

DELHI Timings		
FRIDAY, APRIL 05	RISE 06:07 SET 18:41	
RISE 06:18 SET 18:43		
SATURDAY, APRIL 06		
RISE 06:06 SET 18:42		
RISE 06:51 SET 19:39		
SUNDAY, APRIL 07		
RISE 06:05 SET 18:42		
RISE 07:28 SET 20:34		

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	38	19
Safdarjung	38	19
Palam	40	21

Delhi Palam Today
40°C A hot day is likely to prevail. A short spell dust storm with light rain may occur. Pollution levels to remain poor.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
39°C Drop in day temperatures is expected. A spell dust storm with strong winds and light rain is likely.

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IN BRIEF

Woman constable attacked with acid in U.P.

MATHURA
A woman police constable was attacked with acid allegedly by four men here on Thursday after she refused to marry one of the accused persons, police said. Efforts were underway to nab the four, police added. PTI

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BJP forges alliance with RLP in Rajasthan

RLP chief Beniwal will contest from the Nagaur seat



MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR



RLP chief Hanuman Beniwal.

The BJP on Thursday announced an alliance with Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) for the Lok Sabha elections in Rajasthan after bringing the fledgling party, headed by Jat leader Hanuman Beniwal, within the NDA fold. Mr. Beniwal, 47, will contest the Lok Sabha polls from the Nagaur seat.

Mr. Beniwal, who was earlier a BJP MLA, was terminated from the party's membership in 2011 after he fell out with former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje. He was elected as an Independent MLA from Nagaur district's Khinsar constituency in 2013 and on the RLP ticket in 2018.

Union Human Resource Development Minister Pravesh Javadekar, who is in charge of BJP's election campaign in the State, said here that the RLP would be a part of the NDA and the party workers would campaign in support of BJP candidates in Rajasthan as well as in Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh.

Under the terms of alliance, the BJP has given only the Nagaur seat among the 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in the State to RLP. The alliance will benefit the BJP in Jodhpur, Pali, Barmer and Ajmer districts, where Mr. Beniwal wields a considerable influence and had organised massive "Hunkaar rallies" before the Assembly election.

The RLP won Khinsar, Merta and Bhopalgarh seats

in the Assembly polls.

Mr. Beniwal said he had made the poll pact with the BJP "in national interest" and to ensure that Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister again. "The support to the BJP is the need of the hour after the Pulwama terror attack. Only the BJP, under Mr. Modi's leadership, is capable of giving [a] befitting reply to countries like Pakistan and China," he said.

Tie-up bid failed

The RLP chief was earlier reportedly in touch with some senior Congress leaders to explore the possibility of forging an alliance. The attempts could not make a headway because the Congress was not willing to give the number of seats which the RLP was demanding.

Mr. Beniwal will be pitted in Nagaur against the Congress candidate and former MP Jyoti Mirdha, who belongs to the politically influential Mirdha family of the region.

Supreme Court cancels bail of ex-Minister Yogendra Sao

'His unauthorised presence found in Jharkhand'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday cancelled the bail of former Jharkhand Minister Yogendra Sao, against whom several cases of rioting and instigating violence have been registered.

A Bench headed by Justice S.A. Bobde said it is satisfied that there have been breach of bail conditions imposed on Sao in December 2017 as his "unauthorised presence" was found in Jharkhand. Sao had been directed to stay in Bhopal.

The apex court comprising justices S.A. Nazeer and Indira Banerjee transferred the trial in 18 criminal cases against Sao and his MLA wife Nirmala Devi, an accused in similar cases, from Hazaribagh to Ranchi.

Wife's bail stays

However, the top court rejected the State government's plea seeking cancellation of Nirmala Devi's bail, saying the deviations in bail conditions in her case were minor in nature.



Sao had been booked in many cases of rioting. ■PTI

It refused to accept Devi's prayer to allow her to stay in Patna instead of Bhopal.

On January 21, the Jharkhand government had told the apex court that Sao was threatening an investigating officer posted in Barkagaon police station in Hazaribagh district and a case has been registered against him.

The State government had asked for cancellation of Sao and Devi's bail, saying they were not staying in Bhopal as directed by the top court and also did not attend trial court proceedings when they were in Jharkhand.

On January 15, the apex

court had asked Sao and his wife to explain on how many occasions they did not attend trial court proceedings despite being in the State.

The top court had also asked the couple about the circumstances in which they were out of Bhopal, saying the exception granted to them was that they would enter Jharkhand only to attend trial court proceedings.

Both Sao and Devi were granted bail on December 15, 2017, by the top court and they were directed to stay in Bhopal as a bail condition.

They were allowed to visit Jharkhand only for court hearings under police protection after intimating Bhopal superintendent of police.

"Prima facie his involvement could not be ruled out and it needed a thorough probe. Due to his lack of supervision and negligence, such charges were levelled which marred the image and credibility of the police department and the government," Principal Secretary, Home, Arvind Kumar said.

IIT-Kanpur 'vendetta' against Dalit teacher flayed

Subrahmanyam Saderla had accused four colleagues of discrimination

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

In the wake of the IIT-Kanpur Senate's vote to revoke the PhD thesis of Dalit teacher Subrahmanyam Saderla last month, 400 academics and activists from across the world have signed a statement of solidarity with him, accusing the institution of running a "vendetta" against the young assistant professor of aerospace engineering.

Dr. Saderla, who completed his MTech and PhD degrees at IIT-Kanpur, joined the department in a teaching position in January 2018.

He accused four colleagues of caste-based discrimination and harassment, charges that were subsequently upheld by the institute's own fact-finding commission, an inquiry by a retired judge of the Allahabad High Court,

and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes. First Information Reports have also been filed under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act. However, reports suggest that IIT-Kanpur's faculty forum has sided with the four professors and demanded that the institute defend them.

'Thesis plagiarised'

In October 2018, an anonymous email complaint was sent to several faculty members alleging that sections of Dr. Saderla's doctoral thesis were plagiarised. The institute's Academic Ethics Cell investigated the complaint, and in November 2018, found that there was "no reason to revoke the thesis" and recommended that the scholar rewrite certain introductory passages and submit an apology as well.

However, on March 15,

2019, the IIT-Kanpur Senate voted to revoke his PhD thesis instead.

"The institute's senate's actions smack of a vendetta against Dr. Saderla, following the success of his complaint of caste-based harassment and discrimination against four senior professors who enjoyed wide support among the institute's faculty members," said the solidarity statement, which was signed by academics from 16 countries.

'Take proactive steps'

"We further urge the IIT-Kanpur community, as members of one of India's distinguished academic institutions, to take cognizance of the alleged climate of hostility and alienation suffered by scholars of marginalised social sections at the institute - whether students or faculty - and take proactive measures to address their concerns," it added, noting that Dr. Saderla is one of only four Scheduled Caste faculty members at an institute with a total faculty strength of 394.

Star support

Some renowned scientists who endorsed the statement include American mathematician and Fields Medal winner David Mumford, Indian physicist and Padma Bhushan awardee Ashoke Sen and US National Science Medal recipient Thomas Kailath.

Expressing dismay at

Cong. to name last 7 Punjab candidates in a week: Jakhar

Party to step up campaigning across the State

VIKAS VASUDEVA CHANDIGARH

With the Congress announcing the names of six candidates for Punjab, the party has decided to step up its campaign across the State in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha election.



Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar. ■

State unit president Sunil Jakhar said on Thursday that the party has already launched its 'Mission 13' campaign, aimed at winning all the 13 Lok Sabha seats. "The names of candidates for the remaining seven seats will be announced within a week," he told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Jakhar said leaders and party workers would be going to the voters with the State government's achievements of the past two years and the party's manifesto, which promises to launch a unique scheme to eradicate poverty from the country.

"I along with senior party leaders will hold rallies across the State to convey the message to the people that the Congress believes in overall development of society and that is why it announced a minimum income for the poor," he said.

"The Ministers have been assigned duties in their constituencies to ensure that canvassing in support of the party candidate is undertaken aggressively. We will ex-

pose the real face of the BJP. Its promises such as depositing ₹15 lakh in the bank accounts of people, bringing back black money, more than two crore jobs every year and increase in the income of farmers have proved false," he said.

The Congress had earlier this week announced the names of six candidates for Punjab.

Four renominated

It renominated four of its sitting MPs - Sunil Jakhar from Gurdaspur, Gurjeet Singh Aujla from Amritsar, Ravneet Singh Bittu from Ludhiana and Santosh Singh Chaudhary from Jalandhar. Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's wife and former Union Minister Preneet Kaur will be the party's candidate from Patiala while MLA Raj Kumar Chabbewal will contest from Hoshiarpur.

Highway ban in Kashmir likely to hit tourism, horticulture

The apple crop will bear the brunt, says growers' body

PEERZADA ASHIQ SRINAGAR

Facing criticism from both the political class and the civil society, the State government's ban on civilian traffic twice a week on the 270-km-long national highway in Kashmir is bound to dent the Valley's horticulture industry and tourism, according to the stakeholders.



The traffic ban may affect small growers in the State. ■ FILE PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD

will only add to the woes of tourists and pilgrims."

Stating that Kashmir does not have any alternative road connectivity, Mr. Dug said, "It will result in shortage of essentials."

Doctors Association of Kashmir president Dr. Suhal Naik warned of "increase in morbidity and mortality in patients due to delays in patient care".

Parties condemn ban

Calling for its immediate withdrawal, all major political parties, including the Congress, the National Conference, the Peoples Democratic Party, the Peoples Conference and the CPI(M), condemned the government move taken in the wake of the Pulwama attack, which

According to an estimation, around ₹300 crore worth of fruit is in cold storage in south Kashmir. However, the ban order issued by the Governor's administration has barred the movement of civilian vehicles, including trucks, from 4 a.m. to 5 p.m. twice every week.

Travel Agents Association of Kashmir president Ashfaq Siddiq Dug said, "This will have serious implications for upcoming tourist season. It

left 40 CRPF jawans dead on February 14.

The Srinagar-Jammu Highway was not closed even during the Kargil war. Is the Governor's administration trying to make Kashmir a colony?" said NC president Farooq Abdullah.

PPD president Mehbooba Mufti said, "The Government of India only wants Kashmir and not Kashmiris."

Seeking its revocation, State Congress president G.A. Mir said, "It's a decision taken in haste and will prove perilous for civilians."

"It's another dictatorial move that will cause great distress to people. The government should stop punishing people of Kashmir," said Hurriyat chief Mirwaiz Umar Farooq.

CANCELLATION OF PASSENGER TRAINS
Due to Infrastructural and Maintenance Work the following Passenger Trains will remain cancelled upto 15.04.2019:

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS		
Train No.	Train Name	Cancelled on Days
51915	Delhi Jn. - Farukhnagar Passenger	Daily
51916	Farukhnagar - Delhi Jn. Passenger	Daily
64034	Shakurbasti - Ghaziabad EMU	Daily
64087	H. Nizamuddin - New Delhi EMU	Daily
64092	H. Nizamuddin - H. Nizamuddin EMU	Daily
64093	H. Nizamuddin - Shakurbasti EMU	Daily
64096	Shakurbasti - H. Nizamuddin EMU	Daily
64097	New Delhi - Shakurbasti EMU	Daily
64555	Anand Vihar T. - Meerut City MEMU	Daily
64556	Meerut City - Anand Vihar T. MEMU	Daily
64553	Moradabad - Anand Vihar T. MEMU	Daily
64554	Anand Vihar T. - Moradabad MEMU	Daily
64913	Delhi Jn. - Rohtak MEMU	Daily
64916	Rohtak - Delhi Jn. MEMU	Daily
64036	Shakurbasti - Ghaziabad EMU	Daily
64090	H. Nizamuddin - H. Nizamuddin EMU	Monday to Friday
64098	Shakurbasti - H. Nizamuddin EMU	Daily
74201	Partapgarh - Lucknow DEMU	6 Days a Week
74202	Lucknow - Partapgarh DEMU	6 Days a Week
642		

No-show by Gurung in Darjeeling

High drama witnessed at Bagdogra airport in anticipation of return of GJM leader

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

After creating a sensation in the political circles of the State by announcing that he would return to Darjeeling on Thursday, absconding Gorkha Janmukti Morcha supremo Bimal Gurung did not turn up at the airport. His arrival was announced by his close aide Roshan Giri.

High drama was witnessed at the Bagdogra airport in anticipation of the return of Mr. Gurung, who has been on the run since September 2017 following the violent agitation for a separate State of Gorkhaland. The airport resembled a crisis zone with heavy deployment of police personnel waiting to arrest the GJM leader the moment he landed there. Two of Mr. Gurung's supporters—Roshan Rai and Yogenra Pradhan—were detained from the airport.

Mr. Gurung had been ruling unchallenged in the Dar-



Crackdown: Policemen detain a GJM activist, Yogenra Pradhan, at the Bagdogra airport on Wednesday. ■ AFP

jeeling hills from 2008 till 2017. He went into hiding after the State government slapped numerous criminal cases on him in connection with the violence during the Gorkhaland agitation between July to September 2017.

More than 10 people were killed in the protests that lasted a record 104 days under Mr. Gurung's leadership.

The GJM leader had announced that he would re-

turn to the hills after the Supreme Court asked him and Mr. Giri to move the Calcutta High Court for anticipatory bail in connection with the cases filed against them.

Gorkhaland Territorial Administration chief and once a close aide of the GJM leader, Binay Tamang said Mr. Gurung would surely have been arrested had he dared to come to Darjeeling. "He wants to create a law and or-

der situation in the Darjeeling hills so that the elections can be postponed," said Mr. Tamang.

Poll battle
The Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat, currently held by the BJP, is poised for a neck-and-neck contest between the Trinamool Congress and the BJP. Mr. Gurung's presence in the hills may tilt the balance in favour of the BJP candidate, Raju Singh Bista, whom the GJM (Gurung faction) and the Gorkha National Liberation Front are supporting. The TMC has extended its support to Darjeeling MLA Amar Singh Rai, who also has the support of the Binay Tamang faction of the GJM.

"If Bimal Gurung comes to Darjeeling it will be a major victory for us. We hope that that he overcomes the legal hurdles and arrives as soon as possible," Mr. Bista said.

(With PTI inputs)

Women activists join hands against liquor use in elections

Odisha's Nari Mahasangh wants written promise from parties

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

Braving the scorching sun, female anti-liquor activists formed human chains to create awareness against the use of liquor during election campaign in 12 panchayats of Daringbadi block under Kandhamal Lok Sabha constituency on Thursday.

For the last three decades, women from this area are continuing their crusade against liquor menace under the banner of 'Nari Mahasangh'. On Thursday, they chose the major roads of their respective panchayats for their peaceful demonstration. Their aim was to make the local residents and political campaign vehicles notice their unity and conviction. Sporting placards against liquor sale and consumption, they stood silently, hand in hand, from 10 a.m. till noon.

According to Nari Mahasangh activists, similar hu-



Activists of Nari Mahasangh form a human chain demanding a ban on liquor, in Kandhamal on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

man chains will be formed in the remaining 13 panchayats in their block in a phased manner. "The women who participated in the human chains were farmers and daily wagers who are the worst sufferers of liquor addiction of men in their families," said Nabati Mantri, president of Nari Mahasangh.

Land rights for women'
"We are also demanding a complete ban on intoxicants in Kandhamal and Odisha as well as land rights to the landless, especially destitute

Insurgents' call: boycott Modi visit

IBOYAIMA LAITHANGBAM
IMPHAL

Coordinating Committee (CorCom), an umbrella group of six insurgent outfits in Manipur, and a militant outfit, Maoist Communist Party, have called for a boycott of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the State on April 7.

Mr. Modi is scheduled to address his last public meeting in Manipur before the Lok Sabha polls in the State on April 11 and 18.

CorCom and Maoists have accused the BJP of not doing enough to protect the indigenous people. They fear that if the BJP government implements the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, the indigenous people of the north-eastern region, whose population is small, will be swamped by migrants from Bangladesh. The groups have appealed to the people to stay at home during the 17-hour general strike beginning from 1 p.m. on April 7.

Mizo boy wins Internet with kindness

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A six-year-old boy in Mizoram has won the Internet after his photo with a dead chick in one hand and ₹10 in the other was posted on social media.

The boy, identified as Derek C. Lalchhania of Sairang near Aizawl, had accidentally run over a neighbour's chick with his bicycle a couple of days ago. He rushed home ask-

ing his parents to take the chick to the hospital without realising that the fowl was dead. The boy's father, Dhiraj Chhetri, said he told his son to take the chick to the local hospital. The boy left with ₹10, his pocket money.

The hospital staff told him it was too late. Unconvinced, he went home and complained that the doctors took his photo instead of treating the fowl.



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Contact: Pranav Chawla 9717152200, Coordinator - Pragya Jain (IITD)
Live Webcast : spicmacay.com

Derek's photo with the chick and ₹10 note has gone viral on social media.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



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BJP replaces candidate in Jalgaon

Loyalist Smita Wagh shunted in favour of young face Unmesh Patil

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday has changed its Lok Sabha candidate for the Jalgaon Lok Sabha seat, replacing MLC Smita Wagh with Chalisgaon legislator Unmesh Patil.

Speculation on the change were rife since the ruling party announced Ms. Wagh's candidature last month.

The 40-year-old Mr. Patil, a first-time MLA, filed his nomination papers to the returning officer on Wednesday alongwith an affidavit from the party declaring him [Mr. Patil] as the BJP's official candidate from Jalgaon. Today was the last day of filing of nominations for this seat



New face: Unmesh Patil • TWITTER

which goes to polls on April 23.

Ms. Wagh, a BJP loyalist said to be close to senior BJP leader Eknath Khadse, and her husband Uday Wagh, who is president of the BJP's Jalgaon district unit, dubbed the decision as a "cold-blooded murder".

"I have diligently worked for the party for the last 40

years. Despite filling the AB form, a candidate who joined the party barely four years back is given a ticket. This is akin to a cold-blooded murder," said a disappointed Ms. Wagh, reacting to Mr. Patil's sudden candidature.

While she said she would continue to canvass for the newly announced candidate [Mr. Patil], Ms. Wagh disapproved of the way in which she has been shunted.

The BJP had earlier announced Ms. Wagh's candidature by dropping its two-time sitting MP, A.T. Nana Patil, sparking disgruntlement among his supporters. Mr. A.T. Patil had defeated his NCP rival by a margin of over 3.5 lakh votes in 2014.

According to party insiders, while Ms. Wagh has a strong hold on her constituency, most local BJP (and Sena) leaders harbor deep-seated grudges against her husband, Uday Wagh, who is unpopular due to his abrasive behaviour.

Unmesh Patil was chosen as the replacement to quell factionalism within the party's Jalgaon unit. He is said to be the choice of BJP minister Girish Mahajan, who calls the shots in Jalgaon district.

Mr. Patil faces NCP's Gulabroo Deokar, a former Maharashtra Minister of State who was arrested twice – in 2012 and in 2013 – in connection with the multi-crore Gharkul housing society scam.

Parties need to field more women'

BJP's Shaina NC praises Mamata, Naveen Patnaik for showing the way

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Maharashtra BJP spokesperson Shaina N C said on Thursday said she was "upset and appalled" as most of the leading political parties, including her own, have not given enough representation to women in the coming Lok Sabha elections.

Praising West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for giving 41 and 33% tickets to women candidates respectively, she said all other parties need to "wake up" as they only pay "lip service" to women's causes.

Of the 48 Lok Sabha

seats in Maharashtra, only 13 women have been fielded by prominent parties.

In a statement issued here, Ms. Shaina said, "Ability requires opportunity. Talent needs to be showcased."

"Leadership across the board need to give more women politicians a chance for us to prove our electoral competence. All parties need to wake up," she said.

The BJP has fielded seven women candidates this time, Congress three, NCP and Shiv Sena one each. Independent MLA Ravi Ranjan's wife, Navneet, is contesting from Amravati as an ally of NCP.

BJP candidate for Nan-

durbur seat, Heena Gavit, is the daughter of former NCP minister Vijaykumar Gavit, while the party's Raver nominee Raksha Khadse is the daughter-in-law of BJP leader Eknath Khadse.

Similarly, Bharati Pawar (Dindori) is the daughter-in-law of NCP leader late A.T. Pawar, Poonam Mahajan (Mumbai North Central) is daughter of BJP leader late Pramod Mahajan, Pritam Munde (Beed) is daughter of late BJP leader Gopinath Munde and Kanchan Kul (Baramati) is the wife of RSP MLA Rahul Kul. MLC Smita Wagh is BJP's candidate from Jalgaon.

Ms. Gavit, Ms. Khadse, Ms. Munde, and Ms. Shaina said.

jan are seeking a second term. They had been elected for the first time in 2014.

She vowed to champion the cause of reservation and said she will do it even if she has to fight the male chauvinistic mindset in her own party and all other parties.

"Here on, I will champion the cause of reservation even if I have to fight the male chauvinistic mindset in my parties in all other parties too," she said.

"Requesting all women to speak up and demand 33% tickets as part of their manifesto of their individual party irrespective of legislation in Parliament," Ms. Shaina said.

Infighting casts shadow over Congress prospects in Ramtek

Rahul Gandhi's choice Nitin Raut bypassed in favour of former IAS officer Kishor Gajbhiye

ALOK DESHPANDE
RAMTEK

The upcoming polls could have been a cakewalk for the Congress in Ramtek, if not for the party's familiar bugbear: infighting.

The party is infested with factionalism in this SC constituency in Vidarbha, adjoining Nagpur. It has shown up in everything from distributing tickets to campaigning, to the extent that party president Rahul Gandhi's choice of candidate Nitin Raut could not get the official party documents for the nomination on time.

Instead, Kishor Gajbhiye, who switched from the Bahujan Samaj Party, will take on the Shiv Sena's sitting MP Krupal Tumane.

Ironically, Mr. Gajbhiye was pushed into the arena at the eleventh hour. The former Indian Administrative Service officer was originally



Kishor Gajbhiye : Former IAS officer, Congress candidate from Ramtek • FILE PHOTO



Krupal Tumne : Shiv Sena candidate and sitting MP from Ramtek • S SUDERSHAN

hoping to get a ticket for the Assembly elections from Nagpur. He had to take the Lok Sabha poll plunge on orders from Congress general secretary Mukul Wasnik, leading to a major unrest in the party's ranks. Mr. Wasnik won the seat in 2009 but lost to Mr. Tumane in 2014.

A Congress MLA said, on condition of anonymity, that had Mr. Raut been given the seat, the party would have had it easy in Ramtek. "The Shiv Sena MP has done nothing. He is unpopular, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is busy saving Nitin Gadkari in Nagpur. All the BJP MLAs from Ramtek are camping in Nagpur, leaving the Sena candidate largely on his own."

Kamlesh Wankhede, a senior journalist from Marathi newspaper Lokmat had something similar to say. "Social equations have changed

in the constituency. The Kunbis are aligning with the Congress this time and may vote for the party's Buddhist candidate," he said.

Despite the infighting, Mr. Gajbhiye has his strong points. "I have been the district collector. I know how the system works. Who else can solve your problems?" he asked.

Mr. Tumane on the other

hand, is known for being quite the 'silent Parliamentarian'; having asked only one question in his five-year tenure in the Lok Sabha. His only question was about increasing MPs' salaries. Do you want an MP who wishes to increase his own salary?" Mr. Gajbhiye asked at the public meeting.

Given the size and spread of the seat, Mr. Tumane's campaign is focused mostly on road shows. "I have to meet all my voters before poll day. The Opposition can say anything about me, but my people know that I have been here for them whenever they needed me. I am sure I will win," he says.

Among the other candidates, Kiran Premkumar Rodge, who contested as the BSP candidate in 2014 and won over 95,000 votes, is now the Prakash Ambedkar-led VBA candidate.

BJP set to foist dynasty in Goa, says Congress spokesperson

"They did so in Mapusa, now trying the same in Panaji"

PRAKASH KAMAT
PANAJI

The Goa unit of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is preparing the ground to foist the late chief minister Manohar Parrikar's "dynasty" upon the State, the Congress said on Thursday.

Addressing the press, Goa Congress spokesperson Trajano D'Mello said the Congress was not worried about the entry of Parrikar's sons into politics.

Referring to a joint statement issued by Utpal and Abhijat Parrikar on March 30, twelve days after their father's death, Mr. D'Mello said,

"It is not a legacy. It is a dynasty. Let the people of Goa know how the dynasty is coming forward."

In their statement, the brothers had pledged that they would honour their

father's life by carrying on with his legacy of service to the State and the nation.

Parrikar's death, after a prolonged battle with pancreatic cancer, has left a void in the Goa BJP and a section of party leaders have been urging his sons to work for the party. Some even suggested that the older son, Utpal, contest the Panaji by-poll.

This constituency had been represented by the late Parrikar for several years apart from the small break while he was Defence Minister at the Centre.

Mr. D'Mello said a mere "expression of intent" by the late Chief Minister's sons about joining politics does not mean they had actually hit the political ground. "When it happens,

let them first join (politics), then we will take a call on whether we should welcome them or work hard to defeat them," Mr. D'Mello said.

He also said the BJP in Goa was in the process of building dynasties, citing the case of Joshua D'Souza, the party's candidate for the Mapusa assembly by-poll, son of the late Francis D'Souza, former deputy chief minister who died in February.

The late D'Souza was a long time MLA representing the Mapusa constituency for the s BJP during several recent terms and also for other parties like the now-defunct Rajiv Congress, a regional outfit.

"It looks like they are bringing it (the dynasty) to Panaji too," he added.

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IN BRIEF



Strength us for Special Category Status: Mayawati

TIRUPATI
Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati on Thursday offered to accord Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh on becoming the Prime Minister. Addressing the 'Yennikala Yuddha Bheri', a joint public meeting of the JSP, the BSP and the Left parties, here, Ms. Mayawati spoke about the need to strengthen the State that was "rendered weak by bifurcation".

Amicus curiae report not final: Pinarayi Vijayan

KOLLAM
Parts of the report by the *Amicus curiae* have been released on the eve of the Lok Sabha election with the malicious intention of whipping up public sentiment against the government, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said here on Thursday. He added that the report was not prepared in consultation with all the stakeholders and was not a final one. He said that some people were trying to create an impression that the report was similar to a court verdict, misleading the public.

Migrant labourer dies of sunstroke in Kerala

KOZHIKODE
The Kozhikode district administration has reiterated its warning of action against employers who force labourers to work between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. following Thursday's death of a migrant labourer from Bihar, who was undergoing treatment for sunstroke at the Government Medical College, Sujith Bind, 26, from Patna, was employed at a laterite quarry at Kuttikkattoor. It is reported that Sujith, who was hospitalised on Wednesday, had been working in the quarry since 9.30 a.m. and did not have any external injuries.

Rahul files papers in Wayanad, promises not to attack CPI(M)

Congress president says he will 'absorb' the Left party's criticism with happiness

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KALPETA

Congress president Rahul Gandhi filed his nomination papers for the Lok Sabha election from the Wayanad constituency on Thursday.

He was accompanied by his sister and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. They held a brief roadshow from the helipad at the SKMJ High School ground here to the Wayanad Collectorate before filing the nomination.

Mr. Gandhi filed his papers before District Collector A.R. Ajayakumar, who is also the returning officer, around 11.15 a.m. Four sets of nomination papers were filed by Mr. Gandhi.

Later, addressing reporters, Mr. Gandhi said emphatically that he would not criticise the CPI(M).

He said he would absorb the CPI(M) attacks against him with happiness. "You will not hear a word against the CPI(M) during my campaign," he repeated.

"I know that the CPI(M) and the Congress are locked in a fight in Kerala. And this fight will go on," Mr. Gandhi said.

"But I want to make it very clear to my brothers and sisters in Kerala, and to my brothers and sisters of the CPI(M). I am not here to say a word against the CPI(M). I am here to send a message of unity and I am here to give a message that South India is important," he said.

Attacks Modi

"The manner in which the present government under Narendra Modi and the RSS is functioning has given a feeling among the people of South India - Tamil Nadu



Big show: Rahul Gandhi, Oommen Chandy and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra during a roadshow in Wayanad on Thursday. • PTI

and Kerala - that there is an attack on their culture, language and history," he said.

"Mr. Modi has failed on jobs and he also failed on farmers. Also on the matter of corruption. The country had faith in the Prime Minister when he said he would be a 'chowkidar'. The fact of the matter is that the 'chowkidar' himself has given ₹30,000 crore of Air Force money to Anil Ambani. He has stolen the money and given it to Mr. Ambani," Mr. Gandhi said.

Earlier, Mr. Gandhi, accompanied by Wayanad District Congress Committee

president I.C. Balakrishnan, MLA; Indian Union Muslim League Malappuram district president Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal; and Malappuram District Congress Committee president V.V. Prakash, reached the Collectorate around 11.15 a.m. to file his nomination.

At the helipad, the Gandhis were received by party national leaders, including general secretaries Mukul Wasnik, Oommen Chandy and K.C. Venugopal and IUML leader P.K. Kunhalikutty.

Even in the scorching heat, close to one lakh party

Helps three journalists injured in rally

ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL
WAYANAD

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday helped three journalists, including a reporter from the Asian News International, to an ambulance after they got injured following the breaking of a barricade during his roadshow here.

The journalists were covering the roadshow, where Mr. Gandhi, his sister and Congress' general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and others were waving to the crowd from a vehicle. It hit a barricade that was fixed along the road, causing it to break. The three journalists sustained minor injuries. Mr. Gandhi was seen accompanying the scribes to an ambulance for medical attention.

workers, including women, gathered on both sides of the Kozhikode-Kollegal stretch of National Highway 766, waving party flags and raising slogans.

After filing the papers, the leaders held a second roadshow that lasted nearly 40 minutes in Kalpetta town. Around 2 p.m. they left for the Kozhikode airport.

Mr. Gandhi is locked in a multi-cornered contest in the Wayanad constituency.

His main opponents are Left Democratic Front's P.P. Sudheer and the National Democratic Alliance's Thushar Velappally.

SC rejects Christian body's plea to defer elections

April 18 in T.N., Puducherry coincides with Holy Tridium Easter.

It would affect the fundamental right of Christians to worship.

The petition said the duty to vote and the right to pray should be harmonised.



We don't want to tell you how to pray and vote," the Bench said.

of the Madras High Court dismissing the plea.

The petitioner said the poll date fell in the week of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday followed by the Holy

Hassan SP transferred on EC direction

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HASSAN

Within five days after Deputy Commissioner Akram Pasha was transferred, the Karnataka government on Thursday transferred Hassan Superintendent of Police A.N. Prakash Gowda following a direction from the Election Commission.

Nithish stabbed on Neethu's neck with a sharp weapon and set her ablaze after pouring petrol. Neethu's relatives said she had complained that Nithish used to stalk her.

Neighbours who reached the house after hearing Neethu's grandmother's cries for help caught Nithish who was trying to escape. Neethu was declared dead at hospital.

Police recovered Nithish's motorbike, a knife, a petrol can and a pair of chappals.

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NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Corrigendum No.-1
Tender Notice No. 23TRACK2018 Tender No. NECON2318
The following amendment is required in tender invited vide tender notice no. 23TRACK2018 Open Tender No. NECON2318 is hereby amended which may be read as under:-

Existing Entry in tender No. NECON2318	To be amended as in tender No. NECON2318
Tender documents page no.1	Tender documents page no.1
Tender documents Section-I, para no.7, para 26.3	EMD amount shall be 5% of the estimated value of the tender rounded off to nearest higher Rs. 10 (ten).
Tender documents Section-IV, page no. 52	Tender documents Section-IV, page no.52,
Tender documents Section-V, page no. 54 Sr. No.1	Tender documents Section-V, page no. 54, Sr. No.1
Tender documents Section-III, para no. 43 para.10.2	Security Deposit (SD) amount shall be 5% of the contract value, subject to maximum of Rs. 5 cr, rounded off to nearest higher Rs. 10 (ten). There shall, however, be no ceiling for SD in Global Tenders for procurement of Stores.

The opening date terms and condition of above referred tender notice will remain unchanged. The tenderers may quote there rates as per amended mentioned in the above Corrigendum No.1. It can also be seen on website of Indian Railways at <https://ireps.gov.in>

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IN BRIEF



One dead, 45 injured as bus falls into gorge

SHIMLA
One person was killed and 45 were injured when a bus they were travelling in fell into a gorge in Kullu district on Thursday. The accident took place near Shalang village in Lag Valley of Kullu, the police said. An official spokesperson said the injured were undergoing treatment at a regional hospital. PTI

Five arrested for graft in Rajasthan

The Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau on Thursday arrested five persons, including a superintendent of the State's narcotics bureau, for graft in Chittorgarh district, officials said. PTI

Body of teen abducted for ransom found in Bihar

PATNA
A 14-year-old school student, who was abducted for a ₹50 lakh ransom, was found murdered on Thursday in Bihar's Siwan district, the police said. Rahul Kumar was a Class 7 student of Kendriya Vidyalaya. IANS

4 BSF men killed in encounter with Maoists

The gun battle took place in a dense forest in Chhattisgarh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

RAIPUR
Four Border Security Force (BSF) personnel were killed and two injured in an encounter with Naxals in Chhattisgarh on Thursday, the police said.

The encounter comes a week before polling for the first phase of Lok Sabha election is held in the State.

The skirmish took place

Hub of Assam's 'Bangladeshi' land-grab issue

In Kaliabor Lok Sabha constituency, encroachments by migrant Muslims are a bone of contention

RAHUL KARMAKAR
KALIABOR (ASSAM)

Nearly 185 km east of Guwahati, Kaliabor is a small town between two of Assam's best-known destinations – the century-old Kaziranga National Park and Borduwa, the birthplace of 15th century saint-reformer Srimanta Sankaradeva who made much of Assam turn to Vaishnavism.

The two landmarks, about 90 km from each other, have the Kaliabor Lok Sabha constituency in common. They are also the "showcases" of land-grabbing by alleged Bangladeshis.

Voting in Kaliabor, having 10 Assembly seats, is scheduled for April 11.

Demographic threat

Illegal migrants from Bangladesh and the resultant demographic threat to the indigenous people has been a perennial election issue in Assam. But this parliamentary poll, unlike in the past, has been data-driven by the interim report of a panel headed by former Chief Election Commissioner Hari Shankar Brahma.

Mr. Brahma's report on Protection of Land Rights of



Khalilur Rahman, owner of a house adjoining Kobaikata, debunked the land-grabbing theory. ■ RAHUL KARMAKAR

Indigenous People of Assam, submitted to Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal last year, said that at least 3,630 bighas of land belonging to 12 major satras (monasteries established by Sankaradeva and his disciples) were being occupied by illegal migrants. A bigha in Assam equals 2,880 square feet.

There were similar reports earlier. Former Assam Governor S.K. Sinha's report to the President in 1998 said 39 satras lost 1,945.56 acres to migrant encroachers. A 2012 survey by Northeast Policy Institute revised the fi-

gures to 1,641.42 acres under 36 satras.

The Asom Satra Mahasabha, the apex body of monasteries, says there are 914 satras across Assam and West Bengal. Apart from encroachment, many satras have vanished due to erosion and "undocumented takeovers" by migrants, it claims.

Sankaradeva's followers say satras elsewhere in Assam have suffered more. But they "feel the pain" most at Borduwa and adjoining satras such as Kobaikata, which until the 1980s had 190 bighas and a few Assa-

mese families around.

"What used to be a big monastery is now a small dilapidated structure whose gate almost always remains locked. They (migrant Muslims) have grabbed everything beyond after communal violence during the Assam agitation in 1983," Jugal Krishna Deva Goswami, in charge of Kobaikata, said.

Muslim settlements

Khalilur Rahman, owner of the house adjoining Kobaikata, debunked the grabbing theory. "My grandfather settled here first, and we have as a tradition taking care of the satra, also providing rations to its lone caretaker from time to time," he said.

Krishna Saikia, a schoolteacher and owner of the lone Hindu house among Muslims of half a dozen villages around Kobaikata satra, has a different story to tell. "The Assamese people here had migrated from eastern Assam after the Burmese attack in the 1820s. They sold the land to the Muslims to shift to a nearby place," he said.

But land-grabbing is a reality, asserts the managing committee of Borduwa, the

nerve centre of spiritualism propounded by Sankaradeva. "More than 220 bighas of our land have been under encroachment. The BJP government freed seven bighas at Santitan nearby from encroachers. Occupiers of our 140-bigha plantation were also evicted. The government gave us ₹155 crore for a wall around this plot," the committee's general secretary Intra Mohan Baruah said.

Regaining control

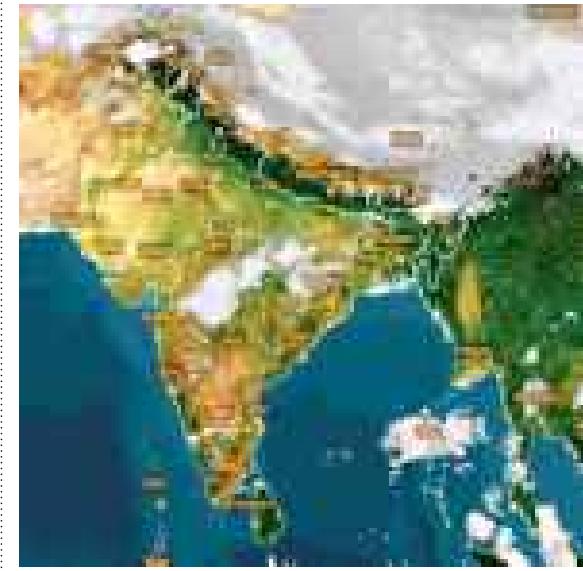
According to local Congress leaders, senior party leader and former Forest Minister Rakibul Hussain had helped Borduwa regain control of the plantation by resettling the encroachers. "We don't make noises about this because we don't believe in communal politics," he said.

Mr. Hussain is the campaign manager of Congress candidate Gaurav Gogoi, who is seeking re-election from Kaliabor. His prime rival is Manimadhab Mahanta, the Asom Gana Parishad candidate backed by the BJP.

While Mr. Gogoi is the son of former CM Tarun Gogoi, Mr. Mahanta is the brother of Assam Water Resources Minister Keshab Mahanta.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Friday: Heat wave conditions likely in some parts over west Rajasthan and in isolated pockets over Madhya Pradesh, south Haryana and east Rajasthan. Thunderstorms accompanied with squall (wind speed reaching 60-70 kmph) & lightning likely at isolated places over Gangetic West Bengal and Bihar

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	1...	34.4...	21.0	Kozhikode	...	27.4	
Ahmedabad	...	43.7...	25.4	Kurnool	...	41.0	27.7
Aizawl	0.1...	28.8...	15.9	Lucknow	...	38.3	19.8
Allahabad	...	42.0...	20.0	Madurai	...	38.6	25.6
Bengaluru	...	35.2...	23.0	Mangaluru	...	35.6	25.8
Bhopal	...	41.0...	22.9	Mumbai	...	32.3	23.2
Bhubaneswar	...	36.0...	25.7	Mysuru	...	36.0	21.8
Chandigarh	...	34.8...	18.8	New Delhi	...	38.2	18.7
Chennai	...	34.4...	26.5	Patna	...	36.0	22.4
Coimbatore	...	37.8...	24.4	Poona Blair	...	32.7	25.7
Dehradun	...	33.4...	17.9	Puducherry	...	35.5	24.8
Gangtok	...	16.3...	10.5	Pune	...	40.5	19.4
Goa	...	33.3...	23.7	Rajpur	...	39.6	24.4
Guwahati	...	26.3...	18.6	Ranchi	...	36.8	18.9
Hubballi	...	36.0...	22.0	Shillong	...	21.9	12.1
Hyderabad	...	38.9...	23.7	Shimla	...	24.0	12.3
Imphal	0.3...	29.1...	13.1	Srinagar	...	24.0	6.6
Jaipur	...	39.0...	27.6	Trivandrum	...	34.8	26.3
Kochi	...	34.2...	27.6	Viruchi	...	38.0	24.6
Kohima	...	22.9...	11.2	Vijayawada	...	36.7	24.4
Kolkata	...	32.4...	26.2	Visakhapatnam	...	32.0	26.5

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITY	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	12	96	21	188	...	■
Bengaluru	...	4	25	42	215	...
Chennai	7	14	44	105	...	■
Delhi	21	64	38	267	374	■
Hyderabad	15	22	16	60	103	■
Kolkata	3	41	16	89	103	■
Lucknow	4	7	74	358	...	■
Mumbai	28	25	82	27	70	■
Pune	31	15	33	100	116	■
Visakhapatnam	26	21	44	45	97	■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 291 indicating very poor pollution. In contrast, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 42

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration can reduce oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

EC inquiry against Meghalaya Minister

For violating poll code by using official vehicle in campaign

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SHILLONG
The Election Commission has initiated an inquiry into alleged violation of model code of conduct by Meghalaya Minister A.L. Hek by using an official vehicle allotted to him as Health Minister, they said.

Meghalaya Chief Electoral Officer F.R. Kharkongor has asked Returning Officer Abhishek Bhagat to conduct a probe, who in turn instructed

district election officer to ascertain the facts and issue notice after verifying the matter.

The matter came to light after a picture of Mr. Hek coming out of the official vehicle, while campaigning for Mr. Shillai versus Mr. Sanbor, a three times MLA, is contesting the general election for the first time on a BJP ticket.

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**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY SRINAGAR
HAZRATBAL KASHMIR - 190006 (J&K)**

TENDER NO. 64-69 Dated : 03.04.2019

Sealed bids affixed with revenue stamps worth Rs. 10/- are invited from the eligible bidders for supply of various Equipments/Software for following Departments. Tender details and Bid documents can be downloaded from NIT website www.nitsri.ac.in. Bids should reach office of O/c, CPU of the Institute up to 4:00 P.M., 24th April 2019. The Institute reserves the right to reject any or all tenders or withdraw this tender without assigning any reason thereof:-

S.No	Deptt. / Section	Name of Items
1.	CRFC	Wave Length dispersive X-Ray Florescence Spectrometer
2.	WRMC	Water level Sensor Automatic Rain Gauge, Lysimeter Couple.
3.	Civil Engineering Department (Surveying Lab)	a. Base & Rover including Antenna Receiver, Controlled Software & Post Processing. b. Reflector-less electronic Total Station.
4.	Electronic Communication Engineering Department	DE2-115 development & Education Board, DE5-Net EPGA Development kit.

No. NIT/CPU/19/4813, Dated: 03.04.2019
Sd/-
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IN BRIEF



Concern after 3 Bejeur vultures die in Telangana

ADILABAD

Three critically-endangered Indian vultures or longbilled vultures (*Gyps indicus*) from the famous Palarupu cliff-habitat in Penchikalpet forest range of Kumram Bheem Asifabad district in Telangana died of unknown reasons about two months ago. A decomposed and dried-up carcass of the scavenger bird was found on March 14 and it has been sent to the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History at Coimbatore for investigation.

AINRC drops Modi's photo from pamphlets

PUDUCHERRY

The disappearance of the photograph of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in pamphlets distributed by the All India N R Congress seeking votes for its Lok Sabha candidate K. Narayanasamy has kicked up a row. The pamphlets distributed by the party in Assembly constituencies where minorities have a sizeable presence did not carry the picture of Mr. Modi. The AINRC has tied up with the AIADMK-BJP alliance.

Wreckage of WW II USAF plane found in Arunachal

NEW DELHI

The wreckage of a World War II U.S. Air Force aircraft was found in a remote location in Roing district of Arunachal Pradesh, the Army said on Thursday. It was recovered on March 30 by a 12-member Army patrol, along with a police representative.

Cong. candidate denies report on kickback

KOZHIKODE

M.K. Raghavan, Congress Lok Sabha candidate from Kozhikode, on Thursday alleged that the CPI(M) district committee was behind the "manufacturing" of a news report on a Hindu news channel that he had sought a ₹5-crore kickback for negotiating a land deal.

Accused in minor rape case thrashed by public

COIMBATORE

Santhosh Kumar, 32, of Thondamuthur, who was arrested for the sexual assault-cum murder of a seven-year-old girl near Thudiyalur, was beaten up by the public when he was brought to a hospital for a medical examination on the directions of a court. Kumar was brought to the hospital for a potency test on Thursday, police said.

CBI seeks time to probe Asthana graft charge

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday put up for hearing April 12 the CBI's plea for more time to complete investigations into graft charges against its former Special Director Rakesh Asthana. The court on January 11 had granted CBI 10 weeks to complete the probe.

SC to hear plea on Modi biopic

The film was meant to manipulate voters during Lok Sabha polls, says petition

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to urgently hear a plea claiming that a movie titled *PM Narendra Modi* is blatant propaganda with little or no artistic inspiration and meant to manipulate voters in violation of the model code of conduct in place for the Lok Sabha polls of 2019.

A Bench led by Justice S.A. Bobde agreed to hear the petition filed by advocate and Congress party spokesperson, Aman Panwar, on April 8.

Asked by the Bench why the petitioner chose to directly approach the Supreme Court, the petitioner related how the Congress party had approached the Election Commission of India (ECI) on March 23 but was met with 'radio silence.'



Vivek Oberoi, who plays the title role in the film, at a trailer launch in Mumbai.

Besides, two high courts, in Delhi and Mumbai, have already refused to entertain similar petitions.

Mr. Panwar said the movie was not an innocuous work of art as repeatedly claimed by the producers, the director and lead actor, Vivek Oberoi.

In fact, the petition argues that Prasoon Joshi, chairman of the Central Board of Film Certification, is listed and credited as one of the artists who worked on the film.

"In other words, the CBFC has acted as the judge in its own cause, (or alternatively, as a judge in the cause of its Chairman) thereby casting a pallor over its decision to be so liberal in its grant of permission for the movie to be released in such an expeditious manner," Mr. Panwar, represented by senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, argued.

Besides this, the petition said all four producers are card-carrying official BJP members. Two of them had

held official posts in the party machinery. The fourth producer was a participant in 'Vibrant Gujarat' and had recently signed, through his company, an MoU with the BJP government in the State for a reported sum of around ₹177 crore.

Poll link?

The petition said the "desperate rush to script, shoot and release the movie in a hurried and clumsy manner" was to time the film with the general elections. This, Mr. Panwar said, was "a fact admitted to by none other than the director himself."

"The BJP has direct association with the movie, with Maharashtra Chief Minister releasing the first poster and BJP chief Amit Shah scheduled to release other similar promotional material."

UAE's top honour for Modi

Announces highest civilian award, 'the Order of Zayed'

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

UAE President Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan has awarded Prime Minister Narendra Modi the country's highest civilian award, 'the Order of Zayed', its crown prince Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan announced on Thursday, a decision that has given rise to speculation PM Modi could travel to the Gulf emirate soon.

"We have historical and comprehensive strategic ties with India, reinforced by the pivotal role of my dear friend, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who gave these relations a big boost. In appreciation of his efforts, the UAE President grants him the Zayed Medal," the UAE crown prince, who is also deputy supreme commander of the UAE's armed forces wrote in a tweet.



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In response, Prime Minister Modi said he would accept the honour with "utmost humility". "Under your visionary leadership, our strategic ties have reached new heights. This friendship is contributing to the peace and prosperity of our people and planet," he wrote to the crown prince.

The two leaders have met a record number of times in the past few years, with PM Modi visiting the UAE and Mohammad Bin Zayed visiting India twice each since 2015. Previous recipients of the Order of Zayed include Russian President Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, British Queen Elizabeth II, and former Pakistan President Musharraf.

Neither the MEA nor UAE officials confirmed when the award ceremony would be held for PM Modi. Diplomatic sources said it could be held in the next few weeks.

The Hindu had reported last week that a "high-level" representation was also expected from India for a foundation laying ceremony for Abu Dhabi's first Hindu temple on April 20.

(With inputs from *Kalol Bhattacharjee*)

Vote against bigotry, say theatre personalities

600 signatories slam 'politics of hate'

GAURI VIJ
MUMBAI

Over 600 theatre practitioners have issued a joint statement that implores Indians to "vote bigotry, hatred, and apathy out of power."

The statement has been endorsed by Amol Palekar, Abhishek Majumdar, Chaitanya Ghosh, Dadi Padumjee, Dolly Thakore, Danish Husain, Lillie Dubey, Naseeruddin Shah, M. K. Raina, Mahesh Elkunchwar, Mahesh Dattani, Konkona Sen Sharma, Navtej Johar, Ramu Ramanathan, Ratna Pathak Shah, Sanjana Kapoor and Vrajesh Hirjee, among others. It was released in 12 languages on the website artstuniteindia.com on Thursday evening.

Highlighting the functions of a democracy, the signatories said that the current government formed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) five years ago on the promise of development, "has given free rein to Hindutva goons to indulge in the politics of hate and violence."

Modi govt. wants to shut BSNL, MTNL to help 'friends': Cong.

'Plan is to retrench 54,000 employees after election'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had "promoted the private telecom companies of his friends" at the expense of state-owned BSNL and MTNL.

Addressing a press conference, Congress communications chief Randeep Surjewala cited a media report to allege that the Modi government would retrench as many as 54,000 employees of BSNL once the election was over, by advancing the retirement age from 60 to 58 and offering them voluntary retirement scheme (VRS).

The news report, published in a Hindi daily, claimed that state-owned BSNL's Board of Directors had already taken the decision to downsize, to improve its financial health.

"Whose telecom companies are BSNL and MTNL? Of the country's 130 crore people. The government-owned BSNL and MTNL have been destroyed. Both companies are in debt," Mr. Surjewala claimed.

In the election season, the Congress is clearly aiming to reach out to the employees of the state-owned telecom companies who are facing a hard time because of de-

layed salaries and the threat of retrenchment.

"Modi ji has promoted the firms of his capitalist friends. BSNL and MTNL are now on the verge of closure," alleged the Congress leader.

He said private companies were able to offer lower tariff despite these companies having debts with public banks to the tune of ₹1.3 lakh crore, while the Centre had stopped BSNL and MTNL from taking loans.

Mr. Surjewala alleged that the Centre had not allotted 4G spectrum to public sector undertakings, further crippling them.

In SC, govt. defends electoral bonds

'Invisibility of donors isn't retrograde'

Donations received through electoral bonds will cause a serious impact on transparency in funding of political parties
— ELECTION COMMISSION, IN SUPREME COURT ON MARCH 27

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The electoral bonds scheme allows anonymity to political donors to protect them from "political victimisation," the government informed the Supreme Court.

The Ministry of Finance dismissed the Election Commission of India's (ECI) version that the invisibility afforded to benefactors was a "retrograde step" and would wreck transparency in political funding.

But the government said the shroud of secrecy was a product of "well thought-out policy considerations". It said the earlier system of cash donations had raised a "concern among the donors that, with their identity revealed, there would be competitive pressure from different political parties receiving donation".

"Non-disclosure of the identity of the donor is the core objective of the scheme of electoral bonds in order to safeguard the donor from political victimisation... In any event, non-maintenance of the identity of the donor of electoral bond by political parties was driven

by well thought out policy considerations," the government reasoned.

The government said electoral bonds achieve the twin purposes of greater accountability in political funding as well as anonymity of the donor. If required, enforcement agencies can always check the details of donors from banking channels.

Protection of the identity of donors is also a reason why political parties are exempted from recording donations received through electoral bonds in their contribution reports to the ECI.

The ECI had flagged how donors need not provide their names, address or PAN if they have contributed less than ₹20,000. Now, many political parties are reporting donations less than ₹20,000. The poll body has hit a wall in its enquiries whether these donations are sourced illegally from government companies or foreign sources.

The government said electoral reforms usher in a "marked shift" from the old system of massive cash donations to political parties.

White blanket



Snowed in: A rescue centre set up at Koksar in Lahaul-Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh by the police and district administration, following heavy snowfall in the region on Thursday. ANI

Counter statement against hospital not warranted, says Madras HC

'Col can only offer its opinion on the nature of treatment'

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Thursday criticised the Justice A. Arumughamswamy Commission of Inquiry (CoI) for its counsel filing a counter statement against Apollo Hospitals before the panel. The CoI is probing the circumstances that led to the hospitalisation and consequent death of former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on December 5, 2016.

The Bench said, "The averments made by, or on behalf of the commission in the counter statement are in fact disturbing. The contents of the counter statement are per se unwarranted and not intended in inquiry proceedings conducted by the second respondent (CoI) in exercise of powers conferred on it under the Commissions of Inquiry Act of 1952."

The counter statement had been filed when the hospital insisted on constitution

of a medical board if the Col wanted to assess the adequacy of the treatment provided to Jayalalithaa between September 22 and December 5, 2016. The hospital said a team of experienced specialists and top doctors from the U.S. and the U.K. had attended on her.

The Division Bench made it clear that the Col should have avoided the procedure of filing a counter statement against the party before it. When the court was told that the counter statement was actually filed by the commission's counsel on his own without any instructions, the judges said that in such a case, counsel concerned must be pulled up as rightly contended by senior counsel C. Ariyama Sundaram and P.S. Raman representing the hospital.

Authoring the judgment, Justice Subbiah said: "We also wish to observe that the CoI is a fact-finding body

and during the course of such inquiry, the commission need not attribute collusion, conspiracy or fraud etc.

"We find some force in the submission of the senior counsel for the petitioner that the second respondent (the commission) exceeded its scope in conducting inquiry proceedings by attributing negligence or collusion to the party before it.

Even when the government decides to act upon the Col's report, the petitioner hospital should be provided all due opportunity of defence in adherence to the Right to Information (RTI) regime.

It however refused to order constitution of a medical board and make it a part of the Col since three government doctors had already been deputed to assist the commission and about 90% of the inquiry by the commission was over.

Judiciary can't be destroyed in the name of transparency: CJI

'Bringing collegium under RTI Act will scare away judges'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Good people will opt out of becoming judges for fear that negative things, right or wrong, about them will come out in the public domain, Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi observed on Thursday.

The CJI, heading a Constitution Bench, was responding to arguments made by advocate Prashant Bhushan that the Supreme Court and its collegium should accede to the Right to Information (RTI) regime.

'Right to know' Mr. Bhushan argued that the public has a right to know why a certain person was appointed or rejected as a judge or what was the reason to transfer or not transfer a judge.

But the Chief Justice was not fully convinced. "No-

cision made by the collegium or the government in the judicial appointments process should not be painted with the same brush, "You have to trust someone," he urged Mr. Bhushan.

The Bench, after a day-long hearing, reserved the petitions for judgment.

During the hearing, the CJI pointed out that the collegium does not recommend judges to the High Courts and the Supreme Court casually.

"Do you know why we spend 10-15 minutes with each candidate? Do you know from how many sources we verify them and from how many we re-verify?" the Chief Justice asked after a conversation with Justice N.V. Ramana on the Bench.

The Bench said too much transparency may become counter-productive. It is necessary to "draw a line". Remarking that every de-

Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi
• SANDEEP SAXENA

Call for ADBS Seed Grant proposals 2019

Call Outline

The Accelerator program for discovery in brain disorders using stem cells (ADBS) invites applications for "Seed Grants" from researchers to develop proposals for studying basic biological mechanisms in brain functions in context of neuropsychiatric disorders.

Applications will be screened and evaluated for scientific content including whether they constitute a meaningful use of ADBS biorepository resources. Successful candidates will obtain access to relevant elements of the biorepository resources, funds to employ a junior research fellow and a consumable budget for 2 years.

Who can apply?

Scientists working in Universities/Academic Institutions / National Laboratories / Hospitals / Industries [Department of Scientific & Industrial Research (DSIR)-Recognized R&D Centre] & Non-Profit Organizations with necessary facilities and scientific background in the proposed area and eligibility to obtain project grant funding from DBT.

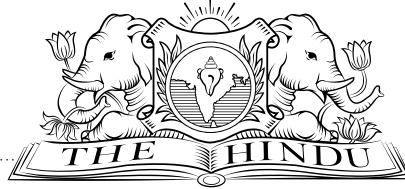
The PI should have an employment contract for at least the duration of the application procedure and the duration of the research the grant is applied for; AND have at least a PhD or an equivalent qualification.

Applicants should have Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Institutional Committee for Stem Cell Research (ICSCR) at their host institution that can provide approval for the proposed project.

How to apply?

The detailed call proposal and application form are available at <https://www.ncbi.res.in/adbs/seed-grants>.

Duly filled in application forms has to be emailed to [adbs@ncbi](mailto:adbs@ncbi.res.in)



No surprises

RBI's reduction in benchmark rates is an acknowledgement of a slowdown in growth

There was no surprise in the 25 basis points cut in benchmark interest rates by the Reserve Bank of India in its first bi-monthly policy statement of the financial year announced on Thursday. The market had anticipated such a cut and the only question was whether the central bank would surprise with a deeper 50 basis points cut. In the event, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) seems to have decided to hold its horses and settle for a conservative approach given the divergent sets of data that it was confronted with. On the one hand, inflation, despite the mild spike in February, is well under control at 2.6% and is projected to average 3.2% to 3.4% in the first half of 2019-20. This is below the 4% target set for the MPC. But there are some factors that could spring a surprise on the upside, such as the behaviour of the monsoon and the trend in global oil prices, both of which feed directly into inflationary expectations. Early forecasts indicate a strong possibility of a below-normal monsoon due to El Niño. Such an event would cast a shadow on agricultural output, and consequently the food prices. Similarly, global oil prices are now edging close to the \$70 a barrel mark on the back of production cuts by the OPEC cartel. While the soft growth trends in the global economy could act as a check on any runaway increase in oil prices, the chances of a sharp fall in the next few months appear remote at this point in time. If these are points of upward pressure on inflation, on the other side growth has been faltering in the last few months, going by both data on industrial output and overall GDP. The Central Statistics Office has revised the GDP growth for 2018-19 downwards to 7% while the RBI has projected a lower growth of 7.2% in 2019-20 compared to the 7.4% estimated in the last policy.

The 25 basis points cut is, therefore, an acknowledgement by the MPC of the slowdown in growth. It also signals a shift in policy since Shaktikanta Das assumed office as Governor of the RBI, whereby the MPC is not solely focussed on inflation but also takes into account growth trends with equal seriousness. The MPC's neutral policy stance is prudent given the uncertainties ahead as it gives the central bank the flexibility to tailor policy to emerging data sets. Meanwhile, Mr. Das has sent out a welcome, clear signal on the central bank's commitment to the framework for resolution of stressed assets in the backdrop of the Supreme Court striking down its circular issued on February 12, 2018. While underlining that the RBI's powers have not been compromised, he has indicated that the central bank will soon reissue the circular taking into account the apex court's observations. This is as it should be.

Outer clarity

India must take up more forcefully the case against weaponisation of outer space. The Indian Space Research Organisation's successful April 1 launch of the PSLV-C45 rocket that placed 29 satellites in three different orbits is remarkable both for the complex set of multi-tasking the mission accomplished and for the timing. Coming three days after ISRO and the Defence Research and Development Organisation knocked out a satellite in a Low Earth Orbit with a direct hit, it would appear that the Indian space programme stands galvanised and poised for a giant leap. The dexterity with which so many satellites, most of them American, were placed in three different orbits certainly showcases both the reliability and the expertise that ISRO offers. This is not a new development. In February 2017, the PSLV-C37 placed 104 satellites, 96 of them from the U.S., in one go, a testimony to ISRO's ability to launch satellites at a fraction of the cost that other countries incur. Equally important, just as the February 2017 launch also placed the fifth of the Cartosat 2 series in orbit, an earth observation satellite with cameras that have a resolution of less than a metre, the PSLV-C45 placed EMISAT, which can, among other things, aid in electronic intelligence. In other words, India is assiduously putting in place a space military architecture. Over the next few months, as many as eight satellites are expected to be launched, strengthening the defence dimension.

That is precisely why the government should articulate much more clearly the doctrinal aspects of the space programme, as well as the deterrence sought to be achieved by it. India must communicate its peaceful intentions just as it showcases its capabilities, so as to contribute to better understanding among countries it hopes to deter and thereby reduce the chances of wrong inferences being drawn in crisis situations. After all, missiles are but one aspect of space warfare. There are other, less visible but equally effective methods to incapacitate satellites that are being developed and are of equally serious concern. The problem is that there is no global regulatory regime to address the growing militarisation in space. Last year, at the UN Disarmament Commission, India expressed concern about the "weaponisation" of outer space, and sought collective action to secure space-based assets. In this regulatory vacuum, India has legitimate reasons to develop deterrence for the security of its space-based assets. Equally, New Delhi must take a bigger lead in forging a global and legally binding instrument to prevent militarisation of space. It is encouraging that after the ASAT test, India said it "expects to play a role in the future in the drafting of international law on prevention of an arms race in space". This is morally and pragmatically in keeping with India's power projection. Given the prohibitively expensive nature of space projects, India and other countries must utilise the increased presence in space to legitimately advance the well-being of their people.

Making democracy meaningful

Freedom must be foregrounded, and each person enabled to contribute her best to it



VALERIAN RODRIGUES

(1946-1949). These later writings do have a place for elections and representation that they engender, but also call for pre-requisites for a fair election that claims to represent the will of the people, and stipulate conditions for its continued salience.

Elections as tools

Elections can hardly be termed as the sole and effective conveyor belts of popular will in India any longer. Probably, they were never so. But there were reasons to hope, as the poor and the marginalised, cutting across diversity and the social and gender divide, rallied behind it in strength. But the hype that has come to surround elections, the resources that it calls for, the close monitoring of the voters by boxing them in social straitjackets, and the media's obsessive focus on elections as a gladiators' den have deeply compromised elections as the preeminent device of representation of popular will.

In the process the electoral space of the poor and the marginalised has shrunk, as other devices have been put in place to elicit their assent. The rectitude of the election machinery alone cannot ensure that the voter is enabled to make a deliberated choice of momentous significance to his everyday life, opportunities and access to resources. Political parties with their stakes, almost without exception, have increasingly tended to fix the voters in social silos, rather than help them redefine their affiliations and connect to the wider social ensemble, if they choose to do so. Redistribution of resources and opportunities has been lost in the endless litany of promises of goods and bounties. A promise, here and there, in the manifestoes of political parties that allude to redistribution sounds theatrical before their socially conservative stance.



Sections of the media have come to play second fiddle in amplifying the sound-bites of political leaders, deploying them to construct and reconstruct opponents, with specified social constituencies in view. They have found jingoism and archaic frames easy to stoke rather than nudge public sensitivity to reinforcing the democratic temper. Highlighting fragments from popular memory-lane, spreading isolated events wide across the political space, and nurturing the effect of simultaneity, particularly with certain audiences in view, have been the take of much reporting these days. Negatively, the advances people had made in shaping their self-rule, in a context of bewildering diversity and complexity and widening inequalities, are given short shrift.

While elections have been successful in reproducing the order of things, they can hardly be considered as the tool of deepening democracy and the nursery of imagining alternative human possibilities.

Imaginary of democracy

There has been an ambivalence regarding elections as the route to democracy in India from early on, even before Independence. It is important to recall that the Indian National Congress rejected the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms

(1919) that expanded the then electoral base, and entertained grave doubts with regard to the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935 till it accorded a qualified endorsement to it. There have always been political tendencies in India after Independence, particularly on the Left, that have sought boycott of elections by appealing to a richer and thicker version of democracy. But there is little to suggest that those who sought to reject or do away with elections have had much success in putting together an alternative, or enjoyed significant and consistent mass support for any appreciable time across the complex and deeply plural social ensemble in India. If the great scholarly account of W.H. Morris-Jones, *Parliament in India*, is to be believed, the 1951-52 general elections demonstrated to an incredulous world, entertaining deep doubts about the prospects of parliamentary democracy in India, the faith that people had come to repose in elections as a mode of choosing their rulers. Subsequent developments, particularly the option of Left parties to take the parliamentary path, demonstrate that elections as a device of choosing representatives find deep echo in the public culture in India. The challenge that the democratic project confronts in India can scarcely be imagined by setting aside one's best to it.

There is no reason for anyone to participate in such a project unless it welcomes them as equals and enables them to pursue what they regard as the best for them. This calls for auditing the election promises of political parties, extending support to some measures and rejecting others. Measures such as access to quality education in the mother tongue, neighbourhood schools, strengthening public health systems, public transport, entrepreneurship and skill development, universal social insurance, and reaching out to those who suffer disadvantages in accessing these measures are definitely in synchrony with the democratic project. At the same time for a large number of Indians the beliefs they uphold, and the practices that ensue therefrom are central to their idea of themselves. There is no reason why India's democratic project cannot encompass such embeddedness and aspirations. There is a dire need to create a helm to focus on India's democratic project.

ven but have to be forged, and have to be forged consciously and deliberately. Certain inheritances, beliefs, memories and shared practices can be a great help in this direction, but it is also important to realise that they can be equally divisive. India's constitutional layout and public institutions can extend much support in streamlining and directing this political project, but cannot be its replacement. In a complex society such as India, such a political project needs all layers of the political community. The deliberation and participation such a project calls for will remain merely a slogan unless we foreground freedom, and enable everyone to contribute one's best to it.

There is no reason for anyone to participate in such a project unless it welcomes them as equals and enables them to pursue what they regard as the best for them. This calls for auditing the election promises of political parties, extending support to some measures and rejecting others. Measures such as access to quality education in the mother tongue, neighbourhood schools, strengthening public health systems, public transport, entrepreneurship and skill development, universal social insurance, and reaching out to those who suffer disadvantages in accessing these measures are definitely in synchrony with the democratic project. At the same time for a large number of Indians the beliefs they uphold, and the practices that ensue therefrom are central to their idea of themselves. There is no reason why India's democratic project cannot encompass such embeddedness and aspirations. There is a dire need to create a helm to focus on India's democratic project.

Valerian Rodrigues had taught Political Science at Mangalore University and Jawaharlal Nehru University

A presidential-style race in Andhra Pradesh

The Assembly campaign has been personalised, with Chandrababu Naidu and Jaganmohan Reddy trading charges



K. VENKATESHWARLU

The Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh have been reduced to a vote simulating a provincial presidential binary, with people having to make a choice between a young challenger, Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy, who has been waiting in the wings for quite some time to occupy the Chief Minister's post, and a seasoned, never-say-die, time-tested incumbent, N. Chandrababu Naidu.

In a way it is a repeat of what happened in the 2014 elections. At that time it was a keen contest between Mr. Naidu's Telugu Desam Party (TDP)-led alliance versus Mr. Reddy's YSR Congress Party. Mr. Naidu romped home with a margin of less than 2 percentage points. Among the many factors then were a strategic alliance Mr. Naidu had stitched up with the BJP as well as incremental support

from actor Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena Party (JSP). Hurt by the way the State had been bifurcated – it had left them without a capital city that used to generate revenue of ₹60,000 crore – voters opted for a leader with vast administrative experience and who had transformed Hyderabad into an IT hub.

This time too the electoral battle is essentially between Mr. Naidu and Mr. Reddy, and if the results throw up a cliffhanger, the JSP along with the Left could prove to be deciding factors. The Congress and the BJP (which is no longer an ally of the TDP) are in the fray too but unable to make any headway as people are angry with Congress blaming it for "unfair bifurcation" and the BJP for denying the State Special Category Status (SCS).

The record and response
So will the magic of 2014 work for Mr. Naidu, given the fact that he has decided to go it alone? Will he be able to buck anti-incumbency? Will he be able to measure up to people's expectations? In a recent interview, Mr. Naidu said he had done his best in a short time and in a challenging situation, having in-

herited a budget with a deficit of ₹16,000 crore and been faced with an "uncooperative Centre". As much as 33,000 acres of land was acquired for a new State capital at Amaravati and ₹40,000 crore of infrastructural works initiated there. The Polavaram irrigation project, which is a lifeline for the State, is on track even though the Centre is yet to release ₹4,000 crore spent by his government. Mr. Naidu said that his government has also been able to attract big manufacturing industries (which includes South Korea's Kia Motors) and ensured an economic growth rate of over 10%.

For farmers, he waived crop loans of ₹24,000 crore and came

up with 'Annadata Sukhibhava', an economic support scheme for Annadata (farmers). Under the 'Pasupu Kumkuma' scheme, every woman registered with self-help groups has been given capital of ₹10,000. On the welfare front, a chain of Anna Canteens offers a meal (₹5) for the poor. Other measures include a hike in pensions for the elderly and widows to ₹2,000 and a scheme to build 30 lakh houses. Mr. Naidu's campaign has focussed on showcasing these 'achievements' and targeting Mr. Reddy for his criminal cases (31), a slew of corruption cases filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation and a 'conspiracy' with the Telangana Rashtra Samithi and the BJP to unseat him (Mr. Naidu).

In turn, Mr. Reddy too has focused on corruption to corner Mr. Naidu. His counter-narrative touches on how this *Pedda Manishi* (elderly person) has turned governance into a money-making machine, allowing his MLAs to loot the State's resources. In the name of land for the capital, Mr. Reddy alleges that the Chief Minister has turned it into a real estate business without building even a single permanent building there

so far. He asks why Polavaram remains half complete. Mr. Reddy adds that banks have estimated a sum of over ₹80,000 crore for implementing a crop loan waiver, with nothing done so far.

All-important caste factor
Campaign rhetoric apart, elections in the State are all about caste and the capacity of different political parties to marshal their support. Mr. Naidu's support base is among the numerically strong Backward Classes (BCs) besides his own influential Kamma community. Mr. Reddy has tried hard to breach the TDP's vote base by giving more tickets to BCs this time besides, strengthening his vote among the Reddys, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities. Mr. Pawan Kalyan has a large following among his Kapu community. It is because of him that they had overwhelmingly voted for the TDP in the last elections. But now that the JSP is in the electoral fray – Mr. Reddy accuses it of backing the TDP – it has to be seen how it will affect the fortunes of the TDP and the YSRCP.

venkateshwarlu.k@thehindu.co.in

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

RTI scrutiny

The arguments put forth by the Attorney General, of the need to not have the judiciary under the ambit of the Right to Information Act are strange. Judicial exclusivity had never been envisaged by any of our Constitution makers. With the allegations made recently about the judiciary's functioning, the RTI Act would serve as a master tool, making the justice delivery mechanism more immune to political pressure and accountable to the people. People have the right to know how the judiciary functions (Page 1, "RTI scrutiny will ruin judicial independence", April 4).

Y. MEENA,
Hyderabad

■ The attempt by the judiciary to wriggle out of the RTI radar is unacceptable. The arguments given in support of this are unconvincing. They equally apply to other civil servants. Therefore, the

judiciary cannot claim preferential treatment. Instead, the judiciary should set an example by abiding by the RTI Act rather than finding excuses for not releasing information. How can there be an argument then to make sure the RTI Act applies to political parties?

R. VIDYA SAGAR,
Chennai

—

Water crisis?
Water management is a much-talked-about subject these days. The issue becomes all the more serious as there are now more credible scientific data to show growing water poverty. It is disheartening that proper lessons have not been imbibed. Year after year we helplessly watch excess rainwater flowing to the sea. Going forward in cities, in addition to rainwater harvesting, we need to build more storage bodies. Today while there is talk of desalination, it is strange that we allow huge water resources to join the sea and

thereafter leisurely think of converting brackish seawater into drinking water. Measures such as estimating the water available in aquifers, use of water conservation techniques, redefining the criteria for recycling and reuse of effluents, installation of water meters, groundwater drafting and water auditing are crucial now. This regimen should become the order and not the exception (Page 1, "Skymet expects a 'below normal' monsoon", April 4).

R. SAMPATH,
Chennai

—

The forces and politics
Our politicians should leave our defence forces and personnel alone. Let them not paint the armed forces with any colour. But for our bravehearts, the nation would not be safe. The military is the people's senna and not the Prime Minister's, as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath claims. Mr. Adityanath should instead issue an

apology ("Former Navy chief protests Yogi's remarks", April 3). Political parties should seek votes based on their achievements.

T. ANAND RAJ,
Chennai

—

■ Since Independence our armed forces have had a stellar record of being apolitical and secular. Comments such as the one by Mr. Adityanath can lead to the politicisation of our defence forces, who are respected by one and all for their supreme sacrifices. The armed forces are sworn to uphold the Constitution of India and take "lawful orders" from the duly elected government, no matter which party is in power. Remarks like Mr. Adityanath's clearly try to intimidate voters. This is not the first time that the ruling party has tried to needlessly politicise the armed forces especially when it comes to scoring points over the Opposition parties.

S.K. KHOSLA,
Chandigarh

—

We are not living in the days of yore when the army was named after the ruler concerned. The Prime Minister does not need enemies from outside. His own followers and friends are capable of inflicting enough damage to the image of the party and the government.

S.V. VENKATAKRISHNAN,
Bengaluru

—

The iconic Ambassador
The report ("Business" page, "Ambassador brand an asset", April 4), on how France's Groupe PSA has said all options are open on the relaunch of the iconic Ambassador brand and car, brought back many fond memories. In 1976, my father bought our family's first car, an Ambassador, with a loan from his employer. It was actually a third-hand one, with a 'VIP number plate': BRF 1. My youngest brother would call it the 'BARAF gaadi'. Two years later it had to be sold as my father was changing jobs and had to close the loan. My brother

was traumatised, crouching and weeping near its tyres. A few years later, my father decided to buy another car and an Ambassador it was again, this time a second-hand one. We had a new life with even my children and nephew enjoying rides in it. But the car had to go after my father passed away. I do hope Groupe PSA relaunches the Ambassador soon. It will be the car I will buy for sure.

SAURABH SINHA,
Bhaktapur

—

₹10 coin
The Reserve Bank of India needs to clarify whether the ₹10 coin is an accepted denomination. There are many establishments that refuse to accept and honour it, putting many of us in great difficulty. At times, this leads to bitter quarrels. The RBI should arrange for a toll free number for the public to lodge complaints.

P.S.V. PRASAD BABU,
Bhadralakhal, Telangana

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:
www.thehindu.com/opinion/letters/

A-NODE

Jobs or doles: which is the way forward?

PARLEY

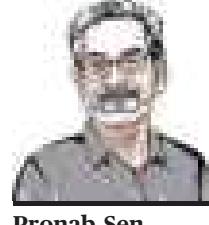
Governments can provide direct cash transfers while creating conditions for employment

With the Congress promising through the Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY) scheme ₹6,000 every month to the poorest 20% of households if voted to power, Mahendra Dev and Pronab Sen talk of the importance and problems of direct cash transfers. Providing social protection is important even as governments try to create conditions for income-generating activities, they say in a discussion moderated by Sharad Raghavan. Excerpts:

Professor Dev, in the light of unemployment being such a big issue now, should the government that comes to power next double down on employment creation or opt for direct transfers to the people who need it?



Mahendra Dev
is Director and Vice Chancellor, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai



Pronab Sen
was the first Chief Statistician of India and is now the Programme Director for the International Growth Centre India Programme



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

SINGLE FILE

Protecting freedoms

Political parties should pledge to uphold human rights — and mean it



MEENAKSHI GANGULY
Everyone, everywhere, is entitled to the protection of their fundamental rights.

These rights are not just violated by the most authoritarian governments, such as in China or North Korea, but can also be undermined in well-established democracies such as India. This time, as India goes to polls, human rights need to be an important part of the discussion.

Balakot, quota and sop for farmers gave PM a boost, finds survey

FROM PAGE ONE

Hard choices

Interestingly, this differing sentiment about the government and its leadership among those aware and unaware was also found across castes, including among traditional BJP supporters.

For instance, the survey found less than one-sixth of upper castes to be unaware of the Balakot strikes and among them the inclination to give the Modi government another chance was found to be more than two times less than for those who were aware, 31% to 63%.

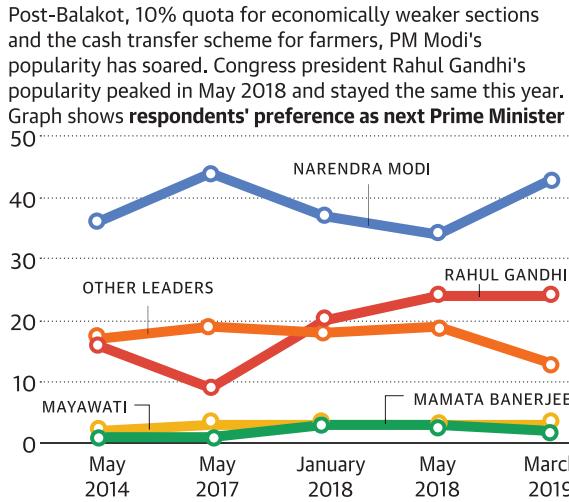
Dalits who were not aware of the Balakot strike were far more likely to want the government to go. On the other hand, Dalits who were aware of the air strikes were split down the middle on the issue of whether or not to give the government another chance.

Just about half the respondents (48%) polled had heard about the Congress's NYAY promise and the awareness was lower still among the respondents who may stand to benefit from it. The promise was, however, made right in the middle of the survey. Congress president Rahul Gandhi is far more popular among those who were aware of the NYAY.

The key to the Congress's success in blunting Mr. Modi's advantage may therefore lie in further popularising the scheme in the days and weeks ahead.



If the pre-poll survey of more than 10,000 potential Indian voters by CSDS-Lokniti is to be believed, concerns over unemployment and development remain paramount, but they have not dented the popularity of the BJP government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Three decisions – the Balakot air strikes, the cash transfer to farmers and the 10% reservation for the economically weaker sections have led to a boost in support for the regime. Tables and graphs look at some of the findings of the survey:



Methodology

As part of its National Election Study, Lokniti conducted a pre-poll survey between March 24 and March 31, 2019, among 10,010 respondents spread across 19 States – Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh,

Compared to a year ago, there is greater support for, rather than against, the government

Opinion	May 2018	March 2019
Modi govt. should get another chance	39%	46%
Should not get another chance	47%	36%

Three key decisions may have turned the tide in Modi's favour. The air strikes is one of them

Respondent opinion	Prefer Narendra Modi as PM
Heard of Balakot air strikes	46%
Never heard	32%

Awareness of Balakot has blunted the impact of other electoral issues

Respondent opinion	NDA should not get another chance
Unemployment is the biggest issue and have not heard of the Balakot air strikes	35%
Unemployment is the biggest issue and heard of Balakot strikes	36%
Price rise is the biggest issue and not heard of the Balakot strikes	46%
Price rise is the biggest issue and heard of the Balakot strikes	38%

Parameter	NDA should get another chance
Aware of Rafale deal	52%
Not aware of Rafale deal	39%

Cash transfer to farmers and reservation to the economically weak also swayed opinions

Respondent opinion	Prefer Narendra Modi as PM
Heard of 10% reservation for EWS in general category	48%
Never heard	37%

But this sentiment was not similar across regions

Region	Govt. should get another chance
North	52%
South	29%
East	50%
West-Central	49%

The share of respondents holding negative opinions about the Modi regime on most parameters was higher in the South as compared to other regions

Satisfaction with present govt. was lower than what it was after UPA-1, but higher than UPA-2

Opinion	UPA govt. in post-poll 2009	UPA govt. in pre-poll 2014	NDA govt. in pre-poll 2019
Incumbent govt. should not get another chance	45%	53%	36%
Incumbent govt. should get another chance	55%	25%	46%
No response	<1%	22%	18%



FROM PAGE ONE

Reserve Bank cuts interest rate again

Bond traders, however, were not impressed with the 25 bps rate cut as they were expecting a higher quantum to address growth headwinds and deficit liquidity. The yield on the 10 year benchmark bond hardened from 7.27% to 7.35%.

"Markets were perhaps anticipating a relatively high degree of dovishness from the policy statement which hasn't materialised," HDFC Bank said in a note to its clients.

Economists said there is still scope for further rate reduction. "We expect another rate cut, with June as our base case. An argument for the cut to be delayed to August is equally strong if the RBI sees reason in factoring in the full-year budget due in July and awaits a clearer picture on monsoon developments," said Radhika Rao, Economist, DBS Bank.

The Governor expressed concern over monetary transmission, while noting banks have only reduced lending rate by 10 bps after RBI reduced the policy rate by 25 bps in February. "More needs to be done."

Release of biopic on Modi put off indefinitely

A separate delegation, led by CPI(M) Polit Bureau member Nilopal Basu and CPI national secretary D. Raja, had also petitioned the Election Commission.

"The delegation pointed

out that there are well-established precedents for withholding the release of such propaganda materials during the pendency of the election," said a joint statement by the Left parties.

BJP's opponents not anti-nationals: Advani

Touching upon several points on which the Modi-Shah leadership of the BJP is facing criticism, Mr. Advani said: "Defence of democracy and democratic traditions, both within the party and in the larger national setting, has been the proud hallmark of the BJP. Therefore BJP has always been in the forefront of demanding protection of independence, integrity, fairness and robustness of all our democratic institutions, including the media. Electoral reforms, with special focus on transparency in political and electoral funding,

which is so essential for a corruption-free polity, has been another priority for our party."

The veteran asked his party colleagues to "look back, look ahead and look within."

In his response, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that Mr. Advani perfectly summed up the true essence of the BJP, most notably the guiding mantra of "Nation first, party next, self last."

"Proud to be a BJP karyakarta and proud that greats like LK Advani Ji have strengthened it," he added.

Nishad Party switches to NDA camp

Praveen Nishad's entry likely to bolster the alliance in Purvanchal, central Uttar Pradesh

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

In a filip to the caste arithmetic of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, the Nishad Party joined the NDA on Thursday, less than a week after it walked out of the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party alliance on March 29.

Gorakhpur MP Praveen Nishad, who won the seat in a bypoll on a SP ticket in 2018 with BSP support, was also inducted into the BJP. He is the son of Sanjay Nishad, the founder and president of the Nishad Party.

Natural alliance' Announcing the tie-up between the BJP in Delhi, Mr. Sanjay Nishad said it was a "natural alliance of Ram Raj and Nishadraj". A caste icon and mythological ancestor of the Nishads, an



Nishad Party leader and Gorakhpur MP Praveen Nishad with Union Minister J.P. Nadda in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ PTI

OBC riverine community, Nishadraj is believed by Hindus to be the boatman who helped Lord Ram, his wife Sita and brother Lakshman

cross the Ganga during exile. The Nishad Party chief said he hoped respect would be provided to all people as part of the 'Sabka Saath, Sab-

ka Vikas' agenda of the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a dramatic shift in his political tone. Barely 10 days ago, he had resolved to mobilise the "85%" (OBC, Dalits and Muslims) against the BJP and had supported the SP and BSP to avoid division of the "85%" votes.

Altered equations The exit of the Nishad Party alters the caste balance in Purvanchal and parts of central U.P., where the BJP already enjoys support of the Kurmi-based Apna Dal and the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party of Om Prakash Rajbhar. While Kurmis are a dominant agrarian OBC caste, Rajbhrs and Nishads are categorised among the most backward castes.

Stung by the exit of the Nishad Party, the SP on Saturday responded by replacing Mr. Praveen Nishad with another Nishad candidate from Gorakhpur – former Minister Ram Bhau Nishad. There is no announcement yet if the Gorakhpur MP will contest polls on a BJP ticket or defend his seat.

BJP parliamentary board secretary J. P. Nadda, who inducted the Nishad Party into the NDA, said its support would have a big impact in east and central U.P.

Reacting to the tie-up, SP president Akhilesh Yadav said it was a "ghate ka sauda" (loss-making deal) for the BJP. The people of Gorakhpur did not vote to ensure the victory of the MP alone but of the alliance that was behind him, he posted on social media, predicting that the Nishad Party boat was due to sink in the election.

The Congress had alleged that the money was found in the vehicles which were part of Chief Minister Pema Khandu's convoy. However, Mr. Khandu denied the allegation, stating that it did not belong to the BJP. When asked, the poll panel said the vehicles were stationed in the guest house when the cash was detected and therefore, a final report from the Income-Tax Department was awaited to determine to whom it belonged.

2 IAF officers killed in road accident

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind has forwarded to the Union Home Ministry a letter from the Election Commission saying that Rajasthan Governor Kalyan Singh prima facie violated the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), for necessary action.

It is learnt that there are two precedents of Governors having been accused of violated the MCC. In both cases, the letters had been

ruled through the Home Ministry. The ECI had earlier taken cognisance of Mr. Singh's statement in Aligarh that he was one of the BJP karyakartas. "We have found that the remark is prima facie violative of the MCC. Therefore, we have written to the President," a senior EC official had said.

Mr. Singh had told BJP workers that they were all party workers and therefore, they should ensure its victory. "Every worker would want Narendra Modi to become the Prime Minister again," he had said.

Four IAF personnel met with an accident this morning in Awantipora. Two of the injured personnel succumbed to injuries," the official said, without giving any further details.

The deceased personnel are Squadron Leader Rakesh Pandey and Corporal Ajay Kumar, according to the official.

The injured personnel – an officer and an airman – have been shifted to a hospital for treatment, the official added. The IAF will conduct an inquiry into the incident, he said.

CMYK

ANURADHA RAMAN

NEW DELHI

NaMo TV made its debut on March 31 on DTH platforms, and created a stir among political parties regarding the content it aired.

For most parties, NaMo TV is a propaganda tool for Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the Lok Sabha election and is in violation of the model code of conduct. They have brought this to the notice of the Election Commission, which has sought an explanation from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, responsible for granting licences to content providers. The Ministry has been given time till Friday to respond. The Commission, it is learnt, is likely to take a decision on April 9 when it meets.

Meanwhile, several questions are being raised on the identity of NaMo TV. Is it a news channel or an add-on service offered by a direct-to-home (DTH) operator or an entertainment channel?

For instance, on Tata Sky, NaMo is available as a Hindi entertainment channel on number 145 as well as a Hindi news channel on number 512. Or is it an advertisement channel? Most important, who is the licence holder?

The Hindu could not verify reports on the ownership of the channel. Media reports alluded that the owners were two Gujaratis. There are reports that the channel is owned by one Parag Shah, said to be close to the BJP leadership.

[SERIES | FROM BARAMULLA TO BARABANKI]

Will Phalodi call it right this time?

From the betting market that has earned a name for its poll predictions to Jaipur, the desert State is in the grip of election fever

AMITABH MATTOO

On the fringes of the great Thar desert lies a remote sandy town, Phalodi. Trains from Jodhpur, and even one between Bandra and Howrah, pass through the junction at Phalodi, as they travel to the golden city of Jaisalmer.

Phalodi has many claims to fame: once a tiny oasis on the caravan route, it has recently recorded the highest temperatures in the country. The nearby saline depression once made it one of the important sources of salt; and it lies close to Pokhran, the country's only nuclear testing site.

It is unlikely, however, that Feluda, Satyajit Ray's legendary private investigator, would have stopped at Phalodi, in search of the elusive treasures in Sonar Kela, the fort of Jaisalmer. With a population of less than 50,000 and a few heritage buildings, the town does not immediately exite attention.

But today, especially during elections, it is Phalodi's *satta* bazaar, or betting market, which is the cynosure of attention among political analysts throughout Rajasthan. An illegal speculative market flourishes with the benign cover of the law enforcement agencies. If the police were to act, they would have to close down the town – so overwhelming and all-pervasive is the political economy of the *satta* trade. The locals claim that the Election Commission can go wrong, but not Phalodi's betting market.

One veteran claimed that they had accurately predicted Donald Trump's victory to the American Presidency, while



Holy visit: The dargah of the Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti in Rajasthan. • V.V. KRISHNAN

advancing arguments for legalising the *satta* market in the town. Globalisation creates its own transnational moral hazards!

While the election results are still several weeks away and a month is a lifetime in politics (in Phalodi's paraphrased view of Harold Wilson's dictum), the bookies are (with only an occasional murmur of dissent) betting on the NDA coming back to power, though with a reduced majority.

The odds, they say, are heavily in favour of the BJP winning 18 of the 25 Lok Sabha seats in Rajasthan. In the 2014 election, the BJP won all 25, getting more than 52% of the popular vote.

In the 2018 Assembly election, the Congress was able to form the government, but the difference in the voting percentage between it and the BJP was less than 1%. And if the polling percentage in the Assembly election was extrapolated today to the Lok Sabha poll figure, the Congress would have won 13 and the BJP

12 seats. Clearly, Phalodi's predictions seem to justify the slogan: "Vasundhara Taireen Khair Nahin, Modi Tujh Say Varir Naheen" (Vasundhara Raje Scindia [the previous BJP Chief Minister], we will not spare you; but Narendra Modi, we have no quarrel with you).

The Phalodi Assembly constituency falls within the Jodhpur Lok Sabha constituency. The BJP's Gajendrasingh Shekawat (currently serving as Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare) won the seat in 2014 by a margin of more than four lakh. In a political gamble, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's son, Vaibhav, is making his political debut from the constituency.

The issues that confront much of Rajasthan are rural distress and the pan-national "concerns" about national security and skilled employment. As general secretary of the BJP Kisan Morcha and activist of the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch, Mr. Shekawat gives top priority to agriculture. On national security, he is believed

to have developed a unique civil defence initiative on the border through the Seema Jan Kalyan Samiti. But the voters – at least anecdotally – are sceptical of his track record.

Nonetheless, the younger Gehlot is facing a formidable opponent in Mr. Shekawat and will require all the support and political magic of his father if he has to make a real dent. Recall that the Chief Minister had represented Jodhpur five times in the Lok Sabha, between 1980 and 1999.

Further west, in Barmer-Jaisalmer, former BJP leader and former Union Minister Jaswant Singh's son Manvendra Singh, who joined the Congress before the Assembly election, has an upper hand, but only marginally at the moment. Infighting within the Congress could cause him damage, with former MP Harish Choudary having staked a strong claim for the constituency.

However, Mr. Manvendra had represented Barmer in Parliament earlier, and even as an Independent in the 2014

election, his father was able to secure more than four lakh votes.

Urbane and once part of Lutyens' set (Mayo College, Amherst and SOAS), Mr. Manvendra has reinvented himself as a true grassroots Rajput leader, proud of his heritage but with a wider social base.

Jaipur vibes

But it is only when you are in Jaipur that you get a sense of the pulse of the whole State, beyond the forecasts of Phalodi. Early morning, even before the first sign of dawn, Central Park comes alive. An outsider would be forgiven for imagining that the entire civil lines of Jaipur has descended on this blessed green oasis, exercising in the multiple open gyms and then fortifying itself with aloe vera or *Khas* juice, ready to take on the world.

Mixing the sacred with the profane, political wisdom is quickly gathered as you join the huge crowds that arrive at Govind Devji's famous temple, before the appointed hours for *darshan*. An evening dinner at Niro's and you are truly equipped to hold forth on the political trends of the State.

The sitting MP for Jaipur is the formidable Ram Charan Bohra, who beat the Congress candidate by over five lakh votes in 2014. In a traditionally Brahmin-dominated constituency and viewed as a BJP fortress, the Congress has sprung a surprise by nominating the former Jaipur Mayor Jyoti Kandelwal. Ms. Kandelwal has appeal, with her clean and efficient track record as Mayor and especially among women voters, but it will require a major shift in Jaipur's

traditional fault lines for her to win.

In rural Jaipur, there is a colourful contest between an Olympian and an Olympian. Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, an Olympic medalist, is facing the Congress MLA for Sadulpur, Krishna Poonia, a Commonwealth Games gold medallist.

Rajasthan has made remarkable strides; its roads, its infrastructure and its heritage tourism are enviable examples of good governance. But rural disempowerment is a stark reality that faces you in all parts of the State. The possibilities of change were once evident as you diverted from the Jaipur-Ajmer highway at Tilolia to Bunker Roy's extraordinary Barefoot College. Today, you see the remarkable Tilolia Bazaar on the highway, with its handicrafts displaying the skills of the village.

This bazaar is a symbol of Tilolia success, but also a reminder that its inability to scale up and replicate itself with the same robustness makes it just one drop of water. In a desert setting, that means success and failure.

Any trip to Rajasthan is rarely complete without paying *Hazari* at the dargah of Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti, revered by Hindus and Muslims alike. It's the only place sequestered from the political noise of the world outside. For unlike Phalodi, the concerns of the dargah are of a different and more lasting order.

(The author is a Professor of International Relations at Jawaharlal Nehru University and at the University of Melbourne)

POLL POURRI



Straddling the Yamuna

NOIDA

The Gautam Buddh Nagar administration has hired a motorboat to ferry voters from Dalelpur village in Noida across the Yamuna to the polling station on April 11, according to an official communication on Thursday. Dalelpur is the only village in the Gautam Buddh Nagar constituency, which falls across the Yamuna and towards the Haryana side, but is a part of the Lok Sabha segment in Uttar Pradesh. The villagers rue years of "ignorance" by the system and lack of connectivity. They had recently announced a boycott of the election. PTI

Kamal Nath's son gets ticket



NEW DELHI The Congress on Thursday announced Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath's son, Nakul Nath, to contest from the Chhindwara Lok Sabha seat and put all speculation of fielding senior leader

Ahmed Patel from Bharuch in Gujarat by announcing Sher Khan Abdul Shakur Pathan. In Madhya Pradesh, the Chief Minister's son will contest from the constituency that his father represented for nine terms while Kamal Nath (in picture) himself will be contesting a by-election from Chhindwara Assembly seat to get himself elected as an MLA.

'Will jail EC if voted to power'

MUMBAI



Dalit leader and three-time MP Prakash Ambedkar has landed in a controversy for allegedly threatening to put the Election Commission in jail for two days for not letting political parties speak about the Pulwama terror attack. Taking cognisance of Mr. Ambedkar's statement, the EC sought a report from local poll officials. Mr. Ambedkar, grandson of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, is contesting the Lok Sabha election from Solapur and Akola constituencies in Maharashtra as a candidate of Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi, an alliance of Ambedkar-led Bharip Bahujan Mahasangh and Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM. PTI

BJP replaces Jalgao candidate



PUNE At the eleventh hour, the Bharatiya Janata Party on Thursday changed its candidate for the Jalgao Lok Sabha seat, replacing MLC Smita Wagh with Chalisgaon Legislator Unmesh Patil. Speculation was rife about the

candidate change, which had been triggered by intense intra-party resentment ever since the ruling party announced Ms. Wagh's candidature last month. The 40-year-old Mr. Patil, a first-time MLA, filed his nomination papers on Thursday.

Trinamool launches its tunes

KOLKATA



West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool chief Mamata Banerjee on Thursday launched a music video for the upcoming LS election in the State. The 2-minute-30-second video was on the theme of peace, harmony and progress prevailing in West Bengal, in contrast to an alleged atmosphere of fear in other parts of the country. The music video was shared by Ms. Banerjee on all her social media channels Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. PTI

Mizoram civil societies to vote



An apex body of major civil societies and student associations in Mizoram, which had earlier sought to boycott the Lok Sabha election, reversed its decision on Thursday following an internal

meeting of the organisation's top hierarchy. The NGO Coordination Committee had called for an indefinite strike from April 8 in protest against the decision of the Election Commission to set up exclusive polling booths at Kanhmun village, on the Mizoram-Tripura border, for the Bru voters lodged in six relief camps of Tripura. A statement issued by the committee claimed that the boycott was called off after the State government promised to end the Bru imbroglio by undertaking the last and final repatriation process this year. PTI

My brother, my true friend, and by far the most courageous man I know. Take care of him Wayanad, he won't let you down.



PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

A colour-coded campaign in Srinagar

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR

Avoiding the party's core issues such as revocation of Articles 370 and 35A related to J&K's special status, the BJP's candidate for Srinagar Lok Sabha seat, Khalid Jehangir, on Thursday launched his campaign in green colour, sought blessings at a Sufi shrine and promised multiplexes in Kashmir.

"I sought the Sufi saint's blessings. We don't do politics at the shrines. The shrine was burnt by a Pakistani terrorist Mast Gul in 1995. The followers of the saint have vowed to safeguard Kashmiriyat today," Mr. Jehangir told *The Hindu*. The BJP leader, whose poll slogan is *Khalid hai tou solid hai*, is contesting from the Srinagar-Budgam Lok Sabha seat against National Conference's Farooq Abdullah.

INTERVIEW | JAGAN MOHAN REDDY

'It's anti-incumbency versus hope, unlike in 2014'

YSRCP chief says TDP has broken its election promises and the euphoria around Narendra Modi has died down

NISTULA HEBBAR

YSRCP chief Jagan Mohan Reddy speaks on the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls, and who he will support in the event of a hung Parliament...

What is the difference between 2014 and 2019 polls for you?

■ In 2014, the difference in vote share between the victors and us was 1%. We got 44.5% and the NDA around 45.1%; so all of them put together were just possibly a percentage point more than us. (Telugu Desam Party chief) Chandrababu Naidu too didn't have any anti-incumbency against him and he could get away with his lies. And he had the Modi euphoria adding to it, as well as the (Jana Sena) Pawan Kalyan factor. His nine years of experience as Chief Minister counted for a newly formed State. All these factors gave them that 1% differential. Today, people have seen his (Naidu's) government and understood that he has lied and broken his election promises. The euphoria around Modiji is also no longer there. These polls are, therefore, in a way

It's the craft



Elaborate piece: A campaign installation in support of the Left Democratic Front candidate in Thiruvananthapuram. • S. MAHINSHA

election today will be credibility versus betrayal.

What is your specific charge?

■ In this entire process, he (Naidu) ruined the entire system. He asked farmers not to pay up their loans, but he didn't give the debt waiver either, as a result, the outstanding agricultural loans have become ₹1,50,000 crore. The worst part is that not only did he breach the election promise of a loan waiver, but earlier farmers were getting interest subvention, some from the Centre and the balance from the State, so that agricultural loans were actually on zero interest, but after Naidu became Chief Minister he scrapped that scheme. So the farmers were not getting zero per cent interest and his promise of loan waiver was not followed through. In the last five years he has only paid out ₹4,00,000 crore, that doesn't translate to much.

You have said that you will support any party which will push for Special Category

offer of support on the condition of granting of SCS mean?

■ Today we are saying we are sick and tired of trusting people, we say we have the numbers, and you sign on the dotted line of SCS and we will support you. Whomsoever it may be.

Anybody, including the Congress?

■ Anybody including you! As long as I get SCS. Here I must say that thanks to KCR *garu* (Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao), who publicly and categorically said that he would support the demand for SCS. With his 17 MPs and our 25 MPs, a total of 42 MPs on one side demanding SCS and with the current day politics, of possibly a hung Parliament, we could, with our numbers, become a pressure group, a group that can make the Centre yield.

It's interesting that you speak in glowing terms of K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

Wouldn't his proximity hurt your prospects in Andhra Pradesh?

■ Let bygones be bygones. My party was the only party that opposed the bifurcation of the State in Parliament and I was suspended from the House along with the other MP from my party. Every party barring mine voted. They broke the State and now 10 years after the agitation, whether I accept or not, they (TRS) have a separate State. They (TRS) are not supporting me individually, but the demand for SCS and I welcome such statement.

There is a lot of talk about events after the Pulwama attack and what happened in Balakot. What is your view on what happened and about Prime Minister Modi?

■ Basically, he (Prime Minister Modi) has exhibited strong will. He has exhibited political will that no other Prime Minister had done, that could be a positive note for him. But as far as Andhra Pradesh is concerned, he failed us.

ELSEWHERE



Court issues notice to Zardari for hiding assets

ISLAMABAD

The Islamabad High Court on Thursday issued a notice to Pakistan's former President Asif Ali Zardari on a petition seeking his disqualification as an MP for hiding his assets worth over \$1 million, including a flat in New York and bulletproof vehicles, in the election nomination papers last year. PTI

Sri Lankan commando kills self at PM's home

COLOMBO

An elite police commando committed suicide on Thursday by shooting himself at Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's official residence in Colombo, officials said. The Special Task Force (STF) member used his officially issued automatic assault rifle to shoot himself at the gate of the Temple Trees residence while the Premier was inside. AFP

Manila protests presence of Chinese boats

MANILA

The presence of more than 200 Chinese fishing boats near an island occupied by Manila in the disputed South China Sea is illegal and a clear violation of Philippine sovereignty, the country's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday. REUTERS

'Body of Israeli soldier found by Russian army'

MOSCOW

The body of an Israeli soldier missing since the 1982 Lebanon War was found by the Russian and Syrian armies, President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday. Sergeant First Class Zachary Baumel had been listed as missing along with two other Israeli soldiers after a deadly battle with Syrian forces in a Lebanese village. AFP

MPs pass legislation to rule out no-deal Brexit by one vote

Bill instructs Prime Minister Theresa May to seek extension to Article 50

VIDYA RAM

LONDON

British MPs, by a majority of one vote, passed emergency legislation that instructs Prime Minister Theresa May to seek an extension to Article 50 that triggered the Brexit process.

The Bill, which was opposed by the government, received support from 313 MPs with 312 voting against it. It was put forward by Labour MP Yvette Cooper and Conservative MP Oliver Letwin in an attempt to rally MPs across the political spectrum.

It comes as Ms. May and the leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, embarked on a second day of talks to try to find the road ahead. The Bill will still have to pass through the House of Lords before it comes into force. While Britain's Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, insisted that a no-deal Brexit was highly unlikely now, Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay has warned the legislation "could increase the risk of an accidental no-deal exit".

The legislation's significance lies partly in the power it gives Parliament in determining the length of any delay to Brexit. The day after it becomes law, the Prime Minister would have to put a motion to the House of Commons to seek an extension to Article 50, which would be amendable by Parliament, thereby giving MPs control over how long a period it would be for.

The Prime Minister would then be obliged to request this extension from the European Council. Were Europe to propose an alterna-



Debate on delay: Theresa May speaking during the weekly Prime Minister's Questions in London on Wednesday. • AFP

tive date, then the process would revert back to Parliament again.

"The House has tonight voted again to make clear the real concern that there would be about a chaotic and damaging no deal and to support the Prime Minister's commitment to ensure that we do not end up with no deal on April 12," said Ms. Cooper as the Bill scraped through at just after 11 p.m. local time on Wednesday.

EU election

The push by Parliament to attempt to stave off a no-deal Brexit came as Ms. May said she would seek a short extension beyond April 12. She has also insisted that she wants the U.K. to be able to leave the EU before May 22 - the day before European parliamentary elections are due to take place. However,

members of the government have also acknowledged that this might not be possible. "There is no guarantee that the U.K. would not participate in European parliamentary elections if the house refuses to support a deal," Mr. Barclay said.

While the U.K. may be prepared to seek a longer extension, there is scepticism in the EU around the road forward, with some warning that giving Britain more time could just involve kicking the can further down the road, and place new risks on Europe, particularly if a politician like Boris Johnson - who has been pushing the U.K. to take a tougher line with the EU - were to succeed Ms. May.

She has already said she will step down before the next stage of negotiations. "We cannot risk giving the

keys of the EU's future to a Boris Johnson, or a Michael Gove, the architects of this Brexit disaster. A long extension would do exactly that," warned the European Parliament's intermediary on Brexit, Guy Verhofstadt.

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, in Paris earlier this week, said that to get any extension the U.K. would have to demonstrate a "clear purpose and a clear plan", while French President Macron warned that the EU could not be held "hostage" to the vagaries of the Brexit process in the U.K.

Whether Ms. May can rally enough support for her withdrawal deal to pass through Parliament before April 12, the current "cliff-edge" for Brexit, remains to be seen. The talks between the government and the Labour Party are focussing not on the legal treaty text itself but on the accompanying "political declaration", which sets out ambitions for the future relationship.

It is through this that the Labour Party hopes to pursue its ambitions for Brexit, which include keeping the U.K. in a customs union with the EU, while also guaranteeing that EU standards on the environment, workers and consumer rights will be maintained.

While the customs union solution - which involves tariff-free trade on goods but not services - would avoid the question of the controversial Irish backstop, it has angered Conservative MPs who believe it wouldn't offer the U.K. the freedom to pursue trade deals with the rest of the world in the way they had hoped.

Maldivians gear up for Saturday's general election

Over 2.6 lakh people have registered to vote in the country

MEERA SRINIVASAN

MALE



Six months after electing Ibrahim Mohamed Solih as President in a high-stakes election, Maldivians are gearing up for another crucial vote in Saturday's parliamentary poll, whose outcome will impact the prospects for political stability in the island nation.

The Election Commission on Thursday said preparations for Saturday's polls were complete and that they expected the polling process to be smooth and swift. Over 2.6 lakh Maldivians have registered to vote in the poll, in which nearly 400 candidates are contesting for 87 seats in Parliament.

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Posters and graffiti in Male. • MEERA SRINIVASAN

sibility of "a coup like in the past", former President Nasheed said, referring to his controversial removal in 2012, less than four years after he became the first democratically elected President of the Maldives.

"When we don't have a parliamentary majority, very often the independent institutions lose confidence in government. And when that happens, the judiciary starts running away with their politically motivated sentences," the former President told *The Hindu* after a late night campaign rally in capital Male, where he is contesting to become a Member of Parliament.

The MDP's strategy also

comes amid growing differences within the ruling coalition since last year, when an eclectic alliance led by Mr. Solih came to power, defeating former President Abdulla Yameen, on the promise of "restoring democracy and fighting corruption".

Qasim Ibrahim, who is the Speaker and leader of the Jumhooree Party (JP) that backed Mr. Solih in 2018, is currently teaming up with the Opposition Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) of Mr. Yameen, who was accused of corruption and authoritarianism when in power.

The PPM has raised concern over "not having a fair chance" in Saturday's poll. "Our leader was jailed for a month, his bank account - which is really the party's - was frozen and our funding was cut. How can we manage a campaign in such a situation?" asked Mohamed H. Shareef, a supporter of Mr. Yameen.

In February, Mr. Yameen was arrested on charges of money laundering and later released following a high court order.

Australia introduces strict laws to tackle violent online content

REUTERS

CANBERRA

Australia will fine social media and web-hosting companies up to 10% of their annual global turnover and imprison executives for up to three years if violent content is not removed "expeditiously" under a new law.

Australian police within a "reasonable" timeframe.

"It is important that we make a very clear statement to social media companies that we expect their behaviour to change," Australian Minister for Communications and the Arts Mitch Fifield told reporters.

U.S. Congress demands details of Trump's income tax returns

Arcane part of tax code invoked to request documents

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON

In what is likely to become a protracted battle with U.S. President Donald Trump, a committee of the U.S. House of Representatives has demanded six years of Mr. Trump's personal and business tax returns from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). House Ways and Means Committee chairman Richard E. Neal, a Democrat, based his request to the IRS on an arcane part of the tax code to request the documents, after months of discussion and deliberation with other committee members, the American media has reported.

Provision in code

The tax code permits the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee to obtain the tax returns of any American tax filer and this was cited to request the

This request is about policy, not politics; my preparations were made on my own track and timeline

RICHARD E. NEAL

Representative

returns.

In addition to Mr. Trump's personal returns for the 2013-2018 period, the committee has requested returns for eight of Mr. Trump's businesses, including the Bedminster golf course.

While it has been practice for Presidents to voluntarily release their tax returns, Mr. Trump has refused to do so. The President has said before that his returns are under audit and he cannot release them, a claim he made again on Tuesday.

"But I've been under audit because the numbers are big and I guess when you have a name you're audited. But until such time as I'm

not under audit, I would not be inclined to do that," Mr. Trump said. Mr. Trump had reportedly told White House advisers that he would fight the House request all the way to the Supreme Court and hope it would be stalled until after the 2020 elections, *The Washington Post* reported.

On the Hill, Mr. Neal defended his request. "This request is about policy, not politics; my preparations were made on my own track and timeline, entirely independent of other activities in Congress and the administration," Mr. Neal said in a statement.

The ranking Republican member of House Ways and Means however opposed the move. "Weaponizing our nation's tax code by targeting political foes sets a dangerous precedent and weakens Americans' privacy rights," Mr. Brady told Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin in a letter.

Christchurch gunman faces 89 charges

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

CHRISTCHURCH

The man accused of attacking two mosques in Christchurch last month will face 50 murder charges when he appears in court on Friday, New Zealand police said. Brenton Tarrant was previously charged with one murder as a holding measure, but police said on Thursday that all the deaths and injuries in the March 15 attacks will be reflected in upgraded charges during his next appearance.

"The man arrested in relation to the Christchurch terror attacks will face 50 murder and 39 attempted murder charges when he appears in the High Court in Christchurch on Friday," they said. A note from the court this week said the appearance was likely to be brief and would "ascertain the defendant's position regarding legal representation" and other procedural matters.

"Social norms are changing. I understand that, and I've heard what these women are saying. Politics to me has always been about making connections," Mr. Biden tweeted, adding, "but I will be more mindful about respecting personal space in the future. That's my responsibility and I will meet it."

"I've always tried to make a human connection... I shake hands, I hug people, I grab men and women by the shoulders and say, 'You can do this!'" said Mr. Biden.

"And whether they're women, men, young, old, it's the way I've always been, it's the way I've tried to show I care about them and I'm listening."

Former Vice-President Joe Biden, whose personal style of physical interaction with women has recently been scrutinised, released a video on Wednesday saying he would be more respectful of personal space.

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Last Friday, Lucy Flores, a

'Will be more mindful about personal space'

Joe Biden, who faces allegations of misconduct, offers assurance but no apology



Lucy Flores, who was then a candidate for Lieutenant-Governor, with the then-Vice-President Joe Biden in Las Vegas in November 2014. • AFP

former Nevada lawmaker and candidate for Lieutenant-Governor, alleged that Mr. Biden's manner of physical interaction with her made her uncomfortable. On Monday, a former congressional aide said Mr. Biden touched her inappropriately in 2009.

"Social norms have begun to change, they've shifted, and the boundaries of protecting personal space have been reset and I get it. I get it.

I hear what they're saying," Mr. Biden said. But he did not offer an apology.

Support for Biden

In parallel to the complaints, several women who knew Mr. Biden or had worked with him took to social media over the past few days in support of the former Vice-President and his interactions with them.

"And over the years, knowing what I have been

through, the things that I have faced, I've found that scores, if not hundreds of people have come up to me, and reached out for solace... it's just who I am," he said.

Mr. Biden and his spokesperson had addressed the issue via statements over the last few days.

"People's space is important to them, and what's important is how they receive it and not necessarily how you intended it," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Tuesday.

This was something Mr. Biden paid close attention to prior, *The New York Times* quoted Mr. Biden's aides as saying. Ms. Pelosi also said it did not disqualify him from running for office in 2020.

Mr. Biden is expected to announce a bid for the White House next year at the end of this month, an expectation supported by the opening remark in his Wednesday video. "In the coming month, I expect to be talking about a whole lot of issues, and I'll always be direct with you."

Boeing asked to review flight control system

Ethiopia releases preliminary report

REUTERS

ADDIS ABABA

Ethiopian investigators urged Boeing to review its flight control technology and said pilots of state carrier Ethiopian Airlines had carried out proper procedures, in the first public findings on the crash of a 737 MAX jet that killed 157 people.

The doomed flight repeatedly nosedived as the pilots battled to control the nearly full aircraft before it crashed six minutes after take-off from Addis Ababa in clear conditions, Ethiopian authorities said on Thursday. "The crew performed all the procedures repeatedly provided by the manufacturer but was not able to control the aircraft," Transport Minister Dagnawit Moges told a news conference, presenting the outlines of a preliminary report.

Investigators are expected to publish the report by Friday.

In a clear indication of where Ethiopian investigators are directing the attention of regulators, they cleared the pilots of using incorrect procedures and issued two safety recommendations. They suggested that Boeing review the flight control system and that aviation authorities confirm any changes before allowing that model of plane back into the air.

Violation of rights

The country's tiny lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, which already had to be dis-

creet about their sexual identities in the highly conservative Muslim country, has been left terrified. "What Brunei is adopting is a violation of basic human rights," said a 33-year-old gay man in the country, who spoke anonymously. Ms. Zayce fled

Brunei last year due to the increasingly conservative climate and is now seeking asylum in Canada.

Plans to implement sharia law were announced in 2013 and the first phase, with less stringent punishments, came into effect the follow-

Brunei's LGBT community lives in fear

The new sharia laws, implemented this week, prescribe death penalty for gay sex

MARKET WATCH		
04-04-2019	% CHANGE	
Sensex	38,685	-0.49
US Dollar	69.17	-1.11
Gold	32,670	-0.24
Brent oil	69.68	-0.79

NIFTY 50		
PRICE	CHANGE	
Adani Ports	380.20	-1.80
Asian Paints	1519.00	21.40
Axisc Bank	762.15	0.65
Bajaj Auto	2859.10	11.80
Bajaj Finserv	7318.55	-83.00
Bajaj Finance	3039.45	-6.55
Bharti Airtel	356.80	6.80
BPCL	354.30	-8.90
Britannia Ind	3041.80	51.70
Cipla	521.00	0.55
Coal India	234.80	0.70
Dr Reddys Lab	2771.35	6.15
Eicher Motors	20489.55	286.85
GAIL (India)	346.30	-6.15
Gasim Ind	834.90	3.20
HCL Tech.	1098.95	-22.55
HDPC	2042.05	28.95
HDPC Bank	2283.95	-8.80
Hero MotoCorp	2637.20	56.75
Hindalco	210.45	-5.50
Hind Unilever	1666.55	-4.25
Indiabulls HFL	898.15	28.30
ICICI Bank	388.75	-3.35
IndusInd Bank	1736.15	-37.45
Bharti Infratech	316.65	-0.60
Infosys	747.90	-5.40
Indian Oil Corp	155.20	1.75
ITC	294.80	-1.35
JSW Steel	287.80	-2.10
Kotak Bank	1322.90	-11.30
L&T	1368.70	-9.35
M&M	653.35	-5.10
Maruti Suzuki	7113.10	40.20
NTPC	135.65	0.85
ONGC	155.25	-0.20
PowerGrid Corp	199.35	-1.60
Reliance Ind	1353.05	-22.15
State Bank	321.80	1.30
Sun Pharma	465.60	3.60
Tata Motors	206.15	4.80
Tata Steel	530.65	-4.80
TCS	2014.50	-64.80
Tech Mahindra	774.50	-3.20
Titan	1106.10	5.60
UltraTech Cement	4079.95	78.35
UPL	931.50	7.25
Vedanta	187.20	1.40
Wipro	259.05	-2.60
YES Bank	268.05	-5.65
Zee Entertainment	417.30	12.75

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on April 04		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	68.96	69.28
Euro	77.37	77.73
British Pound	90.60	91.03
Japanese Yen (100)	61.89	62.18
Chinese Yuan	10.27	10.32
Swiss Franc	69.04	69.36
Singapore Dollar	50.94	51.18
Canadian Dollar	51.63	51.87
Malaysian Ringgit	16.89	16.99

BULLION RATES CHENNAI		
April 04 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses		
Retail Silver (1g)	40.4	(40.3)
22 ct gold (1g)	3020	(3002)

PMI services index at 6-month low

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

India's services' sector activity eased in March with the slowest pace of output growth in six-months due to a slower expansion in new work, leading to weakest rate of hiring since last September, a monthly survey showed Thursday.

The seasonally adjusted Nikkei India Services Business Activity Index fell to 52 in March from 52.5 in February, indicating the slowest expansion since last September.

Despite the moderation, the services PMI was in the expansion territory for the tenth straight month. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below that denotes contraction.

"Indian services sector growth weakened at the end of the fourth quarter of FY18, with activity expanding at the slowest rate since last September," said Pollyanna De Lima, principal economist at IHS Markit, author of the report.

'Linking small loans to external benchmark after further talks'

RBI factors in issues such as interest rate risk management, system upgrade

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The proposal to link small floating rate loans with an external benchmark for improving monetary transmission seems to have taken a back seat, with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) deciding to hold further consultation with stakeholders before implementing such a scheme.

"Taking into account the feedback received during discussions held with stakeholders on issues such as management of interest rate risk by banks – from fixed interest rate linked liabilities against floating interest rate linked assets – and the related difficulties, and the lead time required for IT system upgradation, it has been decided to hold further consultations with stakeholders and work out an effective mechanism for transmission of rates," the RBI said in a statement during the first bi-monthly policy review of the current financial year.

Dec. proposal

During the December review of monetary policy, the RBI had proposed to imple-

Policy Nuggets

Liquidity support

To ease liquidity pressures, RBI announced an increase in the Facility to Avail Liquidity Support for Liquidity Coverage Ratio, from 13% to 15% of banks' net demand and time liabilities (NDTL); to be implemented in phases up to April 2020. Banks can then dip into government bonds held under SLR to the extent of 17% of NDTL.

Committee on Housing Finance Securitisation

A panel will assess the state of housing finance securitisation

markets in India, study the best international practices and lessons learnt from the global financial crisis. This will enable better management of credit and liquidity risks and help lower costs of mortgage finance.

Composition and terms of reference to be announced soon; report by end August

Forex facilities by NBFCs

Resident Indians can now avail foreign exchange facilities towards overseas education expenses, medical treatment abroad, business travel

and private visits from non-deposit taking NBFCs, as RBI plans to give licence to these entities for such activities. The aim is to improve ease of undertaking forex transactions

Time taken to address grievance

Time taken by different payment systems to resolve customer complaints varies. For prompt complaint redressal by all e-payment systems, RBI is planning a framework on Turn Around Time for resolution of complaints and compensation framework across all such systems

Stressed assets circular

ers under Section 35AA in respect of specific defaults by specific debtors. The powers of RBI under Section 35AA and other sections of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 are, therefore, not under doubt.

At the post-monetary policy press conference, Mr. Das said, "In light of the Hon'ble Supreme Court's order, the Reserve Bank of India will take necessary steps, including issuance of a revised circular, as may be necessary, for expeditious and effective resolution of stressed assets."

With the Supreme Court quashing the February 12 circular of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on stressed asset resolution, its governor Shaktikanta Das said on Thursday that the central bank would come up with revised norms.

At the post-monetary policy press conference, Mr. Das said, "In light of the Hon'ble Supreme Court's order, the Reserve Bank of India will take necessary steps, including issuance of a revised circular, as may be necessary, for expeditious and effective resolution of stressed assets."

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IN BRIEF



Bajaj Auto rolls out the new Dominar 400

MUMBAI Bajaj Auto has introduced the latest edition of Dominar 400, a sports tourer, at ₹1,73,870 (ex-showroom, Delhi). The new Dominar comes with a liquid-cooled 373.3 cc DOHC engine that delivers 40 PS power. Sarang Kanade, president - Motorcycles, Bajaj Auto Ltd. said, "Customers have pushed the bike into extreme long distance and challenging geographies, inspiring us to strengthen the sports tourer credentials in the new Dominar."

GMR raises \$300 million for airport expansion

HYDERABAD GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd. on Thursday said it has priced a \$300 million bond in the international market. In a statement, the company said it had entered into a purchase agreement to issue and allot \$300 million senior secured notes of five-year tenure at a coupon rate of 5.375%. The proceeds would be used to fund the expansion of the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport here.

Vistara to add 14 flights to domestic network

MUMBAI Full service carrier Vistara, which is likely to commence services on international routes this year, will add 14 new flights to the domestic network, starting April 7. The new services are being added to Bengaluru, Kolkata and Hyderabad from Mumbai besides on the Hyderabad-Pune routes to meet the demand during the peak travel season in the April-July period, the airline said in a statement. PTI

SEBI panel for more players in commodities

'Commodity derivatives will be a new asset class for investors, can be used as hedge against inflation'

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR
MUMBAI

A panel constituted by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has recommended opening the commodity derivatives segment to all categories of institutional investors in a phased manner, to enhance the depth and liquidity of the commodity market.

'Calibrated approach'
The Commodity Derivatives Advisory Committee (CDAC), which has been formed to review the commodity segment and suggest measures to improve the depth and efficiency of the market, has suggested that the capital markets regulator should adopt a 'calibrated approach' before opening up the segment to overseas in-



Blind spot: Lack of expertise is holding back a sizeable number of investors from the derivatives markets. • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

vestors. The panel is of the view that in the next phase, institutional investors like foreign portfolio investors, banks, insurance companies and pension funds should be allowed in the commodity derivatives segment.

"Commodity derivatives would be a new asset class

for the investors and can be used as hedge against inflation. Investment in commodity derivatives in a portfolio may also benefit the investors in terms of better portfolio diversification," according to a SEBI paper presented to the board of its meet

on March 1.

Incidentally, last month saw the regulator giving the final go-ahead to mutual funds and portfolio managers to participate in the commodity segment. Last year, in October, the so-called eligible foreign entities (EFE) that have an exposure in the Indian physical commodity market were allowed to trade in the commodity derivatives segment.

According to the panel, a substantial number of investors, including retail investors, are not able to directly access the commodity derivatives markets due to lack of knowledge and expertise.

Market participants are of the view that while institutional players do help in broadening the segment, the market also needs to offer

more liquidity especially in the longer dated contracts to attract bigger players.

"Globally, commodity derivatives are a big pull for corporates and institutions that use the platform for hedging their price risk," said Naveen Mathur, director – commodities & currencies, Anand Rathi Shares & Stock Brokers.

"Allowing more institutional participation in the Indian commodity segment is a welcome move as it offers the benefit of broadening the market through their participation depends on the depth and liquidity that the segment offers. Institutional entities are investors and not traders and hence would be attracted if there is liquidity in the longer dated contracts," Mr. Mathur added.



Sibling power: Tarini Jindal Handa (left) and Parth Jindal at the launch of furniture brand Forma. • SHASHI ASHWAL

JSW Group's gen-next looks at diversification

Jindal siblings eye cement, furniture

PIYUSH PANDEY
MUMBAI

Generation-next, which has taken charge at the \$13-billion Sajjan Jindal-led JSW Group, will look at diversification initiatives of the steel-to-energy conglomerate.

While Mr. Jindal's son Parth Jindal is looking to expand the cement business to 30 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) to be among top five cement players in country, daughter Tarini Jindal Handa is guiding the group's diversification into consumer-facing businesses.

Under Ms. Handa's leadership, JSW forayed into India's fast-growing \$19-billion furniture market with the launch of its brand, Forma. The aim is to figure among the top five furniture brands in India.

Growth potential
The launch of Forma enables the conglomerate to capitalise on the immense growth potential of India's furniture market which had been recording CAGR of 11% in last five years.

Forma has been launched as a brand of JSW Living Pvt. Ltd. and the company aims to be present across the value chain of furniture.

"We are learning and

there is an immense distance to travel," Ms. Handa told *The Hindu*.

"We have started in a small way with a strong belief to help India with newer products and solutions. We are investing ₹250 crore aiming at revenue of ₹1,000 crore in the next five years," she said.

There is a strong focus on sustainability and durability, to deliver good designs to a larger number of users. Forma has been developed as a relevant product portfolio for the Indian consumer based on extensive market research, JSW Living said in a statement.

"We are working with our own team as well as designers – both domestic and international – to develop unique designs. At Forma, we will take good designs to larger sections of our society in India. Initially, we will capitalise on JSW's marketing and distribution synergies through steel and cement to provide larger depth and scale to the furniture business.

"By 2023, we will have our own Forma retail outlets, which is expected to be the tipping point for the growth of JSW Group's furniture business," she added.

Groupe PSA to export gear boxes soon

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

French auto major Groupe PSA will start making gear boxes at Hosur from next month onwards for exports, said a senior official.

"So far, we have selected 120 suppliers for making engines and gear boxes in Hosur," said Thomas Delepoule, vice-president, purchasing strategy, Groupe PSA. "Initially, we will start making gear boxes, followed by engines." On Thursday, over 250 suppliers attended India Suppliers Summit hosted by the firm.

The app has been launched in association with a global sustainability organisation, Solidaridad.

"Digital traceability has already been established for 2,500 such growers in Assam, West Bengal and the southern States... this will now be gradually extended to 70,000 small tea growers

Small tea growers to get app-based training

Moves on to establish a brand identity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

At a time when small tea growers' share in India's total tea crop is hovering at about 50%, the organised tea industry has helped launch an app that will act as a digital training tool for these growers while helping establish traceability for the segment, promoting quality and safe-farm practices.

The app has been launched in association with a global sustainability organisation, Solidaridad.

"Digital traceability has already been established for 2,500 such growers in Assam, West Bengal and the southern States... this will now be gradually extended to 70,000 small tea growers

by this year end," Shatadru Chattopadhyay, MD, Solidaridad Asia, told *The Hindu*. Moves are also afoot to establish a brand identity of small holders through a Trinitea logo, he said. It is proposing an ₹8-crore investment till 2021, in these efforts. Trinitea is an initiative by Indian Tea Association and Solidaridad for small tea growers.

Forma has been launched as a brand of JSW Living Pvt. Ltd. and the company aims to be present across the value chain of furniture.

"We are learning and

Tanishq eyes mid-format stores to boost growth

Such units offer good returns: official

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Tata group's jewellery brand Tanishq is betting on mid-format stores and region-specific brand ambassadors to sustain growth, said a top official.

"We have about 290 stores in 174 cities of which 10 are large-format stores," said Sandeep Kulhalli, senior V-P, retail and marketing, Jewellery division, Titan Company Ltd. "Going forward, we are planning to enter B & C towns by setting up mid-sized stores (between 3,500 sq.ft. and 4,000 sq.ft.) as they are economical and offer good returns."

He said the jewellery division had been posting a growth of more than 20%

growth year-on-year.

The division would be roping in leading actresses from Tamil and Kannada film industries as brand ambassadors to boost its sales.

Relaunches store

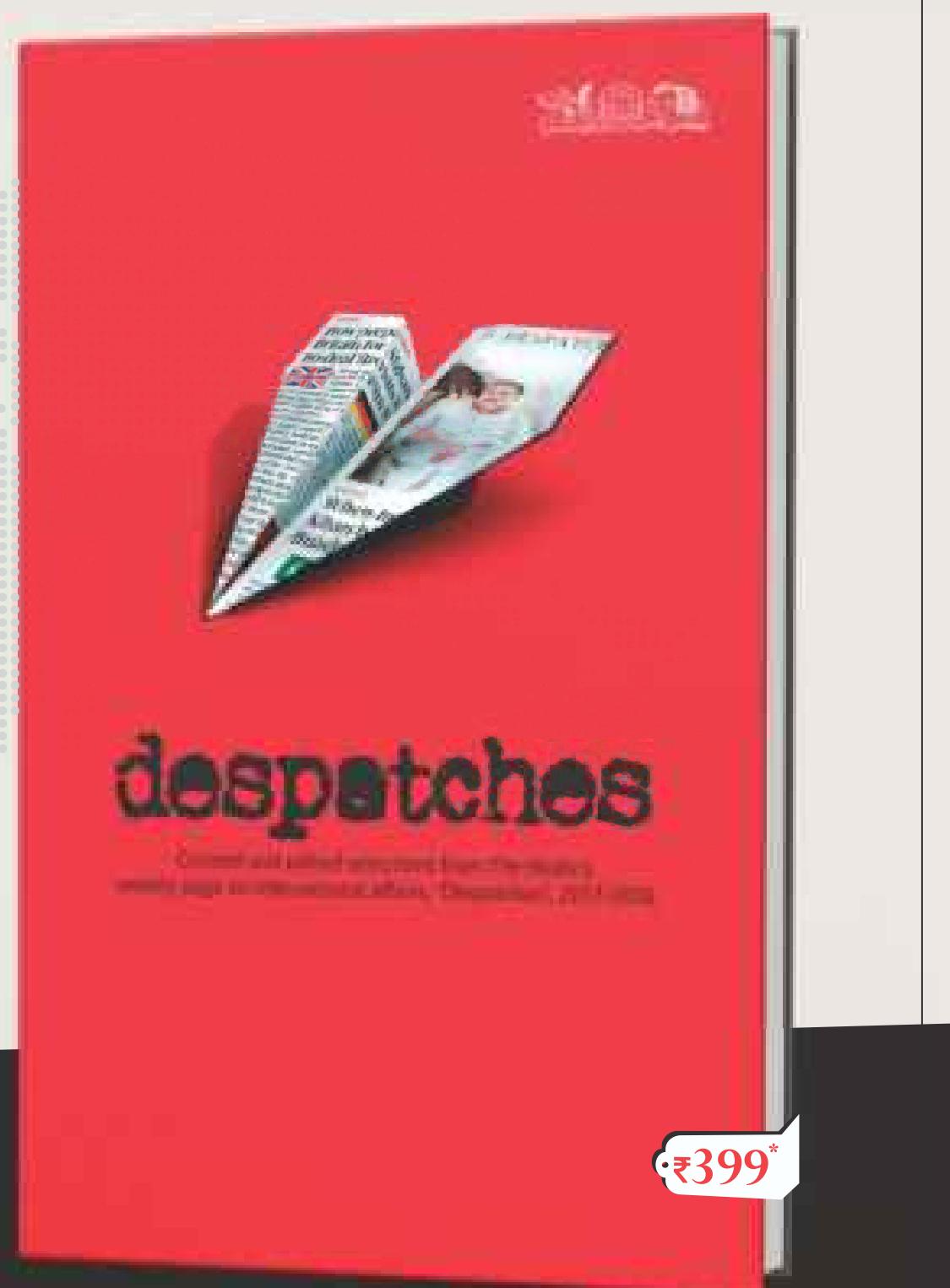
On Thursday, Mr. Kulhalli relaunched a large format store in Chennai and said they would be rolling out community-specific merchandise to vie with established players and non-branded collections targeting younger generations.

During the fourth quarter, Tanishq posted a 22% growth while its subsidiary Caratlane recorded 42% growth, said S. Subramanian, CFO, Titan Company Ltd., in a regulatory filing.

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The Hindu's
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columns from the world over



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Sunrisers prove too hot for Capitals, goes top of the table

After the bowlers restrict the Delhi side to 129, Bairstow comes to the party again with a blistering start



RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

With Delhi Capitals repeatedly shooting itself in the foot, Sunrisers Hyderabad's successful chase was never in doubt.

The eventual five-wicket verdict was Hyderabad's third win and resulted in the third defeat for the host. Much before the winning six was hit, Delhi's ordinary batting and Hyderabad's whirlwind start gave the match a one-sided look.

In fact, the eventual margin does not really reflect Hyderabad's grip on the proceedings as it stretched its winning sequence.

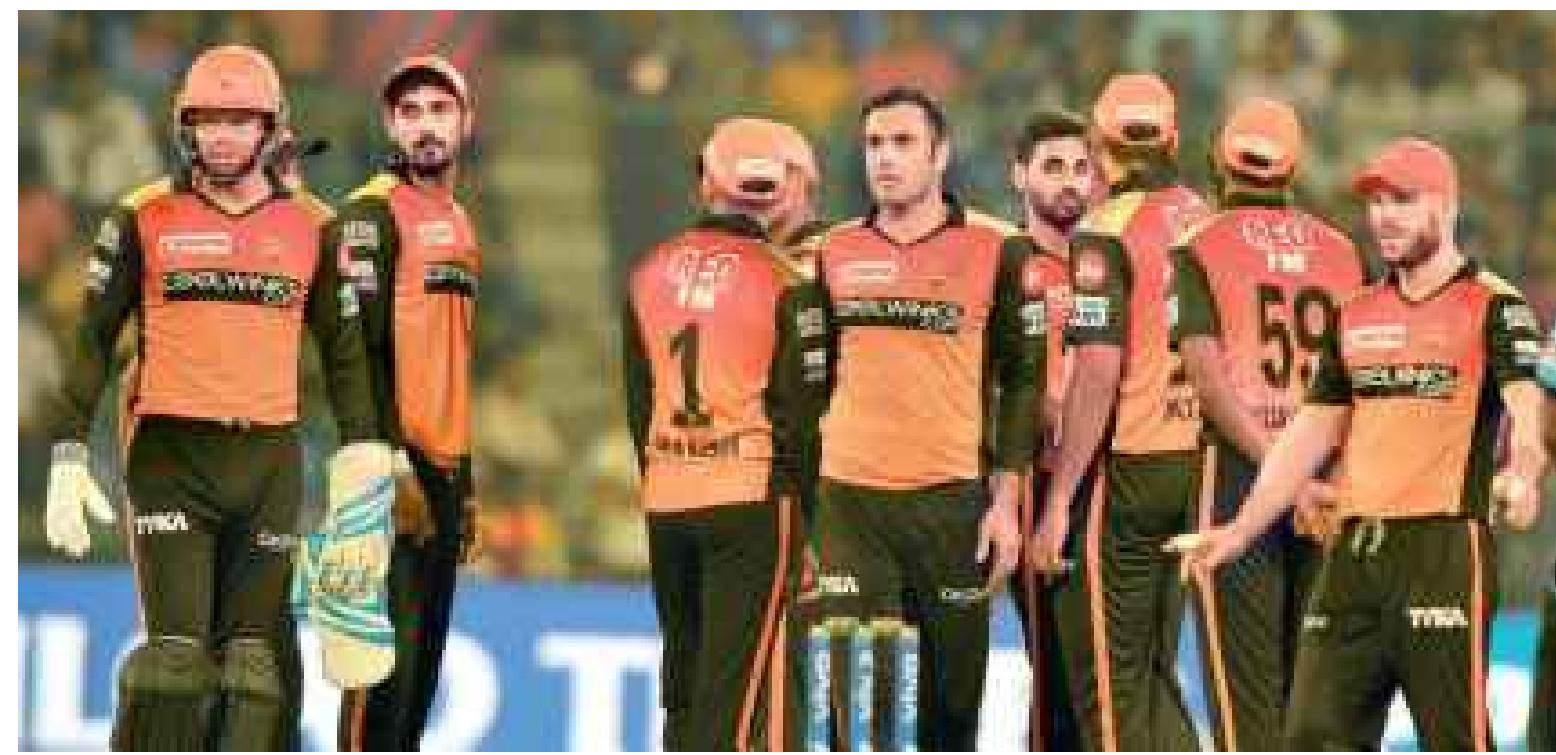
After poor stroke-selection spelt Delhi's doom, Jonny Bairstow threatened to almost single-handedly take Hyderabad home as it chased a modest target of 130.

In full flow

Bairstow and fellow-opener David Warner looked good to post a fourth successive century-stand after raising 62 in PowerPlay.

During this period, Bairstow smashed nine boundaries and a six by virtually monopolising the strike.

He was particularly severe, in varying degrees, on Sandeep Lamichhane, Chris Morris, Axar Patel and Kagiso Rabada between the third and sixth overs that pro-



Dominant display: The Sunrisers Hyderabad bowlers kept the Delhi Capitals batsmen on a leash, never allowing them to get away. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

duced 55 runs!

But off successive overs, Bairstow and Warner departed, thereby giving Delhi time to regroup. From 68 for two in eight overs, the target was far from intimidating and Hyderabad could afford to move to a lower gear to cover the remainder of the distance.

Manish Pandey, Vijay Shankar and Deepak Hooda reached double-digits but lost an opportunity to take their team to victory. It was left to Yusuf Pathan and Mohammad Nabi to finish the job.

Little goes right

Earlier, from the time Bhuv-

neshwar Kumar won the toss and Hyderabad opted to bowl, very little went right for the host.

Notwithstanding skipper Shreyas Iyer's painstaking 43, some 'nothing' shots from the Capitals top-order made the bowlers look more menacing.

Considering that the highest partnership was a run-a-ball 22 for the second wicket reflects Capitals' struggles with the bat.

After Prithvi Shaw started by hitting two boundaries of Bhuvneshwar's opening over, the bowler got back by uprooting the opener's off-stump in his second over. Thereafter, Capitals lost

wickets at regular intervals.

Left-handers Shikhar Dhawan, Rishabh Pant, Rahul Tewatia and Colin Ingram departed, without matching Shreyas' commitment. Capitals were left tottering at 75 for five in the 14th over.

Interestingly, off-spinner Mohammad Nabi, who bowled three overs in PowerPlay, was done with his bowling by the 10th over, getting the better of the aggressive intent of Dhawan and Pant.

Shreyas batted sensibly and stood firm amidst the ruins.

His valiant 41-ball knock gave the Delhi innings some respectability. After his departure in the 17th over, Axar

came up with a cameo as the last two overs produced 24 runs.

Innings scan

DC	Dots	SRH
50	9	48
9	4	14
4	36/2	2
36/2	62/0	6.45
	RR	7.08

Next assignment

SRH: April 6: vs MI
Hyderabad, 8 p.m.

DC: April 7: vs RCB,
Bengaluru, 4 p.m.

Bairstow and Warner keep rocking

Bhuvneshwar took his first wicket in six IPL games after drawing a blank in the previous three games in IPL-12 and last two in 2018

Warner and Bairstow are the second pair to string together four successive 50-plus partnerships after Warner & Dhawan (SRH, 2014)

174.09
The strike-rate of Bairstow and Warner in four innings (477 runs off 274 balls, including three century stands)

Sunrisers' PowerPlay scores

54/0 vs Knight Riders, Kolkata

69/0 vs Rajasthan Royals, Hyderabad

59/0 vs Royal Challengers, Hyderabad

62/0 vs Delhi Capitals, Delhi



No stopping this 'Express'

Is Pollard back in the swing?

G. VISWANATH
MUMBAI

The Indian pacers' workload might be closely monitored by the team management, but at the age of 35, Lasith Malinga played two matches inside 12 hours – a T20 match in India and a domestic 50-over game in Sri Lanka.

Malinga took three for 34 for MI in an IPL game against CSK that ended close to midnight on Wednesday. Early on Thursday, Malinga was on a flight from Mumbai to Colombo and from there travelled to Kandy to play Sri Lanka's domestic Super Four tournament, where he recorded career-best List A figures of seven for 49, respectively.

Galle beat Kandy by 156 runs and it was a vintage performance from Malinga, who got a bit of rest only when Galle batted first.

The sleep-deprived Malinga then rocked the Kandy line-up with figures of 9.5-0-49-7 with the opposition being led by another current international, Dimuth Karunaratne.

Malinga decided to play the provincial tournament despite SLC having allowed him to be available for IPL throughout April.



Malinga. ■ AP



Turnaround: After a poor season last year, Kieron Pollard appears to have found his touch. ■ AFP

tials. At a media interaction before the start of the Vivo-IPL-12, Zaheer said: "Pollard has played a very influential role as far as MI's success is concerned."

"Anyone who understands the game knows how difficult that position of batting is."

"A 20-run difference is huge in this format. Keeping that in mind, the value and

faith that we have shown in Pollard is going to be reciprocated. He recognises how critical his role will be in this IPL and we are looking forward to him making an impact."

This season he made 21 against Delhi Capitals in the first home match, and 5 and 7 against RCB and KXIP, but coming into bat at No. 7 on Wednesday, he and Hardik Pandya went after the CSK bowling to add 45 for the unbeaten sixth wicket and swung the momentum in their team's favour.

The West Indian has electrified the crowd at the Wankhede Stadium with some astounding catches in the deep – the one that he held to send back Suresh Raina was breathtaking.

As long as he takes such catches and tonks the ball at crucial stages, MI will be mighty pleased.

A desperate RCB will look to get off the blocks

Takes on KKR, which is in a far more comfortable situation

ASHWIN ACHAL
BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bangalore simply must figure out a way to get off the blocks and join the race. After four false starts this season, the team will be desperate to get the engines firing with a win over Kolkata Knight Riders here on Friday.

But it won't be easy, especially after the most recent insipid show that led to a seven-wicket loss to Rajasthan Royals on Tuesday.

Catches were dropped, a run-out was missed, and the batting was rusty.

Virat Kohli and his men have been left bereft of ideas and solutions to tackle a long list of problems. Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, whose eight wickets makes him the most successful bowler in the tournament, is the lone bright spot.

The side is yet to settle on a playing eleven, and going by recent trends, more changes are in order. Akshideep Nath and Marcus Stoinis were handed their first IPL caps of the season on Tuesday, while Kohli promoted himself as opener. The moves had little impact on the outcome on the match.

West Indian Shimron Hetmyer, a powerful hitter, slipped to a fourth-straight single digit score. Parthiv Patel held fort with a 41-ball 67, but found little support at the other end.

It is down to the star players – Kohli and A.B. de Villiers – to pull RCB out of this rut.

The West Indian's 159 runs have come at an incredible



Still finding their feet: Kohli and his men have been left bereft of solutions. ■ G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

A swashbuckling knock from either batter, or better still both, can provide the spark to kick-start a stuttering campaign. A Kohli or de Villiers masterclass will blow any opponent out of the water, while compensating for failings in other departments of the game.

KKR, with two wins in three outings, is in a far more comfortable position. The side has a fearsome batting line-up, boasting of the likes of Chris Lynn, Nitish Rana, Andre Russell, Robin Uthappa and Dinesh Karthik.

Experienced KKR leg-spinner Piyush Chawla, however, is not one to take RCB lightly.

"RCB may be four games

Today's match

ORANGE CAP

David Warner (SRH)

Matches: 3 | Runs: 264

HS: 174* | S/R: 161.09

PURPLE CAP

Yuzvendra Chahal (RCB)

Matches: 4 | Wickets: 8

BB: 4/38 | Econ.: 6.56

down, but that does not mean that they are down and out.

"With the quality of players that they have, they will surely bounce back and come hard at us," Chawla said.

Top of the charts

ORANGE CAP

David Warner (SRH)

Matches: 3 | Runs: 264

HS: 174* | S/R: 161.09

PURPLE CAP

Yuzvendra Chahal (RCB)

Matches: 4 | Wickets: 8

BB: 4/38 | Econ.: 6.56

*after the DC-SRH match on April 4

'Clear up grey areas of Mankading'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

England's Jos Buttler, who was recently 'Mankaded' by India off-spinner R. Ashwin in the IPL match between Rajasthan Royals and Kings XI Punjab, wants authorities to address the "wishes-washy" areas in the law dealing with the dismissal.

The incident triggered a debate with the cricket world divided and the custodians of the game MCC doing a flip-flop.

The MCC, at the outset,

said Ashwin did the correct thing only to change its statement next day with one of its representatives stating that "the pause was just too long and therefore not within the spirit of cricket."

"Of course 'Mankading' has to be in the Laws of the game because a batsman can't just run halfway down the pitch trying to get a head-start," Buttler told ESPNcricinfo.

"But I do think, the way the law is written, there is a bit of a grey area in that say-



Jos Buttler. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

If KXIP wins, Tye may do the 'shoey'

SPORTS BUREAU

It might not be the most hygienic thing in the world, but Kings XI Punjab's Andrew Tye wants to bring the 'shoey' to cricket if his side wins the IPL this year.

The 'shoey' is an Australian tradition of drinking champagne from the boots, quite popular in the world of motorsports, thanks to F1 driver Daniel Ricciardo and Moto GP rider Jack Miller.

'Shoey' is believed to have been started by the Mad Hueys, described as a bunch

boy, where I'm from..."

Speaking about Ricciardo, Tye added, "Some of the overtaking moves Ricciardo has done have been just incredible. I have briefly met him once but it was more of a fan moment asking for a selfie so that was it. I haven't had a proper chance to meet him."

"All the best to him this year in the new team. Going to be hard but can just hope he keeps fighting and keep the Honey Badger ruling supreme!"

CM YK

AN-NDE

TV PICKS

NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m.
Malaysia Open badminton: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Star Sports 3, 12.30 p.m.
IPL: Star Sports 1, 2 & Select 1 (SD & HD), 8 p.m.
Super Cup: Star Sports 3, 8.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Saturday).

IN BRIEF



Bayern survives scare in nine-goal thriller

Robert Lewandowski saved his team from a humiliating German Cup exit as Bayern Munich came from behind to beat second-tier Heidenheim in a 5-4 thriller on Wednesday. Bayern was 2-1 down at half-time having gone down to ten men early in the game, and threw away a two-goal lead in the second half. Yet Lewandowski's late winner ended a roller-coaster resistance from Heidenheim and sent Bayern into the semifinals. AFP



More fixing charges against Lokuhettige

DUBAI
Former Sri Lanka cricketer Dilhar Lokuhettige was on Thursday charged by the ICC with three counts of breaching the Anti-Corruption Code. The 38-year-old has been charged with offences related to match-fixing. These three counts are in addition to the charges imposed on him on behalf of the Emirates Cricket Board last year. Lokuhettige has 14 days from April 3 to respond to the new charges. ANI



Jokic shines as Nuggets rout Spurs

LOS ANGELES
Nikola Jokic was just one assist shy of a triple-double on Wednesday as he led Denver Nuggets to a 113-85 NBA blowout of San Antonio Spurs. Jokic scored 20 points, pulled down 11 rebounds and handed out nine assists. **The results:** LA Clippers 103 lost to Houston Rockets 135; Denver Nuggets 113 bt San Antonio Spurs 85. AFP

Indian football team rises to 101

NEW DELHI
The Indian football team gained two places to rise to 101 in the FIFA rankings issued on Thursday. With 1,219 ranking points, India lies 18th in Asia. Iran continues to top the Asian rankings at 21, followed by Japan (26), South Korea (37), Australia (41) and Qatar (55). PTI

IPL should not be criterion for WC selection, says Rohit

Lara wants West Indies to be more consistent; Jayawardene criticises Sri Lanka's preparation for the mega event

WORLD CUP

G. VISWANATH
MUMBAI

Performances in the Indian Premier League should not be the criterion for World Cup team selection, avers India ODI vice-captain Rohit Sharma.

At a panel discussion, featuring Kevin Pietersen, Brian Lara, Mahela Jayawardene and Smriti Mandhana, after the unveiling of website cricket.com, Rohit said: "The IPL should not be the criterion (World Cup team selection). We have played enough international cricket in the last four years to see where we stand."

"You cannot select a 50-over format team from a 20-over format tournament. IPL is a different ball game. That's my opinion," he said.

"We have pretty much a settled side for the World Cup. There are a few spots to be filled. It all depends on what the captain, coach and selectors think," he said.

Decisions on an extra



Star array: Rohit Sharma, Smriti Mandhana, Brian Lara, Mahela Jayawardene and Kevin Pietersen at the launch of cricket.com in Mumbai on Thursday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

seamer or spinner or middle-order or opening batsman would depend on the English conditions, he said.

West Indies legend Lara said: "The West Indies have match-winners, but that's not enough to play in English conditions and win the World Cup. We need a team that is consistent."

Meanwhile, former Sri Lanka captain Jayawardene said he was not sure if Sri Lanka

"Once they are in the knockouts, they can beat any team. We have (Chris) Gayle, Sunil Narine, (Andre) Russell, (Dwayne) Bravo, all playing the IPL."

Combination of errors

On whether politics or the selection process had gone wrong, Jayawardene said: "It's a combination of everything. You plan for the World Cup years ahead, at least 12 months before to know what your combina-

Cricket had made a genuine attempt to build a team for the World Cup.

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IN BRIEF



Johnson's message to stroke survivors

HONG KONG
US sprint champion Michael Johnson says he hopes to inspire fellow sufferers as he declared himself fully recovered from a stroke that paralysed him down one side last year. Johnson said he was now "back to normal" after the stroke in September which left the former 200m and 400m World-record holder unable to walk. The 51-year-old said the "Olympic mindset" that took him to four Games golds had aided his recovery, while his years of charity work helped put his plight in perspective. AFP



Match standards of new stadium: Pochettino

LONDON
Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino claimed his club is now "World Cup winners" in terms of facilities after opening its new stadium by beating Crystal Palace 2-0 on Wednesday. Pochettino underlined the need for what he believes is the "best stadium in the world" to have Champions League football next season before kick-off. He called on his players to perform to the level of the facilities on offer. AFP



Curry credits contact lenses for shooting surge

OAKLAND
Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry said on Wednesday that a decision to start wearing contact lenses has helped him reverse a dip in his shooting numbers. Before Curry began wearing contact lenses, his three-point shooting numbers had started to slump. He made only 51 of 135 three-point efforts in February, or 37.8%, compared to 41.1% a year earlier. However, Curry's percentage spiked in March, rising to 43.3%. AFP



Quickly done: It took just 32 minutes for K. Srikanth, right, to take out Khosit Phetpradab in the second round on Thursday. ■ AFP

Barty upbeat going into clay season

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Miami Open-winner Ashleigh Barty is confident she can "do some damage" in the upcoming clay season, and has hooked up with seven-time world surfing champion Stephanie Gilmore to gain inspiration.

The 22-year-old Australian cracked the world top-10 this week with her victory over Czech fifth seed Karolina Pliskova in the Miami final on Saturday.

It was a breakthrough title for the former Wimbledon junior champion as she became the first Australian woman since Sam Stosur in June 2013 to be ranked inside the top 10.

Now back on home soil, her focus is on this month's



Self-confidence: Ashleigh Barty believes she has as good a chance as anyone else in the French Open. ■ AP

Ponting backs Carey for World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY

Fed Cup semifinal in Brisbane against Belarus, although she is already thinking about the clay season leading up to the French Open.

"I think I have the game on clay to be able to do some damage, I just have to continue to learn how to use it properly," she said on Wednesday.

Chance to learn
"This clay-court season in particular is an opportunity to go out and learn more about myself on that surface."

With the WTA Tour seeing an incredible 14 different winners from 14 events so far this season, Barty knows she has as good a chance as anyone at the second Slam of the year at Roland Garros.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY

Alex Carey has been endorsed by Ricky Ponting to be Australia's wicketkeeper at the World Cup, with the team's batting coach also backing him as stand-in captain if Aaron Finch is injured.

The 27-year-old has enjoyed a rapid rise through the ranks with his calm demeanour and leadership qualities winning over the former skipper.

"Alex Carey offers the best package as 'keeper," Ponting, who played at five World Cups, told cricket.com.au when asked who he sees filling the role.

Chief selector Trevor Hohns recently mentioned Test skipper Tim Paine and the in-form Matthew Wade, as well Peter Handscomb, as other possible wicket-keeping options.

But Ponting believes Carey deserves the opportunity after his performances in Australia's recent eight-game winning streak. "He's dangerous at the top of the order or late in the innings because he does score 360 degrees, he's a deceptively hard hitter of the ball and for mine, he's just the right character, he's the right person that you want to have in your team."

SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

With the WTA Tour seeing an incredible 14 different winners from 14 events so far this season, Barty knows she has as good a chance as anyone at the second Slam of the year at Roland Garros.

Languishing out of the national team for big events like the Commonwealth and Asian Games, apart from the first World Cup of the season at home this year have been a hard experience, but Shahzad Rizvi is grateful for the lessons.

Happy to be back in the national team in air pistol, the 24-year-old Rizvi is keen to clinch the second Olympic quota for the country in the event.

"I missed Commonwealth Games because I was competing in one event and the national federation opted for Jitu Rai as he competes in more events. It hurt me at that time, but I knew it was the right decision. A string of low scores meant I missed the Asian Games. I was happy to compete in my second World Championship in Korea, but a score of 576 did not help," recalled Rizvi.

"I knew I had a lot of hard work to do, and had little time. I slipped in the rankings. I wanted to show myself that I could bounce back. Now that I am back in the team, I want to win the Olympic quota," said Rizvi, quite convinced that everything that happened in the season

not be a great score for me. But I told myself that if I can handle such a difficult situation well, I would be better prepared. I shot 588. It was my best match ever."

Back home, he had a string of fine scores in the trials that fetched him a berth in the national squad.

Srikanth in last eight

Sung Ji Hyun has the measure of Sindhu yet again

MALAYSIA OPEN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KUALA LUMPUR

K. Srikanth made it to the quarterfinals but an erratic P.V. Sindhu went down in straight games at the \$750,000 Malaysia Open here on Thursday.

Eighth-seeded Srikanth, who had reached the final of a BWF World Tour event after 17 months at the India Open last week, defeated Thailand's Khosit Phetpradab 21-11, 21-15 in little over half an hour (32 minutes) to set up a meeting with Olympic champion and four-time world champion Chen Long of China.

Fifth seed Sindhu blew a 13-10 advantage in the opening game to go down rather meekly 21-18, 21-7 to World

No. 10 Sung Ji Hyun for her third straight defeat to the Korean.

Early lead

Srikanth opened up a 6-2 lead early on and then jumped to a 14-6 advantage.

The Indian continued to dominate the proceedings to pocket the opening game. Nothing changed in the second with Srikanth marching ahead early and holding his fort to comfortably shut out the match.

In the women's singles match, Sindhu, after some good rallies, enjoyed a 8-5 lead before Sung drew level.

The Indian again managed to hold a 11-9 lead but after the interval, Sung erased the deficit and grabbed a 16-14 lead thanks to Sindhu's two misjudged shots.

A backhand aimed at the body helped Sung to move up to 19-16.

Sindhu then misjudged the shuttle twice at the back-line, to hand the opening game to her rival.

Sung Ji raced to a 5-0 lead early on before moving to 10-5. A precise down-the-line return helped her grab a 11-6 advantage at the break.

It was a one-way traffic after the breather as the Korean took 10 of the next 11 points as Sindhu made some uncharacteristic mistakes.

The results (second round):
Men: Men: K. Srikanth bt Khosit Phetpradab (Tha) 21-11, 21-15.

Women: Sung Ji Hyun (Kor) bt P.V. Sindhu 21-18, 21-7.

Mixed doubles: Kiang Meng Tan & Pei Jing Lai (Mas) bt Pranaav Jerry Chopra & Sikki N. Reddy 15-21, 21-17, 21-13.

Rotation inevitable during Ashes: Hazlewood

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Australian pace spearhead Josh Hazlewood has foreshadowed bowler rotations during this year's Ashes series, saying the tight schedule will make it "near impossible" for the top quicks to play every Test.

The team will face Joe Root's England in five Tests in less than seven weeks, immediately after the ODI World Cup.

Hazlewood said the workload meant the chances of himself, Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins playing every Test was slim.

"The last four Tests are back-to-back," Hazlewood told Cricket Australia's *The Unplayable Podcast* on Thursday. "I think it's going to be near impossible for any quicks to play all five with it being such a tight schedule."

Not ideal

Hazlewood, who has been sidelined since January with a back injury but is confident of being fit for the World Cup, admitted a long period of short-format cricket leading up the five-day Ashes Tests was not ideal.

Rizvi ready to strike Olympic quota

Says he owes a lot to coach Pavel Smirnov for the guidance

SHOOTING

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Bang on target: Rizvi had a string of fine scores in the trials that fetched him a berth in the national squad. ■ FILE PHOTO

last year, the World Cup gold and silver medals, the World record, apart from the lows, were meant to strengthen his pursuit of excellence.

Exemplary performance

The key to the return was the exemplary performance in the Netherlands when Rizvi gave himself two international competitions to speed up his case.

"I had shot 580 in Inter-shoot in one match in February. The next day, I was having fever and cough. I missed the bus to the range in the morning. I decided to walk about 3km to the range, and reached in time for the competition. I thought that it may

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Censor panel data during golden age of world cinema goes online

Records reveal why some films were either cut or never released in India

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

In the mid-1920s, *The Volga Boatman*, an American silent film produced and directed by the legendary Cecil B. DeMille was refused certification and prohibited from being screened in India by the Bombay Board of Film Censors for its unrelentingly negative portrayal of the October 1917 Revolution in Russia.

DeMille's film, which made American actor William Boyd an overnight star, was refused clearance on the grounds that it portrayed the revolution as full of class-hatred, violence, degrading lust and brutality.

This nugget, and many more, pertaining to films across the globe and the early era of India's nascent film industry are now available online, with the National Film Archives of India (NFAI) digitising old censor records of films released between the 1920s and the 1950s – the Golden Age of world cinema.

"The Censor records in our NFAI vaults run up to



Document showing censor panel data on films released in India between the 1920s and the 1950s. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

2,500 pages and contain fascinating nuggets about the films and the problems some of them encountered with the Censor board. They can act as a valuable historical record for aficionados of world cinema and the early age of the Indian film industry," Prakash Magdum, Director, NFAI, told *The Hindu*.

These records, published as Bombay and Bengal Government Gazettes from 1920 to 1950, give information on the name of the film examined, number of reels, length of film, name of company or person producing the film, country of origin and endorsement particulars, among other details.

Texts and sub-texts

The records detail an incident involving another famous silent film, the 1924 historical drama titled *Poona Raided*, made by Deccan Pictures Corporation and directed by the renowned playwright B.V. Varerkar. In this film, which details

King Shivaji's lightning raid on Poona to dislodge the occupancy of Mughal Commander Shaista Khan, a particular scene was cut and then passed by the then Bombay Board of Film Censors.

According to film historians, the Censor board probably considered the scene in *Poona Raided*, in which Shaista Khan pays obeisance to the crescent moon which then morphs into King Shivaji, as an anti-imperialist metaphor (with Shaista Khan standing in for the British conquerors and Shivaji as the deliverer), drawing parallels with the struggle for India's Independence.

According to the Censor records available with the NFAI, *Poona Raided* was certified on 15 August, 1924, with a recommendation to cut the scene in reel number 7. "Such priceless pieces of information can be of inestimable value to researchers and film historians. Hence, our objective to digitise these records and put them up online," Mr. Magdum said.

Time to push for a sustainable food system, say scientists

EAT-Lancet Commission releases report on healthy diet



Taxes on unhealthy foods, subsidies for healthier food options needed

LAWRENCE HADDAD
Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
"The way we are producing food today is causing increased emission of greenhouse gases, depleting fresh water supply, compromising land use, exhausting the nitrogen and phosphorous cycle, and endangering biodiversity," said K. Srinath Reddy, one of the two Indian commissioners on the EAT-Lancet Commission, and president, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), at the release of the EAT-Lancet Commission's report here on Thursday.

In his video-recorded message, Dr. Reddy stressed, "We need to find a safe space to provide food security to everyone by 2050."

International panel
The report, authored by 37 international experts, including two from India, has been put together by EAT, the science-based global platform for food system transformation, and the journal *The Lancet*.

The EAT-Lancet Commission's report, for the first

tive officer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India. Presenting the EAT-Lancet Commission report, Brent Loken of EAT, said: "If we don't fix the food system, we cannot achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The great thing that FSSAI is doing is beginning this conversation in India."

People's movements

Presenting some key steps required for the 'great food transformation', Lawrence Haddad, executive director, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), a global initiative launched by the United Nations in 2012, said: "Taxes on unhealthy foods, subsidies for healthier food options, strong leadership in the public and private sectors and strong civil society movements, is the need of the hour."

Highlighting the importance of food safety, he cautioned: "As food systems become more formal and organised, food safety threats increase, not decrease. FSSAI has brought the worlds of food safety and healthy eating together."

Cats know their names: study

Study shows that they respond to unfamiliar voices too

known for centuries, much less is understood about how cats react to spoken cues.

Japanese researchers studied 78 cats from households and a cat cafe and found most were able to recognise their own names from other words that had the same length and stress –

even when an unfamiliar person was speaking.

"They seem to associate their name to some rewards or punishments. This is a natural and general learning ability in animals," said Atsuko Saito, a researcher from Sophia University and lead author of the study published in *Scientific Reports*.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Cats are able to distinguish their own names from other similar-sounding words, even when said by strangers, according to research released on Thursday.

While dogs' ability to respond to verbal commands from humans has been

known for centuries, much less is understood about how cats react to spoken cues.

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CII recognises exemplary women

Every year, awards are given to those who have made a change at the grassroots

PRAKASH KAMAT
PANAJI

The CII Woman Exemplar Awards for 2019 have been awarded to Bhimavva Chalwadi (education sector), Vanlalruati (health sector) and Nilima Tiggia (microentrepreneurship).

Ms. Chalwadi is a rescued Devdasi from Goa presently working for Goa-based ARZ (Anyay Aahit Zindagi), an NGO working for the rehabilitation of trafficked women and children. She has worked with adolescent girls at risk of being trafficked and



Bhimavva Chalwadi, Nilima Tiggia and Vanlalruati.

also with self-help groups in vulnerable areas.

The awardees received cash prizes and a trophy, from Suresh Prabhu, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, at a programme organised by the CII on Thursday in New Delhi. The CII will also offer them mentor-

ing and leadership training for a year.

This year, the Woman Exemplar Program received 289 nominations from across 24 States and a Union Territory.

After a rigorous five-step selection process, 15 finalists were shortlisted, each of whom has emerged from the most marginalised communities of the country. They have overcome deep social and economic exclusion to transform their own lives and their communities, the CII said.

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By Rohit Lodha

STARTS 21 June 2019

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By Ashutosh Pandey

STARTS 24 June 2019

Political Science

By Dr. Piyush Choubey

STARTS 25 June 2019

History

By Piyush Kumar

STARTS 26 June 2019

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FRIDAY REVIEW

Robust voice

Kalapini Komkali on her rich lineage and why one should be open to making mistakes

Pages 6&7



■ PREETI MANN

INSIDE



Hit by the Beatle mania
Two songs about the Moptops that created quite a sensation **P4**



The aesthetics of everyday objects
Serendipity is the philosophy that artist Kavita Issar-Batra works and lives by **P8**



The making of Pandit Jasraj
The stalwart on bhakti element in his singing and his association with V.Shantaram **P9**

TIME OUT



Sharada Mushti will present a Rudra Veena recital

INDIA HABITAT CENTRE

APRIL 5

AMALTAS HALL

An evening of Dhrupad and Khayal. Rudra veena recital by Sharada Mushti, accompanied by Sukhad Munde on pakhawaj. Vocal recital by Manu Srivastava accompanied by Pt. Bharat Bhushan Goswami on sarangi and Akhtar Hassan on tabla.

THE STEIN AUDITORIUM

Budding Italian Film Directors' Festival: Screening of Italian film, Per un figlio, directed by Suranga Deshapriya Katugampala.

CONVENTION CENTRE FOYER

Inspiring Nature - Shades of emotions, a solo exhibition by Rajeev Semwal.

OPEN PALM COURT GALLERY

Faith & Fantasy 7th, a group art exhibition by various artists.

INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

APRIL 5

C.D. DESHMUKH AUDITORIUM

The Latin Guitar: Guitar music from Spain and Latin America, a classical guitar recital by Santanu Datta.

The artist will present a programme of works by Leo Brouwer; Emilio Pujol; Francisco Tárrega; Heitor Villa-Lobos; Isaac Albéniz and Joaquín Turina.



Ankita Joshi

INDIA HABITAT CENTRE

APRIL 6

AMALTAS HALL

Soulful ghazals and old film melodies will be rendered by Venkatraman Ramachandran

CONVENTION CENTRE FOYER

Navya Naveli, A group exhibition by Anjana Guleria, Anjali Sharma and Ramonkar

OPEN PALM COURT GALLERY

Aagaaz, a group paintings and sculpture exhibition by various artists.

THE STEIN AUDITORIUM

Screening of Hindi film Andhadhun, directed by Sriram Raghavan.

INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

APRIL 6

C.D. DESHMUKH AUDITORIUM

Hindustani vocal recital by Ankita Joshi from Mumbai, a disciple of Sangeet Martand Pandit Jasraj. She will sing in accompaniment with Abhinav Ravande on harmonium and Ramkrishna Karmelkar on tabla.

Tapping the inner space

Kamalini Dutt's "Rangon'taratma" interpreted the concept of Kashmir Shaivism through Bharatanatyam and Kathak

RANEE KUMAR

Conceptualised and choreographed by guru Kamalini Dutt, "Rangon'taratma" was set across three time-spaces. The dance presentation was preceded by a talk on the concept of Kashmir Shaivism by scholar Dr. Advaitavadini Kaul. Her talk centred on the origin, tenets and applicability to classical dance which is but a metaphor for spiritual sadhana. And the performance was followed by an interactive (Q&A) session, a couple of days later, to voice doubts, delineate and delve into what was presented on stage.

Trying to translate an abstract philosophy like Kashmir Shaivism (Trika) into dance on stage is not an easy task. The choreographer left nothing to chance. The aesthetic visual multimedia backdrop enhanced the production while the prefacing for every piece by Dr. Arshiya Sethi enriched the viewers' understanding of the subject. Surprisingly, the entire performance went on without using the term 'Trika' even once.

If Shakespeare stated, 'All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players, Trika school of thought goes a step further - from the external to the internal. It finds the stage within the human consciousness where the dance of life reaches its consummation. Human endeavour should be to this end. In dance parlance, the Natya Shastra calls this stage of emotional fulfil-



Trying to translate an abstract philosophy like Kashmir Shaivism (Trika) into dance on stage is not an easy task. Kamalini Dutt left nothing to chance



Raising the bar (From left) Divya Goswami Dixit, Hemant Kumar Kalita, S. Vasudevan Iyengar and Purvadhanashri ■ SANJAY KOUL

ment as 'rasa'. The rasa has to be churned by the dancer through her/his performance and this churning can happen only when the artiste moves inwards into that invisible stage space within her/himself.

Shiva's attributes

To this end, "Rangon'taratma" (stage within oneself) interpreted the philosophy through two streams of dance - Bharatanatyam and Kathak. The compositions chosen were also relevant to the theme and the dance form and followed a pattern of evolution from sound (naada) to bindu (centre sphere) and kala (expression).

Only two songs (Suryakanth Tripati Nirala and Subramanya Bharati) and a verse were found to be redundant to this critic, as also time-consuming. These were to indicate the flow and universality of this spiritual thought into modern times but then that doesn't need a tangible proof. So did the choice of 'Shive shringarardha...' (51 verse from Saundarya Lahari) to illustrate Trika's influence on Adi Sankara. It went a little contradictory to Trika school of thought that doesn't envisage Shiva and Shakti as two different entities. The 34th verse would have aptly summed up the imagery of this spiritual system. The alarippu, in two styles simultaneously, was impressive.

Purvadhanashri took up 'Naada tanum anisham Shankaram' in Chittaranjani raga, to elucidate the source of

sound (naada) from which creation took place. Her flourishing nritta to mnemonics to emulate Shiva's manifest attributes was stunning. The interspersing of Vedic verses to elaborate on the five fiery aspects of Shiva and deciphering it through dance was a brilliant piece of creativity. And the unification of Shiva-Shakti as 'Abheeda' (no distinction) where S. Vasudevan Iyengar joins her back to back rotating conjured up the image of unending time and cycle of creation.

The 'Bindu' is supposed to emerge from 'Naada' and withdraw into a dot centred in the macro-cosmic individual self. Vasudevan, in his inimitable dance, virtually recreated the concept of Shakti the creative principle as envisaged in the 'sri chakra' (esoteric energy path) through Dikshitar's composition 'Kanakambari'. The song was an apt choice as the raga is the first in the list of Melakarta chart (in Indu chakra) and the lyric is on mother goddess, the primordial creation. The artiste was alacrity and agility personified recreating in diverse ways, the goddess who resides in the trylokyam mohana chakra which resounds with the mantra syllable 'hum'. It was evident that he worked on his lasya movements with care that it showcased the feminine without being effeminate. His abhinaya of the Devi opening her tresses to do them and tucking the crescent moon to one side of her

hairdo was a superb piece of artistry.

So far it was abstract going into concrete and with Kathak came the abstract within abstract, viz. perceptible and imperceptible time. Divya Goswami Dixit's footwork modulations and her ethereal dance with her gesticulations established the Sankhya philosophical thought where Prakrti strides across the Panchabhoota (five elements that are vital to life), vested with seven colours, spawning the seven matruka (mothers) and straddles across seven worlds - the dancer breathed life into these concepts with her virtuosity.

Artistic touch

Hemant Kumar Kalita encased the entire thought into a nutshell with the lines, 'tum tum nahin, main main nahin..' and the Bhairava sthay was as pulsating as it indicates that the universe is forever throbbing (spanda). To Kalita's credit, it must be said that he denoted this absolutely abstract inference a concrete picture with his footwork and chakkars. The Tarana was an aesthetic yet intense finale where the 'rasa' is shown to culminate through the four dancers into the inner chambers of our being.

The overlapping of Sankhya school and southern Saiva siddanta with Trika was perhaps to give more definition to the presentation which was put up by Anugraham classical art community at Kamani auditorium.

A spring of melodies

The stalwarts of Indian classical music enthralled the music loving city of Indore at the annual Saanghi Smriti Sangeet Samaroh

MANJARI SINHA

The Indore chapter of INTACH organised Saanghi Smriti Sangeet Samaroh, the much-awaited annual music festival of the music loving city, celebrating the memory of Sohanlal Saanghi, known for his love and patronage to music which is sustained by Sharat Sanghi and his family till date. The festival is held in the spring season every year for nearly half-a-century and has presented almost all the stalwarts of the bygone era. This year, it spanned vocal and instrumental music from traditional dhrupad gayaki by Pt. Uday Bhawalkar and sitar by Ud. Shujat Hussain Khan, the scion of Imdadkhani gharana on the inaugural evening to the scintillating santoor by Pt. Tarun Bhattacharya and a sumptuous variety encompassing khayal to thumri, dadra, chaiti, hori to folk songs redolent with the authentic flavour of Purab Ang Gayaki by Vidushi Malini Awasthi on the second evening.

Pt. Uday Bhawalkar, one of the most sought after dhrupadias of the present generation is a true representative of Dagar Bani. He was groomed under the able guidance of Ud. Ziya Mohiuddin Dagar and Ud. Ziya Fariduddin Dagar in the authentic Guru Shishya Parampara for decades on end. This was evident right from his selection of a raga like chhayanan to the form dhamar and also the bandish (composition) "lachkat aave gori, abir gulal ki bhar bhar jhori..." keeping in mind the spring season and the festival of co-

lours. His detailed alaap reminded that dhrupad is a matter of architecture, spacious, aspiring and formal. It explores the inner space of the raga's universe and is radically different from the spirit of khayal.

His leisurely alaap embellished with portamento that spanned sometimes an octave or more, was joined later with Pakhawaj by Pratap Avad. The hori dhamar set to dhamar tala of 14-beat cycle, had his rhythmic play with the tala as if imitating the "Lachkat chaal", the liting gait of the delicate 'Gori', described in the composition.

The following Basant composition "Bhanwara phuli ban-saghan belariya...." in Sool-tala, was dealt as a poetic depiction of nature's bounty in the spring season. Pt. Uday Bhawalkar concluded his dhrupad recital with a beautiful composition in Tilang that went "Sur sangat so gave, tabahi rij-have..." set to Sooltala. The Pakhawaj under the nimble fingers of Pratap Avad enhanced the serene effect of the dhrupad rendering.

Ud. Shujaat Khan nostalgically remembered Ud. Amir Khan of Indore and confessed that Khan Saheb's music had the most profound impact on him after the taalim he received from his own father and Guru Ustad Vilayat Khan. He also mentioned that his great grandfather came from Etawah and settled in this place, hence coming here is like a pilgrimage for him. Keeping in mind the discerning listeners of this city, he offered one of his most memorable renderings of raga Jhinj-

hoti this evening. Even before opening the alaap, he created a magical image of the raga by just strumming the 'Tarab ke taar', the resonating wires underneath the main strings. The detailed alaap embellished by his sensitive touch, lightness of stroke and the tender meends of many 'sur' in one go, created the romantic aura of the raga, before he proceeded to the jod and jhala sections underlining the invisible 'laya' with different Chhand of four and eight beats, intoxicating the listeners with the beauty of rhythm. His leisurely elaboration of the spacious raga during just Alaap-Jod Jhala lasted for nearly an hour before he played the Masitkhani and the Drut gat accompanied by Amit Chaube and Ramendra Singh Solanki on either side. Shujaat gave them ample opportunity to show their individual talent as well.

This was perhaps one of the most satisfying concerts Ud. Shujaat Khan has given in recent times that proved his rich inheritance in full abundance, despite the lighter vein of ghazals and more he had to sing and play on demand from the poetry of Hazrat Amir Khusro to the 'Vaishnav jan' of Narsi Mehta.

Raga as a tribute

Pt. Tarun Bhattacharya opened the next evening with his santoor recital accompanied on tabla by Jyotirmoy Roy Chowdhury. A brilliant Santoor player of Maihar Gharana, Tarun obviously chose raga Janamsammohini created by Pt. Ravi Shankar as a tribute to him. He has devised his santoor for executing meend, but whenever he reached Pancham the volume would go higher.

Tarun is brilliant in the technical aspect but his focus sounds more towards the rhythm. Jyotirmoy on tabla enjoyed reciprocating him, especially in the sawal-jawab sequence. Pt. Tarun Bhattacharya concluded his vibrant recital with a Bhathiyal Dhun.

Malini Awasthi reached the two-day festival to its climax with her vocal recital, making an instant rapport with the enthusiastic audience. Opening with a Chhota Khayal in Bhupali as an invocation of Lord Shiva, the presiding deity of Omkareshwara and Mahakal; she regaled the audience with a slew of selection from thumri, dadra, chaiti, hori and the folk songs of the Gangetic belt explaining their nuances.

The delicate touches of Pt. Dharmnath Mishra on harmonium and the brilliant Banarasi Laggi of Ram Kumar Mishra on tabla enhanced her recital with full gusto. Sanjay Narhari Patel did an admirable job of an anchor.



Nostalgic notes Ustad Shujaat Khan

Detailed and delightful

The celebrated Malladi Brothers impressed with their rendition of Tyagaraja's compositions



In harmony Malladi Brothers in performance

VENKATESAN SRIKANTH

That the celebrated legendary saint composer Tyagaraja has captured a special place in the hearts of Delhiites once again came to the fore when yet another 'big ticket' music organisation of the capital, the Karnataka Sangeetha Sabha recently arranged a two-day music and dance festival in Delhi in association with the government of Andhra Pradesh and the Tirumalai Tirupathi Devasthanams. The festival was titled "Dilliyl Thiruvaiyar" and was held at the Dhyana-mandir auditorium of Tirupati Balaji Temple, Gole Market.

On the second day of the festival, Malladi Sreeramprasad and Malladi Ravikumar, popularly known as the "Malladi Brothers", delighted the music lovers for close to two-and-a-half hours. The Vijayawada-based Malladi brothers are known for possessing a vast repertoire of Tyagaraja kritis. The choice of the artistes for the festival seemed to be a well thought out one and the vibrant manner in which the brothers sang did add glitter to the festivity in the capital.

The brothers opened their concert with the Saint's composition "Janaki Ramana" in the raga Sudhaseemantini in a delightful manner. The information that the elder sibling, Sreeramprasad gave about this raga soon after presenting the song was informative. In particular, the information that the only song available in this raga has been composed by Tyagaraja was music to ears.

Tyagaraja's "Raghu vara nannu" in Pantuvarali not only came in for a detailed rendition in the concert, but the brothers handled the song in a delightful manner and brought out the lyrical values of the composition to the fore. Earlier, the younger sibling Ravikumar sang a scintillating alpana of the raga. The siblings' musical depth also came to fore when they presented the neraval (the pallavi portion itself was taken up for this purpose) and subsequent swaraprastharas.

Tyagaraja's fast-paced "Sarasa sama dana" in Kapi narayani was lively and gave a fillip to the concert. The central item of the brothers' concert was a Ragam-Taanam-Pallavi. The verses of Tyagaraja itself "Rama Ni Samanamevaru Raghu Vamsoddharaka" in Kharaharapriya was taken up as the pallavi which was set to Tisra jati triputa tala. The siblings sang the taanam in turns in a delightful manner and executed the technicalities in singing pallavi brilliantly. However, the break-neck speed with which the elder sibling Sreeramprasad sang the raga alpana was disappointing, though even in this brief alpana the vocalist brought out the nuances of the raga in a fitting manner. One also did not understand the need for the percussion accompaniment for the tanam which was more of a hindrance rather than embellishment. Nevertheless, the ragamallika kalpanaswaras towards the end was enjoyable.

Nishant Chandran on the violin played extremely well. So did Tumkur B. Ravishankar on the mridangam. Chandran's take on ragas Pantuvarali and Kharaharapriya and the ragamallika swaras were delightful. The tani avartanam that Ravishankar played with Elathur N. Harinarayanan (ghatam), was enjoyable, though Harinarayanan was found wanting at times. On the whole, a concert that pepped up the ongoing festivity in the capital.

Resonance

One sound, many names

Commonly referred to as Nagara, the percussion instrument is played at temple processions

DR. M. LALITHA AND M. NANDINI



We were in Kanchipuram Kamakshi temple for the Brahmotsavam. The goddess, in Mohini alankaram, was taken around the streets in a golden palanquin, to the accompaniment of rhythmic beats from a huge drum, known as nagara or kettle drum.

These drums, also called Timpani, are used in different musical cultures. Saul Goodman in his 'Modern Method for Tympanim,' mentions the first recorded use of early Tympanum by the Hebrews during religious ceremonies.

Seaman Christopher and Richards Michael in the *Inside Conducting* mention that in 1457 a Hungarian legation sent by King Ladislaus V carried larger Timpani mounted on horseback to the court of King Charles VII in France. And in the Mughal Empire, kettle drums were placed on the camel back and played. There are also references about its use along with trumpets as ceremonial instruments in the cavalry during the 15th century. By the end of the 18th century, Timpani, from being just a military drum became a part of classical orchestra.

In India different types of kettle drums are used, of which nagara is used in temple rituals, folk festivals and weddings. It belongs to the category of the Avanaddha Vadyas/membranophone/percussion instruments. They are further classified under the sub-category of single-faced drums.

About 1-2 ft in diameter, it is played with two curved sticks. It is usually made of copper, brass or sheet iron and a hide is stretched over the bowl-shaped hollow body, covering the hoops of metal. These are then stretched by ropes or leather thongs.

C.R. Day in his book, *The Music and Musical Instruments of Southern India and the Deccan*, mentions that Nagara, sometimes called as Bheri or Nakker, are played at temple processions.

The instrument is usually placed on a two-wheeled carriage or a bullock cart that follows the procession of the deity. The drum is played by the person sitting in the carriage.

For special occasions

Day also mentions that in the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranas, this instrument is called Dundhubi. The bigger varieties of this instrument, according to Day, were used in battles. The catalogue of the Government museum, Chennai, mentions that the battle drum was played to announce the victory or defeat of a ruler or an army.

Nagara plays a significant role in temples across South India. In Kumarakottam, this instrument used to be

played during the Kandha Sashti festival, though not anymore. But now it is not in vogue.

During the 12-day Brahmotsavam at the Varadarajar temple, Kanchipuram, it is played before the deity is taken out in a procession. This drum is also played during pavitrotsavam, when Nagara is played, when the performers sit and play in the mandapam on all seven days of the utsavam.

At the Kanchi Kamakoti math, Nagara is played during *neivedyam* and *deeparadanai*. The instrument accompanies the Mutt Heads during their yatra to various places. Once performed regularly at the temples in Kanchipuram – mainly Sri Kamakshi Amman, Ekambareswarar, Kumarakottam, Sonna Vannam Seidha Perumal and Vilakodi Divya Prakasar – the instrument is not being used much now. Nagaras is not being used in Though in temples such as Kachapeswarar and Ulagalandha Perumal, it is preserved for reference.

At Atcheswarar temple, Achirappakkam, Nagara was performed during the *veedhi ulla*. A.N. Dakshinamurthy, who plays the nagaswaram at the temple says that Nagara was played by mounting it on a cow. It was played during utsavams at the Jnanapureeswarar temple in Tiruvadisoolam.

At the Nellaiappar temple in Tirunelveli, Nagara is still played during temple rituals. Yegnanarayan, former EO of the temple, says that Nagara was played in the Nagara mandapam mainly to announce the opening of the temple and before the *mudal kalam* puja. Now it is played in the amman *sannadhi* during the Tiruvandal/Tirupalliezhuchi. Similar kettle drums of larger size, usually about 5 ft in diameter, known as Maha Nagara or Nakabet were used in bands in the palaces of Mahomedan nobles in South India.

A variety of this drum called Dhumsa is used in Chhau, a martial, tribal and folk dance form.

Day mentions that a semi-spherical form of Nagara called Karadisamda is used in Lingayat temples. A smaller kettle drum known as Tam Tam is found in almost every street throughout India.

The writers are well-known Carnatic violinists

**The West Wind**

High five to The Beatles

This week 55 years ago, when it created a Billboard Hot 100 record, two songs about the British group caused some excitement on the air waves

PRINCE FREDERICK



In 1964, West Indies almost filled up the coveted Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year list, with four of its players – Sir Gary Sobers, Rohan Kanhai, Sir Conrad Hunte and Charlie Griffith – figuring in it. Four-out-of-five is anytime enough proof of world dominance. But in the summer of 1964, that was not good enough.

If 5-lists across pursuits were compared, that was not the most spectacular list of the year.

The world of music provided it, with The Beatles garnering the top five positions on Billboard's Hot 100 in the week starting April 4, 1964.

In that year, everything clicked into place for the phenomenal British band. They made their first tour of America, and wherever they went, reining in delirious teenage fans, mostly girls, proved quite a handful for organisers. To see the surrealism and magic of the adulation they enjoyed, you should probably watch Ron Howard's documentary *The Beatles: Eight Days A Week - The Touring Years*.

And the top five – 'Can't

Buy Me Love', 'Twist and Shout', 'She Loves You', 'I want to Hold Your Hand', and 'Please Please Me' – seemed like official confirmation that Beatlemania is a 'pandemic'.

Continued dominance

In *The Ultimate Beatles Encyclopedia*, Bill Harry writes that The Beatles dominated the whole of Billboard Hot 100, then. Soon after achieving the top-five, a record that still stands, The Beatles had 14 of their singles in the Billboard Hot 100, Harry points out.

However, the greatest proof of dominance came from the fact that two other songs on Billboard's Hot 100 were there simply on account of what they had to say about the mop-tops. One was a syrupy fan song, and the other came with barbs attached to it.

We Love You Beatles offered by The Carefrees seemed to reinforce images of what was happening at that time – mail by the tonnes from female fans of the 'fabulous four'.

The simple pop song was largely written in the form of a fan mail, and sung by the female vocalists of The Carefrees. It begins with delirious cries reminiscent of female

fans at Beatle concerts, and ends in the same manner. The song has a paragraph dedicated to each of the four Beatles.

A Letter To The Beatles by The Four Preps, an American band, seemed to offer a counter-offensive to the song that eulogised the mop-tops. It's about a man singing about his Beatle-stricken girlfriend, who wrote a letter to "a singing group from England far away".

The song has a pastiche of the main tune-line from The Beatles' *I Want to Hold Your Hand* to express American girl's love for the British band.

And then, the deadly lines:

"Beatles, I'd give you anything/ All of my true love"/ But they wrote a letter back to her/ Sayin' that ain't enough/ You gotta send us twenty-five cents/ For an autographed picture/ One dollar bill for a fan club card/ And if you send in right away/ You get a lock of hair from our St. Bernard.

This song did not survive the Beatlemania of those times. Music history has it that it was scraped by The Four Preps' record label Capitol Records, and the band had to be content having it as a part of a compilation work.

Rising Star

Expanding his artistic horizons

Kieran Heralall on his artistry that is a result of multiple cultural influences

LAVANYA NARAYANAN

"I was in the middle of a career change, to be honest," Kieran Heralall laughs, explaining his current stint in Chennai that has him working with mentor Sheejith Krishna and his Sahridaya Foundation under the auspices of the Canada Council for the Arts' Mentorship Grant.

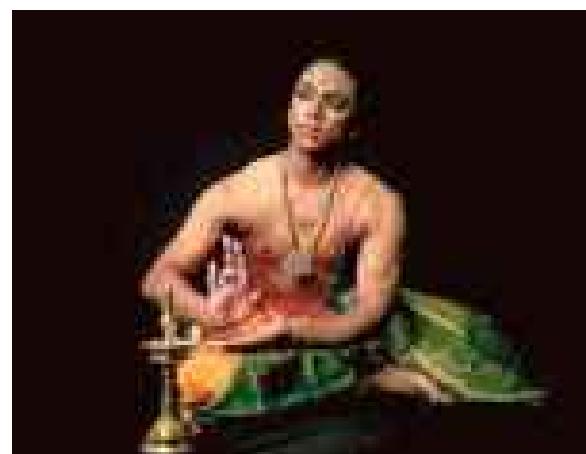
Trained under the illustrious Kalakshetra tradition, Kieran's one of the many NRIs taking time out to further hone his skills in the city. A product of a multitude of art forms, from Bharatanatyam and Carnatic music to Afro-Caribbean dance, he says, what holds it all together is his love of the arts.

Multiple schools

A product of multiple schools and gurus in Vancouver, his hometown, it was there, under his current guru, that Kieran unearthed the identity that he goes by on stage and in the arts community today: Kanna.

"When I met my guru, Malini Pararajasingham, she called me 'kanna.' A common term of endearment, of course, but she would introduce me so and I chose to use it as a tribute to her, with my initials KH as the prefix," he says.

He's dabbled with myriad styles, from dancehall and hip-hop to salsa and folk, even working with film choreographer Vaibhavi Merchant and participating in the 2010 Winter



Olympics. And yet, there's a penchant for the classical arts, one that he says has given him the ability to handle other forms over the years.

"Bharatanatyam has given me an acute awareness of the body and its capabilities. I owe the strong core that I have today to it completely." His versatility, possibly a result of the many collaborations he's been part of, has helped him identify his strengths. "But I ensure that I don't mix the forms. It's not fusion I am attempting. I just love to add to my movement vocabulary."

Supplementing his dance training with lessons in Carnatic music from Arun Gopinath, there's an effort to, as he puts it, "better myself as an artiste, simply by learning the technicalities of the art form."

And yet, as he forays into what he calls the "unknown," he feels the need for a healthy artistic ecosystem; the audience needs to be somewhat conditioned to appreciate art. Passionate about bringing arts into primary and secondary school systems, Kieran says that this one step could pave the way for the next generation of artistes.

"We need to bring dance and music into educational institutions. Performers should be invited to perform for children to foster a recognition of the arts that will carry these students into a future where the arts is as much a part of their lives as anything else," he says.

Theatre Talk

'We need to write plays for children'

Jaimini Pathak with his group 'Working Title' prefers doing plays that have something to say, beyond the craft

DEEPA GAHLOT



It has been 30 years since Jaimini Pathak established his own theatre group -Working Title - and produced about 18 plays, directed and acted in several of them, wrote one, along with acting in the plays of some of the best directors in Mumbai.

After spending his childhood all over the South and then Ajmer, because his father worked with the railways, Jaimini fought the usual middle-class expectations to study science, landed in Mumbai's St Xavier's college to "suffer eco-stats double major" and stayed in the hostel. "The college had a fantastic library. I don't think I have read as much in my life as I did in college," he says.

When he was in the second year, some friends planned to do a 40-day workshop with Mumbai's theatre maverick Satyadev Dubey. "I didn't know who he was. But I was the only one who enrolled for it. After this workshop, I decided theatre is what I want to do. Then Dubeyji said, there's this guy, Sunil (Shanbag), who is doing a play, go work with him. So for a long time I ended up shuttling between Dubeyji and Sunil's plays. Naseeruddin Shah saw me and cast me in one of his plays. I was thrilled that someone like him calls and without an audition, says, here is your role. These days, there are auditions, back then people watched an actor on stage and decided if he was good."

Turning up for rehearsals and memorising the whole play was his "survival strategy." Dubey used to have an associate director, whose job was to remind him his lines; in the process, Jaimini used to learn the script from beginning to end and if any actor dropped out, or was thrown out by Dubey - "as was his practice" - he could easily step into the part. "Dubeyji gave you a lot, but he also extracted a lot out of you - he was a terror. It was a different era - there was no TV, there was no such thing as a fulltime actor, so we turned up for rehearsals whenever we were called."

Jaimini solved the near impossible situation of finding affordable accommodation in Mumbai by extending his courses at the university and staying in the hostel. Then he was cast as the lead in a TV serial, *Farz*, and that was the end of money trouble. "When I look back," he says, "life has been something of a miracle. The right thing happening at the right



Doing differently From 'The boy who stopped smiling' and Jaimini Pathak

time, with the right people."

Eventually, he turned to direction, because, "I had already worked with all the directors on my bucket list.



Besides, if you work with the same bunch of directors, they can't cast you in every play. The best thing about working with people like Dubey and Sunil was that by default you do everything - sets, lights, sound operation, buying costumes and props. I think I was always interested in directing - I used to give suggestions which were accepted.

"Then Ramu Ramanathan gave me 'Curfew', which he said nobody else wanted to do. Sanjna Kapoor gave me a slot at the Prithvi Theatre Festival in 1999. The group, Working Title was born. I don't like the name, but it stuck."

Significant collaboration

The Ramu-Jaimini collaboration lasted for years; he directed many of the playwrights works including 'Combat', '3', 'Sakina Manzil', 'Postcards From Bardoli', and two of his longest running plays 'Mahadevbhai' (1892-1942) and 'The Boy Who Stopped Smiling', which are still on. "The working relationship with Ramu is very symbiotic," says Jaimini. "There was a time when he would almost always write for me. 'Combat' was way ahead of its time, he predicted what is happening in the country today. 'Mahadevbhai' (based on the dairies and letters of Mahatma Gandhi's secretary) was written because of what happened in Gujarat (Godhra incident and the riots)."

Meanwhile, resisting the urge to run an assembly line production company, and rediscovering himself as an actor with web series, he continues to be energised by 'Mahadevbhai', which after 350 shows, still ticks all the boxes he looks for in an ideal production.

He prefers doing plays that have

something to say, beyond the craft, and is always on the lookout for such work. "I have been reasonably prolific, most of my plays have done at least 40-50 shows, except a couple of star-crossed ones like 'The Seagull'. The huge problem with doing a Chekhov play is that if an actor drops out, he cannot be replaced. I could spend all my time re-rehearsing, but it will never match up to the original vision. That's why I leave the classics alone, and do new plays. If I am to do classics, I would like to make them my own. I would like to do a modern version of Tagore's 'Sanyasi' or Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar'. But how to find 12 actors? It's sad when the logistics defeat you. It is difficult to make money on our kind of plays unless there is a tour."

The work he considers most precious, is with children and young people; before it became a trend for theatre practitioners to work with schools and colleges, Jaimini was involved with it. He wrote a lot of short plays for children, as well as one full-length play, 'Once Upon A Tiger', about wildlife conservation, which was funded by well known conservationist Bittu Sahgal. "I find it easier, or rather less intimidating to write for kids. I remember reading somewhere that children who do theatre in middle school, grow up to be less aggressive or have fewer anti-social tendencies. Hardly any plays are being written for children in India."

Meanwhile, resisting the urge to run an assembly line production company, and rediscovering himself as an actor with web series, he continues to be energised by 'Mahadevbhai', which after 350 shows, still ticks all the boxes he looks for in an ideal production.

The writer is a critic and columnist

Emerging from the shadows of giants

With strong memories of her parents Vasundhara Komkali and Kumar Gandharva, Kalapini Komkali quietly voices equally strong opinions

VANGMAYI PARAKALA

She was the opening act at one of Delhi's popular spring-time classical music concerts. Kalapini Komkali inaugurated the Bhilwara Sur Sangam Festival this past Saturday – her act a fitting opening for santoor maestro Pandit Shivkumar Sharma. Not a stranger to walking in the shadow of giants, Komkali is a picture of restrained abandon the next morning. She orders a cold iced-tea ("It's fine, the concert is over now," she quips), and settles down for a freewheeling chat on her relationship with parents-and-gurus, legends Kumar Gandharva and Vasundhara Komkali, her observations of Hindustani classical today, and how young people ought to engage with the tradition.

Edited excerpts:

A lot of times even today, we find parents forcing their children into learning classical art forms. Given your parentage, did this ever happen to you?

My father never forced me. But he would very cautiously notice little things – whether I was listening, whether I was liking what I heard. And when I started showing small signs of interest, it made him happy. In Hindi we say *kautuk* – he praised me, but it was like how you'd encourage a child. It was my mother who was very keen that I start singing. When I was in middle school, she'd try to get me to sit in her classes. I'd go, even if a little reluctantly.

Were you at a mature enough age to understand the transition from a parent-child relationship to a guru-shishya dynamic?

I was about 15 years old at the time. It was quite hard in the beginning. It's natural – I used to consider them my mother and father more than anything else. Initially, I couldn't comprehend sitting in front of Kumar ji (her father) to learn and to sing. I hadn't ever dreamt of it. And even when I started taking lessons formally from my mother, I wouldn't treat her like my guru. Perhaps she indulged me there a bit, so that I'd continue to keep my interest in learning. Sometimes, when she'd correct me or chastise me for not getting something right, I'd get irritated and talk back! "You're no good a teacher, you can't even get me to sing," I'd say. It took a little time for me to adjust, understand and draw that distinction.

What were your lessons with them like?

With my father, it was never a structural thing. It was like very loosely woven scenarios of a particular *raag* or *bandish*. You have said earlier that guru-shishya paramapara is the only right way to learn classical music.



Meticulous in her craft Kalapini Komkali in performance; Pt.Kumar Gandharva ■ V.GANESAN, THE HINDU ARCHIVES

have to go my mother to follow up and clarify. I never had the courage to cross-check with him directly. He was like a god for us.

Given this background, what do you think about training in mainstream music colleges? With the internet, there are now online lessons too. You have said earlier that guru-shishya paramapara is the only right way to learn classical music.

To create interest in Indian classical music, up to a certain point, channels like YouTube are great. As for formal music schools, they too are necessary in that they can get you ready with the nuts and bolts of grammar and theory. But there's a difference between knowing grammar and understanding literature – or even better, writing a poem. There's also the matter of individual inclination – you need to let yourself be soaked in the es-

sence of this art, to have that flow inside of you. It takes all this and more. And that step, without doubt, comes only through the guru-shishya paramapara.

Finding a guru isn't as easy as finding a teacher though...

True. I consider myself very blessed that I had my gurus – and of what renown! – in my parents. I didn't have to go elsewhere or search. They're no more, but the vast sky they've opened up for me

– I don't think I'll be able to even fly through a quarter of it, even if I were to keep flying in it my whole life.

Do you think that quest to find the right guru, and the amount of commitment, rigour and discipline needed to be able to practice the art, is a barrier for young people to stay on and understand the nuances of it?

I don't think so. With our contemporary lifestyles, we all have to manage a



In father's footsteps

Kalapini is currently particularly interested in keeping alive the extensive research her late father did in tracing the classical roots of many folk songs of the Malwa region (Indore, Dewas, Ujjain and Mandu). In reverse, he also incorporated many folk songs into his classical music presentation. "Khari boli, and "braj" are the main languages used in several compositions, but Pt Kumar Gandharva also composed many new compositions in Malwai which have added to our classical tradition. Kalapini shares her late father's love for the Malwai dialect. To present these, she has started collaborating with her nephew Bhuvanesh Komkali in joint concerts, where they both sing the Malwai compositions. Due to the difference of pitch, singing together presents a challenge but her strong desire to keep alive this unique tradition is a big propellant.

tussle between different things. But this is just a part and parcel of the times.

There are efforts in Carnatic music to contemporise its literatures – artistes are infusing socio-religious issues to raagas. This been commended and criticized. Do you see any such trends in Hindustani in a bid to make it more relevant?

Inherently, I think Hindustani classical as a platform is very liberal. We've had various *vaageyaakars* (singer-composers) contributing widely, and they do even now. This allows for compositional experiments and additions at every stage. But I don't think we're moving into the socio-religious realm in that sense – at least I'm not aware of any such developments.

You've had Hindustani music all around you since as far back as you can remember. Have you then noticed any shifts or changes in the larger fraternity in the last two decades?

I do wonder sometimes if we value melody less nowadays, in favour of rhythm. With the new generation of young singers, even many of my contemporaries, I see that there's a lot of stress on perfection, on the grammar of things. And they're all very good.

But I sense that there's a spontaneity that's missing. We must be open to making mistakes. It's very important to me that we are able to improvise well. Instead of just focusing on returning to the *taan* correctly each time, with the right *taan*, or singing different patterns of the *taal* – the demand of perfection with all of this feels a little dangerous to me sometimes.

Pitch perfect

Some of the best known voices of Indian Classical music showcased their range at the Bhilwara Sur Sangam Festival

SHAILAJA KHANNA

Kalapini Komkali has a ringing, robust voice and a carefully cultivated singing style of her illustrious father. Starting with Bhimpalasi, she presented two compositions of her father and an old khayal in Punjabi, "dholan mende ghar aao", possibly composed by Shah Sadarang and attributed to his ruler, Mohammed Shah Rangile.

Kalapini's singing style is one of quick progression, without lingering, and perhaps a judicious use of pauses would be welcome. But without doubt, this was one of her better concerts, she sang on her mettle Singing with passion, her next piece in Dhani (incidentally, a very old composition in Punjabi) which is very close to Bhimpalasi underlined her skill , as the "shakal" of Dhani is compact and can easily stray into unwanted territory.

The piece in Hameer, "Tu kaun kahan te aayi albeli naa", which followed, was lyrical, composed by Pt Ram Ashrey Jha. The next drut teen taal khayal, "Ja re ja ranga rejawa re", again in Hameer, was composed by Pt Kumar Gandharva. Her own creativity came to the fore in her two Holis, in which in the first she unusually sang a lovely "auchar" preceding the percussion accompaniment. This was based on raga Tilak Kamod, and its unhurried presentation was a delight. The second Holi, racy in gait, was equally



Showing the way Kaushiki Chakravorty; (below) Raghunandan Panshikar

attractive. Her singing is enhanced by her evident feel for the lyrics she sings, an attribute acquired no doubt from her father. The evening ended with the recital of santoor maestro Pt Shiv Kumar Sharma.

The next day started with Jaipur Atrauli exponent Raghunandan Panshikar. Born into an erudite family of scholars and musicians, Raghunandan has trained under the late Kishori Amonkar for 20 years. His beautifully practised baritone, measured singing in the authentic Jaipur Atrauli tradition with the slow meticulous use of notes, in raga Marwa was a real treat. Keeping his vilambit exposition to over half an hour, which for him was shorter than usual due to time constraint, Raghunandan then expertly used the time he had in singing two compositions in Marwa, displaying not only "Raagdaari" but also vocal virtuosity. His "taans" in the "drut ek taal" khayal (amended by himself from an older composition) had both "wazan" and "daana", were in patterns using differing divisions in "laya", and were breathtaking, reminding one of his great guru. The familiar Basant Bahar composition,

"Maan re" was appropriate given the spring season (Basant and Bahar both are spring ragas). The concluding Misra Des Meera bhajan, the "mukhra" of which again he amended, perhaps lacked "bhaav".

It was a true pleasure to listen to the well-rounded singer, undoubtedly, one of the finest in his generation. The last concert sung by his guru was at the Bhilwara Festival in 2017, so no doubt singing there must have had poignant memories. There was a standing ovation.

All-female band

The festival concluded with the performance by Kaushiki Chakravorty and her classical music group "Sakhis". Friends off-stage too, the all-female band is one of kind and performs purely classical music only. Kaushiki sings, Nandini Shankar (younger granddaughter of the legendary Dr N Rajam) is on the violin, Debopriya plays the flute (she is a disciple of Pt Hari Prasad Chaurasia), Bhakti Deshpande dances kathak (disciple of Pt Birju Maharaj and Shaswati Sen), Savani Talwalkar is on the tabla and Mahima Upadhyay on pakhawaj. This time there was the addition of another "sakhi" - Anupama Bhagwat on sitar (disciple of Pt Bimalendu Mukherji of the Imdadkhani gharana).

The act has been structured with care; having some pieces showcasing only the instruments, only percusion, two with all of them together, some with the dance included, one only with Kaushiki singing. The Sakhis have received musical inputs from their gurus - Pt Ajoy Chakravorty composed one piece, Pt Birju Maharaj another, Pt Suresh Talwalkar a third. Technically, the difficulties of performing in unfamiliar pitches have been overcome seamlessly by the instrumentalists.

Anupama shared that she had to play the sitar tuned in "e-scale", and then also had to use her "Ma" as the "Sa" in two pieces to play; a very difficult task as she had to adjust to different frets. Nandini too had to tune her violin to a different pitch. One felt the need for editing, as there was repetition. Maybe, it could be an hour's performance only; however, it was received very well by the appreciative audience, who rose for a standing ovation.



Taking art to the public

ANURADHA VELLAT

The charm of Delhi's National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) has somewhat been indelibly ingrained in every art lover's mind. In 1954 as the magnificent Jaipur House opened its doors to nurture NGMA, the institution was testimony to India's transition into a democratic republic. And on 29th March, NGMA celebrated 65 years of existence with a series of events. Says Ritu Sharma, Director, NGMA, "For a long time, people did not even know where it existed! I often see the thronging crowd outside India Gate. I would consider my job half done the day they begin to throng NGMA."

Jaipur House, as it was, was home to the Maharaja of Jaipur. It was designed by architect Charles G Blomfield and his brother Francis B Blomfield in the year 1936. This month, Jaipur House will be reopened after renovation works that have gone on for over a year, with an exhibition of the works of renowned artist Upendra Maharathi.

Since his taking over as the first Director General of NGMA, Adwaita Gadanayak's tenure has brought in many changes in the space both ideologically and physically.

The Art Adda and Night at the Museum, the two initiatives which seek to increase public interactions have only seen increased footfall in the past few months. Art Adda is organised on last Friday of every month and Night at the Museum on the last working day. This year, the two have collided with the Foundation Day. "Since the time I joined, I have been wondering how we shall connect with the public. I see them around India Gate lawns, and I want NGMA lawns to be so open as well. Here, we are not working for ourselves; we are working for the society. NGMA was also born out of an imagination of freedom and independence. That imagination needs to be continued in our minds, and one cannot be selfish about it," says Gadanayak. "Maharathi's work, for instance, is felt throughout Patna. We want our visitors to get a similar feel," he adds.

"When you think of Upendra Maharathi, here is an artist who was a contemporary of Mahatma Gandhi and has worked with almost all the leaders. My favourite is his Birsa Munda portrait, which is something widely used in school textbooks as well. These works could have easily gone to world galleries like Met, made millions, but his daughter has chosen NGMA. It goes to show the mandate of our institution," adds Sharma.

For the 65th Foundation Day celebrations, Art Adda's discussions were followed by a tribal dance performance by dancers from Bastar, Chattisgarh. There was also a Hindustani vocal performance organised by the Raag Mantra Music Foundation, followed by night tours of the galleries.



The aesthetics of everyday objects

Serendipity is the philosophy that artist Kavita Issar-Batra works and lives by

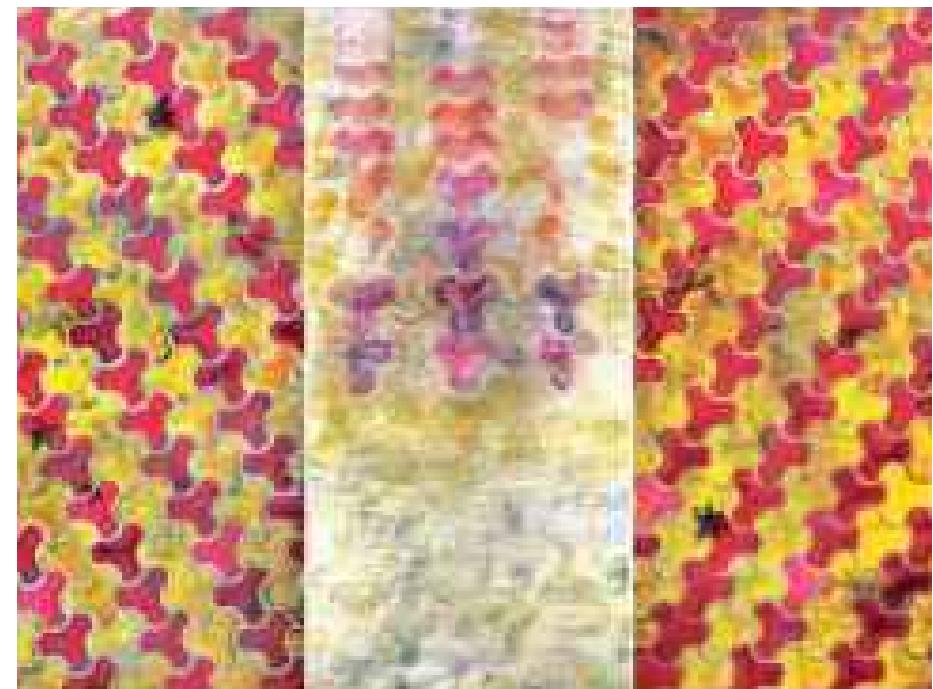
SHRINKHLA SAHAI

Turning an artistic eye towards forgotten, unnoticed, trampled and discarded objects on streets and pavements, visual artist Kavita Issar-Batra transforms them into paintings, video art, photographs and installations in her studio. Daily walks through the city fuel her imagination as she collects what one would call 'litter' from the streets. A half-crushed flower, dried leaves, feathers, threads, crumpled paper, bark, mud, and even a chipped off block from a footpath - all find their way into the gallery as inspiration or art objects.

Developing 'detritus' into the theme for her debut solo exhibition in Delhi - *No Number No Name*, the Singapore-based artist explores the otherwise ignored and invisible aspects of our interaction with the cityscape. The exhibition is curated by Alka Pande and in collaboration with Delhi NGO Chintan, where a portion of the proceeds would be used to support waste collectors.

"If observed closely, one can see an entire landscape in a leaf," says Issar-Batra, "This material that I come across on the road, is my library." Working with a range of material and mixed media, from a regular A-4 size sheet to the largest painting so far being over 16-feet long, with substrates, plywood, canvas and high quality acid free paper, she prefers to explore organically without the end in mind.

"I allow the material to guide me, and my hands just respond to that." Her work is process-led and open-ended, based on a corporeal engagement with the material. The resulting art works nudge the



Aesthetic appeal Kavita Issar-Batra's 'Ode to the Urban Indian Footpath'; (below) the artist

viewer to observe everyday objects in the environment more attentively and through the lens of artistic imagination, opening up the way for introspection and interpretation.

Simplicity is the hallmark of Issar-Batra's work. "I am moved by imprints on the footpath," she reflects, "Through my work I want them to be remembered in a different way, and not just vanish as they do, from the street and also from our minds."

These imprints are alchemised into different textures on her canvas. The tree bark on a pavement, an egg-shell from breakfast, feather on concrete, a leaf on the road surface - these impressions are re-imagined on canvas as multiple layers with contrasting hues, often using gel-plate printing. Some emerge as photographs, without filters, pictured as artistic propositions that recover natural, organic material lying around, into still-life studies. The photographs form a series on Hahnemühle paper, titled simply with numbers.

The most striking work at the exhibition is the imposing three-panel mixed media on canvas - 'Ode to the Urban Indian Footpath'. While it can be easily recognised as the recurring pattern of the Indian footpath, from another angle it also looks like a stream of human torsos. "It signifies a celebration of the teeming mass of people who

daily jostle along the footpaths in India, in a bid to eke out a living, to get somewhere or even simply live on them. Stumbling across this park a year ago, in a neighbourhood I spent some of my childhood, I felt time seemed to have stood still in it: most of the houses around it hadn't been torn down to be replaced by monstrous apartment blocks, the beautiful trees, bushes and creepers had witnessed the years I have been away. It was the torso like tiles that, as I followed the path round, held my gaze captive conjuring up a vision of the human masses that make up our urban cities and lay just beyond the boundary wall."

Issar-Batra is of Indo-British origin, she grew up on the hillsides of Nainital and then in Delhi. She went on to live and work in the UK for 20 years before moving to Singapore nine years ago with her family. Largely self-taught, she trained with British artist, James Holdsworth, and was later mentored by Australian artist, David Kelly.

Looking inwards

The installation at the centre of the gallery is another work that draws the onlooker inwards. Created in Delhi for the exhibition, it carries memorabilia, vintage objects in old trunks, and dried leaves and flowers in jewellery boxes. It brings together family memories, evokes precious moments and sparks off sepia-tinted

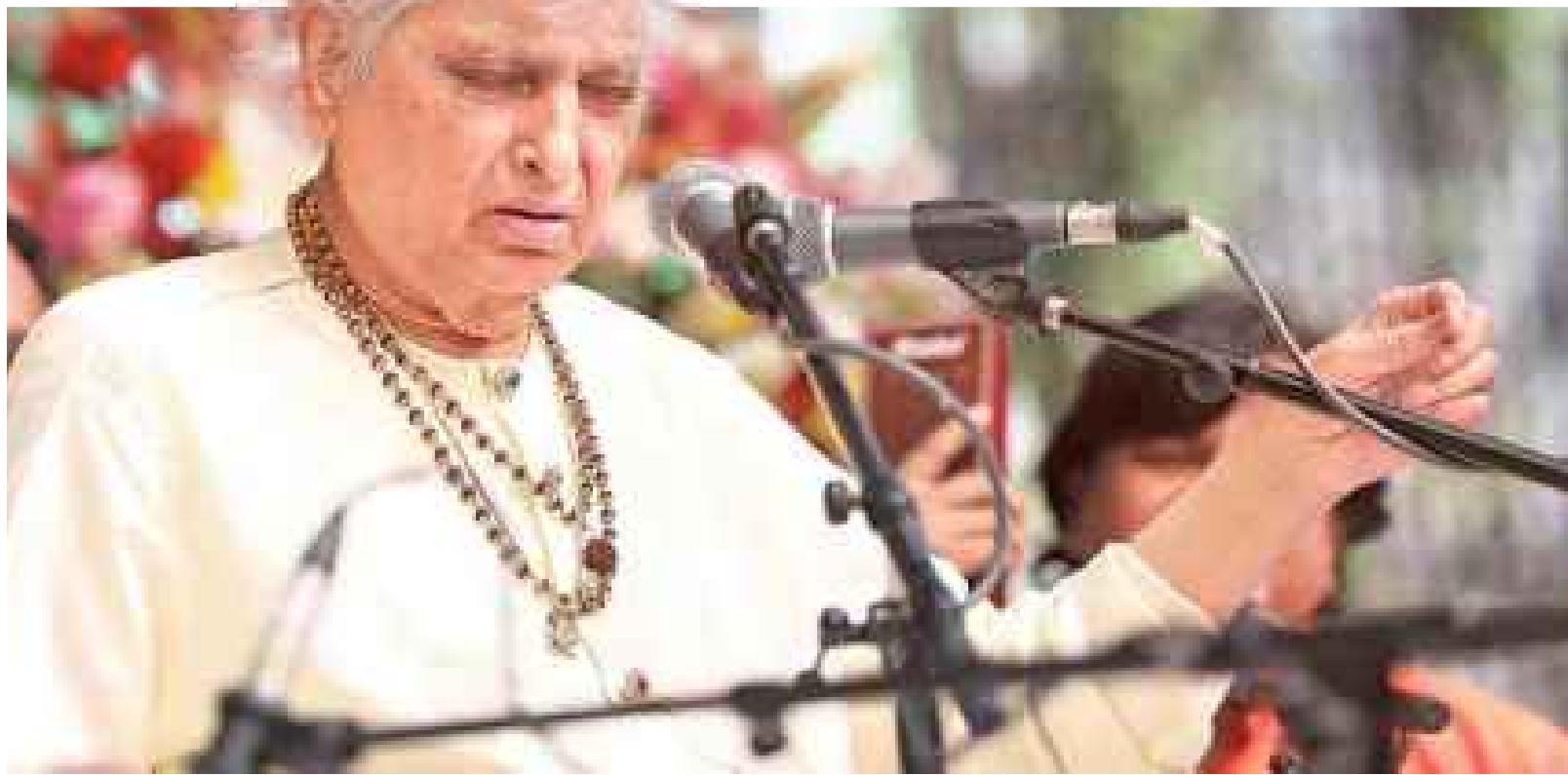
experiences. The installation occurred by chance as the artist was rummaging through long-forgotten family treasures in Delhi.

Serendipity is the philosophy that she works and lives by. "The material I come across on the street has taught me about texture, shape, colour, value, tone, composition, botany, philosophy and a rhythm to life. It has become an alphabet to my thoughts and emotions as well as inspiration for my paintings. I document the 'moment' our paths intersect photographing with my iPhone camera to be able to respond spontaneously. Sharing these through Instagram and Facebook is about building community. Most images are taken 'as found'; some a montage of the detritus that I might pick up (nothing is plucked or altered) placed on a painting in progress and then photographed. I do not photoshop as each is beautiful just as they are."

Evocative, tender, nuanced and layered, *No Number No Name* promises to redefine our relationship with the environment as it provokes a mindful inquiry into our everyday interactions and offers a different way of looking at the mundane as a magical work of art.

(*No Number No Name* is on display at Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi till April 6, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.)





The making of Pandit Jasraj

In a candid conversation, the stalwart talks about the bhakti element in his singing and his association with the legendary filmmaker V.Shantaram

MANJARI SINHA

The soulful voice of Pt. Jasraj reached the 72nd Shriram Shankarlal Music Festival to its climax when his devotion-drenched voice ascending in the kirtan-like utterance of 'Vithal Vithal' ultimately rested at the formidable peak of Taar Pancham.

There was a very thoughtful selection of ragas like Abeer Todi and Hori Sarang, for this concert, adhering to the time theory of Hindustani music. It was not just about the time of the day but also about the season keeping in mind the proximity of Phagun ritu. Opening his morning concert with Abeeri Todi, a very rare and old variant of the timely Todi, which had shades of ragas like Jaunpuri, Desi and Khat, he presented a traditional Bada Khayal set to Vilambit Ektala, while the Chhota Khayal in Teentala, "Braj Banwari....", was a composition of his father late Pt. Motiram.

It was followed by the Goojri Todi Khayal, a composition of Nayak Dhondu, "Chalo sakhi sutan ke ghar jaihen Maan ghathe to ka ghat jaihen, Piya ke darshan paichen...". Then came the Hori Sarang, prevalent in Haveli Sangeet, that went "Mai mero mann mein Saanvaro, ghar angana na suhaay" sung in typical Hori style set to the

Chaanchar Theka of Deepchandi, concluding with the scintillating Benarsi Laggi on Ramkumar's tabla.

Ultimately, he had to sing 'Mata Kalika...' the popular adana bandish and conclude with "Om namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya...." on public demand. The heartwarming live orchestra comprised mostly his disciples except for Pt. Ram Kumar Mishra on tabla. There was Tripti Mukherjee on harmonium and vocal support along with Ratan Mohan Sharma and Gargi Siddhant on tanpuras.

One had not yet recovered from his intoxicating music when we met at New Delhi's India International Centre where he was staying with his wife Madhura Jasraj, the gifted daughter of the legendary filmmaker V. Shantaram.

The unique gayaki of Pt. Jasraj is no doubt polished and honed on the cutting edge of Mewati Gharana but his penetratingly tuneful voice and the bhakti-soaked content of compositions have his singular signature. Talking of the element of bhakti and devotional compositions in his musical tradition, Pt. Jasraj gives its credit to his lineage. "My father was in the court of Raja Pratap Singh, the Shaivite king of Kashmir, who used to worship Shiva's Parthiv Ling, which he and the group of Brahmin priests of his kingdom would make

out of mud in early morning from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. and then would merge in the Tavi river as a daily ritual. Being the musician of his court, my father's day would begin with singing devotional music daily for these three hours. So the element of bhakti, I believe, was there in my genes."

Return of voice

Then he narrates the miraculous story of his Guru and eldest brother Pt. Maniram who had totally lost his voice for some time. One day their spiritual Guru Maharana Jayawant Singh alias Bapu-sahib, the Maharaja of the erstwhile royal estate of Sanand in Gujarat, who was a devotee of Goddess Kali Mata, made him sing Mata Kalike and he resumed singing as if he had never lost it. "I have experienced innumerable miracles of spirituality and bhakti in my life and I believe that the almighty holds your fingers and takes you along this path without even you being aware of it."

He gives full credit to Bapu-sahib, Maharana Jayawant Singh ji for discovering the element of devotional music in young Jasraj.

He would ask the 14-year-old to sit near him when great poets and musicians would come to recite poetry, discuss musical matters and perform for him. "Listening to them all, this love for good poetry

and music gradually evolved in me. In due course, I sensed a spiritual calling inside me and realised that I sing for my Isht (beloved deity) alone. Beckoning Him lovingly through my music became its sole purpose, which you call the melodiousness and the spiritual element of my music."

Pt. Jasraj was also very close to Jaddu Krishnamurthy (JK), who was very fond of his singing. Pandit ji shares one such memory when in the 1980s in London, Krishnamurthy invited him. "Come home, we would have lunch together and in the evening would listen to your music. JK was very particular about time and I reached 10 minutes late. He requested everyone else to carry on with the lunch and himself waited for me. When I tried to apologise, he said in future you need not take an appointment, come whenever you feel like. And this lasted till the end, when I would go to sing for him sitting on his bed, during his last days."

Madhura ji joins for coffee at this juncture and the conversation turns to her. How does it feel to have two great artistes in one's life?

"It is simply hard, but you also get to learn a lot. I shall share just one incidence each to give you an idea. We were married for hardly a couple of months and he would wake

me up in the middle of the night, say around 3 a.m. and would ask me to note down a bandish (composition) that had just occurred in his mind and then he would go back to sleep. Just think of living with such a man, it's not a joke!"

The other glimpse is about the other great artiste in her life. "I had made a film on father titled 'Portrait of a Pioneer'. When I showed the rough cut to him, the very first cut came after four hours and fifty-five minutes. He told me, 'it's not good to love your subject that much. Cut it drastically short, edit like an enemy. No film should run beyond two hours. This mantra on editing lasted me lifelong."

Pandit ji said Shantaram loved him a lot. "The most important tip that he gave me was his remark, 'you sing lovely compositions with the choicest of words but take care about the clarity of those words, so that they reach your listeners with the desired impact.'"

He affirms "I also realise the fact that careful pronunciation of the words supports the emotional expressions of the melody too. He made me conscious of giving utmost importance to the words of a bandish or composition, where the verbal meaning also helps to create the corresponding melodic meaning of the raga."

ART



Antiquity of Indian chariot

Chariots have interesting stories to tell. The entire cosmos becomes a chariot playing a significant role in the Indian thought process.

(clockwise from above)
Gitopadesha; Chariot at National Museum; and Tripurantaka Chalukya



CHOODAMANI NANDAGOPAL

The largest and magnificent object of National Museum, New Delhi is the installed chariot on the left corner of the campus, quaintly watched by every passer. Encased in a transparent and huge showcase, the chariot tells an interesting story from where it travelled to National Museum. This temple chariot was dedicated to Pandanalluru Sri Adikesava Perumal, the form of Maha Vishnu from a Temple near Kumbakonam, Tamilnadu. It is a five-tiered structure in wood with six wheels, each wheel is 5.5 feet diameter and the weight of each wheel is 100 kg. That gives an idea of the massiveness and the size of this museum object, which was crafted in the mid-19th century. A team of craftsmen under the leadership of Pashupati Achari and his son executed the crafting of this chariot. Four patrons by name Manikkam Pillai, Subbu Pillai, Chattayya Pillai and Jambunatha Pillai were the great devotees of Adikesava Perumal commissioned the chariot.

Prastara, the wall portion of the chariot is carved with hundreds of panels with interesting tales to narrate. Most of them figure around the themes of Vishnu and his incarnation. Some themes represent erotic and secular aspects signifying the sacred and profane exist side by side. Scenes depicting child birth indicate the reality of human existence.

Chariots were primarily used in south Indian temples; in some, new chariots have been replaced old



ones. If the chariots become very old and fragile, or caught with fire or even damaged beyond repair, they are not be drawn during *Rathotsava* but abandoned outside the town in an open field. They are acquired by the museums and private collectors, who restore and place them in museums. Today, we can see a massive chariot beautifully positioned in the newly built Manjusha Museum at Dharmasthala, Calico Museum at Ahmedabad, Janapadaloka at Ramnagar, Government Museum at Kanyakumari and at the National Museum in New Delhi. Not only in temples as such, even in public places and airports, chariots of different sizes and made of different materials are making their frequent entry.

Indian Gods expelled valour and

chivalry in the act of vanquishing evil and they are equipped with great chariots. Symbolically, the entire cosmos becomes a chariot playing a significant role in the Indian thought process. The puranic sources exquisitely describe various constituent parts of a chariot which the Gods used for waging wars such as Krishna-Arjuna chariot or Shiva's chariot as Tripurantaka. Surya, the Sun god covers the entire earth within 24 hours in his high speed chariot which is yoked with seven horses and one wheel, which traverses emitting light and life.

A significant episode in the great epic Mahabharata, is the Kurukshestra War. The 18 days war had changed the entire scenario of life of common people as well as the kings of the land. It must have taken a longer time to reset the political and social life of the land and people. What emerged from the ashes of this war that remains eternal truth of one's own understanding is the 'Geetopadesha', Krishna delivering the eternal truth in the midst of war.

The dialogue that takes between Arjuna, the master and Krishna the charioteer, or between two *sakhas*, the intimate friends, or between the *bhakta* and the God, is awe-inspiring. Vyasa Mahabharata gives a detailed account of Arjuna's chariot

nificant description of the divine *Ratha* of Shiva is found in the *Shivapurana*, wherein Sanatkumara narrates the structure of the splendid chariot of Shiva used when he wages war with the three demons, known as Tripurantaka. The chariot of Shiva plays an important role in *Tripura dahana*, the three cities reduced to ashes as illustrated in the sculpture of the National Museum.

Bramhanda Purana vividly narrates this form of Devi and her chariot in the chapter of the *Lalithaopkyana*. The *Sri chakra raja ratha* had the unparalleled dimensions and it is hard even to visualise. It was a nine-level structured chariot. Goddess in the form of Lalitha was gifted an unparalleled chariot to vanquish Bhandasura.

Apparently, while the rest of the world has relegated the chariots in the pages of history or as relics of the past, in India chariot has retained its stature by reigning supreme in Indian thoughts and beliefs. The vibrant tradition of *Ratha*, the *Rathotsava*, owes its inspiration to the innumerable hymns and epics, myths and legends, and folklore offering a treasure of knowledge about this *vahana*. We find various connotations and interpretations associated with *Ratha*, its magnificence, divine perceptions, its philosophical, religious and socio-cultural significance continues to fascinate Indian minds.

In south India after Ugadi, chariot festivals are celebrated heralding of the New Year. From one to five chariots are dedicated to temple festivities, a week-long festival are corresponded with the foundation of the temple or the annual festival day of the temple.

Chariot, is an eye-catching beautiful wooden or metal structure, a moving form of temple architecture known as *chala-alaya* with intricate work and thematic representations. The vibrant tradition of the '*Ratha*', '*Teru*', *Rathotsava* or *Rathyatra* finds its antiquity from the Vedic to historical and now on to present times. One of the authentic textual sources is the *Vishvakarmiya Rathalakshanam*, preserved in Sarasvati Mahal library at Tanjavur accounts three types of chariots, namely, Patrakalpa - the chariots for Gods, Chitrakalpa - the chariots for kings and the Ratnakalpas - the chariots for upper class. The magnificent temple chariots of medieval times owe their forms to the evolution and development of early temple architecture, that were executed in the form of shrines as seen in the *rathas* at Mahabalipuram and Vijayanagar stone chariot Hampi.

Recently a huge chariot with wheels and parts of its structure intact was found during the excavation at Sinauli, Uttar Pradesh. It is a great evidence for tracing the antiquity and cultural heritage of chariot, the product of knowledge society that India as ever.

(The writer is a Tagore National Fellow, National Museum, New Delhi)

Going Native

Beyond the chaos

In its latest issue, "Urdu Channel" opens a window to the contemporary Afghan short story

SHAFAY KIDWAI

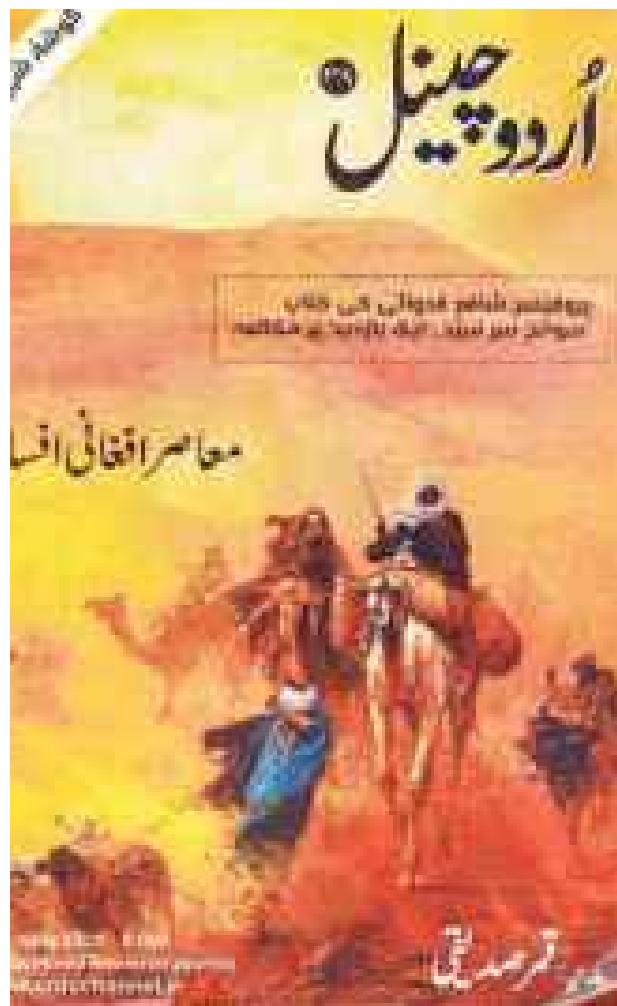
The creative genius of Afghanistan, largely closed off to the rest of the world, is stunningly explored by the avant-garde Urdu periodical "Urdu Channel" in its latest issue that carries a special section on the contemporary Afghan short story.

Since not much is known about the literature being written in two major languages of Afghanistan - Dari and Pashto- editor of the journal and a promising poet and critic Qamar Siddiqui tries to acquaint us with what exists beyond the total chaos. In this laconic but insightful introduction, he regrets that we hardly know anything about the admirable aspects of Afghanistan. "How does war and violence produce a devilish religiosity? It is aptly reflected through the lenses of the authors. The contemporary short story brims with the elegance of creative prowess and the writers harp on the widespread feeling of disgust and aversion to the merciless violence and its aftermath," the editor concludes.

The journal, in line with French scholar James Darmesteter's assertion: "If we want to know what an Afghan is, let us put all books aside and receive his own unconscious confessions from the lips of his favourite poets," makes the contemporary fiction our entry to understand how one feels to live in a situation shaped by appalling horror.

The first story in the section, "Nama-e-Amaal" (record of deeds) by a young Pashto writer Mahmood Mahrin creatively delineates the dreadful consequences of a situation when people tend to forget the difference between mindless killing and scarifying the life for a noble cause. The perpetrator of violence is the killer, not the martyr. The protagonist of the story "Record of Deeds"

Past cannot be one's future and the contemporary Afghani fiction creatively ratifies it. Dr Qamar Siddiqui and Dr Zakir Ali Khan deserve accolades for making the Afghani writers' perspective accessible to a larger audience who look to understand the country beyond explosions and utter chaos.



offered up his life for a cause for him it was Jihad. A thundering voice greeted him in the grave: "You killed innocent children who could not differentiate between friends and foes but you slaughtered them all."

"That's right. What is the place I am?" You have not noticed yet that it is the grave and you are no longer alive.

"Am I not alive? No, death cannot touch me. Had I met my end, I would have attained martyrdom."

"What is this?"

"This is your record of deeds."

"Is it my record of deed...please let me stretch my right hand. You know I am a martyr but where is my right hand. What can I do? I can use left hand for carrying my record of deeds. Ouch! Oh God. Why are you taking me towards hell, Am I not a martyr?"

"No, you cannot be taken as martyr. You are nothing more than a brutal killer."

By turning the prevalent concept of Jihad upside down, Mahmood Mahrin tries to understand why ferocity and cruelty become

acceptable and prompts people to celebrate tragedies.

Does intense engagement with an unprecedented act of madness that happened in near past produce a nuanced and enduring narrative?

Rarely, it does, and Zalmay

Babakohi's short story "The Idol's Dust" bears a testimony to the fact. Zalmay fashioned a gripping and immutable narrative only four weeks after the unfortunate destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha's statue in March 2001. Employing unexplored power of immediacy, the author through his incisive and passionate prose questions what we are presented with.

The moving and exuberant narrative depicts poignantly how mindless demolition turned the breakers of the statue into idols. The Taliban, avowed enemy of everything that does not fit into their myopic vision of religion, had blown up Buddha's statue in Bamiyan valley. What had happened after the Buddha was reduced to ashes and pebbles, the story tells us:

"After getting the statue demolished with great diffi-

culty, the Taliban tried to wipe the dust and soil that obscured their faces. They want to celebrate the completion of the work assigned by the commander of the faithful. Their whole body including their faces, noses, ears and hands wore a nauseating white look, they turned white and resembled the white plaster statues. One said to others, the soil and dust has inundated your faces and heads, you have changed into idols. You should also be blown up, he said and started laughing. It produced a wave of laughter. They rushed toward the river flowing in front of the idols, for removing the idol's dust and soil from their bodies. The young crusaders plunged into the river to wash their bodies with almost chilled water. They rubbed as quickly as they could but the idol's dust stayed".

Since they cannot remove the dust as their appearance closely resembled with idols, it invited the ire of the supreme commander defying all codes of human behaviour. His order was: "Efface everything that either is an idol or looks like an idol. All idols are required to be destroyed at once. Everything, be it living or non-living or has become an idol, must be done away with."

Dark secrets

The story goes on narrating the heart wrenching tales of all those who took an active part in the demolition and reacquaints with the dark secrets and contradictions of the rigid set of beliefs we could have imagined.

Three other stories by Khan Muhammad Sind, Parveen Faiz Zadmalal and Mohammad Karwan are included in the section. These stories, brilliantly rendered into Urdu by Dr Zakir Khan, make us aware how a trail of national traumas produce an engaging read. Past cannot be one's future and the contemporary Afghani fiction creatively ratifies it. Dr Qamar Siddiqui and Dr Zakir Ali Khan deserve accolades for making the Afghani writers' perspective accessible to a larger audience who look to understand the country beyond explosions and utter chaos.

Telling Voices

Stories set in snow

Eowyn Ivey on why both her books "Snow Child" and "To The Bright Edge of the World" are based in Alaska

SUDHAMAHI REGUNATHAN



Eowyn Ivey grew up in Alaska, amidst snow and wilderness. When she set out to become a writer, it was like a dream. She spent ten years working as a reporter, but, she says, "Never was it really my passion. Reading novels was my passion. I had grown up in a family that was always reading. So I made the decision to work in a book store. It was really a fortunate decision because I suddenly found myself surrounded by readers, books and ideas and it was very inspiring. It gave me the creative energy at the end of the day."

Ivey says, "One evening I was shelving books in the childrens' section when I came across a little paper back with a very simple retelling of a Snegurochka fairy tale for children. I read it standing there and that was really a lightning bolt moment for me. I realised this was the story that was perfect for me to tell in a landscape that I had grown up in, a northern wilderness. And it had the magical quality I was always looking for. So I abandoned a completely different novel that I had been working on for almost five years and began writing the Snow Child and had the first draft in about a year."

Growing up in snow

The Snow Child is set in the 1920s while To The Bright Edge of the World is set way back in the 1880s. Both in Alaska. "Much of Alaska is really very similar to how it is in the stories that I tell. Large parts of Alaska are still uninhabited. In rural areas like we live in, we live on 20 acre plots.

Cities like Anchorage are very modern cities. By choice we decided to live a life which involved heating with firewood, hunting for salmons, picking blueberries and so it was not a matter of research as I wrote my first novel. I based it on my life and growing up. For the second novel I have done quite a bit of research for I talk of a military expedition along a river I invented, the Wolverine river. The expedition is a true incident that took place along the Copper river. But I created my own space. For this book I had to do a lot of research including floating along Copper river for a week."

Ivey says, "It is really interesting for me to see how much more interest and fascination with the snow and ice of a place like Alaska. Growing up there I took it for granted but with my books I know that people are interested in knowing how it is to live up there where six months of the year there is ice and snow."

I also think with global warming that large parts of these places may be in danger and become somewhat more precious then and maybe we want to capture that snow and ice while we can."

Art show for a cause



On the occasion of autism month, marked on April 2, Art Reflect 2019, an annual charity art fundraiser for Udaan is being organised in Delhi. Curated and presented by architect Nilanjan Bhowal, 25 renowned artists will be showcasing their paintings and the proceeds will go to Udaan.

Udaan, a non-profit foundation for children with autism, has achieved recognition for its work with neuro developmentally delayed disorders in children.

Some of the participating artists for the cause include Anjali Ela Memon, Farhad Husain, Jai Zharotia, Jagannath Panda, Jogen Chowdhary, Manisha Parekh, K.S. Radhakrishnan, Lalu Prasad Shaw, Madhvi Parekh, Manu Parekh, Pares Maity, Kanchan Chandra, Jogen Chaudhary, Veer Munshi, Alex Davis, Mukkul Goyal, Rameshwar Broota, Sakti Burman, Vibhor Sogani, Veer Munshi and Yuriko Lochan.

Starting today, the five-day show will be held at the Ojas Arts Gallery, Mehrauli.

Tale of two brothers



Filled with laughter, mayhem and drama, "Kaise Karenge?", an urban Hindi play starring Darsheel Safary, will be staged at Kamani Auditorium this Saturday, 7 p.m.

Presented by Act1 Scene1 and directed by Suketu Shah, it revolves around the story of Saurav Parasrampuria and his brother Kapil Parasrampuria. Just when Saurav is about to leave for Massachusetts Institute of Technology, his brother Kapil develops Multiple Personality Disorder. Ultimately, Saurav chooses his brother over his career.

Rise of the quiet boy

Actor Vikrant Massey on making a splash with a series of eye-catching performances

ATIF KHAN

From a young boy with responsibilities in "Balika Vadhu" to the face of "Criminal Justice" in India, Vikrant Massey has come a long way.

The Indian remake of the BBC show is directed by Tigmanshu Dhulia and Vishal Furia. Vikrant, who impressed with his performance as an educated gangster in *Mirzapur*, is playing a cab driver, accused of murdering his passenger in the series. Here he talks of his rise from the hero's best friend to be cast opposite Deepika Padukone in "Chhappak".

Excerpts:

What is on your mind?

'Criminal Justice' is coming out this week and I am looking forward to it. We conceptualised it last year and right now I am nervously and anxiously excited about it because I am the protagonist here. There is a sense of motivation also because I got to work along with many good actors and a dedicated team. Sharing screen space with Jackie Shroff ji was a kind of fanboy moment for me as in childhood I have seen him act and now I am working with him.

What was your approach to adapt it to the Indian sensibilities?

Yes, there was pressure because of it being an internationally known series. I had to work a lot on understanding the person's psyche as I have never seen jail and a police station. It was diagonally opposite to what I have seen all my life, which was full of privilege. Life in prison takes both physical and mental toll on a person and I had to understand through the research material given to me. Physically, it was very demanding and I cannot ever relate to the character because he is accused of rape and murder. Actors come from a position of privilege. They are probably the last one to be cast on a project after writers and content creators have done half of the work. Anyway, we have tried very hard to mix reality with fiction so that people find it real and engaging.

How did you shape the character?

We wanted to keep the emotional differences right. I wanted Aditya to be that boy who is present in every family. People should relate themselves and their children with the character. Only then, they could empathise with the character and will be eager to know more about the system.

Having done various kinds



Versatility matters Vikrant Massey in "Criminal Justice" ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

of roles without getting stereotyped, how do you see your growth as an actor?

I am not a trained actor. I learn on sets. In order to grow as an actor, we have to go beyond our usual easy limits and present ourselves as dynamic so that people could accept us. As each project demands a new approach, you keep discovering new things and that is where learning happens.

Being a Mumbaikar, what was your relation with cinema while growing up?

I was also like everybody else. A typical boy overawed by cinema. I grew up in Versova where most of the time we used to see shooting happening around us. There were days when I was on a film shoot for the whole day. Also, my grandfather was a theatre actor and a director-producer at the prestigious Gaiety theatre in Shimla for more than three decades. Because of my mother, I



As each project demands a new approach, you keep discovering new things and that is where learning happens

had an exposure to 'art' cinema helmed by Satyajit Ray and serials like Gulzar's 'Mirza Ghalib', films like '36 Chowringhee Lane'. Naseer Sahib's acting was part of my growing up years. I think that early exposure to arts helped me build my sensibility which is helping me today.

You started early as a dancer with Shiamak Davar's group. How did training as a performer translate into acting?

I see them as different forms of expressions. Since a young age, I started analysing where I was going wrong because of stage performances. Same is the case for those who do theatre, particularly street plays, because you get quick responses while performing.

Getting a response in cinema used to be a tiresome and a long process because you had to wait for a review to come two days after the release. Now everything is very quick and that is why you get instant reaction. You have social media which gives you report card on what is working with the audience.

How do you see the rise of a new set of actors? Was there a void that needed to be filled?

I will not say that there was a void. I would say that there are

more opportunities now and because of the more opportunities there are more people coming in. Earlier, it used to be only television and theatre. Today, we have personalised content catering to every section of society. I see it that way. The sensibilities of people have changed and it is part of a cycle. You cannot stop it as it is like beliefs which changes every 10 years. There is a history of people with merit and no prior connections who have made a mark in this industry.

You are working alongside Deepika Padukone in "Chhapaak". How do you see your rise in the industry?

I will not talk about 'Chhapaak'. It is a good thing that people want to know more about me now because of 'Mirzapur' and other projects. I am very excited about this phase. I will not call it stardom but I am happy that there is a certain sense of appreciation and acceptance of what I am doing. It is a great feeling and I am living it. My only job is to keep doing what I was doing and be the best at whatever I do. My only motto is to give good content that is relatable to people because that is the only way to keep myself going.

Criminal Justice is streaming on Hotstar

DELHI METRO



Soliciting votes

Gujarat trader's goods continue to be sold with the electioneering slogans in stores across Delhi [Page 2](#)



Fake branded products

The Delhi HC fines a local trader ₹3 lakh for dealing in counterfeit products of Louis Vuitton [Page 4](#)



Superhero saga

Joe Russo on keeping secrets, fighting for one's beliefs and working with a stellar cast [Page 5](#)



Something sweet and sour

Opposing flavours merge seamlessly as different regions in the country celebrate the New Year [Page 6](#)

IN BRIEF



Street dogs go missing in Gurugram

GURUGRAM
The animal welfare volunteers are at loggerheads with Uppal's Southend Residents' Welfare Association on Sohna Road here over the disappearance of around 10 street dogs from its premises.

[CITY ▶ PAGE 2](#)

12-year-old apprehended for killing minor boy

NEW DELHI
A 12-year-old boy was apprehended on Thursday for allegedly killing a six-year-old boy in Sikanderpur on Tuesday here, the police said. The Juvenile in Conflict with Law allegedly pushed the child into a pit following an altercation and then hit him with a stone, they said.

[CITY ▶ PAGE 3](#)

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	254	Gurugram	201
Ghaziabad	282	Faridabad	266
Noida	256	Greater Noida	241

■ Good ■ Satisfactory ■ Moderate
0-50 51-100 101-200
■ Poor ■ Very poor ■ Severe
201-300 301-400 >401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M., YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB

AAP, Cong meet to talk 'alliance'

Decision to be taken by Rahul, says Chacko even as some leaders oppose tie-up

JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ
DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Two days after Congress president Rahul Gandhi said that his party was "open and flexible" to alliances nationally, senior leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress met here on Thursday to discuss seat sharing, sources said.

A member of the AAP's Political Affairs Committee said that AAP senior leader and MP Sanjay Singh met All-India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary in charge of Delhi P.C. Chacko to initiate discussion on seat sharing on Wednesday. Mr. Singh had on March 19 met Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar, who was acting as a mediator, and offered to give two seats to the Congress in Delhi, four seats in Haryana and 10 seats in Punjab.

Seat-sharing discussion

A senior Congress leader said on Thursday that the only offer that had been discussed was for three seats each to the Congress and AAP and one common candidate on the seventh seat in



Former CM Sheila Dikshit flanked by party leaders during the release of the Delhi Congress party manifesto for the general election, at the head office on Thursday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Delhi. The AAP PAC member also said that the Congress had asked for three seats in Delhi, to which AAP had responded with its demand for seats in Punjab and Haryana. The matter would be discussed with the leadership of both parties internally, said the AAP PAC member.

Addressing a press conference on Thursday, when asked about talks of the alliance with AAP, Delhi Congress president Sheila Dikshit said, "We will remain as we are," without elaborating.

Mr. Chacko added that the final decision would be taken by Mr. Gandhi and that an announcement would be made if any decision to align is taken.

Ms. Dikshit and the three working presidents of Delhi Congress – Haroon Yusuf, Rajesh Liloithia and Devendra Yadav – have stuck to their stand of being opposed to any alliance and have launched their election campaign and have also been working on selecting candidates for all the seven Lok Sabha seats.

Mr. Yadav, who has been leading a 14-day cycle rally across the Capital, said that the minimum income guarantee scheme and other promises mentioned in the Congress manifesto have found favour with the common man and that the support for the rally has been received since it was launched on March 31 was proof that the Congress had the support of Delhiites and would win all the seven Lok Sabha seats.

Ahead of polls, safai karamcharis put political parties on notice

Call for stricter implementation of manual scavenging laws

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

How can this country be called a democracy when so many people are still being forced into this kind of dehumanising work? This is not a choice, our people are being forced



SUKUMAR
A core convenor of the Safai Karamchari Andolan

compensation, government jobs, pension, health, housing and education benefits.

Usha, a State-level convenor of the Andolan, said: "We don't simply want money, we want jobs. We want government jobs. That is what will bring real change to the community."

The manifesto calls for "government employment to at least one woman member in the household of every manual scavenger". "Employment in the government sector is a guarantee to socio-economic empowerment. When a woman has a permanent public sector employment, she will not only empower herself but her entire family and community," it said.

Green capping of landfill sites: NGT forms panel

Says process in violation of norms

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Thursday constituted a joint committee to look into a plea raising allegations of improper green capping of landfill sites in the Capital by civic bodies.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel constituted a committee comprising a former NGT expert member and officials from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The Bench directed the committee to submit a report within three weeks.

The plea moved by the Centre for Wildlife and Environment Litigation (CWEL) contended that the procedure of green capping undertaken by civic bodies are not in consonance with relevant solid waste management rules.

Stating that the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and civic bodies are in violation of rules pertaining

to rehabilitation of dumping sites in the national capital, the plea sought directions for a status quo on the green capping of the Bhalswa landfill site.

Water contamination

"The North Delhi Municipal Corporation, at the time of deciding adoption of green capping process has failed to realise that the said process will lead to contamination of groundwater in the national capital, as the said process has failed to address the issue of leachate process," the plea contended.

Stating that approximately 5% of the Bhalswa landfill site consists of hazardous waste, the plea added that green capping of the said area will be in violation of rules which state that "no person shall handle any hazardous waste except in accordance with such procedure and after complying with such safeguards as may be prescribed".

To the rescue



Delhi Fire Service personnel during a rescue operation after a building collapsed, killing two persons and injuring others, at Dilshad Garden in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY (SEE ALSO PAGE 3)

VVIP chopper case: ED files fourth chargesheet

42 accused chargesheeted so far

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday filed a fourth supplementary chargesheet in the money laundering case connected with the VVIP chopper deal bribery case.

Alleged middleman in the deal, Christian Michel, David Syms and Global Services FZE and Global Traders figure as accused in the chargesheet. Both Michel and Syms are directors of these companies.

Taking the probe report on record, Special Judge Arvind Kumar said that he would take it up for consideration on April 16.

So far, the agency has chargesheeted 42 accused in the case.

The ED has charged the accused persons with laundering of €70 million. With the filing of the fourth chargesheet, involving alleged laundering of €42 million, the probe agency has co-



Christian Michel
vered the total amount alleged to have been laundered.

Money laundered

The Enforcement Directorate charged that the money was laundered through multiple foreign companies which were used as front to park alleged bribe money.

Former Air Chief Marshal S.P. Tyagi is also an accused in the case. He is on bail, while Michel is in judicial custody.

Michel was arrested by the ED on December 22 last year after his extradition from Dubai.

Braving the heat, spirited women march for *azadi*

Demand freedom and an end to gender-based violence, raise voice against shrinking democratic spaces in current regime

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

"Several years have passed since the country got its Independence, but *azadi* for women is still a long way to go. Even today, stepping out of our houses, seeking employment or dealing with domestic issues has remained our biggest hurdle," said 50-year-old Usha Devi.

Ms. Devi, a housewife, was one of the hundreds of women who participated in the "Women's March for Change" on Thursday. Demanding an end to gender-based violence and raising their voice against shrinking democratic spaces, several women marched from Mandi House to Jantar Mantar.



Unstoppable: Women participants during the march from Mandi House to Jantar Mantar in the city on Thursday. ■ ANUJ ARORA

ly, our governments have hardly done anything to improve the safety of women. Governments come and go but sadly our situation has remained the same. We still need to think twice before

stepping out and keep worrying about our children's safety.

The march brought together diverse communities of women and transgenders, including students, activists,

lawyers, persons with disabilities and others.

Raising a call to "vote out" the current regime, activist Shabnam Hashmi said, "This time we really do not have any demands from the go-

This time we really do not have any demands from the government. Rather, we want women to vote out this government as it is anti-democratic, anti-women, anti-poor and anti-student

SHABNAM HASHMI
Activist

vernment. Rather, we want women to vote out this government as it is anti-democratic, anti-women, anti-poor and anti-student.

lawyers, persons with disabilities and others.

Raising a call to "vote out" the current regime, activist Shabnam Hashmi said, "This time we really do not have any demands from the go-

ASI jumps in front of metro train, dies

No note has been recovered: police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 46-year-old Delhi police officer allegedly jumped in front of a metro train at Jahangirpuri station on Thursday afternoon. No note has been recovered, the police said.

A senior police officer said that the deceased was identified as an Assistant Sub-Inspector who was posted in the communication unit of Delhi Police. The deceased, a resident of Narela Police Colony, belonged to Himachal Pradesh's Kangra district.

The police said that the officer allegedly jumped in front of the train which was on its way to HUDA City Centre around noon. "He jumped before the metro train at Jahangirpuri station this afternoon, following which he was taken to a nearby hospital where doc-

tors declared him brought dead," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Metro) Mohammed Ali. No note has been found so far, he said.

Health issues

During preliminary enquiry, however, the police said that the ASI was suffering from mental health issues and was being treated for the same back home at Dr. Rajendra Prasad Government Medical College in Kangra.

He was allegedly suffering from a kidney ailment due to which he was upset, the police said. The ASI is survived by his wife, 19-year-old daughter and 17-year-old son. He joined the police force in May 1994.

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday (10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.)

IN BRIEF



Drive to enrol third gender voters launched

NEW DELHI A special drive to enrol "left-out" third-gender voters was launched by Delhi CEO Ranbir Singh at Chandni Chowk on Thursday. The objective is to enrol the maximum number of such voters before April 13, the last date of enrolment. Currently, there are 673 such voters enrolled in Delhi, and there are only 72 in Chandni Chowk. Two NGOs which work with the community have been roped in to carry out door-to-door surveys to find the "left-out" third-gender voters. STAFF REPORTER

'Climate change a result of human activity'

NEW DELHI Climate change is not an abstract concept, but a direct consequence of human activity on earth, former NGT chairperson Justice (retired) Swatanter Kumar said. Addressing a conference on 'Adapting Environmental Laws for Effective Climate Response', he emphasised the need for inexpensive and expeditious environmental justice to mitigate the effects of climate change. PTI

North body organises health workshop

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The North Delhi Municipal Corporation organised a workshop on 'Tobacco free Delhi' and 'Prevention and Control of Vector-Borne Diseases' at the Town Hall on Thursday. The workshop was held for nodal teachers of the corporation's schools and Health Department staff, including Public Health Inspectors, Malaria Inspectors, field workers and domestic breeding checkers. Prevention and control of vector borne diseases, details of mosquito life cycles and prevention as well as work procedure of the malaria department were discussed. On tobacco control, legal provisions were discussed, the civic body said in a statement.

BJP alleges corruption in Delhi Jal Board

Urges L-G to order inquiry by ACB

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Alleging corruption within the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Vijender Gupta on Thursday urged Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal to order an inquiry by the Anti-Corruption Branch.

Addressing a press conference, Mr. Gupta said that after Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal took over the DJB chairperson's role in 2017,

Garment trader from Gujarat advertises Modi before every poll

Packaging soliciting votes is supplied from wholesale market in Chandni Chowk

SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

For at least the last six months, a women clothes manufacturer based in Ahmedabad, K. Anuj, has been packaging goods with pictures of Narendra Modi and messages such as "Vote for Modi" and "Nation with Namo". While the proprietors said that such packaging was stopped after the election dates were announced, their goods continue to be sold with the electioneering slogans in stores across Delhi and other parts of North India.

Complaint on cVigil

Ashok Randhawa, president of Sarojini Nagar Mini Market Association, who had filed a complaint on the packaging, through the Election Commission's cVigil app on Tuesday, said that no action had been taken even though a response time of two days was allotted. The status of his complaint on the app was "open" as on Thursday evening. Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) for the area, Rakesh Dahiya, said that the flying squad visited the area but had not



(Above and right) Pictures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi printed on clothes which have been put on sale at Katra Neel in Chandni Chowk. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

found anything so the complaint was disposed of. The complainant, Mr. Randhawa, however, maintained that he had been waiting for someone to turn up but no one did. "They are lying!" he said.

'Modi bhakt'

At the wholesale market in Katra Neel, Chandni Chowk, K. Anuj is a popular name. Divanshi Jain, a cloth trader says he is one of the top traders of women's suits in the country, selling mid-range goods that go for anywhere between ₹200 and 800. "He is a big Modi bhakt. He does this every time there are elections," says Divanshi.

Proprietor of the firm, whom *The Hindu* spoke to over the phone, said that similar packaging was undertaken during the last Gujarat elections as well as the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. While he claimed that there was no connection with the BJP, he said he did it because "Modi desh ko bacha dega [Modi will save the nation]".

Another trader at Katra Neel, Pradeep's, has taken to selling white and saffron cloth with pictures of the Prime Minister and the BJP symbol printed on those. Shopkeepers said that the clothes are used for kurta, pyjamas and Nehru jackets. "We have been selling these



for about a month now and will continue to till the elections are over. They are selling well, both to wholesale and retail customers," said one shopkeeper.

While some shopkeepers, who regularly purchased K. Anuj goods, claimed to have no knowledge of the matter, one small trader said that most of the goods he received had such messages even though he purchased only a handful of those.

"But we remove the packaging before showing the wares to the customers. It is our strategy to not let the competition know where our goods are coming from," he said.

Delhi govt not against hike in teachers' salary, says Sisodia

A false impression is being propagated by vested interests'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government was not against private schools increasing teachers' salaries, but some schools were trying to implement "unjustified fee hikes" in the garb of implementing the Seventh Pay Commission recommendations, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Thursday.

Mr. Sisodia, who is also the Delhi Education Minister, said a "false impression" was being propagated by "vested interests" that the Delhi government was against the implementation of the Seventh Pay Commission.



Minister Manish Sisodia during a press conference on the court stay on interim hike in fees by private unaided schools, in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

Requirement for increased salaries from their surplus, without increasing fees. The schools that wanted to hike fees were asked to take the DoE's permission, which would be given after their finances are audited and no surplus is found.

"The reasons behind this restriction are two-fold. First, these schools are situated on the land allotted by the Delhi Development Authority and therefore bear certain societal obligations. Secondly, the government is against the exploitation of parents and students due to higher fee structure," said Mr. Sisodia.

He further said that these details would be submitted to the High Court.

DDA land, 260 had applied for permission to hike fees, but 32 subsequently withdrew their applications, he said.

Audit of accounts

"During the audit of their accounts, it was found that nearly 150 schools had sufficient surplus to implement the Seventh Pay Commission and were therefore denied permission to hike the fees. Rest of the applications are under process," he said, adding that some schools were found to have surplus of about ₹40 crore.

BJP responsible for sealing : AAP

Centre could have brought an Ordinance to stop the drive'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The BJP alone was responsible for the sealing drive that started in 2017, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said on Thursday, a day after Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Puri said the Centre and the civic bodies had nothing to do with it.

In a series of tweets, Mr. Puri said on Wednesday that the sealing drive was being conducted on orders of the Supreme Court-appointed Monitoring Committee and that the government and municipal corporations, which are ruled by the BJP, were not responsible.

On Thursday, AAP New Delhi Lok Sabha candidate and AAP Delhi trade wing convenor Brijesh Goyal said that "the BJP alone is responsible" for the sealing as



The sealing drive began in the Capital in 2017. ■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

the Central government could have brought an Ordinance to stop it, but did not. "Today, there are 20,000 shops, factories and other spaces that are lying sealed. That means at least 20,000 families of the traders and lakhs of workers' families are affected. The Centre could have stopped the sealing with a simple Ordinance," Mr. Goyal said.

The shops were sealed for

various violations of the Masterplan 2021 regarding commercial activity. The Centre had, through the Delhi Development Authority, amended the Masterplan last year to give relief to those affected, but the Supreme Court had not allowed it. Mr. Goyal said the Centre had not made the case before the court properly, leading to the amendment being disallowed.

Skill on sale



Daily-wage labourers waiting to be hired at Hauz Qazi in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

Noida village tells its MP to stay out, protests show no sign of abating

Villagers blame him for a realty group reneging on its promises and for the many ills that hinder their development

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NOIDA

He adopted their village, represents them in the Lok Sabha after they broke tradition to vote for him, but Union Minister Mahesh Sharma is now strictly persona non grata in Kachera with slogans and posters making it abundantly clear he is not welcome any more.

The protests, which started following a standoff with a realty group and spilled into anguish over the lack of development in their area, have

been going on for the last six months, come rain, winter or summer and show no signs of abating. In October 2018, violent protests in Kachera village in western Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar bordering the Capital led to 86 locals being arrested after a standoff with a realty group.

The resentment still burns, deep and strong. The demonstrations since have been constant.

A poster declaring Kachera Varsabadi, Mahesh Sharma ke

god liye gaon mein BJP walon ka aana sakha mana hai (This is Kachera. The BJP's people are not allowed in this village adopted by Mahesh Sharma) is hung on a wall near their protest site and similar signages are seen at various entry points of the village. The anger, however, is directed primarily against Mr. Sharma, who they blame not just for the realty group reneging on its promises but also for the many ills that hinder their development.

Slogans like Modi tujhse

bair nahi, Mahesh Sharma ki khair nahi (Modi, we are not against you, but Mahesh Sharma will not be spared) can be heard often.

In 2014, Kachera, which has around 4,500 votes, broke away from tradition in the Nagar community-dominated region with 27 villages and voted for Mr. Sharma, a Brahmin.

Faced with the continuing anger against him, Mr. Sharma said the agitation in the village was due to political reasons. Locals said they had

sold their land to a private developer in 2010 and were given monetary compensation. They were also promised roads, drinking water, health-care facilities, community centres, a degree college, a sports ground and improved facilities crematorium. However, the only thing the developer did was build concrete roads. And this, too, was improperly done with roads in the interiors of the village getting clogged during rains, said Dharampal Singh, a retired school teacher.

Bhupendra Nagar (27) alleged that on October 26, 2018, the administration, in cahoots with the private developer, destroyed standing crops. When the locals resisted, they were beaten and 86 of them arrested. That day, some people from the village reached out to Mr. Sharma apprising him of the situation and he assured getting them released in a day. Our people were in jail for 13 days, he said. The villagers said they are still hurting from that injustice.

10 street dogs go missing: animal welfare staff, RWA at odds over issue

Animal welfare volunteers say the canines were captured at the behest of Uppal's Southend RWA, which denies allegation

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

The animal welfare volunteers are at loggerheads with Uppal's Southend Residents' Welfare Association (RWA) on Sohna Road here over the disappearance of around ten street dogs from its premises. The volunteers have lodged an online complaint with the police alleging that the dogs were beaten up and captured at the behest of the RWA and taken to undisclosed locations in sacks.

The RWA has, however, denied that it had anything to do with the incident. RWA president Ramesh Bhardwaj said that it was case of security lapse wherein some people from outside entered



The dogs were allegedly captured on Monday and Tuesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the township and took away the dogs in sacks, an argument which volunteers are not willing to buy.

The volunteers argued that the dogs were captured on Monday and Tuesday and it was difficult to believe that people from outside came to

the township on two consecutive days to catch the animals without the consent of the RWA.

Jain Foundation volunteer Smita said that the RWA, the existing security agency, Dayma Security; a new security agency to be soon hired by

the Uppals and the residents, who have been openly instigating matters, are responsible for it. She claimed that several children and residents were witness to the gruesome act of brutally catching the dogs and one such incident was also caught on the CCTV camera.

One of the residents, Jayati S., a freelance photographer, said that two men on a motorcycle caught Kalu, who lived on the street outside her house, on April 2. Ms. Jayati said that on being confronted, they told her that they were from the municipal corporation and had come to catch dogs at the request of the RWA. She said that she tried to confirm the same

from a woman RWA member known to her, but they had driven off with the dog by then.

One of the residents informed People for Animals about this on April 2 and a call was made from the office of the NGO's chairperson Maneeka Gandhi, who is also the Union Minister for Women and Child Development, to the RWA office.

When another Jain Foundation volunteer, Meenakshi Rajagopal, an animal rights activist, took up the matter with the RWA on Wednesday following the intervention of the PFA, the RWA lodged a complaint with Sector 50 police station and reported the street dogs missing. The pol-

ice have asked the residents to share the details of the missing dogs to help it find them.

Ajay, an accountant at the Uppal's Southend, said that street dogs was a big menace in the township and the dogs would often chase and bite people. Another resident, Jyoti Kaul, claimed that her maid was bitten by a dog sitting under a car while she was coming to work two days ago. Ms. Kaul claimed that the elderly and the children were too scared to step out of their houses, adding that the authorities needed to acknowledge the problem and find a solution to it. "It is a big menace. Mere sterilisation and vaccination are not solutions to it," said Ms. Kaul.

Six-day skill-testing programme at Mandoli

Sponsored by Ministry of Tourism

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Jamia Millia Islamia, conducted a six-day skill-testing and certification programme for the inmates of Mandoli Jail No.14. The training was organised as a part of capacity-building programme for 104 inmates of the jail who were involved in performing tasks related to cooking, service of food as well as jobs related to cleaning.

This skill certification has made the inmates learn about the standard operating procedure of food and beverage services and they were able to acquire knowledge on various aspects of the same." the university said.

IN BRIEF



Man dives into Yamuna, goes missing; probe on

NEW DELHI A 27-year-old man has gone missing after he allegedly dived into the Yamuna to collect coins with his friends, the police said on Thursday. They received a PCR call at 7 p.m. at Jamia Nagar police station regarding the incident following which divers and fire tenders were sent to the spot. Prakash, a resident of Jamia Nagar, could not be traced. The police have informed nearby stations about the incident.

STAFF REPORTER

Woman found dead; manhunt on for husband

NEW DELHI A woman was found dead in her rented accommodation in outer north Delhi's Bhalswa Dairy, the police said on Thursday. A senior officer said they received information on Wednesday morning regarding one Shazia Khatun lying dead. The police suspect that her husband killed her as he has been missing since the incident. A case under the section of 302 (murder) has been registered and a manhunt has been launched to nab the husband, they added. PTI

Man held for accidental firing in coffee shop

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 61-year-old man allegedly accidentally fired inside Starbucks, a coffee shop, in Connaught Place (CP) on Thursday afternoon, the police said. The accused has been arrested, they said.

Expired licence

Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Madhur Verma said Anil Kumar, a resident of Model Town, was carrying a pistol whose licence had expired in 2018.

The police said the weapon fell on ground accidentally and the shot was fired.

No injuries

No injuries were reported in the incident.

"A PCR call was received at 1 p.m. regarding accidental firing by a customer at Starbucks in CP's N block. When police reached the spot, a revolver with five live rounds and an empty cartridge was found on the spot," Mr. Verma said, adding that the accused was also present at the spot.

The police have registered a case under Section 336 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) of the Indian Penal Code and relevant sections of the Arms Act.

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Rajni Kothari Lecture: "Comparing Secularism - An East Asian perspective" by historian, Prajeet Dua. Chair: Rajeev Bhargava at Seminar Room, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 29 Rajput Road, 6 p.m.

Talk: Roundtable discussion on "Chinese Engagement in Africa - Perspectives from India". Convener: Veda Vaideyanathan, Research Associate, ICS; Chair: Amb. Nalin Surie, Distinguished Fellow, Delhi Policy Group, at Seminar Room, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, Teen Murti House, 10 a.m.

Exhibition: "Eyes Wide Shut", a solo show of paintings and sculptures on contemporary issues by Mohan Lustra at All India Fine Arts & Craft Society, 1 Rafi Marg, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Dainandin", a solo show of paintings by Bibhuti Dash at All India Fine Arts & Craft Society, 1 Rafi Marg, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

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

2 workers dead, 3 injured in Shahdara factory collapse

Fire department officials reach spot after rescue operation, allege locals

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two workers died while three sustained injuries after the factory where they were working collapsed in Shahdara's Seemapuri on Thursday morning, the police said.

They said the deceased have been identified as Baldev and Dharmender, both in their 30s, from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar respectively.

They were working on the ground floor of the double storey aluminum factory along with the injured - Raju Chaudhary, Mohd Shahbaz and Zumman.

The incident happened at around 11 a.m. when a part of the roof on the first floor collapsed, the locals said.

"A lot of construction work happens here. The workers were probably doing some repair work when the incident happened," said Sunil Kumar, who runs a dye factory just opposite the spot. Soon after the roof collapse, Sunil and about 15 others rushed to the spot to help the injured. Recalling the rescue process, he said the local police reached on time. However, teams of fire department and Department of Delhi Disaster Man-



Delhi Fire Service officials engaged in rescue work in Shahdara's Seemapuri on Thursday.

• R.V. MOORTHY

agement Authority turned up after the locals and the police rescued the victims, he said.

"It took us about two hours to pull the five persons from under the debris. There were iron rods and iron slabs in the debris, which were extremely heavy. After rescuing two persons, we realised another person was trapped," Sunil said. The third victim told us

that there were two more persons trapped inside, he added.

No equipment
"We saw one person who had an iron rod stuck inside and was also under the slab. As there was no other equipment to rescue him, we brought hydraulic, which is used to lift cars. We could only lift the slab a little. He was, however, dead by

then," Sunil said. All five were rushed to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital where Baldev and Dharmender were declared dead. The injured are undergoing treatment and are said to be out of danger, the police said.

"A case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code is being registered and necessary legal action will be taken," said a senior police officer.

Senior citizen found injured, naked in park

Police suspect sexual assault, probe on

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 61-year-old woman was found lying naked with injuries in a park in south-east Delhi's Lajpat Nagar on Wednesday morning, the police said on Thursday.

The police suspect that she has been sexually assaulted and got injured while trying to resist.

Rape charges

They have registered a case on charges of rape.

A senior police officer said a PCR call was received at 6 a.m. stating that an old woman is lying naked in the park.

On reaching the spot, they found the woman lying unconscious with a head injury.

"There were also bruises and abrasions on her body. She was taken to a hospital immediately," said the officer.

During enquiry, it was revealed that the woman, who appears to be mentally challenged, stays with her sister in East of Kailash.

Her sister is also mentally challenged, the police said. "The two, however, regularly visited the locality where the incident took

Man arrested for attacking girlfriend

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 22-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly trying to kill his 17-year-old girlfriend as he suspected her of infidelity in Shahdara's Farsh Bazar, the police said on Thursday.

An officer said Deepak Yadav from west Chajjupur attacked the victim with a sharp object on March 31. He was arrested on Wednesday.

The victim, a resident of Loni, told the police that she was in a relationship with Deepak, whom she had met about three years ago. "On March 31, Deepak took me to Bihari colony on his motorcycle. He accused me of talking to someone else and started fighting.

When I refused, he got angry and said he will kill me," she stated in the complaint. He then attacked the teenager with a sharp object on her throat and fled the spot. She then fell unconscious.

The police have registered a case under Section 376 (punishment for rape) of the India Penal Code.

 The victim has not been able to narrate the incident. Her sister is also not aware of the incident. The involvement of local ruffians is suspected. The woman is out of danger.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

place because their parental house, which is now sold, is there," the officer said.

The locals told the police that they often saw the woman in the park.

"The victim has not been able to narrate the incident. Her sister is also not aware of the incident. Involvement of local ruffians is suspected. The woman is out of danger," the officer said.

"There were also bruises and abrasions on her body. She was taken to a hospital immediately," said the officer.

During enquiry, it was revealed that the woman, who appears to be mentally challenged, stays with her sister in East of Kailash.

Her sister is also mentally challenged, the police said. "The two, however, regularly visited the locality where the incident took

12-year-old apprehended for killing minor boy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

A 12-year-old boy was apprehended on Thursday for allegedly killing a six-year-old boy in Sikanderpur on Tuesday here, the police said.

The police suspected the 12-year-old boy as he was last seen with the victim.

On being questioned, the JCL purportedly told the police that he had an altercation with the victim while they were playing with their friends following which he took him inside the jungle on some pretext and pushed him inside a pit.

At this the victim got injured and started bleeding. He then threatened to report it to his mother and get the JCL beaten up.

The JCL then hit him with a stone causing his death, the police said.

The police suspect that parts of his body were eaten up by animals.

No sexual assault
Gugugram police spokesperson Subhash Boken ruled out sexual assault.

Fifty shades of brown



A woman makes cow dung cakes at Haryana's Kunal village. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

HC tells AIIMS to set up panel on cause of Indian's death in Maldives

He died in 2016 allegedly due to medical negligence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed AIIMS to set up an expert panel to examine the forensic and post-mortem reports of a man, who died allegedly due to medical negligence in 2016 so as to determine the cause of his death.

Samples not traceable
A Bench of Chief Justice Rajendra Menon and Justice A.J. Bhamhani issued the direction after it was informed by the Maharashtra government, which had carried out the forensic examination and post-mortem of the deceased, that the viscera samples were not traceable and only the reports and the tissue samples were available.

The director of the concerned Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) in Maharashtra told the court that an enquiry was being carried out into the disappearance of the viscera samples which were available till January 2018.

The Bench, thereafter, directed FSL to handover all

on April 11.

The directions came on the plea by the deceased's father, Chelakara Ramaswamy, who has contended that his son died due to the medical negligence of the doctor - Dorjee Khandu - who treated him for food poisoning while he was staying at the resort at the Vilu Reef Island, which is more than 100 km away from Male, capital of Maldives, and can be reached only by sea planes.

He has also alleged that the J J Hospital at Mumbai, where the post-mortem was carried out, did not follow the procedure properly and gave a "sham report".

He has further claimed that the Final Cause of Death Certificate, issued by JJ Hospital was not in terms of the Maharashtra Registration of Births and Deaths Rules, 2000.

Senior advocate N. Hariharan, who has been appointed as an amicus curiae in the matter, told the court the doctor in Maldives was negligent as he had given certain medicines to Ramaswamy's son for stomach problems, which should never be given together.

HC stays order on intimation to blacklisted OCIs, foreigners

Centre had challenged single-judge order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has put on hold its single-judge order of August last directing the Centre to inform in advance all blacklisted Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders and foreigners that they would be denied entry into the country.

Disturbing feature'

The single judge had issued the direction after taking note of a number of cases being filed in the High Court on account of foreigners or OCI cardholders not being permitted entry into India when they arrive here and stating that the "disturbing feature" in each was that none of them had any prior intimation that they were blacklisted, despite having a valid visa.

The order was challenged by the Centre before a Bench of Chief Justice Rajendra Menon and Justice A.J. Bhamhani which said the directions given by the single judge on August 21 shall not be given effect to till May 1, the next date of hearing. In the August 21, 2018 order, the court had

directed the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to ensure that necessary directions are issued to all the officers, who are authorised to issue blacklisting orders, to inform the foreigners/OCI cardholders concerned that they have been blacklisted and their entry into the country would be denied.

The directions came while hearing a petition by a woman, whose husband - an OCI cardholder - was not allowed to enter the country despite having a valid visa. According to the petitioner, her husband is a person of Indian origin and had acquired the citizenship of the United Kingdom in 2006 after spending 17 years studying and working there. She had said that her husband, Naresh Satyamay Kumar, was invited to give a key note lecture at a medical conference in Amritsar between August 9 to August 11 and accordingly, both of them had travelled to India on August 8.

On arrival here, Kumar was denied entry and a notice was made on the passport that 'entry refused', her plea said. The court had challenged the single-judge order on the ground that the Centre had failed to provide any specific reason for the denial of entry to the foreigner.

The court had also observed that the Centre had not provided any specific reason for the denial of entry to the foreigner.

Money laundering: Deepak Talwar withdraws plea in HC

Claims his arrest since Jan was illegal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Deepak Talwar, an accused in a money laundering case, on Thursday withdrew from the Delhi High Court his plea in which he claimed that his arrest since January 30 was illegal.

Talwar's counsel sought to withdraw the habeas corpus petition while referring to a recent judgment of the Supreme Court.

Habeas corpus petition

The top court had said that a challenge to the order of remand is not to be entertained in a habeas corpus petition - a writ requiring a person under arrest to be brought before a judge or in court, especially to secure his release, unless lawful grounds are shown for his detention.

A Bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Vinod Goel allowed Talwar, a corporate lobbyist, to withdraw the petition and disposed of the matter. Advocate Tanvir Ahmed Mir, appearing for Talwar, said he would file a bail application in the trial court raising the legal and factual issues.

The court was hearing a

habeas corpus plea which claimed that his arrest and custody from January 30 onwards was illegal detention. He has alleged that his fundamental rights were violated by the authorities.

The court had on March 27, refused to entertain Talwar's prayer challenging the Constitutional validity of various provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), including the agency's power to arrest and the burden of proof.

Central government's standing counsel Amit Mahajan had informed the court that the challenge to sections 19 (power to arrest) and 24 (burden of proof) of the PMLA is pending consideration before the apex court.

The court had on March 27, refused to entertain Talwar's prayer challenging the Constitutional validity of various provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), including the agency's power to arrest and the burden of proof.

BND-NDE

Chopper case:
ED records
Ratul Puri's
statements

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday recorded the statement of businessman Ratul Puri in the AgustaWestland VVIP chopper deal case, said an agency official.

Mr. Puri appeared before the case investigating officer around 11 a.m. He has denied any kind of connection or involvement in any case.

On Wednesday, the ED informed a city court that it had summoned Mr. Puri, chairman of Hindustan Powerprojects Private Limited, for confronting him with Sushen Mohan Gupta, an accused arrested recently by the agency in the chopper deal case.

In a statement, Mr. Puri's company said: "He would be fully cooperating with the Enforcement Directorate probe and provide any clarification or information as may be required."

Trader fined ₹3 lakh for selling fake Louis Vuitton products

HC awarded another ₹9 lakh to luxury brand for expenses incurred in fighting case

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI



The trader admitted to "innocent use" of the name of Louis Vuitton Malletier for over 8-9 years. ■ FILE PHOTO

The Delhi High Court has imposed a cost of ₹3 lakh on a local trader operating in Sadar Bazar here for dealing in counterfeit products of French luxury brand Louis Vuitton.

Justice Sanjeev Narula held that the trader infringed on the trademark of the company, Louis Vuitton Malletier, by selling counterfeit wallets bearing the company's mark. The High Court also awarded Louis Vuitton another ₹9 lakh which it accrued while fighting the case, including lawyers' fees as well as amount spent on court fees.

Infringed on trademark

"The defendants (trader) are found to be guilty of infringing on the plaintiff's trademark and dealing with counterfeit products," the High Court said.

"The use of the plaintiff's

trademark by the defendants is certainly not bona fide and is being done only to cause confusion and deception in the mind of the general public and the consumers" it added.

Louis Vuitton Malletier, which opened its first exclusive retail outlet in India in 2003 in New Delhi, had moved the High Court against the trader for selling counterfeit products of the brand. It told the High Court that in addition to the use of the name 'Louis Vuitton' as a

trademark, the initials of Louis Vuitton, namely 'LV', represented in an intertwined manner has also been used as a trademark by the luxury brand since 1890. Louis Vuitton Malletier has been vigilant in protecting and safe-guarding its trademark rights from misuse by third parties, it added.

During a market survey conducted by investigator in September 2011, it came across the premises at Sadar Bazar which was dealing in counterfeit products bearing

its registered trademarks.

Before the High Court, the trader admitted to "innocent use" of the name of Louis Vuitton Malletier for the last over 8-9 years. It, however, choose not to participate in the trial.

The Local Commissioners, appointed by the court, who visited the two premises of the trader took into custody the wallets which were bearing the company's trademark.

Sought ₹1 crore damages

The luxury brand had sought damages of over ₹1 crore stating that the illegal and infringing activities have been going on for the last 8 to 9 years.

However, the High Court said that the reports of the Local Commissioners do not show the extent of the business operations of the trader for the court to arrive at the correct measure to award damages.

Thunderstorm, dust storm expected in the city today

Temperature may hover around 40 and 20 degrees Celsius

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

There will also be an increase in humidity due to moisture coming from the Bay of Bengal side due to the prevailing easterly winds over Indo-Gangetic plains

B.P. YADAV
Head, IMD's Regional Meteorological Centre

storm are expected because of a feeble western disturbance currently lying over east Afghanistan and adjoining Pakistan and a cyclonic circulation over Rajasthan," said head of the IMD's Regional Meteorological Centre B.P. Yadav.

"There will also be an increase in humidity due to moisture coming from the Bay of Bengal side due to the prevailing easterly winds over Indo-Gangetic plains

sius, while areas under Lodhi Road, Ridge and Ayanagar recorded a high of 38.4, 39.3 and 39 degrees Celsius respectively. The humidity level oscillated between 83 and 26%.

Partly cloudy

"The skies will be partly cloudy and there is a possibility of thunderstorm and dust storm on Friday. Heat wave conditions are likely at isolated pockets," the official said.

The Palam observatory recorded a maximum temperature of 40.4 degrees Cel-

"Thunderstorm and dust

Recall LOC against businessman, HC to CBI

Koneru is an accused in a corruption case involving meat exporter Moin Qureshi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed CBI to recall the Look Out Circular (LOC) issued against a Hyderabad-based businessman who is an accused in a corruption case involving meat exporter Moin Akhtar Qureshi and the agency's ex-director A.P. Singh.

Issued on May 16

Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal said since Pradeep Koneru, the businessman, has been regularly joining the investigation, there is no justification in keeping alive the LOC which was issued on May 16 last.

"Since the petitioner

[Koneru] has been regularly joining investigation, there is no justification in keeping the present Look-Out Circular dated May 16, 2018, alive. The same be recalled by the issuing authority," the court said.

The court also imposed certain conditions on Mr. Koneru, including that he has to join the probe as and when called by the investigating officer (IO) and cooperate with the CBI.

It also said that in case he has to travel abroad, he has to furnish to the IO the details of the country where he proposes to go, one week prior to the visit.

The High Court passed the order on Mr. Koneru's plea seeking quashing of the

two weeks in one month... The amount of ₹6 crore deposited by the petitioner in the court shall be kept in the form of FDR till March 31, 2021 on auto renewal basis," the court said.

Told to return passport
In case of any violation of the conditions by Mr. Koneru, the FDR will be forfeited and the CBI is at liberty to take appropriate recourse in accordance with the law, it said. It asked the trial court to return his passport and directed the High Court registry to communicate a copy of this order to the FRRO.

The High Court passed the order on Mr. Koneru's plea seeking quashing of the

LOC issued against him by the CBI in the corruption case.

The FIR, in connection with which Mr. Koneru was being questioned, was filed in 2017 by CBI after ED and Income Tax department's probe into money laundering and black money allegations against Mr. Qureshi allegedly revealed involvement of senior public servants.

The ED had written a letter to the CBI in this regard and it had in 2017 lodged an FIR against the meat exporter as well as its former director A.P. Singh, Mr. Koneru and several others.

Koneru is a prosecution witness in the ED case.

Siesta time



A cycle rickshaw puller takes a break after the day's work in the city on Thursday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

POOCH CAFE



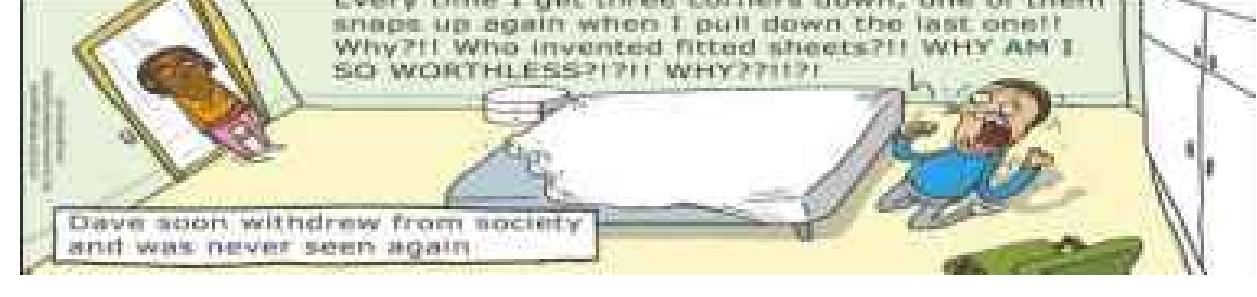
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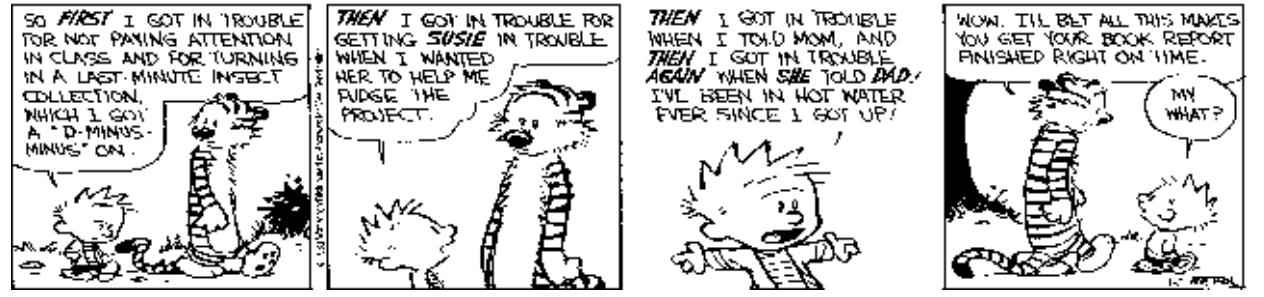
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



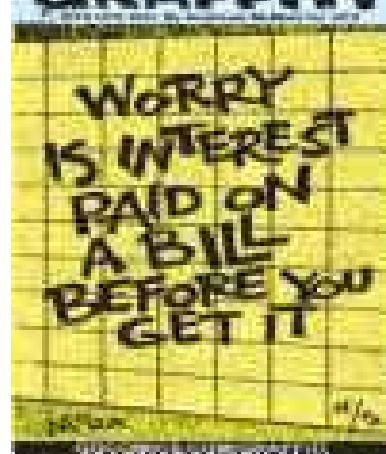
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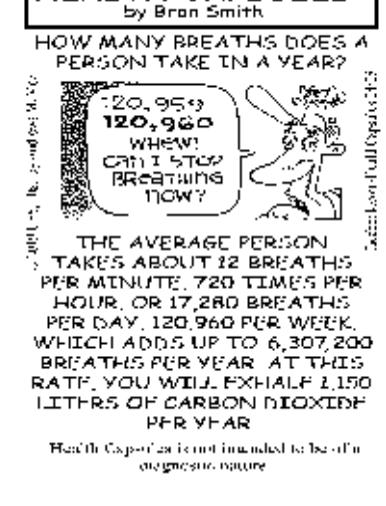
CALVIN AND HOBBES



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- 3 A pot of tea? (4)
- 4 Computer programs (12)
- 5 Difference of opinion (12)
- 6 Checked for drink-driving (6-6)
- 7 Grudge (12)
- 12 Sharply defined (5-3)
- 15 Daniel Defoe's castaway (6)
- 18 Coarse, ill-mannered person (4)

Solution will appear in Delhi Metro dated April 6, 2019.

Solution No. 13035

- Across
- 1 Bed, breakfast and one main meal (4,5)
- 8 Terms of reference (5)
- 9 Grants immunity to (7)
- 10 Upset (by a stirrer?) (8)
- 11 Chessman (4)
- 13 Breeding ground (6)
- 14 See pal (anag) - (6)
- charm (6)
- 16 Book of the Old Testament (4)
- 17 Living thing – man's giro (anag) (8)
- 19 The shakes (7)
- 20 Body of established rules or principles (5)
- 21 Cleanser (9)
- Down
- 1 Milliner (8)
- 2 Look suggestively (6)

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I only understand the road that involves unity'

Avengers: Endgame director Joe Russo on keeping secrets, fighting for one's beliefs and working with a stellar cast

DEBORAH CORNELIOUS

Contrary to what pop culture experts on the Internet will have us believe, *Avengers: Endgame* will not be shot from purple supervillain Thanos' point of view. That's all that I manage wrangle out of Joe Russo during our brief eight-minute chat. He did confirm what we know already: the film will focus on the original six: Captain America, Thor, Black Widow, Hawkeye, Hulk and Iron Man. And the film will be markedly distinct from its predecessor *Infinity War*. Russo was in town to promote the upcoming Marvel magnum opus that releases on April 29. It's the fourth film helmed by Russo and his brother Anthony following *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (2014); *Captain America: Civil War* (2016); and *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018). Clearly, *Endgame* isn't their first Marvel rodeo. The brothers Russo have previously, won accolades for their directorial effort on TV shows like *Community*, *Arrested Development* and *Happy Endings*.

When we met, earlier this week - Russo was weary, bordering on bored. It could be the jet lag he was nursing or the shocking factory line of interviews organised during the day. Plus, there was a star-spangled press conference later to release the A.R. Rahman Marvel anthem for *Endgame*. An overwhelming day, one that was enough to push polite chitchat into the furthest recesses of anyone's mind. "I mean you just have to ignore all that and shut it out," he

says about the impending outcome of what is possibly the biggest ensemble film in cinematic history with more than 30 characters. His replies emerge succinct, almost rehearsed. "I tell people to avoid the Internet when they're getting ready to watch one of these films. But at this point, it's in the universe's hands and I can't do anything to stop people."

Keeping secrets

It's when the topic of misleading fans through trailers comes up, that Russo becomes sharp-eyed. The brothers Russo might just pen another open letter like they did last April. Just before *Avengers: Infinity*

War, the two requested fans to "maintain the same level of secrecy so that all fans can have an equal experience when they watch it for the first time. Don't spoil it for others, the same way you wouldn't want it spoiled for you". Unfortunately, as we now know, fans are ruthless creatures bent on doing the opposite of what's asked of them.

The brothers Russo along with screenwriters Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely have spent three long years honing the script. The paranoia they harbour fearing pop cultural espionage is justified when considering the effort a Marvel film extracts. That, and the

boggling energy fans exercise in wanting more details before others. Predictably, *Endgame* trailers have been minutely dissected to a painstaking degree. "The most important thing for me as a filmmaker is to make sure that the people who want to be surprised [remain] surprised," he says adding that *Endgame* has even bigger and more secrets than the last film. "I want to protect that experience for them. There are a lot of people who want to ruin surprises and a lot of people who want [surprises] them now. I think patience is a virtue. If people are not happy with that then they don't have to go see the movie."

Incubating superheroes

The three-year scriptwriting process has crafted a three-hour long film. This, even though Russo declares his disdain for exaggerated run times. "We're wrapping up stories for characters and it's going to take time," says Russo.

so. "If you want emotional moments and investment in those characters, those take time to develop on screen." To put that in perspective, there are more than 30 characters with their own narratives that have to be dealt with. "We are very spoilt by the quality of the cast," smiles Russo adding that even Oscar winners have been excited to join the Marvel universe for a single day's work. Case in point, Anthony Hopkins and Benicio Del Toro are among the names the Russos have roped in.

In spite of the impact superhero films have in the realm of pop culture, the Russo brothers are known for the inclusion of real world themes. Take their second Marvel outing, *Civil War* which took a jibe at government control in the lives of ordinary citizens.

When it came to their *Avengers* films, the siblings explore the concept of a modern day common hero: standing up for what you be-

lieve is right. "We're in a time right now where a lot of people are questioning the collective future of the world," says Russo. Only looking out for yourself, your identity or even your own country is a path that will inevitably lead to isolation and worse yet, hatred. "I only understand the road that involves unity."

Though *Endgame* is quite possibly the Russos' most ambitious project, they're not slowing down. Next on cards is a small budget venture, *Cherry* with Tom Holland, (who plays Spider-Man in the Marvel universe).

"We're probably going to shoot this summer," says the director, excitedly for the first time since we're started chatting.

"[*Cherry*] is a true story,

about the opioid epidemic

that going on in America

right now," he says.

As we part, the relief is palpable with Russo perhaps even saying to himself, one down with a whole day's worth more to go.

PURPOSE Junking the junk

A citizen-activist group clears the ground for conversation around conservation of the environment



Wall-E, the sci-fi flick directed by Andrew Stanton starred a robot that compressed junk on a litter-filled earth of the future with its citizens housed away in luxurious starships. The message is relevant even today with increasing reports of the marine and terrestrial ecosystem being affected by manmade wastes.

Coming as a ray of hope, environment activists are taking up cudgels against littering of plastic and other non-biodegradable wastes on the planet. A case in point is Delhi-based TherelsNoEarthB, a group of volunteers who get together every Sunday to clean up areas in the city, as part of their unique awareness drive.

"We are a team of volunteers who believe that there is no other planet for us to destroy after we have destroyed this one. Because we have realised that directly approaching people (requesting them not to litter) is unlikely to work, we go with the Gandhian philosophy of indirectly influencing people by their observation skills working against their desire to litter. We don't have a leader or founder. People who come for the drive are the real stakeholders," says Dhrstudum, a member of TherelsNoEarthB.

Speaking about the varied group comprising bankers, wildlife photographers and students, he says, there's Rakesh Bhalla, a 65-year-old citizen activist who joins the group at the Connaught Place clean-up drive every Sunday, 6-year-old Adhiraj who is the youngest member, and Shruti, a teacher who also makes the posters. Volunteers come from as far as Ghaziabad, Faridabad and Gurugram.

Currently the group volunteers at Connaught Place and Deer Park, in Hauz Khas. The litter at Connaught Place is segregated and plastic is given for recycling while the rest of the waste is put in dust bins. "NIFT student's team Bin There Do That is working on an installation with plastic wastes collected at the Deer Park," Dhrstudum says. Volunteers also plant saplings during and participate in plantation drives.

"We plan to work in more areas. People are contacting us on Instagram." Next up are Gurugram and Bengaluru, he says. "We welcome people joining us. We don't accept donations. All you need to bring is your enthusiasm," says Dhrstudum.

The next clean-up drive is on Sunday, April 7, at 8:30 a.m. at Deer Park and 5:30 p.m. at Gate No. 6, Rajiv Chowk, Connaught Place. The group can be reached on WhatsApp (9868113891), Instagram and Facebook.

SYEDA FARIDA

PRODUCT

Cool threads



Lila is an all-natural-material clothing brand that sources its fabrics indigenously. They work in small batches, developing limited-edition designs for all body types - basically a slow-fashion that likes to interact with clients. Their current collection is inspired by Japanese minimalism and is made in handloom fabrics: cotton, linen and mulmul.

At 17, Ground Floor, Near Dada Jungi Lane, Shahpurjat; yourlila.com; ₹2,000 upwards

FOOD SPOT

Back to Bengal

Get nostalgic at Kolkata's Kopai, an eatery which serves dishes from Rabindranath Tagore's family recipes



RAHUL VERMA

I haven't holidayed in Santiniketan, though the university town has often figured on our list of must-visit year-end getaways. But I came pretty close to it during an extended food fiesta in Kolkata some days ago. I went to a restaurant called Kopai, which is the name of a river that flows past Tagore's idyllic town. And I had quite a memorable meal there.

For folks who visit Kolkata, I write about occasional restaurants in the eastern megapolis. I love Kolkata for very many reasons, chief among which (apart from the fact that some of my dear friends live there), is its food.

Kopai is off Sarat Bose Road, near the locality's post-office. It is a small place, with a basic but pleasing decor. The food is touted as Thakurbari'r ranna, essen-



The Bengali factor: A look into the interiors of Kopai; (right) Dhokar dalna ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

beef, to lamb and fish, to say nothing of greens and sweets. So, while in the city, I thought I would try out a restaurant that I had been reading about. I landed up there one fine afternoon, with friends and family.

Kopai is off Sarat Bose Road, near the locality's post-office. It is a small place, with a basic but pleasing decor. The food is touted as Thakurbari'r ranna, essen-

tially dishes that the Tagore family was known for. I could tell they had a mild 'West Bengal' touch. Food in Bengal is either 'East Bengali' or 'West Bengali', depending on who's cooking it. The former is - largely - spicier; the latter has a bit of sugar in its gravies.

We asked for a plate of begun bhaja (fried brinjal: ₹50), badaam jhurihuri aloo bhaja (crispy fried potato

with peanuts: ₹50), luchi (maida puris ₹80 for four), light masoor dal (₹70), chholar dal (channa dal: ₹90), shukto (a light vegetable mix: ₹90), dhokar dalna (steamed lentil cakes: ₹140), mutton curry (₹300), chintri malai curry (prawns in coconut milk: ₹250), rice and kacha aam (green mango) chutney (₹90). For desserts, we had mishti doi (₹50) and chhana bhollobhi (₹80).

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chana ballavi was a soft square of chhaina that had been fried brown and dipped in sugar syrup. And the mango chutney was a delectable mix of sweet and tart tastes.

There was a time when you couldn't get Bengali food in Kolkata. Then, a women's cooperative called Suruchi opened up, Peerless got known for its Bengali restaurant, and a well-known resident and feted cook opened a small eatery in her house.

Now there are scores of Bengali restaurants in the city. I must go and visit some of the small dhabas that I have heard so much about.

In these eateries - called Pice hotels - you get authentic, home-cooked Bengali food. It's no coincidence that the word for food in Bengali is similar to that for news. The first is khabaar, the second is khabor. Ki khabor translates into 'What news?' and Ki khabaar, into 'What food?'

THE WRITER IS A SEASONED FOOD CRITIC

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



PERFORMANCE

Instrumental music

Alliance Française de Delhi presents a musical concert "From Bach to Bhupali" this evening. Delhi-based Dutch cellist Saskia Rao-de Haas will play Indian cello and child prodigy Ishaan Leonard Rao will perform on the piano. This rare mother-son duo has already enthralled audiences in Australia, France and Bengaluru.

VENUE: M.L. Bhartia Auditorium, 72, Lodi Estate

TIME: 6:30 p.m.



CARNIVAL

Kids' Fair

Galaxy Cinevision is hosting Kids Fair Gurgaon, an event dedicated to children and families. This biannual three-day extravaganza will include activities like adventure games, fun learning activities, group competitions, art and crafts, quizzes and science exhibits, fun rides, live music and food courts.

VENUE: Obstacle Park, Sector 48, Gurugram

TIME: 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.



MUSIC

Raga Utsav

The Odishi Raga Utsav is the annual endeavour of Guru Gopal Panda Odishi Academy. The two-day festival celebrates Odishi ragas and raginis, through solo, duet, group presentations in vocal and instrumental music and dance. This year there will be performances by Sangita Panda, Madhavi Mudgal and Jyoti Shrivastav.

VENUE: Triveni Kala Sangam, Mandi House

TIME: 6:30 p.m.



BEVERAGE

Summer special

Kiara Soul Kitchen, a vegetarian dining restaurant that serves modern Asian food, is hosting a special menu through summer. In order to beat the heat, the restaurant offers a bunch of summer drinks such as watermelon Martini, mango mojito, mint blast, fruit mixture, special aam panna sorbet, and more.

VENUE: M-30, Greater Kailash Part-II

TIME: 12:30 p.m. - 11:30 p.m.



CONCERT

Classical music

The Anirudh Varma Collective, in association with Swarit Foundation, is hosting 'Classical Re-Imagined', the third edition of its Live Concert series this evening. Led by the pianist and composer Anirudh Varma, the project brings together over 70 talented musicians trained in Carnatic, Hindustani classical and jazz music.

VENUE: Sri Sathy Sai Auditorium, Lodhi Road

TIME: 6 p.m.

Bihu, Assam

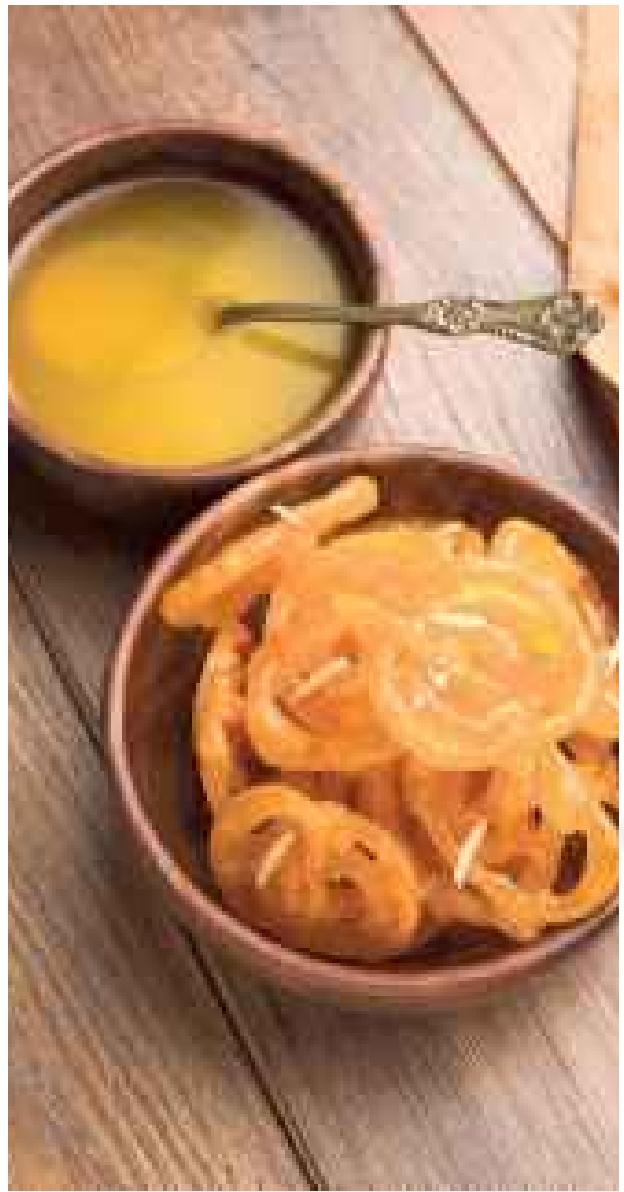
There are three variants of the festival, and April is the time for Rongali or Bohag Bihu, says NorthEast food blogger Puspanjalee Das Dutta. In Assam, this is the beginning of the harvest cycle. "Upper Assam, which has more tribals, rings it in differently than Lower Assam. The former celebrates Bihu over seven days – day one is dedicated to the animals and on day seven, people offer Bihu Ura."

When it comes to food, Pittha (sweet rice crepes) rules the roost for Bihu, as does Laru (laddoo). In Lower Assam, people eat neem leaves and raw turmeric on an empty stomach. Dried harp chirota (a native plant) is soaked overnight and its bitter juice drunk. "It is possible these were consumed, because both turmeric and neem leaves are bitter and help clean the gut," says Dutta.

While rice is had only for dinner, they make a delicious laddoo of coconut, til and jaggery. Dutta adds, across Assam, people eat a dish made of 101 leafy greens and herbs.



■ GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK

**Baisakhi, Punjab**

Retired school teacher Mohinder Kaur, 73, is eagerly awaiting Baisakhi (April 14). This is when farmers delight in seeing the plants on their farm heavy with golden wheat, or bulbous sugarcane ready for harvest. Kaur lives in Raikot sub-tehsil in Ludhiana district and says almost all the dishes cooked for Baisakhi have a wheat connect.

"We make jalebi, mithai, pakode, gulgule (roti dough allowed to ferment, mixed with saunf, soda and sugar and fried into pakodas), and jaggery-coated shakkarpura. We also make meetha chawal with jaggery and rice," says Kaur.

Food columnist Rahul Varma says that all harvest festivals such as Baisakhi, Poila Boisakh, Bohag Bihu, Ugadi and Vishu celebrate what is reaped. Which is why, this festival in April is marked with dishes prepared from wheat or rice. "There's meetha chawal (sweet rice) in the North or payesh (thickened milk with rice) in Bengal, Assam, Odisha and elsewhere in the East. You will also find laddoos – prepared with coconut in the East, and often with besan in the North."

Something sweet, something sour

Opposing flavours merge seamlessly as different regions in the country celebrate the New Year

SUBHA J RAO

**Gudi Padwa, Maharashtra**

After weeks of looking at mango trees and seeing the blossoms bloom, young mangoes take shape. In Maharashtra, tradition has it that mangoes must be eaten only in the month of Chaitra, which begins on Gudi Padwa, shares chef and author Saeed Koranne-Khandekar. Simple but popular dishes for this festival are ambyachi dal or kairichi dal, besides puran poli.

In the gudhi (a pole hung in the window with a silk cloth and the sugar garland

and neem), neem paste and boiled sugar sweets such as batashe are hung. Dessert is as always shrikhand, filled with cooling yoghurt, says Khandekar. Delhi-based nutritional consultant Sangeeta Khanna speaks of how all traditional food is nutritious by default. In the neighbourhood, eastern UP and Bihar delight in sattu made of jau (barley) and chana (gram). If you're ever in the region check out farms where they roast tender wheat and serve it with jaggery and ghee.

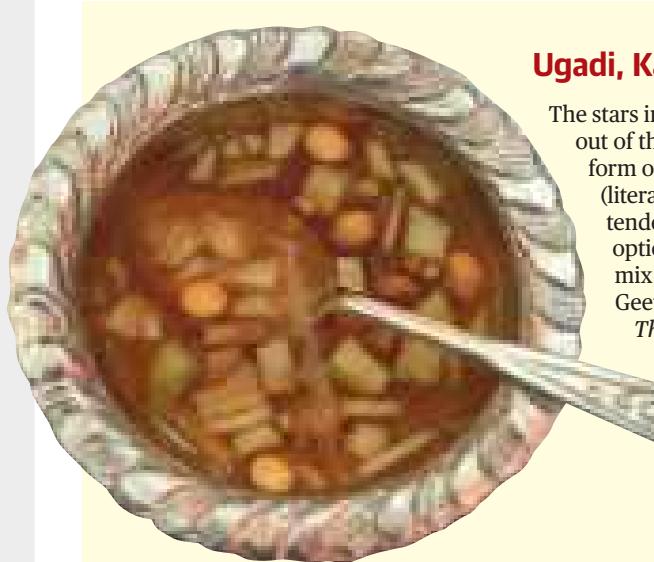
Puran poli**INGREDIENTS**

(For the dough)
1 cup Maida
1/4 cup Water
(For puran the OPOS way)
100 grams Chana dal
soaked

Jaggery

METHOD
Mix the ingredients under dough to form a sticky dough. Add two tablespoons of oil and mix well; this lends it elasticity. Set aside. In a two-litre pressure cooker, add three spoons of water and drained dal. Cook on high flame for four to five whistles. Let it settle. Open and cool the dal before mashing it. Mix in the jaggery. Shape into balls. Divide the dough into 10 portions. Roll out each partially, place the puran, close and roll into thick polis. Cook evenly on both sides with ghee.

Recipe courtesy: Roopa Raghav

**Ugadi, Karnataka**

The stars in the menu are newly harvested rice, dal and jaggery fresh out of the cooking vat. There's also a dash of tangy raw mango, in the form of mango rice. A must during Ugadi in Karnataka is bevu-bella (literally translates to neem-jaggery), a semi-liquid concoction of tender red-green neem leaves, white flowers, jaggery and, optionally, some finely chopped mango. This bitter-sweet-sour mix is supposed to reflect life with all its highs and lows. Author Geetha Rao, who co-wrote with her mother Malati Srinivasan

The Udupi Kitchen, a cookbook on Madhwa cuisine in the Udupi belt, has fond memories of eating sihi huggi, a sweet dish similar to Tamil Nadu's sakkarai pongal, and holige (puran poli) made using dal, jaggery and coconut inside flattened dough. "The use of rice and dal is expected because they have just been harvested; the same holds true for jaggery," says Rao.

AROUND THE WORLD**GoT Cookies?**

The return of the HBO fantasy series *Game of Thrones* for its final season has brought with it some news for cookie lovers. So we have seen *Game of Thrones* beer, wine and liquor, and this year, with the news of Mountain Dew releasing a ghostly can, one also got to hear that Oreo would be releasing *Game of Thrones* cookies to celebrate the series. The cookie company officially announced, *Game of Thrones* Oreos as the company's 'largest limited-release to date'. The cookie itself is just a standard chocolate-wafer-and-creme-filling; but instead of the typical Oreo design, the GoT Oreos are embossed with the sigils of famous families in George R R Martin's fictional universe – think House Stark, House Targaryen, House Lannister, and one dedicated to the Night King.

**Fools for food**

Food lovers on Monday (April 1) couldn't stop talking about the beer-mix pouch unveiled by a popular Indian beer company. The minute the video, sporting a fairly decent production value, was uploaded on WhatsApp and social media, beer-lovers were quick to doggedly search for said pouch like a treasure hunt. The hunt and excitement ended only when a news bit was released announcing it was an April Fool's Day joke. That's not all... fans of David Chang on Instagram were taken by surprise, thanks to a dazzling video of the chef announcing the opening of Korean Pizza Kitchen. In his post, he mentioned he was teaming up with two of the greatest bakers – Chad and Chris – and also offering up their unique 'round bread'. Most netizens were, however, quick to identify the joke.

Thandai in my chocolate

Fabelle, exquisite chocolates by ITC, is adding an Indian twist to chocolate. They now have traditional flavours like thandai, alongside saffron and raspberry and coconut. These flavours are limited-edition chocolate creations from the brand this year, says a press release. The thandai chocolate creation is said to be crafted with a splash of thandai-infused milk chocolate ganache and crunchy almond bits, while the saffron chocolate creation comes with a hint of saffron infused with a dash of pistachio slivers into white chocolate ganache. The raspberry and coconut chocolate creation is made with a combination of intense raspberry coulis, raspberry ganache and buttery, roasted coconut crunch mixed into Fabelle white chocolate. The chocolate range of limited edition chocolate creations is available in a box of three and a box of six at a price of ₹400 and ₹800, respectively. These will be available across chocolate boutiques inside select ITC hotels in the country.

The secrets of Awadh

Mohsin Qureshi, an expert on Lucknowi fare, attributes the finesse of his cooking style to *ustaads* and *khansaamas*

SHIBANI BAWA

Chef Mohsin Qureshi is an expert in Awadhī cuisine. The 31-year-old chef can boast of an enviable work experience at some of the leading hotel chains in India. He attributes the finesse of his cooking style to his lineage, *ustaads* and *khansaamas* from whom he "learnt the secrets of this cuisine".

Hailing from the Qureshi family, Mohsin's early years were spent at his uncle's restaurant, Shahid (in Lucknow's Lal Bagh). This is where he "learnt the nuances of Awadhī fare. Almost all the Qureshis worked or trained at this family-owned restaurant, including the celebrated chef Imtiaz Qureshi," he shares.

Mohsin spent two years at the restaurant and accompanied his uncle who catered for high-profile weddings and events, "learning on the job".

Mohsin's professional journey with hotels began with the Taj group in 2007, fol-

lowing which he worked at restaurants such as Masala Art at Taj Palace (New Delhi), Paatra at Jaypee Siddharth, Fire at The Park, Caraway at The Grand New Delhi and Dhaba by Claridges.

Currently, the executive sous chef at Lebara Lucknow, Mohsin claims his forte lies in perfecting the delicate flavours and specialised techniques of Awadhī cuisine.

He is on a mission to revive forgotten recipes, "especially

those that are on the verge of dying". One dish he is particularly proud of recreating is the *majlis* kebab. "Also known as *ghutwaan* kebab, this was a special delicacy that was served during long hours of *majlis* or social gatherings, where people sat together for hours discussing issues ranging from religion and culture to politics," he explains.

"The kebabs were made with

finely-minced mutton cooked on

dum using the slow-cooking

technique. Today, chicken tikka,

galawat kebabs and *sheermal*

are served at such events as

'ghutwaan' kebabs require lengthy marination as well as a long cooking time," adds the chef.

He explains how he has re-created the signature kebab. "It

has marinated minced meat,

which is sealed with *sheermal*

roti instead of plain dough, and is cooked in a small earthen container on a wood fire. As we dig in, we are treated to perfectly-spiced kebabs that melt in our mouth, leaving behind a lingering flavour of fine meat and a mélange of spices. There is another version with bone marrow to make it even more succulent, says Mohsin, who is also known for his *baghaare baigan*, *kheer*

ma stuffed karelas and *singhaare ki subzi*.

According to him, "If the chef is not experienced in slow cooking, dishes can be undercooked or overcooked, spoiling the entire preparation."

As he serves us samples of these, we are left asking for more. Achieving these skills is no easy feat, says Mohsin, who decided to become a chef when he

If the chef is not experienced in slow cooking, dishes can be undercooked or overcooked, spoiling the entire preparation



Digging into the past: Chef Mohsin Qureshi ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

was 14, following the footsteps of his father and grandfather. "I wanted to take the family legacy forward," he states.

His grandfather was a *khansaama*, honoured by Queen Elizabeth II. His father cooked and travelled with some of the top Indian political leaders. Mohsin too has followed suit, and has today's politicians and Bollywood stars eating out of his hand.

VALUE MEAL

In royal Mughal kitchens, each grain of rice was reportedly coated in silver flecked oil, to aid digestion and act as an aphrodisiac.

