

on Sunday



2 militants killed in an operation in Anantnag district: J&K police chief
page 10



Rahul Gandhi remains 'top leader' in Congress, says Salman Khurshid
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Afghans mark start of weeklong partial truce amid isolated attacks
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Captain's knock from Williamson puts New Zealand in control
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NEARBY



No Kejriwal, Sisodia in Melania's school event

NEW DELHI
Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia will not be present during U.S. First Lady Melania Trump's visit to a Delhi government school on Tuesday as their names were dropped from the guest list, sources said.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 11

Dangerous building razed, several evacuated

NEW DELHI
Scores of people have been evacuated from their houses in front of JNU main gate on account of a dangerous six-storey construction being demolished. With valuables and various documents left behind, many of them, who have taken shelter on the footpath outside their houses, are worried about their livelihoods.

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MAGAZINE ▶ 12 PAGES
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Truth cannot be eclipsed by prejudices: President Kovind

He inaugurated *The Hindu*'s thought conclave The Huddle in Bengaluru

AMIT BARUAH
BENGALURU

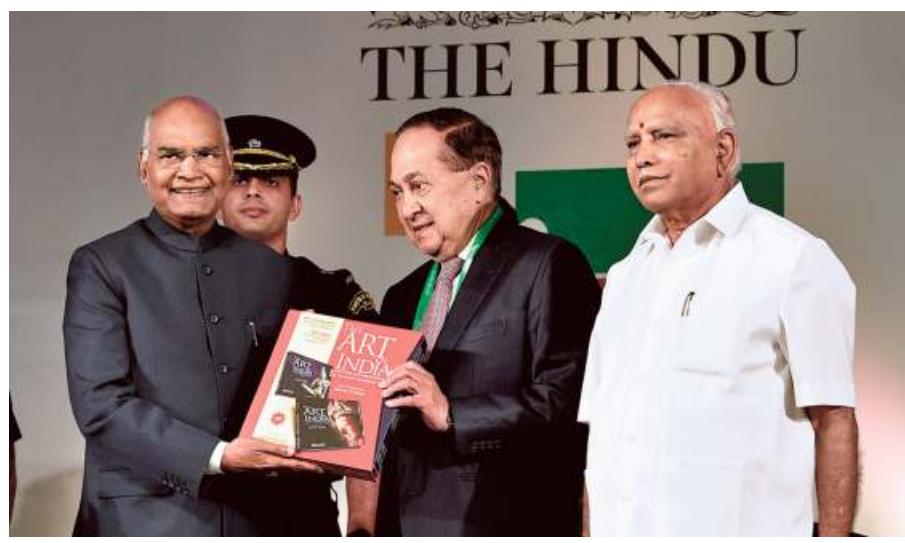
"Truth exists in absolute form which cannot be eclipsed by blinkers of prejudices. It cannot be a case of 'your truth' versus 'my truth'. Truth has to be one," President Ram Nath Kovind said on Saturday, while inaugurating the fourth edition of The Huddle, organised by The Hindu Group of Publications.

Paying glowing tributes to *The Hindu* for "relentlessly aiming to capture the essence of this great country", Mr. Kovind pointed out that sometimes dogmas and personal prejudices distort the truth.

As one of the oldest newspapers in the subcontinent, *The Hindu* had contributed immensely to nation-building.

"Fired by a nationalist impulse, six intrepid youth of Madras, barely out of their teens, founded *The Hindu* in 1878 to redeem our cultural pride. They challenged the imperial power at its peak and nourished nationalism," the President said.

"Since then, the story of *The Hindu*'s journey is quite instructive for those who



Big start: N. Ram, Chairman, THG Publishing Pvt. Ltd., felicitating President Ram Nath Kovind at the inauguration of The Huddle 2020 in Bengaluru on Saturday. At right is Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

wish to understand the spirit of India that is Bharat. Readers too responded enthusiastically. For many in Chennai and elsewhere, the morning came to mean a cup of filter coffee and a copy of *The Hindu*," Mr. Kovind said.

Praise from Gandhiji

When the newspaper celebrated its golden jubilee in 1928, the President quoted Gandhiji as saying: "I gladly add mine to the many tri-

butes that will be paid to *The Hindu* on its Golden Jubilee. I consider *The Hindu* to be one of the best, if not the best, among the Indian-owned dailies throughout India."

"In the 150th year of Gandhiji's birth, let us ponder this question: will it not be proper to pursue truth itself as the ideology? Gandhiji has shown us the path by walking ceaselessly in search of truth..." the President

said to a packed house at The Huddle. Mr. Kovind pointed out that today, the world seemed to be living in the post-truth era. "I wonder what Gandhiji would have said about it. Of late, there have been attempts to give various shades to truth and define its stages as if some truth exists beyond provisional truths," he said.

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MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 12 & 13

Modi a versatile genius, says Justice Arun Mishra

'He thinks globally and acts locally'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge Arun Mishra described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as an "internationally acclaimed visionary" at a public forum on Saturday. He also called Mr. Modi a "versatile genius" who "thinks globally and acts locally".

Justice Mishra, one of the first five seniormost judges of the court, twice lauded Mr. Modi in his vote of thanks at the inaugural session of the International Judicial Conference 2020 'Judiciary and the Changing World'.

"India is a responsible and most friendly member of the international community under the stewardship of internationally acclaimed visionary Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi... We thank the versatile genius who thinks globally

and acts locally, Shri Narendra Modi, for his inspiring speech, which will act as a catalyst for the deliberations and agenda of the conference," he said.

PM on the dais

On the dais were Mr. Modi, Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, Justices N.V. Ramana and L. Nageswara Rao, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal. Also in attendance were Supreme Court and High Court judges, judges from 24 nations, former judges and advocates.

In his inaugural address, Mr. Modi said 1.3 billion Indians had "wholeheartedly" accepted "some critical judgments" recently. These judgments were the subject of a global discussion.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Marching as one



Ready for action: As many as 1,160 personnel, including 84 women, were inducted into the Central Industrial Security Force after a passing out parade held at the Regional Training Centre near Arakkonam in Tamil Nadu on Saturday. ■ C. VENKATACHALAPATHY (SEE PAGE 9)

Govt. cautions against travel to Singapore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Indians have been advised to avoid all non-essential travel to Singapore after the country registered a rise in the number of coronavirus cases recently.

The decision was announced after the Cabinet Secretary chaired a high-level meeting to review the action taken and preparedness of the States and the Union Territories to handle novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on Saturday.

"...in addition to the universal screening as per earlier advisories, universal screening at airports is now being planned for flights from Kathmandu, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia," a release said.

CHINA DENYING NOD ▶ PAGE 11

Breaking barriers with Yakshagana

A young Muslim woman overcomes resistance to acquire prowess in the art form



Arshiya preparing for a performance.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

her skills at Kadali Kala Kendra in Mangaluru.

She grew up in an atmosphere where

Yakshagana was all

pervasive but it was a

teacher of this traditional

style, Jayaram, at Jaycees

English Medium School in

Vitla, who kindled her

interest. "The role of Mahishasura in a *Devi Mahatme* episode which I watched during childhood mesmerised me. I got addicted to *bannada vesha* [villain roles]," she said.

Many characters

"The most enthralling part of Yakshagana is the *pravesa* (entry) of *bannada vesha*. I still love it and enjoy performing," she said, recalling her portrayal of Nishambhasura, Raktha Beejasura and Mahishasura in *Devi Mahatme*.

Going by the stage name of Tami Vitla, she is also learning to play the 'chende', a percussion instrument, under Ramesh Bhat of Kadali Kala Kendra.

Mr. Bhat said Ms. Arshiya was "in the process of

learning to use complicated Yakshagana make-up". She is also likely the first woman from the Muslim community in Yakshagana.

Entry into the field was not a cakewalk. Though family members were supportive, some other members of the community were not. Overcoming such resistance and against all odds, she has performed in Mangaluru, Udupi, Karwar and Belagavi.

Her colleague in the automobile company, Prakruthi, said that Ms. Arshiya prompted her also to learn Yakshagana and she has been taking lessons for four months. Senior artiste S.N. Bhat Bayar said the country's heritage and culture recognised no religious barriers.

Road near Shaheen Bagh opened by protesters: police

The move follows a visit by court-appointed interlocutors

SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

A stretch of a road near the Shaheen Bagh protest site here was opened on Saturday, following a visit by a Supreme Court-appointed interlocutor.

However, volunteers involved in the protests whom *The Hindu* spoke to differed on who opened the road – the police or the protesters themselves.

Shaheen Kauser, a social activist who has been protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act for the last two months, informed that Sadhana Ramchandran, one of the interlocutors, visited the site on Saturday morning to speak to the protesters here. "She listened to us without imposing her views and told us that all our concerns would be placed before the court," she said.

Protesters insisted that in order to open one side of the National Highway on which the protests have been taking place, they would need assurances from police officials, Ms. Kauser said. But no discussion on opening any other road took place, she said.

The police said a small stretch was opened by protesters, followed by a visit by the interlocutors in the morning. "A section of the protesters opened the stretch that joins Abu Fazal Enclave to Kalindi Kunj Junction but after a few minutes, it was closed again by another group. Subsequently, the stretch was opened again by the protesters and it remains open," Deputy Commissioner of Police (South East) R.P. Meena said.



Open again: A stretch of the road that was closed for over two months being cleared on Saturday. ■ PTI

had also put up a blockade here but were allowing ambulances and school vans to pass through, he said. Mohamed Shabazz, another volunteer, said the blockade of the road to Jamia Millia Islamia was cleared by the police, and the protesters were not involved.

After talks on Friday, interlocutor Sanjay Hegde had said the protesters, in principle, were not against opening of the non-protest side of the road if their security could be guaranteed in writing by the police under suitable orders of the Supreme Court.

(With inputs from PTI)

TRUMP MAY RAISE CAA ▶ PAGE 11

No relief for Nirbhaya case convict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Dharmender Rana rejected Vinay Kumar Sharma's petition, saying there were no signs of psychological distress, and he did not find any occasion to refer him to the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences or any other hospital. The petition said he sustained a grievous head injury and a fracture in the right arm, and

Additional sessions judge

was suffering from "insanity", "mental illness" and "schizophrenia". The court said that "general anxiety and depression" in a death row convict "is obvious" and noted that adequate medical treatment and psychological help had been provided to the convict.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

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Scores evacuated for razing six-storey structure near JNU

Residents leave behind money, valuables, documents; take shelter on streets

SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

Scores of people have been evacuated from their houses in front of JNU main gate on account of a dangerous six-storey construction being demolished.

People left their houses with nothing but clothes. With valuables, jewellery and various documents left behind, many of them, who have taken shelter on the footpath outside their houses for the last three days, are worried about their livelihoods.

'Ran out to be safe'
Poonam Singh (37), who lived on the top floor of the six-storey building, along with her husband and four children, said that she was sleeping when she heard a loud creaking sound. Residents felt a vibration that shook the building and many woke up. Ms. Singh immediately ran downstairs, leaving behind everything she owned "just to be safe".

Clothes hung on her floor could be seen as she pointed towards her house. "I haven't changed, haven't taken a bath, haven't even been able to brush my teeth in the last three days," she said.



Residents of the building (left) sitting on the footpath.
■ SANDEEP SAXENA

Ms. Singh, like other residents here, have been taking help from friends and has been standing outside the house as municipal authorities attempt to bring down the building with heavy machinery.

Ramvati Chauhan, who lived on the third floor of the house, left only with a mobile phone and a water bottle. With her husband being ill, she is the only earning member of the house. Ms. Chauhan said that among other valuables, she had nearly ₹1.5 lakh for her daughter's marriage kept in the house.

Others, including one Rocky Kumar, were worried about their education certificates that would get "buried" during demolition. Mr. Ku-

mber was scheduled for an interview with a multinational company on Sunday but said that he would not be able to appear for it without his certificates.

Many, including the residents of around eight houses in the vicinity that were evacuated due to safety issues, have been roaming in the street outside JNU for the last few days. They are worried about their belongings and "trying to make ends meet".

People said they had visited the Chief Minister's office, the area Sub-Divisional Magistrate and other officials, but in vain. They were told that the matter was under the South Delhi Municipal Corporation.

With authorities having failed to demolish the build-

ing in the last three days, residents here believe that they could go to their respective rooms and recover some essential items.

Risky matter

A senior corporation official said that it was too dangerous and would be a risk to people's lives. On being asked by the people if some sort of supporting structure could help temporarily hold up the building, the official said that it would put the lives of the labourers at risk and that was not an option.

On Saturday, authorities worked till evening, trying to bring down the building using earth-moving machines, a crane, and later by attaching metal rods. One of the challenges in bringing down the structure was lack of space to bring in heavy machines, the official said.

Man on the run after killing mother-in-law

Woman was shot in an e-rickshaw

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A man has allegedly killed his mother-in-law as he suspected that she was behind his wife's decision to terminate pregnancy twice, the police said on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) P.S. Kushwah said that the prime accused has been identified as Pankaj and his accomplices as Ujjwal Dabas and Ajit. While Mr. Dabas has been arrested, the other two are absconding, the police said.

The police said that the woman was killed in Mundka on February 14 when she was returning home from a private hospital in Paschim Vihar where she worked as a nurse. "Her son-in-law [Mr. Pankaj] and his accomplices shot her while she was in an e-rickshaw. She sustained five bullet injuries and died on the spot," Mr. Kushwah said.

Efforts are on to nab the absconding accused, the police said.

The police said that she did not regain consciousness,

woman and later set the vehicle on fire in Ladrawan village, the police said.

During investigation, the police said, it was found that Mr. Pankaj had a dispute with his mother-in-law. He suspected that she was behind his wife's decision to terminate pregnancy twice.

Mr. Pankaj's wife had left him and was living with her mother.

The police said that Mr. Dabas was arrested from Lajpur village on Wednesday, based on a tip-off, and one pistol and nine cartridges were recovered from him.

During interrogation, Dabas spilled the beans on another crime which he committed in early February. His gang had demanded sum of ₹15 lakh from the sarpanch of Lajpur village.

When the sarpanch refused to pay, he and Mr. Ajit opened fire at him.

The accused fled the spot in their car after killing the

woman and later set the vehicle on fire in Ladrawan village, the police said.

A 22-year-old student was attacked with a stone in north Delhi's Maurice Nagar on Saturday morning, the police said. It is suspected that she was hit by her male friend, the police said.

A senior police officer said that the victim is a resident of east Delhi's Kabir Nagar who completed her graduation from Delhi University and is currently studying at an institute in Ghaziabad.

The police said that a call was received around 11.30 a.m. on Saturday and the caller stated that a woman was lying unconscious near Bonta Park.

When a police team reached the spot, it was found that the woman had sustained a serious head injury after which she was shifted to Bara Hindu Rao Hospital.

The woman's family was informed about the incident after which they reached the hospital.

The police said that she did not regain consciousness,

Four held for impersonation, duping senior citizens

Accused took away victims' belongings on the pretext of frisking them

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Four persons who used to impersonate policemen were arrested for allegedly duping senior citizens on the pretext of frisking them, the police said on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Ram Gopal Naik said that the accused have been identified as Sadiq Kambar Jafari (25),

a resident of Bhiwandi Thane and Kasim Beg (30), Khaibar Ali (23), Salim Ali (35), all residents of M.P.'s Bhopal, they said.

Recent robberies
The police said that many incidents of robberies in the Delhi-NCR had been recently committed by members of a gang who posed themselves as police officers. CCTV footage were

analysed and the accused were identified as members of 'Irani Gang'.

"On Friday, the police received a tip-off regarding the accused and they were later arrested from Okhla Mandi. Gold ornaments weighing around 220 g, one car and a bike were recovered from their possession," Mr. Naik said.

During interrogation, the police said, it was re-

vealed that two members of the gang used to impersonate policemen and asked senior citizens to take off their jewellery on the pretext of frisking them.

"They would then pack the jewellery in a paper packet and instead of returning the original items, they would hand over fake ones in similar packets to the victims," Mr. Naik said.

The police said that she did not regain consciousness,

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New Ashok Nagar 'honour killing': kin lived normal life after murder

Employee, neighbours say family was polite to everyone

HEMAMI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Employee and neighbours of a family, the members of which have allegedly killed a 25-year-old woman and dumped her body in a canal, said that the Chaudhary's had lived a "normal life" at their New Ashok Nagar residence after committing the crime.

At the double-storey residence, which has a dairy on the ground floor, Vijay, an employee of the family, claimed that he "did not get a whiff of any disturbance in the last 20 days".

The family had allegedly killed Sheetal Chaudhary on January 30 for secretly marrying one Ankit Bhati last year. They told the police that they were against the marriage as Mr. Bhati was from the same clan as them. Mr. Bhati runs a dairy and lives with his family in a village close to Dabri.

Mr. Vijay said that he comes to work in the after-



Sheetal Chaudhary

noon and leaves in the evening after rearing the cattle. "They all appeared normal after January 30 as well. There was no difference in their behaviour or any visible tension in the family. I just did not see Sheetal in the house," he said.

A police officer said that Sheetal and Mr. Bhati got into a relationship three years ago. They got married in October 2019 in an Arya Samaj temple but continued to live in their own houses. Sheetal's family came to know about the marriage recently.

Sheetal's mother, father, two paternal uncles, a cousin and brother-in-law have been arrested for the murder.

DELHI TODAY

Music: Pracheen Kala Kendra presents an evening of Indian classical music. The event will feature a sitar recital by Ustad Usman Khan accompanied by Ustad Rafiuddin Sabri on tabla at Triveni Kal Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 6 p.m.

Talk: Shankar Narayan will present a talk on the topic of Sardarsharan at Ramani Kendra, Lodhi Road, 5 p.m.

Exhibition: An exhibition of ceramics artwork by Delhi Blue Pottery Trust at Triveni Kal Sangam, 205 Tansen Marg, 11 a.m. - 6.30 p.m.

Exhibition: 'Baolis of Delhi', a group show by Urban Sketchers Delhi at Delhi 'o' Delhi Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: 'Colour Me Colour You', a solo painting exhibition by Anubha Agarwal at Convention Centre Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

(Mail your listings for this column at cityeditor@thehindu.co.in)

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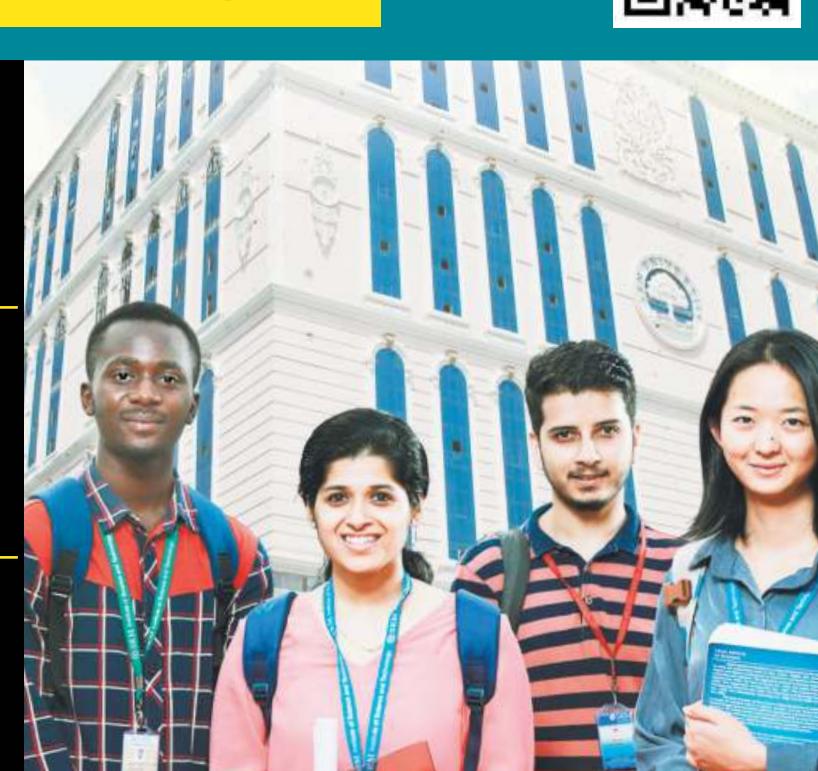
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Dalit groups demand stringent action in Nagaur torture case

They seek urgent steps for rehabilitation of the victims who are in trauma

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

After a political storm over the torture of two Dalit youths in Rajasthan's Nagaur district, Dalit groups here on Saturday demanded stringent action against the accused and urgent steps for rehabilitation of the victims who were in a trauma following the horrific act of caste-based violence by some members of the Rajput community.

The youths were also forced to pay a "fine" of ₹5,100 to the tormentors after the incident.

Bisa Ram, 24, and Panna Ram, 20, were beaten up, stripped and tortured on the suspicion of stealing money from the cash box of an automobile service agency in Nagaur district's Karnu village on February 16. The incident came to light when the videos of the assault went viral on social media earlier this week.

A fact-finding team of the Centre for Dalit Rights, Dalit Mahila Manch and Meghwal Mahasabha visited Karnu and met the victims on Friday. "The youths, who are cousins, were in a state of shock. The boy, who was vio-



Rashtriya Loktantrik Party members sitting on an indefinite dharna outside the SDM's office in Khinvsar.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lated with a screwdriver dipped in petrol, was unable to move because of excruciating pain... Their families are living in fear," CDR Director Satish Kumar said.

Dalit activists said that the Karnu episode matched Gujarat's infamous Una flogging incident of July 2016 in its intensity, and the dominant Rajputs were still threatening Dalits in the village.

Section 308 added
After the activists' demand, the police have added Section 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide) of the Indian Penal Code in the criminal case registered against the seven accused who have

since been arrested.

The team demanded that charges under the Protection of Civil Rights Act and the Information Technology Act be added to the FIR. The victims' families have been provided with police security under Section 15-A of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act mandating protection against intimidation, threats or violence.

The ruling Congress and the Opposition BJP leaders also met the two youths and their families in Karnu, while a delegation of the Bahujan Samaj Party met Director-General of Police Bhupendra Singh here and demanded

compensation and security to the victims. Union Minister of State Arjun Ram Meghwal alleged that the State government had indulged in a cover-up and said the victims were still waiting for financial assistance.

The Congress team, comprising Social Welfare Minister Bhanwar Lal Meghwal, former Nagaur MP Jyoti Mirdha and others, also sought strict action against the accused and hoped that no police officer found involved in the brutality or its cover-up would be spared. The team will submit its report to Pradesh Congress Committee president Sachin Pilot.

Relief package

The Rashtriya Loktantrik Party, which wields influence in Nagaur and adjoining districts, has started an indefinite dharna outside the Sub-Divisional Magistrate's office in Khinvsar demanding a relief package for the victims and removal of the Nagaur Superintendent of Police. RLP MLA Narayan Beniwal had led a demonstration on the issue at the Assembly entrance gate here on Thursday.

Sleeping tight



Passengers in their make-shift berth in Deendayalu Coach of Hyderabad-New Delhi Telangana Express in Bhopal on Friday.

■ A.M. FARUQI

In Shivpuri, access to water riven by caste

Upper castes threatened by our assertion, rise in society, says Dalit victim's family

SIDHARTH YADAV
SHIVPURI (M.P.)

At Fatehpur village in Shivpuri district, even water is riven by caste fault lines. As with territories – roads, shops, playgrounds and trees – split among groups, a mutual pact forbids a Dalit person from drawing water from gushing pumps and teeming wells held by Thakurs, an upper caste, enjoying piped connection at home, a luxury still a far cry for others.

On February 16, however, more than 50 members of a Mehtar family lost their only potable water source – a hand pump near a forest post – as foresters shot dead Madan Balmik while his family drew water from there. The other pump is used only for washing purposes.

"They said we were polluting the water source as we were lowly," said Ms. Mamata, aunt-in-law of Madan, 38. "Where do we go to fetch water now?"

Like every day, Ms. Mamata, along with Madan's wife and two daughters, sauntered to the pump, 200 metres away, clutching steel pots for the second round around 2.30 p.m.. As one of the daughters swilled a pot, some water splashed on a forester, who, enraged, hurled casteist slurs at them, and shot dead Madan when he reached the spot to quell



The family of the Dalit man who was killed by forest officials in Shivpuri district. ■ SIDHARTH YADAV

tension.

After thrashing the women and hitting his brother Pankaj with rifle butts, the family alleged, foresters, and even villagers, left Madan, with more than 50 pellet wounds, unattended on the road for three hours. "Thakurs have vehicles but they refused to take him to hospital as they said touching him would pollute them," said Ms. Babita, another relative. The family, which owns only two wheelers, could finally arrange for a vehicle, but Madan died on the way to the hospital in Karera, 25 km. away.

Two rifles seized

The police have seized two rifles, registered a case against 14 officials under the Indian Penal Code and The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and arrested six persons so far.

Despite having left manual scavenging years ago, six siblings are still involved in sanitation work. Madan's father, Mahattam Balmik, 61,

the eldest sibling, became the first to land a government job, as a forest guard, 40 years ago, which caused an upheaval in the village. Despite this, the family doesn't have toilets at home and still defecate in the open.

A fourth generation member, Madan's daughter, who goes to Class VII, said the teacher still made Dalit children spruce up the school. "She hands us brooms as soon as we reach saying we're destined to do such work, while Thakur children study in classrooms. Also, we've been asked to carry separate utensils so that the midday meal isn't polluted for other children who get utensils at the school," she said.

The family claimed riding a mare during wedding procession is forbidden for them, as is eating meals in plates similar to those used by the upper castes persons during functions.

"After bhaisaab was killed, we had to travel to Karera to get tonsured," said Mr. Pankaj. Madan's son Bimal, 16, feared he would not be able to appear for his Class X board examinations starting March 3 in order to support the family. His father made ₹3,000 a month by selling chicken and worked as an agricultural labourer for ₹250 a day.

Three women killed in building fire

'A paying guest facility was being run in the house; probe under way'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Three women were killed while two others sustained injuries in a fire that broke out in a residential building in Chandigarh, the police said on Saturday.

The police said a preliminary enquiry has revealed that the fire broke out due to short circuit in the house in sector 32 D, where a paying guest accommodation was being run.

"The deceased have been identified as Riya, of Kapurthal in Punjab; Pakshi, from Kotkapura in Punjab and Muskan of Hisar in Haryana. The incident occurred at 3.45 p.m.," said a police statement.

The women, aged between 19 and 22 years, were staying as paying guests on the first floor of the building.

"A case has been registered under Sections 304, 188, 34 and 336 of the IPC and the investigation was under way. We will seek a report from the civil administration about whether the PG was complying with rules



A view of the house in Chandigarh after the fire on Saturday. ■ PTI

and procedures," said Chandigarh Superintendent of Police Vineet Kumar.

Station Fire Officer Lal Bahadur said four fire tenders were pressed into service and it took 10-15 minutes to put out the fire. He added that one of the women saved herself by jumping from the first floor.

"There was very low visi-

bility because of smoke and fire," Mr. Bahadur said. "Two women were found unconscious in a room and another with burn injuries was found in another room."

Two injured
With the blaze engulfing the first floor of the house, it was a difficult task for the fire fighters to take the women

out of the room.

Two women were admitted to a hospital and they are out of danger, Mr. Kumar said.

According to neighbours, around 25-30 women were staying at the PG. At the time of the incident, most of them were out of the PG, the police said.

(With inputs from PTI)

AMU students' panel on hunger strike

Announcing new phase, they seek action against police for 'brutality' on campus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ALIGARH (U.P.)

Members of the AMU students' coordination committee has begun a three-day hunger strike, seeking action against police personnel for alleged brutality during an anti-CAA stir on the campus last December and withdrawal of cases against protesters.

Announcing that their 10-week-long peaceful agitation has entered a new phase, 12 students started the 72-hour hunger strike on Friday night.

Sent notices

The panel said if their demands were not met, a group of students would launch an indefinite hunger strike at the Bab-e-Syed gate of Aligarh Muslim University. They

have sent a notice to the University and district authorities.

The panel has also sent copies of their notice to the President, the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.

Committee spokesman



AMU students during a protest march against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Aligarh. ■ FILE PHOTO

On our part, we are placing all the evidence before the court and will also do so if the government orders a judicial probe

FAIZUL HASAN
AMU students' coordination committee spokesman

on grounds of moral responsibility with regard to the incident.

They are also demanding that the CCTV footage of all the incidents pertaining to the "police brutalities" be fully secured and protected.

Meanwhile, at the Eidgah grounds in the old city, women protesters, who have been on a strike against the Citizenship Amendment Act for the past three weeks, staged a dharna at the Kotwali police station. They alleged that the police prevented them from putting up a tent at the protest site on Thursday night during a hailstorm.

Senior district officials rushed to the spot and pacified the protesters.

Punjab DGP flayed over Kartarpur remark

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

The Shiromani Akali Dal and Aam Aadmi Party on Saturday accused Punjab Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta of hurting the sentiments of the Sikh community by making "irresponsible remarks" in the context of pilgrims visiting the Kartarpur Gurdwara in Pakistan through the newly built corridor.

The DGP, however, expressed shock and outrage over his remarks being "misunderstood or wilfully misconstrued". He said he had "only red-flagged the obvious potential for misuse by elements notorious for their hostility towards India" through the corridor.

At an event on February 20, the DGP had allegedly said that a Sikh devotee going to pay obeisance to Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan can be turned into a terrorist within six hours.

AAP MLA and Leader of the Opposition in Assembly Harpal Singh Cheema and Kotkapura legislator Kultar Singh Sandhu said Mr. Gupta's remarks were highly offensive and unbecoming of an officer of his stature.

AKali leader Bikram Singh Majithia asked the DGP to clarify his statement within 24 hours.

Police clean chit to BJP MLA, nephew arrested in rape case

Involvement of only two persons was found, say police

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The nephew of a BJP MLA in Uttar Pradesh was arrested on charges of raping a woman on the pretext of marrying her. She also alleged that the MLA and other male members of his family had raped her repeatedly in a hotel for a month during the 2017 Assembly elections.

Criminal intimidation
Bhadoli Superintendent of Police Ram Badan Singh said after a probe, the involvement of only two persons in the case was found – Sandeep who is accused of raping the woman and threatening her, and another relative Nitesh, who is charged with criminal intimidation.

Sandeep was arrested from a hotel on Friday, the police said.

However, the names of the MLA and his sons were removed from the case as on the basis of the "evidence" provided by the victim, it didn't appear "from any angle" that they were involved, Mr. Singh said. "Based on the investigation so far, it is clear that the charges against the MLA and his sons could not be established," he said.

Asked by the reporters why the woman named the MLA in the FIR, the SP said she could have done it to pressure Sandeep into marrying her. The victim has refused to undergo a medical examination, he said.

In her FIR, the victim had alleged that she was even forced to undergo an abortion by the accused.

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- Driver, One Post (Unreserved) in pay scale of L-2,
- Carpenter, One Post (Unreserved) in pay scale L-2,
- Safai Sevak, Two posts (One unreserved and one reserved for OBC) in pay scale of L-1.

The interested candidates may see above mentioned Employment News February 22 - 29, 2020 and the website of GSDS <https://www.gandhismiti.gov.in> for details

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Starting Fresh Batches from

Odisha activists call for anti-CAA resolution in House

They allege Act is discriminatory on religious grounds and NPR is a step towards NRC implementation

STAFF REPORTER

BHUABANESWAR

The Naveen Patnaik Government should tell the Centre that it is not ready to implement the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Population Register (NPR) survey by passing a resolution in the State Assembly, demanded activists and intellectuals here on Saturday.

Activists, who gathered under the banner – ‘We the people of India’ – on the death anniversary of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, alleged that the CAA is discriminatory on religious grounds and the NPR is a step towards the implementation of the controversial National Register of Citizens (NRC).

“Implementation of CAA,

NPR and NRC will not only become a financial burden on the State, but also create divisions in society. Citizens possess different identity proofs such as Aadhaar, voter identity card, driving licence and land records. We do not want NPR, which will lead to NRC,” said Suresh Panigrahi, a CPI(M) leader.

Narendra Mohanty, an activist, said: “Like other

non-BJP State governments, Odisha should pass a resolution in the Assembly to oppose NPR survey in the State.”

‘Anti-poor’ exercise

They demanded the withdrawal of CAA, NPR and NRC, which they claimed was against the country’s secular credentials, anti-poor and contrary to the Indian Constitution.

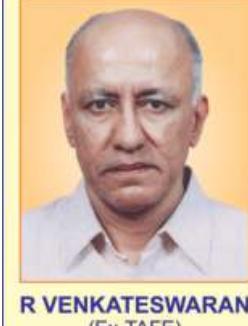
The forum also started a signature campaign on Maulana Azad’s death anniversary and announced that it will continue till March 23. The signatures would be handed over to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

During this period, the activists would hold peaceful agitations in all districts of the State.

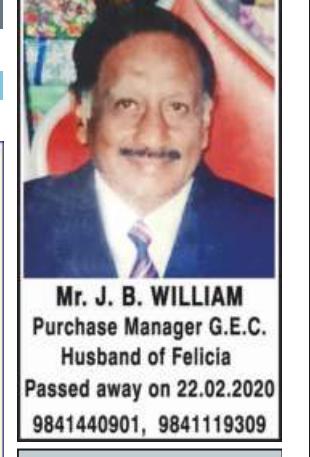
OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SAD DEMISE



DEATH



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Purchase Manager G.E.C.
Husband of Felicia
Passed away on 22.02.2020
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R VENKATESWARAN

(Ex-Mech.)
S/o. Late K.P. Ramasami passed away peacefully on 21.02.2020.

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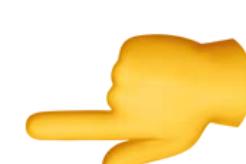
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IN BRIEF



Discharge petition of bishop posted to Feb. 29

KOTTAYAM The additional district and sessions court I, Kottayam, on Saturday posted the discharge petition filed by Bishop Franco Mulakkal in the nun rape case for further hearing to February 29. Earlier in the day, the accused filed a petition seeking to initiate contempt of court proceedings against the prosecution agency and the media for publishing the records under the court's consideration without permission. The petition pertained to the reports on the allegations of sexual abuse raised by another nun against the bishop.

10-day festival at Sabarimala from March 29

PATHANAMTHITTA The 10-day annual festival at the Ayyappa temple in Sabarimala will be celebrated from March 29 to April 7. The temple will be opened on March 28. The Tantri will hoist the flag at the Kodiyettu ceremony on March 29. The Vishu festival at Sabarimala will be held from April 10 to 18. Vishu will be celebrated on April 14.

Three youth held for bid to rape minor in A.P.

CHITTOOR The Andhra Pradesh police took three youth into custody on the charge of attempting to outrage the modesty of a minor girl at a SC hamlet in Yerpedu, 20 km from Tirupati. According to information, the 15-year-old was on her way home from Yerpedu when Saikrishna, 25, Ankaiah, 21, and Veeraswamy, 22, reportedly stalked her and allegedly tried to outrage her modesty. However, the girl shouted for help and was rescued by cowherds nearby. A case has been registered based on a complaint from the girl's parents.

Anti-CAA arrests: Bommai calls meeting of senior officers

Bengaluru police have arrested two people recently for "anti-national" statements

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Amulya Leona shouting pro-Pakistan slogan at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on February 20. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

Close on the heels of two youngsters – Ardra Narayanan and Amulya Leona – being arrested by the Bengaluru police for their alleged "anti-national" statements in the course of protests against the Citizen (Amendment) Act, Karnataka Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai has called a meeting of senior-level police officers in Bengaluru on Sunday to take stock of the situation and discuss preventive steps.

Speaking at Davangere, Mr. Bommai expressed concern over the "growing anti-national activities" and said there seemed to be an organised network, which needs a thorough probe. "There are efforts to disturb the peace

legedly controversial placard, conducted mahazat at the paying guest accommodation at C.V. Raman Nagar here on Saturday.

Ardra is learnt to have told the police that no organisation had backed her act.

Meanwhile, a special team

Reward for 'encounter' of Leona: Sri Ram Sena leader

BALLARI

Stirring a controversy, Sanjeev Maradi, a local leader of Sri Ram Sena announced a reward of ₹10 lakh to anyone who "encounters" Amulya Leona, the student-activist who was booked for sedition after she raised pro-Pakistan slogans in Bengaluru on Thursday. He said this would happen if the government failed to take strict action.

has been formed to probe the case of Amulya Leona, who shouted pro-Pakistan slogans at Freedom Park on Thursday.

Currently, both Leona and Ardra are housed in the same cell at Parapana Agrahara central prison.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOZHIKODE

BALLARI

Minister for Transport A.K.

Saseendran

IN BRIEF



Translate NCERT books into Tamil, T.N. varsity told

CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Information Commission directed the Tamil University, Thanjavur, to translate into Tamil the Physics, Chemistry, History, Geography, Economics and Mathematics books published by the NCERT from 6th to 12th standards. In a plea, R. Chander of Chennai had said that most competitive exams were based on NCERT syllabus, books for which were available only in English and Hindi.

12 killed in tempo-truck collision in Gujarat

VADODARA

Twelve people were killed and four others were injured in a collision between a truck and a tempo near Mahuad village in Vadodara district of Gujarat on Saturday night, police said. The injured were shifted to SSG Hospital in Vadodara, said District Superintendent of Police Sudhir Desai. PTI

9 dead as vehicle falls into gorge in Kathua

JAMMU

Nine people, including three women and as many children, were killed and five others injured on Saturday when a passenger vehicle skidded off the road and fell into a deep gorge in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, officials said. The accident took place when the driver lost control over the vehicle, which then rolled into the 300 feet-deep gorge. PTI

Thieves steal ATM machine with ₹19 lakh

AMBALA

Thieves decamped with an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) of Central Bank of India containing over ₹19 lakh here, police said on Saturday. The thieves sprayed paint on CCTV cameras fitted inside the ATM booth and stole the machine. Police said an investigation is on and footage of CCTV cameras installed in nearby areas had been collected. PTI

Monsoon in Sunderbans likely to get longer, warn climate experts

A fact sheet has called for long-term coastal planning to preserve important intertidal habitats in the region

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

The monsoon in Sunderbans is likely to last longer and get more intense, according to a fact sheet titled *The Sunderbans and Climate Change*, which was made public during the ongoing Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

"Climate specialists have predicted that as climate change progresses, monsoon seasons in the Sundarbans will become longer and more intense. Conversely, drought conditions will also become

more pronounced, presenting further challenges for agricultural producers in particular and ecosystems in general," said the document released during the Conference of Parties being held at Gujarat.

Natural habitats

The document highlights the need for "long term coastal planning to ensure that these critically important intertidal habitats with their unique flora and fauna and local inhabitants have a space to retreat inland". The paper also points out that the habi-

tat of the Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) in the Sunderbans is also affected by the storm due to a decline in the availability of prey.

While the fact sheet puts the rise in the sea level at 3.2 mm per year currently, it states that an estimated rise of 28 cm above the sea levels registered in the year 2000 would result in a 96 % decline of the habitat of the Bengal tiger in Bangladesh.

Discussions were also held on the Transboundary Conservation of Threatened Freshwater Fauna, including species like Indian River Ter-



Mounting concern: The paper also highlights a rising threat to the habitat of the Bengal tiger. ■ FILE PHOTO

rapin (*Batagur baska*), Hilsa (*Tenualoa ilisha*) and Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*).

The forum comprised

scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India, World Wildlife Fund for Nature, Wildlife Trust of India, Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) and

the member secretary of Central Zoo Authority.

Risk of flooding

"There is clear evidence of the habitat of all the three species extending to the Sunderbans in both India and Bangladesh. We are hopeful that the points that were raised are going to be well received by the CMS and there will be some concerted action for the conservation of the freshwater species that migrate across the Sunderbans," said Shailendra Singh, director, TSA.

The fact sheet points out that large parts of Sunderbans, which are designated as 'Ramsar Sites', are highly susceptible to flooding.

"Due to this, any swelling of ocean water is going to dramatically affect the area. Although mangroves are somewhat resistant to submergence in water, they can die when tidal inundation occurs too frequently or lasts too long," the document stated.

Apart from the frequent storms and the rise of sea level, another concern is the rise of salinity both in water and soil. "Excess levels of soil salinity can be incredibly damaging to ecosystems as salts can accumulate in the soil and hinder plant growth. It also threatens the health of freshwater aquatic life such as fish and giant prawns," the document adds.

Govt. eyes public-private fund to give R&D a shot in the arm

Target of ₹40 cr. is currently on the anvil

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

In an effort to stimulate investment in research and development (R&D), the Department of Science and Technology is mooting a fund that will match the contributions made by private companies in R&D.

Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, told *The Hindu* that discussions were on with certain "large, private sector" companies and currently, a ₹40 crore target was on the anvil. "The idea is to pool funds from a group of companies willing to invest in fundamental research, such as quantum computers or artificial intelligence, and whatever is invested government will match that," he added.

A major beneficiary of such private sector funds,

Research bill

In 2017, the global R&D spend was estimated to be \$1.7 trillion in PPP terms, with the United States, China and Japan being the top spenders. India's share was around 2.8%

India's top three R&D spenders in 2017-18

- 1. Department of Atomic Energy
- 2. Department of Space
- 3. Department of Science and Technology

Source: R&D Expenditure Ecosystem, EAC-PM



Top three Indian companies who have contributed to R&D spend in 2017

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. SAP Labs India Private Limited | 2. Mphasis Limited | 3. Olympia Tech Park Private Limited |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|

Mr. Sharma noted, could be the Indian Institutes of Technology.

The scheme will be coordinated through the department's Science and Engineering Research Board, which funds a variety of basic science projects in several universities.

Though India is among the top five countries in terms of its output of scientific publications, it doesn't match up in investments.

The total expenditure on R&D has tripled in the last decade in nominal (revenue sans inflation) terms – from ₹24,117 crore in 2004-05 to an estimated ₹1,04,864 crore in 2016-17. However as a fraction of GDP, public expenditures on R&D has been stagnant – between 0.6-0.7% of GDP – over the past two decades. It is well below that in major nations such as the U.S. (2.8), China (2.1), Israel (4.3) and Korea (4.2), accord-

ing to a 2019 report by the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) to the Prime Minister.

Public sector institutions form the lion's share of India's investment in R&D. In 2004-2005, private sector accounted for 28% of India's research spend and in 2016-17 this increased to 40%. In most advanced economies, private R&D accounts for the bulk of investment in R&D.

Moreover, while the government is the major source of funds for R&D, it's also the major user – in terms of money consumed by public sector enterprises or Central institutions.

"As a lower middle-income country, it is not surprising that India's spending on R&D lags upper-middle income and high-income countries such as China, Israel, and the U.S. However, it currently underspends even relative to its income level... In fact, in 2015, there was a sizeable decline in R&D spending even as GDP per capita continued to rise," the EAC report notes.

Mr. Sharma on February 12 announced that government-aided madrasas, Islamic theological schools and *talims* or ashrams teaching Sanskrit and religious scriptures would be shut. He had said these centres would be converted into schools as it was "not the duty of the government to teach religion".

The recruits were trained in weapon handling, industrial security, aviation security, VIP security, human rights, gender sensitisation, terrorism, insurgency and naxalism. Special attention was given to improve their soft skills to keep in line with CISF's fundamental principle – polite but firm on duty. In his address, Mr. Reddy said the CISF had successfully met new challenges

The decision received criticism, the sharpest being from his author-mother Minalini Devi, who was in January elected vice-president of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, the State's apex literary bo-

dy. She will take charge in April. "I studied Sanskrit in school. I love the language that is the root of the Assamese tongue. The government should continue to teach Sanskrit even if the *talims* cease to exist," she said three days ago.

"The government has its own way of functioning and not on the basis of what parents think or feel. It takes decisions based on facts and

necessities of the people in general. Almost 80% of the Sanskrit *talims* have become meaningless today," he said. The Education Minister, who also holds the Finance and Health portfolios, asserted that the *talims* had become "meaningless" and were essentially "factories for mere matriculation (high school-leaving class 10 exam)".

He added: "Most *talims* this year had no candidates for the Class X exams. The government cannot waste its limited resources." The closure of the madrasas and *talims* is expected in the next academic session from April.

Assam has 614 government-run and recognised madrasas. Of over 900 *talims*, only 97 are government-aided, officials said.

1,160 recruits inducted into CISF

STAFF REPORTER
RANIPET

As many as 1,160 personnel, including 84 women, were inducted into the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) after a passing out parade at the Regional Training Centre near Arakkonam on Saturday. Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy accepted the guard of honour and reviewed the parade.

The recruits were trained in weapon handling, industrial security, aviation security, VIP security, human rights, gender sensitisation, terrorism, insurgency and naxalism. Special attention was given to improve their soft skills to keep in line with CISF's fundamental principle – polite but firm on duty. In his address, Mr. Reddy said the CISF had successfully met new challenges

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ED raids 12 locations to probe 'bike bot' scam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The ED on Wednesday conducted searches at 12 locations in Delhi, Noida and Lucknow in connection with the "bike bot" scheme scam, in which about 2.25 lakh investors were allegedly cheated on the pretext of huge returns.

The case pertains to a motorcycle taxi service scheme launched by a Greater Noida-based company, Garvit Innovative Promoters Limited. Following complaints from investors, the Uttar Pradesh Police registered over 60 cases in the alleged ₹3,000 crore scam and arrested several people, including the company's owner, Sanjay Bhati.

In 2018, the accused persons asked people to invest ₹62,100 per motorcycle for a monthly return. Investigation revealed that over 150 luxury cars were bought in the company's name and gifted, and of about 7,000 motorcycles, only 2,000 were registered with the transport authorities.

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TAMIL NADU HOUSING BOARD
J.J. NAGAR DIVISION

SEALED OFFER - CUM - OPEN AUCTION NOTICE

Tamil Nadu Housing Board, J.J.Nagar Division, has proposed to sell the reserved plots of Commercial site, Convenience shop site, Daily market site, Public Purpose site, Religious purpose site, Cinema Theatre site, Community Hall site and Industrial site, (Total-102 Nos) in the following schemes of J.J.Nagar East Scheme, J.J.Nagar East Industrial Plot Scheme, J.J.Nagar East - Padi Industrial Plot Scheme, J.J.Nagar West Scheme, Nolambur Ph I Scheme, Ambattur Ph I & II Scheme, Ambattur Ph III Scheme, Ambattur Village, Thirumullaivoyal 120 MIG Flats Scheme, Avadi Site & Service Scheme through Sealed Offer – Cum – Open Auction. The details are as follows.

Sale of Application form From 24.02.2020 to the previous working day of auction between 11.00 A.M to 4.00 P.M

AUCTION DATE : 18.03.2020 & 19.03.2020

Please also visit www.tnhb.tn.gov.in website for the details regarding of Code No., Name of the scheme, Category of plot, Plot Number Plot Extent, Upset Price and Application Cost, 15% Cost of Plot along with Application, Period of sale of application, Allotment conditions etc., For, further details, kindly contact the following Address.

Office of the Executive Engineer & Ado,
J.J.Nagar Division, Tamil Nadu Housing Board,
3rd Floor, TNHB Shopping Complex, Thirumangalam,
Chennai-600 101, Phone No.044-26154577.

Executive Engineer & Ado,
J.J.Nagar Division

All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur

Tatibandh, G.E. Road, Raipur, C.G.-492099

Ref. No. AIIMS/RPR/Acad/2020/659

Date 22.02.2020

ADMISSION NOTICE

SPOT COUNSELLING FOR PG COURSES – JAN.2020 SESSION

Spot Counselling for filling up vacant Postgraduate (MD/MS) seats (Total Vacant Seats-12, UR-03, OBC-04, SC-02, ST-01, EWS-02) of AIIMS Raipur for January 2020 session (after Open Counselling) is to be held on Friday, 27.02.2020 at 12.00 noon at AIIMS Raipur. The details of vacant seats are-

- Dept. of Anatomy (Total Seats-03,UR-01,SC-01,ST-01)
- Dept. of Biochemistry (Total-03,UR-01,OBC-02)
- Dept. of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology (Total-01,EWS-01)
- Dept. of Microbiology (Total-02,OBC-01,EWS-01)
- Dept. of Pharmacology (Total-01,OBC-01)
- Dept. of Physiology (Total-02,UR-01,SC-01).

The revised and final updated list of all vacant seats available for spot counselling will be uploaded on the website www.aiimsraipur.edu.in by 2.00 PM on 27.02.2020. Those candidates who have secured 50 percentile or more in the entrance examination conducted by AIIMS New Delhi on 17.11.2019 and desirous of seeking admission in the spot counselling should register on or before 27.02.2020 (5 PM) by clicking on the given link <https://forms.gle/ZCEVlh6pvn776rQZ>. The link can also be copied and pasted on the address bar of the internet browser for submitting the required information. Registered candidates are required to remain physically present at AIIMS Raipur along with all original certificates/documents mandatorily. For essential eligibility conditions, other details and terms and conditions please visit the website of AIIMS Raipur www.aiimsraipur.edu.in

Director

KSEB KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED E-TENDER NOTICE

Office of the Chief Engineer, Transmission North - Kozhikode

Tender ID: 2020_KSEB_344324_1 Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of two Nos. of 33kV 6 Panel Indoor Switch gear set at various substations * PAC :

Rs. 1,58,00,000/- Last Date : 28-02-2020, 4 PM

Visit www.etenders.kerala.gov.in and www.kseb.in

Ref: PR/MC1/E 183/E-Tender/2020

THE HINDU

LET US KNOW YOU BETTER

Your feedback is valuable to us.

FROM PAGE ONE

Truth can't be eclipsed by prejudices: President

The President pointed out that debate and discussion were internalised in India's social psyche since time immemorial. "They are means to an end. On a lighter side, I am talking about an era that preceded high-voltage TV debates."

"Even in this period of transition, *The Hindu* continues with its tradition of conducting informed debate through news and views. It would not be an exaggeration to say that *The Hindu* seeks to protect the sanctity of the printed word and holds fast to the ideology of the truth," the President stated.

Pointing out that the perception of truth was conditioned by circumstances, Mr. Kovind pointed out: "Through arduous research, we came to know it well that neither does the sun rise nor does it set. The conditions that cloud the truth's positions are effectively dispelled by a contestation of ideas through debate, discussion and scientific temper. Prejudices and violence vitiate the search for truth."

According to Mr. Kovind, the world was "above all" being shaped by information technology. "These trends have impacted journalism in all its aspects, from news gathering to delivering news to readers and finally making money to sustain the activity."

The internet and social media have democratised journalism and revitalised democracy. This process is ongoing, but in its current

"At this conclave, speakers are invited to come together and form a huddle to deliberate and review the strategy for the benefit of society and the country. Implicit in this effort is welfare of the entire cosmos consistent with the philosophy of "Sarve bhavantu sukhinah". I once again command *The Hindu* group of publications for organising this conference that lays out a roadmap for posterity," he added.

Modi a versatile genius, says Justice Arun Mishra

In an apparent reference to the Ayodhya land dispute verdict, he said several apprehensions were expressed about the consequences of these judgments. "But look what happened! 1.3 billion Indians wholeheartedly accepted the judicial verdicts."

He said his government acted swiftly and with "complete sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs of modern society" by legislating the rights for transgenders and enacting a law against triple *talaq*.

CJI Bobde said, "The *zeitgeist* of our time is technological development. A small change in one corner can impact other corners". He said conferences like these helped the judiciary gain knowledge from each other. He said a well-structured judicial system had been part of this country for over 2,000 years.

Justice Ramana flagged global issues such as terrorism, cybercrimes, environmental degradation and health. He said terrorism had affected every part of the world. He said there was a need for the judiciary to evolve "innovative principles and jurisprudence to keep terrorism at bay while upholding the rule of law".

No relief for Nirbhaya case convict Vinay

"The jail superintendent is once again directed to ensure adequate care of the convicts as per rules."

The court noted that the submissions by Dr. Vivek Rustogi and Dr. Akash Narade, both working in Tihar Jail, that though the convict was observed to be anxious, agitated and restless, he had responded well to the supportive therapy conducted by the specialist psychiatry.

"It is categorically observed that according to his psychological assessment, no behavioural abnormality was noted. It is reported that the conduct of the convict is suggestive of deliberate disruptive behaviour," the court said. The convict was found to have dramatic and superficial demonstration of mental illness, it noted. "No objective signs of psychological distress were observed. The convict desires himself to be falsely diagnosed 'mentally ill'."

In their submissions, the jail authorities termed the plea "a bundle of distorted facts" and the convict was not only being provided regular medical care but also regular supportive therapy by the specialist psychiatry.

Defence counsel said the convict had a plastered hand that showed he had fractures.

The book *Who is Bharat Mata* by Purushottam Agrawal and Radha Krishna con-

Prasad flags use of campaigns to sway verdicts

Some people launch populist campaigns about the kind of judgment they expect from the court, says Law Minister

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

stage, it has also led to many anxieties. The new media is fast and popular and people can choose what they want to watch, hear or read. But only the traditional media has, over years, developed skills to authenticate a news report, and that is a costly operation. I hope that we will arrive at the ideal trade-off soon," the President stated.

"In the meanwhile, the traditional media will have to introspect on its role in society and find ways to earn the reader's full trust again. The project of democracy is incomplete without informed citizens – which means, without unbiased journalism," Mr. Kovind stressed.

The President said those at the helm of *The Hindu* began their journey with a "huddle", 142 years ago, for a cause. "That thinking must also be behind naming the event The Huddle that covers a wide array of topics ranging from politics, economics, the environment and entertainment to gender and sports."

According to Mr. Kovind, the world was "above all" being shaped by information technology. "These trends have impacted journalism in all its aspects, from news gathering to delivering news to readers and finally making money to sustain the activity."

The internet and social media have democratised journalism and revitalised democracy. This process is ongoing, but in its current

have been rejected in the popular mandate become the biggest flag-bearers of populism... In our constitutional scheme, it is very clear, the government must be left to those who were elected by the people of India to govern..." he said.

Mr. Prasad was speaking at the inaugural session of an international judicial conference attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday.

He said populism is the resort of those who have lost the popular mandate.

Elected to govern

"In a democracy, we welcome dissent. We welcome populism too. We have a problem when populism impinges on well-settled constitutional principles. And populism also becomes a problem when those who

In a separate segment of his speech, the Law Minister touched on the limits of right to privacy, saying courts have "many a time" clarified that privacy does not extend to terrorists and the corrupt.

"The Supreme Court has held that right to privacy is a fundamental right. The judgment has become a beacon



Care and caution: PM Narendra Modi with Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, CJI S.A. Bobde and judges in New Delhi. ■ PTI

globally. It is a wonderful judgment, saying that right to privacy flows from Article 21, the right to life and live with dignity. But our courts have also stated that terrorists and the corrupt have no right to privacy because right to privacy has acquired critical proportion in the wake of

digital landscape expanding globally. This is the age of information; information is power. This is the age of communication; communication is power," Mr. Prasad said.

In his address, the Minister emphasised that judges must be left "completely in-

dependent to give judgments in accordance to what they think is correct under the rule of law".

'Sinister trend'

"But there is a sinister trend developing globally and is also in our country... Some people start campaigning as to what kind of judgment they expect, and if the judgment is not in accord with that, they unleash all the forces of criticism against judiciary," Mr. Prasad said.

Mr. Prasad said criticism of the judiciary for a judgment was welcome, but "some kind of norm has to be maintained if rule of law has to acquire continued resonance".

The Law Minister said though he was "a great supporter of social media" and

its freedom to empower, using populism to impinge on well-settled constitutional principles was a dangerous trend.

Obviously, they are accountable to the Parliament and, in many ways, to judicial decisions and the people," he said.

Senior Supreme Court judge, Justice N.V. Ramana, said the issue of populist trends affecting justice administration was of "fundamental importance".

"Populist decisions affect the constitutional rights, and more often than not, rights of one group are pitted against the rights or interest of other group(s). Courts will have to guard constitutional values as well as balance all constitutional considerations".

Security forces kill two LeT militants in Anantnag

They were wanted in many militancy-related incidents: DGP

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Two Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militants were killed in an operation by the security forces in south Kashmir's Anantnag on Saturday.

Commanding the security agencies for the Anantnag operation, Director General of Police (DGP) Dilbagh Singh said the current "hot pursuit" strategy against militants in Jammu and Kashmir would continue. Multiple security agencies have stepped up the vigil in J&K on active militants and 'sleeper cells' to thwart any attempt by militants to carry out a 'spectacle attack' during Mr. Trump's visit.

Terming the killing of the two LeT militants "another success" Mr. Singh said the slain militants were wanted in several militancy-related

incidents. "One slain militant was wanted in seven incidents," said the DGP.

The militants were identified as Naveed Ahmad Bhat and Aqib Ahmad Bhat, both residents of Kulgam. The duo was killed in a midnight operation in Gund Baba Khali area of Sangam, Anantnag, and the militants

were trapped in an open field. The police said two AK 56 rifles, four magazines, two grenades and one pistol were recovered from the encounter site.

Separately, the DGP said a Hizbul Mujahideen militant, identified as Junaid Farooq Pandit, had been arrested in Baramulla.

18 Congress RS MPs to retire this year

A section believes the old guard should make way for younger leaders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Beginning this month, 18 Congress MPs are going to retire in 2020, with 12 of them completing their term by April. But the party may manage to retain only half of these vacancies, given its strength in the State Assembly.

So, amid the churn over leadership, the party's choice of nominees to the Rajya Sabha could indicate the direction the party would take in the immediate future. It is already a matter of debate within the party who should replace such senior leaders as Moti Lal Vohra, Digvijaya Singh and Kumar Selja.

Traditionally, the Con-

gress has sent its old guard to the Rajya Sabha, as much for their loyalty as for their experience in governance. But a section of the party believes the old guard should make way for younger and articulate leaders to make an

impact in Parliament.

In April, the Congress-ruled Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan will have three vacancies each, while Chhattisgarh will have two vacancies. The names of younger leaders such as Jyotiraditya Scindia, Randeep Surjewala, Jitin Prasada and R.P.N. Singh are being floated as possible replacements by the section that is close to former party president Rahul Gandhi.

There is also speculation on Uttar Pradesh in-charge Priyanka Gandhi Vadra being sent to the Rajya Sabha from any of the Congress-controlled States.

Asked to comment on such reports at a press conference on Friday, Deputy

Leader of the Congress in the Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma said such decisions would be taken by the party president.

The Congress did not want to engage in any public debate on its choice for the Rajya Sabha, but the senior leaders do not want to cede ground to leaders viewed as being close to Mr. Gandhi. That is why some of the younger leaders close to Mr. Gandhi believe questions about a leadership vacuum has been timed to target the former Congress chief.

"Finally, who makes it to the Rajya Sabha will give us an idea of which leader prevailed in the final decision-making," said a Congress member.

If party thrives, benefit will reach all: Nadda

Put up party flags at your homes: Nitish

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

With the Bihar Assembly elections just months away, presidents of NDA allies – the BJP and the JD(U) – on Saturday addressed party leaders and workers in Patna, saying the NDA would win over 200 seats in a House of 243.

"Do not get swayed by concerns of individual benefits. Do remember that if the party thrives, the benefits will reach to all," said BJP president J.P. Nadda while addressing party leaders and workers at the party headquarters in Patna, during his first visit since taking over as party chief.

"Opposition has neither issues nor programme...our party will move on its principles," Mr. Kumar said.

He later met JD(U) president and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and discussed poll strategies for the assembly polls due in October-November.

Mr. Kumar, in his address to regional party leaders at his official residence, also said the NDA would win over 200 seats.

He exhorted party leaders and workers to put party flags on their house as "it will send a positive message not only to party workers but also to common people".

"Opposition has neither issues nor programme...our party will move on its principles," Mr. Kumar said.

Manmohan flags misuse of 'Bharat Mata' slogan

It leads to a militant idea of India'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday said 'nationalism and Bharat Mata Ki Jai' were being misused to construct a 'militant and purely emotional idea' of India.

Dr. Singh was speaking at the launch of a book on Jawaharlal Nehru's works and speeches.

"It is a book of particular relevance at a time when nationalism and the slogan of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' are being misused to construct a militant and purely emotional idea of India that excludes millions of residents and citizens," the former Prime Minister said.

In their submissions, the jail authorities termed the plea "a bundle of distorted facts" and the convict was not only being provided regular medical care but also regular supportive therapy by the specialist psychiatry.

Defence counsel said the convict had a plastered hand that showed he had fractures.

tains selections from Nehru's classic works including *Glimpses of World History* and *The Discovery of India*, his speeches and letters among others.

Lasting contribution

Speaking at the event that formally launched the Kannada version of the book, Dr. Singh said India's recognition as a vibrant democracy along world powers was a lasting contribution by India's first Prime Minister.

"With an inimitable style, and a multi-linguist, Nehru laid the foundation of the universities, academies and cultural institutions of Modern India. But for Nehru's leadership, independent India would not have become what it is today," Dr. Singh said.

"Modi government can waive loans of ₹7,77,800 crore in 5 years of cromy friends, why no debt relief to

Congress spokesperson

It should come clean on who benefited from the move: Cong.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday alleged that the Narendra Modi government had written off nearly ₹8 lakh crore bad loans and demanded that it should reveal the names of the corporates whose debts were waived off.

Citing a Credit Suisse report that purportedly said the Modi government had waived loans worth ₹7,77,800 crore, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged that "cromy capitalist friends were given a bonanza in five years".

Congress spokesperson



India's farmers? Who is responsible for safety of people's money in banks?" asked Mr. Surjewala.

"Shocking state of bank loan waivers, NPAs & impaired banking assets imposed by Credit Suisse report! Since 2014, Modi government has given supersized bank loan waivers worth ₹7,77,800 crore!" he said in another tweet.

Congress spokesperson

Rahul remains top leader in Congress, says Khurshid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A large section within the Congress has always felt that Rahul Gandhi must come back as party chief and he remains the "top leader" in the party, senior leader Salman Khurshid said,

Supriya Shrinivas, at the party's media briefing, said the government should come clean on who benefited from the waivers.

Three demands

"We, through you, have three big demands of this government. First, make public the names of borrowers whose credits have been written-off. I think as a country, we deserve to know. The

second and more important demand also is to set up a high-powered committee to review the pace and method at which credit write-off has happened and the third, do a review of the financial viability of the banking sector."

Ms. Shrinivas told reporters. The Congress argued that unless the banking sector improved and credit off-take improved, economic recovery would be difficult.

AN-NDE

In India, Trump likely to raise CAA, Kashmir

U.S. President will also encourage a reduction in tensions and bilateral dialogue between India and Pakistan, say officials

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON DC

U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to raise U.S. concerns around the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, (CAA), and National Register of Citizens (NRC) with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, when he visits India next week, as per senior U.S. administration officials who had a briefing call with reporters on Friday. Mr. Trump will also encourage a reduction in tensions and bilateral dialogue between India and Pakistan while in India.

The comments are significant at a time when there is growing concern in Washington over India's adherence to democratic processes and traditions, namely, Parliament's passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the establishment of a National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam.

In response to a question on whether Mr. Trump will raise the CAA and NRC with Mr. Modi, the official said the administration is "concerned" about these issues and that Mr. Trump will talk about these issues with Mr. Modi.

Religious freedom

Particularly, Mr. Trump is expected to raise the issue of "religious freedom," which is "extremely important" to the current U.S. administration, as well as discuss shared traditions of democracy "both in public remarks and certainly in private," the official said.

Responding to a question from *The Hindu* on whether Mr. Trump will offer to mediate between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, the official said Kashmir will be raised and Mr. Trump would very much encourage a "reduction in tensions" between New Delhi and Islamabad and encourage them to engage in bilateral dialogue to resolve all differences.

"We continue to believe a

core foundation of any successful dialogue between the two is based on continued momentum in Pakistan's efforts to crack down on terrorist and extremists on its territory. We continue to look for that. I think the President will urge both countries to seek to maintain peace and stability along the Line of Control and refrain from actions or statements that could increase tensions in the region," the official said.

An official indicated that India's benefits under the Generalized System of Preferences, the U.S.'s preferential market access system for developing countries, was unlikely to be restored immediately. Restoring some degree of benefits has been on the negotiating table as the two countries try to hammer out a mini trade deal.

The concerns that led to the revocation of GSP access remain, an administration official said.

The official said a number of announcements from India in the "past several weeks" have increased U.S. concerns around protectionism. Among Washington's concerns on the trade front have been the 2019 draft e-commerce policy, the personal data privacy law, announcements in the Union Budget, which included tariff increases on various agricultural commodities and a 'health cess' that would impact medical device imports.

"Whether or not there will be an announcement on a trade package is really wholly dependent upon what the Indians are prepared to do. That said, we have a number of significant commercial deals, which are of great significance that we are very pleased to announce," the official added.

Defence deals of up to \$3.5 billion for MH-60R helicopters and Apache attack helicopters have been approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security.



On track: A man walking past a large poster of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.S. President Donald Trump and wife Melania Trump near the Motera stadium in Ahmedabad on Saturday. • VIJAY SONEJI

No clarity yet on Trump's roadshow

Modi not to accompany U.S. President to Taj Mahal

MAHESH LANGA
AHMEDABAD

Amid claims about 'millions' of people turning out during U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's roadshow in Ahmedabad on Monday, there is no clarity as yet on whether the roadshow is going to be 22 km long, as the authorities had claimed earlier, or just 6 km as per a schedule shared by the White House that shows Mr. Trump going directly to the stadium from the airport.

The lack of clarity on the roadshow's distance and route stems from uncertainty about whether President Trump will visit Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram during his brief trip to Ahmedabad.

'Sabarmati ashram'

Indian authorities maintain that the U.S. President would visit the Gandhi Ashram before heading to the Motera stadium to attend the 'Namaste Trump' event.

Accordingly, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has designed the

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not accompany President Donald Trump during his visit to Taj Mahal, an official source has said.

"The visit to Taj Mahal by the U.S. President and the First Lady will afford them

the opportunity to view the historical monument suitably. Therefore no official engagements or presence of senior dignitaries from the Indian side is envisaged there," said the official. Some media reports had said that Mr. Modi was to accompany them to Agra.

the President's visit are adamant on skipping it," a key official involved in the preparations in Gujarat, speaking on condition of anonymity, told *The Hindu*.

Now, without Sabarmati Ashram, the distance from the airport to the stadium is about 6.7 km, which means the roadshow will be significantly shorter than the 22 km route envisaged earlier.

And over a 6 km-long route, it is difficult to fit in even one lakh people.

On Friday, Gujarat's Chief Minister told media persons

route for the roadshow from the airport to the Sabarmati Ashram and then on to the Motera stadium, a 22 km route.

However, the tentative schedule shared by the White House about the President's brief visit to Ahmedabad does not include a visit to the Ashram, leaving just one engagement for Mr. Trump at the stadium.

"PMO and MEA are still trying to include a brief halt at Sabarmati Ashram but U.S. officials and agencies involved in preparations for

that the White House would decide about President Trump's visit to Sabarmati Ashram.

Officials at Ahmedabad's civic body, the organiser of the roadshow, are struggling for clarity on the distance and route with just over a day to go for the event even as President Trump and Gujarat's Chief Minister have publicly claimed that 'millions' will show up when the convoy of the President and PM passes by.

On Saturday, in a 55-second promotional video posted on Twitter, Chief Minister Rupani claimed that "millions" will witness a monumental roadshow.

Earlier, the U.S. President had said that Mr. Modi told him that 10 million people would show up in Ahmedabad.

"They say anywhere from six to 10 million people are going to be showing up along the route to one of the largest stadiums in the world, the largest cricket stadium in the world, which is brand new and beautiful," Mr. Trump had tweeted.

Kejriwal dropped from Melania's school visit

Deputy CM also missing from the list

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia will most likely not be a part of U.S. First Lady Melania Trump's visit to a Delhi government school here next week, according to officials in the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

According to the AAP officials, the U.S. Embassy had, earlier this week, reached out to the Delhi government in regard to the First Lady's wish to see the AAP government's flagship 'Happiness Curriculum' in practice and was to convey the schedule on Saturday. When contacted, the Embassy declined to comment on the issue.

"We were reached out to on Thursday and were in the process of screening not just one but two to three schools which could be a part of the visit," an AAP official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said. "Mr. Kejriwal and Mr. Sisodia, in his capacity as Deputy CM as well as the Education Minister, were to be a part of the programme," the official added.

"However, on Saturday when we were supposed to get the final word from the U.S. Embassy regarding the visit, it was conveyed that neither the Chief Minister nor the Deputy Chief Minister can be a part of it due to some issues related to protocol," said another AAP official.



Pepping up: Manish Sisodia interacting with students at a 'Happiness class' in New Delhi on Saturday. • PTI

'China denying nod for relief flight'

Indian officials say evacuation aircraft from other nations have been allowed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

China has allowed evacuation flights from other countries but has denied India permission to fly an aircraft carrying medical supplies to Wuhan, sources said on Saturday. The statement regarding this came two days after the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said a C-17 Globemaster military transport aircraft will carry medical supplies to coronavirus-hit Wuhan and evacuate Indians who are willing to return.

"The Chinese side continues to maintain there is no delay, but inexplicably the clearance has not been given. Meanwhile, Indian nationals in Wuhan continue their long wait for the flight which will evacuate them to India. The delay is causing them and their family mem-



Free to leave: Indians air-lifted from Wuhan waiting to collect fitness certificates at an ITBP facility in New Delhi. • PTI/FILE

bers in India tremendous mental anguish," said an official source confirming the brewing tension.

The Chinese Embassy in New Delhi said Beijing attaches great importance to the health and safety of Indian nationals in China. Counselor Ji Rong, spokesperson of the Embassy said,

"The epidemic situation in Hubei province is complicated, and the prevention and control of Covid-19 has entered a critical stage."

Proposal pending

However, an official source sharply questioned the Chinese diplomat's explanation and pointed that Beijing has

allowed flights from France, Japan and Ukraine to take off from Wuhan since February 16 whereas an Indian proposal for the relief flight was sent on February 13.

"If the work was not critical enough to stop or delay these flights, how did it suddenly become critical for the Indian flight?" asked the official.

India had sent two, long-range civilian aircraft for earlier sorties that evacuated 647 citizens, and seven Maldivians. But for the latest relief and evacuation attempt, it was decided to send a U.S.-manufactured heavy lift C-17 that is the largest military transport aircraft in India's possession. The MEA spokesperson had informed that citizens of other countries would also be considered for evacuation.

For the first time since 2003, an ally of the BJP is expected to face a strong opposition in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) polls in Assam.

Elections to the 40-seat tribal council are scheduled in April. The council, established under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and headquartered in western Assam's Kokrajhar town, covers four districts where the Bodo community has a sizeable population.

On Friday evening, ex-student leader Pramod Boro joined the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) headed by former Rajya Sabha MP Urkha Gwra Brahma. The former was immediately made the party's working president.

Mr. Boro had resigned as the president of the influential All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) soon after signing the third Bodo Peace Accord on January 27 along with leaders of all the factions of the

disbanded extremist group National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB).

Vocal critic of BPF

Mr. Brahma has been one of the most vocal critics of the

Bodoland People's Front (BPF) and its chief Hagrama Mohilary, who is also the chairman of the BTC. The BPF is one of the two regional constituents of the BJP-led alliance government in Assam.

The UPPL's inability in becoming a major political force all these years has made Mr. Boro more of an opposition leader in the BTC areas while spearheading the Bodoland statehood movement – shelved after the January accord – during his prolonged stint as the ABSU chief. He had several runs with the BTC leadership during that phase.

Analysts said Mr. Boro's joining the UPPL in the presence of former NDFB leaders has made it clear that the polls would be one of the most keenly contested.

to wait for two years to receive the benefit under the scheme and how a claimant's application was pending for over a year because it had not been processed by the data entry operator at the taluk level since the computer at the office had not been repaired for months. The report highlighted the problems faced by beneficiaries in filling up the 32-page application form and providing identity documents.

How States scored
This is the second report released by the government on the implementation of Poshan Abhiyan. It scores the States and Union Territories

were at the bottom, with a score below 55%.

Among the eight small States, Mizoram and Sikkim scored above 75%. Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Manipur and Goa were at the bottom, with scores below 60%. However, all small States had a score above 55%, displaying a fairly good level of readiness and implementation.

Four of the seven Union Territories had a score of over 70%. Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Chandigarh, and Daman and Diu scored above 75% and were ranked among the top three Union Territories. Delhi, and Lakshadweep were at the bottom, with scores below 50%.

One in three payments for maternity benefit scheme credited to wrong account

Sometimes, the money is untraceable by beneficiaries enrolled under PMMVY and field functionaries, a cause for much dissatisfaction, says NITI Aayog report

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

One in three Aadhaar-based payments for the Centre's maternity benefit scheme, or Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), was credited to a wrong bank account, according to a progress report on Poshan Abhiyan (Nutrition Mission) released by the NITI Aayog on Saturday.

A substantial number of payments (28% of all Aadhaar-based payments, of 31.29 lakh) are going to different bank accounts than what had been provided by the beneficiaries. Sometimes these are even untraceable by beneficiaries and field

functionaries. It is a prime cause for dissatisfaction among beneficiaries, which needs to be addressed on an urgent basis," the report says about the implementation of the scheme on the basis of the data collected until March 31, 2019. 66% of the direct benefit transfers were based on Aadhaar.

The report says a telephone survey of 5,525 beneficiaries, conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, revealed that only 60% were aware of the receipt of the benefits and the bank accounts to which the money was transferred. Under the PMMVY, pregnant women and lactating moth-

ers receive ₹5,000 for their first child in three instalments. Each tranche is released upon the beneficiaries meeting some conditions. The money is meant to compensate women for loss of wages, and is aimed at ensuring a healthy nutritional development of the newborn.

Simplify documentation
The NITI Aayog has called for "simplification in documentation and operational rules" to avoid delays. It has proposed to "rationalise" the mandatory waiting period of 180 days before the second instalment is released as well as the compulsory birth certificate for the release of the

third instalment. It calls for the training of auxiliary midwives who fill up the mother-child protection card and data entry operators.

A report in *The Hindu*,

Money trail: Under the PMMVY, pregnant women and lactating mothers receive ₹5,000 for their first child. • AP

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Words of praise for *The Hindu's* practice of 'panchsheel'

AMIT BARUAH

President Ram Nath Kovind commended *The Hindu* for its insistence on sticking to the five basic principles of journalism – truth-telling, freedom and independence, justice, humaneness and contributing to the social good.

Delivering the inaugural address at the fourth edition of The Huddle organised by The Hindu Group of Publications on Saturday, the President said: "I am borrowing here [Chairman, The Hindu Group Publishing Private Ltd.] Shri N. Ram's wonderful description of these principles as 'Panchsheel' for *The Hindu* group of newspapers.

"You all deserve appreciation for organising The Huddle as a platform for the churning of thought on a variety of issues that concern people. I am sure that the nectar, that is, Amrit, coming out from the churning would benefit the nation and the world," he said on Saturday.

Even in the current period of transition, the President complimented *The Hindu* for continuing with its tradition of conducting informed debate through news and views. "It would not be an exaggeration to say that *The Hindu* seeks to protect the sanctity of the printed word and holds fast to the ideology of truth."

As one of the oldest newspapers in the subcontinent, Mr. Kovind said the daily had "contributed immensely" to the task of nation-building. "Fired by a nationalist impulse, six intrepid youth of Madras, barely out of their teens, founded *The Hindu* in 1878 to redeem our cultural pride. They challenged the imperial power at its peak and nourished nationalism. Since then, the story of *The Hindu's* journey is quite instructive for those who wish to understand the spirit of India that is Bharat. Readers, too, responded enthusiastically. For many in Chennai and elsewhere, the morning came to mean a cup of filter coffee and a copy of *The Hindu*."

Those at the helm of the newspaper "know that their journey" began with a huddle and a cause 142 years ago. It was this thinking that "must also be behind" naming the event as The Huddle.

"At this conclave, speakers are invited to come together and form a huddle to deliberate and review the strategy for the benefit of society and the country. Implicit in this effort is welfare of the entire cosmos consistent with the philosophy of *Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*. I once again commend The Hindu Group of Publications for organising this conference that lays out a roadmap for posterity," the President concluded.

From the wings



Ayes and nays

If the applause was an accurate barometer, the crowd at The Huddle was a divided house on the issue of the CAA. If a statement from the BJP's Rajeev Chandrasekhar defending the CAA got loud applause, what a rebuttal from Manish Tewari of the Congress received was equally robust. The loudest cheers, though, were reserved for the measured interventions of Yamini Aiyar of the Centre for Policy Research, the non-politician on the panel.

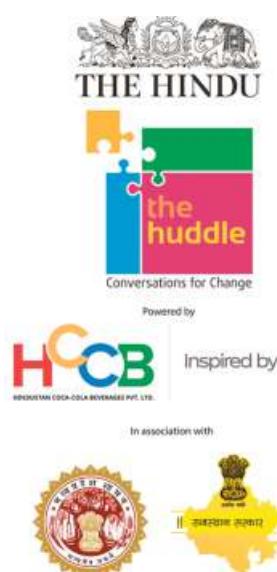


This Huddle is special

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa took time out of his hectic pre-Budget meetings to attend the fourth edition of The Huddle. In his speech welcoming the President, he acknowledged the contribution and impact of *The Hindu* in Bengaluru and across Karnataka. "This year's edition of The Huddle is special because it is being held even as the Bengaluru edition of *The Hindu* is set to turn 50 in March," he said. He added that over two days, the debates and topics of discussion at The Huddle will encourage dialogue.



Social media bubble
During the session "Between Jazz & Jaunpur: Finding music's middle ground", Anil Srinivasan, pianist and educator, took a dig at people who are obsessed with social media, continuously putting out updates. "There is no need to report everything. We need to pause, listen, and reflect." He said most of us are stuck in the social media bubble, but the real world is outside that.



Debate and discussion part of Indian psyche'

President says The Huddle is a platform for the churning of thought on a variety of issues that concern people

Here is the full text of the speech delivered by President Ram Nath Kovind at the two-day The Huddle thought conclave of The Hindu that started in Bengaluru on Saturday:

I am happy to be here to attend The Huddle organised by *The Hindu*, a name that connotes not only India's cultural diversity but also covers a sweep of history which is unparalleled in the world in civilisational context.

The Hindu Group of Publications has been relentlessly aiming to capture the essence of this great country through its responsible and ethical journalism. I commend them for their insistence on sticking to the five basic principles of journalism – truth-telling, freedom and independence, justice, humaneness and contributing to the social good. I am borrowing here Shri N. Ram's wonderful description of these principles as 'Panchsheel' for The Hindu Group of newspapers.

You all deserve appreciation for organising The Huddle as a platform for the churning of thought on a variety of issues that concern people. I am sure that the nectar, that is, Amrit, coming out from the churning would benefit the nation and the world.

Let me tell you why it is civilisational context to hold The Huddle in this land. Long before the West discovered the benefits of democratic decision-making, Sant Basaveshwara, a 12th century philosopher endowed with extraordinary wisdom, had promoted a culture of collective discussion which was called 'Anubhav Mantapa'. This is remembered as one of the world's first parliaments where people were encouraged to speak their mind irrespective of their social status. This was also a unique experiment of gender equality as women were also encouraged to take part in discussions and express their views. We, the people of India, are blessed to have sages like Bhagwan Basaveshwara among our ancestors.



On the right note: President Ram Nath Kovind, right, inaugurating The Huddle in Bengaluru. Karnataka Governor Vajubhai Vala, left, and Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa are seen. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

Debate and discussion are internalised in India's social psyche to arrive at truth since time immemorial. They are means to an end. On a lighter side, I am talking about an era that preceded high-voltage TV debates! Even in this period of transition, *The Hindu* continues with its tradition of conducting informed debate through news and views. It would not be an exaggeration to say that *The Hindu* seeks to protect the sanctity of the printed word and holds fast to the ideology of truth.

There is no doubt that perception of truth is conditioned by circumstances. For example, we tend to describe the day's progress with the rising or setting of the sun. But we know that it is more of a popular and metaphorical expression than the truth. Through arduous research, we came to know it well that neither does the sun rise nor does it set. The conditions that cloud the truth's positions are effectively dispelled by a contestation of ideas through debate, discussion and scientific temper. Prejudices and violence vitiate the search for truth.

Role in nation-building
As one of the oldest newspapers in the subcontinent, *The Hindu* has contributed immensely to the nation-building. Fired by a nationalist impulse, six intrepid youth of Madras, barely out of their teens, founded *The Hindu*

in 1878 to redeem our cultural pride. They challenged the imperial power at its peak and nourished nationalism. Since then, the story of *The Hindu's* journey is quite instructive for those who wish to understand the spirit of India that is Bharat. Readers, too, responded enthusiastically. For many in Chennai and elsewhere, the morning came to mean a cup of filter coffee and a copy of *The Hindu*.

One of this newspaper's avid readers was the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, himself. When *The Hindu* celebrated its golden jubilee in 1928, Gandhi wrote: [and I quote] "I gladly add mine to the many tributes that will be paid to *The Hindu* in its Golden Jubilee. I consider *The Hindu* to be one of the best, if not the best, among the Indian owned dailies throughout India."

Gandhi's insistence on truth,

that is, Satyagraha, was based on his unique understanding of truth. Gandhi, as we all know, was a journalist, too, and edited a range of journals, in several languages, in South Africa as well as in India. His journalism was journalism with a cause. Yet,

any prompt, are indicative of the new generation's yearning for arriving at truth through their own experience.

The world is now being shaped above all by information technology. It is so rapidly evolving that what was outright unimaginable only a few years ago has not only become a reality but has even lost its novelty! These trends have impacted journalism in all its aspects, from news gathering to delivering news to readers and finally making money to sustain the activity.

Journalism democratised

The Internet and social media have democratised journalism and revitalised democracy. This process is ongoing, but in its current stage, it has also led to many anxieties.

Today, however, we seem to be living in what has come to be called the post-truth era. I wonder what Gandhi would have said about it. Of late, there have been attempts to give various shades to truth and define its stages as if some final truth exists beyond provisional truths. To my mind, such attempts are nothing more than indulgence in semantics. Truth exists in absolute form which cannot be eclipsed by blinkers of prejudice. It cannot be a case of 'your truth' versus 'my truth'. Truth has to be one.

I am sure that society has been moving in this direction to discover truth through persistent dialogue, argumentation and scientific approach. Let me cite one instance of how society has been transforming itself. Two weeks back, I visited the Kendriya Vidyalaya located on the Rashtrapati Bhavan premises for an interaction with students.

I faced a volley of questions about fundamental duties, and many schoolchildren asked if those duties should not be made mandatory for citizens.

Those at the helm of *The Hindu* know that their journey began with a huddle, 142 years back, for a cause. That thinking must also be behind naming the event as The Huddle that covers a wide array of topics ranging from politics, economics, the environment and entertainment to gender and sports. At this conclave, speakers are invited to come together and form a huddle to deliberate and review the strategy for the benefit of society and the country. Implicit in this

effort is welfare of the entire cosmos consistent with the philosophy of *Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*. I once again commend The Hindu Group of Publications for organising this conference that lays out a road map for posterity.

Going back to the dialogue table on J&K

M.K. Narayanan seeks talks with political leadership

SUHASINI HAIDAR

India needs to reopen a dialogue with Pakistan, former National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan said on Saturday while also advocating the resumption of political engagement by the Modi government with leaders in Jammu and Kashmir.



Tough questions: Former National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan and Professors Mohammad Ibrahim Wani and Srinath Raghavan in conversation with Amit Barua, Resident Editor, *The Hindu*, Delhi. ■ SAMPATH KUMAR G.

I am known as a hawk, and I am not in favour of Pakistan, but I believe we must move towards dialogue...

dullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti and other leaders. The government had explained its decision as necessary for law and order in the Union Territory.

Country divided
Acknowledging that there was widespread support in the rest of India for the government's decision, Mr. Narayanan said there was a divide in the country between those who thought the government's decision was unwarranted, and those who supported it as overdue.

Asked whether economic development of Jammu and Kashmir might be accelerated now, given the government's plans for "investor's summits" to attract industry there, the panellists felt that it was too early to predict a positive outcome.

Mr. Wani felt that investors would not feel "comfortable" at present to invest in the Kashmir Valley unless restrictions were lifted.

Mr. Narayanan also said it would be a "mistake" to believe that economic development alone would reduce levels of violence, and stressed that a process of "political engagement" was necessary first.



Hot button issue: BJP MP Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Congress MP Manish Tewari and Centre for Policy Research president Yamini Aiyar with Mukund Padmanabhan, former Editor of *The Hindu*. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

'One country, two pathways of citizenship' reopens old debates

Session mirrors the heated national debate about the CAA

ANANTH KRISHNAN

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act fundamentally upends the Constitution by creating two very distinct pathways of citizenship on the basis of religion, according to president of the Centre for Policy Research Yamini Aiyar.

By "introducing a religion test into our definition of citizenship and what it means to be an Indian", the Act is now "reopening in a fundamental way" a debate that was long settled by the Constitution, said Ms. Aiyar on Saturday, speaking at a session on the CAA.

Mirroring the ongoing, heated national debate about the CAA, the session brought into sharp relief differing views not only about the Act but also about fundamental constitutional principles. Ms. Aiyar, BJP MP Rajeev Chandrasekhar, and Congress MP and national spokesperson Manish Tewari were in conversation with Mukund Padmanabhan, curator of The Huddle and former Editor of *The Hindu*.

No government will go into an NRC that is so heavily exclusionary

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR
BJP MP

Mr. Chandrasekhar said while the Act would fast-track citizenship for a group of people who have been refugees in India for several years post-Partition, it was incorrect to suggest that the Act "prohibits any other class of foreigner to apply for and get citizenship".

Mr. Tewari pointed out that there was no need in the first place to pass a new Act, as the existing architecture already allowed it to give citizenship to any persecuted minority. The Act not only violated Article 14 of the Constitution that provides for equality before the law, but also went against several of India's international obligations on non-refoulement.

Mr. Chandrasekhar countered that the CAA was itself "non-controversial" and only because it had been hyphenated with the National Population Register

(NPR) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) that concerns arose. "The narrative that it is discriminatory to a group of people or that somehow we have shut the door on them for citizenship is plain and simply factually wrong. Nothing in the Act prevents refugees from Bangladesh or elsewhere from applying for citizenship."

He acknowledged there were legitimate concerns over how the NRC had been implemented in Assam. "When you have 19 lakh people left out of 3.3 crore in Assam, it is problematic. No government will go into an NRC process that is so heavily exclusionary," he said.

Ms. Aiyar said the problem arose precisely because the CAA created a different channel for citizenship on the basis of religion, particularly against the backdrop of the NPR-NRC.

Political sparring aside,

Ms. Aiyar told her fellow speakers that the one heartening outcome they both should agree on was the large-scale political awakening of university students.

According to Mr. Raghavan,

the government's decision was spurred by a desire to change the entire political dispensation in the erstwhile State as had been done by former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru when he dismissed the State government and imprisoned Sheikh Abdullah for a decade in 1953, as well as by subsequent Central governments that installed alternative Chief Ministers over the past 70 years.

"I am known as a hawk, and I am not in favour of Pakistan, but I believe we must move towards dialogue..."

Mr. Raghavan was speaking as part of a panel moderated by *The Hindu's* Resident Editor, Delhi, Amit Barua, which included Ashoka University Professor Srinath Raghavan and Assistant Professor at the University of Kashmir Mohammad Ibrahim Wani, that discussed the Article 370 decision and the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir, titled "The Kashmir gambit: can it pay off?"

According to Mr. Raghavan,

the government's decision was an accord with Sheikh Abdullah in 1975. It remains to be seen how the present situation in Jammu and Kashmir will be judged in the future," he added.

Mr. Wani said the difference in the 2019 Kashmir decision was that there was no alternative leadership in place when the government decided to detain former Chief Ministers Farooq

Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti and other leaders. The government had explained its decision as necessary for law and order in the Union Territory.

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The delicate strings of musical thought

AKHILA KRISHNAMURTHY

The concluding session of day one of The Huddle 2020 began with a song. Two artistes – Anil Srinivasan, pianist and educator, and musician Sikkil Gurucharan – opened their act, aptly titled “Between jazz and Jaunpur: finding music’s middle ground”, with an interesting medley of poetry and music.

Starting off with a composition by 15th century poet-saint Arunagirinathar’s *Nada Bindu Kaladi Namo Namaha*, a song in praise of Lord Muruga, and segueing into *Ave Maria* and a poem on Allah, both by poet and freedom fighter Subramanya Bharathi, Mr. Srinivasan and Mr. Gurucharan set the context for their session.

With an intent to present music that was universal in its spirit and appeal, the session reiterated the pursuit and possibility of multiple truths. “There’s your truth, and then there’s mine,” said Mr. Srinivasan, reinforcing music and its potential to enable and nurture multiple, meaningful truths.

Against the backdrop of the polarised world of today, Mr. Srinivasan made a statement about how as musicians, they [referring to himself and to Mr. Gurucharan] were neither left nor right. “We walk the middle ground because music is after all about compassion and if there is any side that requires for us to be on it, the best way to do it would be by expanding our empathetic universe.”

The two, who have collaborated for over a decade now and constantly created music that marries the classical and the contemporary in a way that the overall experience is genre-bending, laced their session with interesting pieces of music that helped demonstrate the very idea of the middle ground.

Mr. Srinivasan spoke about the very magnanimous nature of music and how, in a sense, it doesn’t belong to any one place, region or community that can, therefore, claim ownership of it.

They demonstrated this idea of inspiration, layering and universality with Srinivasan playing a little verse of the national anthem of the United Kingdom, *God Save the Queen*.

Mr. Gurucharan went on to present how that melody manifested itself in a composition called *Santhatam Paahimam* by Muthuswamy Dikshitar, one of the trinity in the Carnatic music repertoire, way back in the early 19th century.

Tweets

It will lead to radicalisation only if the opposition plays mischief & spreads disinformation (with reference to Manish Tewari saying 'If implemented, CAA will lead to alienation, radicalisation & extremism)

SHREEKUMAR MENON

@SHREEMENON

Give loans for needy and eligible, not for big business people associated with politicians. Banks giving loans to common people but actual running those business are others... proxy loans damaging livelihood of poor and lower middle class

ROOPESH KUMAR

@ROOPESHKUMAR007

Actually this is a good point... Do nations and societies have it in them to fight generational battles or just the here-and-now ones? Pakistan and its allies have been fighting a generational battle against us, one strand of which is sowing self doubt within us. (With reference to M. K. Narayanan saying that India is not united in looking at what is happening in Kashmir unlike in the 1960s)

AKHILESH MISHRA

@AMISHRA77

What was short term abt Sheikh wanting and working to achieve an independent sultanate of J&K? Nehru rightly imprisoned him

NISSAR GURU

@NISSARGURU

It (*The Hindu*) is only print edition still active which carried more readable content

HUMANITY

@BE_WITH_IT

Experienced the ‘Presidential Presence’ for the first time at @thehuddle today #TheHuddle2020

BALAJI VENKATARAMAN

@BALAJIVENKATARA

Thank you for organising this excellent conclave

GURU MAKAM

@GURUPRASADMAKAM



12% GST: one rate that fits all is best stimulus

Economists suggest adopting a progressive tax regime and widening the direct tax base

THOMAS K. THOMAS

Widening the direct tax base should be a key priority for the government and the biggest fiscal stimulus that could be provided would be to simplify the GST to a single tax rate of 12%, according to economists speaking at a session of The Huddle titled “Rebooting the economy: what needs to be done and how we go about it”.

“The first thing we need to is to converge on a single lower rate,” said Ajit Ranade, group executive president & chief economist, Aditya Birla Group. “Secondly, we need to expand the net. A large part of the GDP is still not in the GST tax net. Areas like electricity, petroleum... are still not under the GST,” he added. “A higher GST rate is a virtual admission of failure that we were unable to go for a progressive tax regime that includes higher direct taxes,” he said.

Slowdown blues

“The [economic] slowdown is terrible for the unemployed,” said Jaimini Bhagwati, a former diplomat, World Bank Treasury specialist and author. “For those who are underemployed, the need is to create more jobs. The government has been unfair in not allowing the numbers [on GDP growth] to come out as they should. We are growing at 5% or even lower when we should have been growing at 8%. The problem is both structural and cyclical, not one or the other.”

Dr. Bhagwati said that the main concern was that India is largely a tax non-compliant so-



Growth issues: Jaimini Bhagwati, former diplomat; Ajit Ranade, group executive president & chief economist, Aditya Birla Group; and Ashima Goyal, economist, in conversation with R. Srinivasan, Editor, *Business Line*. ■ SAMPATH KUMAR GP

cietry. The Central Board of Direct Taxes had recently said that only 5.78 crore individuals filed returns disclosing income for the financial year 2018-19.

“It is high time that the government tracked the consumption pattern of things like scooter sales, how many are sending children abroad, how many people are buying a house and clamp down on those who are not paying taxes,” Dr. Bhagwati suggested.

In most other countries, direct taxes are invariably more than indirect tax collection,” he observed.

“India’s direct tax-to-GDP ratio is among the lowest in the world,” said Dr. Ranade, participating in the panel discussion moderated by Raghavan Srinivasan, Editor, *Business Line*. “GST

C The government has been unfair in not allowing the numbers [on GDP growth] to come out as they should

JAIMINI BHAGWATI
Former diplomat

is a virtual admission of failure that we were unable to go for a progressive tax regime that includes higher direct taxes,” he said.

Responding to an audience question on equitable growth, Ashima Goyal, economist and author, said, “There is a rise in rural unemployment because of the stress in agriculture. We need to deal with that issue on priority. For example, we could set up training agencies and pro-

vide opportunities in other areas.”

Dr. Bhagwati said there was a link between the poorest in the country and those working in the agriculture sector. “Over a period of the next 10 years, we need to get farmers off the land and get them jobs. India has roughly 50% of the population in agriculture while in developed countries, it’s not more than 2-4%,” he said, adding that more funds should be given to village panchayats and local administrations, and in a transparent manner.

To a question on reviving investment in infrastructure sectors, Dr. Bhagwati said that the PPP model does not work because the risk is shifted to the public and the returns are taken by the private partner. “Govern-

ment has to do the heavy lifting on infrastructure,” he added.

Dr. Ranade said that the lock-in period of 30-40 years in infrastructure projects should be done away with. “There should be something called ‘take out financing’ where a private investor comes in for say seven years and he should be able to hand over the project to the next investor. We need development of the corporate bond market,” he said.

Asked why women’s participation in the economy was not addressed, Dr. Goyal observed that India had one of the lowest levels of women’s participation in the economy. “If women are empowered to transition from informal to formal [work], then that will boost GDP growth,” she said.

In a Huddle



Food for thought: A section of the delegates at the The Huddle thought conclave of *The Hindu* in Bengaluru on Saturday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

How Chhattisgarh is bucking the slowdown trend

CM says rural buoyancy caused an uptick in economy

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

People will stick to farming as long as they get remunerative prices for their produce, and governance initiatives in Chhattisgarh over the previous year have proved this beyond all doubts, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said on Saturday.

At The Huddle session on the topic “Betting on rural India: challenges in the time of climate change” moderated by Nistula Hebbar, Political Editor, *The Hindu*, he listed the series of measures that significantly raised the income for farmers in the State. Mr. Baghel said due to the resultant buoyancy in the rural sector, there was an overall uptick in Chhattisgarh’s economy.

“We have improved the purchasing power of the rural community by reducing their economic burden and substantially raising their incomes

number of farmers going up by 2.5 lakh.”

Linking remunerative pricing for produce to environment-friendly outcomes, the Chief Minister said he had been lobbying with the Union government for converting a portion of the grain stocks to biofuels. The Centre was trying to stop him from paying bonuses to farmers.

This is not the first time that the States and the Centre are ruled by different parties, but this government has been disrespectful of our federal spirit. A sum of ₹23,000 crore due to us under the GST regime has not been given to us for several months now.”

Keeping farming and animal husbandry sustainable economically and environmentally was the focus of his government, Mr. Baghel said.

He said government schemes were in place for recharging ground water and reviving rivulets across the State. After he took over, he said, earlier categories of beneficiaries of the public distribution system had been done away with. “Our PDS is now universal.”

Pitch for Rahul

Turning the discussion to Congress politics, Mr. Baghel said his was the only party that confronted the BJP and its current leadership on questions of ideology and governance.

“People are generally very reluctant to speak up these days. Yes, *The Hindu* is one platform that is not afraid of speaking up. Police violence happened in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi in recent times. Who has stood by the victims other than Priyanka Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi? Therefore, I say only Rahul Gandhi is capable of challenging this regime in a truthful manner,” he said, obliquely pitching for Mr. Gandhi’s return as party chief.



New-age scripts: Actor Taapsee Pannu; Namrata Rao, editor; and Atika Chohan, screenwriter, at a discussion on ‘Women in the age of cinema’. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

Heroes still not okay with ceding screen space to women: Taapsee

Men reluctant to play secondary role in Indian movies, says actor

TANU KULKARNI

Though the Hindi film industry is witnessing a surge in the number of women-oriented films, male actors are still not comfortable with getting less screen space than their women leads, actor Taapsee Pannu says.

At The Huddle session on “Gender bender: women in the new age of cinema”, she narrated several instances of male actors showing reluctance to play a secondary role in a film. Taapsee said a leading actor, in fact, had refused to work with her in a film where he was given 40% screen time. He said he had been advised by people that he should not do this film at “this stage in his career,” she said.

Ms. Pannu also spoke of how women are always put on a pedestal, which often deprives them of “feeling the regular emotions”.

“We are now, however, walking down from the pedestal to become normal human beings. In films, the aspirational hero is now being replaced by real people,” she said.

Female voice

Speaking of women in the new age of cinema, screenwriter Atika Chohan said the “consolidation of the female voice” was a collective momentum of all female artistes.

She also spoke of how feminism could not be superimposed on any story but should be organic.

C For how long will my benchmark be based on achievements of male actors?

the industry had distanced them selves from her.

Social conditioning

All the three panellists spoke of how they had to battle with their own social conditioning. Ms. Chohan said she constantly questioned herself at work and wondered if she could be a “carrier of misogyny”. Speaking of sexism, which is deeply ingrained, Ms. Pannu spoke of how she was told by a producer that she was the “female Ayushmann Khurrana”.

“Things are normalised to such a large extent that a compliment is not actually a compliment. For how long will my benchmark be based on achievements of male actors,” she asked.

The session was moderated by Namrata Joshi, Cinema Editor, *The Hindu*.

C Social conditioning



Rural focus: Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel in conversation with Nistula Hebbar, Political Editor, *The Hindu*. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

Virus cases double in South Korea

Samsung shuts down factory; nine of those who tested positive had gone to Israel on pilgrimage

REUTERS

SEOUL
South Korea said on Saturday that the number of new coronavirus (COVID-2019) cases in the country had doubled to 433, and officials suggested that the tally could rise significantly as more than 1,000 people who attended a church at the centre of the outbreak reported flu-like symptoms.

Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 142 new cases at a morning briefing and another 87 in the afternoon. It also reported another death from the virus, bringing the total to three.

Linked to gathering

Of the new cases, most have been linked to outbreaks at a branch of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus in the southeastern city of Daegu and a hospital in Cheongdo.



New frontier: Medical workers with a patient at a hospital in Chuncheon on Saturday. ■ AFP

Samsung Electronics on Saturday said one of the virus cases had been confirmed at its mobile device factory complex in Gumi, causing a shutdown of the facility there until Monday morning. Gumi is close to Daegu. Samsung's factory in

Gumi accounts for a small portion of its total smartphone production, as it produces most of its products in Vietnam and India.

Also among the new cases were the first reported infections in Busan, South Korea's second-largest city, and on

the Island of Jeju, a popular tourist destination. The government designated both Daegu, which has a population of 2.5 million people, and Cheongdo county, home to around 43,000 people, as "special care zones" on Friday. Officials sent military

medical staff and other health workers, and extra resources, including hospital beds. More than half of the national cases are linked to a 61-year-old woman known as "Patient 31" who attended religious services at a branch of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus in Daegu, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony. The woman had no recent record of overseas travel, authorities said.

Among the new confirmed cases were nine of the 39 South Koreans who had gone on a pilgrimage to Israel earlier this month, North Gyeongsang Province Governor Lee Cheol-woo told a briefing on Saturday.

Israel's Health Ministry said in a statement it had been informed by South Korea that the nine tourists who had toured across Israel earlier in the month had since tested positive.

Iran shuts schools after virus kills 5

Cinemas also closed after country sees 28 confirmed cases

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TEHRAN

Iran on Saturday ordered the closure of schools, universities and cultural centres after a COVID-19 outbreak that has killed five people in the Islamic republic – the most outside the Far East.

The moves came as Iranian authorities reported one more death among 10 new cases of the virus. Since it emerged in December, the SARS-CoV-2 virus has killed 2,345 people in China, the epicentre of the epidemic, and 17 elsewhere in the world.

The COVID-19 outbreak in Iran first surfaced on Wed-

nnesday, when authorities said it claimed the lives of two elderly people in Qom, a Shia holy city south of the capital.

They were the first confirmed deaths from the disease in West Asia. "We have 10 new confirmed cases of COVID-19," Iran's Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour told state television on Saturday.

The latest cases take to 28 the total number of confirmed infections in Iran.

Based on official figures, nearly 18% of those infected with the SARS-CoV-2 in Iran have died, compared with little more than 3% in China.

As a "preventive mea-

sure", authorities ordered the closure of schools, universities and other educational centres in Qom and the nearby city of Arak from Sunday, state television reported.

The government also announced that "all art and cinema events in halls across the country have been cancelled until the end of the week" in order to stop infections.

The World Health Organization has expressed concern over the speed at which COVID-19 has spread in Iran, as well as it being exported from the country to other countries including Lebanon.

100 more disembark from Japan cruise ship

They will be quarantined near Tokyo

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TOKYO

Around 100 more passengers were allowed to disembark from the COVID-19-stricken Diamond Princess cruise ship on Saturday as Japan's Health Minister

apologised after 23 others were allowed to leave without being properly tested.

The news came as a Japanese woman who left the ship on Wednesday tested positive for the virus after returning home to Tochigi Prefecture, Kyodo news agency reported, citing the prefectural government. She is the first person to

have tested positive for the virus among the group of approximately 970 passengers who disembarked earlier this week, it said.

The 100 people who left on Saturday will be quarantined for two weeks near Tokyo, officials said. At a news conference on Saturday, Health Minister Katsunobu Kato apologised for 23 passengers having been allowed to leave the ship without undergoing all the required tests. With the latest disembarkation, a 14-day quarantine period is expected to start for more than 1,000 crew still on board.

Afghans celebrate as week-long truce with Taliban begins

This could be followed by a peace deal on February 29

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL

A week-long, partial truce appeared to be largely holding across Afghanistan on Saturday, with jubilant civilians celebrating in the streets to mark a potentially historic turning point in the war, even as isolated attacks threatened to undermine the process.

The Taliban, U.S. and Afghan forces have all agreed to a so-called "reduction in violence" marking only the second lull in fighting since 2001. "It is the first morning that I go out without the fear of being killed by a bomb or suicide bomber. I hope it continues forever," Kabul taxi driver Habibullah said, while in other parts of the country people danced in the streets.



Marking a new beginning: People in Kandahar celebrate the start of a truce between the Taliban, the U.S. and Afghan forces on Saturday. ■ AFP

More than 10,000 killed or wounded in 2019: UN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL

More than 10,000 civilians were killed or wounded in Afghanistan's war last year, the UN announced on Saturday.

According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 3,404 civilians were killed and 6,989 were injured in 2019.

The UNAMA report said there had been significant fluctuations in violence throughout 2019, coinciding with gains and setbacks made during U.S.-Taliban negotiations.

While the number was down 5% from 2018, it was nonetheless the sixth year straight that the war caused

more than 10,000 casualties, UNAMA said.

The 5% drop in casualties was attributed to the decrease in activity by the local Islamic State affiliate in eastern Afghanistan, which was largely wiped out last year.

The UNAMA report said there had been significant fluctuations in violence throughout 2019, coinciding with gains and setbacks made during U.S.-Taliban negotiations.

reduction in violence across Afghanistan", while Afghan security forces will remain "on active defence status" during the week.

In Kandahar, one insurgent said he had received orders to stand down – but another said he had only been ordered to refrain from attacking major cities and highways.

Washington has been in talks with the Taliban for more than a year to secure a deal.

'Campaign spreading false alarm on COVID-19'

U.S. blames Russia-linked accounts

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

Thousands of Russia-linked social media accounts have launched a coordinated effort to spread alarm about the coronavirus, disrupting global efforts to fight the epidemic, U.S. officials said.

The disinformation campaign promotes unfounded conspiracy theories that the U.S. is behind the COVID-19 outbreak. State Department officials tasked with combating Russian disinformation said that false personas are being used on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to advance Russian talking points in multiple languages.

"By spreading disinformation about coronavirus, Russian malign actors are

once again choosing to threaten public safety by distracting from the global health response," said Philip Reeker, the acting Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia.

Economic war' The claims circulating in recent weeks include allegations that the virus is a U.S. effort to "wage economic war on China," that it is a biological weapon manufactured by the CIA or part of a Western-led effort "to push anti-China messages."

U.S. individuals, including Bill Gates, who has spent billions on global health programmes, have also been falsely accused of involvement in the virus.

U.K. to revert to pre-EU blue passport

REUTERS

Britain will start re-introducing traditional blue passports next month, the Interior Ministry said on Saturday, replacing the burgundy European Union (EU) documents that have been in use since 1988. Reverting to the dark blue of pre-EU days has been a point of pride for many Britons who voted to leave the bloc in a 2016 referendum – even though the new passport will be made by a Franco-Dutch firm.

"By returning to the iconic blue and gold design, the British passport will once again be entwined with our national identity and I cannot wait to travel on one," said Home Secretary Priti Patel.

Stay out of U.S. elections, Sanders warns Russia

He was briefed by intelligence officials of possible Russian efforts to interfere in polls

REUTERS

WASHINGTON/LAS VEGAS

Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders warned Russia on Friday to stay out of White House elections after U.S. officials told him Moscow was trying to aid his campaign.

"The intelligence community is telling us they are interfering in this campaign, right now, in 2020. And what I say to Mr. Putin, if elected President, trust me you are not going to be interfering in American elections," Mr. Sanders told reporters in Bakersfield, California.

A frontrunner Mr. Sanders, 78, is considered the frontrunner for the Democratic nomination and was favoured to win the Nevada caucuses on Saturday.



Battle for Nevada: Presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders speaking during a rally in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Friday. ■ AFP

were told that Russia, maybe other countries, are going to get involved in this campaign," Mr. Sanders told reporters.

"Look, here is the message: To Russia, stay out of American elections. What they are doing, by the way, the ugly thing that they are

in the U.S. presidential campaign to boost Mr. Trump's re-election chances.

"These are more paranoid announcements which, to our regret, will multiply as we get closer to the (U.S.) election," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. "They have nothing to do with the truth."

Jessica Brandt of the Alliance for Securing Democracy, an organisation that monitors foreign interference in U.S. politics, said Russian state media and official social media accounts were working to help Mr. Sanders by amplifying conspiracy theories that his Democratic rivals, the Democratic National Committee and the "corporate media" have been "rigging the system" against him.

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

ELSEWHERE



Pope moves Salvadoran priest closer to sainthood

VATICAN CITY

A priest, who was murdered in 1977 and who in death became an icon for human rights in rural Latin America, was moved a step closer to sainthood by Pope Francis on Saturday. The Vatican said the Pope had approved a decree recognising that Rutilio Grande and two lay Salvadorans were killed "in hatred of the faith".

Ryanair head accused of Islamophobia over remark

LONDON

Muslim men should be profiled at airports as terrorists will "generally be of a Muslim persuasion," Ryanair CEO Michael O'Leary said in an interview published on Saturday, sparking accusations of racism. A spokesman from the Muslim council of Britain accused him of "Islamophobia".

Conservatives take lead after Iran election sees low turnout

This is a blow to President Rouhani's moderate faction

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TEHRAN

Conservatives took an early lead on Saturday as the first results of Iran's parliamentary election came in, boosted by a predicted low turnout following the disqualification of nearly half the candidates.

Friday's election followed months of steeply escalating tensions between Iran and the U.S. Voters had been widely expected to shun the polls, disillusioned by unfulfilled promises and struggling to cope in a country whose economy has buckled under harsh U.S. sanctions.

Mass disqualification About half of the 16,000-odd candidates were disqualified. Among them were many reformist and moderate candidates – including dozens of sitting MPs – leaving conservatives with virtually

most votes went to the first three names on the alliance's list, he said.

Final results for both the capital and other provinces would be announced by early Sunday at the latest, he added. If the results are confirmed, it will mean President Hassan Rouhani's slender majority of reformists and moderates elected with fanfare four years ago is nearly purged.

An unofficial tally published by Fars news agency said 183 of Parliament's 290 seats had already been decided, with conservative candidates winning 135 of them. Reformists were a distant second at 20, it said, adding independents had won 28 seats.

Turnout was estimated at around 40% nationwide and 30% in Tehran at the scheduled close of polls on Friday, according to Fars.

L'Arche charity founder sexually abused women

Vanier had a 'spiritual hold' on them

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS

A report reveals that L'Arche founder Jean Vanier, a respected Canadian religious figure whose charity work helped improve conditions for the disabled in multiple countries, sexually abused at least six women. Vanier died last year at age 90.

According to the report seen by the AP on Saturday, the women's descriptions provide evidence enough to show that Vanier engaged in "manipulative sexual relationships" over a period from 1970 to 2005.

During the inquiry, commissioned by L'Arche last year and carried out by the independent, U.K.-based

4 banks under PCA being monitored: Das

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das has said four banks under the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework are taking efforts and they are being monitored.

Currently, Indian Overseas Bank, Central Bank of India, UCO Bank and United Bank of India are under this framework, which places several restrictions on them, including on lending, management compensation and directors' fees.

"We would like them to improve their performance and [exit] PCA as quickly as possible. We are engaged with the banks. We are monitoring it. They are taking efforts," Mr. Das told PTI in an interview.

'Pro-business and not pro-crony policies needed'

India has some distance to go: CEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

India has some distance to go in fully shifting from pro-crony to pro-business policies, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) Krishnamurthy Subramanian said.

Pro-business policies will enable the "invisible hands of the market" and also take the country to the goal of \$5 trillion in GDP, he added.

"Pro-business policies are those that enable fair competition in the country. We have some distance to go in terms of enabling that fully. Pro-crony policies, on the other hand, just help incumbents and that is something that we have to stay away from in enabling the

Tardy pace of farm schemes irks FinMin

Ministry asks banks to hurry, wants 2.33 cr. more PM-Kisan beneficiaries under credit card scheme

MANOJIT SAHA

MUMBAI

The Finance Ministry has come down heavily on public sector banks for unsatisfactory progress of various schemes related to the farm sector. The Ministry has expressed its displeasure over the tardy progress made by banks, and asked them to double their efforts.

The communication to banks comes ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to Chitrakoot in Uttar Pradesh on February 29, where he will launch the implementation of schemes announced in the Budget.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced in the Budget that all eligible beneficiaries of PM-KISAN will be covered under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme. The Finance Minis-



Make haste: While there are 9 crore PM-Kisan beneficiaries, there are only 6.67 crore active KCC accounts. •V.V. KRISHNAN

try is not satisfied the progress made by banks so far in implementing the scheme.

The Ministry said while there were 9 crore PM-Kisan scheme beneficiaries, there are only 6.67 crore active KCC accounts. The campaign for saturation of all PM-Kisan

beneficiaries with KCC started on February 10.

'Not encouraging'

"As you are aware, at present there are about 6.67 crore active KCC accounts as against 9 crore beneficiaries under PM-Kisan, which

leaves a gap of 2.33 crore PM Kisan beneficiaries who are outside the coverage of KCC schemes. However, mid-way [through] this campaign, the progress made so far is not encouraging," the Finance Ministry said in a letter dated February 21.

The letter, addressed to all MD and CEOs of public sector banks and chairman of State Bank of India and Nabard, has been reviewed by *The Hindu*. The KCC scheme was launched in 1998 with the objective of providing short-term credit to farmers for cultivation of crops, post harvest expenses, working capital for maintenance of farm assets, among others.

"The on-going campaign for saturation of all PM Kisan beneficiaries with KCC which started with effect from February 10, 2020 will

culminate at a function at Chitrakoot (U.P.) by the Hon'ble PM on 29.02.20," the letter said. The Ministry also pulled up banks on slow implementation of Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) Scheme.

"As per data compiled by DAC&FW [Department Of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare], from the PMFBY portal, the total number of applications received by all banks as on 21.02.20.. is only 9.33 lakh, of which 4.13 lakh applications have been sanctioned," the letter said.

"Given the tardy progress of the campaign, banks need to redouble efforts to ensure success of the campaign," it added. Launched in 2016 by Mr. Modi, PMFBY provides insurance cover against failure of crops.



Mr. Buffett says the returns in the insurance businesses were strong compared with long-term U.S. Treasuries. •AP

Buffett backs decisions that fuel record profit

Berkshire 'fully prepared' for his death

REUTERS

NEW YORK

Warren Buffett on Saturday defended Berkshire Hathaway Inc.'s decision to invest heavily in the stocks of companies such as Apple Inc., while giving new details about how Berkshire Hathaway is prepared for his death, in an annual letter to shareholders.

The letter, widely read on Wall Street, came as Berkshire Hathaway posted record full-year earnings of \$81.42 billion that nearly doubled its previous record from 2017, largely as a result of accounting rule changes that require the company to report paper gains and losses from its stock holdings with net income.

Despite those gains, Berkshire Hathaway's stock has underperformed the broad U.S. stock market by gaining 11.7% over the last 12 months, compared with a 20.3% gain in the S&P 500 over the same time.

In his letter, Mr. Buffett focused on his company's investments in the stock of companies such as Apple at a time when the conglomerate has struggled to find whole companies to buy, while also highlighting the

growth of its core insurance businesses. Mr. Buffett noted that the returns in the insurance businesses were especially strong compared with the low yields on long-term U.S. Treasuries.

If something close to current rates should prevail over the coming decades and if corporate tax rates also remain near the low level businesses now enjoy, it is almost certain that equities will over time perform far better than long-term, fixed-rate debt instruments."

The 89-year-old assured that Berkshire is prepared for the eventual departures of himself and vice-chairman Charlie Munger, 96.

"Charlie and I long ago entered the urgent zone," he wrote. "But shareholders need not worry: Your company is 100% prepared for our departure."

He gave new details about what will happen to his shares in the company after his death, noting he expects it will take 12 to 15 years for his estate to fully liquidate his position in the company.

He wrote, "I myself feel comfortable that Berkshire shares will provide a safe and rewarding investment during the disposal period."

Greaves set to tap EV, BS-VI sectors

Auto engineering major moves to business-to-consumer segment

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI



Nagesh Basavanhalli

Greaves Cotton Ltd., a predominantly business-to-business (B2B) player supplying diesel engines to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) such as Piaggio, has, following a business transformation strategy, moved into the business-to-consumer (B2C) segment to take advantage of the fast moving electric vehicles (EV) industry and the BS-VI compliant engine business, top officials said.

Fuel-agnostic solution
Its fuel-agnostic engine solutions will add to its growth, they added.

"Three years ago, when disruptions were coming in, Greaves decided to shift fo-

cus from being a pure auto engine player to a fuel-agnostic solution provider and adopted a strategy to diversify into the non-automotive engine segment, clean mobility, including the fuel-efficient CNG engine, electric mobility and strengthen the after-market business," said Nagesh Basavanhalli, MD and CEO, Greaves Cotton.

Having invested heavily in technology development, the firm has managed to develop a grounds-up BS-VI three-wheeler (3W) diesel single-cylinder engine in a record 24 months. This engine is best suited for city transportation as it delivers up to 30% lower emissions.

Recently, the company acquired 100% stake in Ampere Vehicles in the electric mobility domain. Ampere is developing several new electric two-wheelers and eyeing a sizeable market share.

Non-auto diversification
Greaves currently manufactures 7 HP to 700 HP engines. "Diversification into the non-automotive segment has paid off with exponential growth achieved in the last

few years. The company has also expanded and strengthened the retail business (2W-3W) across the country in the form of Greaves Retail (380 stores) and Ampere Exclusive outlets (over 200) which have shown significant growth," Mr. Basavanhalli said.

Today, Greaves is well poised to grab upcoming opportunities in diverse (existing business) areas. This comes from our investment in multiple, newer business areas – non-automotive usage, multibrand spares Greaves Care, Greaves Retail in the last 3-4 years – which are now fetching good results and have strongly positioned the company to take it to the next level of growth," he said.

INTERVIEW | PADMAJA CHUNDURU

Amalgamation sans hitch is our goal, says Indian Bank MD

There will be opportunity to rationalise products'

N. ANAND

With barely six weeks left for the amalgamation of Allahabad Bank with Indian Bank, officials of both lenders are burning the midnight oil to ensure smooth transition of technology and human resources, says Indian Bank MD and CEO, Padmaja Chunduru. Edited excerpts from the interview:

I have been visiting corporates from my SBI days. In Chennai, there are firms that have not been availing any working capital facility from Indian Bank. We are trying to rope them in

We are primarily strong in the south as is Allahabad Bank in the north. There is very little overlap of branches. We flew down zonal branch heads from Kolkata to Chennai and they had a healthy discussion. In fact, we held town hall meetings in three cities and one more will be held soon. Our staff is very receptive. Daily, we get hundreds of suggestions to improve the bank's performance. Recently, we opened a portal for our staff. Soon, we will do it for our customers as well on the Net.

Is it not time to rationalise products?

Yes, it is a good opportunity to rationalise and remove products that have been going on for a long time. Sunsetting products is a good opportunity. The other one is to pick the best products from the two and tweak them into more market-friendly products. In our next steering meeting, we will realign retail assets.

We will centralise loan processing, Retail, MSME, Agriculture (RAM) allied activities so that branches are not bogged down in processes. That will help us have staff on the customer-facing side.

Recently, you had visited corporates. Any feedback from them?

I have been doing this since my SBI days. There are so many good companies in India in which Indian Bank is not there. In Chennai, there are corporates who have not been availing any working capital facility from us. We are trying to rope them in.

Do you think that the merger will lead to excess staff?

We don't have excess staff, but some duplication of roles. There will be some

Need to enhance global risk monitoring, says FM

Asks G20 to explore policy coordination

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday emphasised on the need to enhance global risk monitoring and explore the scope for policy co-ordination to deal with such risks.

Speaking at the G-20 Finance Ministers and central bank governors meeting in Riyadh, she called upon all member countries to enhance their efforts aimed at empowering women, youth and small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

A tweet by the Finance Ministry said that the Finance Minister had called upon the G20 to enhance global risk monitoring and explore the scope for policy co-ordination to deal with such global risks.

It added that she had also emphasised that growing inequality had slowed down

the pace of inter-generational mobility globally. She pointed out that identifying the causes and developing solutions require coordinated policy solutions, the tweet said.

Ms. Sitharaman held bilateral talks with her counterparts from other countries and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development officials on the sidelines of the G20 event.

'One Indian weighing 70 kg, uses 1500-kg car to travel'

'Need personal transport designed to move one person'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Indians use cars too big by size for moving a single person and the fate met by Tata Nano was unfortunate, Mahindra & Mahindra MD Pawan Goenka said.

He also conceded the automobile industry did add to pollution and pitched for adopting means to reduce it.

The Tatas had discontinued Nano after a poor response to the 600-cc ₹1 lakh car. Many experts had blamed its utilitarian product pitch in a country where owning a car was seen as a lifestyle necessity as the reason for the failure.

"It is very unfortunate that the Nano didn't do very well," Mr. Goenka said, speaking at an alumni event organised by his alma mater IIT-Kanpur here.

"We need to have personal transport that is more tuned to moving a single person," he said.

Keeping the same requirement in mind, Mr. Goenka said his company had launched a smaller car, the



Pawan Goenka

He said Indians, weighing 65-70 kg, use an entire 1,500 kg car to travel individually, hinting at the wastage of resources that go into making the big car move.

"We need to have personal transport that is more tuned to moving a single person," he said.

Keeping the same requirement in mind, Mr. Goenka said his company had launched a smaller car,

which should be hitting the market soon.

He also acknowledged that automobiles at present contributed 7% of the carbon dioxide and a fifth of particulate matter, PM 2.5, and every effort should be made to reduce the impact.

Connected cars

He also said India can lead the race in connected cars due to its prowess on the information technology front.

There is 'a lot of work' happening in electric vehicles as well with start-ups dedicated to niche areas such as batteries, charging infrastructure, two-wheelers and three-wheelers mushrooming, he said.

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LVB to focus on capital-efficient lending

Lender eyes jewellery, MSME loans; targets ₹6,250 crore additional business

N. ANAND

CHENNAI

Cash-strapped private sector lender Lakshmi Vilas Bank Ltd. (LVB) has begun focussing on increasing its loan book through assets that require zero or lesser capital allocation, to improve its profitability, said a top official.

"We are fine-tuning some of our business verticals and have given additional powers to branches, regional managers and centralised executives who were earlier not in the loop," said S. Sundar, MD and CEO, LVB



Bodo accord and rifts

Why have the terms offered by the Centre not gone down well with several tribal groups in Assam?

ABDUS SALAM

The story so far: The Ministry of Home Affairs, Assam government and Bodo groups including the All Bodo Students' Union and militant outfits signed an agreement on January 27, New Delhi's third attempt at conflict resolution after the 1993 and 2003 accords. The new deal offers more hope than the earlier accords; some of the most potent factions of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland that had stayed away from earlier agreements are now on board. More significantly, the stakeholders have agreed that the updated political arrangements would remain confined to the realm of wider autonomy within the State of Assam, giving statehood and Union Territory demands a final burial.

Is all well with the peace accord? The third peace accord with the Bodos threatens to intensify the sociopolitical contestation among groups in the State not just in the expanded area, which will be renamed as Bodoland Territorial Region, but also regions where the so-called Scheduled Hill Tribes reside in large numbers. While greater contiguity of Bodo-populated areas would aid more efficient governance in the Sixth Schedule administrative unit, it has deepened insecurity among other groups such as Koch Rajbongshi, Adivasis and Muslims in the existing Bodoland Territorial Area Districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udaguri. The local Kokrajhar MP, a non-Bodo, has appealed to the government to ensure that a Bodo solution does not engender a non-Bodo problem. The Bodoland Peoples Front, which has dominated the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) since inception in 2003, is also not pleased with newer claimants to power in the council elections due soon. BTC chief Hagrama Mohilary, himself a former Bodo Liberation Tigers militant, has threatened to reject the accord and refused to use BTR as part of the new vocabulary. There are also rumblings elsewhere. The agreement stipulates that Bodos living in the hill areas outside the BTAD will be conferred Scheduled Tribe (Hills) status, something that has not gone down well with tribes such as the Karbis.

Students' bodies of the hill districts, chiefly the Karbi Students' Association and the Dimasa Students' Union, have risen against the Centre's assurance of granting ST (Hills) status to Bodos living in the hill areas

Why are the hill tribes up in arms? In Assam, there are as many as 14 recognised plains tribe communities, 15 hill tribe communities and 16 Scheduled Caste communities. The plains tribes are Barmans in Cachar, Bodos, Deoris, Hojais, Kacharis, Sonowals, Lalungs, Mechs, Misings, Rabhas, Dimasas, Singphos, Khamtis and Garos. The ST (Hills) status is primarily reserved for tribes residing in the two autonomous hill districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao, where the Karbis and Dimasas are the most dominant in their respective areas. At present, while 16 seats are reserved for STs in the 126-member Assam Assembly, two are reserved for existing tribes in the 14 Lok Sabha seats of the State. Students' bodies of the hill districts, chiefly the Karbi Students' Association and the Dimasa Students' Union, have risen in unison against the Centre's assurance of granting ST (Hills) status to the Bodos living in the hill areas. Militant group Karbi Longri and North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF), which signed a ceasefire with the Centre in 2009, has also opposed the move saying it would adversely impact the "identity of the Karbis". While political configurations at the State level will not be largely altered because of the measure in the five Assembly seats of the hill districts, elections to the local autonomous tribal councils in Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao, which also enjoy Sixth Schedule protections, could witness realignments. The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, which has 26 seats, is due for elections in 2022. The Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council has 30 seats. The Karbis comprise over 46% of the population in the KAAC area and the Dimasas around 35% in the DHADC.

Will it have a ripple effect? Other insurgent groups at the talks table with the Centre, including the KLNLF, have taken note of the Bodo pact and are likely to push for similarly generous terms. The plot is likely to be stirred further in Assam if the plan to accord ST status to six communities from the State – Tai Ahom, Koch Rajbongshi, Sotea, Moran, Matak and 36 different Adivasi groups clubbed together as 'Tea Tribes' – gets the final nod. The communities are estimated to make up almost 27% of Assam's population. The impending Naga peace accord, in the works in its latest iteration since 2015, could also spur a demand for territorial and administrative rights in the Naga territories of Manipur even as the dominant Meiteis of the valley push their own agenda of inclusion in the ST category.

The Trump visit as India-U.S. trade booster?

What is the prospect of cooperation on trade and tariffs, and will the key sticking points be overcome?

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

The story so far: United States President Donald Trump's first foreign trip after his acquittal in an impeachment trial in the Senate will also be his first ever official visit to India. The 45th American President will be in India on February 24-25, spending time in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home State of Gujarat, and in New Delhi. At stake during Mr. Trump's visit is the prospect of more cooperation on trade and tariffs, the possibility of major defence deals and the optics of a mass welcome at the just-constructed Motera/Sardar Patel stadium in Ahmedabad, which would hope to mirror the success of the "Howdy Modi" event in Houston, Texas, in September 2019.

Where do the two countries stand on trade cooperation?

The world's oldest and largest democracies have been, by and large, stable trading partners to each other, yet this area has not been without wrinkles in recent years, especially since Mr. Trump entered the Oval Office. At a broad level, U.S.-India trade in goods and services has grown at a steady clip from \$16-billion to \$142-billion during 1999-2018.

As a recent report by the Council on Foreign Relations noted, "U.S. and Indian officials have disagreed for years on tariffs and foreign investment limitations, but also on other complicated issues, particularly within agricultural trade. Concern for intellectual property rights has preoccupied the U.S. for thirty years, while issues concerning medical devices and the fast-growing digital economy have more recently emerged."

At the heart of Mr. Trump's foreign policy strategy are concerns about the trade deficit that the U.S. has with its economic partners worldwide. Although India does not rank among the top 10 in this regard – for example, its 2019 trade deficit with the U.S. of \$23.3-billion is dwarfed by China's corresponding figure of \$346-billion – there have been a series of skirmishes between Washington and New Delhi over tariffs in specific sectors, and that has destabilised the bilateral balance to a certain extent.

What is the chronology of U.S.-India trade squabbles?

In March 2018, the Trump administration slapped "national security" tariffs of 25% on \$761-million worth of steel and of 10% on \$382-million of aluminium imported from India. Despite formal World Trade Organisation disputes initiated by India protesting these tariffs, Washington ended a year-long review of the U.S. Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) in June 2019 by removing India from the tariff concession system. This is said to have impacted nearly \$5.8 billion of India's exports, or more than 12% of exports to the U.S. in 2017. India immediately imposed higher retaliatory tariffs on 28 U.S. products including almonds, walnuts, cashews, apples, chickpeas, wheat, and peas.

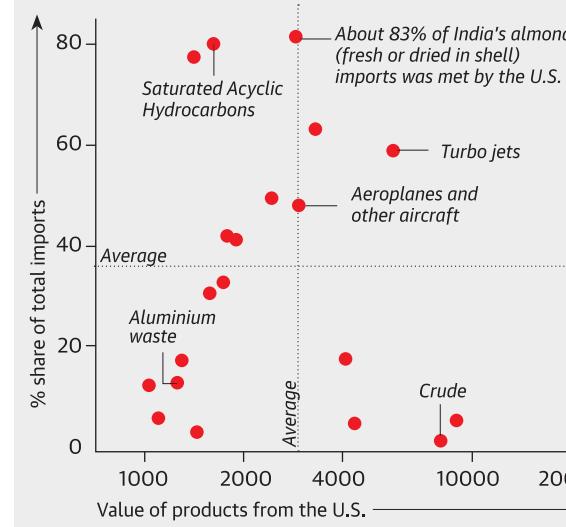
Besides other agricultural products such as dairy, the Trump administration remains wary of India's position on intellectual property rights protection, barriers to free-flowing foreign direct investment, symbolically important trade sectors such as Harley-Davidson motorcycles and medical devices.

The U.S. also recently changed the status of India, among other countries, to a "developed" country, to further reduce trade concessions that it could receive from the U.S.

The other side of the coin is the concern that India has

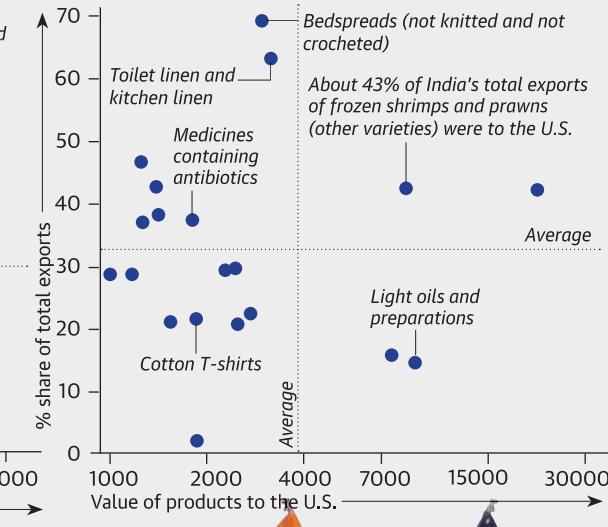
Business diary

India's imports | The graph shows imports from the U.S. in \$-million for various products and their % share of total imports between FY15 and FY20 (Apr.-Dec. '19). For instance, India imported \$2.8-bn worth U.S. almonds



About 83% of India's almond (fresh or dried in shell) imports was met by the U.S.

India's exports | The graph shows exports to the U.S. in \$-mn for various products and their % share of total exports between FY15 and FY20 (Apr.-Dec. '19). For eg., India exported \$8.2-bn of frozen shrimps/prawns (others)



About 43% of India's total exports of frozen shrimps and prawns (other varieties) were to the U.S.

History of imports from the U.S.

Period	Value*	% share
2014-2019	128	5.84
2009-2014	108	5.18
2004-2009	678	6.77
1999-2004	192	6.59

History of exports to the U.S.

Period	Value*	% share
2014-2019	225	15.20
2009-2014	154	11.48
2004-2009	918	13.89
1999-2004	485	20.10

* in \$-billion

Compiled by Suman Sen & Naresh Singaravelu

Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Govt. of India

expressed on multiple occasions regarding restrictions on visas for highly skilled professionals seeking to take up employment in the U.S. – even though the laws that brought in restrictions, for example by imposing higher visa fees, were passed before Mr. Trump entered office.

Is there any hope for a positive announcement on trade?

While there were initial signs that a "limited trade deal" might be hammered out when Mr. Trump and Mr. Modi meet, that aspiration fell through when it became clear

that nothing on that scale would likely be finalised in this space until after the November 2020 U.S. presidential election. Thus U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer's planned visit to India just prior to Mr. Trump's was put off to a future date.

What unconfirmed reports point to presently is the possibility of a "mini trade deal" or more

simply a smaller trade package announcement. This might include, reports suggest, an increase in India's LNG imports from the U.S. In a similar vein, *The Hindu* reported earlier that "An MoU for India's gas importer Petronet to invest \$2.5 billion in U.S. company Tellurian

Inc's LNG project, that was signed during Mr. Modi's visit to Houston, is likely to be formalised during Mr. Trump's visit."

What are the priorities in the defence and strategic spaces?

There is more positive news on the defence cooperation and trade front, with the likely announcement during the visit of Mr. Trump of a deal for 24 Lockheed Martin-built MH-60R Seahawk Multi-Role Helicopters for the Indian Navy; India's Cabinet Committee on Security has cleared their purchase. These 24 helicopters, said to be worth \$2.4-billion, are likely to be procured through the Foreign Military Sales route of the U.S. government. India and the U.S. are also said to be in negotiations regarding India's potential purchase of drones, additional P-8I long-range, multimission maritime patrol aircraft and also Raytheon intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) aircraft.

On the strategic front, Mr. Trump's oft-reiterated promise to stop the U.S.'s "endless wars," particularly by bringing home U.S. troops from Afghanistan, will possibly pose some thorny questions for Indian strategies in its neighbourhood. If the American withdrawal proceeds apace and alongside the possible revival of the Taliban's influence, Pakistan-based terror elements or the Inter-Services Intelligence gain a stronger foothold in the power vacuum that will inevitably develop there, this could compromise Indian interests considerably. Mr. Modi may privately seek reassurances from his American counterpart to mitigate the fallout of such a scenario.

Is the endgame near in Syria's civil war?

How significant is the advancement of government forces in Idlib? Why is Turkey upset?

STANLY JOHNY

The story so far: Recent advances by Syrian government forces in Idlib, the last major rebel-held territory in the war-torn country, have triggered a massive displacement besides raising the possibility of a wider conflict with neighbouring Turkey. The Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad is backed by Russia and Iran in the operation to recapture Idlib, while some rebel factions within the province get support from Turkey. Ankara's protests have also threatened to disrupt the delicate Turkish-Russian cooperation, which had gained traction in recent years. However, despite Turkey's protests and mounting international concerns, the Syrian government seems determined to press ahead with the operation.

Why is Idlib strategically important?

The province in northwestern Syria that borders Turkey fell into rebel hands in 2015 at the height of the Syrian civil war. The Assad regime at that time was on the verge of defeat. Rebels and jihadists had captured huge swathes of the country from the regime, including parts of Aleppo, Hama, Homs, the outskirts of Damascus, the capital, and several towns in the south near the Jordan border. But since the arrival of the Russians in September 2015, the regime forces have recaptured almost all of these territories from the rebels. The Kurdish region in northern Syria is run by an autonomous government and the Kurdish rebels, under attack by Turkish forces and pro-Turkish rebels, recently bought peace with Damascus. So in effect, Idlib is the last rebel stronghold, which is also the seat of the Syrian Salvation Government, the rebel administration that claims to represent the whole of Syria. If the government forces recapture Idlib, the Syrian civil war would practically be over, handing final victory to Mr. Assad. With Idlib under control, the regime can also take over, or come close to taking over, the 130-km border the province shares with Turkey. The government will also have control over the key highways that run through Idlib connecting Aleppo, which before the civil war was the commercial capital of Syria, to Damascus. The government version is that it wants to "liberate" Idlib from terrorists.

Who controls Idlib?

There have been several rival rebel and jihadist factions present in Idlib ever since it fell from government control. The dominant group among them is Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) whose roots go back to al-Qaeda's Syria branch. The group is commanded by Abu Mohammad al-Joulani, who was originally sent to Syria in the early years of the civil war by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the then chief of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), to establish an al-Qaeda branch in Syria. Joulani set up Jabhat al-Nusra, which emerged as the most



fierce jihadist group in the Syrian theatre. When Baghdadi announced the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Joulani broke links with him and continued to command the Nusra Front, which remained the official Qaeda unit. Al-Nusra later rechristened itself a few times to shed the al-Qaeda tag and operate as a Syrian nationalist front. In January 2017, the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (another name for al-Nusra) and a few other Salafi-jihadist groups merged to create the HTS. The group has implemented a strict Sharia code in Idlib and has been ruling the province through fear and force ever since. Though the HTS has renounced al-Qaeda ties, it is still widely seen as the Syrian front of the transnational jihadist group. The Free Syrian Army and other pro-Turkish rebel groups are also part of the alternative government in Idlib, in an uneasy alliance with the HTS.

Why is Turkey protesting?

There are largely two aspects to Turkey's strong opposition to the Syrian government's bid to take Idlib. First, the humanitarian angle. Turkey already hosts more than three million Syrian refugees. It always feared that an attack on Idlib would trigger another refugee exodus towards its borders. The UN estimates that about one million people have already been displaced in Idlib over the past three months. Turkey has now shut its border with the province. But the pressure on Turkey will mount to open the border if more and more displaced people move towards it. Ankara does not want that situation to arise. The second is strategic. Turkey has made it clear that it wants the Syria-Turkish border to be controlled by pro-Turkish rebels, not by the Syrian government, nor by the Syrian Kurds. It had launched a few military offensives in the past to carve out buffer zones on the border. If the Syrian government recaptures Idlib, it will alter the balance of power in the border region, giving an

upper hand to the Syrians, and of course, the Russians. The pro-Turkish rebels will be weakened, which means Turkey's ability to manoeuvre in the Syrian conflict will be enfeebled. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan wants to prevent such an outcome.

What is Putin's game plan?

Russian President Vladimir Putin, the main backer of the Syrian regime, has always maintained that his single most priority in the Syrian civil war is to help the government win the war. The Russians had taken tactical retreats in the past, like the de-escalation agreement they reached with Turkey to reduce violence in Idlib in 2017 or the pact reached between the two sides to neutralise Kurdish rebels in northern Syria. But Mr. Putin, it seems, never backed off from recapturing Idlib, and seal off the civil war. With the focus of the United States turning towards domestic issues in an election year, Mr. Putin and Mr. Assad have a window of one year to achieve this goal. This explains the timing of the attack.

Turkey's protests were predictable. But the question is whether Mr. Erdogan has the wherewithal to stave off the Russians within Syria. Even if Turkey makes a limited intervention along with the rebels, it may be able to delay the Syrian-Russian advances, not deter them. And if Turkey launches a full-scale war, the consequences would be disastrous for all sides.

CM YK

Classy Williamson propels New Zealand

Ishant's strikes keep India in the game; Taylor digs in with his skipper to raise 93 for the third wicket

INDIA IN NZ

S. DINAKAR
WELLINGTON

Kane Williamson picked the length early and played the ball late like great batsmen do. He had the time to essay his shots and the timing to ease the ball between fielders.

Men such as Williamson play with the field, they open up gaps, disrupt bowlers' rhythm, create opportunities. Yet, his innings on Saturday, the second day of the first Test at the Basin Reserve, ended in anticlimactic fashion.

Quality innings

His strength, the cover-drive, proving his undoing. Williamson could not keep his shot off seamer Mohammed Shami down and was held by substitute Ravindra Jadeja, diving forward. Nevertheless his 89 was an innings of quality and substance.

Yet credit to the Indians – dismissed for 165 – for fighting back. They hung in there, continued to keep attacking fields and hit back in the last session. New Zealand was 216 for five when play reached an early conclusion because of insufficient light.

Earlier, the host was coasting at 166 for two – a potentially huge lead in sight – when Ishant Sharma got a delivery to climb into Taylor (44), who, unable to keep the sphere down, was picked up by short-leg.

The dismissal ended the 93-run third-wicket partnership between Taylor and Williamson. Kohli did well to keep the short-leg.

Then, late in the day, the left-handed Henry Nicholls was held in the slips off an Ashwin delivery that spun away.

The Indians kept the belief. Even after the Kiwis had surpassed the Indian score, Kohli had a slip and two short-legs when Ashwin operated at Williamson, well into his 80s.

There was some turn and bite for Ashwin and, if the Indians can set a reasonable target in the fourth innings, he could be a handful. He



Exquisite: Kane Williamson showed why he may be counted among the greats with a finely crafted innings. ■ GETTY IMAGES

bowed against the wind and there was some drift for him.

Off-colour Bumrah

Apart from Ishant, who tested batsmen with his line and bounce to scalp three, the Indian pacemen largely disappointed. Jasprit Bumrah was off-colour.

The seamers should have bowled a fuller length that the Kiwi pacemen had employed with success to test footwork and find edges.

They needed to force the Kiwi batsmen to come forward to well pitched up deliveries and cover for the swing. If they didn't do so, they would be caught at the crease.

Ishant struck for India when the Kiwis replied; he had Tom Latham taken down the leg-side and castled Tom Blundell (30), who played some fluent pulls and cover drives, with a nip-backer.

And the 100-Test man, Ross Taylor, walking in to a memorable ovation, joined his skipper.

Williamson was already into his groove, stroked off either foot – the cover-

SCOREBOARD

INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

Prithvi Shaw b Southee 16 (18b, 2x4), Mayank Agarwal c Jamieson b Boul 34 (84b, 5x4), Cheteshwar Pujara c Watling b Jamieson 11 (42b, 1x4), Virat Kohli c Taylor b Jamieson 2 (7b), Ajinkya Rahane c Watling b Southee 46 (138b, 5x4), Hanuma Vihari c Watling b Jamieson 7 (20b, 1x4), Rishabh Pant run out 19 (53b, 1x4, 1x6), R. Ashwin b Southee 0 (1b), Ishant Sharma c Watling b Jamieson 5 (23b), Mohammed Shami c Blundell b Southee 21 (20b, 3x4), Jasprit Bumrah (not out) 0 (3b); Extras (lb-1, w-3): 4.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-16 (Shaw, 4.2 overs), 2-35 (Pujara, 15.3, 3-40 (Kohli, 17.5), 4-88 (Mayank, 34.3, 5-101 (Vihari, 41.1), 6-132 (Pant, 58.2), 7-132 (Ashwin, 58.3), 8-143 (Rahane, 62.3), 9-165 (Ishant, 67.3).

NEW ZEALAND BOWLING

Southee 20.1-5-49-4, Bout 18-2-57-1, de Grandhomme 5-12-0, Jamieson 16-3-39-4, Ajaz 3-2-7-0.

NEW ZEALAND – 1ST INNINGS

Tom Latham c Pant b Ishant 11 (30b), Tom Blundell b Ishant 30 (80b, 4x4), Kane Williamson

FALL OF WICKETS

c sub b Shami 89 (153b, 11x4), Ross Taylor c Pujara b Ishant 44 (7b, 6x4, 1x6), Henry Nicholls c Kohli b Ashwin 17 (62b, 2x4), B-J. Watling (batting) 14 (29b, 1x4), Colin de Grandhomme (batting) 4 (2b, 1x4); Extras (b-1, lb-1, w-5): 7. Total (for 5 wkts. in 71.1 overs): 216.

INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 18.1-4-62-0, Ishant 15-6-31-3, Shami 17-2-61-1, Ashwin 21-1-60-1.

Devine turns it on for NZ

Taylor excels in West Indies' win

WOMEN'S T20 WC

REUTERS
PERTH

Sophie Devine led from the front, smashing an unbeaten 75 for her sixth straight T20 half-century, to guide New Zealand to a seven-wicket victory over another Sri Lanka in a Group A match of the ICC Women's World Twenty20 World Cup on Saturday.

In Group B, West Indies captain Stafanie Taylor, with an allround display, helped her side to a similar win over debutant Thailand.

In the second match, openers Chamari Athapaththu (41) and Hasini Madushika played unorthodox shots to give Sri Lanka a brisk start with a stand of 60



Hitting away: Devine played as she is wont to while guiding New Zealand to an easy victory over Sri Lanka. ■ GETTY IMAGES

before Hayley Jensen's spell of three of 16 slowed down the momentum. Devine hit six fours and two sixes in her 55-ball knock to help the Kiwis get through.

The scores: Group A: Sri Lanka 127/7 in 20 overs (Hasini Perera

Ervine hits ton

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE DHAKA

Skipper Craig Ervine scored a dogged century as Zimbabwe shared the honours with Bangladesh on the opening day of the one-off Test here on Saturday.

The scores:

Zimbabwe 228/6 in 90 overs (Prince Masvure 64, Craig Ervine 107, Nayeem Hasan 4/68) vs Bangladesh.

Barca rides on Messi's four

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON

Lionel Messi scored four goals as Barcelona began a crunch week in its season by thrashing Eibar 5-0 in the La Liga on Saturday.

In the Premier League, Olivier Giroud and Marcos Alonso came in from the cold to inspire in Chelsea's 2-1 win over Tottenham as the Blues cemented their grip on fourth place.

The results:

Premier League: Chelsea 2 (Giroud 15, Alonso 48) bt Tottenham 1 (Rudiger 89-0); Burnley 3 (Vidya 53, Rodriguez 61-pen, McNeil 87) bt Bournemouth 0; Crystal Palace 1 (Van Aanholt 44) bt Newcastle 0.

Sheffield United 1 (Stevens 26) drew with Brighton 1 (Maupay 30); Southampton 2 (Long 8, Armstrong 90+5) bt Aston Villa 0.

La Liga: Celta Vigo 1 (Aspas 62) bt Leganes 0; Barcelona 5 (Messi 14, 37, 40, 87, Arthur 89) bt Eibar 0.

Friday: La Liga: Real Betis 3 (Sergio Canales 19-pen, Fekir 35-pen, Joaquin 48) drew with Real Mallorca 3 (Hernandez 16, Budimir 27, Kubo 70).

Seria A: Brescia 1 (Chancellor 26) lost to Napoli 2 (Insigne 49-pen, Fabiani 54).

Bundesliga: Bayern Munich 3 (Gnabry 25, Lewandowski 70, 88) bt Paderborn 2 (Srbeny 44, Michel 75).

Sri Lanka squeaks home

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE COLOMBO

Tailender Hasaranga de Silva hit an unbeaten 42 as Sri Lanka beat West Indies by one wicket in the first ODI here on Saturday. Needing 290, Sri Lanka reached the target with five balls to spare as Hasaranga held his nerve after the hosts slipped to 262 for eight. For the West Indies, Alzarri Joseph claimed three wickets after Shai Hope had made 115.

The scores: West Indies 289/7 in 50 overs (Shai Hope 115, Darren Bravo 39, Roston Chase 41, Keemo Paul 32 n.o.) lost to Sri Lanka 290/9 in 49.1 overs (Avishka Fernando 50, Dimuth Karunaratne 52, Kusal Perera 42, Thisara Perera 32, Hasaranga de Silva 42 n.o.; Alzarri Joseph 3/42).

Agar's hat-trick sinks SA

AUSTRALIA IN SA

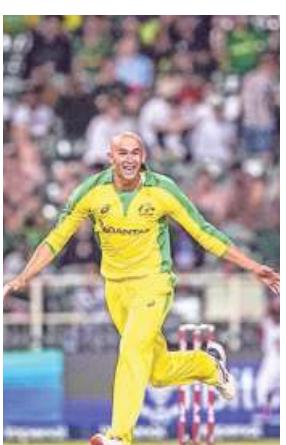
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE JOHANNESBURG

Left-arm spinner Ashton Agar took a hat-trick as Australia crushed South Africa by 107 runs in the first Twenty20 International at the Wanderers here on Friday.

Steve Smith, back in South Africa for the first time since the 2018 ball-tampering scandal, hit a top score of 45 for Australia, which made 196 for six after being sent in.

South Africa made a bad start against the pace of Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins before Agar's triple strike sent them hurtling to an all-time lowest T20 total of 89.

Agar returned career-



best figures of five for 24.

The scores: Australia 196/6 in 20 overs (S. Smith 45, A. Finch 42; Steyn 2/31, Shamsi 2/31) bt South Africa 89 in 14.3 overs (Agar 5/24).

Agar returned career-

India pulls off a victory

Beats Australia via the shootout to pocket three points

FIH PRO LEAGUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BHUBANESWAR

India bounced back in style to beat holder Australia 3-1 via a shoot-out, after being locked 2-2 at the end of regulation time, in the second match of the two-leg FIH Pro League match on Saturday.

India converted two penalty corners through Rupinder Pal Singh (25th minute) and Harmanpreet Singh (27th), while Trent Mitton (23rd) and skipper Aran Zalewski (46th) were the scorers for Australia.

In the shoot-out, Harmanpreet, Vivek Sagar Prasad and Lalit Upadhyay scored for India, while only Daniel

HOCKEY AT ITS BEST



First salvo: Rupinder Pal Singh celebrates his opening strike for India. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUTH

Beale found the net for the visitors.

By virtue of the win, India earned three points while Australia pocketed one.

Both the teams have 10 points from six games but the Kookaburras are a rung

above the Manpreet Singh-led side at third spot in the standings on goal difference.

The result: India 2 (Rupinder 25, Harmanpreet 27) drew with Australia 2 (Trent Mitton 23, Aran Zalewski 46). India won 3-1 in the shootout.

PM launches KI varsity games

CUTTACK: Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the first Khelo India University Games through a video conference facility here on Saturday. As many as 3,400 athletes from 159 universities across the country will vie for top honours across 17 disciplines. PTI

Ajay bows out

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BARCELONA

Ajay Jayram crashed out of the semifinals of the Barcelona Spain Masters badminton on Saturday after suffering a straight-game loss to Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn. The unseeded Indian went down 20-22, 12-21 in the BWF World Tour Super 300 event.

Ravi Dahiya, India's lone gold winner

ASIAN WRESTLING

UTHRA GANESAN NEW DELHI

On a day Bajrang Punia was expected to raise the Indian flag, the crowd at the K.D. Jadhav Indoor Stadium had to wait till late night, the last bout of the day to be precise, to listen to the Indian nation anthem.

Ravi Dahiya was the lone bright spot for the host, expected to rule the medals table in the men's freestyle category on the day but managing only a handful of silvers instead on day five of the Senior Asian Wrestling Championships here.

Dahiya, who won bronze at the 2019 World Championships in the 57kg to qualify for Tokyo Olympics, began in dominating fashion

– a 14-5 win against former world champion Yuki Takahashi of Japan – and ended the same way, thrashing Hikmatullo Vohidov of Tajikistan 10-0 in 2 minutes 38 seconds for the title.

Bajrang, though, failed to

BRIGHT SPOT: Ravi Dahiya, on top, brought cheer to the Indian fans with a stellar show. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

fight in the final, going down 7-5 in the 79kg category to Arsalan Budazhappov of Kyrgyzstan with most of the points being scored in the last 30 seconds of the match.

The results:

57kg: 1. Ravi Dahiya (IND), 2. Hikmatullo Vohidov (TJK), 3. Amirhossein Azim Maghsoudi (IRI), Daulet Niyazbekov (KAZ).

70kg: 1. Ilyas Bekbulatov (UZB), 2. Amirhossein Ali Hosseini (IRI), 3. Islambek Orozbekov (KGZ), Meirzhan Ashirov (KAZ).

79kg: 1. Arsalan Budazhappov (KGZ), 2. Gourav Balyani (IND), 3. Ali Bakhtiar Savadkouhi (IRI), Shinkichi Okui (JPN).

97kg: 1. Mojtaba Mohammadsafieh Goleij (IRI), 2. Satyavrat Kadiyan (IND), 3. Alisher Vergali (KAZ), Rustam Iskandari (TJK).

Bright spot: Ravi Dahiya, on top, brought cheer to the Indian fans with a stellar show. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

CM

TV PICKS

New Zealand v India: 1st Test, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 4 a.m.

NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 7 a.m.

Bangladesh v Zimbabwe: Only Test, Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 9 a.m.

Ranji Trophy: Star Sports 3 & SS Select 1 HD, 9.30 a.m.

Khelo India University Games: Star Sports (SD & HD), 11.30 a.m.

ICC Women's World T20: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 4.30 p.m.

South Africa V Australia: 2nd T20I, Sony Six (SD & HD), 6 p.m.

ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

Serie A: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 5 p.m.; Ten 1 & ESPN (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

Bundesliga: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 8 p.m.

IN BRIEF

Divi loses in doubles quarters

DELRAY BEACH (USA)

Divi Sharan, in partnership with Artem Sitak of New Zealand, was beaten 6-2, 4-6, [10-3] by the top seeded Bryan brothers, Bob and Mike, in the doubles quarterfinals of the \$673,655 ATP tennis tournament here.

Facile win for Bagan

MARGAO

Mohun Bagan ran away a 3-0 winner over Churchill Brothers in their I-League match here on Saturday.

The result: Mohun Bagan 3 (Diawara 7, Suahir 50, Tarsunov 58) bt Churchill Brothers 0.

Vishal powers Cavalry-A

NEW DELHI

Vishal Chauhan scored six goals in powering Cavalry-A to a 9 goals to 2½ victory over Remount and Veterinary Corps in the semifinals of the Army polo championship.

The results (semifinals):

Cavalry-B 7½ (Raghav Raj Singh 2, Apurva Dabholkar 2, Tarsem Singh, handicap 2½) bt ASC 5 (GS Pandher 3, Prithvi Singh Rathore 2).

Cavalry-A 9 (Vishal Chauhan 6, Mritunjay Singh 2, Aman Singh) bt RVC 2½ (Anant Rajpurohit, Ramvir Singh, handicap ½).

Mukesh Kumar's three-wicket haul helped Bengal gain a crucial 82-run lead on the third day of its Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Odisha at the DRIEMS ground here on Saturday.

Odisha, resuming at 151 for four, aggregated 250, to concede the lead which could decide the fate of the match. At draw of stumps, Bengal – at 79 for two in its second innings – was in the driver's seat with an overall lead of 161 runs.

Odisha batters, captain Subhranshu Senapati and overnight not out batsman Debabrata Pradhan, negotiated the old leather well for about an hour to add 40 runs.

Bengal took the new ball in the 83rd over and Nilkantha Das immediately provided the breakthrough, having Debabrata (15) caught

behind.

Mukesh, who combined well with fellow pacers, made the best use of the new ball on a placid track.

The disciplined Mukesh rapped the pads of Biplob Samantray and changed ends to find Rajesh Dhuper's edge before the lunch break.

In the first over of the middle session, Mukesh bowled Suryakant Pradhan with a yorker.

Ishan Porel claimed the last two wickets, including that of a fighting Senapati (46, 103b, 5x4), to wrap up Odisha's innings within half-an-hour of resumption.

In firm control of the match, Bengal gave its top-order some batting practice in its second essay.

The scores: Bengal – 1st innings: 332.

Odisha – 1st innings: Shantanu Mishra b Shahbaz 62, Anurag Sarangi c Goswami b Nilkantha 5, Debasish Samantray c Gos-

wami b Nilkantha 68, Govinda Poddar c Majumder b Porel 11, Debabrata Pradhan c Goswami b Nilkantha 15, Subhranshu Senapati c Shahbaz b Porel 46, Biplob Samantray lbw b Mukesh 3, Rajesh Dhuper lbw b Mukesh 10, Suryakant Pradhan b Mukesh 13, Basant Mohanty b Porel 5, Preet Chohan (not out) 4; Extras (b-6, lb-1, w-1): 8. Total (in 102.1 overs): 250.

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-135, 3-145, 4-151, 5-191, 6-198, 7-217, 8-235, 9-241.

Bengal bowling: Porel 27.1-10-72-3, Nilkantha 21-8-43-3, Mukesh 26-9-51-3, Shahbaz 25-60-1, Nandi 5-0-17-0.

Bengal – 2nd innings: Koushik Ghosh b Sarangi 41, Abhimanyu Easwaran c sub b Poddar 30, Abhishek Raman (batting) 4, Manoj Tiwary (batting) 3; Extras (w-1): 1. Total (for 2 wkts. in 45 overs): 79.

Fall of wickets: 1-60, 2-76.

Odisha bowling: Suryakant 9-3-20-0, Basant 8-3-10-0, Debabrata 8-4-7-0, Chohan 10-0-31-0, Poddar 8-2-8-1, Sarangi 2-0-3-1.

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Magazine

**CULTURE**

Collector and queer activist Patrick Sun on supporting the LGBTQIA+ rights movement in Asia through art p5

**WIDE ANGLE**

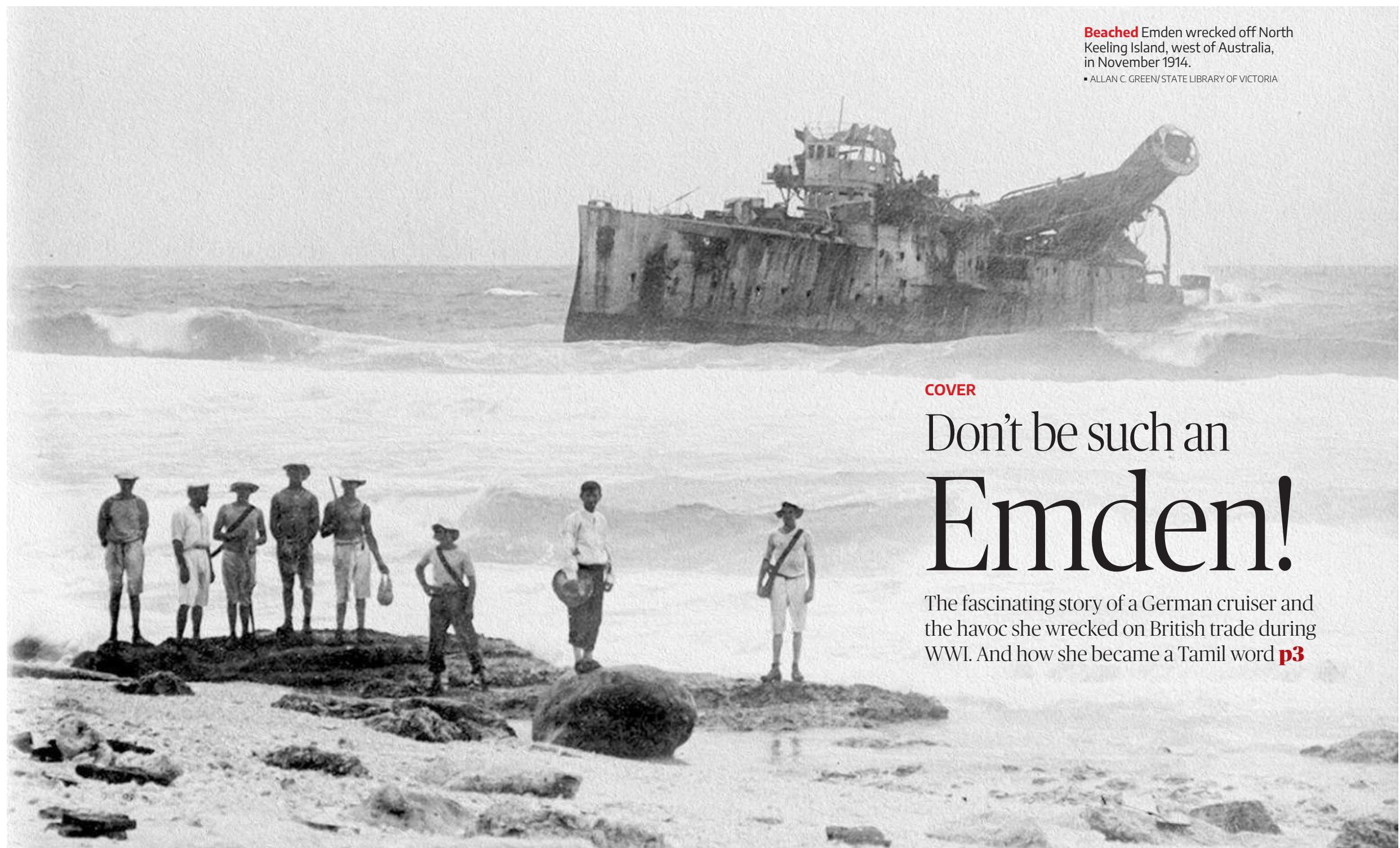
A Sanskrit inscription dedicated to Allah as protector of a vihara sheds light on the pluralistic past of Bengal p6

**FRAMED**

Kashmir's Kani shawl, made from Ladakhi Pashmina, draws its uniqueness from the way it is woven p11

**LITERARY REVIEW**

Mamang Dai writes about the blend of myth and memory that gives literature from the Northeast its unique timbre p7

**COVER**

Don't be such an Emden!

The fascinating story of a German cruiser and the havoc she wreaked on British trade during WWI. And how she became a Tamil word p3

last week

Golden boy

Sunil Kumar became the first Indian in 27 years to win a gold medal in Greco-Roman wrestling at the Asian Wrestling Championships, ending the country's long dry run when he defeated Kyrgyzstan's Azat Salidinov 5-0 in the final match of the 87kg category, held in Delhi. The last Indian to win gold was Pappu Yadav in 1993, in the 48kg category.

**Buffalo bolt**

Amid the media hullabaloo around Kambala racer Srinivasa Gowda, who was being compared to sprinting great Usain Bolt for covering 100m in 9.55 seconds, another racer surpassed Gowda's time in the traditional buffalo-drawn racing sport of Karnataka. Nishant Shetty covered 100m in 9.51 seconds and joined the three other Kambala runners who have broken the 10-second mark.

**Wall paper**

The controversial preparations for U.S. President Trump's visit continued apace in Gujarat, with 45 families in an Ahmedabad slum being served eviction notices and a four-foot wall erected to hide slums from view. In U.P., the irrigation department released 500 cusecs of water into the Yamuna to improve "environmental conditions" ahead of Trump's visit to Agra.

**Access denied**

British MP Debbie Abrahams, chair of a Parliamentary group on Kashmir and a critic of the Indian government on human rights, was denied entry to India after landing at Delhi airport. She was deported to Dubai, with government sources claiming that her visa had been revoked a few days before, although Abrahams claimed she only learned of it after landing.

**Unbeatable**

V Unbeatable, a troupe of 29 dancers from Mumbai, won the second season of *America's Got Talent: The Champions* with an exhilarating, impressively athletic performance featuring Blink 182's drummer, Travis Barker. The group, which had finished in fourth place last year, came in a resounding first this time, earning a standing ovation from the judges and congratulations from many Indian supporters.

**Killer virus**

The death toll from novel coronavirus in China crossed 2,000, with more than 74,000 people confirmed to be infected. Several other countries saw a spike in cases, including Japan and South Korea. Meanwhile, passengers who tested negative finally began to leave the Diamond Princess cruise ship, which had been quarantined for two weeks in Japan. At least 542 people on board were found to be infected.

**Video war**

Jamia Millia Islamia students and the Delhi Police engaged in a "video war" with both groups releasing footage portraying each other as responsible for the campus violence on December 15. In one video deconstruction, the "stone" held by a protester turned out to be a wallet. The police also filed a chargesheet naming Sharjeel Imam — a JNU Ph.D. student facing several charges and now in custody in Assam — as instigator.

**Man and wives**

The Senate of Utah voted unanimously to effectively decriminalise polygamy, a practice that was once in vogue among the U.S. State's predominantly Mormon population, but with only fundamentalist groups continuing to practise it now. If the Bill is passed in the House of Representatives — where it's likely to face more resistance — polygamy will simply become an infraction with fines on par with parking tickets.

**Chennai rises**

A massive protest in Chennai saw thousands of people, from both Islamic groups and opposition parties, marching to demand that the State Assembly pass a resolution against the CAA, NRC and NPR. Protesters marched to Chepauk stadium and held a gathering there in defiance of a court order. Several other cities in T.N. witnessed similar protests.

**Right to protest**

Addressing the protests at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh, the Supreme Court upheld the fundamental right to protest, but urged a change of venue to avoid blocking roads. It appointed three interlocutors, senior advocates Sanjay Hegde and Sadhana Ramachandran (in pic) and ex-CIC Wajahat Habibullah. The former two visited the site and held talks.



ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

Peking duck, anyone?

Let the Chinese eat what they like. Leave it to the scientists to find out if their eating habits are causing periodic outbreaks of diseases

Muraleedharan Nair

On a recent weekend, I, along with my wife and son, went to a popular multicuisine restaurant in Gurugram for an early dinner. As we sat down at a table, a little girl came running towards us, calling out 'ye ye'. Even without her calling me grandpa in Mandarin, I would have guessed that the little angel was from China as her sprightly gait was unmistakably that of the hundreds of little emperresses I had seen during my stints in the Indian diplomatic missions in that country.

Her grandfather back home must be a retired teacher, I thought. I had seen hardly anyone other than some elderly academics and a few retired journalists in urban China who have not dyed their grey hair black.

As I turned to look for her parents, I saw a small group of young couples huddled together at a corner table.

The mother was waving at the daughter to return, possibly hesitant to walk towards us through the res-

taurant nearly full with weekend diners.

While the little girl was oblivious of the havoc COVID-19 has unleashed in her home country, her mother was clearly conscious of the sensitivities of the other diners and seemed unwilling to move away from the sanctuary the corner table seemed to provide the Chinese group. We waved at the young lady who gave us a half-smile that seemed to thank us for the gesture.

Authentic tastes

As we waited for our order, the elderly Caucasian couple at the table next to ours were served their meal. The Chinese chef came to their table, rousing my curiosity. I noticed a roast duck sitting on a platter, skilfully sliced, skin first followed by the meat in well-rehearsed, regimented movements unique to Chinese chefs.

The aroma of the dish that had wafted across by then reminded me of our visits to popular Peking duck restaurants near the Forbidden City in Beijing. I was pretty sure instantly that my gong bao chicken was going

to be great. As we were leaving post-dinner, the girl's father waved us goodbye. As I walked up to their table for courtesy's sake, the quizzical look of the Caucasian couple seemed to ask me, "Are you sure?"

The group was from central China, not far from Wuhan. The girl's parents were in India on a business-cum-pleasure trip with friends and had decided to extend the stay for a few more days for the sake of their only child.

The Year of the Pig that just ended witnessed a slowing down in their business, but the Year of the Rat has brought bad luck to their nation, the young man said in a choked voice. He said my unruly grey hair reminded him of his ailing father back home, and invited me to join them for a quick drink. I thought he would break into tears if I stayed longer. I wished them and the entire Chinese population good health and prosperity as I left.

I did steal a quick glance at the meal they were having. For, the best food for the Chinese anywhere in the world is Chinese food. The Chinese, like most Indians, are not adventurous as their Western counterparts are in trying out unfamiliar cuisines.

After the outbreak of COVID-19, friends have been sending me videos of Chinese wet markets, asking if it was true that they eat all the wild animals and birds figuring in the footage. Yes, several videos are genuine, but certainly not as scary as the Western commentators have

made them out to be.

Friends in academic circles in mainland China have often told me that the Chinese do not go after "anything that walks, creeps, swims or flies" on purpose. In fact, as in India, they have one of the exquisite range of dishes that varies from region to region.

China was hit by several droughts and famines, some of which lasted years on end. Stricken with hunger, millions perished. Those who were lucky to survive went into the forests, foraging for wild berries, fruits, roots and leaves. And animals and birds that they knew were tasty. For those in the coastal regions, the sea provided sustenance.

When even that became scarce, they caught and ate whatever was available. It was not a question of taste or sensitivities, but a simple matter of survival.

When conditions improved, some of the people were already hooked on to several "exotic" animals, birds and other lifeforms normally not relished in other parts of the world. That too varied from region to region in a large country like China.

Spice challenge

It is generally a trying experience for a number of Chinese to savour spicy Indian cuisine. So is the case with most of the Indians on short visits to China. Trying out various exotic dishes even during official banquets has been a challenge to visitors and even many of those Indians working in China. We all go searching for Indian restaurants not only in China but in other parts of the world as well.

After all these years, I have come to realise that no food is good or bad. It is just a matter of getting used to the taste.

Let the Chinese eat what they like. Leave it to the scientists to find out whether their eating habits have led to the periodic outbreaks of diseases caused by viruses jumping from animals and birds onto humans.

Let us wish the billion-plus people of our neighbouring nation well. Even as we take precautions, let us not follow the West, but continue to respect the sensitivities of the visitors from China. After all, for us, *athithi devo bhava* is not just another proverb.

.....
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FEEDBACK

Letters to the Magazine can be e-mailed separately to mag.letters@thehindu.co.in

Cover story

The ancient story of Koya matriarchs, Sammaakka and Saralamma, who provided love and support for their local tribal community ('When the devils come visiting'; Feb. 16) filled me with delight. The jaggery on the heads represents the sweetness in getting together, thinking together and acting together.

K.M.K. MURTHY

Magazine



fertilizers for natural manures."

VANAMALA

The banality of evil

Sudipta Datta's interview with Revati Laul about her book *The Anatomy of Hatred* ('We have created a political culture that feeds off hate'; Feb. 16) was thought-provoking. The title reminds me of Norman Cousins' book, *The Anatomy of an Illness*. Ms. Laul asks us to indulge in a thought experiment to know what it feels like to be part of a mob. What biology enables, culture forbids. But if culture itself permits hatred, hate becomes both 'powerful' and 'addictive'. The culture of hatred is a very important problem in a plural society like ours. People must guard against hating others, without falling prey to politicians who thrive on hate-mongering.

P. PERRAJU SARMA

Secular counter-narrative

Prof. Gyan Prakash points out the "counter-narratives emerging from the streets". (60 Minutes: 'Social roots of the current protest stronger than JP movement'; Feb. 16) The basis for this idea is political awareness among the marginalised and the minorities that, if religious identity is made the criterion for citizenship, then their equal rights, as citizens, will be in jeopardy. The counter-narrative against majoritarianism is mutual regard for all faiths. This is being demonstrated in the multi-faith prayers being held in Shaheen Bagh.

S. GURU DUTT

Green wastelands

In these critical times of climate change and dwindling forest cover, the efforts of Sabarmati and her father to convert a large tract of wasteland into a forest, albeit a "food forest", assumes enormous significance ('The food forest of Nayagarh'; Feb. 16). KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI

Organic farming

.....

S. GURU DUTT

Encore

I wish Ms. Lenin's illuminating pieces would appear more frequently here in *The Hindu*. ('Cuddly with a chance of venom'; Feb. 16)

KAY NATHAN

Dr. Internet is in the wrong trade

Enter the symptoms and lo, the diagnosis is made. How casual and at what cost?

Santosh Balakrishnan

It was a peaceful Saturday at the clinic, but my pleasant chain of thought was broken by a loud hello. A man in his late 30s introduced himself as a successful senior executive at the local office of a leading multinational information technology giant. His exposure to information science, he said, has made him aware of the need to invest time in his health. I commended his mature insight into life's priorities, and asked him the reason for his visit.

"I think I need a biopsy," he said. "Whatever for," I asked taken aback. "How else do you propose to diagnose my lymphoma?" The unexpected question knocked the wind out of my sails. "Whoever told you that you have lymphoma?" He signs are all there," He had entered his "symptoms"

into an online app, which unequivocally made the "diagnosis".

"Would you mind telling me what exactly are the symptoms and signs?" I asked with the greatest respect to the oracle of the modern world, the Internet.

Just aches and pains

"If you must know," he said rolling his eyes, "it all started six weeks ago with generalised aches and pains; I have been waking up each morning as if I have been through the mill."

"And then," he said softly with the air of a writer narrating his story to a prospective film producer, "I noticed a progressively increasing painless lump in the right groin. To think that this happened after working out at the gym under a trainer for the past two months has done better."

"I think I need a biopsy," he said. "Whatever for," I asked taken aback.

"How else do you propose to diagnose my lymphoma?" The unexpected question knocked the wind out of my sails.

"Whoever told you that you have lymphoma?" He signs are all there," He had entered his "symptoms"



Thinker look like he was simply bored. "How can you be so sure," he asked indignantly, upset by my dismissal of the oracle's prophecy. My clinical diagnosis, I assured him, was the summation of elements I had picked up from his medical history and signs I had noted on examination, a skill afforded to me by years of training.

"With due respect to you doctor," he said, "I would be happier if this could be proved through an objective test such as a scan rather than embark on surgery based on human perception alone."

At this point, I decided it was time to call it quits and wrote him out a request for an MRI. Two days later, he returned a much happier man waving his report. "Doc, you were right! It is indeed a hernia," he said expecting me to feel happy. I was glad, I said. The perception of the machine projected as images had convinced him that my real-world perception of his clinical situation was worthy of acceptance.

The evident lack of trust in clinical medicine is driving many clinicians to rely more on investigations and imaging than on their professional judgment, sounding the death knell for clinical medicine and driving care beyond the reach of most.

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Of women porters and shouting matches

Journey by trains in India has a phenomenal ability to throw up surprises

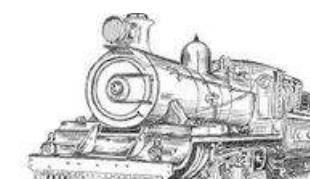
V. Ramasubban

I am 87 and widely travelled. Now in the past decade, my wife and I have been thinking of our earlier journeys and compare the conditions then and now.

In 1952, for instance, while travelling from Madras to Kanatala as a student, I had to get down at Virangam, near Ahmedabad, to take a connecting train. When the train stopped at the station at night, two or three women porters (have you seen them in any other station?) barged into the coach and picked up my luggage and

ran out, yelling in Gujarati. I panicked. My Gujarati co-passengers told me calmly that the porters would come back and take me to my luggage and seat. Within 10 minutes, it happened.

Two years later, my classmate and I were travelling from Pilani to Delhi, carrying some 15 steel trunks belonging to us and our friends, each weighing not less than 30 kg and packed with books and other goods. We stacked the trunks one upon the other up to the roof of the coach. But then the ticket examiner, a Punjabi, told us to shift the trunks to the brake van. When I shouted "Mutta" in Tamil, he shouted back in equally chaste Tamil. "I am not a mutta. I follow the rules. I had worked and stayed in Tamil Nadu for 17 years," he said. I ran away leaving my friend to deal with this. Soon, I returned to apologise for my rude remark,



and we became good friends.

In 1963, I went to the Tatagarh station to buy tickets to travel to Madras and beyond the next month. I went to the station late in the evening and stayed there the whole night. I was second in the queue in the evening. No one joined the line till the morning when I bought the ticket. Strange! Only then I realised that the date and day were considered inauspicious for travel towards south. Had I known this earlier, I would have gone to the counter only in the morning.

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A smile can go a long way

Though the only species with this graceful expression, humans do not fully comprehend its strengths RISHI KANNA

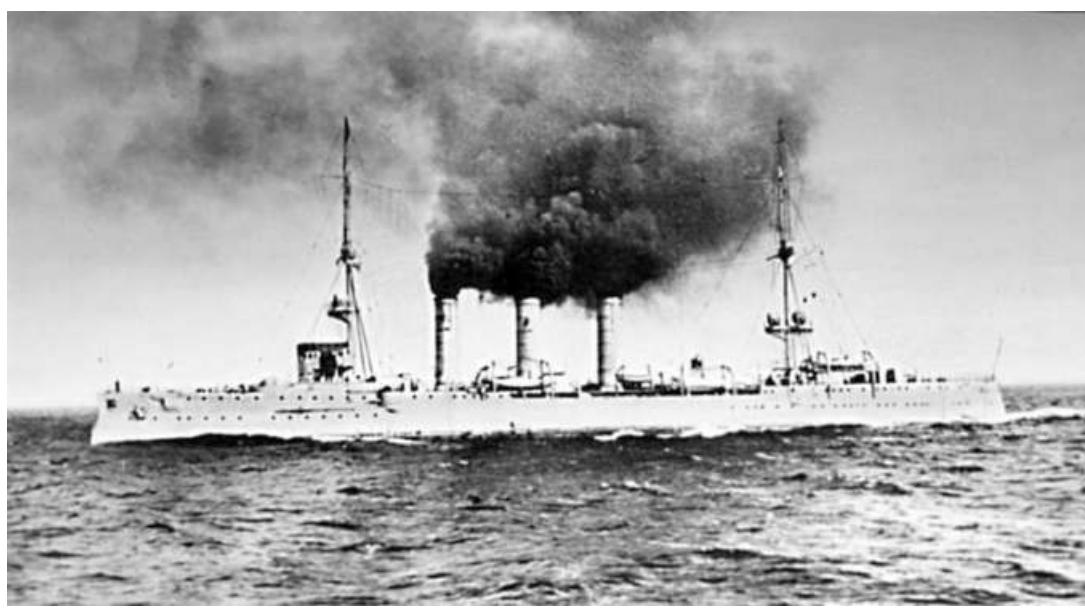
No mall rats back then

Large shopping establishments were unknown in the past, and people had no money to splurge S. BHASHYAM

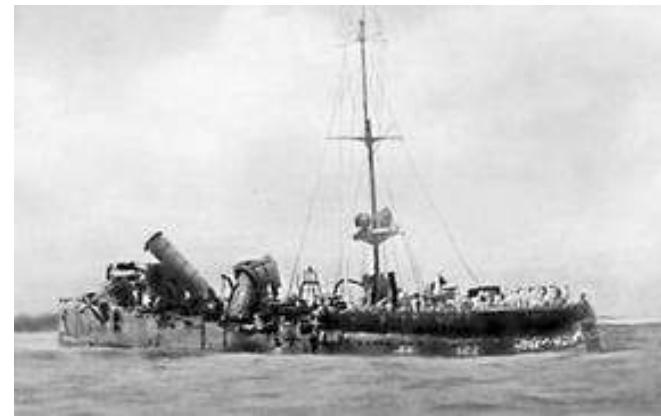
Enough of the princesses

Despite parents' attempts to make playtime more gender neutral, princesses crowd homes SEERAT KAUR GILL

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▲ SMS Emden on the high seas. ■ WIKI COMMONS



A wrecked Emden off North Keeling Island.
■ WIKI COMMONS



▲ Rani Islon with visitors at Nancowry Island. ■ NANCOWRY TRIBAL COUNCIL



▲ Karl Friedrich Max von Müller, captain of the Emden. ■ WIKI COMMONS



▲ The German landing party at Direction Island before escaping to Germany on Ayesha, a wooden schooner.
■ WIKI COMMONS

MARITIME HISTORY

A raider, a rani and how they met

The story of the German cruiser that struck terror in the heart of the British Empire, created a mighty Nicobarese matriarch, and became a Tamil word

Ajay Saini

The summer of 1914 was unlike any other year in Europe. Since early July, the spectre of war had begun to haunt the continent. And by the end of the month, the greed of European imperial powers had plunged the world into World War I.

Around this time, an obscure German light cruiser named SMS Emden had completed four years of service in China, at Tsingtao, the East Asian Station of the Imperial German Navy. In mid-August of that year, the German admiral Maximilian von Spee assembled all his captains on Pagan Island in North Pacific Ocean. The admiral's plan was for the entire squadron to leave for the coast of South America, its future hunting grounds.

Everyone concurred, except Emden's Commander, Karl Friedrich Max von Müller. Müller put forth an unexpected proposal: Emden should detach from the squadron and operate as an independent commerce raider in the Indian Ocean. A brave proposition, but possibly suicidal too.

Spee agreed. Soon, the signal flags rose: 'Emden detached. Wish you good luck!' they read. Emden withdrew from the long queue, along with her coaler, Markomannia, sailed in a different direction, soon losing sight of the squadron.

From then on, Emden had no harbour of refuge. This 'swan of the east' was all alone in hostile waters, with one mission only – to sneak into the Indian Ocean and play havoc with British shipping.

Camouflaged

Emden entered the Indian Ocean on August 30. The British were unaware that a heavily armed 389 ft long German warship was prowling in their waters. Back then, the British dominated the Indian Ocean. Cargo, essential for the survival and expansion of the Empire, was regularly transported across the oceans. The Indian Ocean provided crucial sea-lanes and connected the Far East with Europe. Müller's idea was to inflict heavy losses on the British by raiding ships on these busy trade routes. This, he believed, would also lower the prestige of the British and inspire the Indians to rebel against their oppressor.

Though swift and well-armed, Emden was poorly protected. But it was her appearance that worried the Germans the most. Unlike the British ships with two or four funnels, Emden had three. The enemy would recognise her from miles away. A brilliant idea struck Müller's second-in-command, First Lieutenant Hellmuth von Mücke; he simply rigged up a counterfeit funnel with sailcloth and wooden laths.

With Emden's identity now camouflaged, the Germans were ready to cause trouble. They found their first victim on September 10. On the Colombo-Calcutta



▲ Emden crew. ■ WIKI COMMONS

route, Emden intercepted a Greek steamer, Pontoporos, which was carrying coal for the British, a much-needed commodity for Emden's own survival. The very next day, the Germans plundered and scuttled Indus, which was transporting provisions from Calcutta to Bombay for British troops. Later that day, a troopship, Lovat, also ended up at the bottom of the sea. Over the next few days, Killin, Diplomat, Trabrock, and Clan Matheson all met their doom.

With its fourth dummy funnel, the German raider looked exactly like the British cruiser Yarmouth. The crews of the intercepted ships were often left puzzled. Müller's men were also exceptionally efficient. They would not give the victims any chance to use their wireless. 'In this way,' wrote Mücke, 'they cleaned up the whole region from Ceylon to Calcutta.'

Put to rest

What happened next was an anomaly in naval history. On September 12, Müller captured an English ship, Kabinga, but released it two days later. The gesture was gallant albeit hugely risky. But Müller was no ordinary commander. He was fighting a big war, but with a big heart.

At just 18, Müller had joined the German Navy as a midshipman, and had quickly risen through the ranks to become Emden's commander by 1913. He proved to be a gentleman, even during war: he resolved to disrupt the enemy's shipping, but without bloodshed. While the intercepted vessels were destroyed ruthlessly, crew and passengers were treated with kindness. Around 400 people aboard the Kabinga soon reached Calcutta safely.

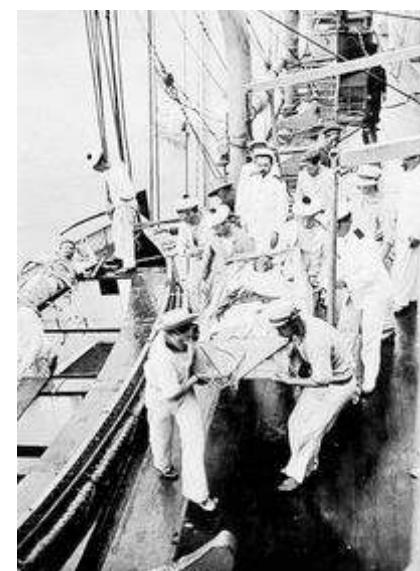
Although Emden's hunting grounds in the Bay of Bengal were not far from Indian shores, the British remained completely ignorant of her depredations until around 2 p.m. on September 14.

Emden crew injured in the Battle of Cocos being moved out for treatment.
■ WIKI COMMONS

A day earlier, Müller had intercepted Loredo. Being a ship from a neutral country, Italy, he had let her go. Loredo, however, broke her code of neutrality and reported Emden to a British steamer. The British immediately ceased all shipping activities in the Bay of Bengal. Emden shifted course and drifted towards Rangoon, but in vain. Meanwhile, Vice-Admiral Martyn Jerram dispatched Hampshire, Chikuma, Yarmouth, Minotaur, and Ibuki to hunt Emden down. With several Allied warships now frantically combing the sea, Emden was in peril.

Madras bombarded

The evening of September 22 was like any other in Madras. What the city didn't know as she made ready to sleep was that her brightly shining lights and well-lit buoys were guiding a raider towards the shore. Some 3,000 yards away from the pier-heads, Emden turned on her searchlights. Painted white, with a stripe of red, Burmah Company's oil tanks were well within range. Then: 'A couple of shells sent in that direction, a quick upleaping of tongues of bluish-yellow flame, streams of liquid fire pouring out through the holes made by our shots, an



▲ Emden crew injured in the Battle of Cocos being moved out for treatment.
■ WIKI COMMONS

enormous black cloud of dense smoke... we had sent several millions worth of the enemy's property up into the air,' described Emden's First Lieutenant.

Around 130 rounds were fired. Five oil tanks were hit, two went up in flames. Several shots destroyed a steamer in the harbour; others caused minor damage in the city. Madras reeled. Thousands fled in fear, leading to lawlessness and looting. Shipping operations in the Bay of Bengal ceased. Trade was paralysed. The prices of essential commodities shot up.

Emden had by now become an overnight sensation. By bombarding Madras, Müller had not intended to harm the Indian people but wanted to spread panic in the city and humiliate the British. It was the first (and only) time an Indian territory experienced the horrors of World War I. Soon, the word 'emden' would enter the lexicons of both Tamil (emden) and Malayalam (yamandan) to signify a range of meanings – 'strict and authoritative', 'daring and capable', 'huge and powerful', 'manipulative and crafty'. Songs would be composed about Emden's exploits, and older people would use the legend to frighten young children.

Penang harbour

Leaving Madras behind in smoke, Emden steamed southward to the Colombo-Penang-Singapore and the Aden-Colombo routes. She intercepted King Lud, Tymeric, and Gryfevale on September 25. Then Riera and Foyle were sunk. The capture of Buresk, which was carrying 6,660 tonnes of high-grade Welsh coal, was nothing less than a lifeline for Emden. Müller released Gryfevale, which took the captured crew and passengers to Colombo.

▲ Müller's second-in-command, First Lieutenant Hellmuth von Mücke. ■ WIKI COMMONS



The nemesis

Emboldened by his success in Penang, Müller headed to the Cocos Islands, approximately midway between Australia and Sri Lanka. On November 9, around 6 a.m., he stopped at Port Refuge. A party of 46 men landed ashore under Mücke's command to destroy the wireless station on Direction Island and cut communication between Britain and Australia. The island's wireless operators did manage to send out a message – 'Unidentified ship off entrance', but their second message, 'Emden here', was stopped by the Germans.

When the Emden crew intercepted an unknown warship calling the island, Müller did some quick calculations and figured that they had plenty of time to accomplish their mission. At 9 a.m., however, the sudden appearance of a cloud in the north took everyone by sur-

Continued on Page 4



▲ Officials inspect the damage caused by Emden's shelling of Madras city in September 1914. ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES



▲ A boat with the German crew that survived sails away from the Emden. ■ WIKI COMMONS



▲ Rani Lachmi, daughter of Rani Islon, with Indian President Rajendra Prasad.
■ NANCOWRY TRIBAL COUNCIL



◀ An unexploded shell from the *Emden* is examined by a British soldier in September 1914.
• THE HINDU ARCHIVES



▲ Rani Islon (left) with Fatima, the current chief of Nancowry Island.
• NANCOWRY TRIBAL COUNCIL

A raider, a rani...

Continued from Page 3

prise. About half an hour later, they discovered a warship approaching. *Sydney*, an Australian cruiser, which had been escorting a convoy of troops to Colombo, had changed course for Direction Island after picking up that first wireless message sent from the island that morning.

Müller had made a fatal miscalculation. He had thought the unknown warship was 250 nautical miles away when she was actually just 52 nautical miles away. Mücke's landing party had accomplished its task, but it was now too late to leave the island. *Emden*'s face-off with her nemesis was imminent. *Sydney* came closer. *Emden* fired the first shot and scored two hits, but soon the Australian cruiser's heavy calibre weapons opened up. The German cruiser was torn apart in no time.

Rare courage

Despite heavy casualties and destruction, Müller showed rare courage. He tried to come closer to *Sydney* to bring her within *Emden*'s torpedo firing range, but the Australian cruiser maintained a safe distance and kept scoring hits.

Emden, a spent force, now had only one option. Müller voluntarily wrecked her off North Keeling Island and saved his remaining men. *Emden* had lost 134 men and had 65 wounded. For Müller, it was the death of a dream and he contemplated suicide, but finally chose prison. 'I realised that my duty was to care for the remainder of the crew – and my death would have been of no use to my country,' he would write later in a letter. Mücke and his men, who had haplessly witnessed *Emden*'s destruction from Direction Island, hijacked a rickety schooner, *Ayesha*, and somehow made it to Germany. After years in a prisoner-of-war camp in England, Müller was finally repatriated to Germany in October 1918, where he died in March 1923, aged 49.

In her short career as raider, *Emden* had intercepted 23 merchant and naval



▲ Destruction in Madras city from *Emden*'s shelling in September 1914. • THE HINDU ARCHIVES



▲ A street named after Müller in his birth city, Hanover. • CREATIVE COMMONS



▲ A memorial plaque at the spot where shelling from the *Emden* destroyed a portion of the Madras High Court's compound wall on September 22, 1914. • K.V. SRINIVASAN

In 1947, when India became independent, Rani Islon proved to be a crucial bridge between a historically isolated community and a newly independent nation

Emden intercepted 23 merchant and naval ships in two months.

It was no mean feat. But it was her commander's chivalry that touched scores of hearts, including that of his enemies

ships in two months. It was no mean feat. But it was her commander's chivalry that touched scores of hearts, including that of his enemies. 'Captain, officers and crew of *Emden* appear to be entitled to all the honours of war... should be permitted to retain swords', telegraphed the Admiralty on November 11, 1914.

'It is almost in our heart to regret that the *Emden* has been captured and destroyed. We certainly hope that commander Karl von Müller... has not been killed... he destroyed over 74,000 tons of shipping without the loss of a single life. There is not a survivor who does not speak well of this young German,' wrote *The Daily Telegraph*. 'We trust his life has been saved, for if he came to London he would receive a generous welcome,' wrote *The Times*, saluting Müller for being a 'brave and chivalrous foe'.

Rani's role

Another person had played a significant role in *Emden*'s capture. On the remote Nicobar Islands in the eastern Indian Ocean, a woman named Islon, the chief of Nancowry Island, had become a British 'agent' in the Nicobar. In October 1914, when *Emden* had touched down on Nancowry, Islon had welcomed her by hoisting a Union Jack. Müller had assumed that the island had a strong British presence and had steamed ahead to Penang. Islon had soon realised that she had welcomed a German warship, and she immediately dispatched a canoe to the nearest signal station to tip off the British. Islon's intelligence proved crucial. Rear-Admiral Sir Arthur Rullion Rattray would later say: 'It was she [Islon] who was responsible for our catching the *Emden* in 1914.'

The grateful British conferred on Islon the title of 'Rani of Nancowry', and she emerged as one of the tallest Nicobarese leaders. In 1947, when India became independent, the Rani proved to be a crucial bridge between a historically isolated community and a newly independent nation. The Indian government strengthened the unique political institution by declaring that if Rani Islon fell ill, her daughter Lachmi would carry on in her place. It was Rani Lachmi who ushered in an era of economic prosperity in Nicobar. She set up a cooperative society for the islanders and helped bring several basic amenities to the remote islands. Rani Lachmi passed away in 1989. Fatima now continues the legacy.

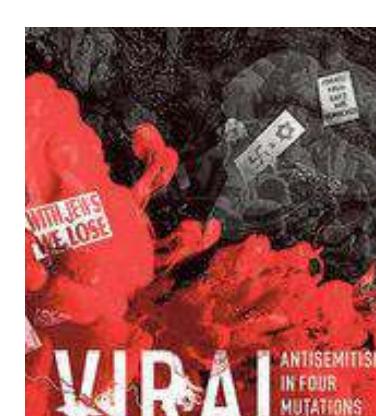
Islon, the first 'Rani of Nancowry', and Müller, 'the last gentleman of war', never met or exchanged a word. But they ended up altering each other's worlds forever.

The writer is assistant professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. He works with remote indigenous communities.



Banksy show

A travelling exhibition of the works of British graffiti artist Banksy, titled 'The Art of Banksy: Without Limits', has opened at the King Abdullah Financial Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Around 70 photos, prints and other works, being shown in West Asia for the first time, are on view until April 20.



On antisemitism

Andrew Goldberg's documentary, *Viral: Antisemitism in Four Mutations*, posits that antisemitism is on the rise, focusing on the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting in the U.S., the ongoing antisemitism scandal in the U.K. Labour Party, attacks in France and Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán's campaign against Jewish financier George Soros.

FILMY DIALOGUE

Red-light rendezvous

Kamal Khan's thriller *Laal Kabootar* is Karachi noir par excellence

There is a sense of verticality that stands out in the evocation of class divides in Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite*. A sprawling, rich home and its hidden basement and a suffocating semi-base-ment at a distance become spatial attributes of the incipient hierarchies. Then there are the staircases that constantly take the characters, and in turn the viewer, up and down the high and low life, seemingly offering mobility that eventually proves to be nothing more than an illusion.

Like the Seoul of Bong, class conflicts define the Karachi of Kamal Khan's *Laal Kabootar*, Pakistan's official entry for the Oscars this year. Only, here the societal cracks are spread horizontally, like a blanket across the city's expanse. It becomes the defining backdrop against which characters and their stories intersect and link up or collide and disconnect.

Shared thirst

There is the upper crust, for whom going to the U.S. is as easy as picking up vegetables in the market. Juxtaposed against them are those unable to make it in life, for whom Dubai is the promised land where their dreams could turn real. 'Aukaat kabhi ek jaisi nahin rehti (Statue doesn't always stay the same)', says a character. As in *Parasite*, hope lies in the possibility of mobility but what truly binds the extremes together is the precariousness underlying their lives, a shared thirst for revenge and money and materialism.

The working title of the crime thriller was *Signal*, Khan tells me on a WhatsApp call: 'Because it's at the red light that people from all strata of life seem to come together.' Just like in Mumbai, I tell him, leading him to rue that co-existence is becoming more and more rare in urban societies. 'We are in each other's spaces yet not together, we have stopped sympathising, the divides are getting wider and wider, leading to crime,' he says.

His film kicks off with one such transgression at the traffic signal – a journalist digging out the dirt on a builder is shot in broad daylight. Meanwhile, other petty crimes carry on unabated. Passengers get robbed of their mobile phones by thieves on bikes as they wait in cabs for the light to turn green. The cops have copped out. There is no rule of law, rather the upholders of law become the law-breakers. It's the wild, wild west. 'It's what Karachi used to be when we were growing up. We were paranoid about getting stuck at the red light. But it's not so any more. The builder, water mafia might still be there, but things have watered down a lot,' he says.

Mumbai connection

Khan's heady concoction of crime and class ties up well with South Korean actioners. He professes to be a huge fan, reeling out names – Na Hong-jin's *The Chaser*, Jung Byung-gil's *The Villainess*, Lee Jeong-beom's *The Man from Nowhere*... 'They are so relatable for us – the severely flawed protagonists, the amazing arcs,' he says.

But it's Bollywood he grew up watching – the Govinda, Aamir Khan and Salman Khan films picked up from the video store – and he even dons a hat to it, playing Major Saab's 'Pyaar Kiya Toh Nibhana' in the background in one scene. What truly drives his 'Karachi noir' is 'Mumbai noir', Ram Gopal Varma's *Satya and Company* but most of all, Anurag Kashyap's *Ugly*, which, he feels, deserved more plaudits than it got.

Back in India, even if one has identified Pakistan for its well-crafted television serials, films haven't quite made the cut. Even within Pakistan, Lollywood has played second fiddle to Bollywood. After Asim Abbasi's understated, measured, women-centric family drama, *Cake*, set a new bar in 2018, *Laal Kabootar* comes across as a surprisingly slick and gripping thriller. It's a good mix of swag, stunts and sentiments with a great soundtrack to boot, with Taha Malik's music, and Danial Hyatt, son of music composer and producer Rohail Hyatt, providing the background score. A consummate set of actors keeps one engrossed, most so Rashid Farooqui, who swings effortlessly between a corrupt cop at work and a loving father and family man at home. And towering above them all is the gritty and spirited Karachi itself, the most significant of all the characters.



Namrata Joshi is Associate Editor-Cinema with *The Hindu* in Mumbai.

SCANNER



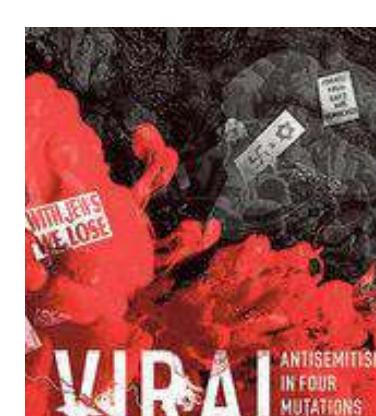
A boxer's life

A documentary on boxer Sarita Devi, produced by the Films Division and directed by Manipuri filmmaker Borun Thokchom, will soon be released. Titled *Rise*, the film starts at a controversial point in the athlete's career — when she refused to accept the bronze medal at the 2014 Asian Games — and seeks to "highlight her life and struggle".



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FRAMED

Artist nonpareil

A new book on the multifaceted Gulammohammed Sheikh

For over 50 years, no other artist has possibly been as influential as thinker and pedagogue, and as complex in his practice, as Gulammohammed Sheikh. In all areas that have preoccupied him, as curator, writer and painter, Sheikh's engagement has been essentially dialogic: the interrogatory, even challenging, tone of his letters to modernists of the 70s is matched by his conversational engagement with art that has spanned centuries.

The Lorenzetti brothers of the Sienese school; the Mughal painters Basawan and Mir Sayyid Ali; Kabir and the poet patron Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khana; the maker of the Mughal *muraqqa* or accordion book; the craftsman-narrator of the itinerant Rajasthani *kavadi*: these are a few names from the fraternity of thinkers, artists and poets that Sheikh's encyclopaedic world teems with. On his canvas, they have all found a place which is neither synthesis or pastiche, but a respectful hospitality, where they become part of a larger enactment. Into this mix, add a painterly attitude, of recapturing the delicate translucency of a 16th century Persian atelier's brush, the poetics of a central Asian landscape that bears witness to poet travellers and Sufi saints. Christian saints and temple cities drawn in the finest detail, and the strands of Sheikh's painterly inspirations become visible.

A new book, *At Home in the World: the Art and Life of Gulammohammed Sheikh*, edited by Chaitanya Sambrani, draws on both the artist's life story and the manifold contexts of his thinking and curatorial work as pedagogue and artist. Sheikh's humble beginnings in the small Saurashtrian town of Surendranagar hardly anticipate his appetite for a synoptic view of art. As a young student, he assisted Ravishankar Rawal, a doyen in the annals of art in Gujarat, with the painting of a history of world civilisation on the outer walls of a public library. Later at Baroda, and then at the Royal College of Art, his facility to bridge art impulses across centuries was honed further.

Sambrani writes that for over four decades, Sheikh's work has sought "novel ways of making the world manifest through translation." In itself, this may seem like an extraordinary claim, yet Sheikh's central obsession has been with cartographic poetics, transcontinental journeys, with empires, and the voice of poetic resistance.

In retrospect, two broad impulses seem to have guided the artist, who worked with an extreme self-consciousness of his own place in Indian art history, as well as that of the pan-Asianists led by the Tagores, the internationalism of the Progressives, and the looping return to the indigeneity of his peers. His more recent vision of a medieval tapestry of saints, Sufis, imperialists and wanderers seems to stand at odds with the great flourish that Sheikh affected from about 1970 to the early 80s, where he appears as a painter of the city, its lusts and transgressions and the rising pitch of communal violence.

Interplay of time

Just as he worked with multiple perspectives in his paintings, he introduced different emotional registers of everyday life in Vadodara. What he achieves, however, is also an interplay of time, from reverie, a space for remembrance or dream, to the urgent gestures of the momentary, in the same painting. In the more recent 'Mappa Mundi' series, the space for temporal reality stretches across millennia: positing Majnun, Kabir, a whirling dervish, or a Christian saint as outside the periphery of the globe, he invokes the journey and the narrative as interchangeable.

India's entire medieval period, for instance, with its conquests and social reform, may crystallise in the singularity of poet-saint Kabir. Colín Parsons' essay 'Mapping the Globe' describes a moment of epiphany when Sheikh discovered the most famous of the *mappae mundi*, the Ebstorf Karte, reproduced on a postcard – a map that documents "the social, cultural and political landscape, not the topographic landscape." Maria Kupfer's essay 'Worlds Enmeshed' provides further details of the finding and later destruction of this unique document. As such, the *mappa mundi* was to provide Sheikh with a cornucopia of possibilities. The space of the globe became hospitable to a transhistorical narrative of his own making.

Seen in this light, the 'Mappa Mundi' images mount the terrifying contradiction that the history of the world has moved through the collision of religious dogmas; equally, it is these violently competitive faiths that produce the most exalted art. Sheikh re-energises symbols of classical art: Ram stepping forth with a raised bow and arrow, or St. Francis preaching during a deep personal crisis with markings of blood instead of a cluster of birds.

They become redolent with meaning in troubled times.



Gayatri Sinha is an art critic and curator who runs www.criticalcollective.in.

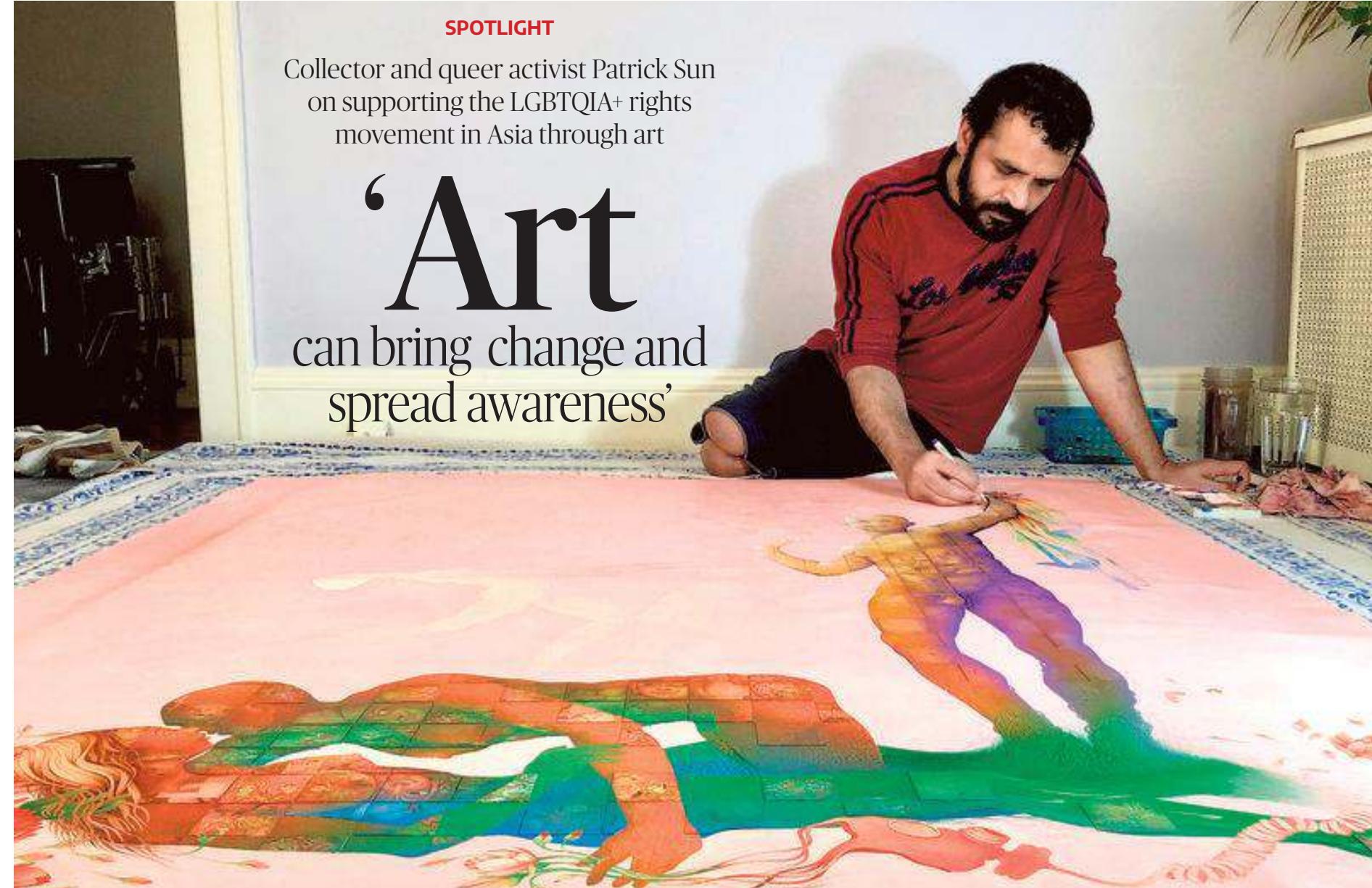
Statement art

(Bottom to top) Patrick Sun at the India Art Fair; a work from Sunil Gupta's photography series, 'The New Pre-Raphaelites'; Balbir Krishnan at his studio in New York. • COURTESY PATRICK SUN/SUNPRIDE FOUNDATION



Art contest

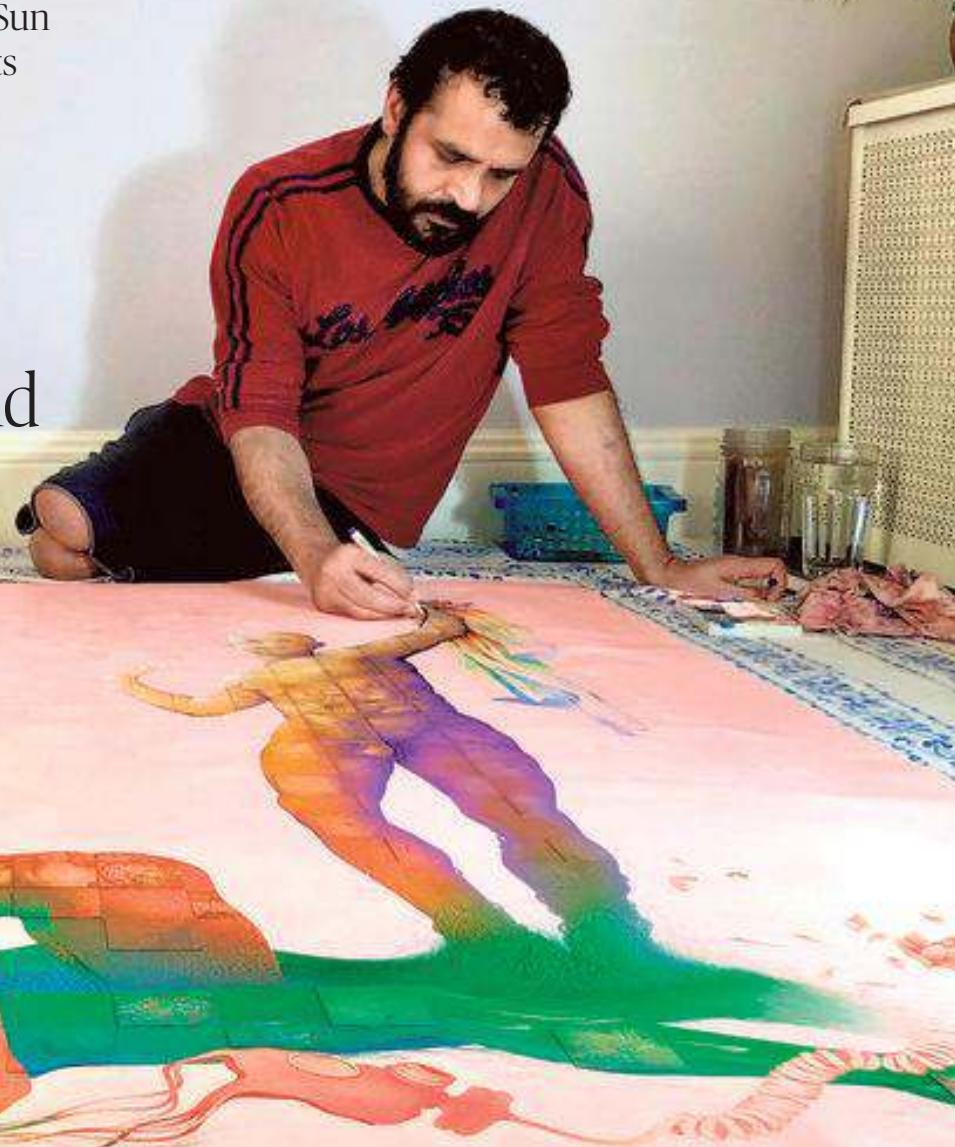
The online art platform Mojarto is holding a contest for emerging and professional artists with prizes worth up to ₹3 lakh. Contestants can register and send in their original works until February 25. Selected participants will have the chance to exhibit their works in several cities and be mentored by the judges.



SPOTLIGHT

Collector and queer activist Patrick Sun on supporting the LGBTQIA+ rights movement in Asia through art

'Art can bring change and spread awareness'



Georgina Maddox

Patrick Sun, the founder-director of the Hong Kong-based Sunpride Foundation, speaks about encouraging and supporting South Asian LGBTQIA+ art and the ways in which one can engage with audiences through visual culture.

How did you begin collecting and get involved with supporting the queer arts movement in South Asia?

■ I began collecting art in 1988, when I first started my own business in real estate. It so happened that my first project was in Hong Kong, which is famous for curios and antiques and paintings. So, every day, I walked past these shops – and I got interested. But that was more than 30 years ago, and in subsequent years my focus has been more on contemporary art. One day I thought, why don't I merge my two passions – collecting art and supporting the gay rights movement. I thought maybe I could do both, using art as a vehicle to correspond with what it can say about the LGBTQIA+ community.

What is a fortuitous and brave combination. How did it manifest?

■ I am very proud to say that, in the five years since I started the Sunpride Foundation, we have managed to hold some very important LGBTQIA+ exhibitions. The first one in Taiwan, at the Museum of Contemporary Arts, Taipei, was the first show of this kind to be held at a public institution. We try to anchor our event at a museum because it is the only way we can communicate with the general public. Now we are doing one at the Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre, with more than 130 works by 58 artists from many different Asian countries, over an area of 16,000 square feet. Because we try to promote diversity, we have a range of mediums – paintings, sculptures, installations and performance – and I am happy to say that it's a well-attended show. The last I heard, there had been 200,000 visitors.

Are all the artworks on display from your collection?

■ We had about 200 works when we first approached the Taipei Museum. Then I let the curators decide how to expand the collection into a coherent show. Ultimately, we did the show not just from the Sunpride Foundation, but also have artworks from other collectors, museums, artists and galleries. In fact, when you first walk into the exhibition you see two paintings – one is of a young girl dressed as a boy in a yellow shirt and the other is of a young boy dressed as a girl with a red skirt. Now, these paintings send an important message – that the exhibition is not just about homoeroticism, because a lot of people expect sexual content, physiques and muscles, but about many issues that gay people are concerned with. One of these works belongs to Sunpride; the other is a famous painting from the National Museum in Taiwan.



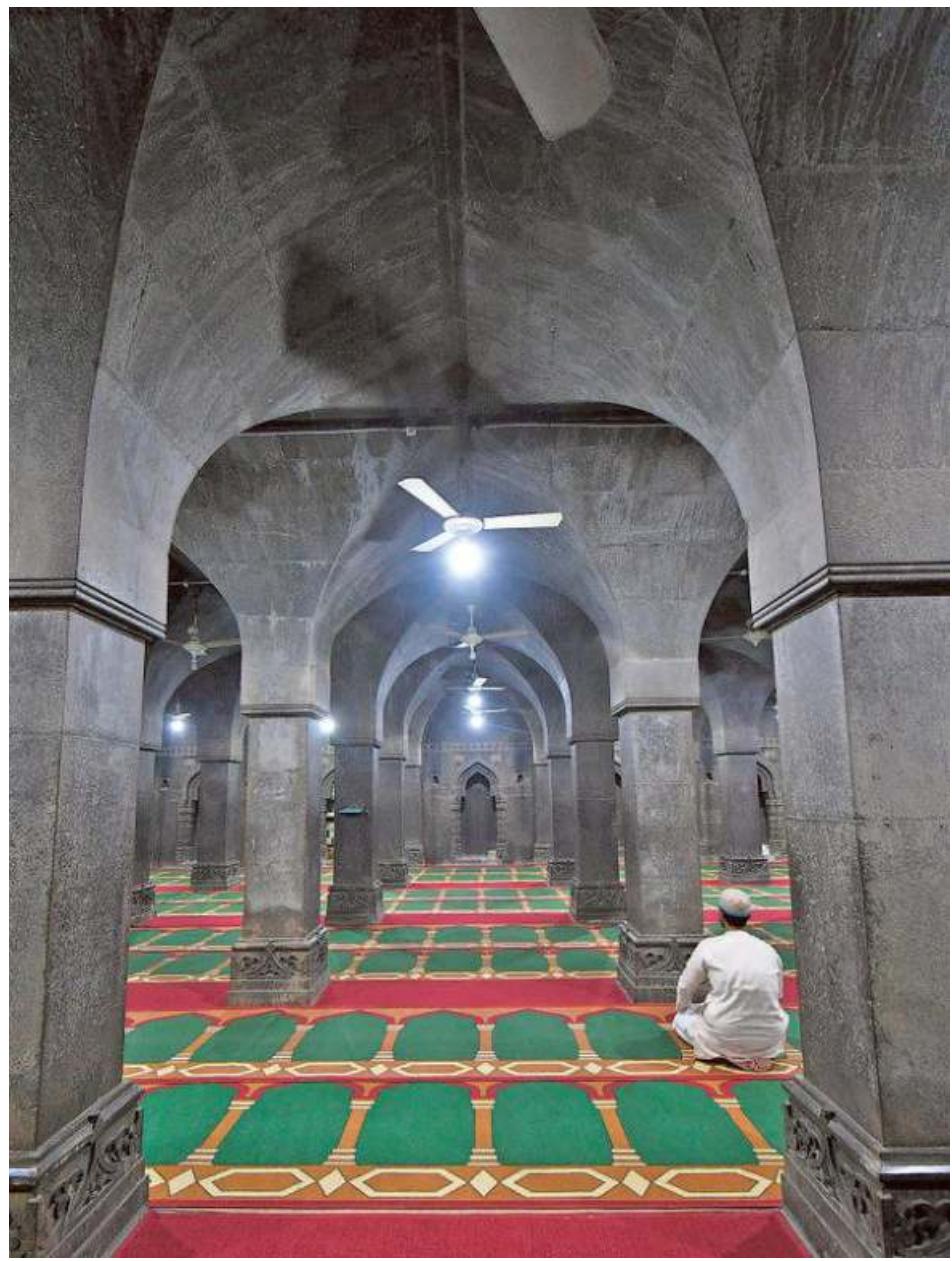
Secret war

An exhibition by two Aboriginal artists concerned with Australia's "secret war" with the indigenous population and colonial atrocities will be held at Birmingham's Ikon Gallery. Judy Watson's work will be on view from March 4 to May 31, while Yhonnie Scarce's work will be exhibited from April 9 to May 31.



Moscow exhibition

An upcoming show at Moscow's State Tretyakov Gallery, organised in collaboration with the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art and the Indo-Russian Cultural Foundation, will reportedly be the most extensive exhibition of Indian art ever held. 'Extension.India', featuring more than 60 artists, will be on view from June 17 to September 6.



Ranabir Chakravarti

Allahabhattarakasvamijan-sitavihara. It's a single word, a Sanskrit compound, that gives us a glimpse into medieval life that resonates with relevance in contemporary India. It refers to a *vihara*, obviously a religious complex, protected by the divinity Allahabhattarakasvami. The term Allah is clearly the Sanskritisation of Allah. The two Sanskrit honorifics *bhattacharya* and *swami* are suffixed to Allah, implying veneration.

Discovered in 1964 in Sujanagar in what was then East Pakistan (now in Munshiganj Upazila of Bangladesh), this particular inscription is in the collection of the Bangladesh National Museum at Dhaka. The inscription was first translated in 2010 by the late Shariful Islam, but it was in 2019 that Ryosuke Furui, a University of Tokyo expert on ancient Bengal and its epigraphic wealth, rendered a fresh reading and an improved translation (in the journal *Pratna Samiksha*, vol. X).

During his seventh regnal year (AD 1145), Bhojavarman endorsed a monetary donation in the form of cowries to this religious institution.

The word *vihara* usually stands for a Buddhist monastery, which often contained shrines, educational facilities and residences for monks and others.

Applied to Allah or Allahabhattarakasvami, it probably connotes a mosque and its associated structures, in-

cluding – according to Furui – a madrasa-like institution.

High-ranking contributor
The inscription says the initiative for this patronage came from Bhojavarman's subordinate and intermediary ruler (*mahasamanta*) Avudeva, son (*suta*) of Hasi. The name Avu is a Sanskritisation of the Arabic name Abu. A high-ranking functionary, his

name is suffixed with *deva*, literally god, but actually a regular honorific for important personages.

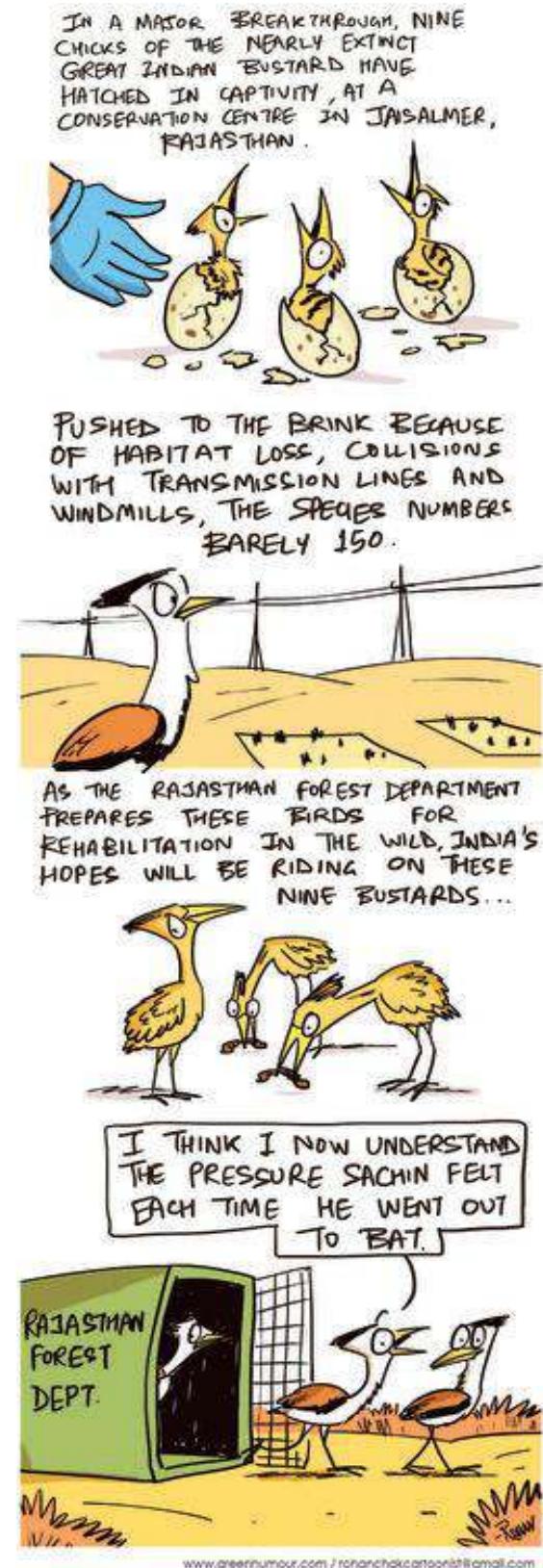
The name Hasi, father of Avu, could have been based on the Arabic word Hashim or Asif. Hasi figures as a *panchakulika*. This designation is rarely encountered in inscriptions from Bengal but is found in Gujarat for a body of merchants and artisans, usually located in a city or

much before the Turkish conquest in AD 1205.

All in Sanskrit (Clockwise from above) The Sujanagar inscription from 12th century Bengal; Shahi Jama Masjid in Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh, which has inscriptions from the 16th century; once a temple, the Asthana-e-Moula Ali dargah in old Pallavaram, Chennai, where some of the earliest inscriptions of Madras were found. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT, A.M.FARUQUI & B.JOTHI RAMALINGAM

The advent of the worshippers of Allah in 12th century coastal Bengal was evidently not through conquest but by commerce

GREEN HUMOUR BY ROHAN CHAKRAVARTY



PASSING BITE

I, as a voter, protest

A man from a minority community in a deeply racist Britain writes to the Prime Minister asking him to resign in no uncertain terms. And this, in 1956



In the shadow
Anthony Eden with Sir
Winston
Churchill. ■ FLICKR

On Facebook recently, a friend posted a letter written by her father. My friend's father, M.V., had moved from India to Britain in the late 1930s, just before the start of World War II. After the war, M.V. stayed on in London working in the Indian High Commission. The image on Facebook is a copy of the ac-

tual letter sent via post. Typewritten and just a page long, the letter is a fine example of the courteous yet pithy English in use at the time. The addressee's name is on the top left: 'Sir Anthony Eden K.G., Prime Minister, 10 Downing Street, London SW 1'. The date on the top right says November 4, 1956.

Anyone with some knowledge of

commercial centre. This prompted Furui to consider Hasi to be a merchant connected with the local administration in Vikramapura. His son Avudeva rose to a higher administrative position.

As a tool for explaining the past, empirical study is crucial. The dependence on Brahmanical normative texts in Sanskrit leaves an impression, mostly inaccurate, that early India can be perceived through the prism of the Vedas, Dharmasastras and Puranas: that is, the *sruti-smriti* tradition. Yet, there is an impressive corpus of inscribed documentation (mostly on stone and copper plates, sometimes on pottery shards) from this period. Nearly four decades ago, D.C. Sircar, the doyen of Indian epigraphy, counted more than 84,000 such inscribed documents. These include royal and administrative records, documents of donation by individuals and groups, and label inscriptions accompanying divine images. Since these inscriptions mostly record events, they are descriptive evidence, while the Dharmasastras texts are essentially prescriptive.

Capturing the times

Inscriptions present voices from a past otherwise not audible in didactic texts. These inscriptions, more accurate by dating and provenance than texts, are also of infinite value in capturing the social, economic and cultural situations of remote times. Like other branches of history, epigraphy too is a specialist's job and open to multiple readings of the same texts by different experts.

Bhojavarman is also known from his other inscription, a land grant record in copper plate dated in his fifth regnal year, showing that like his two predecessors Hariharman and Samalavarman, he too was a devout Vaishnava ruler. He was a local monarch, ruling merely over a sub-region of ancient Bengal. Yet, he looms large in cultural history by accommodating diversity of faiths in his realm. In fact, two Buddhist manuscripts were prepared during the reign of the same texts by different experts.

Bhojavarman is also known from his other inscription, a land grant record in copper plate dated in his fifth regnal year, showing that like his two predecessors Hariharman and Samalavarman, he too was a devout Vaishnava ruler. He was a local monarch, ruling merely over a sub-region of ancient Bengal. Yet, he looms large in cultural history by accommodating diversity of faiths in his realm. In fact, two Buddhist manuscripts were prepared during the reign of the

Vaishnava Varman rulers.

Cultural plurality was thus a lived experience in Vanga under the Varmans. The Varman patronage of Buddhism implies their familiarity with *viharas*. That is why an Islamic institution was called a *vihara* in the 12th-century inscription.

Arabic and Persian script

Avudeva's monetary donation to the *vihara* of Allahabhattarakasvami had the assent (*anumaya*) of all the kinsmen (*jnatnam*) of the non-local people (*paradesikas*) in the area; as worshippers of Allahabhattarakasvami, they were Muslims, probably from overseas. A large number of Arabic

and Persian texts speak of the port of Samandar, identified with Chittagong in Bangladesh.

The patronage given to the earliest known Islamic shrine in Bengal thus illuminates the presence of a Muslim diaspora in ancient Vanga. This diaspora was accommodated by a host society that was steeped in Brahmanical *bhakti* cults and familiar with Buddhist practices. The advent of the worshippers of Allah in 12th-century coastal Bengal was evidently not through conquest but by commerce. Thanks to Furui's insightful reading and translation of this fascinating document, the heritage of cultural plurality in the sub-continent is further established.

This grant is not unique. A mid-ninth century inscription from Kerala records similar grants of land by the Chera king Kulasekhara to a Syrian Christian church. A Jewish settlement similarly received patronage in Kerala around AD 1000. The coastal town of Somanatha in Kathiawad perhaps offers the most emblematic illustration of cultural plurality. In 1264, an elaborate Sanskrit inscription (with an accompanying, but synoptic, text in Arabic), says that a mosque (*Mijigit*, Sanskritised form of *Masjid*) was built at Somanatha by a devout Muslim shipowner (*nakhuda*), Nur-uddin Firuz (Sanskritised as Noradina Piroja), hailing from Hormuz.

The procurement of land for the mosque was upheld by Saiva Pasupata *acharya* presiding over the local town council, endorsed by the provincial authority, and finally approved by the Chaulukya ruler Vaghela Arjunadeva. The inscription opens with a salutation (*Om namaste*) to Allah. Allah is described by four stunning attributes: *Visvarupa* (Universal), *Visvanatha* (Lord of the Universe), *Sunyarupa* (Formless or Aniconic) and *Lakshya* yet *Alakshya* (Visible but Formless).

These inscriptions clearly show that there were few attempts at 'othering' any diasporic groups, including Muslims, by local host societies in the subcontinent. Neither was there any compulsion to reduce cultural diversities into a 'melting pot'. It underlines the long-drawn Indic practice of promoting cultural plurality. Which is why one cannot but be alarmed by the attempts to erase this heritage by the current proponents of religious nationalism, hate ideology and majoritarian politics. What Bhojavarman practised in 12th-century Bengal needs to be embraced and multiplied for the very sustenance of the idea of India.

The writer was Professor, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, and is now Visiting Scholar, Department of History, University of California.

the action of a petty, petulant bully, trying to convince himself he is as great as his predecessor. The last passage is particularly cutting, the final swipe, of course, referring to Winston Churchill, whose large shadow hung over every Prime Minister who came after him for the next 20 years, especially the ones from Churchill's own Tory party.

The letter ends with another deadly swipe, neatly tying it to the beginning, when M.V. quotes the exhortation in Parliament to Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister responsible for the Munich debacle. 'The only honourable course left to you sir... is to resign immediately and let the rule of morality and law prevail again. In the words of Mr. Leopold Amery on the occasion of another great crisis in this country's history, *Go! In the name of God, go!*'

Sharp language
Looking at this letter now, in the time of Messrs Trump, Johnson and Modi, the phrase 'petty, petulant bully' stands out, as do a few other things

hortation in Parliament to Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister responsible for the Munich debacle. 'The only honourable course left to you sir... is to resign immediately and let the rule of morality and law prevail again. In the words of Mr. Leopold Amery on the occasion of another great crisis in this country's history, *Go! In the name of God, go!*'

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The man writing the letter is from a minority community; at the time of writing, Britain is a deeply racist society with many still suffering from the hangover of jingoistic empire; this is technically a time of war and also of a potentially huge international humiliation; and yet, this man, not powerful, not overly connected in terms of position or influence, this man who claims his authority by the simple phrase, 'I, as a voter', spells it out to the country's Prime Minister, in clear, sharp language, telling him to eject himself from office with speed. The letter was written on November 4. We will never know if Eden or anyone close to him ever read it.

However, just over two months later, despite serious attempts to save his job, Anthony Eden was obliged to follow M.V.'s advice and resign.

Ruchir Joshi is a writer, filmmaker and columnist.

Literary Review



Indian in Rowling's next

Netraprasad Sharma, a tour guide from West Bengal's Buxa Tiger Reserve Forest, is to be featured as the main character in J.K.'s next novel. He will be going to California in July to discuss the details of his life and work with Rowling.



Lit prize for women writers

A new annual literary prize, the Carol Shields Prize for Fiction (named after the Canadian novelist), has been instituted to honour female novelists. Starting from 2022, the award comes with 150,000 Canadian dollars, which is more than the Booker Prize money.



Dickens Museum's new exhibits

The Charles Dickens museum in London has acquired a huge cache of his letters, manuscripts and personal effects from a U.S. private collection. In the letters he talks about his relationships, his reception in America and the time he got stuck on a mountain with Wilkie Collins..

THE LEAD

What the swirling clouds said

It would seem that many shamans are beginning to sing the Northeast into existence for the rest of us who are seeking its myriad identities

Mamang Dai

Once I imagined a dusty library and a woman sitting alone, caught in a beam of light, thinking: 'Among all these books on these shelves there is not one that mentions this place where I come every day to unlock the cupboards and look at the big atlas of the world.' Of course I was thinking of the old library in my hometown, near the airfield, and the woman was another me, scrutinising oceans and coastlines and filling with notebooks.

The image became a secret map for 'A Diary of the World', which is a poem, a chapter title of *The Legends of Pensam*, the recurring theme of a novella. Now that small building is overshadowed by a new stadium and the woman has vanished. Or maybe she is around but in another guise – who can tell? Ask an author about their writing and most likely the question will curve and swerve in their mind with myriad answers. It is like diving into a deep pond, trying to catch the ripples expanding from shore to shore. How did we even begin to write?

The hidden place

Today there is talk about 'mappings'. Nothing like the contours of a world I once imagined. This is about cultural mappings, with conferences on margins and borders and emerging literatures. A publishing boom in the last decade has brought into focus literatures from the Northeast. This has happened along with the growth of media, literary forums and festivals to strengthen public understanding of the region's art, culture and the social transformations taking place there. Post-publication territory is like a minefield. What voice,

genre, gender, to find a place in literary canon. How and why does one write, and what do we write about?

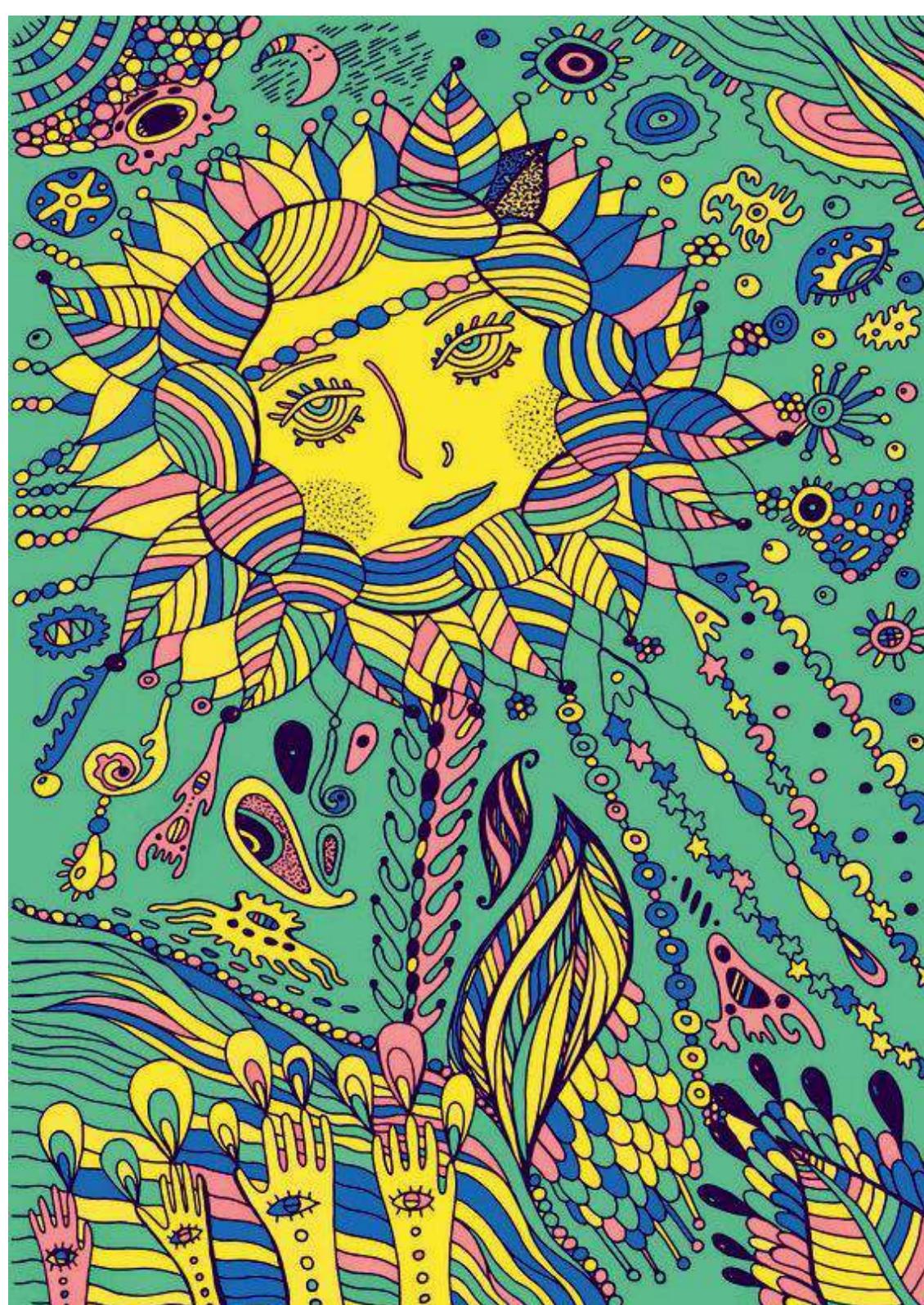
One is stumped for answers.

In the small library of my imagination there was no thought of 'meaning' or motivation to convey specificity like a territory – 'the Northeast' – the Adi tribe, although all the time the land was the other character stealthily exerting its presence to set the context of time, place, remembrance, and the type of stories. The land is a definite physical presence, but above and beyond this I believe every writer creates their own space that is quite simply the hidden place, conjured up by some strange magic where thought and feeling can roam freely in the indescribable freedom of writing.

The story leads us and we follow, sometimes happy, sometimes resisting, struggling, blank, and wondering. Who would ever know how a story slips out of our hands. We are never in complete control. Like a piece of music, all our remembrances, the chance encounters, that things that happened to us and the way we responded, or did not, float in and out of memory like breath and life to make up a kaleidoscope of you, me, them, us, the way we were, or the way we hope to become. Words only try to catch a tune. Perhaps this is all that writing is about – transformation. Our lives altered by our desire.

Nurturing stories

Imagine a shaman singing an epic poem for five days and five nights. This is a performance art of the oral tradition where a man can sing a world into existence. It is the world of myth and legend, but I heard someone say something that changed my ideas or at least posed a new question about my



• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

understanding of myths and legends. It was at a wake and we said the other rituals would be done in the morning since we couldn't cut wood at night. Everyone agreed. 'Of all the trees and plants the only one that offers itself for use at any time, day or night, is the bamboo,' they said.

I was wonderstruck. In the indescribable atmosphere of mourn-

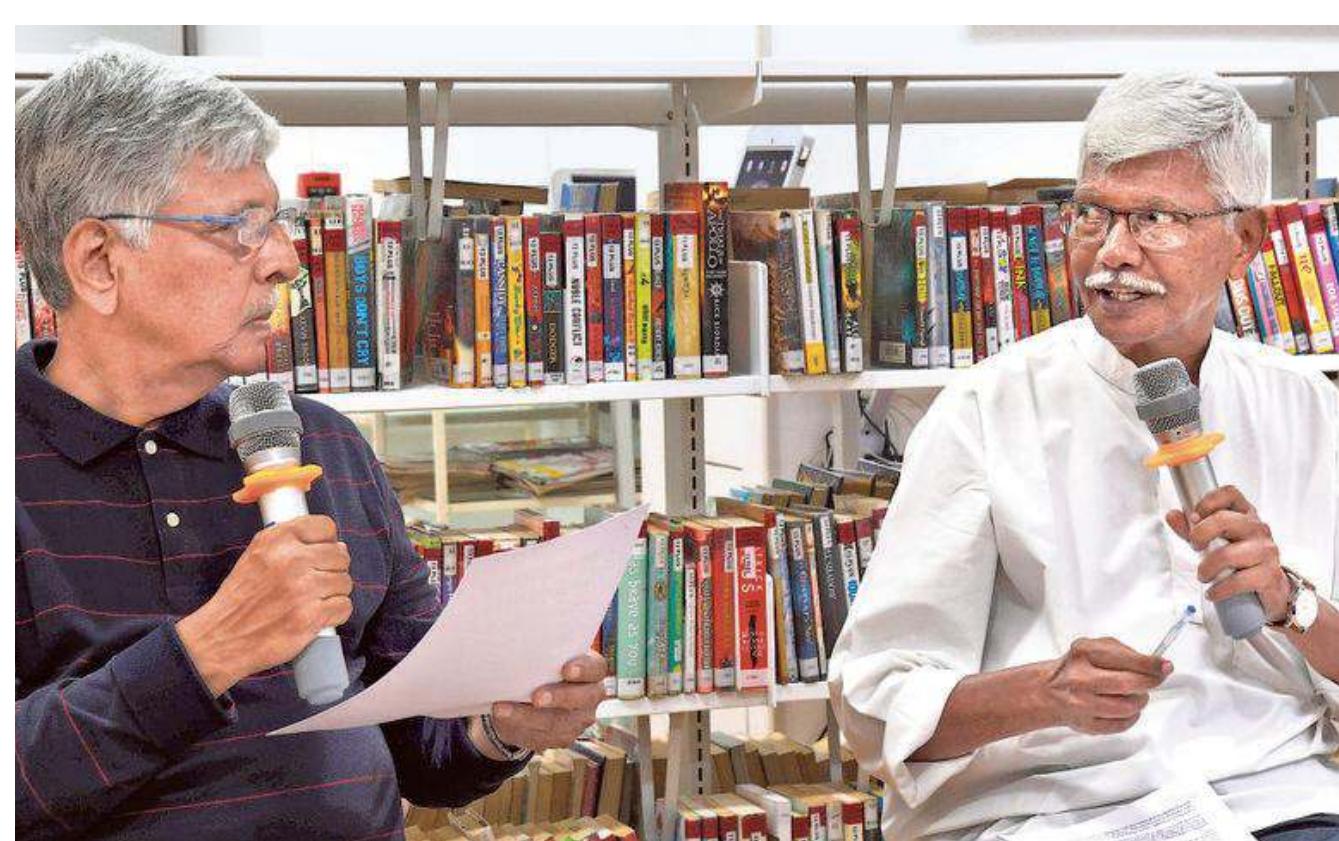
ing all my relatives were carrying on with the business of performing obligations, and the source of these obligations was our stories. Here was consolation. The stories nurture us: suddenly I was moving through the land again, aware of new textures and vibrations.

Perhaps we can say that since time began, the first travellers were words – spoken, written,

and communicated in totems and hieroglyphs. Perhaps a great ancestor stood watching the movement of clouds. His thoughts travelled through time and words were released to the sky, to the mountains, along desert dunes and sea waves to convey such feelings of wonder, love and awe and longing in song, then inscribed on rocks, painted symbols slowly falling on a stone ta-

The writer is a poet and novelist from Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh.

Each northeastern State has its distinct voice with acclaimed writers writing in different languages and there are as many symbols and images as there are voices. There is blood, fire, water, despair and hope and all that links human fate



Joint effort

Poomani (right) with N. Kalyan Raman at British Council Library, Bengaluru.

SUDHAKARAJAIN

B. Kolappan

Vekkai, translated into English as *Heat*, was the first novel that the Sahitya Akademi-winning Tamil writer Poomani wrote. The heat that his book generated can be felt even now, 38 years after it was published. It was translated into English by N. Kalyan Raman last year. And a few months ago, it was made into a film, *Asuran*, directed by Vetrimaaran. Though the film was successful,

Poomani is not too happy with the political colour given to his story. "It is the story of a teenage boy who takes revenge for the murder of his elder brother. His intention was not to kill, only to chop off the hand of Vadakkooran, the antagonist in the novel," says Poomani, whose works are set in *karisal bhoomi* or the semi-arid and rain-fed regions of southern Tamil Nadu. Excerpts from an interview:

More than three decades have passed since you wrote the novel. How do you feel about its

form and content today?

■ I am satisfied with the form. The story is told from the perspective of a teenage boy. The narration is based on his exposure to life.

Are you happy with the translation?

■ While I am happy, I must say that proficiency in two languages alone cannot do justice to a translation. The translator should have an idea of or exposure to the landscape and existential conditions of the people living there. For translating a literary work, that is more

Tamil writer Poomani, whose *Heat* was recently made into a successful film, is scathing about both the movie and about Dalit politics

important than knowledge of the language.

While the film adaptation has been highly appreciated, you seem to be unhappy. Why?

■ In the film, Dhanush falls at the feet of every villager. He is also forced to carry chappals. Those are all different stories. There are no panchami lands (lands reserved for Dalits) in our areas, as shown in the movie.

The translator should have an idea of or exposure to the landscape and existential conditions of the people living there



The film has retained the novel's larger framework, but developed its own story. My friends advised me to keep quiet, because if I had said anything then, it would have embarrassed the film crew.

I did not want to discourage them at that time. I trusted them.

Can you mention some of the changes made in the movie?

■ Even the cultural language of the novel has been changed. The book has sharp and short dialogues; those are missing in the film.

Many more characters are murdered in the film. And the film has murdered the novel.

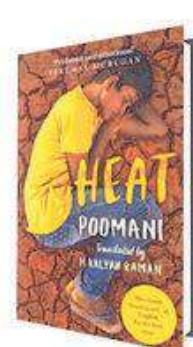
Both the novel and the film are interpreted as a battle between Dalits and landlords. Your comments.

■ *Vekkai* is not a Dalit novel. It centres on the agony of a teenage boy and in my book I have not given the boy a caste identity. The idea of a Dalit identity is imported from Maharashtra.

The novel was written and published long before the term came into vogue in Tamil Nadu. The filmmakers have treated *Vekkai* and *Asuran* on a par with *Kabali* and *Pariyerum Perumal*. Literature does not need caste politics; it goes beyond that.

Then what is the way out for communities seeking to liberate themselves from the clutches of oppressors?

■ Liberation from what? There was caste even before the time of the *Mahabharata*. It is intricately woven into the culture of the country. It came from the temple tradition. How do you achieve liberation? By breaking statues? Don't forget that in some places, the scheduled castes are the oppressors.



PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM

Nothing comes out of nothing

The shadow of loss overhangs the narrative. But instead of a human story what we have here is a charade of humanity

Aditya Sudarshan

Jeet Thayil's *Low* is a difficult work to review. Ordinarily, a book review continues the dialogue which the book itself enters into. A harsh review, no less than a fulsome one, validates the importance of that dialogue, and respects the author's contribution to it. But when a book, by the manner of its writing, shows itself to be quite indifferent to other interlocutors, and quite uninterested in a meaningful encounter with them, then a reviewer faces a trap.

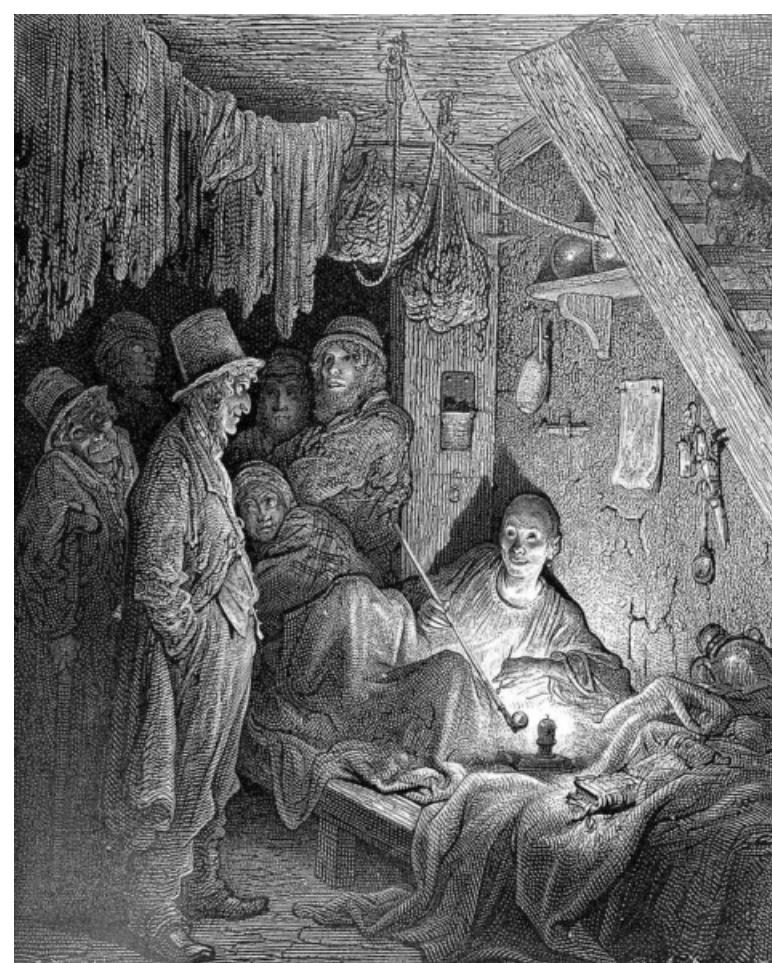
Neither praise nor rebuke will turn out well; the former will degenerate into empty sighs and grunts of pleasure, the latter into futile lecturing. Instead, the proper task here is to simply delineate the error of the book – that which renders it a nullity. This must be done (naturally) with reference to something without, because the text itself is beholden to nothing.

Low fascination

To illustrate, *Low* follows the manoeuvres of one Dominic Ullis, an autobiographical writer-character whose much younger wife has died suddenly and unnaturally, precipitating, on Ullis' part, a flight to Bombay, various desultory conversations, bouts of ill-tempered social commentary, apocalyptic ruminations and the studious consumption of many chemical substances, in the evanescent company of drifters.

All this is indeed overhung by the shadow of loss, but the human story one is tempted to impute to this narrative (that of tragedy driving addiction, with some kind of passion) is not actually present. What Thayil has put on display is the equivalent of the 'crocodile fighting python' brand of viral video; a spectacle of low fascination which originates from, and powerfully appeals to, naught but our reptile brain.

Recall that this 'reptilian brain' also produces responses to loss and death; it can form plans, and verdicts about others and the world; it can harbour feelings of emotional discomfort; and upon this existential plane, it can even utter expressions of mesmerising felicity. Therefore, it baits our tendency to anthropomorphise and exoticise it, but if we can retain a grasp of the truly human, the deception is really paper-



Up in smoke An engraving of an opium den in London's East End by Gustave Doré. ■ WIKI COMMONS

thin; even openly confessing itself, as Dominic Ullis candidly admits: "he was devoted to the image of [Donald Trump]."

Why? Because "everything [Trump] did was a satire of itself, a satire of presidential gravitas, a satire of compassion and grievance, a satire of civility, masculinity and patriotism. This is why the president was a comfort and an inspiration. It was thrilling to know that nothing was true and therefore everything was true... The president was living proof that you could say anything and it didn't matter. Communication was concealment."

And moreover: "Ullis understood the need to burn down the house, the country, the planet... he understood this president." Just such a charade of humanity, with such nihilism underlying it, suffuses *Low*, as Ullis sends every event and encounter (the death of his wife, as much as the kick of a drug), and even his very self-awareness and self-criticism, down the way of his absolute self-centredness.

Block of narcissism

This pathology, however, in no way follows from his subject matter. According to Thayil, he has sought in his writing "to honour the people I knew in the opium dens, the marginalised, the addicted and deranged, people who are routinely called the lowest of the low." And it is quite true that misfits, burnt-out folk, selfish and addicted people of whatsoever social strata lose nothing of their humanity, and are fit subjects for the most humanistic literature.

Dostoevsky, perhaps more than any other novelist, has shown us this. But he has also shown us how this is so, and the contrast with Thayil could

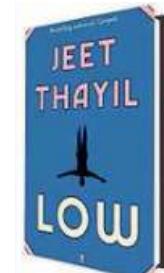
not be starker. In the light of Dostoevsky's gaze, we understand addiction as an unhappy derailment of (nonetheless) passionate and upward-reaching energies. Therefore, a man like Alexei (in *The Gambler*) is able to tremble with his wretched love for roulette and his hopeless love for Polina, teaching us that it takes a human being to be so deceived.

Whereas Ullis trembles to nothing at all, beyond the realm of physiological reactions to this or that powder. "I see nothing, I hear nothing. Most of all I know nothing," he confesses to a taxi driver. Yet, even this utterance, accurate as it may be, is not truthful, for thereupon: "the ride passed in companionable silence."

In *Low*, no racked human being appears before us, but rather a well-managed reptile, and from the same standpoint, only so many others, who populate the world of Thayil's imagination.

In all this, encased as it is in a rigid block of narcissism, blowing neither hot nor cold but always lukewarm, Thayil's writing is perfectly critic-proof. There are, however, endearing chinks of honestly bad writing. *Low* does attempt to throw some structure of meaning around its unfolding, via the use of a ghostly imaginative device, a 'climactic' instance of grief, and a set-piece ending slathered with resonance. These attempts come off hammy, heavy-handed and remarkably stilted. But they are at least 'signs of life,' heartening moves towards humanity, whose genuineness is not for me to judge.

The writer is the author, most recently of *The Outraged: Times of Strife*.



Low
Jeet Thayil
Faber and Faber
₹599

In *Low*, no racked human being appears before us, but rather a well-mannered reptile, and from the same standpoint, only so many others, who populate the world of Thayil's imagination

HISTORICAL FICTION

Three Indians in a London bar

A remarkable novel with its subtle balancing of humour and gravitas

Percy Bharucha

The year is 1943. The Great Western Railway in Swindon has just hired the services of three Indians for special covert operations. The Indians include railwaymen Vincent Rosario, Imtiaz 'Billy' Khan, and mathematician Akaash Ray. Their work is imperative to push the war effort in Britain and to free Europe of the scourge of Nazism. While the three debate who's the most English of them all, their fates are intertwined through a series of extraordinary events including romantic entanglements, espionage, murder, and a broken-down toilet.

McCallum's finest hour is his characters; he creates simmering tension and passive aggression simply by layering them with opposing cultural and political values. His study of people pays off in

the fine details he flourishes them with. The competitiveness of Indians is captured in the heated exchange between Akaash and Vincent about Akaash's Ph.D. and Vincent's derisive remark about Akaash not being a real doctor. One of the longest-running gags in the novel is the ironic representation of culture, say, in the way Akaash slurps his tea or Billy's dress uniform.

This same attention to detail is evident in the descriptions of locomotive engines, local flora and fauna. One forgets that the past is a different place; McCallum evokes it with such completeness.

The trope of using cultural differences to elicit laughter is often laden with stale clichés such as accent jokes, unintentional double entendres and



Mrs A's Indian Gentlemen
Dawood Ali McCallum
Hachette India
₹499

clumsy gaffes related to cultural ritual. This is where McCallum's treatment shines. He turns a simple domestic meal into an occasion for hilarity through the divvying up of pork chops and chicken soup among a by-choice-protesting-vegetarian Akaash, a devout Billy, and an opportunistic Vincent.

Mrs. A's Indian Gentlemen is a remarkable novel for how McCallum manages a subtle balancing act between humour and gravitas by portraying a working class that tries to make the best of what it has. McCallum reminds us of the truth that despite cultural differences, what binds us is kindness, and that, surprisingly, people are capable of it.

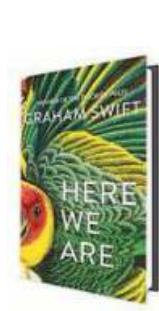
The writer is a freelance author and illustrator.

Mrs A's Indian Gentlemen
Dawood Ali McCallum
Hachette India
₹499

BROWSER

Here We Are
Graham Swift
Simon & Schuster
₹450

Brighton, 1959. Ronnie, a magician, and Evie, his assistant, are drawing huge audiences to the theatre each night. Jack the compère is holding the whole show together. Then the off-stage drama among the three begins to overshadow their success.



Two Plays
Chandrasekhar Kambar, trs Krishna Manavalli
Penguin Random House
₹299

These two plays are haunted by a sense of foreboding. In *The Bringer of Rain: Rishyashringa*, a famine-afflicted village awaits the arrival of rains. Power and bloodshed run hand in hand in *Mahmud Gawan*, set in the 15th century Bahamani Sultanate.



Not All Those Who Wander
Arjun Nath
Penguin Books
₹299

Seventeen-year-old Gehna Rai finds out that she is going to be a mom. Eram, a high-school dropout, dreams of becoming a poker pro while looking after his dad, who has Parkinson's. Sometimes together and sometimes on their own, Gehna and Eram travel an unexpected road.

house. Or perhaps, it is the story of reversals of fortune – a domestic help's son makes it big in the U.S., the girl from the outhouse becomes a rich and successful spiritual healer while the family that employs them both struggles at material, emotional and personal levels. A large novel can deal with multiple stories but this novel distracts you from choosing a direction. The title of the novel is no great help either.

There are many insightful passages like this one, which represents a typically successful Indian diaspora in the U.S. seen from the point of view of one who fails to succeed: "They all reminded him of characters out of *The Truman Show* – the men with their cars and golf and professional ease, their razor sharp super-

wives, the couple who wanted to do South America one country at a time, their children's success and their unbearable energy."

And there is the poignancy of poetry too: "When he had left the frozen waters of Lake Michigan in January, there was a splinter of ice embedded in his heart. He had been watchful not to pull it out because then he would have to deal with the haemorrhaging."

The pointless Rushdie-like foregrounding of history, the meanderings into needless details, and the self-indulgent verbosity erode an otherwise refined narrative experience.

The writer, a Sahitya Akademi translation award winner, teaches English at Christ University, Bengaluru.



Boys from Good Families
Usha K.R.
Speaking Tiger
₹599

The Gods Came Afterwards: Poems

Sharmista Mohanty
Speaking Tiger
₹299

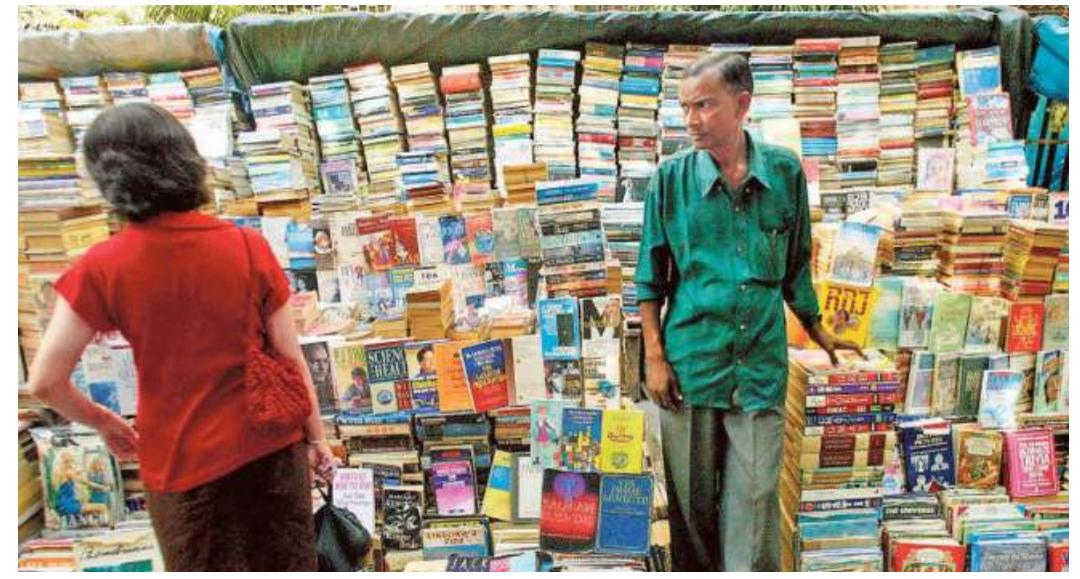
These spare poems weave together the contemporary and the primal. The result is a voice which is both new and ancient. The oral quality of the poems seems to draw out what was once, and perhaps still is, under the surface.



BIBLIOMANIA

Classics in the attic

There's a peculiar delight when long forgotten or long ignored books are discovered and resurrected



Karthik Venkatesh

Forgotten works have a habit of resurfacing most unexpectedly, in the most unexpected places. You may find one while sifting through the pickings of the local *raddiwallah* and lo, your life changes. Earlier this month, a novel from the early 1930s was published for the first time, marking a rare and momentous event.

The novel, *Romance in Marseille*, is by Claude McKay (1889-1948), a leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance.

Given that the book revolves round queerness, slavery and explores the possibility of the creation of a post-colonial African identity, McKay's agent felt that it would be too shocking for readers of the time. For McKay, a writer of Jamaican origin who was bisexual and a Marxist, that was reason enough to shelve the novel.

Scholars had been aware for some time that two manuscripts of *Romance in Marseille* were held by Harlem's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and Yale's Beinecke Library. But copyright issues and a perceived lack of market interest prevented the book from being published. Until now.

Incidentally, this is the second of McKay's works to resurface. *Amiable with Big Teeth*, a 1941 work that remained unknown until a scholar found the typescript in an archive a decade ago, is another. This was published in 2017.

Mere mischance?

In 2019, a British publisher reissued a long-forgotten work, *What Not*, by Rose Macaulay. Originally published in 1918, the novel

sketches a dystopian future where the government ranks people by intelligence, insists on 'mind-training' for all its citizens, and maintains strict control on childbirth. Clearly, the space that *Brave New World* and *1984* later came to occupy had already been explored to chilling effect by Macaulay. Why had the novel been neglected for so long? Did Rose's gender have anything to do with it? Or was it mere mischance?

Like the publication of Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman* in 2015, readers are awaiting unpublished stuff from the estate of the reclusive J.D. Salinger.

Look again

But anyone talking of discoveries and rediscoveries of lost literary classics must necessarily remember U.V. Swaminatha Iyer ('Tamil Thatha'). Born in 1855, Iyer was a

The space that *Brave New World* and *1984* later came to own had already been explored to chilling effect by Rose Macaulay in 1918

Tamil scholar who studied under the formidable Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai and was later employed in the Government Arts College at Kumarakom as a Tamil teacher. On October 21, 1880, a day "etched in red letters" (as Iyer was to describe it in *En Sarithiram*, his autobiography), he met Ramaswami Mudaliar, a District Munsiff recently posted to Kumarakom.

A Tamil scholar himself, Mudaliar asked Iyer where and what he had studied. As Iyer rattled off the ancient Tamil texts that he had spent years mastering, Mudaliar remained unimpressed. He

then asked if Iyer had read the *Jeevaka Chintamani* or *Silappadikaram*. A.K. Ramanujan writes in his essay, 'Language and Social Change', that Iyer was aghast that "he had not even heard of them". Mudaliar handed him the palm-leaf manuscripts of *Jeevaka Chintamani*.

Iyer went on to transcribe *Jeevaka Chintamani*, a Buddhist work, on paper and published the epic with notes and commentaries in 1887. It was an instant success.

The success of *Jeevaka Chintamani* motivated Iyer to search for the original texts of other ancient literary works, a search that lasted till his death. He visited hundreds of villages to obtain palm-leaf manuscripts. He rediscovered *Purananoor* (from the Sangam era) and *Manimekalai* (an offshoot of *Silappadikaram* featuring some of the same characters). He had these twin epics of ancient Tamil literature republished. In a span of about five decades, Iyer published close to 100 books – all of them long-forgotten Tamil works.

In 2005, Arun Kolatkar's *Jejurí* – one of the classics of Indian English poetry and for many years available only in small numbers from one publisher – was issued internationally for the first time, to great acclaim.

Similarly, in the early 90s, G.V. Desan's *All About H. Hatter* came up for air after decades of neglect and non-availability.

Are there other masterpieces that deserve a second look? A lost/forgotten novel by Raja Rao, perhaps? Set off to your nearest library or *raddiwallah* – who knows what treasures lurk there.

The Bengaluru-based writer works in publishing.

DIASPORA FICTION

Too much of a good thing

Usha K.R.'s usual attention to detail is a bit too much for this novel

Meenakshi Shivram

Readers familiar with the works of Usha K.R. will be aware of the large canvas she works on. Her eye for detail, her ability to capture every distinct sight and sound of a setting is her trademark. If that is what you expect in this novel as well, you won't be disappointed. Too much of a good thing, however, robs this story of its impact.

This is the story of a young man, Ashwath, who leaves his family to find himself. No, no. This is the story of a brother and sister whose lives get trapped within ideas of location and freedom. No, again. This is the story of a house called Neel Kamal and how it records the passage of history. Maybe, no.

This is a love story – of a young rebel from a well-to-do household and a poor young girl who lives in the out-

houses. Or perhaps, it is the story of reversals of fortune – a domestic help's son makes it big in the U.S., the girl from the outhouse becomes a rich and successful spiritual healer while the family that employs them both struggles at material, emotional and personal levels. A large novel can deal with multiple stories but this novel distracts you from choosing a direction. The title of the novel is no great help either.

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TERROR

The long reach of ISIS

What are the ideological underpinnings of the jihadist movement in South Asia?

Stanly Johny

Why did Kerala, one of India's most advanced States, with high literacy levels, have the most number affected by the Islamic State (ISIS or IS) outreach in India? "The answers are in fact rooted in migration, economics and religion," writes Kabir Taneja in his book, *The ISIS Peril: The World's Most Feared Terror Group and its Shadow on South Asia*. Taneja, a fellow with the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi, tells the IS story from a South Asian perspective, bridging a vital knowledge gap in the rise and fall of the 'Caliphate'.

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the IS, announced the establishment of the Caliphate from Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, in July 2014. By that time the group had captured huge swathes of territories in Iraq and Syria. At its peak, the reign of Baghdadi's Caliphate stretched from Der Ezzour in eastern Syria to the outskirts of Baghdad, the Iraqi capital. The declared aim of the Caliphate was to expand its territories through military action and formation of 'provinces' across the world. As part of this campaign, IS units came up in several South Asian countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and the Philippines. Taneja offers a holistic view, starting with the IS' origins in Syria and Iraq and then goes into its leadership.

New grounds

Taneja provides details of IS-linked activities in the region. The group has made a lasting institutional presence in Afghanistan. "Afghanistan's political vacuum and divisive socio-religious landscape could, however, become a new ground for ISIS," he writes.

The IS has claimed responsibility for a couple of attacks in Pakistan, which "offers an intertwined military jihadist civilian complex to accurately place ISIS's presence or influence."

In Bangladesh, the IS claimed the July 2016 Dhaka cafe attack. IS posters and flags have been seen in Jammu and Kashmir. And the group attracted dozens of youth from India, especially from Kerala. "South Asia's complex socio-political and socio-cultural narratives remain an open door for ISIS's marketable fantasy, more than an ideology," writes Taneja.

But despite these complexities and a vast Muslim population in the region who are directly targeted by IS propaganda channels for recruitment, the group failed to make any major impact in the region, except in Afghanistan.

As for India, Taneja lays down a historical background of India's engagement with West Asia, the source of the IS threat. He argues that India's non-interventional foreign policy with its roots going back to the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) has allowed the country to build capacities in the region, while also prevent transnational jihadist organisations such as the Islamic State and al-Qaeda taking institutional roots.

While this is true, what he could also have looked into is the character of Islam in the sub-continent, which is fundamentally different from the Salafi-jihadist version that jihadist groups champion.

The chapter on Kerala stresses on the historical connection between the State and the Gulf and their 'Muslim solidarity'. But this alone doesn't explain why so many Malayalis were drawn to the IS network. 'Muslim solidarity' is not a problem in itself. But Taneja is careful when he says "much more empirical work needs to be done on modern jihadist groups." "Terrorism has evolved, its study must follow suit," he writes.

PROFILE

Reading Karl Marx in the 21st century

A historian introduces the German philosopher and his critical thinking for the times, warts and all

Ramin Jahanbegloo

Reading Karl Marx amid political uncertainty and rise of populism could be a challenging exercise. However, no one could have done a better job than Shlomo Avineri in resuscitating Marx in a non-Marxian period, where students in humanities have rarely heard of The First International and *Das Kapital*.

Professor emeritus of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Avineri dedicated more than half a century in reading, teaching and writing on Marx and Hegel. In his most recent book, *Karl Marx: Philosophy and Revolution*, published

in Yale's 'Jewish Lives' series, Avineri, once again introduces us to Marx the philosopher, economist, journalist and revolutionary, while "liberating the real-life Marx from the canonization in which his thought has been wrapped."

Two in one

Avineri's book is really two books in one. The first is the author's account, as a historian of ideas, of the development of Marx's critical thought in relation to his Jewish background and the influence of Hegelian philosophy.

The second is about Marx's struggles and difficulties as a revolutionary, a friend, a husband and a father. In less than 200 pages, he captures

the essence of Marx's relation with his Jewish identity and presents him "in the actual historical contexts, intellectual and political, in which he lived and acted."

Avineri portrays Marx as a Jewish thinker who is far from being involved with the idea of Zionism, but writes his notorious essay 'On The Jewish Question' (*Zur Judentumfrage*), associating Judaism with the worship of money in a typical anti-Semitic trope, while on the other hand arguing for equal rights for Jews. As Avineri shows us in his interesting research, there is a degree of awareness in Marx of his Jewish background, which doesn't make of him a Jewish thinker.

The book captures the range of

Marx's work, from his early writings as a critique of Hegel's philosophy to the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848 with Friedrich Engels and finally the publication of the first volume of *Das Kapital* in 1867.

Avineri portrays Marx as a man of complexities, with a great intellectual ability to listen, to learn and to lead, but also with a venomous tongue against his opponents.

That is to say, "The singularity of Marx's intellectual brilliance and learning also carried a hidden curse that accompanied him for most of his life: because he was so intellectually superior to many of his colleagues in the socialist movement, he could not stop himself from pointing out the inconsistencies in

their writings, their occasional muddled thoughts, and sometimes their sheer ignorance."

Impartial study

The impartial study is very successful in engaging with Marx's intellectual timeline and to do justice both to the thinker and his writings.

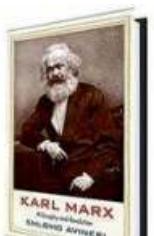
In doing so, Avineri follows in his book the path of another historian of ideas, Isaiah Berlin, who in his book *Karl Marx*, written in 1939 and considered today as a classic of the genre, wrote the following: "No thinker in the nineteenth century has had so direct, deliberate and powerful an influence upon mankind as Karl Marx. Yet Marx could not, at any time, be called a popular figure in

the ordinary sense: certainly he was in no sense a popular writer or orator."

In the same line of thought, Avineri's conclusions on Marx are not very different from those of Isaiah Berlin. He agrees with him on the worldly impact of Marx in the first half of the 20th century.

However, he adds that "such a fascination with radical social revolution is no longer a central factor in the political life of western societies."

It is true that tributes to Marx are quite rare in today's world, and maybe this is another reason to list this book among the very best studies on Marx in the past two decades.



Karl Marx:
Philosophy and
Revolution
Shlomo Avineri
Yale University
Press
₹1,504

Fateful Triangle

Tanvi Madan

Penguin/Viking

₹799

A specialist on Indian foreign policy argues that China's influence on the U.S.-India relationship is not a recent phenomenon. Madan says U.S. and Indian perceptions of and policy towards China significantly shaped U.S.-India relations in three crucial decades, from 1949 to 1979.



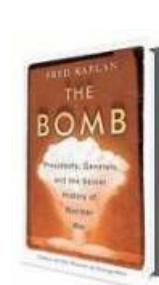
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Nidhi Dugar Kundalia

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This book weaves together prose, oral narratives and Adivasi history to tell the stories of six remarkable tribes of India, reckoning with radical changes over the last century, as they were pulled apart.



The Urdu Ghazal: A Gift of India's Composite Culture

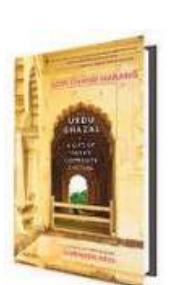
Gopi Chand Narang

Translated by Surinder Deol

Oxford University Press

₹1,295

The volume presents the unique flowering of the ghazal. It explores a variety of influences on the ghazal, including Sufism, the Bhakti movement, and infusion of Rekhta and Persian languages.



LAW

How India came to be one

In replacing the colonial system of governance with a democratic model predicated on a written Constitution, the Indian Republic sought freedom from the shackles of the past

Uday Balakrishnan

For long, the best analytical account of the Indian Constitution was Granville Austin's classic *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*. Now Austin's tome has found a worthy partner, in Madhav Khosla's aptly titled book, *India's Founding Moment: The Constitution of a Most Surprising Country*.

Most scholars in the West, with the exception of Austin and a few others, have been largely sceptical of India's constitutional experiment. Some of them like Perry Anderson, a professor of history at UCLA, have also either been condescending or derivative or both. In his book, *The Indian Ideology*, Anderson writes, "The body that created Indian democracy was it: self not an expression of it." He adds that "the constitution to which it gave birth moreover owed the majority of its provisions to the Westminster: some 250 out of its 395 Articles were taken word for word from the Government of India Act passed by the Baldwin cabinet in 1935."



India's Founding Moment: The Constitution of a Most Surprising Country
Madhav Khosla
Harvard University Press/
HarperCollins
₹599

Break from democracy

Khosla is conscious of this criticism. In a convincing introduction to his book, he writes: "Regardless of the number of words that were taken

from the 1935 Act, democratisation signified a major break from the past." That is a point Anderson misses. By no stretch of imagination can one refer to colonial rule as having anything more than a semblance of democracy. In replacing the colonial system of governance with a democratic model predicated on a written Constitution, the Indian Republic, as Khosla writes, took a leap of faith, through which it sought to break itself free from the shackles of the past.

The methodology at the heart of this leap no doubt brought with it tension between different, and at times competing, lines of vision. Khosla brings out this tension admirably. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of this book is the author's ability to merge into one coherent whole constitutional theory with the history of India's political struggle.

Nehru, for example, Khosla writes, while not opposed to the idea of a written Constitution still saw a long document as one that might deny "constitutional elasticity." "So far as the nature of the Constitution is concerned," he notably said, "it must deal with fundamental aspects of the political, the social, the economic and other spheres, and not with the details which are matters of legislation."

The author merges into one coherent whole constitutional theory with the history of India's political struggle

Ambedkar, on the other hand, was keen to fill the Constitution with details. He accepted that the document's length and content was atypical, but, to him, given that India was unused to constitutional democracy, the only way to build "constitutional morality" was through maintenance of fidelity to matters of form and procedure. The ease and frequency with which the Indian Constitution has since been amended tells us that Ambedkar's fears were well founded.

Asymmetrical federalism

Khosla covers plenty more ground. He builds a narrative that shows what went into the founding of the republic, the various choices that the framers ultimately wrote into the Constitution. For instance, he tells us how and why the Indian Constitution came to adopt an asymmetrical model of federalism with a strong centre. On this, the Nehruvian conviction that a strong centralised state was necessary to hold India together came through. Nehru feared that fissiparous tendencies would balkanise the country. The text of India's Constitution reflects this belief.

He also discusses in some depth

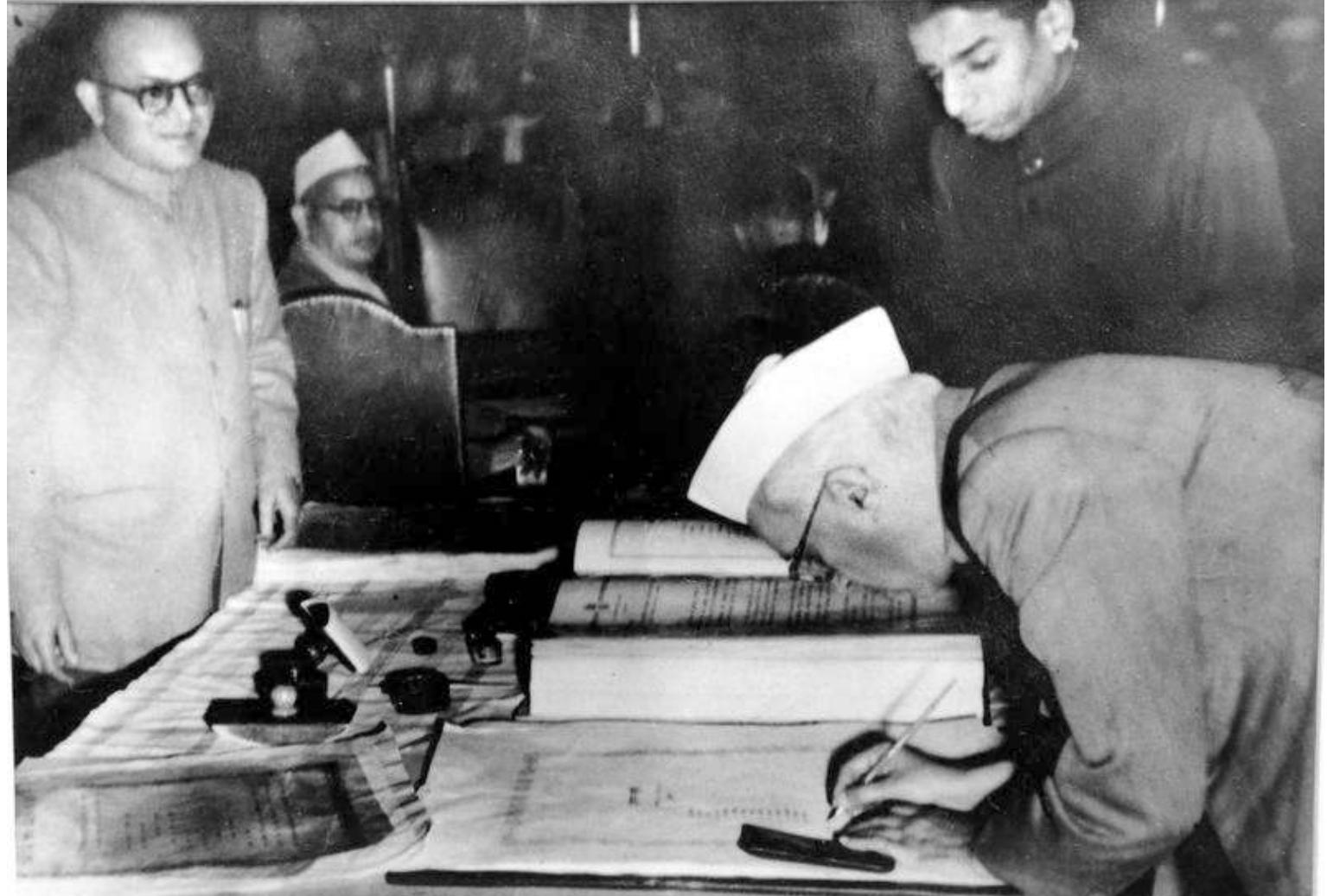
how the framers' quest to bring about parity between popular rule and substantive justice resulted in the drafting of a set of 'Directive Principles of State Policy.'

These principles are non-justiciable but they have still come to occupy an important space. What Khosla doesn't tell us though is how these principles have since proved controversial. In some instances, their inclusion has given a handle to extremist Hindu sentiments, as we have seen with the rise of 'cow vigilantes' while in other instances they have led, for example, to the hasty rollout of a flawed Panchayati Raj system that has worked well only in a few States.

What is more, some of the provisions that ought to have been made inalienable nonetheless found themselves in the Directive Principles for many decades, such as the one directing the state to provide free and compulsory education for all children until 14.

But this is a mere quibble. India's Constitution is a revolutionary document. It seeks to transform our society, and our polity. It serves as a marker between colonialism and self-governance. Coming as it does on the 70th anniversary of the republic, Khosla's book will remind readers for years to come of the truly radical vision that the Constitution enshrines.

The writer teaches governance at IISc, Bengaluru.



PROFILE

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Revolutionary document

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru signing the first copy of the Constitution in New Delhi, as B.R. Ambedkar (left) looks on.

■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

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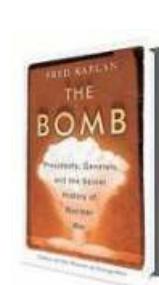
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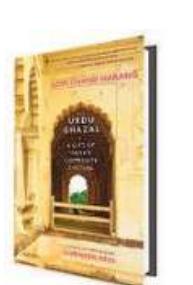
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CULTURE MULCH

I/Me/You/We

The Dolly Parton challenge tells us that we are counted and we account for something, even if only as a type of potato

This new Dolly Parton challenge has me all aflutter. Because unlike Dolly Parton, who appears perfectly coiffured in all four quadrants of the aforementioned meme, I find it a chore to keep body, soul, and hair in place. I am far from the "woman who can do it all." But I still love the meme.

For those not in the know, the Dolly Parton challenge involves posting profile pictures from four social media platforms – Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Tinder – in one collage. I find this hilarious in many ways.

For once, we have been freed to laugh at the absurdity of our curated lives and reminded that our "hypocrisies" are available for the world to see. (Some of us have, of course, used this as an opportunity to multiply our ridiculousness, posing perfectly for each handle, but that's a column for another day). That all the hours we spent choosing photographs, considering consequences, counting views, must reckon with the laughter that is the only counter to narcissism.

Such contradiction in the hashtag universe, however, merely provides fodder for hating (double/quadruple standards!) or loving (so good at this game!). Each of these calls – for seamlessness on the one hand, and savviness on the other – betrays something of the ways in which we consume others. And ourselves.

We like types. We want to pin down people. In order to figure out how to orient ourselves towards them. The social theorists call this structuralism – every element in a system is held in place vis-à-vis its ten-

sions with and differences from another. The important thing to understand here is that neither is any element stable by itself nor does either possess intrinsic meaning.

Hall of mirrors

This is also how identity functions, as an endless hall of mirrors. We curate ourselves for each of our social media platforms based on how we would like our imagined audience to see us, and as a result we only perceive ourselves in relation to the ways that we think we are apprehended. See what I did there? Stay with me; it'll make sense soon enough.

This is where the Dolly Parton challenge delights me. For, by presenting to us the continued hollowness of our identity choices, it tells us that there may be other ways to live outside these echo chambers.

Long years ago, my friends and I, on the job market after a marketing and communications degree, were willing participants in a cultural phenomenon called the Myers-Briggs test. Over many sets of questions seeking to understand what sort of people we were, the algorithm went on to classify us into combinations of Introverted Vs. Extraverted (sic), Sensing Vs. Intuitive, Thinking Vs. Feeling, and Judging Vs. Perceiving. We soon realised that we could be

For, by presenting to us the continued hollowness of our identity choices, it tells us that there may be other ways to live outside of these echo chambers



Perfectly coiffured Dolly Parton's original collage. • FACEBOOK.COM

any combination of the above on any given day. We performed our chosen personality by answering questions accordingly, exposing to some of us the superficiality and limitedness of types, and the boring nature of the bureaucratic world that needs workers and not humans.

Seductive tests

The appetite for knowing the self through these boxes does not seem to have quelled, however. I continue to take great pleasure in taking tests of various kinds telling me exactly who I am. You'd think that by now, I would know better, or at the least have some idea of self as accumulated test knowledge.

Typology – what kind of a sun-

sign/ waffle/ volcano/ rockstar/ colour are you? – is a seductive proposition. For it tells you that somewhere in the universe, someone has clocked you. You are counted and you account for something, even if only as a type of potato. That in an adult life,

beset by invisibility, endless work, and the contradictions of a world too complex to be quelled, it's nice to know that someone (not god), knows you. Even if the knower is only an algorithm. And by the fact of being known, life can now have meaning.

The danger, of course, is that in the thrall of such longing to be acknowledged, we forget to offer the same courtesy back. A hall of mirrors, therefore, with nobody on the other side.

Here then is a radical set of propositions and antidotes. Be many things and no one thing. Laugh long and loud at yourself. One day a week, ask someone else who they are that day, and really listen. Turn off social media. Meet a friend. Oh. And take the Dolly Parton challenge.

Mathangi Krishnamurthy teaches anthropology for a living, and is otherwise invested in names, places, animals, and things.



cashing two top spades in dummy, and leading a third spade. When East discarded a club on the third spade, Helgemo ruffed and led the jack of hearts. East won and led a heart to dummy's nine as West discarded the king of diamonds. This was the position:

NORTH	♦ A K 10 4 2
♥ 9 7 4	
♦ A 2	
♣ 10 7 2	
WEST	♦ Q 8 6 5
♥ J 2	
♦ K 10	
♣ Q J 9 3	
EAST	♦ J 7
♥ K Q 5	
♦ Q J 9 5 4 3	
♣ 8 4	
SOUTH	♦ 3
♥ A J 10 8 6	
♦ 8 7 6	
♣ A K 6 5	

The bidding:

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

19 Pass 14 20

Pass 30 Pass All pass

32 Pass 49 All pass

Opening lead: Two of ♠

Neither vulnerable,
South deals

Bob Jones

Norwegian star Geir Helgemo, one of the world's best, was South, in today's deal. The best route to 10 tricks would be to ruff a diamond in dummy, but the excellent opening trump lead prevented that.

Second choice was to set up a long spade in dummy, needing a 4-3 spade split. Helgemo went after this by winning East's queen of hearts with the ace at trick one,

NORTH	♦ 10 4
♥ Void	
♦ A 2	
♣ 10 7 2	
WEST	♦ Q 9
♥ Void	
♦ 10	
♣ Q J 9 3	
EAST	♦ Void
♥ Void	
♦ Q J 9 5 4 3	
♣ 8	
SOUTH	♦ Void
♥ 10	
♦ 8 7	
♣ A K 6 5	

Helgemo now made the elegant play of leading the two of diamonds from dummy! East won with his jack. A club from East would see Helgemo duck, end-playing West, so East led a diamond to dummy's ace. West had to shed a spade. A spade ruff, establishing dummy's 10, and a low club now finished West. He had to win and lead another club, giving dummy an entry for the established spade. A beauty!

Grand plans The Palais Garnier in Paris was partly the inspiration for a famous gothic novel and musical. • ERIC POUHIER

series that you can find in any bookshop?

9 This classic 1859 novel is set before and during the French Revolution. It tells the story of a French doctor who after being imprisoned moves to London to live with his daughter who he has never met. It is most famous for its starting lines which ring true even today – 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness'. Which book is this and who wrote it?

10 Gerald and Charles started a publishing house in 1908 after working together at Methuen & Co. The company was planned as a diversified publisher, publishing both fiction and non-fiction titles. After World War I, the company's fortunes declined. After Gerald's death, Charles reshaped the company in 1930 and made it what it is today. Interestingly, they are one of the few publishing houses with a name that's more famous than their titles. What are the surnames of these two gentlemen, which might be more familiar to women readers?

A molecular biologist from Madurai, our quizmaster enjoys trivia and music, and is working on a rock ballad called 'Coffee is a Drink, Kaapi is an Emotion'. @bertyashley



tain Indian languages, it was not awarded to an English work till 1960, when it went to a certain novel that was also turned into a path-breaking film in 1965. Who is the recipient of the first Sahitya Akademi Award for an English work and what is the title of the novel?

4 The books in this children's series by Italian author Elisabetta Damí, published from 2000 onwards, are a huge success in the original Italian as well as in their English translations. Neither the original nor the English versions, however, have Damí's name on the cover as author; instead, the protagonist of the series, a rodent reporter, is listed as the author. Who is this character by whose name this series is known?

5 They have broken the nose of the sphinx, met Jesus Christ's parents, invented bullfighting and mountain rappelling, brought a close to the Roman circus, discovered tea, started the practice of drug tests in the Olympics, met the Beatles and defeated coronavirus in a race. Who are these two people and where do they live?

6 This book, by an aerospace scientist and his colleague Y.S. Rajan, examines in depth the weaknesses

and strengths of India, and offers a vision of the ways in which India can emerge among the world's top four economic powers and a knowledge superpower by a certain year. The tag line of the book is 'A Vision for the New Millennium'. The name of the book is a reference to the year in which they believe this can happen, and also the standard normal score for the visual acuity test which an optometrist might call 'perfect vision'. What is the name of the book?

7 The Palais Garnier is an iconic building in Paris in which a part of the 7-ton crystal chandelier fell and killed an employee in 1896. This incident, as well as the discovery of an underground lake, inspired a 1910 gothic novel by Gaston Leroux. What is the novel that eventually also became a famous musical?

8 This author goes by three names – Jovial Bob, Eric Affabee and the one he is most popularly known by. Known as the Stephen King of children's literature, his bibliography includes hundreds of horror fiction novels that have spawned video games and even a movie. The most popular among them is a series that gets its name from a feeling one gets when in horrifying situations. Who is this author and what is the name of this book?

10 Gerald and Charles started a publishing house in 1908 after working together at Methuen & Co. The company was planned as a diversified publisher, publishing both fiction and non-fiction titles. After World War I, the company's fortunes declined. After Gerald's death, Charles reshaped the company in 1930 and made it what it is today. Interestingly, they are one of the few publishing houses with a name that's more famous than their titles. What are the surnames of these two gentlemen, which might be more familiar to women readers?

A molecular biologist from Madurai, our quizmaster enjoys trivia and music, and is working on a rock ballad called 'Coffee is a Drink, Kaapi is an Emotion'. @bertyashley

LETTER FROM A CONCERNED READER

Paining like anything

Respected Madam/Sir,

Tragedy is always starting with comedy. This is the life. This is life they should put under four lions of Ashoka.

Satyameva jayate and all nobody cares these days.

If you tell some youths, "Hello youths, please come here listen to me, truth alone is leading to success." They will say, "Uncle please sit down. This is not *jambavan* period. Nowadays morning to evening nonstop telling lies means some cash will come."

Three days back I woke up in the morning. I said two-three prayers and stepped out of bed and where I am putting the foot?

Directly on cover of superhit novel *The Night of Wenceslas* by Lionel Davidson. Then what happened?

Book is flying one direction, foot in other direction, Mathrubootham is crashing to the floor like Skylab crashing in Australia in 1979. Whether you are remembering Skylab?



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

whole body and said, "Mathrubootham, no serious issues are there. All items working properly. But too much stiffness is there. Whether you are doing any gym or exercise or joggings?" I said, "Dr. Shankaramen, for last 30 years you are living in next flat. What nonsense questions you are asking." He said, "Mathrubootham please go for one massage treatment. I know one clinic in Anna Nagar West near Mainland China hotel." Kamalam said, "I am booking appointment immediately, you keep quiet."

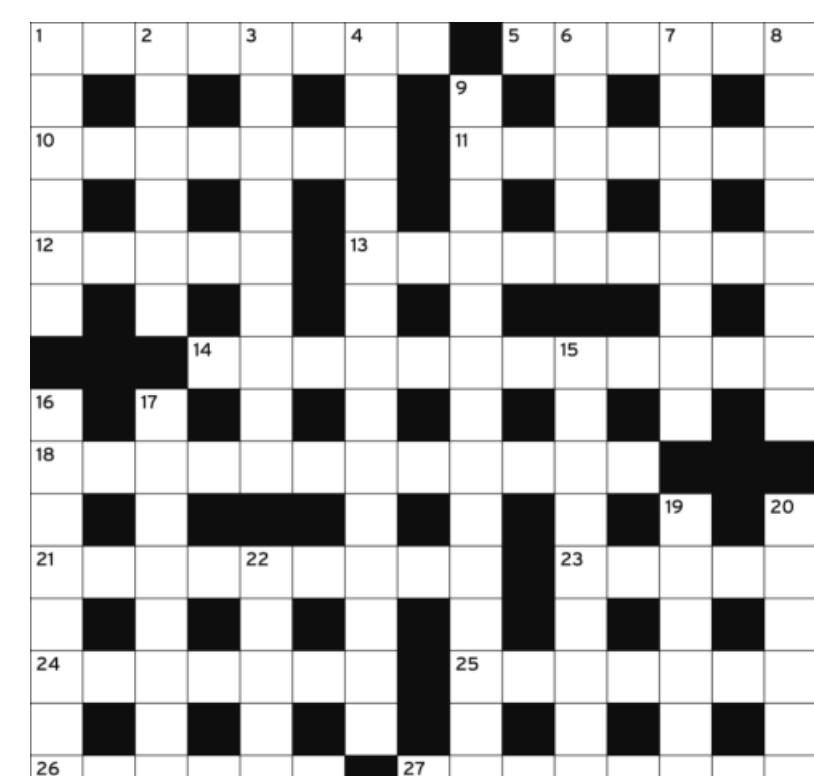
Next day I went to massage establishment. Receptionist asked some questions, then I said about falling in bedroom. She closed her eyes and said, "Ayappa, time to take him up?" I said, "Excuse me madam what nonsense, this is customer service or customer insult?" That moment one massage fellow with name badge Ayappan came and took me to upstairs treatment room.

Madam/sir once during college days I had one accident. I am going to college on cycle. Going-going just like that. Suddenly one man on scooter came and put loud horn. I fully lost balance and fell into one ditch full of small stones. Motorcycle man is coming running to help but he is slipping and falling on top of me. How many stitches total? Seven stitches from stones and two from motorcycle man helmet.

But that pain and all nothing compared to pain that Ayappan is doing during massage. After long time, he said sir is it paining too much? I said Ayappa for 20 minutes I am crying and crying. You are asking now? I reached home tottering. Mrs. Mathrubootham asked old man, how you are feeling?

I said Kamalam absolutely no feelings anywhere. She said very good, I have booked weekly appointment for next two months. It is surprise gift.

Yours in extreme persecution,
J. Mathrubootham

THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 3088**Across**

- 1 President grandly dines, leading to gym session (5-3)
- 5 Invention that secures part of level crossing (6)
- 10 Report following that woman's affair (7)
- 11 Russia's banks fiddle endlessly with cases from Italy (7)
- 12 A little dab at Ikea fabric (5)
- 13 Dislocated nine noses? Definitely not (2,2,5)
- 14 Why so blue, kid? Regrettably, it's the drink (6,6)
- 18 Uninjured, rare bird almost crashed into something met at high speed (5,7)
- 21 Recklessly races back for pescatarian's dish (4,5)
- 23 Next to west section of church, left a kind of orange (5)
- 24 Oaf's to run about, in a way (2,1,4)
- 25 Opens a French port and sips (to begin with) (7)
- 26 Shocked? About time to become experienced (6)
- 27 So splendid (4,4)

Down

- 1 Ignore eyewitness without hesitation (4,2)
- 2 Lets out what a Cockney comic does, we're told (6)
- 3 Cask of don drunk with crisps, etc (5,4)
- 4 Silk pants being laid out as festive



ANSWERS
1. MILLS and Boon
2. R.L.Stine Good Omens
3. Rick Moranis, *The Little Mermaid*
4. Geronimo Stilton
5. Asleep and Deliberately of Gaul
6. India 2020
7. The Phantom of the Opera
8. RL.Stine Good Omens
9. 10. Mills and Boon
11. R.L.Stine Good Omens
12. India 2020
13. Geronimo Stilton
14. Asleep and Deliberately of Gaul
15. The Phantom of the Opera
16. R.L.Stine Good Omens
17. India 2020
18. Geronimo Stilton
19. The Little Mermaid
20. R.L.Stine Good Omens
21. India 2020
22. Geronimo Stilton
23. The Phantom of the Opera
24. R.L.Stine Good Omens
25. India 2020
26. Geronimo Stilton
27. The Little Mermaid
28. India 2020
29. Geronimo Stilton
30. The Phantom of the Opera
31. India 2020
32. Geronimo Stilton
33. The Little Mermaid
34. India 2020
35. Geronimo Stilton
36. The Phantom of the Opera
37. India 2020
38. Geronimo Stilton
39. The Little Mermaid
40. India 2020
41. Geronimo Stilton
42. The Phantom of the Opera
43. India 2020
44. Geronimo Stilton
45. The Little Mermaid
46. India 2020
47. Geronimo Stilton
48. The Phantom of the Opera
49. India 2020
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52. India 2020
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63. The Little Mermaid
64. India 2020
65. Geronimo Stilton
66. The Phantom of the Opera
67. India 2020
68. Geronimo Stilton
69. The Little Mermaid
70. India 2020
71. Geronimo Stilton
72. The Phantom of the Opera
73. India 2020
74. Geronimo Stilton
75. The Little Mermaid
76. India 2020



Prized craft A Kashmiri craftsman weaves a Kani shawl on a handloom with wooden needles and thread made out of Pashmina wool at Kanihama in Budgam district.

The beginning
A worker cleans the wool in a factory in Srinagar.



Spinning a yarn
Weaving Pashmina thread in Srinagar.



Unique design
Starting work on a shawl.



WOVEN ART

A rare Kashmiri craft

Each exquisite Kani shawl, from the Valley's Kanihama area, takes at least six months to weave

Nissar Ahmad

Kashmir's Kani shawl, one of the Valley's most famous exports from the time of the Mughals, draws its uniqueness from the way it is woven. Made from the coat of Pashmina goats, which are reared in the desert region of Ladakh, it is mostly women who spin the wool into yarn on *charkhas* in their homes. Craftspersons in the Valley's Kanihama area then weave the shawls with a rare dexterity.

A designer, known as *naqash*, creates a pattern. The weaver brings it into life with numerous bobbins or *petit sticks* loaded with yarn of different colours. There is no embroidery. Neither does the bobbin shuttle from one side to the other of the warp. Instead, *tujis* or sticks of different colours are inserted at different points across the warp thread. In this, the weaver follows a code prepared by the designer. The task is time-consuming and requires immense patience. One shawl takes at least six months to weave. And this explains its high cost – ₹40,000 to ₹2.5 lakh.

The Kani shawl, which has a Geographical Indication tag, now faces competition from cheaper machine-made shawls from Punjab. But craftsman Mohammad Ramzan isn't very worried. He says the buyers can tell a machine-made shawl from a hand-made one. Others don't share his optimism. Micro-chips could be attached to handmade shawls to set them apart from fakes, say experts.



Sewn up
Pashmina yarn in different colours.



Hue and dry
A dyer adds colours.



Full splendour
Displaying a Kani shawl in Srinagar.

60 MINUTES WITH MALCOLM GLADWELL

'My books help people make sense of the world'

The Canadian writer and journalist says that he sees his role as trying to explain both sides of a debate

Jinoy Jose P.

- Bachelor's degree in history from Trinity College, University of Toronto, 1984
- Was a national level runner in school; among Canada's fastest teens at 13 and 14
- Host of the podcast *Revisionist History*, where he talks about a person, event or idea, and proceeds to question our knowledge on the subject
- Has six books to his credit. His first was *The Tipping Point*, for which he received a \$1 million advance

Why was it important now to write about talking to strangers?

This is one of the dominant facts about the modern world. Twenty years ago, we would not be having this conversation. Twenty years ago, books by Canadians may have been sold, but they weren't selling many copies in India and we wouldn't be having a conversation over mobile phone this easily with a connection this good. There are all kinds of reasons why typically strangers like us

would never have met, but now we meet all the time. That's a central fact of a connected world. And the issue is, are we any good at this kind of communication? For instance, there is a world of difference between you interviewing an Indian author face-to-face and you talking to a Canadian author over the phone.

But doesn't a connected world

make it easier for strangers to know each other?

Yes, today you can dig up the past of strangers from their social media profiles. But my book is really concerned with personal communication, and understanding its nuances and subtleties. It is so easy for meaning to be lost when I'm unfamiliar with your background, your culture, the assumptions you're bringing. I talk a lot in the book about what it

means to interpret facial expressions. All of us, every day, are forced to use facial expressions and body language to interpret someone's emotional state. If I know you very well, I can do that. I can do that with some degree of accuracy. If I don't know you at all, it's really hard and we make mistakes.

In the book, I tell the story of Amanda Knox (who was first convicted and then acquitted in the

murder of her British roommate). That's as much a cross-cultural misunderstanding as anything. Such problems will only be magnified if we don't learn to understand strangers.

In a book about talking to strangers, it is highly unlikely you'll meet characters like Sylvia Plath or Anne Sexton. How did this book come along?

When I write books, I start with a single story that I think is powerful and has depth and meaning and I build from there. So I begin with (the death of) Sandra Bland not just because I thought that story was moving and tragic and fascinating, but because I thought it had layers. It is the kind of story you could think about and investigate on a number of levels. And that's what I'm always looking for in a book; stories I can tell and that allow me to take a step back and examine from a number of perspectives.

Many say your books blend self-help and pop psychology. Are you a self-help writer?

Well, it's funny. I suppose I am in a certain way. Although it's not; it's a different kind of self-help in this book. Normally, in self-help books, people end with, say, 10 rules that you make sense of, and I don't do that at all. Perhaps mine are a little more complicated. My books try to explain social processes. Any book that does that is basically a self-help book, right? It's that way to help people make sense of the world.

That's why reviewers say you bring "intellectual sparkle to everyday subjects". Is this a deliberate approach?

Yeah, it's deliberate. I've often observed that people are experience-rich and theory-poor. All of us have an enormous wealth of stories and experiences. But what we lack is the means to make sense of all that, to organise it, to understand it and to comprehend it. My books are addressing that. I'm not telling you facts you didn't know before. You've all been in situations I'm describing. What I'm doing is saying, here's a way of organising your thoughts.

Is that why your narratives sound apolitical? Critics say you ignore politics altogether in your writings.

I feel like there are enough books about politics. I always joke that my book was the only American book published in 2019 that did not mention Donald Trump. I don't think the world needs more on Trump and Brexit and Modi and whoever else. So I have deliberately steered clear

of that. And also, I think politics has become so divisive. The minute you mention politics, people take sides and they're not listening to what you're saying any more. And they're distracted. I'm going to talk about other things and leave politics to the politicians. We forget in these politically charged moments just how much there is outside of politics, and I'm not someone who has terribly trusted in politics anyway, so it's never been hard for me to be apolitical.

You've said you want to get people to take human psychology seriously and to respect the complexity of human behaviour and motivations. Since when have you been interested in writing about people and their inner workings?

I've always been kind of curious about people's motivations. When I began to read a lot in academic psychology in my 20s, I became fascinated by the mountain of work that had been done by some very brilliant people. A lot of my reading is about the specifics of human interaction.

People are experience-rich and theory-poor. All of us have an enormous wealth of stories and experiences. But what we lack is the means to make sense of it

tion. As someone who is an immigrant many times over, I'm always in the situation of observing things that are certainly unfamiliar to me. And that's a good jumping off point for this kind of writing.

Who are the writers that have influenced your writing?

Richard Nisbett has been tremendously influential in the world of psychology and also on my thinking, and he's someone who has a great theme... to investigate the ways in which our environment, our situation, influence our behaviour.

Your writing style is pedagogical.

The role of the journalist is to be the observer; the curious observer. As a journalist, that comes very naturally too. As I said, I'm not someone who's taking sides in debates. I'm trying to explain debates. So you're not going to participate directly in them. I kind of try to help people understand both sides. That's the natural position to be in.

Your writing reminds me of Truman Capote. Is he a favourite of yours?

Yes! I'm glad you found that out.



NOSTALGIA

The sweetness of winters

As winter winds down, a look at date palm jaggery and its long history in Bengal

Tanushree Bhowmik

Winter is well on its way out now, and we are lapping up the last of the bright red winter carrots and pale green fresh peas. For us, winters always meant two things – ma's 'to die for' peas kachori and khejurer gur. From sweets made on Makar Sankranti to the thick, creamy payesh and the everyday comfort food of doodh-bhaat (milk and rice), khejurer gur nudged and pushed white sugar out of business and elevated the mundane. I would break pieces of the soft, deep caramel gur and put it on my tongue and savour the complex sweetnes-

slowly spreading in my mouth. It was like a small piece of sweet warmth. I still think this is the best way to eat it. Ma had trusted sources who would procure and deliver to her good quality khejurer gur from Bengal to Assam, the softer ones for immediate use and the harder roundels to last through the year, safely tucked in airtight containers inside the refrigerator. My sister and I inherited this trait and we fulfil it every year like a family ritual.

Khejurer gur or date palm jaggery, that highly prized seasonal produce, occupies a place of pride in Bengal's already accomplished sweet-making history. As far back as the 4th century BC, Panini wrote, *Gurasha auang desho goura*, which means 'Gour is the place of gur (jaggery)' which means Gour is the place of gur (jaggery)'.

Tasty wares A vendor with earthen pots full of date palm jaggery in Joynagar. ■ AFP

ket or *haat* was held on Mondays and Fridays in that village where people from different villages came to sell gur. The fine quality of the date palm jaggery sold in this *haat* is orally documented in the Piruli song of Farid Pir and also in the folk poems of Dakshin Kalikapur village. The reason why a more formal, 'Sanskritised' documentation of the origin of khejurer gur is unavailable is because the Siulis – the artisans – belonged to the lower castes.

Nomadic artisans

Amir Sheikh and his younger brother shift home from Nadia to Adityapur village in Burdwan district for three to four months every winter. This means staying in makeshift huts, away from their families and creature comforts. A few kilometres away, near the Kopai river in Bolpur, Sabir stays with his family of four, including two infants. These families are all seasonal nomads, Siulis, who specialise in tapping the sap of the date palm tree and making khejurer gur.

The Siulis mostly belong to Scheduled Castes or Tribes, or to the Mahishya and Muslim community, and they are spread across the four-five major gur producing districts of Bengal – Nadia, North and South 24 Parganas, Murshidabad and Malda. While the demand for khejurer gur has steadily increased over the years, nobody really knows much about its unique and climate-sensitive production or about the community that produces it. In the absence of this connect, the Siulis, the men who scale the thorny trees to collect the sap, are almost never acknowledged.

Obtaining the sap requires skill. The tapping is generally done at night, with an intervening period of rest for the tree. The Siulis climb the tree at dusk, cut the end of the inflorescence (flower cluster), and hang an earthen container from it, leaving it overnight to catch the dripping sap. The tree cannot be tapped if the weather is foggy, drizzly or warm, as the sap will become turbid and sour. It's this that makes the gur so sensi-

tive to climatic conditions. The fresh sap of the wild date palm is sweet, fragrant and as clear as drinking water. Rich in vitamins and iron and with 12-15% sugar, it is a delicious thirst quencher.

However, it ferments quickly along with the rising sun to turn into the alcoholic *tari*, so the Siulis start work before the crack of dawn. The pots are brought down from the trees and the collected sap is filtered and poured into open troughs. This juice is then put to boil till the Brix value reaches 118-120%, a calculation that experienced Siulis like Amir make just by sight and touch alone, without any modern instruments.

Many varieties

Date palm jaggery can be eaten as nolen gur – the softer, golden coloured gur, named after the *nol*, or the pipe that is used to collect the sap, and from *nolen* meaning new. Or as jhola gur, the viscous liquid gur made by reducing the sap but stopping short of crystallisation.

Jhola comes from the Bengali word for 'hanging' – the way the pots are hung. Jhola gur has low shelf life but high aroma, and is used to make the famous Joynagar moa. Then there is poysa gur, from the word *poila* or 'first', for the gur made from the first sap of the season. This is believed to be the best variety because of the elongated period of rest that the tree gets.

The jhola gur made from the first sap is called *jiren jhola gur* – 'jiren' being the word for resting. The *jiren* gur is almost translucent. The sap is reduced further on low heat and poured into terracotta moulds to yield the solidified patali, which has the highest shelf life of about eight months but is the most compromised on flavour.

Khejurer gur has now become a part of fine dining and has inspired several refined sweets, but the first jhola gur each season still evokes memories of a winter special Bengal breakfast of luchi and jhola gur. Or, as the famous poet Sukumar Ray recalled, "kintu shobar chaita bhalo, pauruti aar jhola gur" – the best of all is bread with jhola gur.

The writer is part-time culinary historian, part-time development professional and full-time storyteller.

SUNDAY RECIPE



Jhola gur diye moong-narkoler ichhamura

(Sweet croquettes of moongbeans-coconut served with jhola gur)

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cup jhola gur
Refined oil for deep frying
For dough:
150 gms shredded coconut
75 gms moong daal
200 gms sugar
50 gms khoya
2 inches cinnamon
1/4 cup water
1 tbsp ghee
2-3 tbsp maida

METHOD

1. Take sugar and water in a kadhai and put on medium heat. Let it come to a boil. Add the coconut, mix on low flame for five minutes and add khoya. Keep stirring till it becomes sticky and coconut is glossy. Remove from fire, transfer to another container and let it cool a bit till you can handle the mix.

2. Roast the moong daal in ghee, add cinnamon and boil in just enough water so that the daal is cooked and the water is absorbed. Remove half the cinnamon stick, cool, and make a smooth paste in a blender. Prep the daal mix before the coconut.

3. Mix the moong daal, coconut and maida together and form a smooth dough.

4. Take a tbsp of the mix and mould into inch-long oblong croquettes. Deep fry till golden brown in hot refined oil.

5. Heat the jhola gur in a pan and put the ichhamura right after draining the oil into the jhola gur. Soak for a while and serve, with spoonfuls of jhola gur drizzled on top.

Note: Drop a little dough into the oil and check if you need more maida to bind. Do not add much as it will ruin the taste. Do not fry in piping hot oil as it will brown the outside too quickly and blister it too.