bank of India (SBI), as the administrator. Mr. Kumar resigned from SBI to take up the role of the administrator.

While assuring depositors that there was no need to panic, RBI said that it would



RBI said the bank's financial position deteriorated as it failed to raise capital to address loan losses. ■ REUTERS

explore and draw up a scheme in the next few days for the bank's reconstruction or amalgamation, and with the approval of the government, would put the plan well before the end of the moratorium period of 30 days. During the moratorium period, the bank cannot

grant or renew any loan or advance, or make any investment, but would be allowed to make certain expenses like salaries of employees.

The withdrawal limit will be relaxed for depositors who need money for medical treatment, education, marriage or other ceremonial

events and any other unavoidable emergency. In these cases, depositors will be allowed to withdraw up to a maximum of ₹5 lakh.

RBI said that the financial position of the bank deteriorated as it failed to raise capital to address loan losses, which resulted in rating downgrades and triggered invocation of bond covenants by investors, and withdrawal of deposits.

"The bank has also experienced serious governance issues and practices in the recent years which have led to steady decline of the bank," the RBI said.

The central bank said it was in constant engagement with the bank's management to find ways to strengthen its balance sheet and liquidity.

While the bank management had indicated that it was in talks with various in-

SBI Cards IPO subscribed more than 22 times

Bids received for 225.1 cr. equity shares

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The initial public offer of SBI Cards and Payment Services, which closed for bidding on Thursday, was subscribed a little over 57 times with bids received for nearly 139 crore equity shares.

The public offering, with a size of over ₹10,000 crore, would see existing shareholders State Bank of India (SBI) and private equity major Carlyle diluting their stakes in the company. SBI Cards is the second-largest credit card issuer in the country with a market share of 18% on the back of almost 10 million cards.

SBI, which has a stake of 74% in the card company, would be offloading 4% stake by way of the offer while private equity major Carlyle will be diluting its stake by 10% (it currently holds 26% stake).

The segment reserved for institutional investors,

Vishwanathan seeks early retirement as RBI dy. governor

Cites health issues, replacement likely from within the bank

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

N. S. Vishwanathan, one of the four deputy governors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has requested for an early retirement on health grounds. He was due to retire on July 3 this year.

While there was no formal communication from the central bank on the issue, sources said he could be relieved by the end of the month or early next month.

Mr. Vishwanathan took charge as deputy governor on July 4, 2016. He was given a three-year tenure. Last year, the government reappointed him for another year. Out of the four deputy governors of RBI, two are

from the central bank. This led to speculation that Mr. Vishwanathan's replacement may come from outside since the government may stick to the 'two-plus-two' formula. All the deputy governors of RBI are appointed by the government.

However, sources clarified that during the economist deputy governor's appointment, which was advertised by the government, Mr. Patra had gone through that process for the appointment. Hence, Mr. Patra's appointment is not considered as an internal promotion.

According to the swap ratio, 1,150 equity shares of PNB are to be exchanged for every 1,000 equity shares of Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC) and United Bank of India (UBI) into itself with effect from April 1.

PNB's board on Thursday had approved for amalgamation of OBC and UBI, Punjab National Bank said in a BSE filing.

According to the swap ratio, 1,150 equity shares of PNB are to be exchanged for every 1,000 equity shares of Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC) and United Bank of India (UBI) into itself with effect from April 1.

Oriental Bank of Commerce advanced 15.89%, Syndicate Bank jumped 10.53%, Allahabad Bank 9.23%, Andhra Bank 3.91%, United Bank of India 3.31% and Corporation Bank 2.14% on the BSE.

The Big Four

Share swap announced for creation of four big State-owned lenders from April 1, 2020

- Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank to amalgamate with Union Bank of India

- Allahabad Bank to merge into Indian Bank

- Syndicate Bank to merge into Canara Bank



■ Syndicate Bank to merge into Canara Bank

Banks announce share swap ratios

Move comes ahead of mergers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Meanwhile, the SBI board, at its meeting on Thursday, gave in-principle approval to explore investment opportunities in Yes Bank.

The lender confirmed this in a reply to the exchanges late on Thursday and said that no negotiations had taken place yet.

Punjab National Bank (PNB), in a regulatory filing, announced the share exchange ratio in accordance with the scheme of amalgamation, as it is set to merge Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC) and United Bank of India (UBI) into itself with effect from April 1.

PNB's board on Thursday had approved for amalgamation of OBC and UBI, Punjab National Bank said in a BSE filing.

According to the swap ratio, 1,150 equity shares of PNB are to be exchanged for every 1,000 equity shares of Oriental Bank of Commerce, while 121 equity shares of PNB are to be swapped for every 1,000 equity shares of UBI.

"The board of directors of the bank...have fixed Wednesday, March 25, 2020, as record date for issuing and allotting equity shares of the PNB to the shareholders of OBC and UBI as per the share exchange ratio," PNB said in the filing.

Union Bank, in a separate exchange filing, said its board on Thursday had approved the equity share ex-

Jindal Stainless Ltd. exits CDR

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Jindal Stainless Limited (JSL) has successfully exited from the Corporate Debt Restructuring (CDR) framework with effect from March 31, 2019, with the company receiving a letter from the consortium of CDR lenders to this effect.

Pursuant to this, existing CDR lenders have realized the full recompence of about ₹275 crore in cash, which will add to their income in the current fiscal year. Additionally, Jindal Stainless Limited has fully redeemed the outstanding Optionally Convertible Redeemable Preference Shares (OCRPS), which were issued to the lenders in June 2017, and has paid around ₹558 crore, taking the aggregate realisation of lenders to around ₹833 crore, the company said in a statement.

Through another pair of eyes

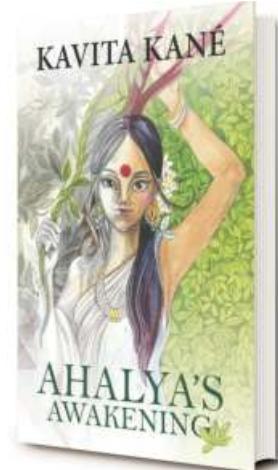
Minor characters sometimes give you an alternative perspective to mythological stories, says author Kavita Kane

R KRITHIKA

"Stories are very deep and symbolic. You don't have to take them literally," says best-selling mythological author Kavita Kane. Mythology, she points out, has been used as "a literary device to portray contemporary issues and sensibilities."

Her first book was *Karna's Wife*. "Does she even appear in the epic," I ask incredulously. A very minor character, she responds. Actually she wanted to tell Karna's story, "but didn't want him to do the telling. It would have become very one-sided. I wanted a woman who would see him for what he was: a tragic character with a flaw. A wife was the best to see him, not just as a husband but as a political person, as a hero, a warrior, a condemned, conflicted and torn man... At first I wondered if the story should be told through his mother's eyes but finally decided on the wife. After all she was his partner, his conscience."

Interestingly, Kavita had first lit on Urmila, who appears in the *Ramayana* as Sita's sister and Lakshmana's wife. "Hers was the book I really wanted to write. My second book, but my first thought," she says, smiling.



"I lost courage," she says ruefully. "There wasn't much on her, so I started *Karna's Wife*. When that did well, I thought I could write about *Sita's Sister*." According to Kavita, Urmila also undergoes 14 years of exile, "her own private one." Legend has it that Urmila was asleep for the 14 years so that Lakshmana could stay awake and serve his brother and sister-in-law. "Interpret the sleep as a metaphor for loneliness and loss," says Kavita, "and there you are."

While doing her research on Urmila, Kavita stumbled upon Menaka. "I was intrigued by the fact that



Vishwamitra and Menaka really loved each other and had a 10-year relationship," she muses. "The way it is portrayed is as if she seduced him and abandons their child." Kavita describes Menaka's story as "every woman trying to create her own little slice of heaven."

If she had not revealed her motive to Vishwamitra, would they have lived happily ever after? She shrugs, and then adds, "I wanted to see what kind of woman she was and the circumstances that forced her to take the decisions she did without judging her. Our stories give us a very uni-dimensional image of a beautiful seductress. We don't associate courage and sacrifice with her."

She lets fall another startling fact: Menaka abandoned not one but two children. Later I dig around and find this: According to the *Pavloma Parva*, Menaka has a girl with Visvavasu, the king of Gandharvas and abandons the baby near the hermitage of Sage Sthulakesha. "Menaka is the symbol of female sexual power. Her sexuality is part of her personality. It is who she is," re-

marks Kavita.

Kavita's latest book is *Ahalya's Awakening*, about Ahalya who is restored to human form by Rama after having been turned into a stone for infidelity and adultery. "The episode is minor but you feel the echoes right through until Sita's *bhumipravesh*." The villain here, she feels, is not Rama, Gautama or Indra, but society.

"It's us sitting in judgement and condemning people with the little we know. The story of Ahalya is not about love and loyalty in marriage. It is about how the act of being judgemental kills the very essence of a person," she says.

Ahalya and Sakuntala are classic victims of a patriarchal mindset, Kavita argues. "In the original story, Sakuntala did not go back to her husband. But all we know now is Kalidasa's Sakuntala."

As a student of literature, Kavita stresses the importance of mythology. "If myths reflect the socio-cultural ethos of earlier times, they can also be used to contemporise those same issues in today's world. Actually nothing has changed.

Mythological lens Kavita Kane

* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Author as reader

- I don't have any favourite book. When I read I don't worry about genres. We will be limiting ourselves if we worry about genre. If it looks interesting, or if I have heard something about it, I want to read it.
- I grew up reading all I could lay my hands on. My father had a huge collection of books and in my family, if you didn't read you were a freak. We had a competition among cousins as to who would finish the Agatha Christie collection first.
- I always have a PG Wodehouse on my bedside table. Apart from him, I loved reading Tolstoy, Raymond Chandler and James Hadley Chase

Love, rivalry, disappointment, war, anger, greed... all of these emotions still exist. There's a chance of an alternative perspective by looking at the epics through the women and minor characters at that."

Ask if she has a favourite among her books, Kavita says she enjoys them all, but each is special for a different reason. Take *Sita's Sister*, for example. "I come from a family that has lots of girls. Sita also had four sisters, and I wondered if things changed once they became sisters-in-law. And then Satyavati... the seeds of discontent actually start with Yayati, Sarmishta and Devyani and find their apogee with Savitri and Shantanu."

She agrees that the research is time consuming, more so because not much is known about these characters. "Sometimes the information is so huge and massive that filtering it all takes time. I have to remind myself to get down to writing."

Her next book is almost done, but "I am being a little superstitious, I don't want to say what it's about. Not now," she says.

Ahalya's Awakening is published by Westland and is available in bookstores and online, ₹248

PEOPLE

'Challenges keep my career interesting'

Ahead of Road To Ultra India, KSHMR dishes about his new track 'Over And Out' and how his label Dharma Worldwide empowers budding musicians



It is not easy to get a hold of KSHMR. The musician, whose broody appearance and addictive tunes are unmistakable, was just in New York, Brazil and Mexico, before flying out to India for his Road To Ultra performances in Hyderabad and Delhi.

The 31-year-old, whose real name is Niles Hollowell-Dhar, has been in the music industry for almost a decade now, his early years being with a band called The Cataracs. He was born in San Diego to a Kashmiri father and American mother. These cultural convergences often reflect in his music.

"In the early 2000s, there was no KSHMR yet. It was only me, Niles, and my group The Cataracs (known for their 2011 chart-topper 'Top Of The World'). I would tell myself to stop trying to be 'cool' and focus on songs that come from the heart," he says.

He adds that he is a "recovering workaholic" but does spend time with his dogs and his friends, and exercises. "It takes a concerted effort to step away from music and do 'normal' things, but I'm starting to appreciate those more. Challenges keep my career interesting for me: working in new tempos and genres, reinventing the live show, and of course finding the next great melody. The pursuit of great melodies is a fire in me that will never die."

His most recent release is the galactic 'Over And Out' with vocals from Charlott Boss. The lyric video was released just two days ago. "We were all excited to release a track in line with my earlier work, something hard-hitting and sure to connect with the crowd when I play it live. The vocal was sent to me by Ilan, our [artistes and repertoire division] at Dharma Worldwide. He is a magician, always finding ideas and vocals that blow me away — and Charlott's demo struck me instantly."

Spotify Wrapped 2019, a roundup of the streaming platform's listening-trends for the year, revealed that KSHMR had 192.1 million streams, for 9.1 million hours, by 20.6 million listeners across 79 countries. He was also ranked 15th on DJ Mag's Top 100 in 2019. KSHMR's career also brims with notable collaborations — with Tiësto, Lost Stories and Marnik. He even made his Bollywood debut last year for the Hindi film *Good Newwz*, for its theme song, with Tanishk Bagchi.

KSHMR will be performing for Road To Ultra India at Backyard Sports Club, Gurugram on March 8.

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

PRODUCTS

Fizzy Goblet X Rahul Mishra

Fizzy Goblet, the juttu-inspired footwear brand started by Laksheeta Govil, is collaborating with couturier Rahul Mishra, who recently became the first Indian designer to showcase his work at Paris Couture Week. The limited edition Rahul Mishra X Fizzy Goblet collection prominently incorporates Mishra's signature styles on Govil's playful takes on juttis.



Expect ruffles on sneakers, and zippers and collars on juttis. The colours are pastel with champagne, blush, and mint predominating. Bright pops of embroidery and embellishments also make some of the pieces in this collection stand out.

The collection is available on Fizygoblet.com; upwards of ₹3,690

Contact us at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in

Scaling Annapura

The Bengalis have a way with sweets, especially when it's milky and fried

RAHUL VERMA

There is something about the word *singara*. It is the Bengali for samosa, of course, but has its own charm. For one, the Bengali *singara* is vastly different from its North Indian counterpart. The potatoes are not mashed, but are in small pieces, and you will find bits of peanuts and sometimes even potato skin in the stuffing.

Then there is a cauliflower *singara*, in which the filling consists of florets usually sautéed with potatoes. And, as I found to my pleasant surprise some years ago, there is even something called *Kheer Singara*, a sublime sweet with a stuffing of thickened, sweetened milk.

I first had this sweet at a small eatery called Ramakrishna Sweets in I.P. Extension. I was floored. It looked beautiful, and the taste was superb. It's called a *singara* only because it is shaped like one. But the outer casing, as well as the filling, is of sweetened, thickened milk.

Some days ago, we were given a



Feast on Bengali sweets (Below) Aloor Singara and Kheer Singara; a view of the New Annapurna

* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

that the shop had moved to another end of the Yusuf Sarai Market. The old Annapurna sweet shop has its shutters down. The new one is two buildings away — and is called New Annapurna Sweets (G 12, Rakesh Deep Building, Balbir Saxena Marg, Yusuf Sarai; phone: 011-4213 8143, 9958047810).

The Kheer Singara (₹25 for a piece, ₹750 for a kilo) was even better than what I had eaten some weeks ago; this had *gur* in it, which of course added to the taste. I also ate some Shor Bhaja (₹25 a piece, ₹450 for a kilo), and found it absolutely A-class.

This is a sweet made out of layers of *malai* thickened, sweetened, and fried. I had it for the first time way back in the '70s when my friend Kajal Ghosh got the sweet from Krishnanagar, a city in Bengal

known for its Shor Bhaja and Shor Puria. It was love at first bite.

New Annapurna has all the other Bong favourites, too — from *Dorbesh* and *Rajbhog* to *Khir Kadam* and *Chomchom*. The small *Misti Doi* (₹30), *Sankh Sandesh* (₹16) and *Kancha Golla* (₹25). The savoury counter has *singaras* (₹16), *paneer* chop, vegetable cutlet (₹30) and even *kachoris* (₹25).

I had the *alo* and the cauliflower samosas, and thought they were delicious. The cauliflower one, in particular, was superb; the florets had been fried with potatoes and spiced well.

It is good to know that the Annapurnas — old and new — are all thriving. What could be sweeter than more sweets?

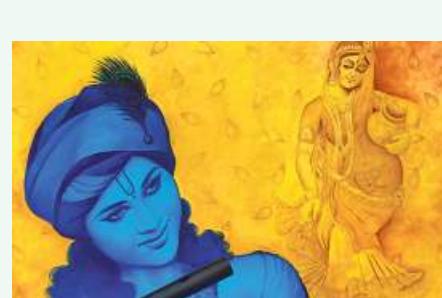
The writer is a seasoned food critic

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



PERFORMANCE

Music appreciation
Ustad Imamuddin Khan Dagar Indian Music, Art and Culture Society is organising a Gunjan Sabha Verso 59, titled The Sound of Universe. Vidushi Jyoti Hegde will perform a Rudra Veena recital. One of the first woman players of this type of veena, she will be accompanied by Manmohan Nayak on the pakhawaj.
VENUE: Amalata Hall, India Habitat Centre
TIME: 7 p.m.



EXHIBITION

Paintings
A painting exhibition of Contemporary Golden Krishna by Krishn Kanhai, a three-day show, is being inaugurated today at Nandjeet Khemka Art Gallery. A Padmshri awardee, Krishn is a master in contemporary, portrait as well as traditional gold painting. He has painted thousands of portraits on the theme of Radha-Krishna.
VENUE: Natya Tarangini, Pushpa Vihar, Saket
TIME: 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.



CONCERT

Tribute
Naad Nartan is hosting its 10th Dance & Music Festival in memory of the Kathak exponent from the Jaipur Gharana, Pt. Tirath Ram Sharma Azad. The evening will feature a sitar recital by child prodigy Adhiraj Chaudhuri, a Hindustani vocal by Dr. Ujjwal Nagar and a Jaipur Gharana style Kathak performance by Shambhavi Shukla.
VENUE: Triveni Kala Sangam, Mandi House
TIME: 6 p.m. onwards



F&B

Holi special
Starting today, on the occasion of Holi, the restaurant Monkey Bar offers a special festive cocktail called Holti Colada. It is a signature milk-based cocktail that is prepared by putting thickened milk infused with badam shirin, loaded with white rum, and finally topped with almond slivers and a touch of saffron.
VENUE: 11, Local Shopping Complex, Vasant Kunj
TIME: 12 noon - 12 midnight



MUSIC

Full moon night
Teamwork Arts presents its second edition of Under the Banyan Tree, a monthly concert series, this evening. This special edition will feature the performances of New York-based guitarist and composer Shubh Saran, followed by a music presentation by electro jazz duo Sungazer, and will end with melodies by Bianca Gimonti Trio.
VENUE: 1AQ, Opposite Qutub Minar, Mehrauli
TIME: 7 p.m. onwards

Why established,
popular walk-in
restaurants are
branching out to
create standalone
cloud kitchen
entities

MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

Restaurants are increasingly aware of why at-home diners prefer cloud kitchens over them. A large part of it has to do with serving size. First movers in India's cloud kitchen scene – like Rebel Foods, the Pune-based entity that owns Faasos, Lunch Box, Behrouz, The Good Bowl and Oven Story among others – tend to have menus featuring either single-person dishes and combos, or party sizes fit for at least four to five people. Both tailored for a night in, be it social or solitary.

Restaurants and cafés, on the other hand, serve items that are either meant to be shared by two people, or that come with their share of frills in terms of sides, sauces and platings. Attractive when eating out, cumbersome when dining in.

So a few of them have started changing things around. Take, for instance, the 11-year-old chain Smoke House Deli, which has branches in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Delhi and Kolkata. The brand has started relaunching its restaurants as Smoke House Deli 2.0, the fourth and most recent one unveiled in Delhi this week.

In a company statement, Smoke House Deli 2.0 boasts healthier options in its menu, a "more airy, open, and modern" ambience, and more importantly, a grab-and-go counter which has its own, separate presence on food delivery platforms Swiggy and Zomato. The latter is called Goodness To Go by Smoke House Deli, and features a menu curated by brand head and head chef Jaydeep Mukherjee.

According to Jaydeep, the idea is to provide "a station where patrons can step in to grab quick meals, healthy



Way to go Packaging and portion size are key factors
■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK
AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Same kitchen, SEPARATE WAYS

smoothies, salads, sandwiches etc. Easy and convenient, it allows patrons to keep up with their busy lifestyle on-the-go, while still eating mindfully." The packaging keeps that in mind, making the food easy to "grab" not only for rushing customers, but also for delivery personnel.

Meanwhile, TI Cycles' Chennai-based Ciclo Cafe, which expanded its presence to Bengaluru and Delhi, has now scaled back into its hometown and is "working on regrouping," says marketing head Amrutha Anandanathan. The café has launched a health-based delivery vertical called Ciclo Life, which features a salad bowl and meals, with plenty of quinoa, millets and cauliflower rice making their presence felt. Says Amrutha, "We don't want to call it health food completely, but rather delicious food with a healthy leaning. The menu also includes popular staples that we have taken from Ciclo Cafe, and given healthier variations, including multigrain and keto-friendly options."

The service has three successfully running branches in Chennai alone – RA Puram, Anna Nagar and OMR – and is now confident of expanding well in other cities. "We have experienced chefs, and a team that knows how to run things. We are strengthening our home base first," adds Amrutha.

In terms of operations, this system seems to be working out to the restaurants' advantage, with the basic infrastructure already built in and a whole new clientele to reach out to. With the same team and kitchen staff handling these new verticals, restaurants can retain the image and branding that provided them loyal custom-

ers over the years, instead of depending on the outsourced kitchens and infrastructure provided by delivery platforms, that many cloud-only kitchens tend to depend on.

Swiggy, for instance, is reportedly tying up with Bengaluru-based restaurant chain Gilly's, for the operation of two new delivery-only brands. One is called Kitchens of Punjab, and the other is Kitchens of China. These outfits operate out of infrastructure that are already existent at Gilly's outlets, and be run by the existing Gilly's staff. Swiggy does not offer any infrastructure in this case; it only helps with delivery, according to Swiggy. Only the menu and the online presence will be separate from the motherbrand, and will be focussed entirely on delivery, according to Swiggy.

Similarly, Goodness To Go by Smoke House Deli operates out of a central kitchen that is otherwise used for coordination between its various Mumbai branches. While Goodness To Go is mainly present as a counter within each Smoke House Deli 2.0, a standalone outpost operates inside a Crossword bookstore in Mumbai's Kemp's Corner, and depends entirely on this central kitchen. On delivery apps, too, this vertical stands on its own with a full menu. More are to follow, in other bookstores and unexpected hangouts. The idea, as chef Jaydeep puts it, is for it to metamorphose "into an artfully imaginative, wholesome and evolved version of itself."

EARLY DELIVERY
It is believed that the first recorded pizza delivery took place in 1889 in Italy. It was delivered to King Umberto and Queen Margherita at their palace in Naples.



The spirit of Speyside

We speak to a master distiller, about what makes this Scottish region iconic in the world of whiskies

PRYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Alan Winchester is a spirited man. Let's just say that is one of the many perks of being a master distiller. Especially, considering he has been in the whisky industry for 40 years, since he was a 16-year-old.

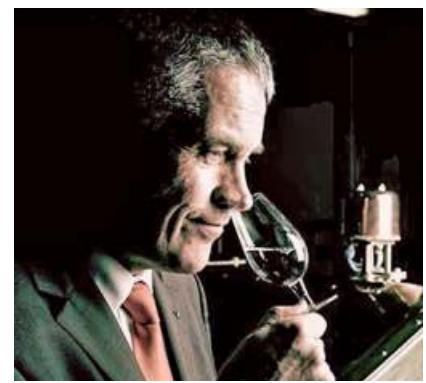
For the last 20 years, Winchester has been an integral part of the French alcohol giant Pernod Ricard. "It has been an honour to work with Pernod Ricard on Secret Speyside, a curated collection of 15 rare and remarkable whiskies from four of Speyside's most elusive distilleries," says Winchester.

For the uninitiated, Speyside, located in the picturesque Scottish Highlands, is Scotland's biggest whisky-producing region. It is home to 50 distilleries, and represents almost half of all distilleries in Scotland, some of which date back to the early 1800s.

Explaining the geography, Winchester says that there are five undisputed regions in Scotland producing this drink: Speyside, Highlands, Lowlands, Islay and Campbeltown, each offering its own distinctive flavour profile.

One of the reasons why Speyside stands out is due to its abundance and quality of water. It is believed that the region's water has the lowest level of dissolved minerals in the country. And as a result, what you get are sophisticated, smooth whiskies "frugal with peat and full of fruit." Apple, pear, honey, vanilla and spice all have a role in expressions from this region, which are commonly matured in sherry casks.

The region produces an overwhelming number of malts. Some of the better-known names include Glenfiddich, The Macallan, Glenlivet, Glen Moray and Aberlour, as well as Glen Keith, Caperdonich and Braes of Glenlivet that are part of the Secret Speyside collection. Winchester



Golden brown Alan Winchester at work; (below) a distillery in the Speyside region ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

says the philosophy behind the creation of Secret Speyside is one of discovery, cultural enrichment and excellence.

The distilleries have intriguing stories. "Take Caperdonich, for example – the distillery was taken down brick by brick in 2011, so, there is only a finite supply of the whisky featured in the collection. Once gone, they will be gone forever," he says.

And do the whiskies from the distilleries of Speyside have a characteristic taste or aroma? Although there is a sweet, fruity, floral, Speyside "style," the house styles of different distilleries in the same area can be dramatically different, says Winchester.

Despite having over 120 active distilleries across different regions, the dram here varies from one distillery to another. "From the source of the water and the shape of the still to the wood of the cask used to mature the spirit, there are many factors that make Scotch whisky so wonderfully different." He adds, "No two are the same; each has its own proud heritage, unique setting and its own way of doing things that has evolved and been refined over time."



POOCH CAFE

FAMOUS DOGS

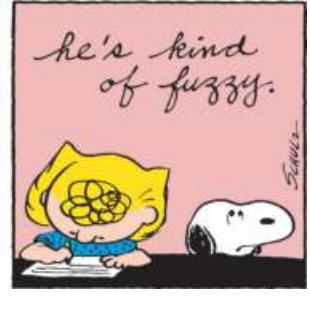
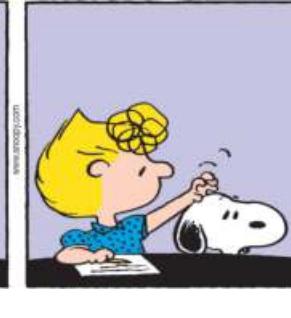


MUHAMMAD COLLIE
BORN CAR-CHASER CLAY, COLLIE DECIDED TO LEARN HOW TO SCRAPP AFTER ANOTHER DOG STOLE HIS CHEW TOY. HE LEARNED WELL, UPSETTING SONNY LICKSTON TO BECOME THE LARGE BREED CHAMPION OF THE WORLD IN 1964. HE WENT ON TO WIN 8 GOLDEN PAWS CHAMPIONSHIPS IN MATCHES WITH COLORFUL NAMES LIKE "THE BARK IN THE PARK," "THE BRAWL OUTSIDE THE MALL," AND "OFF-LEASH IN MARRAKECH."

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



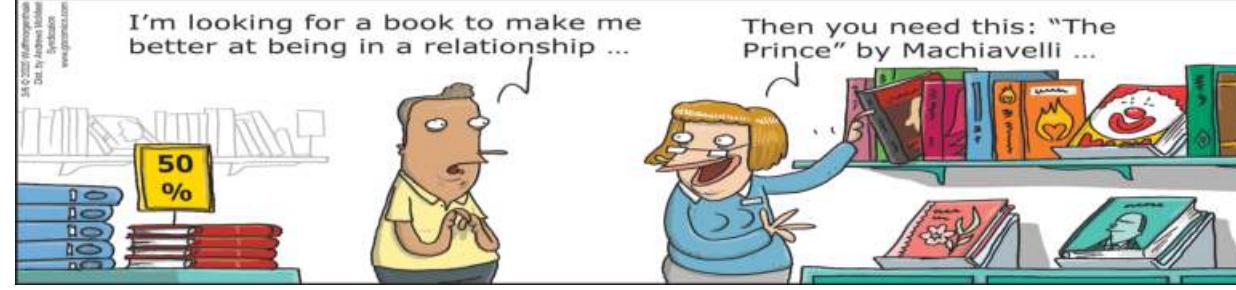
PEANUTS



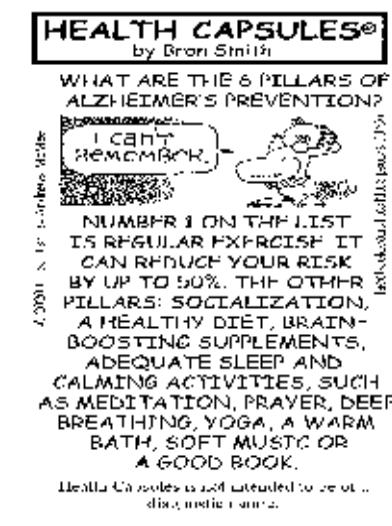
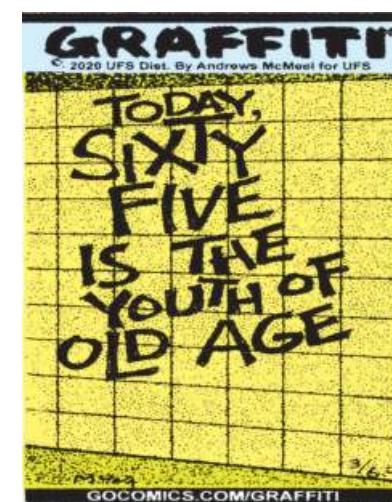
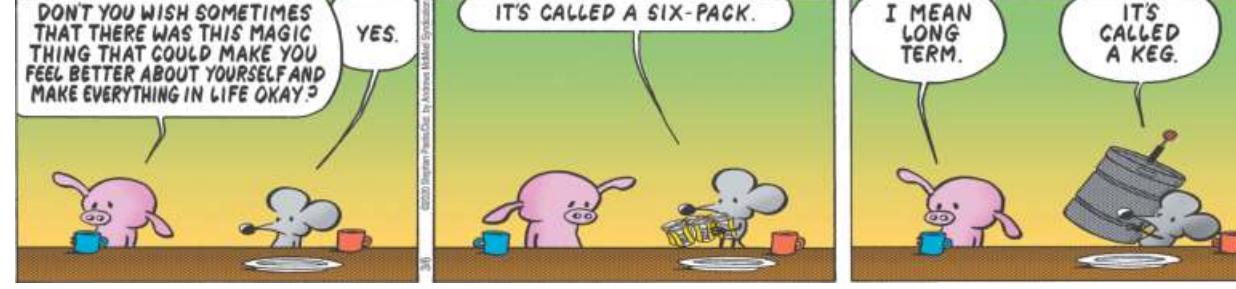
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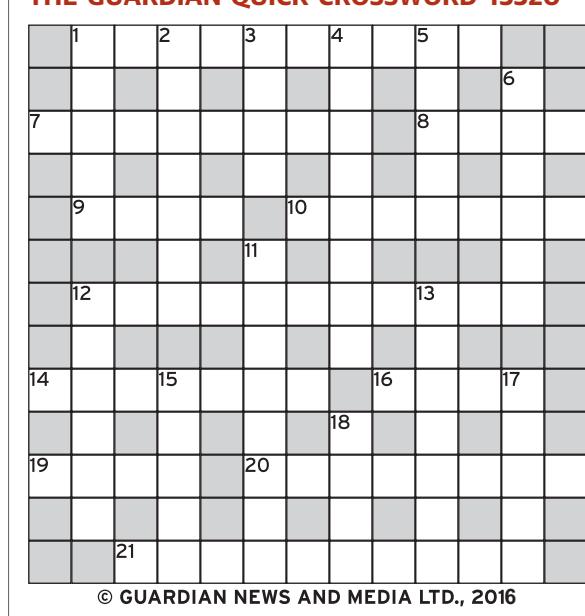
WUMO



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13320



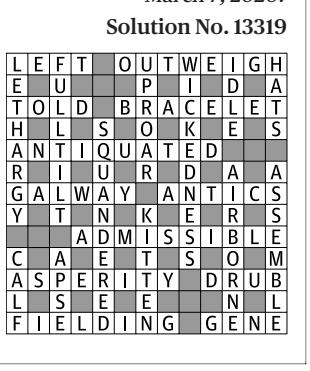
To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

- 11 Act of retaliation (8)
- 12 Criminals (6)
- 13 Tortilla folded around a savoury filling (7)
- 15 Core group – cared (anag) (5)
- 17 Surly – rough-spoken (5)
- 18 Thin (4)

The solution will appear on March 7, 2020.

Solution No. 13319

- 1 Across
 - 1 Traveller with a rucksack (10)
 - 2 Small freshwater turtle (8)
 - 3 Intense – extreme (4)
 - 4 Arab sailing vessel (4)
 - 5 Lack of refinement (7)
 - 12 Car with a folding roof (11)
 - 14 Magic (7)
 - 15 Finished (5)
 - 16 Small quantity (of residue?) (4)
 - 19 Slide out of control (4)
 - 20 Plausible but false (8)
 - 21 Reprimand (7-3)
- 2 Down
 - 1 Lolly – basic food (5)
 - 2 Animated film made by photographing a series of drawings (7)
 - 3 Chrysalis (4)
 - 4 Sorry (8)
 - 5 Finished (5)
 - 6 A grinder or pounder (6)



CM YK

Washout propels India into summit clash

Leaves England dejected; Women in Blue will be up against defending champion Australia



Gloomy sight: All rain and no play – not the ideal way to decide a semifinal – but the Indians weren't complaining. ■ ICC



Contrasting moods: For Knight and Harmanpreet, it must have meant agony and relief respectively. ■ GETTY IMAGES

T20 WORLD CUP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY

An unbeaten run in the group stage propelled India into its maiden Women's T20 World Cup final after its last-four clash against England was washed out here on Thursday. India will take on holder Australia – which defeated South Africa by five runs in another rain-hit semifinal – in the final on Sunday which happens to be International Women's Day.

Persistent rain

Persistent rain since morning delayed the toss and eventually the semifinal was called off without a ball being bowled, leaving England

players in tears. "Really frustrating. Not how we wanted the World Cup to finish for us. No reserve day, no chance of getting play, and ultimately that loss against South Africa cost us," a dejected England captain Heather Knight said.

Harmanpreet Kaur also agreed that the semifinals should have had a reserve day, a request which was made by host Cricket Australia but turned down by the ICC. "Unfortunately we didn't get a game, but there are rules and we have to follow it. Having reserve days in the future will be a great idea," said Harmanpreet.

Paying the price
Knight said her team paid the price for not starting the tournament well. "It's all very English isn't it?" talking about the weather and getting knocked out. "It felt that we gained a bit of momentum in the last few games and we were pumped up for the semifinals," she added.

England had ended runner-up in the previous edition. India had topped Group A with four victories in as many matches while England had finished second in Group B with three wins and a defeat.

"From day one, we knew we have to win all the games because in case the semis don't happen, that would be hard for us. In that sense, credit to the team for winning all the games," said Harmanpreet. "Everybody is looking in great touch – Sha-

fali (Verma) and Smriti (Mandhana). They are giving us good starts, and that helps. Me and Smriti are trying to spend more time in the nets," she added reflecting on her and Smriti's so far indifferent form.

"We are looking more positive now. Unfortunately we haven't come up with big innings, but our teammates are, and at the end of the day it's a team game."

Really frustrating.
Not how we wanted the World Cup to finish for us. No reserve day, no chance of getting play... loss against South Africa cost us

HEATHER KNIGHT
England captain

Unfortunate we didn't get a game,
but there are rules and we have to follow it. Having reserve days in the future will be a great idea

HARMANPREET KAUR
India captain

In the earlier seven editions, India had never reached the final but this time, they have emerged as serious title contender after a string of superlative performances.

The final

■ March 8 (Sunday),
India vs Australia,
Melbourne, 12.30 p.m. (IST)

Kohli congratulates women's team

Former players also applaud the side for making the T20 World Cup final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India's men's team skipper Virat Kohli congratulated the Harmanpreet Kaur-led women's side for reaching its maiden final of the T20 World Cup in Australia, saying the outfit's performance is something to be "proud" of.

The Indian women's team advanced to the summit clash owing to a superior group stage record, after the semifinal clash against England was abandoned without a ball being bowled at the Sydney Cricket Ground due to persistent rain.

"Congratulations to the Indian Women's team on qualifying for the



Kohli says he is proud of the Indian women's team. ■ REUTERS

@T20WorldCup final. We are proud of you girls and wish you all the luck for the finals," Kohli tweeted.

Former India opener Virender Sehwag also took to Twitter to wish the Indian side luck for the final which

is scheduled to be played in Melbourne on Sunday.

"...A reward for winning all the matches in the group stage. Congratulations @BCCIWomen and wishing you glory this Sunday #T20WorldCup," Sehwag said.

Former India Test specialist V.V.S. Laxman hailed the side for its unbeaten record in the tournament so far.

"Would have been great to see the match, but many congratulations to @BCCI Women for making it to the finals of the #T20WorldCup. A reward for winning 4 out of 4 in the group stages. Wishing the girls the very best for the finals on #WomensDay"

India decides to keep out Nagal

Prajnesh, Ramkumar for singles; Bopanna to partner Leander

DAVIS CUP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian team sprang a surprise by keeping its No. 1 player Sumit Nagal out of action, at least for the opening day, of the Davis Cup World Group qualifier to be played on indoor hard courts in Zagreb.

In the opening rubber, the 132nd-ranked Prajnesh Gunneswaran will play the 277th-ranked Borna Gojo. That match will be followed by the 182nd-ranked Ramkumar Ramanathan against the former World No. 3 Marin Cilic, who had helped Croatia win the trophy in 2018.

On the same page
"It is our strategy for the tie, and in the best interests of the team. The team is on the same page. It is not about individuals," said Rohit Rajpal, captain of the Indian team, after the draw.

India will field Rohan Bopanna and Leander Paes in doubles against the pair of Franko Skugor and Mate Pavic.

It may be recalled that the 46-year-old Leander had won three matches in India's shock victory over Croatia in 1995, when he outlasted Goran Ivanisevic in five sets. That has been the only meeting between the two teams in Davis Cup.

"It's a big honour to re-

port the players. The matches will be played on a best-of-three format.

Live on Dsport
The tie between India and Croatia will be telecast live by Dsport from 7.30 p.m. IST on Friday.

The second day's play on Saturday, featuring the doubles and followed by two singles, will be also start at 7.30 p.m.

The draw:
March 6: Borna Gojo vs Prajnesh Gunneswaran; Marin Cilic vs Ramkumar Ramanathan.

March 7: Mate Pavic & Franko Skugor vs Rohan Bopanna & Leander Paes; Marin Cilic vs Prajnesh Gunneswaran; Borna Gojo vs Ramkumar Ramanathan.

Full of confidence
Ramkumar, who was happy to get an opportunity, said he was confident of delivering the best.

"I am really happy and excited. The conditions are good for me," he said.

The 127th-ranked Nagal may have been kept out, but could play in the tie, if needed, as there is a provision to

replace the players.

The matches will be played on a best-of-three format.

Ramkumar: Prajnesh Gunneswaran; Marin Cilic vs Ramkumar Ramanathan.

March 7: Mate Pavic & Franko Skugor vs Rohan Bopanna & Leander Paes; Marin Cilic vs Prajnesh Gunneswaran; Borna Gojo vs Ramkumar Ramanathan.

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"It's a big honour to re-



Battlelines drawn: Ramkumar and Cilic will match wits on the opening day. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sania-Ankita combo powers India past Korea

FED CUP

SPORTS BUREAU
DUBAI

Sania Mirza stepped on court to help India beat Korea 2-1 in the third league match of the Fed Cup Asia-Oceania group-I tennis tournament on Thursday.

It was India's second win. After the loss against top seed China in the first match, it had defeated Uzbekistan 3-0.

India will meet Chinese Taipei on Friday, and Indonesia on the final day. The top two from the six-team league will qualify.

Former World No. 1 in doubles and six-time Grand Slam champion, Sania combined well with Ankita Raina to script a win for India.

The results (league): India bt Korea 2-1 (Rutuja Bhosale bt Jang Su-Jeong 7-5, 6-4; Ankita Raina lost to Han Na-Lae 4-6, 0-6; Sania Mirza & Ankita Raina bt Han Na-Lae & Kim Na Ri 6-4, 6-4).

Driving home: Sachin Tendulkar has advised the women's team members not to take any pressure. ■ PTI

Rutuja gives 1-0 lead

Rutuja Bhosale had given the Indians a bright start, battling past Jang Su-Jeong 7-5, 6-4.

The results (league): India bt

Korea 2-1 (Rutuja Bhosale bt Jang Su-Jeong 7-5, 6-4; Ankita Raina lost to Han Na-Lae 4-6, 0-6; Sania Mirza & Ankita Raina bt Han Na-Lae & Kim Na Ri 6-4, 6-4).

Ashish in quarterfinals

BOXING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AMMAN (JORDAN)

Ashish Kumar (75kg) sailed into the quarterfinals of the continental Olympic Qualifiers for boxing with a thumping win over fourth seed Kyrgyz Omurbek Bekhigit Uulu in the last-16 stage on Thursday.

Ashish won 5-0 to set up a clash with Indonesia's Maikhel Roberr Muskita, who

defeated New Zealand's Ryan Scaife in his pre-quarterfinal bout.

Making the semifinals would assure Ashish of his maiden spot in the Olympics this year.

Up against a spunky rival, who he defeated in the Asian quarterfinals last year, Ashish played the waiting game to perfection.

Ashish's powerful and precise right hand served him well in the final three minutes.

Sixth straight final for Australia

South Africa falls short by five runs under DLS method

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY

Four-time champion Australia used its rich big-match experience to surpass a spirited South Africa by five runs in a rain-hit semifinal here on Thursday, setting up a title clash against first-timer India. This is Australia's sixth successive final out of the seven editions held so far.

There were fears that the second semifinal between Australia and South Africa at the SCG too will be washed out like the India and England match earlier in the day. But the weather improved just enough to get a game albeit a curtailed one.

Host Australia, which did not have the services of injured star allrounder Elysse Perry, was ecstatic after Jess Jonassen was able to defend 19 runs in the final over with South Africa getting only 13.

"It was extremely tense. Even in the last couple of balls it just wasn't safe. They

turned during the innings break and South Africa was set a revised target of 98 runs in 13 overs as per the DLS method.

South Africa ended at 92 for five despite a fighting 41 not out off 27 balls from Laura Wolvaardt.

South Africa was reeling at 24 for three before Wolvaardt and Sune Luus (21) brought their team back in the game with a quickfire 47-run stand. Wolvaardt, who smashed three sixes and two fours, had too much to do on her own.

Host Australia, which did not have the services of injured star allrounder Elysse Perry, was ecstatic after Jess Jonassen was able to defend 19 runs in the final over with South Africa getting only 13.

"It was extremely tense. Even in the last couple of balls it just wasn't safe. They

needed 19 off the last over and we knew we had to nail it. But that's T20 cricket for you," said skipper Lanning.

Class side

On the final against India, "India are a class side, they have been playing excellent cricket. We are going to have to play really well. We have been improving each day, it hasn't been an easy road," she said.

South Africa skipper Dane van Niekerk said her team tried its best. "... we have to give credit to Australia for the way they bowled and we just came six short."

The scores: Australia 134/5 in 20 overs (Meg Lanning 49 n.o., Beth Mooney 28, Nadine de Klerk 3/19) bt South Africa 92/5 in 13 overs (Laura Wolvaardt 41 n.o., Megan Schutt 2/17). **Revised target:** 98 in 13 overs under DLS method.



Ecstatic: The Aussies' joy knew no bounds after they emerged on the right side of a tight finish in the semifinal against South Africa. ■ ICC

Go out and give your best: Tendulkar

Says women's team has inspired so many youngsters



Driving home: Sachin Tendulkar has advised the women's team members not to take any pressure. ■ PTI

SHAYAN ACHARYA
MUMBAI

As the Indian women's cricket team gears up for its maiden T20 World Cup final, it has a piece of advice from Sachin Tendulkar – stay in the moment and be positive.

"Go out and give your best – that is what my message to them [is]. Don't take any pressure, though it is easier said than done."

"I genuinely want to tell them that just stay together, you don't need to spend time with outside world. If you are in the company of each other, keep talking positive things because good things have happened to our team," Tendulkar said.

"I have been following

their performances and they have inspired so many youngsters... It is about bringing laurels to our nation and you can come back (with the trophy). So many athletes in different fields have brought laurels to our nation, this would be another one. Go and enjoy yourself," he said.

The former India captain was in Australia recently, when he met some of the players – including Shafali Verma. Reminiscing that meeting, Tendulkar said: "Coincidentally, I was there next to the trophy, and few members were there from our women's team. I said it would be nice to see you with this trophy in India."

TV PICKS

NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m.
Bangladesh vs Zimbabwe: 3rd ODI, SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.
Sri Lanka vs West Indies: 2nd T20I, Sony Six (SD & HD), 7 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Doncic sets triple double record

LOS ANGELES
Luka Doncic, right in pic., had a record-setting 30-point triple double as the Dallas Mavericks held off Zion Williamson's New Orleans Pelicans 127-123 in overtime on Wednesday.
The results: Celtics 112 bt Cavaliers 106; Thunder 114 bt Pistons 107; Bucks 119 bt Pacers 100; Heat 116 bt Magic 113; Grizzlies 118 bt Nets 79; Jazz 112 bt Knicks 104; Timberwolves 115 bt Bulls 108; Mavericks 127 bt Pelicans 123 (OT); Trail Blazers 125 bt Wizards 104.
AGENCIES



Injured Nishikori to miss Davis Cup qualifier

TOKYO
Injury-hit Kei Nishikori said on Thursday he had failed to recover from an elbow injury and will sit out the behind-closed-doors Davis Cup qualifier against Ecuador at the weekend. A depleted Japan will also be without World No. 48 Yoshihito Nishioka when it bids to reach the finals in Spain later this year. AFP

Harika stuns Ju Wenjun

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA LAUSANNE

Indian Grandmaster Dronavalli Harika inflicted a defeat on world champion Ju Wenjun in the third round of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix chess tournament here.

Harika, the World No.9, is in joint lead with two points after three rounds along with four others.

The Indian outlasted the 29-year-old Chinese player, ranked No.3 in the world, in 54 moves with white pieces late on Wednesday.

Three of the six games on the day were decisive with Kashlinskaya and Muzychuk registering wins.

The results: (third round): D. Harika 2 bt Ju Wenjun (Chn) 1; Anna Muzychuk (Ukr) 2 beat Marie Sebag (Fra) 1; Alexandra Goryachkina (Rus) 2 drew with Zhansaya Abdumalik (Kaz) 1; Alexandra Kosteniuk (Rus) 0.5 lost to Alina Kashlinskaya (Rus) 1; Antoneta Stefanova (Bul) 1.5 drew with Nana Dzagnidze (Geo) 2; Mariya Muzychuk (Ukr) 1.5 drew with Pia Cramling (Swe) 1.5.

Zeel double bagels Zeina

SPORTS BUREAU CAIRO

Fifth seed Zeel Desai outplayed Zeina Shaaban 6-0, 6-0 in the pre-quarterfinals of the \$15,000 ITF women's tennis tournament here on Thursday.

The results: \$25,000 ITF men, Potchefstroom: Pre-quarterfinals: Roberto Ortega-Olmedo (Esp) bt Sidharth Rawat 6-3, 6-2.

Doubles (quarterfinals): Benjamin Bonzi & Matteo Martineau (Fra) bt Mick Veldhorst (Ned) & Sidharth 6-4, 6-4.

\$15,000 ITF men, Faro, Portugal: Pre-quarterfinals: Sebastian Fanselow (Ger) bt Arjun Kadhe 6-2, 6-4.

\$15,000 ITF women, Cairo: Pre-quarterfinals: Zeel Desai bt Zeina Shaaban (Egy) 6-0, 6-0.

Doubles (quarterfinals): Lee Sora (Kor) & Caroline Romeo (Fra) bt Izabella Gabriela Novac (Rou) & Saumya Vig 6-3, 6-0.

SILENT RULER, 2. ECO

Legends World Series T20

India takes on West Indies while Sri Lanka faces off against Australia

CRICKET

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Sri Lankan stalwarts Rangana Herath, Farveez Maharoof and Romesh Kaluwitharana asserted that past rivalries will be revived on the cricket pitch when teams from five nations face-off during the Unacademy Road Safety World Series T20 featuring legends.

The fixtures

- March 7: India vs West Indies; March 8: Australia vs Sri Lanka
- March 10: India vs Sri Lanka; March 11: West Indies vs South Africa
- March 13: South Africa vs Sri Lanka; March 14: India vs South Africa
- March 16: Australia vs West Indies; March 17: West Indies vs Sri Lanka
- March 19: Australia vs South Africa; March 20: India vs Australia
- March 22: Final
- All matches at 7 p.m.



It's official: Former Sri Lankan cricketers Romesh Kaluwitharana, Rangana Herath and Farveez Maharoof unveil the Sri Lankan jersey. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

India and West Indies will clash on Saturday while Sri Lanka will play against Australia on Sunday. The other participating team is South Africa.

Sri Lanka team captain Dilshan Tillekaratne and off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan were part of the squad which went down to India in

the 2011 World Cup final at the Wankhede Stadium. Chamara Kapugedera also played in that game.

Herath said: "We have a pretty good side and though I am sure competition will be tough, we stand a good chance."

Allrounder Maharoof said: "This is an amazing ini-

tiative, I thank the organisers for bringing us all together for a sport we love."

The Sri Lanka Legends squad, besides Tillakaratne and Muralitharan, includes Marvan Atapattu, Chaminda Vaas, Sachithra Senanayake, Kapugedera, Thilan Thushara, Upul Chandana and Malinda Warnapura.

Mashrafe steps down as ODI captain

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
SYLHET

Bangladesh pace bowler Mashrafe Mortaza, one of the country's biggest sports stars, stepped down as captain of the national one-day side on Thursday, possibly ending his international career.

Friday's 50-over game against Zimbabwe here was his last as captain, said the 36-year-old, who already has a new career as a Member of Parliament.

Mashrafe said he would remain available for selection as a player, but selectors are under pressure to bring in fresh blood ahead of the 2023 World Cup in November 2020.

The Under-21 league

would be held in three phases across three different venues – Delhi (March 23-29), Bengaluru (July 13-19) and Bhubaneswar (November 22-29).

"I would like to thank Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for keeping confidence in me for such a long period," said Mashrafe. "I will try to give my best as a player if I get the opportunity."

Mashrafe had not played any ODI since last year's World Cup until the current Zimbabwe series. He claimed three wickets in the first two matches.

playing in a round-robin format. Phase three would include classification matches and finals based on the rankings after the first two phases.

The teams would be drawn from registered academies and Public Sector Units and finalised on a first-come-first-serve basis subject to confirmation of acceptance of the terms of participation.

While the central government, along with various state governments, have been organising Khelo India events across age-groups, this is the first time a single-sport league has been finalised and organised by a sports federation.

"With this new initiative, we want to provide a platform to young women players to play at a high level consistently becoming a part of the National team set-up in the future," Hockey India president Mohd. Mushaque Ahmad said.

HI to organise

Khelo India

women's league

HOCKEY

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

In a first-of-its-kind partnership, Hockey India, in association with the Sports Authority of India, would organise the First Khelo India Women's Hockey League, starting later this month and continuing till November 2020.

The Under-21 league would be held in three phases across three different venues – Delhi (March 23-29), Bengaluru (July 13-19) and Bhubaneswar (November 22-29).

"The number of national-level competitions currently being held in women's hockey is limited and we felt the need to create this league so that more talent could be identified," Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said.

Round-robin format
The first two phases would see 14 teams divided into two pools of seven each

Bindu in elite panel of Blue Badge umpires

TABLE TENNIS

M.R. PRAVEEN CHANDRAN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



M.S. Bindu.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Former State table tennis champion M.S. Bindu has become a trail-blazer for women umpires in the State after she was made it to the International Table Tennis Federation's (ITTF) elite panel of Blue Badge umpires.

Second from India

The 38-year-old became the first woman from Kerala and second from India to be selected to the coveted panel.

Bindu, who had represented Kerala in 11 senior national TT championships, also became the second Blue Badge umpire from Kerala.

Blue badge umpires officiate in ITTF's elite tournaments including the Olympics and World Championships. Bindu qualified as international umpire in 2012 even when she was active as a player.

She officiated in the Commonwealth championships in Cuttack in July and World Junior championship in Thailand in December.

Bindu's performance in these tournaments was evaluated by ITTF and she passed the interview which was conducted during the World Junior TT championships in Thailand to complete the Blue

Badge qualification process within six months

Hardworking

"She was very hard working and dedicated when she was a player. She has shown the same traits after she became an umpire."

"It is a great achievement to achieve this within six months as normally people take more time to complete the Blue Badge process."

"I hope Bindu will inspire more women to take up umpiring," said N. Ganeshan, ITTF's competition manager and Bindu's mentor.

Bindu, who is married to Kerala State Sports Council coach Jobin Christy, chose to be an umpire rather than a coach after her retirement. "I grew up watching Ganeshan as a umpire. I was always impressed by his dedication and passion and always wanted to be an umpire."

"He was the first person to encourage me to take up officiating."

"I should also thank my family and especially husband for all their support," said Bindu who is awaiting her first assignment as a Blue Badge umpire.

On the attack

Making its intentions clear right from the beginning, Chennai City successfully thwarted Bagan's attacking

plans.

The visitors toiled hard and created quite a few chances in the opening session, but failed to convert them.

The visitors could have easily found the lead early on in the opening session as Yusa ran amok and came up with three clear chances in the opening 30 minutes.

But the opportunities went abegging as Spanish striker Adolfo Miranda (twice) and Jockson Dhas failed to find the target.

Chennai City, which had lost its first leg out 3-2 against Bagan in Coimbatore, put up a much-improved performance to share the honours with the current leader in its own den.

The draw, after seven successive wins, prolonged Bagan's wait for the title.

Bagan, which has 36 points from 15 matches, is 13 points clear of its nearest challenger – Punjab FC – which has 23 from 15 games.

On the prowl: Katsumi Yusa broke Bagan hearts with a goal in the 67th minute. ■ RAJEEV BHATT

Gokulam protests

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOZHIKODE

Football Federation secretary Kushal Das requested the goal be allowed, his team declared the winner and be awarded three points.

He has also submitted photographs in support of the claim that the goal by Lalromawia in the injury time was legitimate.

Nasum in Bangladesh squad

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
DHAKA

Bangladesh has called up uncapped left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed for its 15-man squad for the upcoming two-match T20I series against Zimbabwe.

The squad:

Mahmudullah Riyad (Capt.), Tamim Iqbal, Soumya Sarkar, Mohammad Naim, Liton Das, Musfiqur Rahim, Afif Hossain, Mohammad Saifuddin, Mahadi Hasan, Aminul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Shafiqul Islam, Al-Amin Hossein, Hasan Mahmud, and Nasum Ahmed.

9 HONAVAR PLATE (1,200m), rated 15 to 35, 5-y-o & over, 5.15: 1. Rudram (8) Vivek 60, 2. Hunters Moon (9) Ankit Yadav 59.5, 3. Ispelldangorto (1) M. Naveen 58.5, 4. Zehnaseeb (2) T.S. Jodha 57.5, 6. Tyto Alba (12) R. Ravi 57.5, 7. She's Superb (11) Chetan G 55.5, 8. Soviet Union (3) Sai Kiran 55, 9. Bella Mamma (10) Naveen Kumar 54, 10. Glorious Days (5) Jagadeesha 54, 11. Perfect King (7) Arshad 54 and 12. Nerva (6) Nazerul 53.

8 DR. K.T.B. MENON MEMORIAL TROPHY (Div. II), (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 4.45: 1. Slice of Heaven (9) R. Marshall 60, 2. Agarwal (12) Naveen Kumar 53.5, 3. Deneb (10) Naveen Kumar 53, 4. Set To Win (8) M. Naveen 57, 5. Dorth Charge (3) Sai Kiran 56.5, 6. Corona Del Cosa (7) Darshan 54, 7. Fire Glow (10) T.S. Jodha 52.5, 8. Commodus (10) Trevor 51.5, 9. Torsoro (9) R.

7 MANAS SAROVAR TROPHY (1,400m), rated 60 & above, 4.15: 1. Psychic Warrior (6) Jagadeesha 60, 2. Attorney General (5) S. John 59.5, 3. Super Success (1) Sai Vamsi 58.5, 4. Set To Win (8) M. Naveen 57, 5. Dorth Charge (3) Sai Kiran 56.5, 6. Corona Del Cosa (7) Darshan 54, 7. Fire Glow (10) T.S. Jodha 52.5, 8. Commodus (10) Trevor 51.5, 9. Torsoro (9) R.

6 DR. K.T.B. MENON MEMORIAL TROPHY (Div. I), (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 3.45: 1. Slice of Heaven (9) R. Marshall 60, 2. Agarwal (12) Naveen Kumar 53.5, 3. Deneb (10) Naveen Kumar 53, 4. Set To Win (8) M. Naveen 57, 5. Dorth Charge (3) Sai Kiran 56.5, 6. Corona Del Cosa (7) Darshan 54, 7. Fire Glow (10) T.S. Jodha 52.5, 8. Commodus (10) Trevor 51.5, 9. Torsoro (9) R.

5 ON THE TROT, 2. PORT OF BEAUTY, 3. SLICE OF HEAVEN

Jkt: 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9; Tr (i): 1, 2 and 3; (ii): 4, 5 and 6; (iii): 7, 8 and 9.

Two heads, one thought!



Time to rock: M.S. Dhoni, right, and Suresh Raina gearing up

Ailing Novy Kapadia awaits his long-delayed pension

Noted sports commentator and author afflicted with rare disease

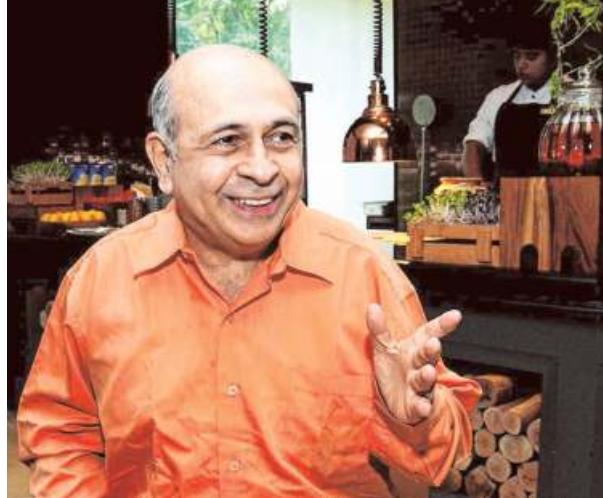
FOOTBALL

VIJAY LOKAPALLY
NEW DELHI

The plight of noted sports commentator and author Novy Kapadia confined to his home has left the football fraternity sad. Pictures of an otherwise vibrant Kapadia, now unable to move around even within his house without assistance, has distressed many who have known Kapadia for close to four decades.

"What pains me is the fact that Novy has not been paid his pension for more than two years," said commentator Ghans Mohammad, Kapadia's partner on radio and television for more than 30 years.

"His service to football is unmatched and it is time the football fraternity lends support to the man who did so much to popularise the game. This generation of football lovers owes it to him. His background of teaching ensured he had a smooth flow in his commentary and impeccable pronunciation."



Novy Kapadia in better times. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHANKER CHAKRAVARTY

Having covered nine FIFA World Cup tournaments, the 67-year-old Kapadia is considered an authority on football in India.

"Football has been a passion for me. It hurts that I can't do my commentary now but I feel elated when my students visit me and friends drop in," said Kapadia, who taught English at Khalsa College for 41 years and has been waiting to receive his pension for 31 months.

Kapadia, who once owned the Ashoka Club and played active football in the local league, has been afflicted by a rare neuro-degenerative disease that causes the nerves in the spine and brain

to lose function over time. "I have served Delhi University with all dedication and hope I get help at this stage of my life from the Government to meet my medical expenses," he pleaded.

Technical knowledge
According to veteran football scribe Jaydeep Basu, "Novy is one of the finest grass-root reporters of Indian football. He has deep technical knowledge of football and footballers. I envy his understanding of the game and I am sad that he has been sort of neglected by the society. I am sure help will pour in for him to meet his medical expenses," said Basu.

Football guru for some and football encyclopedia for others, Kapadia awaits to hear from the Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju, who has promised to look unto the matter.

Taking note of Kapadia's condition, All India Football Federation president Praful Patel told *The Hindu*, "the sports fraternity owes a lot to Novy. AIFF will certainly help him. I will also take it up the Sports Minister."

India's match against Qatar likely to be postponed

FIFA and AFC made a formal proposal after a meeting in Zurich on Thursday

WC QUALIFIER

SPORTS BUREAU
CHENNAI

India's FIFA World Cup 2022 qualifier at home against Qatar is likely to be postponed after FIFA and AFC made a formal proposal for the same after a meeting in Zurich on Thursday.

Apart from the game against Qatar, India is also scheduled to play a friendly

versus Tajikistan in March. Already out of contention after failing to win even a single game, India is scheduled to play 2022 tournament host Qatar in Bhubaneswar on March 26, followed by matches against Bangladesh and Afghanistan in June. India is now seeking to qualify for the 2023 Asian Cup.

FIFA and AFC have sent the proposal to the relevant member associations to postpone the match. An up-

date on these fixtures will be announced after consultation with the associations. The decision was made keeping in mind the well-being and health of all individuals involved.

Monitoring the situation
FIFA said it will continue to monitor the situation in relation to the coronavirus outbreak in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), the confederations and the member associations.

The other matches discussed were the women's Olympic Games play-off between Korea Republic and China PR and the AFC Futsal championship in Turkmenistan.

According to the Indonesian football association, matches scheduled to take place in March and June have been moved to October and November respectively.

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'Sufi music is a way of life'

Ahead of her performance in Delhi, Smita Rao Bellur talks about her transition from Khayal to Sufi music

SHRINKHLA SAHAI

For vocalist Smita Rao Bellur, transition is the song of life. Moving through life choices marked by shifts, from Bengaluru to Mumbai, Hindustani classical music to Sufi kalam and from a lucrative corporate profile to being a musician, she believes in going with the flow of artistic impulse. Slated to perform over the weekend in Delhi at the World Sufi Music Festival 'Jahan-e-Khusrau', the artist reflected seamlessly on Sufi music as a way of life.

The shift

"In Northern Karnataka where I grew up, the Hindustani classical influence is very strong," recalls Bellur as she talks about her father taking her to her first music class. Trained primarily in the Kicana gharana, khayal music was the mainstay in the early days of her performance career. "Music was always a serious pursuit." Taught in the traditional guru-shishya tradition, she believes the teaching system of that time made music a part of life, first as a hobby and interest and later as a consuming passion and profession.

"I remember almost growing up in my Guraji's home. After school I would spend most of my time there, learning and practising, and most of my summer vacations too." Years of training with maestros PR Bhagwat and Arjuna Nakod gave her a strong foundation, sketched further with



Colours of hope Smita Rao Bellur ■ G.RAMAKRISHNA

a nuanced study of the Jaipur style with vocalist Alka Dev Mukarji. With over 350 classical concerts to her credit, Bellur's initiation into Sufi music was sudden and swift.

Words of wonder

The vocalist started listening to Sufi music as a panacea to her work life. She recalls a moment that marked the sublime shift of genres and professions for her. "I was in the thick of corporate life, returning from work, and this particular Sufi kalam took me into a trance." The composition was Aziz Ahmed Warsi's rendition of 'Allah Hu.' For her the words carried a message and it was the surreal experience of the universe speaking directly with her. "The way this famous kalam was presented was very different. It was slower in pace, and included a little narrative about a devotee and her belief that the divine power would come home to visit her, she even begins preparing for this visit. She is mocked and berated



Indian music is largely about love. In today's world hate has unfortunately become more popular. In our traditional music, there is a nuanced exploration of love – from erotic, romantic, to the divine.

for her belief and told that her concept is faulty. In this story, god says that a devotee can worship or love them the way they want. This absolute acceptance and expression of devotion is beautiful."

Deeply moved by this kalam, Bellur's artistic stirrings directed her towards finding a teacher for her foray into Sufi music. Soon she had become a disciple of the Warsi Brothers. "I realised this was my calling and since I had trained to be a classical singer, it was not very difficult to learn this

genre."

She continued to practice Khayal, and Sufi music gradually took prevalence until she decided to finally give up her cushy corporate day job and move to Mumbai to focus entirely on being a musician. "Khayal is mostly about creating the mood of the raga, the focus is more towards the akar and development of the raga and not the bol. Sufi music focuses on the poetry." She shares, describing the gravitation towards the world of words, "It is not just the text, but the vibration of the words, the way they are sung, that is important." Bellur believes that Sufi music has a deep connect with the audience and is anchored in emotion and spirituality.

The vocalist points out that delving into Sufi music actually goes beyond musical training. "A lot of Sufi learning is about understanding the philosophy, reading, connecting the dots." The immersive world of Sufism has taken her into the compositions of several

other saints apart from the traditional lineage of the Warsi brothers. "Mystical traditions of various languages and regions draw me, for instance the Punjabi Sufi kalam are very different in thought and music and go deep into social and cultural life."

For Bellur life changed dramatically in 2016 as she adopted Sufism into her everyday life. "To quit my job and move to another city in the pursuit of music was an impulsive and inspired decision," she reflects. "I almost dismantled a comfortable and financially stable life for this and rationally it would probably not appear a good idea. But it felt natural, and I just took a leap. Sufism, after all, is a way of life."

Embracing change

Balancing major changes in daily life has also been accompanied by transformations in the aesthetics of music presentation. Bellur points out that traditional instruments have given way to new-age arrangement in the Sufi music sphere. "It is quite common now to use the keyboard, drums, programmed rhythms. I try and stick with acoustic or Indian-sounding arrangements though some changes are required to present a sound that connects with young people also."

As one of the few women qawwals, she believes that the entry of more women in the Sufi genre subtly challenges the social structure. "I was accepted easily into the musical tradition where few women have been allowed earlier, times and attitudes have changed now and there is acceptance and less gender bias."

Curating theme-based presentation is the way ahead for Bellur as a researcher and musician. Presently engrossed in the works of Hyderabadi poets including ghazals and Sufi kalaam, she would be sharing her interpretations in her upcoming concert at Jahan-e-Khusrau. "The festival is known for its Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb and Muzaffar Ali sahibb has given me a rare kalam of his choice to compose." Iranian musicians would be accompanying the vocalist at the festival.

Quietly reflecting on the significance of Sufi music in the present world, the vocalist says, "Indian music is largely about love. In today's world hate has unfortunately become more popular. In our traditional music, there is a nuanced exploration of love – from erotic, romantic, to the divine. Themes of love have been written and celebrated. I am happy to be part of this musical world where love is at the centre."

(Smita Rao Bellur will perform at the World Sufi Music Festival: Jahan-e-Khusrau, Delhi, on March 6, 2020)



Common concern KishwarNaheed

Stages of bias

Indian and Pakistani societies, two bastions of Urdu poetry, inflict subtle discrimination on women poets

ANJANA RAJAN

We are living in times when "Dadis (grandmas) of Shaheen Bagh" daily shatter all manner of glass ceilings and barriers, yet some stereotypes refuse to go away. Take the case of women poets in Urdu. While Urdu poetry itself attracts enthusiastic mixed audiences across the Hindustani speaking regions, a curious gender divide trips up women poets.

Delhi-based poet Ameeta Parsuram 'Meeta' is known for her ghazal writing and her annual event "Bazm" in the Capital, an evening she describes as aimed at preserving the traditional form of ghazal gayaki. Pointing out "subtle discrimination", she says that for every 10 male poets at a given mushaira (festival of Urdu poetry), there would be on average "two or three or fewer" women. "And it's not as if there are not enough women poets!"

Harder time

Gauhar Raza, another successful Delhi-based poet, agrees that women have a harder time than their male counterparts in getting recognised for their literary skills. "Yes, creating space in any field of art and literature is far more difficult for women in a male dominated world," he says. "Urdu poetry world is not free of this exclusivity."

Over years of observation, Ameeta finds that audience reaction to women poets too is often one of "lower energy or indifference," or of "looking at her as a woman, followed by applause suggestive of 'celebrating the woman' – almost as if she was there to entertain them, while ignoring the poet." Worse, there are occasions like last year when popular male poet Manzar Bhopali made shockingly derogatory remarks about women reciting at mushairas from a public platform in Bhopal.

At the other extreme is the "Khawatiin ka mushaira" (mushaira for women poets), which Ameeta calls "regressive" and "worse than even tokenism".

Raza feels, "Since there is no mushaira called 'Mardon ka Mushaira' or 'Hazraat ka Mushaira', it is derogatory to call any mushaira 'Khawatiin ka Mushaira'."

Mushairas must not be differentiated by gender, "even if the majority or all participant poets are women," he avers. When a poet is introduced with emphasis on the gender instead of the quality of the work, "The broad message is 'it is primarily a display of poets, judge their work on a different parameter'."

Interestingly, Pakistani poet Kishwar Naheed says there are very few mushairas in her country only for women, though they may be held on occasions like March 8 or February 12, designated as Pakistani Women Day. "TV channels often hold such mushairas," she says, but adds, "Male writers, when invited as listeners, do grumble and try to make jokes. In grand (main) mushairas, quite a few participate and are appreciated."

Continued on page 3

Delineating the dualities

ANURADHA VELLAT

Malavika Sarukkai's art has often transcended the boundaries and grammars of Bharatanatyam and come to represent a wholesome interpretation of some of the most complex philosophical texts. She does not transcend these boundaries because they limit her, rather, it is striking to see how much more Bharatanatyam is capable of when it comes to truly be expressional. In her latest production called "The Battle Within", Sarukkai undertakes the enormous task of rendering a dramatic interpretation inspired by the Bhagvat Gita. A creative work that works within and without the structures of Bharatanatyam, Sarukkai says that it is also a product (and process) of her own journey as a dancer and choreographer. "I try to reflect on where I am today. Bharatanatyam is singular, in a way, which is why I have called this a dramatic interpretation because it is not a margam or the rendering of two or three 'items'. The overall patterns of Bharatanatyam work on different terrain. I want to say I went ahead with an intuition," says Sarukkai.

The process, she says, has been a staggering one, wherein she explores the dualities of humankind through Ar-

READ INSIDE

"Smaran": A musical tribute to Pt. Ravi Shankar P2

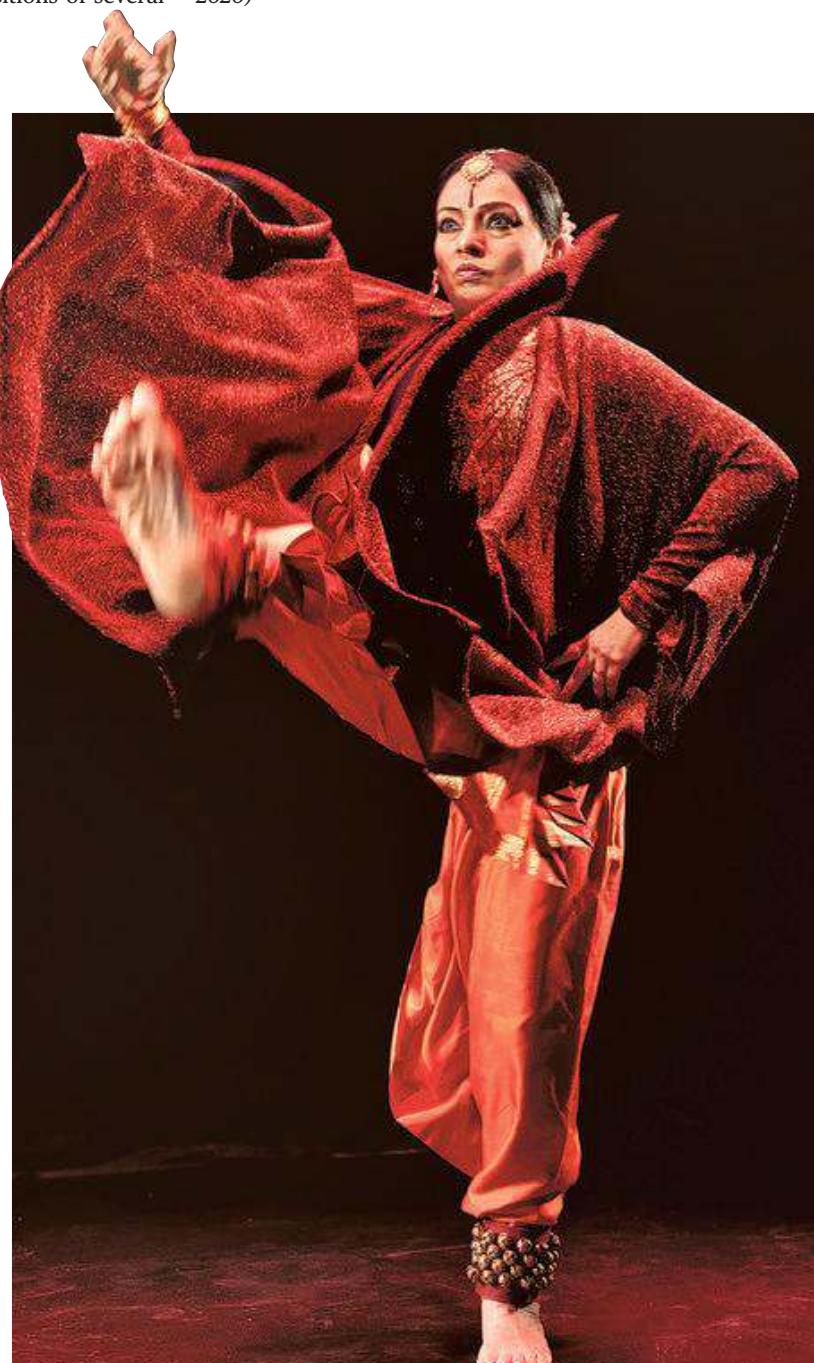
Based on the Bhagvat Gita, in "The Battle Within", Bharatanatyam exponent Malavika Sarukkai explores the constant tussle between confusion and clarity

both characters herself.

"I think 'intention' is a terribly critical word for me. I find there is a constant tussle between confusion and clarity, that even if one finds clarity for a brief passing moment, one loses it easily too. It is the predicament of human life. When I began to explore the emotions of Arjuna, I understood that Krishna was not merely the charioteer of the vehicle but also Arjuna's inner self. For instance, Arjuna has seen Krishna as both beautiful and terrible. He sees the vishwaroopam, his glory and undergoes a moment of *vismaya* or magic. But then, he decides to go into the battle anyway as the vengeful warrior. The revelation here is that one does not immediately transform the moment one sees the truth," says Sarukkai.

One wonders why she chose to play

To me, this resonates with the kind of chaotic mess that we are in and whether we are really capable of changing ourselves.



Rising to the occasion Malavika Sarukkai in "The Battle Within"

■ SUDEEP BHATTACHARYA

mind, which she had to consistently resolve before taking a step further.

She says, "There were moments when I would feel completely disconnected and moments when it all came together. If I knew how much it would demand from me, I would have taken a few steps back because I have never done anything so raw and concentrated. These emotions were/are fierce, terrifying but also funneled."

Personal discourse

Besides the obvious difficulty of playing two characters, a major one has been the different energy levels she has had to switch between. She also sees the two as masculine/feminine, self/ego, conscience/desires and the many other binaries of mankind, which often get blurred too. The discourse itself became predominantly personal for the artist. "Do we go beyond the Bhagvat Gita apart from looking at Arjuna as the warrior and Krishna as God? I do not think we do. To me, this resonates with the kind of chaotic mess that we are in and whether we are really capable of changing ourselves. Krishna is the moral compass here and our conscience," adds Sarukkai.

In a highly stylised form, "The Battle Within" integrates visual inputs on 3D screens, extensive sound and light effects alongside Sarukkai's choreography. She has collaborated with artist Sumitra Ghosal for the creation of the piece. The sound and light design are by Sai Shravanam and Niranjan Gokhale respectively, music by Murali Parthasarathy and costume by Sandhya Raman.

"The Battle Within" will be staged at Kamani Auditorium, March 6, 7 p.m.

Highlights of the ongoing 61st National Exhibition of Art P3

Tune in to Sahir's songs in times of turmoil P4

MANJARI SINHA

Drenched with the blessings of rain-gods, Nehru Park reverberated with the ringing voice of Pandit Ravi Shankar singing "He Nath, hum par kripa keejiye! Duur kar andhkar, jnan ka aalok dijiye...", his own composition in the sonorous swaras of raga Yaman. It was the background score for a short biopic on his life and music that heralded 'Smaran': Celebrating 100 years of the Bharat Ratna. Organised by the SRF Foundation with SPIC MACAY and RIMPA (the Ravi Shankar Institute of Music & Performing Arts), the two-day centenary celebration had just begun with the auspicious 'Mangal-Vadya' shehnai by Sanjeev and Ashwini Shankar, his youngest disciples playing raga Madhuvanti, that the rains resumed fiercely and the rest of the performances had to be postponed.

"Smaran" was preponed to 3 p.m. the next day and it was perfect time for Bhimpalasi, the melodious afternoon raga one rarely gets opportunity to listen to, but Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt and Pt. Tarun Bhattacharya chose the regular Charukeshi for their duet on Mohan Veena and Santoor. The two senior disciples of Pt. Ravi Shankar took turns to elaborate the raga with Alap-Jod Jhala and two compositions in slow and medium Teentala. The imaginative use of the two tablas tuned to the lower and the upper Shadja got Bickram Ghosh instant applause in his opening uthaan itself. The amiable

Of melodies and memories

Organised to celebrate the birth centenary of Pandit Ravi Shankar, "Smaran" saw stalwarts of classical music in sublime form

mukha (opening phrase) of the *drut gat*, opening with a fast *taan* and resting on a melodic *meend* (oscillation) of *Mandra Dhaivat* for a surprising *sam*, was remarkable. There was an alluring alap in raga Desh prefacing the concluding *Vande Mataram* enhanced by the Bhajaneek theka of Bickram on his broad-faced tabla that sounded like a Pakhawaj.

Echo effect

Begum Parveen Sultana fondly remembered Pt. Ravi Shankar whom she addressed 'Kaka-Babu' (uncle) and how he relished her cooking. She also shared an anecdote when he obliged her husband Dilshad Khan by playing raga Bihari in a concert on his request. Accompanied on harmonium by Vinay Mishra and on tabla by Akram Khan, Parveen opened with raga Madhuvanti, perhaps, unaware of the fact that the raga was already

played on the Shehnai earlier. Her slow and medium tempo khayals were adorned with the usual ornaments including her signature echo effect before she concluded with a Meera bhajan.

The sitar and sarod duet by Shubhendra Rao and Partha Sarathy with Bickram on tabla sounded like a heartfelt homage with Gangeshwari, a raga created by their Guru Pt. Ravi Shankar. Keeping in mind his love for rare and challenging talas, they presented the slow composition in Char-Taal Ki Sawari with a time cycle of 11 beats followed by the faster composition set to drut Ek-tala of 12 beats cycle and maintained it marvelously till the jet-speed jhala without taking refuge in the customary Tattava for convenience sake.

Vidushi Ashwini Bhide expressed her adoration for Pt. Ravi Shankar, accepting that without being under his direct tutelage, she

has soaked in sankaras (impressions) from his music. She echoed her feelings through the composition "Eri Aali bhaag jage...." in raga Jhinjhoti. Thinking of his penchant for different talas, she presented a Dhamar in raga Lalit-Pancham invoking Basant Ritu, with decisive design and detail. The intricate variety of 'Bol-Baant' dividing the 14 beats of Dhamar Tala also underlined the remarkable difference in her treatment of Dhamar with Bol-Taans and the following khayal "Khelan aye Shyam mose Hori..." with aakar and sargam taans, despite the tender touches of the twin-Madhyam of Lalit in both the compositions of Lalit-Pancham. The concluding dadra "Sakal Brij dhoom machi..." enhanced by the romantic touches of harmonium by Vinay Mishra and the Banarsi Laggi on tabla by Vinod Lele completed her well-conceived concert that vouched for her fierce integrity and power of inheritance.

"Smaran" reached its climax with the melodious flute recital by Pt. Hariprasad Chaurasia inspired by the wit and vigour of Ud. Zakir Hussain on tabla. His soul-stirring Biham with aalap and a couple of compositions set to Rupak and Teentala and the concluding dhun in the romantic raga Pilu, was ably supported by disciples Shuchismita and Vivek Sonar on flute. The lilting gait of the dadra augmented by the charismatic inputs of Zakir, left the audience enthralled. It was after a long time that one found Pandit Chaurasia in such high spirits.

Hindi Belt

A prayer for revolution

One of Latin America's most admired poets, The Reverend Ernesto Cardenal, who passed away recently, demonstrated how religious heritage could be used in people's struggles

KULDEEP KUMAR

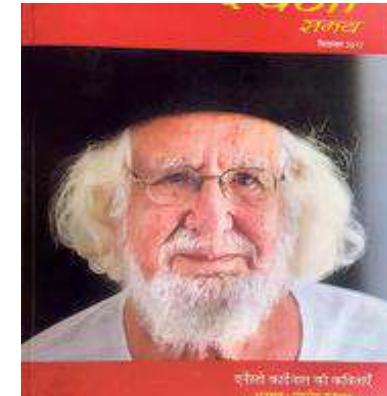
He was a man whose contradictions turned him into a complete human being who defied all stereotypes and created his own unique persona. He was a Roman Catholic priest who took active part in the Nicaraguan revolutionary struggle led by the Sandinistas against the authoritarian regime of the Somoza dynasty that relied on torture, extra-judicial killings and suppression of the press to contain its opponents. He was a Marxist who prayed but not for his people, as he did not view himself as an intermediary between God and man. He was the best known Liberation Theologian who had emphasised the emancipatory essence of religion - in his case, Christianity. He wrote revolutionary poems and songs following the literary style of Psalms and thus demonstrated how religious heritage could be used in people's struggles.

Such was The Reverend Ernesto Cardenal, one of Latin America's most admired poets, along with Federico García Lorca, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz and Nikanor Parra, who breathed his last on March 1, 2020 in Managua at the age of 95. He was also one of those great revolutionary poets who, like Nazim Hikmet, Faiz Ahmed 'Faiz' and Mahmood Darvesh, became sources of inspiration for several generations of Hindi poets because of their dedication to the people's cause and their mastery of the art of poetry.

When people of my generation began to write poetry, Naxalbari had happened merely four-five years ago and revolutionary change was in the air. Alokdhanya was emerging as the voice of this revolutionary fervour and left-wing poets like Sri Sri and Varvara Rao (Telugu) or Nabarnan Bhattacharya (Bengali) were being read with keen interest in Hindi literary circles. That was the time when Hindi poets discovered Cardenal and his poems, translated from English into Hindi, started appearing in literary magazines. However, after a few years, Hindi poets such as Prabhakti Nautiyal, who had learnt and studied Spanish language and literature at Jawaharlal Nehru University, began to translate Cardenal's poems straight from Spanish.

When Cardenal came to Delhi in March 1983 to attend the Seventh Non-aligned Summit as Nicaragua's minister for culture, Nautiyal was deputed to liaison between him and the Indian government. When he told Cardenal that he had translated some of his poems from Spanish into Hindi and that he was a beloved of young Hindi poets, he could not believe it. He was under the impression that nobody in India knew who he was. So, the next day, Nautiyal showed Cardenal the November 1978 issue of Hindi magazine "Saraoor" that had carried Nautiyal's translation of his celebrated poem "Salmon". Although Cardenal did not understand a word of Hindi, he asked Nautiyal to read out the translation and asked if he could take the magazine with him back to Nicaragua - a request that Nautiyal happily acceded to. Cardenal also signed a poem for him.

Eminent poet Mangalesh Dabral, who was among those who led the Award Wapasi movement in 2015 to protest the Modi government's silence on the targeted killings of public intel-



Reverend Ernesto Cardenal

lectuals and writers, also had a similarly interesting experience with Cardenal that showed how simple a man he was despite his international stature. He had returned from Bhopal after attending a World Poetry Festival at Bharat Bhavan and there was a function at the Nicaraguan Embassy to celebrate his birthday on January 20, 1989. Dabral was the literary editor of Hindi daily "Jansatta" and his poet-cartoonist colleague Rajendra Dhadapkar had given him a blank paper to get it signed by Cardenal as he wanted to draw a cartoon of the revolutionary poet. When Dabral spread the blank sheet before him and asked him to sign, Cardenal took out and his pen and was about to sign when embassy officials stopped him, pointing out how he could sign a blank paper.

A born poet

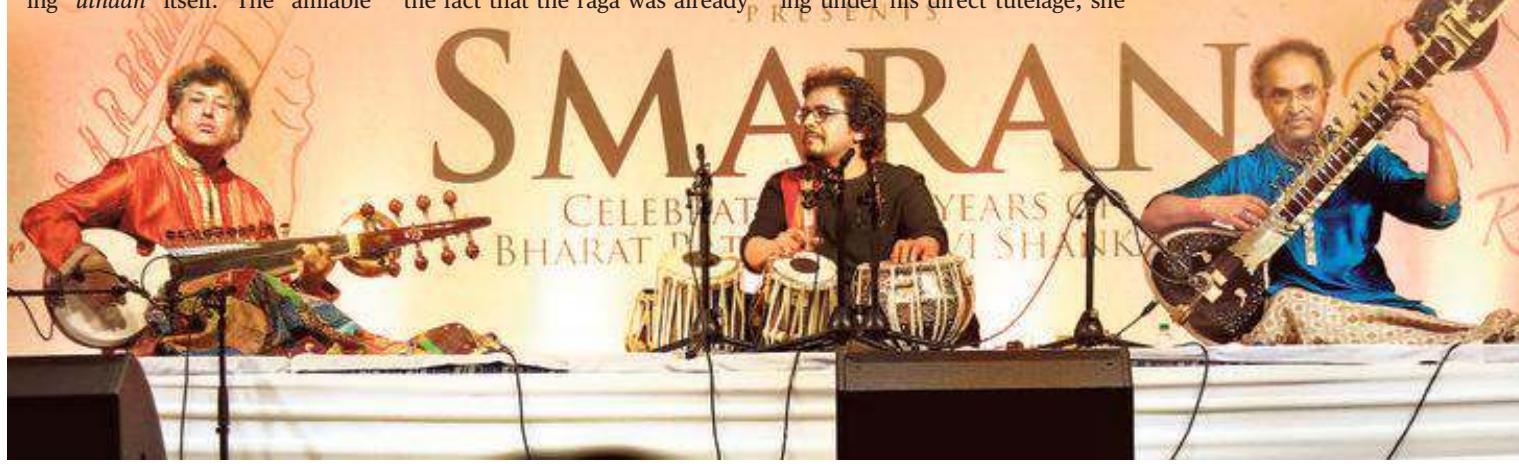
Dabral too had translated a few of Cardenal's poems and he gave him the issue of Hindi magazine "Tanaav" that had published them. Cardenal was very happy and he sent him some of his poems after returning to Nicaragua. In 2017, Hindi journal "Rachana Samay" published Dabral's translation of 80 of Cardenal's poems.

If poets are born and not made, Cardenal was truly a born poet. He began writing verse when he was a small boy of four years. Later, he once said that he could not remember a time when he did not write. He wrote against American imperialism but there is not a word in his writings that is directed against the American people. In this sense, he represented revolutionary universalism that aims to unite all the suffering people of the world by creating bonds among them. His poem "Zero Hour" bears some resemblance with a long poem of Firaq Gorakhpuri titled "Aadhi Raat" (Midnight), especially because of its recurring refrain:

Watchman! What hour is it of the night?
Watchman! What hour is it of the night?

Perhaps, secular fundamentalists and doctrinaire Marxists of today can learn something from Father Cardenal. He was a deeply religious man who defied the Church and Pope John Paul II. And, he was a Marxist, who as a revolutionary poet did not fight shy of learning the art of poetry from a self-proclaimed fascist like Ezra Pound. Cardenal is Dead. Long live Cardenal!

The writer is a seasoned literary critic



Ultimate homage
Partha Sarathy and Shubhendra Rao with Bickram Ghosh on tabla

An enchanting experience

Despite niggling problems, vocalists Jyothi Sridevi and Sanjay Subrahmanyam provided a feast of Carnatic music to Delhiites

VENKATESAN SRIKANTH

The Indira Gandhi National Centre For the Arts and the Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Sabha organised a Carnatic music concert recently as part of "Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar Day" celebrations. The concert was held at the lecture hall of the IGNCA. The Delhi-based Jyothi Sridevi structured her vocal concert based entirely on the compositions of this legendary composer. Dikshitar is considered one of the musical trinity of Carnatic music (the other two being Shyama Sastri and Tyagaraja). Despite her voice not being in fine fettle on the day of the performance, Sridevi sang brilliantly by interweaving her talent in the thoughtfully selected compositions of the composer. She sang both the popular compositions as well those not heard frequently in the concerts.

Sridevi began her concert with the invocation song to Lord Vinayaka ("Vallabha Nayakasya" in Begada ra-

ga. The short and creatively crafted kalpanaswaras in rupakam tala for this song as well as for the succeeding song "Swaminatha Paripalaya" in Natta and in Adi tala was reflective of her musical talent in the creative sphere.

After rendering "Sri Nilotpala Nayike" in Reetigowla and "Sri Ranganatnam Upasmahe" in Poornachandrika in a delightful manner, Sridevi took up "Hiranyakseem Lakshmeem" in Lalitha and "Meenakshi Memudam" in Poorvikalyani for detailed renditions. In the detailed and unhurried alapanas, she brought out the features of these ragas to the fore in a scintillating manner. Besides, she also took up a phrase in each of these songs for neraval. These and the subsequent kalpanaswaras once again brought to fore her creative talent. The Delhi-based Uma Arun on the violin and K.N. Padmanaban on the mridangam provided appropriate support to Jyothi Sridevi.

Two things were noteworthy in popular vocalist Sanjay Subrahmanyam's recent concert in the Capital. One was the seating of students and rasikas of music on the stage around the area where Sanjay himself was performing, bringing the memories of similar such concerts that take place at the Madras Music Academy during the famous December season. The other was Sanjay was not in the company of his usual accompanist (S. Varadarajan- violinist and Neyveli B.



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Venkatesh - mridangam). Instead, he was in the company of Nagai Murlidharan (violin) and Srimushnam V. Raja Rao (mridangam), besides K. V. Gopalakrishnan (kanjira).

The beauty of Carnatic music is that every accompanying artist is an expert in his chosen field and their musical talent gel swiftly with that of the main artiste. Here too, the situation was no different and it was an enchanting musical evening.

Sanjay sang on the first day of the two-day event titled "Swar Sangam", organised by the Gurukulam Foundation at the auditorium of the Delhi Tamil Sangam.

His central item was Marimuthu Pillai's composition "Enneramum oru kala" in the raga Todi, a song not heard frequently in concerts.

An outstanding raga alapana, the delightful manner in which he sang the composition to a riveting tempo and the kalpanaswaras that flowed with rich creativity were a treat to music lovers. Sadly, the Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi session ("Baktharukku Sahana Sadguru nin malaradi paniyum" in Sahana raga and set to Chaudusra jathi tripuda tala) that followed did not get the kind of treatment and was not even in Trikala (three speeds). On their part, the seasoned accompanists regaled the music lovers.

In Shorts



A book on Devadasis
er, U.P. Police, P. Arun Kumar, I.I.S., Deputy Director, Ministry of I.B and A. Annamali, Director, National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi.

The book chronicles the life and history of Devadasis, from the inception to the abolition of Devadasi system with archaeological evidence. It largely deals with the Tamil region but also covers almost all Indian States. Devaradiyar (Devotees of God) and Devar Magalar (God's daughters) are the terms used for these women temple functionaries in Tamil. The book insists they were living a normal family life with their husband and children besides their temple service and were supported by the rulers. The book mentions their position degraded in the colonial period. The author has also researched about their varied tasks and hierarchy, remuneration, donations to society and temples.

The Tamil book, based on researches in epigraph, was released by MP and poetess Kanimozi Karunanidhi in the presence of important dignitaries like V. Renganathan, I.P.S. (Retd), President, Delhi Tamil Sangam, Jagadesan Kannan, I.P.S., Joint Commissioner, Delhi Police, Rajesh S., I.P.S. Deputy Commission-

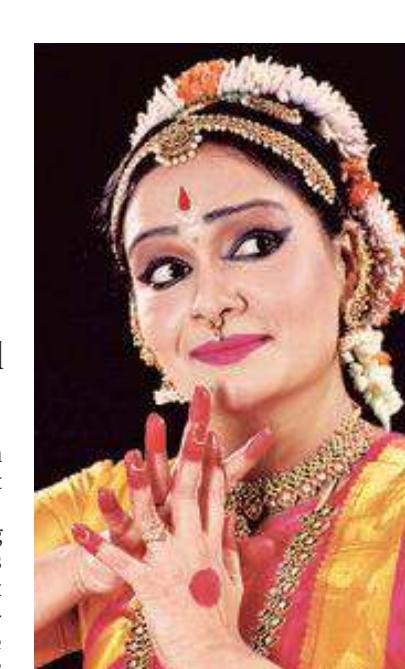
Love of the Lord

RANEE KUMAR

Sonad Venu School organised a festival in memory of Guru Kamla Devi Gangani at the India Habitat Centre, this week. The event saw Bharatanatyam and Kathak performances by seasoned artistes. As is the custom, the young disciples of the school opened the show with a group invocation to lord Surya wherein they pictured the sunrise as the deity comes on his seven-horse drawn carriage. The nritta to swar bol was notable.

Pratibha Prahalad's Bharatanatyam was the mainstay of the show. She took up a varnam and a padam from the customary repertoire. Going by the diverse audience of the Capital, her briefing in English on both the pieces was educational. The Bhairavi varnam "Mohamana" is quite a challenge for any dancer since the lyric is wrought with amorous nuances, oscillating between explicit invitation to love and devotional praise.

Pratibha testified to her grip over the medium with her excellent abhinaya. Though the nritta part of the varnam was optimum, maintaining the mandatory three-cycle speed, etc., it was the expressive aspect of the piece that was handled with amazing artistry and ma-



Showing the way Pratibha Prahalad

At a show organised in memory of Guru Kamla Devi Gangani, Bharatanatyam exponent Pratibha Prahalad testified her grip over the medium

turity. There was no clinical trimming in depicting the erotic, yet there was not iota of vulgarity either.

The starting viruttam (verse) extolling lord Shiva with exquisite postures was like a gesture to the devotional aspect underlying the varnam to come. The artiste in Pratibha was able to show the nayika (heroine) of this composition as an earthly soul pining for union with the supreme soul (God, here lord Shiva/ Thyagesha). On the physical plane, she is a temple dancer who eschews a normal life and courts a symbolic wedded relationship to serve the deity within the sanctum. Hence her erotic feelings are to be viewed in a slightly exalted light. Portraying the arrival of a miffed beloved (lord Thyagesha), she made for a convincing picture of the pining nayika suddenly evincing pleasure at seeing Him, yet perplexed by his moodiness

resque. A love-lorn woman's reference to Cupid and his flower arrows (Maran in Tamil), the wind (Maruta), the cuckoo bird pair as extraneous factors to trouble her, was shown with ringing clarity.

Her second piece, a bold and beautiful Telugu padam, garbed in sarcasm was also dealt with fine artistry. The song depicts a Krishna-beloved turning around and boldly spelling out 'open secrets' on the other known women who comment on her infidelities behind her back. She rips them down individually by revealing their secret paramours chastising them all the while. The graceful, swinging gait with which Pratibha enters was a pointer to the theme. Her surreptitious glances of a woman in prayer, the malicious questioning of another woman's child's legality, emulating behind-the-back scenario made for a lively interpretation of the song. However, Thanjavur Keshavan's power-packed nattuvangam did not find a corresponding echo in the nritta.

An elegy to Krushna, Guru Harish Gangani's solo was marked by deft footwork and irresistible gestures. Be it abhinaya or show of intricate technicalities of Kathak, the artiste was grace and strength personified. His rigorous chakkars and racy footwork were amazing. The combinations and permutations within taal dhamar established his forte with footwork delineations and expressive dance. India Habitat Centre played host to the performances.

Tapestry of talent

From childhood memories to finding the animal within, here are five National Award winning works that hold your attention at the ongoing 61st National Exhibition of Art at the Lalit Kala Akademi

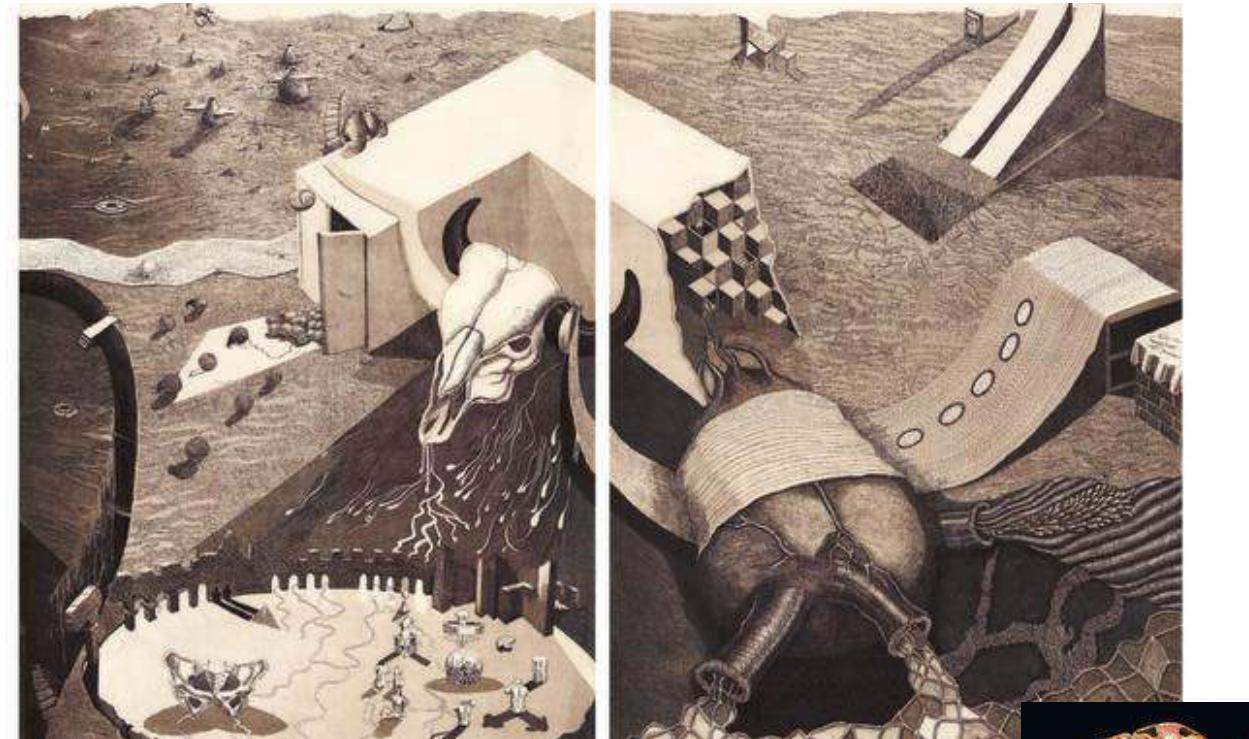
UMA NAIR

The 61st National Exhibition of Art of the Lalit Kala Akademi is showcasing a set of 283 works from different parts of the country. The exhibition follows the National Lalit Kala Akademi Awards given to 15 artists by President Ram Nath Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhavan earlier this week. The works consist of drawings, paintings, mixed media, ceramics, sculptures, etchings, and woodcuts.

Amongst the works of winners, five works stood out for their degree of originality, their compositional control and their ingenuity of subjects chosen. While the compositions ranged from everyday realities to experiences and observations and memories, it is clear that personal choices and aesthetics enrich the language used by artists. The perception of reality differs from one person to another, but it is the perspective within and without that leads an artist to create a work that echoes the credibility of a living presence.

Drawings

Trichur-born, Santiniketan-dweller Anoop Manzukhi Gopi's charcoal on rice paper is a riveting drawing of a set of dried branches bundled together perhaps for fuel or even just to make a thatched roof. "During the day, I walk around the little pathways and look at the remnants of the lifestyles of humble people," says Gopi. "I use charcoal on rice paper because it allows me to consider simultaneously the charac-



Contrasting hues (Clockwise from above) Devendra K. Khare's 'Perpetual Melancholy'; Keshari Nandan Prasad's 'Kal Chakra'; Tejaswini Narayan Sonawane's self-portrait, Anoop Manzukhi Gopi's untitled work; Faruque Ahmed Halder's 'Childhood' ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

istics of the object I 'drawing, its textural qualities, and I also include the quality of surrounding light, the atmosphere and all that can only be expressed by drawing. I think of vanishing practices in these days of the great migration from city to city and try to capture simple rudiments that are engag-

gentle reference to the beauty and power of stoneware as a medium in creating contemporary art pieces.

Kolkata artist Faruque Ahmed Halder's "Childhood" is a moving wooden sculpture of a poverty-stricken hungry little child trying to lick the remnants that he finds in a *handi*. The posture and expressive action both become the evocative emotion. "I was making a comment on the very memory of childhood that I saw on the street," says Halder, "at the end of the day it fills the onlooker with so much pain and pathos that we think of it long after we have witnessed it."

Etchings and woodcut

Amongst the etchings and woodcuts, it is Solapur's Tejaswini Narayan Sonawane who won the award for a self-portrait in a woodcut that finds bird and animal within. "I looked into the mirror and thought I am a cat, so I

made the ears, I thought of a bird that can fly without any burden leaving everything behind. I think, as men and women according to our circumstances, we are both bird and animal."

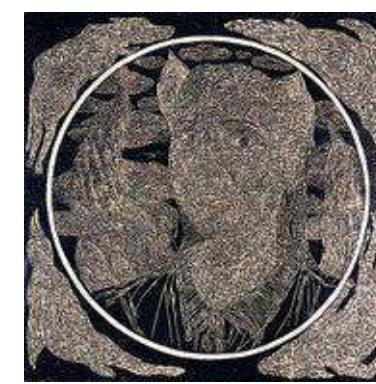
The second award-winning print maker is Vadodara's Devendra Kumar Khare whose favourite artists are Albrecht Durer, Francis Goya and Anupam Sud. Khare creates a stellar diptych in which he creates a sepia tone scene that speaks of surrealism as well as the incisive iconographic treatment of memories as metaphors that sift through time. "My etching is based on my teenage experiences," says Khare. "I used the image of a bull to comment on the likeness of man and animal - just as the bull chews and regurgitates what it eats we too keep mulling over events that have happened in our lives and shapes our present. In the second part, I dealt with death because I remember my drawing teacher who died when I was young. I, now, realise that death is inevitable but at that time it was unsettling and deeply traumatic to lose a loved teacher."

Ultimately, these five award winning artists portray the poignancy of personal practices honed on the hinges of art education.

(The 61st National Exhibition of Art runs until March 22, 2020, at the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi)

Sculptures

Amongst sculptors, it is last year's AIFACS award winner Keshari Nandan whose "Kaachakra" made of stoneware is a modern-day testimony to tumultuous times we live in. Deliberate distortions in his wood-fired stoneware terracotta tinted creation speaks evocatively about karma as he sets us pondering about why and wherefore of the Purusha Prakriti principle that meant harmony and balance in the days of yore. Jaipur-based Keshari's treatment of the sculptural stoneware is also a



gentle reference to the beauty and power of stoneware as a medium in creating contemporary art pieces.

Paintings

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Celebrating Delhi's cultural diversity

Defining and describing a metropolis on the basis of its skyscrapers, multiplexes, malls, sports stadia is never complete. The city's true character and uniqueness is reflected through its music, literature, visual arts, dance, poetry, performing arts, theatre, etc. This is what the fourth edition of Words In The Garden, held last week, brought to the fore. The annual festival was curated by noted Hindi poet-critic, Ashok Vajpeyi. "The objective was to honour the incredible creativity, imagination and ideas that Delhi generates, sustains and embodies," observed Vajpeyi.

The festival hit the right note as it started with an informative and insightful documentary "Ram Kumar: Nostalgic Longing" by Laurent Bregeat. Recalling how he was fascinated by art, artist Ram Kumar, narrates his initial classes under Sainoz Mukherjee, keeping his writing and painting in tandem and going to Paris to learn art from Fernand Leger and Andre Lhote. Later, he returned to India to start with figurative paintings and then moved to abstract. "Kumar, lived and worked in Delhi and being one of the leading lights of art in the Capital, we decided to feature this documentary," said Vajpeyi.

The screening was followed by an invigorating session "The Many Layers - History and Culture".

The panelists included Vajpeyi, Pavan K. Varma, Sohail Hashmi, S.Y. Quraishi and Rajiv Sethi, centred on how Delhi has emerged as India's cultural hub with its own unique culture -- a delightful mix of the traditional and the contemporary and a true reflection of India as a whole.

Quraishi, whose family has lived in Delhi for 500 years, said, for over thousands of years the city had welcomed people, and even made invaders, settle down here.

Reminiscing about the Capital, Sethi, a noted cultural impresario, fondly talked about Connaught Place's green cover and Janmashtami celebrations at the Lakshmi Narayan Mandir. He said the city ingrained in him the love for art and theatre and also moulded his character. Lamenting the shrinking of Delhi's cultural space, he remarked, "As compared to Delhi, Mexico City is teeming with more museums, thus ensuring its residents enjoy its culture and heritage."

Making a pertinent observation, historian Hashmi said: "All cities are made by migrants. What makes Delhi special is that it never discriminates on the basis of language. It, rather, welcomes all." He cited the examples of Mir Muhammad Taqi Mir and Mirza Ghalib, both from Agra, who made Delhi their home. He said the use of the word 'bara' as a prefix or suffix to name areas and monuments denotes the influence of Marathas. "Every city has layers, pertaining to its customs, food, language, which are added year after year. For example, the red chilli used in Mughlai food today was never part of the original cuisine."

Varma, author and former diplomat, wondered, "Has the city got its own cultural vibrancy today?" Highlighting the people's participation in culture, Varma said when Ghalib composed a couplet in the morning, the Old Delhi residents started reciting it by the evening. "In those days, culture was not elitist but popular with masses who enjoyed its finer nuances." He added that unlike cities like London, Delhi didn't patronise popular and classical arts equally. Varma asked for a change in the education system, to ensure rasikas are there to appreciate classical art and music. Hashmi added, that institutions needed to reinvent themselves, making them accessible to children. "Museums should be made interactive, with lesser restrictions, in order to attract youngsters."

Well known Kathak exponent Pandit Birju Maharaj, who joined the panel later, was honoured for his yeoman service to the dance form.



S. Ravi

Creative images in a garden

Kathak danseuse Prerana Shrimali aligned her body to the verse of Delhi poets

NAVINA JAFRA

Delhi, the voice of India, recently, has become a postcard of ruptures. In popular history, the cityscape is believed to have been destroyed seven times and re-inhabited eight times. Each time, the tapestry of the city is embellished with a cultural layer, a process that continues to reflect its resilience.

Dilli ki Sanskriti (the Culture of Delhi) was the theme of the three-day festival - "Words in the Garden" co-hosted by Sanatan Sangeet Sanskruti and IILM University at the India International Centre.

Poetry in motion

Known for her command on expressing the most complex images through subtle body movements was Kathak danseuse Prerana Shrimali. She aligned her body to the magical voice of Imran Khan singing verse of Delhi poets - Amir Khusrau, Ghalib, Mir, and Daag. The lilting sounds of the sarangi by Ahsan Ali, sitar of Fateh Ali Khan and percussion rhythmic necromancy of Fateh Singh Gangani came together to enhance the audio experience of the works performed. The metaphor of colour danced to the slow tempo of Khusrau's poetry evolved into a journey of created images such as the binding and blending reflected in fastened chains.

The topical symbolism 'garden' and 'words' in Ghalib's ghazal 'jahāñ terā naqsh-e-qadam dekhte hain, k hayābāñ k hayābāñ iram dekhte hain,' (I follow footprints meandering from one flower-bed to another only to map the garden of paradise) was woven for instance in the image of the innocence of a child walking the earth comprehending his existential reality.



The tilt of culture Prerana Shrimali in performance ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The final piece engaged with words displaying a fascinating technical subversion. Shrimali chose to weave into a slow tempo Tarana, the poetry of Mir and Daag. Usually, the fast nonsensical syllables of the Tarana are sung to reflect the wizardry of rhythm in a song.

The dancer, instead, chose to present stillness to the pearl-like rendering of the musical weave. Shrimali was at her best in the manner she delved into image-making. She illustrated her command in marrying linguistic comprehension to the inhuman Kathak dance language.

The artist's awareness of her depth resonated with the universe of Words in the Garden. There was for the audience a luminous equilibrium to changing appearances releasing the essentials of the poetic words, written and performed.

Naya Theatre Group calls themselves the 'Theatre of the Ordinary'. Under the directorship of actor Ram Chander, they carry on the work of Habib Tanvir's Chhattisgarh Natak Academy. Presenting *Rang Mandali*, Ram Chandra Singh, as the brilliant sutradhar (narrator) with his talented troupe, sang and danced Habib's creative and magnificent journey. The array of chosen classic compositions written and performed so many decades ago, ironically, brought the visible present reality without denaturing it.

Habib Tanvir's spirit

Habib's creative genius was once again on display in "Charandas Chor" (Charan, the Thief), a satire on brainless policemen. There was not one direct reference to the present yet Habib's work was nothing

but the reality of the present. The song of renunciation from the play "Dekh Rahe Hain Nain" (My eyes are seeing) echoed as the counterfoil anthem to Faiz Ahmed Faiz's poem "Hum Dekhenge" (We too shall witness).

The song "Chola Maati ke Ram" from the play "Bahadur Kalarin", which was adapted in the film "Peepal Live", spoke of the ephemeral body. The body is of mud and will dissolve in the mud. Time spares no one. The dissolution of Guru Drona and the kind Karna is a reality test we tend to forget.

One after another Tanvir's sartorial panache was reflected through plebian images, placing the ordinary man in the centre. Tanvir's spirit rose through the performance capturing the inner man and outer time, sacred and mundane.

...Stages of bias

Continued from page 1

Ameeta asserts she has never accepted an invitation to a 'khawatin ka mushaira'. "At no point can a poet ignore the nagging feeling that she occupies this platform more for being a woman than a poet."

When a woman's work does get published and she becomes a literary celebrity, "Often people or literary establishments (controlled by men) talk of it as a special case, as if she achieved whatever she did because of being a woman," says Ameeta.

Even content is judged according to the poet's gender. Ameeta cites Pakistani poet Parveen Shakir, whose themes such as the desire for love and intimacy, sexuality, injustice and gender discrimination attracted censure. "To begin with from her own family members - it is common knowledge her father did not want her to write love poetry - and then from the masses."

Ameeta says Shakir's nazm "Misfit" represents "the inner struggles, pains and angst of any woman of her times, who dared to express her desires, complaints, ambitions, etc. She shares in this nazm how such a woman faces the consequence of feeling guilty.

Parveen Shakir paid a heavy price for her rebellious poetry, which aimed at changing the image of the 'ideal Muslim woman'.

Ironically, remarks Ameeta, the same poet denounced by patriarchal reactionaries for being too outspoken was criticised by feminists for also writing 'weak' love poetry, "completely overlooking that individual and political cannot be separated. My question is, do men ever go through such internal conflicts to create a space for their creativity?"

Along with Shakir, poets like Kishwar Naheed and Fahmida Riaz have been resolutely pushing the envelope, says Ameeta. "Kishwar Naheed has agitated many minds and evoked reactions by presenting in her work a woman who is powerful, has a mind of her own, defies the mould."

With poets from various communities taking to writing Urdu Shayari, and women constantly breaking stereotypes, would the 'ideal Muslim woman' image not become obsolete?

"Times have changed, no doubt, but when it comes to the relationship between a woman and the society, the concept of the 'ideal woman' has not changed. It has simply expanded to include more features like 'she earns too'. But even today a 'good' woman is expected not to assert, leave alone demand!"

Meanwhile, women mostly remain primary caregivers to children and family elders, notes Ameeta. "Would that not have implications for the larger chunk of their experience?"



Ameeta Parsuram

riences and their poetry?" But here, the 'good' woman's writing is not accepted as universal enough.

"For a long time, creative work based on women's perspectives, experiences and sensitivity has been trivialised. According to Ada Jafari, the first shayra to ever write about herself as a wife and a mother, thus impacting the existing idiom for women's writings, 'Patriarchy has suppressed women writers and their poetry'."

Ameeta even quotes a journalist in a south Indian publication who disparagingly referred to the use of the first-person pronoun (the third person is considered more dignified): "Is the resort of neurotic women poets."

Even "honest and mature poets" feel "good poetry has to be about the bigger issues, issues beyond the individual," recounts Ameeta. When women write on 'universal' themes, "the accusation which follows is that they are trying to be different, trying the masculine terrains! Their authenticity is questioned too," she says, wondering why poetic themes need to be categorised by gender.

Naheed says, "Male writers till recently never approved of or appreciated women's themes. Women poets take up universal as well as themes ingrained in the conflict between man and woman. Right from terrorism to child abuse to honour killings - [these] are more relevant subjects for women poets." She says while male Pakistani writers do agree these are worthy subjects, they don't explore them themselves. But, observes Naheed, when women do, like when she and fellow Pakistani poet Fahmida Riaz write on themes related to girls' education, menstruation, marriage and divorce, the "male critics write a one-liner just naming the women poets."

Naheed says this discrimination is limited to the subcontinent. Still, Raza sees a hopeful change. "Women poets have created spaces for themselves and their merit has been recognised," he states. "Many of them have refused to be recognised as 'khawatin' and the quality of their work speaks loud and clear."

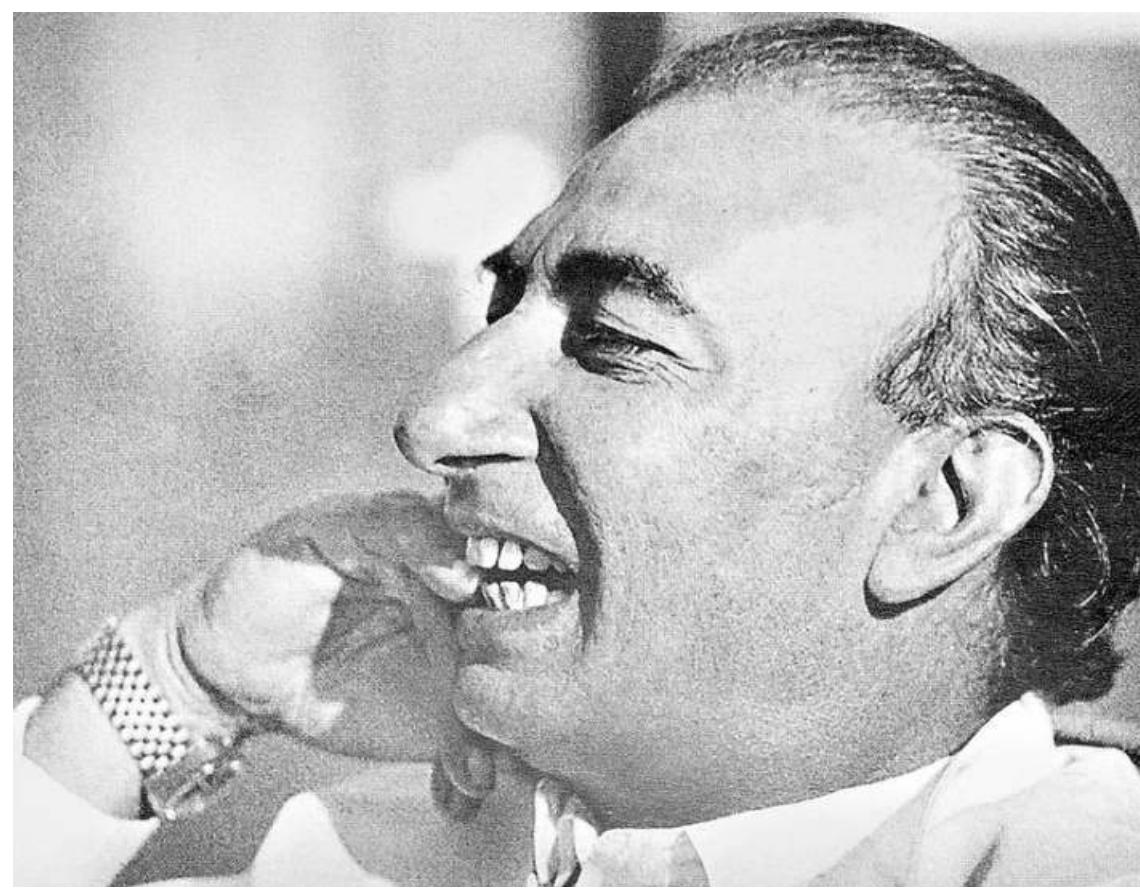
Waiting for that dawn...

In times of turmoil, one can find solace in songs of Sahir Ludhianvi

DEEPAK MAHAAN

Daring to express the most complex human emotions, poets are God's special creatures. Go down the lanes of history, words of rulers have died with them, but verses of poets remain alive as they communicate everlasting truths that most are unable to hear and imbibe. Every age gives rise to a few great poets who make us discern the imponderable mysteries of the universe through a spontaneous overflow of emotions. And without a doubt, in the post-Partition era, such a profound voice was Sahir Ludhianvi.

His unique ability to serve unvarnished truths set Sahir apart as a people's poet who inspired the finest ideals of mankind and many of his verses such as "Tu Hindu Banega Na Musalman Banega, Insaan Ki Aulaad Hai Insaan Banega" (*Dhol Ka Phool*) have acquired iconic status because of their lucid distillation of eternal wisdom. His stirring verses like "Ye Duniya Agar Mil Bhi Jaye To Kya Hai" and "Jinhein Naaz Hai Hind Par Wo Kahan Hain" (both from *Pyaasa*), "Aurat Ne Janam Diya Mardon Ko, Mardon Ne Usey Bazaar Diya" (*Sadhana*) or "Wo Subah Kabhi To Aayegi" and "Chino-Arab Hamara, Hin-



Stirring verses Sahir Ludhianvi ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

dustan Hamara" (both from *Phir Subah Hogi*) are part of folklore since they knocked hard at social inadequacies as well as political and affluent classes.

Not that he spared the common citizens for their culture of hypocrisy, dogma, and hate. Several songs like "Bane Ho Ek Khaaq Se" (*Aarti*), "Khuda-e-Bartar Teri Zameen Pe Ye Jung Kyun Hai" (*Taj Mahal*), "Insaanon Ne Paise Ke Liye" (*Paisa ya Pyar*) and "Bataa Ae Aasman Wale" (*Marina Drive*) are critical of their follies! But the masses still adored him because he held a mirror to their anguish as well as shortcomings in a transparently, honest manner.

If a poet is to influence, enlighten and motivate, Sahir did it with remarkable distinction. Even in the throes of passion, this finest of romantic poets did not forget his duties and responsibilities. Ponder over just one sample: his unusual rejoinder "Par Thehar Wo Jo Wahan.. Phir Teri Maang Siataron Se Bhari Jayegi" to his beloved when she beckons with "Aaj Ki Raat Badi Shokh Badi Natkhat Hai" (*Barsaat Ki Raat*). His bosom is not short of love but devotion to a cause makes him plead with her to "wait till

he had built houses for those sleeping on the footpath as well as helped the poor that are denied even shrouds for their corpses".

Expression of pain

A rarer expression of solace is difficult to find except in Sahir's "Tum Mujhe Bhool Bhi Jao" (*Didi*) wherein he reminds the beloved that in a world afflicted with hunger and thirst, love is not the ultimate necessity!

Seeing or reacting in a manner different from the ordinary came naturally to Sahir. Abhorrence to constrictions of social customs, luxury, opulence and decadence made him a rebel of sorts and a saviour of the down-trodden. That is why for him Taj Mahal was not a monument of love but a grotesque advertisement of a king: "Ek Shahenshah Ne Daulat Ka Sahara Leke, Hum Gareebon Ki Mohabbat Ka Udaya Hai Mazaak" (*Ghazal*). Time and time again, through various pertinent metaphors, he made us realise our fates were intertwined with each other and "Ye Ishq Ishq Hai" (*Barsaat Ki Raat*) is the perfect example of how this visionary could articulate similarities and synthesis of cultures and how

love alone made us worship stones as incarnations of Gods.

As one re-engages with thousands of Sahir's verses in his centenary year, it becomes evident that the poet sought equality, justice, peace and prosperity for all. Every genre came easy to him and be it bhajans, sufi songs, ghazals, nazms, love ballads or qawwalis, Sahir embellished each with a thought that was not just vividly different from the rest of his milieu but also immensely lyrical and awe-inspiring.

Though he did write quite a few patriotic songs, he remained a steadfast pacifist who always advocated love and understanding rather than war: "Khoon Apna Ho Ya Paraya Ho, Nasle Aadmi Ka Khoon Hai Akhir, Jung Mashirk Mein Ho Ke Magrib Mein, Anne Alam Ka Khoon Hai Aakhir" (Shed the blood of our own or a stranger, It is ultimately the blood of mankind, Be it a war in the east or west, It is ultimately the murder of peace and tranquillity).

As fear and prejudice haunt the lanes of Delhi once again, it would be wise to remember the same advice of Sahir that war (killing) is itself a problem and can never resolve our problems.



As fear and prejudice haunt the lanes of Delhi once again, it would be wise to remember the sane advice of Sahir that war (killing) is itself a problem and can never resolve our problems.

As the Oscar-nominated film comes to India, actor-co-screenwriter Alexis Manenti talks about the politically-charged French drama

MURTAZA ALI KHAN

After making waves in the festival circuit, Ladj Ly's hard-hitting political drama "Les Misérables" is releasing in India. As part of the promotions, Alexis Manenti (co-screenwriter and one of the main protagonists) and actor Omar Soumire were in Delhi, recently.

The first thing that strikes about the French film is its title, inspired by Victor Hugo's classic novel. "The film's major connection to the Victor Hugo novel is that it is set in Monfermeil, a commune in the eastern suburbs of Paris, where an important part of the classic novel is set. So even after 150 years the place still suffers from poverty," reveals Manenti.

Soumire agrees that the title does create a sense of curiosity among the audiences owing to obvious reasons.

"The people want to find out if it's a modern retelling of the same story or not. So, the title does help at some level. But I think that ultimately the success of the movie is because of what it offers not because of its title," asserts Soumire who feels that the film's greatest strength is that it doesn't take position for the police or for the population.

"It shows that police is also the victim of the political situation. Also, the policemen are underpaid but they try to do their job. But the social tensions and political pressures are so intense that it becomes very hard for them," adds Soumire.

Present tense

While, Hugo's novel offered a critique of a French society essentially comprising French people, Ladj Ly's examines the plight of the immigrant population in Monfermeil. "What has changed is that earlier there were all French people but now the place has a lot of immigrants, especially of African or Arabic ethnicities.

"Les Misérables" questions the responsibility of the government towards its people'



Making a point Alexis Manenti

But, the problems they face are more or less the same. So, the film talks about poverty and the present situation. What makes the situation worse is the violence, and cops provoking people. As a result there are riots against the police towards the end of the film," reveals Manenti while lamenting the loss of life and

property in the recent Delhi riots about which he got to read in the newspapers.

"Les Misérables" is actually based on a short film of the same name made by Ladj Ly about three years back. "The director Ladj Ly is a friend of mine. We started 20 years ago doing some short films. Now, around three years back he asked me to

Story of a sidekick

Ahead of the release of *Kaamyaab*, Sanjay Mishra talks about what it means to be successful

ATIF KHAN

In the last decade, there has been a rise of faith in supporting actors in Hindi films. One of them is Sanjay Mishra. Now, Mishra's fame as a supporting actor has made him the subject of *Kaamyaab*, which closely relives what he has experienced in the film industry. With Shah Rukh Khan presenting the film, it seems *Kaamyaab* has a successful promotion strategy.

He nods, "Involvement of a name like Shah Rukh Khan has brought a different kind of attention to this small film. Otherwise, it is still difficult to find space for such films. You cannot imagine me to be a hero who could attract the audience, but I am feeling like a hero right now. That is because of the compelling story which made me the centre of attraction," he says.

Kaamyaab is Hardik Mehta's debut film which centres around a character actor Sudhir's yearning to complete 500 films. Mishra relates his own experiences of the famous Juhu Tara road where he used to roam around to find a role in films. "That was the reason I picked up this film as I had to play the struggle of an actor and that is the world I know inside out. I was Hardik's choice because I have lived that life. Like Sudhir, I did a lot of films where I had a very small screen time. However, I am different from Sudhir in terms of his ap-

proach towards his career as unlike him I never came here to become a typical hero."

Mishra reminds there was a time when actors were earmarked for a particular role. "For drunkard, you had Kesho to Mukherjee. For father, there was Kader Khan, for judge, D.K.Sapru and for corrupt bureaucrat there was Om Shiv Puri. It is a homage to these wonderful actors as well," he underlines.

One should admire Mishra for rising above the sidekick tag to play meaty roles in films such as *Aankhon Dekhi*, *Masaan*, and *Kadvi Hawa*. "The process of filmmaking should be an exploration. Director explores the actor and actor gets a chance to explore himself while understanding the director's choices. I love to be directed by new directors and films like *Masaan*, *Newton* and *Angrezi Mein Kahte Hain* were a result of that exploration only," he reveals.

"I am glad that these films are giving me a chance to act as a protagonist and that is different from my other films where I play supporting roles and the responsibility to carry the film is not on my shoulders."

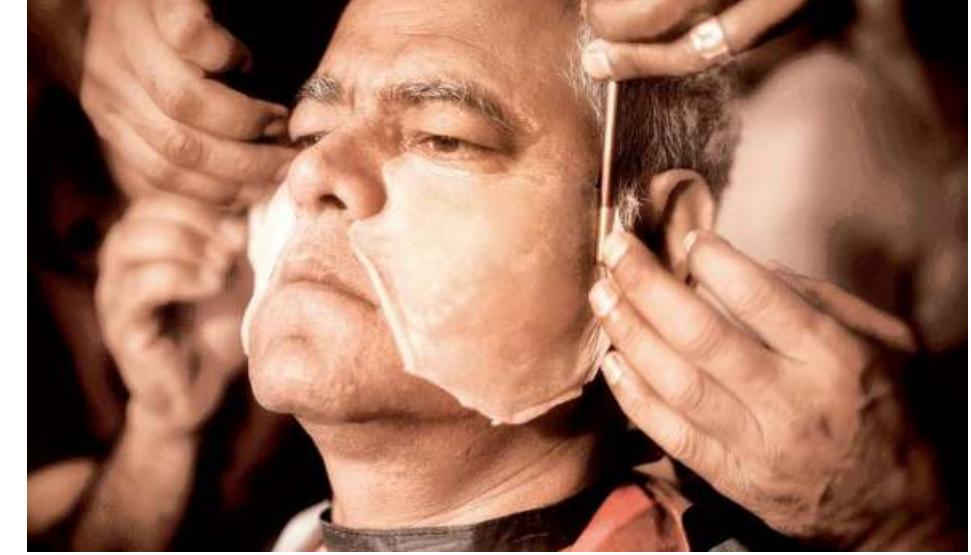
Hindi films are increasingly telling ordinary people's stories and, in a way, has created a demand for actors who could essay such characters. Mishra is aware of this trend. "A film like *Masaan* talks about the sensibilities of youth but that was not a col-

lege romance. There was a time when there existed a parallel cinema, but those stories are now becoming mainstream.

Had they been made in the '80s, they would have been treated as a parallel cinema but right now it is not a case. There is a space for older characters, heroines are not just heroes' love interest and I am very thankful for this change." Is there an increased affinity of the audience for older characters as well? "Of course, you can see how Mr (Amitabh) Bachchan has re-invented himself. There was a time when old age was considered as something negative on screen. I feel, if you show gripping old characters to the audience, they will be inspired."

Initially, he was chosen for roles close to his real self, but gradually filmmakers realised his range. He likes picking up mannerisms from different spaces and cultural humour which helps him become a new person in every film. "I learnt music in my childhood and I relate that with the acting I do. You need to understand the note of the character and that should be tuned to the director's vision."

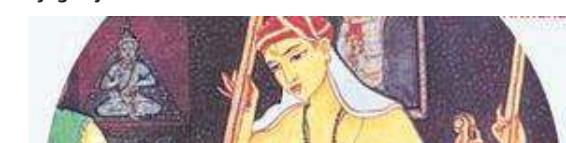
Mishra says he is content. "If you get success very early, it becomes essential that you maintain it. It becomes difficult and there comes a lot of pressure. As I got the attention very late, I don't have any ego."



Layers of effort Sanjay Mishra ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CATCH UP

Tyagaraja festival



India International Centre is hosting a two-day Purandarsa Tyagaraja Festival at Lecture Room-II, Basement Annex on 7th and 8th March. The first day event will feature a Carnatic vocal recital by Bhavya Hari from Chennai, daughter and disciple of late T.V. Sundaravalli. She will be accompanied by G. Raghavendra Prasath on the violin and B. Manohar on the mridangam.

Hindi comedy play

Playwright Manav Kaul's Park, a Hindi play, performed by Hindi Dilkhush Students will be staged at Akshara Theatre on 6th March at Baba Kharak Singh Marg Auditorium, Gole Market. Directed by Swati, the play revolves around Uday, Nawaz and Madan who struggle with issues of self-image and his space in society. In all, it is a comedy about these three men who fight for their place in a park.



Folk songs and storytelling



The third edition of Amarras Night, a platform to showcase young artists, will be held at Sunder Nursery Amphitheater, Nizamuddin on 7th March. This Holi special edition will feature the popular forms of folk storytelling such as vyang, hasya kavita, mushaira by noted poets Meeruthi and Pawan Dixit. In addition, there will be a performance by Jogi-folk poet-singer Jumme Khan and his band from Alwar, Rajasthan.

Lit fest



The eighth edition of the Delhi Literature Festival, supported by Government of Delhi begins today at Dilli Haat, INA Market. The three-day event will witness an assemblage of writers and experts from different fields like fashion, acting come together to discuss and deliberate on various issues of the country. The organisers have lined up an impressive list of authors including Chitra Mudgal on her book Post Box 203, Manto and I by Nandita Das.

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