

on Sunday



PDP leader Naeem Akhtar booked under stringent PSA
page 10



Thai soldier kills 20 in shooting rampage inside shopping mall
page 12



Jamieson makes a grand debut as Kiwis seal ODI series
page 17



India takes on Bangladesh in u-19 World Cup final
page 17

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NEARBY



Two killed in cracker explosion in Punjab

CHANDIGARH
Two persons were killed and nine injured when firecrackers loaded in a tractor trolley exploded during a religious procession in Tarn Taran district of Punjab on Saturday. Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has asked the SDM to conduct a thorough inquiry.

NATION ▶ PAGE 9

Kamal Nath warns RSS workers of legal action

BHOPAL
Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath on Saturday warned RSS workers of legal action if they went ahead with their plan to "coerce" the tribals of the State into declaring themselves Hindus during the 2021 census. "I'll not allow the RSS to go ahead with its plan, at any cost."

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

One dead as three-storey building collapses

CHANDIGARH
One person died while three were rescued from the debris of a three-storey building that collapsed on Saturday in Kharar town of Mohali district in Punjab, the police said. "The building came down when a JCB machine was digging an adjacent plot," said Mohali SSP Kuldeep Singh Chahal.

NORTH ▶ PAGE 7

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Exit polls predict AAP's return in Delhi

Voting peaceful but turnout dips to 61.67%; Shaheen Bagh bucks trend with large numbers

JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ

NEW DELHI

Delhi's reported voter turnout declined to 61.67 on Saturday, from the 67.13% recorded in the 2015 Assembly election.

Polling passed off peacefully despite the run-up to the election witnessing several vitriolic campaign speeches and three incidents of firing at anti-CAA protest sites. Union Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur was barred from campaigning for three days for exhorting "traitors" to be shot.

As polling began, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal made a request to women voters to go out and vote.

"Just as you shoulder the responsibility at home, likewise, the responsibility of the country and Delhi is on your shoulders. Also take the men in your family out to vote and discuss with them who is the right person to vote for," he tweeted. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who spearheaded the BJP's campaign, appealed on Twitter to the people of Delhi to

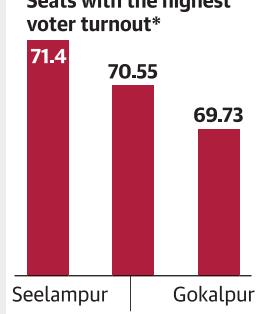
Back with a bang

Exit polls predicted that the AAP would cross the majority mark of 36 seats, and the BJP would improve on its 2015 tally

Source	AAP	BJP+	CONG+
India Today Axis	59-68	2-11	0
Times Now-Ipsos	47	23	0
ABP News-C Voter	51-65	3-17	0-3
TV9 Bharatvarsh-Cicero	54	15	1
Republic TV-Jan Ki Baat	48-61	9-21	0-1

*As of 10.20 p.m. on Saturday

Seats with the highest voter turnout*



A youngster and her grandmother after casting votes in Delhi.
■ SANDEEP SAXENA

vote to "free Delhi from lies and vote bank politics".

At the New Delhi constituency, President Ram Nath Kovind, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh were among those who voted. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra cast her vote along with her son Rehan, a first-time voter.

Protests continue
Voters in Shaheen Bagh, the epicentre of anti-CAA protests, turned up in large num-

bers to exercise their franchise.

With Shaheen Bagh being used as a punching bag by the BJP during the bruising campaign, several voters present outside polling stations said that it was time for the Hindu-Muslim discourse to end.

In a bid to ensure that the Shaheen Bagh dharna continued, women protesters took turns to vote, with some arriving after spending the entire night at the protest site while others headed

there soon after casting their vote.

There was heavy presence of paramilitary forces in the Okhla constituency as Shaheen Bagh had been declared a "critical" area by the Chief Electoral Officer.

A 50-year-old polling officer on duty in northeast Delhi's Babarpur reportedly died of a heart attack after he fell sick at the polling station, an hour before voting began.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

BJP likely to gain over 2015 tally

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is set to return to power for another term with a big win, based on the projections of all major exit polls.

The counting of votes will take place on February 11.

A poll of polls done by NDTV showed AAP winning 56 of the 70 seats, a drop from its tally of 67 seats in 2015, while the BJP was projected to win 14 seats, a jump from the three seats won by the party in the last Assembly election.

The Congress's bad run in the national capital was expected to continue with the poll of polls showing the party drawing a blank.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10



Warm welcome: Sri Lankan PM Mahinda Rajapaksa with PM Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

Modi flags Tamil concerns to Mahinda

Sri Lankan PM remains non-committal

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Sri Lanka wants India to allow debt repayments by Colombo to be deferred for three years, visiting Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said, in order to help the country deal with its massive debt burden.

The issue was at the top of the agenda when Mr. Rajapaksa met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi on Saturday and discussed plans to utilise a \$400 million Line of Credit extended by India.

Speaking to the media after their bilateral talks at Hyderabad House, Mr. Modi said he had raised the issue of post-LTTE war reconciliation with Sri Lanka's Tamil population chooses, he added. "We want to go forward, but we need to have someone to discuss, who can take responsibility for the [Tamil] areas. So the best thing is to hold elections, and then ask for their representatives to come and discuss the future with us," Mr. Rajapaksa said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10
'WE CAN CONVINCE OTHERS'
TOO ▶ PAGE 11

AAP, BJP leaders locked in war of words

Manoj Tiwari says Kejriwal insulted Hinduism; god belongs to all, says Delhi Chief Minister

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

As the people of Delhi stepped out of their homes to vote on Saturday, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and BJP Delhi president Manoj Tiwari sparred on Twitter over the Chief Minister's temple visit.

Mr. Tiwari stated that Mr. Kejriwal "insulted" the Hindu religion.

The AAP chief hit back, saying god belongs to everyone and may god bless all,



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal.

Yesterday I went to the Hanuman temple. Today BJP lead-

ers are saying that the temple was defiled by me going there. What kind of politics is this? God belongs to everyone. May God bless everyone, even people from BJP," Mr. Kejriwal said in response.

Sanjay Singh's charge

Hitting out at the BJP, AAP MP Sanjay Singh said, "The BJP considers Arvind Kejriwal an untouchable. Manoj Tiwari has said 'Kejriwal de-

filed Bajrangbali by worshiping Hanumanji.'

Why so much hatred? I appeal to the people of Delhi to give a reply to the BJP, which considers your son an untouchable."

Mr. Kejriwal and Union Minister Smriti Irani also got into a war of words on Twitter on Saturday over his tweet urging women to discuss with men about the right person to vote for.

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 4 & 5



In the grip of fear: People wearing masks leaving a subway station in Hong Kong. ■ AP

Coronavirus death toll in China rises to 722

Nearly 35,000 people infected globally

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING

The death toll from the novel coronavirus outbreak soared to 722 in China on Saturday, including the first foreign victim, as Hong Kong imposed a mandatory quarantine on mainland arrivals to block the spread of an epidemic that has caused global panic.

With 86 more people dying in mainland China – the highest one-day jump so far – the toll was closing in on the 774 killed worldwide during the 2002-03 SARS epidemic.

The epidemic has prompted the government to lock down cities home to tens of millions of people, as anger mounts over its handling of the crisis, especially after a whistle-blowing doctor fell victim to the virus.

tizen of Chinese origin. A Japanese man in his 60s, with a suspected coronavirus infection, also died in hospital in Wuhan, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said, adding that it was "difficult" to confirm if he had the illness. The only fatalities outside the mainland were a Chinese man in the Philippines and a 39-year-old man in Hong Kong.

Nearly 35,000 people have been infected globally with the new strain, which is believed to have emerged in a market selling wild animals in Wuhan last year.

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LET'S FOLLOW THE FOOT STEPS OF VALLUVAR IN NURTURING THE TRADITIONAL FARMING

-A.D.PADMASINGH ISAAC



Tradition is the life line for any culture. The traditional agricultural practices and food habits are deeply rooted in our tradition. Need no mention that both are forgotten halfway. For the first time the need to revisit our traditional practises of



Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman,
The Honourable Minister of Finance

agriculture and food habits was voiced in the parliament by a Tamilian lady and we are proud that, it is the voice of Tamilnadu—our Honourable Minister of Finance, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman. She has raised this issue with concern, keeping in mind the deteriorating Indian lifestyle to bring about this awareness amongst us. She echoed the sacred verses of Thirukkural “PINIYINMAI SELVAM VILAIVINPAM EMAM” “ANIYENPA NAATTIV VAINDHU” to put forward her message, which means that “A country’s jewels are these five: **unfailing health, Fertility, joy, a sure defence, and wealth**. Pertinent in this verse is that “**The life without diseases is well lived**”. This essentially is the bottom line that reflects our Tamil culture “**Food is our Medicine**”.

Thiruvalluvar, the fourth century divine poet and philosopher always felt that agriculture is the back bone of any country, and the farm produce not only helps the farmer to be independent and happy, but also significantly contributes to the development of the households and contributes to the country’s economy. His far sightedness is evident from the fact that he stated “**A country that is healthy, wealthy and has a strong agricultural background is bound to be successful**”. Thirukkural thus is timeless and has infinite application to the entire universe.

The **novel coronavirus** that originated from China struck disaster over 30 countries due to its impact. Statistical records have exposed the fact that Indians have been excessively diagnosed with diabetes, breast and cervical cancer on a global comparative basis. It is found that everyone in eight women and one in nine men are affected by cancer. Besides these, Indians are also prone to obesity, thyroid and heart diseases. The solution to overcome these diseases lies in pesticide free farming and our food habits only. The then fertile agricultural lands have been ravaged by the excessive use of chemical based fertilizers that have done more damage than good to all. Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman’s words bring to life the famous quote of Avvaiyar “**Bhoomi Thiruthi Un**” which means “Tend to your land, do not be excessive and then reap your harvest”.

Instead of using artificially created chemical pesticide and inviting health issues as consequences, it is emphasised that the traditional practices of using natural herbs like neem oil, neem cakes, cow dung and cultivating lands using manures, vermicompost, Jeevamirtham and panchkavyam be promoted. This will be the most noble deed that we could do to our soil, which shall go a long way in promoting the good health in our offspring’s too. The earth worms need to be infused naturally into the soil to create pesticide free farm produce. In nutshell it means that Traditional farming practices and healthy food habits will always lead to live a healthy life that will be free of diseases. Today artificial colours are rampantly used to create a sense of naturality in food products. Aachi promotes and advocates use of vegetables such as turmeric, red chillies, greens and different varieties of capsicum that naturally creates the required colour for the food we consume. Aachi has considered the use of artificial colours as a challenge to humankind and save it from the bad consequences. Aachi believes in promoting natural food coloration init and has its tagline as “**VEETIL SA-MAIPOM-UNAVAL INAIYOM**”.

Not long ago to say, just four decades ago, a typical villager lived in an ecology that was surrounded by farm, greenery, cows, sheep and hens. That was the natural habitat. These families depended solely on agriculture and worked on their farms with passion. The agricultural and house hold waste were used as natural recycled manure for their own agricultural use, thereby improving the lands fertility on one hand, and the quality of the produce on the other, which was not pesticide infused. This led to an independent and healthy life style of the people those days.

The paradigm shift in the human attitude towards the Mother Nature has created concrete jungles that are totally dependent on electrical appliances & non-renewable sources of energy, which in turn has led to ozone depletion and has made the world warmer. The melting glaciers are the warning signs of the disaster in waiting. We in the process have lost self-sufficiency and have become more dependent on artificial ecology.

The unwarranted and excessive use of chemical based fertilizers have destroyed the natural fertility of the soil, and in turn caused an array of diseases to mankind. The fast paced pollution in air, water and soil have negatively affected not only mankind, but also animal and birds alike. We are now faced with the pressing need to identify not only the problems due to this, but also feasible solutions for the same.

The records of the **International Nitrogen Initiative** have revealed that approximately **1.7 crore tons** of Nitrogen based chemical fertilizers have been used by Indian farmers. Unfortunately, only 30% of this has been used productively, while **70%** have shocking impacts—in terms of making agricultural lands barren, affecting wildlife and water bodies too adversely. This pollution has created havoc on the ecology and led to a host of diseases to mankind.

A one-stop solution to solve all these problems lay in **implementing traditional farming practices by discouraging excessive use of pesticide**. Use of **bio-degradable waste** and practising **vermicomposting** helps to improve the fertility of the agricultural lands. The alarm bells have already rung and it’s time for us to wake up and take conscious steps to adopt natural cultivation techniques in agriculture. Though not scientifically proven, it is observed that, including nutritionally enriched vegetables and fruits in our homes, helps to bond families through a healthy food cul-

Avvaiyar and is meticulously executed by a farmer more fully known as “**Nalla Keerai Jegan**”, who cultivates nearly 40 varieties of greens through his traditional farming practises. Added to this is that the late **Agricultural Scientist, Sir Nammalvar**, has been the **source of inspiration** for the creation of “**Nalla Keerai**” to evolve. Because of this, the greens so cultivated have been trademarked, thus helping to make traditional food habits a reality. Mr. Jegan’s initiative “**Nalla Sandhai**” which means a “**Genuine Market**” has over 2000 registered traditional farmers to its effort. Nal-



SAFEGUARDING HEALTH THROUGH FOOD IS A CHALLENGING TASK.

AACHI STRIVES TO OVERCOME THIS WITH ITS SERVICE TO MANKIND AND ITS SOCIAL INITIATIVES

ture. Today artificial colours are rampantly used to create a sense of naturality in food products. Safeguarding the health through use of quality food products is a growing challenge. Aachi Group of Companies takes great pride in **sourcing quality farm produce** that form the essential ingredients in manufacturing its **masalas, spices, spice mixes and food products** from farmers across India and motivates



Traditional cultivation practices adopted by Aachi and which is implemented successfully by “Nalla Keerai” Jagan

la Sandhai serves and integrates the farm produce from these farmers at fair prices and distributes them to customers. It is no wonder that they have become popular traditional farm producers in Tamil Nadu.

Through this Aachi has created a **Farmer-Food Processor interface** making the concept of **doubling farmer’s income** and to direct its effort to **provide the customers, pesticide free food products**. Thus Aachi is marching forward successfully towards reaching its vision of “**A HEALTHY INDIA**”.

Article :

A.D.Padmasingh Isaac
Founder & Chairman
Aachi Group of Companies
Chennai



Protesting
lawyers boycott
Lok Adalat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GHAZIABAD

On the fourth consecutive day of their strike, lawyers of the District Bar Association here on Saturday boycotted the Rashtriya Lok Adalat on the court premises.

The protesting lawyers barricaded the premises where the Rashtriya Lok Adalat was scheduled to take place, District Bar Association President Sunil Dutt Tyagi said. The strike will continue till our demands of chambers, accidental claim tribunal, trade tax and railway tribunal in the court or collectorate premises are met, he said.

The protesters did not retreat despite efforts made by the police.

Scrap trader shot dead over monetary dispute

He had asked accused to clear dues of ₹4 lakh, says brother

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GHAZIABAD

A 24-year-old scrap trader was shot dead by assailants allegedly over a monetary dispute in Maulana Azad Colony here on Saturday, the police said.

The incident happened at 12.45 p.m. under Loni border police station area when the unidentified assailants fired four rounds at Salim, killing him on the spot, Superintendent of Police (Rural) Neeraj Kumar Jadaun said.

A fellow scrap dealer, identified as Shafeeq has been detained in connection with the death, Mr. Jadaun said.

Shafeeq [accused] used to purchase copper wires from Saleem [victim], but of late was trying to switch to another business. Saleem used to constantly ask Shafeeq to clear his dues

SALEM'S ELDER BROTHER

Salim's elder brother told the police that the victim was shot dead as he had asked Shafeeq to repay dues of ₹4 lakh.

Shafeeq used to purchase copper wires from Saleem,

but of late was trying to switch to another business, the brother said. Saleem used to constantly ask Shafeeq to clear his dues, he said.

The brother has also levelled allegations against eight persons for their involvement in the murder.

The CCTV footage of the area is being analysed to identify all the accused, the SP said.

No FIR lodged

No FIR has not been lodged yet, Mr. Jadaun said, adding that everyone involved in the case will be nabbed after an investigation.

SI kills self after killing woman officer in Rohini

Accused started harassing the victim after she spurned his advances: police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 27-year-old Delhi police Sub-Inspector allegedly shot himself in Haryana's Sonipat after killing a woman Sub-Inspector in Delhi's Rohini on Friday, the police said on Saturday.

The SI, Preeti Ahlawat, posted in Patparganj Industrial Area police station, was returning home in Rohini East when she was shot dead. She had joined Delhi Police in 2018.

"Three bullets were fired at her from a close range. Two hit her on the head, while the third hit a car passing by. She was taken to a hospital where doctors declared her brought dead

POLICE OFFICER

Three bullets were fired at her from a close range. Two hit her on the head, while the third hit a car passing by. She was taken to a hospital where doctors declared her brought dead

POLICE OFFICER

range. The accused fled the spot in a white car after the incident.

"Based on the description of the assailant, CCTV footage of the area and mobile phone records of the woman, the police narrowed down on an SI with the Delhi police. He was traced to Sonipat, but remained untraceable.

Around 1 a.m. on Saturday, Haryana Police informed them about a policeman who was found dead in his car near Karnal Toll plaza. A Delhi police team has been sent to Sonipat for further investigation.

Three empty cartridges were found at the spot, the officer said, adding that a case of murder has been registered and a probe is on.

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During preliminary investigation, it was found that the accused and the victim were acquaintances. After she had reportedly refused his advances, the accused started harassing her. He used to stalk her and was insist-

ing on meet him but was turned down, the police said. On the night of the incident, the accused was deployed on security duty in Bhajanpura but remained untraceable.

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Democratic right

Luminaries and citizens queued up at polling stations across the Capital on Saturday to cast their vote in the Delhi Assembly elections



(Clockwise from top left) Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal and his family members at Civil Lines after casting their vote; Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari; a woman shows her inked finger; senior citizens in Subhash Nagar avail the poll panel's pick-and-drop facility; a differently abled man with young voters at the Civil Lines polling station; former PM Manmohan Singh after casting his vote at Nirman Bhavan polling booth on Saturday. ■ PTI, R.V.MOORTHY, SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA; SANDEEP SAXENA

Shaheen Bagh votes to end 'communal talk'

People cast vote for safer future for kids, good healthcare system; voters near JMI confident of a 'clear choice'

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

Shaheen Bagh, which has been the nucleus of anti-CAA protests in the city for over 50 days, saw people come out in large numbers to vote for an "end to communal talk", on Saturday in the Delhi Assembly elections. The voters in the area, which falls under the Okhla Assembly Constituency, went to the polling stations in batches to ensure that the protest remained undisturbed.

Most hoped for safer educational spaces.

Heena Ahmad, a make-up artist, who was standing in a queue to cast her vote after spending the night at the protest site, said: "For the last 56 days, we have been protesting for a safer future for our children. Good education and safer environment in educational institutions is the need of the hour. My daughter was injured in the December 15 incident [at Jamia Millia Islamia]. We also do not want Ministers who use impolite language."

A 27-year-old homemaker, Nazneen Banu, said: "The Prime Minister, at one point, used to talk about 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao'. But now, look how he is treating women. To



Voters stand in queue at a polling station in Shaheen Bagh on Saturday. ■ PTI

him, clearing roads is more important than addressing our demands. How are we supposed to trust him?"

"What we need is good healthcare and education for our children. For us, saving ₹100 a day means that the children will get an extra dish in their meals," the mother of four added.

Stating that her vote was towards "development", Praveen Khan, a nurse at a hospital in Karol Bagh, said: "In the last five years, we have got free electricity and free bus rides. For poor people like us, nothing else matters. Saving on bus fare means a lot to us, then why should we not support the government which has actually

worked for us?"

Voters near Jamia Millia Islamia, another area that has been pivotal to the ongoing protests against the amended citizenship law, said: "It was a clear choice". Homemaker Feiman Fatma said: "My vote was for a better education system. I am sure that the protest against the CAA will be an important

C The Prime Minister, at one point, used to talk about 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao'. But now, look how he is treating women. To him, clearing roads is more important than addressing our demands

NAZNEEN BANU
Homemaker

factor in this election."

Businessman Rais Ahmad, who also voted from Shaheen Bagh, said: "This election is based on development. We have already seen what 'vikas' is happening in the country."

Space crunch

Meanwhile, people at Okhla Modern Public School, one of the polling stations in Shaheen Bagh, complained that only three polling booths were provided for 4,400 voters.

The security personnel in and around the school had a tough time managing the queue as people had to wait for hours before they could cast their votes. When the voters complained about the situation, a polling officer said: "Nothing can be done now."

Just minor incidents'

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Assembly elections on Saturday went off peacefully with just 223 calls of minor scuffles and other campaign-related issues.

Around 42,000 Delhi Police personnel, 190 companies of CAPFs, and 19,000 Home Guards kept vigil across the city with senior officers supervising the arrangements, said the police.

"Special emphasis was laid on area dominance, critical polling stations/booths; border nakas were also strengthened. Special surveillance was maintained to detect movement of anti-social elements near polling premises. Flag marches were also conducted in sensitive areas," said Sharat Kumar Sinha, DCP (Election Cell).

A total of 223 PCR calls were received till 6.00 p.m. and they were promptly attended to, he added. The nature of the calls ranged from 'providing more tables in booths' to 'seeking help for transportation to booths', 'canvassing inside restricted area', 'quarrel among party workers' and 'not permitted to cast vote'. No serious complaint was reported, Mr. Sinha said, adding: "It was a peaceful day and constant efforts of the entire force made it possible. No untoward incident was reported. The elections were conducted in a free and fair manner."

The buzz in AAP's central 'war room'

Party stays updated on turnouts from all constituencies

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

It is 3.30 p.m. on Saturday and everyone inside the main room of 16 E, Ferozshah Road, is on edge. The voter turnout had less than expected.

Leaders inside room

At least four men, smartphones in their hands, are giving updates to AAP Delhi election in-charge Sanjay Singh and Prashant Kishor of I-PAC.

Mr. Kishor was roped in by the Aam Aadmi Party for the election campaign.

The bungalow, which has been allotted to an AAP MP, has doubled as the central "war room" for the party throughout the day.

"Why is the turnout low in GK1 and GK2? The rich are not

coming out to vote?" one person asked an AAP volunteer over the phone.

Another person walked into the room to show on his phone that the turnout had touched 40%.

"Don't worry about the turnout, it will touch 60% for sure," another man assured the rest of the room.

One room in each Assembly

The party had set up 70 "war rooms" – one each for the 70 Assembly constituencies – for management of poll activities.

The party had also deployed two "booth-level agents" per election booth, one inside and one outside the booth.

"They give us information if there is any issue, hourly turnout and also how many

would have voted for us," an I-PAC member said, adding: "If there are any problems such as less turnout in our strong polling booths, then we raise it to 'booth-level mobilisers' [five per booth] and ask them to mobilise more people."

Apart from the main room, the "war room" was divided into four teams.

In the main room, there was a large LCD screen that displayed excel sheets with details of all constituencies and two whiteboards.

One of the board had the names of 10 constituencies written on it and inputs like – Shalimar Bagh-opposition campaigning on booths, Okhla-RO not cooperating and Rohtas Nagar, Uttam Nagar had 'intentional slow voting'.

EC gives red-carpet treatment to voters

Stations equipped with facilities, including wheelchairs, ramps and more

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

To make the voting experience in the Delhi polls a pleasant affair, the Election Commission (EC) had on Saturday set up 70 model polling stations across the Capital where the voters were given a "red-carpet treatment".

The model polling stations had several facilities such as toilets, drinking water, shade, ramps and wheelchairs. The stations were set up inside maintained buildings with freshly painted walls, and quality furniture for polling personnel. The voters appreciated the efforts of the EC personnel, especially the arrangement made for senior citizens and the differently abled. Urmila Devi from west Ansari Nagar said: "The arrangements for voters here at the Atal Adarsh Vidyalaya, Havlock



A differently abled voter being helped by volunteers at a polling station in Laxmi Nagar on Saturday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

Square, are commendable. But this is also because of the facilities that the school received because

of the Delhi government."

Shalu Devi, a voter from Civil Lines, said: "Everyone deployed to assist voters have been very helpful... from information about the booths to queries related to water and assisting senior citizens. The authorities have done a good job." A model polling station in Green Park had a red carpet laid out for voters from the gate to the polling booth. The station had a first-aid booth and huge waiting areas with chairs. Most of these model polling stations also had women officials. In a model polling station in Chilla village, officials put up self-booths, had large waiting areas, and even made arrangements to engage children. Some polling stations in east Delhi had put up posters made by schoolchildren celebrating elections.

Twins go for the broom

20-year-old twins Simmi and Kajal, along with their elder brother, came out to vote on Saturday at a polling station near the Vidhan Sabha. The siblings said they voted for development. The twins, who were voting for the second time, said without hesitation: "Jhadu ko vote diya (We voted for the broom)." "We are very impressed with the work done by the Aam Aadmi Party, be it education or health," said the siblings, who live in Chandrawal, an unauthorised colony, in north Delhi which falls under the Chandni Chowk constituency.



Twins Simmi and Kajal with their brother Mohit.

The protest must go on

A group of women protesters at Turkman Gate said that in order to continue their round-the-clock protest, they decided to go to vote in batches of 10 while the others continued their agitation. A group of women at the protest site, who showed their inked fingers, said that they joined the protest after casting their vote. "We will keep protesting until the government rolls back CAA," they said.





Clockwise from left: A voter shows her inked finger in Jamia Nagar; President Ram Nath Kovind and First Lady Savita Kovind after voting; Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra with her son Rishabh, a first-time voter; former Vice-President Hamid Ansari poses for the cameras at Nirman Bhawan; first-time voter Muskan after exercising her franchise in Pandav Nagar; voters queue at Zakir Hussain college; BJP MP Gautam Gambhir with his wife Natasha Jain after voting on Saturday. • PTI, R.V. MOORTHY, SANDEEP SAXENA, V.V. KRISHNAN

North East Delhi again registers highest voter turnout

District saw 67.83% of voters exercise their franchise; New Delhi also followed previous trend, sees lowest turnout at 57.11%



SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

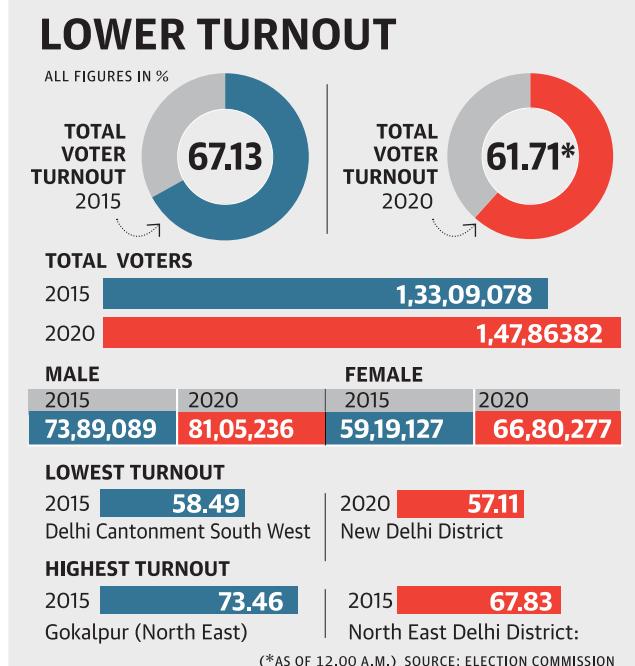
Similar to voter turnout trends in the previous Assembly elections, New Delhi district saw the lowest overall turnout at 57.11% while the North East Delhi district saw the highest overall turnout at 67.83%, as of 12.00 midnight on Saturday.

Polling started at a sluggish pace and the voting percentage was low till noon.

However, it picked up pace as the day grew warmer.

With voter turnout data pouring in till late in the night, the Delhi Chief Electoral Officer refused to comment on the reasons behind the comparatively low turnout of 61.71%. The overall turnout in 2015 was 67.13%.

Multiple factors affect voter turnout, including the fact that polling was held on a weekend, said the CEO. The voting percentage was 60.6 in the 2019 Lok Sabha



Okhla constituency, the EC's app reported only 58.83% turnout.

Election officials, however, said that there was a lag in turnout data being reported in the app. A review of the 2015 voter turnout data, however, showed that the Okhla constituency had the second lowest voter turnout at 60.73% in the previous Assembly elections.

Till late night

Voting at about 103 stations went on till late into the night even though the gates of polling stations were closed at 6 p.m. Voters who had queued up before the deadline were issued tokens to ensure that they cast their vote. While the voter turnout figures are likely to increase, the final figure is unlikely to surpass the record 67.13% voter turnout witnessed in 2015.

North West district saw 62.23% turnout, South 59.65%, Central 58.57%, South West 61.57%, East 61.29%, West 61.79%, North 57.19%, Shahdara 62.96%, and South East 54.89%. Exit polls have predicted a clean sweep for the ruling Aam Aadmi Party while the BJP was a distant second.



I do not believe in these free power and water schemes. How will the government function if everything is free? What about the promise made to give permanent jobs to contract workers? I have voted against unkept promises

—ASHOK KUMAR,
Resident of West Ansari Nagar

My vote was against Shaheen Bagh... [Arvind] Kejriwal has done work but the protests in Shaheen Bagh should not be happening. My Hindu brothers in other countries are suffering and the law is to bring them here. It is not denying the rights of anyone

—SANJEEV GUPTA, 48,
Employee of a private firm in Noida

Many of my friends faced violence in Jamia and one was injured badly... she had stitches on her head. CAA was not right. The government should not have excluded a particular section of people from getting nationality

—PALAK HANS, 18,
Delhi University student

In this election, we are concerned about local issues only. Safety, water supply, health, schools, hospitals are important issues. Remedies can only be brought about by the Delhi government and not the Centre

—GOUR KANJILAL, 74,
Retired government employee

Whatever [PM Narendra] Modi does is good and right... No matter what he [Modi] does, I will still have to go to work and earn my living. But I voted for what my heart wants

—RAJU RAM,
A shopowner

Leaders of BJP, AAP in a fix in two-cornered contest

Low turnout prompts Kejriwal, Shah to hold meetings with their senior party leaders

JATIN ANAND
ROCKY SOIBAM SINGH
NEW DELHI

With their collective fate sealed in the confines of Electronic Voting Machines, each of the three political players in the Capital went into a huddle here on Saturday evening.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah summoned the BJP's seven MPs to assess the party's performance at its State headquarters while Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal presided over a similar meeting with AAP bigwigs in the party's electoral "war room".

This election witnessed relatively low voter turnout compared to the previous three elections, said insiders, adding that the 2020 polls were not only bereft of "a wave" but was mainly a two-cornered battle between AAP and the BJP, with the Congress mostly missing in action.

"This seems to have been a peculiar election as there was no significant undercurrent



Aam Aadmi Party office and Delhi BJP office at Civil Lines on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

either in support of AAP or the BJP, which is one way to perceive the low voting percentage. We were expecting a more comfortable win on the back of Mr. Kejriwal's wave like in 2015," said an AAP insider, adding that their party needs to focus on "better booth management" in the future.

A source in the BJP said: "We are confident of getting 38 seats and forming the government. The low voter turnout seems to indicate a wave in favour of the BJP, which was evident during the Lok Sabha election that we contested on Prime Minister Narendra Mo-



Aam Aadmi Party office and Delhi BJP office at Civil Lines on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

dhi's face, who was not there on the ground today. This was a local election and anything above the figure of three seats is a win for us."

The 2015 Assembly elections had registered a voter turnout of 67.13%, 2013 recorded 65.93% and in 2008, it was 57%.

On local, national issues The citizens said they voted on the basis of both national and local issues. The turnout for the 2020 elections, as of 12 a.m. on Saturday, was 61.71%. Husband and wife Kamal and Revti Gautam from Chandni Chowk said they do

This was a peculiar election as there was no significant undercurrent either in support of AAP or the BJP, which is one way to perceive the low voter turnout

not know the name of AAP's candidate from their constituency but voted for Mr. Kejriwal. "We voted for [PM] Modi in the last election and now we are voting for Kejriwal. We are impressed with Modi's international policies and Kejriwal's local policies," they said.

Kamal said he was happy with the work done by AAP in hospitals and school.

"I was able to get my child admitted to a school, which is a big thing today," he said.

Sahil, a first-time voter from Civil Lines Assembly constituency, said: "I believe in Modi but have voted for Kejriwal because he is popular."

Never missed chance to vote, says Capital's oldest voter

The 110-year-old was escorted by family, EC officials

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

110-year-old Kalitara Mandal from Chittaranjan Park, the city's oldest voter, said she was elated to be able to vote at her age. The centenarian, who was escorted by her son, daughter-in-law and grandson, said she had never missed an opportunity to vote since the time she got her voter-ID.

Her son Sukhranwan Mandal said they are refugees from Bangladesh, who initially stayed in a camp and then were transferred to Chhattisgarh before finally coming to Delhi.

Mr. Mandal said he was a child when he came to the city hence does not remember when the family moved to Delhi. "I believe it was around 1970, I am not sure," he said, adding that his mother was born in undivided India in 1908 and has seen the partition of India and Pakistan and then of Bangladesh and Pakistan.

"I take care of her. She does not have any particular health issues," said Mr. Mandal.

Assistant Returning Officer Harish



Kalitara Mandal at a polling station in Chittaranjan Park on Saturday.

■ R.V. MOORTHY

Kumar, who went to Ms. Mandal's house to provide her pick-and-drop facility, said: "This time, we have extended the pick-and-drop facility to all voters above 80 years of age."

"There was a centralised call centre – 1950, where people called to book the facility. After this, our booth-level officer, supervisor and volunteers gave them a time slot for providing the facility," he added.



Almost Slapgate

Congress candidate from Chandni Chowk Alka Lamba got into an altercation with an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) worker outside a polling booth. A video of the incident shows Ms. Lamba trying to slap the AAP worker and attempting to chase him. Ms. Lamba later alleged that the man used "very foul" and objectionable language against her. The accused was later detained by police personnel deployed outside the polling booth located in Majnu ka Tilla area.



At your own risk

A 'mobile locker' was installed at a polling station in Guru Amar Das Public School in Tilak Nagar, but there was no token system and officials said that voters could keep their phones in it at their own risk. "It [the locker] is kept on the table but we do not keep a tab on who is keeping which phone and taking which one," an election official said. "The poll officials should note the name of the people who keep their phones in the locker," said Satpal Kaur, 60.



A free ride

Harpreet Singh Sonu, 45, ferried countless voters for free in his e-rickshaw from Tihar village to the polling station in Subhash Nagar throughout the day. "My uncle is associated with the BJP and I am doing it for him," he said outside the polling station.

In this election, we are concerned about local issues only. Safety, water supply, health, schools, hospitals are important issues. Remedies can only be brought about by the Delhi government and not the Centre

—GOUR KANJILAL, 74,
Retired government employee

Whatever [PM Narendra] Modi does is good and right... No matter what he [Modi] does, I will still have to go to work and earn my living. But I voted for what my heart wants

—RAJU RAM,
A shopowner



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BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

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One dead as three-storey building collapses in Punjab

Three rescued from the rubble; Chief Minister seeks report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

One person died while three were rescued from the debris of a three-storey building that collapsed on Saturday in Kharar town of Mohali district in Punjab, the police said.

"Construction work was being carried out near the three-storey building. The building reportedly came down when a JCB machine was digging an adjacent plot for construction of basement," said Senior Superin-

tendent of Police, Mohali, Kuldeep Singh Chahal.

Officials said efforts are on to find out if more people are trapped under the debris.

Taking a serious note of the incident, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh asked the Mohali Additional District Magistrate to conduct a thorough probe into the matter and submit his report within a week.

The Chief Minister also directed the district administration to take all possible steps to rescue those

trapped under the debris. As per Mr. Singh's order, the entire cost of the treatment of those injured in the incident would be borne by the State government, a government spokesperson said.

The local administration has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the incident. Mohali Deputy Commissioner Girish Dayalal told reporters that the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Kharar has been asked to inquire and submit a report within three days.

(With PTI inputs)

Timings
DEHLI
SUNDAY, FEB. 09
● RISE 07:05 SET 18:07
● RISE 18:14 SET 07:09

MONDAY, FEB. 10
● RISE 07:04 SET 18:07
● RISE 19:23 SET 07:57

TUESDAY, FEB. 11
● RISE 07:04 SET 18:08
● RISE 20:31 SET 08:39

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 20 06
Safdarjung 20 06
Palam 20 07

Delhi Palam Today
20°C Generally shallow fog in the morning. A windy afternoon with sunny sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
21°C A cold morning with mist/shallow fog. A comfortable afternoon with few clouds.

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THE HINDU
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RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION LUCKNOW
Tender Notice No. RE-LKO-TELE-GD BRK-306 Dt. 06.02.2020
OPEN TENDER NOTICE
By. Chief signal & Telecom Engineer, Railway Electrification, Lucknow for and on behalf of the President of India invites sealed open E-Tenders on the prescribed form for the under noted works:
1 Tender No. RE-LKO-TELE-GD BRK-306
2 Name of work with its location *Supply, installation, testing & commissioning of way station equipments, Head quarter control equipment with power supplies, emergency sockets etc in SPSS/TSS including Trenching, laying, Back filling, jointing of 6-quid, PIJF cable, OFC cable, Splicing for providing communication to SPSS/TSS and station in Gonda-Bahraich section of Lucknow division over North Eastern Railway.
3 Completion Period 06 months from the date of issue of Letter Of Acceptance.
4 Approx. Cost of the work ₹ 10257026.60 (Rs. One crore two lakh fifty seven thousand twenty six and paisa sixty only)
5 Earnest money (EMD) to be deposited ₹ 201300.00 (Rs. Two lakhs one thousand three hundred only).
6 Cost of Tender document ₹ 5000.00 (Rs. Five thousand only).
7 Tender closing date and time 02.03.2020 upto 15.00 hrs.
8 Validity of offer 30 days from the date of opening of tender.
9 Website particular and notice board location where complete detail of tender can be seen etc. (<http://www.ireps.gov.in>); Notice Board at the office of Chief Project Director, Railway Electrification, Station Road, Charbagh, Lucknow-226001.
NOTE:- Original/revised bids are to be submitted online upto closing date and time on IREPS website only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be summarily rejected. Tenderer should get the digital signing certificate and register them on this website to participate in the tender. The Tenderers are advised to keep themselves updated regarding any corrigendum to be published in this tender. All corrigendum will be published in news paper. No separate corrigendum notice will be published in news paper.
10 PVC clause No PVC clause applicable in this tender.
11 JV/Consortium/MOU JV/Consortium/MOU shall not be considered.

(Sushil Kumar)
Dy. Chief S&T Engineer/R.E., Lucknow,
For & on behalf of President of India
No.PR/211/2020 Satya Adv.
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TAMIL

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HINDU,TAMIL, KALLAR, Avittam—Doctor /41/176,Chennai. Looking for Doctor Bride India/Overs seas. Contact via rspnspg@gmail.com

THULUVADA Mularai Aviyil, 39 BE(Mech) MBA MNC Chennai Six Digit Sal seeks Educated Goodlooking SameCommunity, goodfamilyback ground. 9444023802 / 8056196033 (w)

BRAHMIN ABOVE35 for boy 42, 6' tall goodlooking, employed Chennai annual income Rs. 5.5 lakhs, owns flat, contact parents 9841072502

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IN BRIEF



Senior IPS officer suspended in A.P.

A.B. Venkateshwar Rao, senior IPS officer in the rank of Director-General in Andhra Pradesh, has been suspended on the charge of violating the All India Services Rules. He served as Additional DG (CID) and Director-General (Intelligence).

Woman refuses to leave from Tirumala temple

TIRUMALA
A woman devotee refused to leave the premises of the Sri Venkateswara temple in Andhra Pradesh on Saturday. The woman, who was unidentified, was spotted by Srivari Seva volunteers lying behind a sub temple. When asked to vacate the place, she refused to do so. The security staff was alerted and she was escorted out of the temple.

Ornaments stolen from passengers of two Kerala trains

Railway police suspect involvement of the same gang

STAFF REPORTER

KOZHIKODE
Jewellery reportedly worth ₹18 lakh was stolen from two passengers travelling on the Chennai-Mangaluru Superfast Express and the Thiruvananthapuram-Mangaluru Malabar Express in two separate incidents on Saturday.

In the first case, a woman named Ponni Maran, who was going from Kannur to Chennai in the Chennai-Mangaluru Superfast Express, claimed that she lost gold ornaments and diamonds worth ₹15 lakh. She said she came to know about the theft around 3.40 a.m.

Jagan opens Disha police station

First facility inaugurated at Rajamahendravaram; 17 more planned by month-end

STAFF REPORTER

RAJAMAHENDRARAM

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has said the State is preparing to equip itself with all facilities like forensic laboratories, special courts, and public prosecutors to effectively implement the Disha Bill 2019 by June.

The Chief Minister was inaugurating the first Disha police station here on Saturday. Later, he launched the Disha mobile application at the Adikavi Nannaya University.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Reddy said: "The State government is fully geared to implement the Bill once it gets the nod of the President."

Special courts

As many as 18 Disha police stations would come up by February-end, said the Chief Minister. Similarly, ₹26 crore



In the right direction: Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the inauguration of the first Disha police station in Rajamahendravaram on Saturday. ■ S. RAMBABU

was sanctioned for setting up 13 special Disha courts. "We are awaiting the nod from the High Court for setting up the courts," said Mr. Reddy. Forensic laboratories were being set up at a cost of

₹31 crore at Tirupati and Visakhapatnam for speedy investigation of the Disha cases, he said.

Deploring the delay in the Nirbhaya case, Mr. Reddy said: "The Disha law is de-

signed in such a way that it awards the capital punishment for the convict in a rape case if the evidence is established during the 14-day trial. The State ensures a fair investigation within seven days in the Disha cases."

New chapter

The Chief Minister claimed that a new chapter had begun in the country with the establishment of the Disha police station and other initiatives to ensure security for women.

"The State will not tolerate any atrocity on women and children. The Disha bill will be implemented without any compromise," said the Chief Minister.

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, Home Minister M. Sucharitha, Director-General of Police Gautam Sawang and other officials were present.

China returnees sent home after screening in Kalamassery

15 students arrived at the Kochi airport early on Saturday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI

Screening for the novel coronavirus infection among the 15 students who returned to Kochi from China on Saturday yielded negative results. They were sent home by 2 a.m. on Saturday after they underwent tests at the Government Medical College, Kalamassery.

Detailed test results from the virology lab in Alappuzha are expected in two days, said a communication from the medical college authorities here. The students will be in isolation at their houses for 28 days.

"She is recovering from fatigue but is happy and healthy," said the husband of a young doctor from Kochi who is doing her house surgery at the Dali University



Ambulances carrying the group of students from China. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

food and money. They had initially booked tickets to Singapore but were not allowed to board the plane from the Kunming airport. With the help of the Indian Embassy in China, tickets on the Air Asia flight that brought them to Kochi were booked.

He said there were initially 21 students, some of whom had flown to Singapore.

The team of doctors and other medical professionals at the Kochi medical college were quick to screen the 15 students who landed at Nedumbassery. They were transported in six ambulances to the medical college. Samples from the students were collected in an hour and then sent to the Alappuzha lab.

A.P. Transport Department unearths major vehicle scam

J.C. Diwakar Reddy, his family alleged to be involved



J.C. Diwakar Reddy

The BS-III vehicles were illegally registered in Kohima in Nagaland and transferred to Tadipatri within two to 15 days, with an NOC (No Objection Certificate) from Nagaland.

All these vehicles reportedly ply in Tadipatri and Kadapa regions to carry goods related to cement factories. Anantapur Deputy Transport Commissioner N. Sivaram Prasad lodged the complaint with the police seeking a probe against manufacturers, dealers or the buyers to find out who was primarily responsible for the alleged fraud.

According to officials, they allegedly got Bharat Standard (BS) III vehicles registered and brought them to Anantapur from Kohima in Nagaland.

Joint Commissioner Transport S.A.V. Prasad Rao (road safety) at a press conference here on Saturday

said that a case was registered in Anantapur I Town Police Station on Saturday with regard to the operation of 66 trucks in Anantapur and Kadapa districts that were not BS-IV compliant.

The tweet drew more than 3,300 comments, most of which said it laid bare the intentions of the ruling party. One user tweeted: "...this tweet says it all about intentions of ruling party of India, they are openly calling for Indian Muslims to prove their loyalty & citizenship in a threatening way."

The tweet comes days after the Union government, in a reply in the Lok Sabha, said there was no discussion on the National Registry of Citizens (NRC), where peo-

ple need to furnish documents to prove their citizenship. The Centre has repeatedly claimed that the National Population Register (NPR), all set to take off this year and opposed by States such as Kerala and West Bengal, does not involve furnishing any documents.

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NEARBY



2 cr. signatures collected against CAA, says Stalin

CHENNAI

DMK president M.K. Stalin said over two crore people participated in the signature campaign against the Citizenship (Amendment Act), though the original plan was to obtain one crore signatures. The signatures would be handed over to the President soon, he said.

Moderate quake jolts Assam, north Bengal

GUWAHATI An earthquake of magnitude of 5.0 struck Assam and its neighbouring areas on Saturday evening. However, there was no casualty or damage to property, the police said. The quake also jolted a few districts of north Bengal, sources said.

Drugs worth ₹120 crore seized in Manipur

Assam Rifles busts manufacturing unit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Troops of the Assam Rifles on Saturday uncovered an illegal drug manufacturing unit in Manipur and seized illegal drugs worth ₹120 crore in the international market, along with equipment and chemicals.

A joint team of the Assam Rifles and representatives of the Maphou police station busted the illegal drug processing and manufacturing plant from the Kamu Saichang area of Thoubal district of Manipur, the Assam Rifles said in a statement.

The plant was being utilised to extract morphine

West Bengal growing arsenic-resistant rice

Seeds were made available after successful trials in both the wet season and the dry season

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Researchers have developed and commercialised a rice variety that is resistant to arsenic. Several studies have shown that arsenic from groundwater and the soil can enter the food chain through paddy.

West Bengal is among the States with the highest concentration of arsenic in groundwater, with 83 blocks across seven districts having higher arsenic levels than permissible limits.

The new rice variety, Muktoshri – also called IET 21845 – was developed jointly by the Rice Research Station at Chinsurah, coming under West Bengal's Agriculture Department and the National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow, over several



Poison-free: Studies show that arsenic from groundwater and soil can enter the food chain via paddy. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

years. A gazette notification for the commercial use of Muktoshri was issued by the Rice Research Station at Chinsurah, coming under West Bengal last year.

Bijan Adhikari, one of the scientists who worked on developing the variety, said

that the State government's decision to make the seeds available for cultivation came after successful trials in both the wet season and the dry season in different blocks of the State. The trials

were done in areas with arsenic contamination in groundwater, particularly in Nadia, North 24 Parganas, Bardhaman and Murshidabad.

Yield per hectare

"During our multilocational trials, we found that this variety absorbs very less amount of arsenic from soil and water than the other varieties of rice. The variety yields 5.5 metric tonnes per hectare in the Boro season and 4.5 to 5 metric tonnes per hectare in the Kharif season, respectively," said Mr. Adhikari.

The work on developing the variety started in 2006 and by 2013 the scientists were successful. Pradip Kumar Das, a farmer at Birnagar in Nadia district who cul-

tivated the variety on over four hectares (30 bighas), said that the yield was satisfactory, despite a dry spell.

"In Nadia, arsenic contamination is a major health problem. So far about 150 farmers are cultivating the variety and it is going to increase in the next few years," Mr. Das said. He said the rice was long and thin, and aromatic. Across the State, thousands of farmers have started cultivation, even in areas where arsenic in groundwater is not an issue, because of the aroma and the yield.

According to the World Health Organization, long-term exposure to arsenic, mainly through drinking water and food, can lead to poisoning. Skin lesions and skin cancer are the most characteristic effects.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN IN 2016)

Forecast for Sunday: Cold wave conditions very likely in isolated places over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Odisha and northeast Rajasthan.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	23.7	13.8	Kozhikode	—	35.0...	22.9
Ahmedabad	—	26.6	12.5	Kurnool	—	33.0...	24.0
Aizawl	—	18.3	7.6	Lucknow	—	22.3...	8.0
Allahabad	—	25.3	8.5	Madurai	—	34.0...	23.2
Bengaluru	—	30.8	19.0	Mangalore	—	32.7...	19.3
Bhopal	—	23.3	10.2	Mumbai	—	31.3...	16.6
Bhubaneswar	0.9	23.3	16.6	Mysuru	—	32.4...	17.4
Chandigarh	—	18.8	6.7	New Delhi	—	21.0...	7.0
Chennai	—	32.2	22.0	Patna	—	24.4...	11.4
Coimbatore	—	33.6	21.7	Port Blair	—	30.4...	22.0
Dehradun	—	22.6	14.0	Puducherry	—	31.4...	23.0
Gangtok	—	12.7	5.0	Pune	—	28.4...	14.2
Goa	—	30.4	18.4	Raipur	—	18.6...	15.6
Guwahati	00.0	00.0	00.0	Ranchi	—	16.2...	11.0
Hubballi	—	28.0	22.0	Shillong	—	15.2...	4.3
Hyderabad	—	29.2	21.5	Shimla	—	11.8...	0.8
Imphal	—	22.1	8.5	Srinagar	—	12.6...	3.9
Jaipur	—	24.0	14.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	33.4...	24.7
Kochi	—	30.6	24.4	Tiruchi	—	33.9...	21.9
Kohima	—	14.0	6.6	Vijayawada	—	32.0...	21.4
Kolkata	—	20.5	17.1	Visakhapatnam	—	29.7...	23.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	61	61	35	.203	.142	■
Bengaluru	12	60	81	—	.168	■
Chennai	04	20	21	.56	—	■
Delhi	21	32	60	.308	.165	■
Hyderabad	02	.64	29	.88	.94	■
Kolkata	12	65	.55	.209	.163	■
Lucknow	07	.59	17	.336	—	■
Mumbai	14	101	30	.99	.173	■
Pune	76	.22	73	.100	.92	■
Visakhapatnam	10	.20	44	.43	.49	■

In observation made at 6.00 p.m., Muzaffarpur, Bihar recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 326 indicating a dangerous level of pollution. In contrast, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 44.

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 in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM_{2.5} & 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

2 killed in cracker explosion in Punjab

The incident occurred during a religious procession in Tarn Taran district

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Two persons were killed and nine injured in Tarn Taran district of Punjab on Saturday as firecrackers loaded in a tractor-trolley exploded during a religious procession.

Chief Minister Amarinder has ordered a magisterial probe into the incident.

Probe ordered
He has asked the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) of Tarn Taran to conduct a thorough inquiry and fix responsibility.

Inspector-General of Police (Border Range) S.P.S. Parmar told *The Hindu* that the



Looking for clues: Police personnel at the explosion site in Tarn Taran district on Saturday. ■ PTI

incident occurred near Dailek Mor in Palasaur village after someone burst fire-crackers during a Nagar Kirtan.

"The crackers in the trolley

went off, resulting in an explosion that left two dead and nine injured," Mr. Parmar said.

The procession was going from Pahuwind village to Gurdwara Tahla Sahib in Chattiwind village, he said.

An official statement said initial reports suggest some youngsters were bursting firecrackers and some sparks landed in the trolley triggering the explosion.

The government has announced ₹5 lakh in ex gratia for the families of the deceased and free treatment for the injured admitted to the local civil hospital and Guru Nanak Dev Charitable Hospital, the statement said.

CBI books three in forgery case

They tried to grab 57.55 hectares that was acquired by U.P. govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has booked three persons, including an advocate, for allegedly using forged papers to file petitions in the Allahabad High Court in a bid to grab about 57.55 hectares of land acquired by the government in Lucknow.

The agency has registered two cases, in which main accused Ashok Pathak, his associate Kapil Pratap Rana and advocate Vinay-jit Lal Verma have been named.

The land located in Lucknow's Sarojini Nagar was transferred to the gram samaj in November 2002 and taken over by the government vide a District Magistrate's order on May 10, 2016. The next month, a writ petition was filed against it in the High Court's Lucknow Bench purportedly by one Khursheed Agha.

However, Mr. Agha denied having filed the petition. Accordingly, in June 2019, the court directed

Man fined ₹42,500 for allowing minor to ride his vehicle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHUBANESWAR

The transport authority in Odisha's Bhadrak district has slapped a penalty of ₹42,500 on a man for allowing a minor to ride his motorcycle, violating traffic rules, under the new motor vehicles law, officials said. The minor was found riding the bike without a helmet, with two of his friends on pillion, they said.

The challan has been issued in the name of the two-wheeler owner under the provisions of the amended Motor Vehicles Act, traffic inspector Dhaneswar Nayak said.

The accused have been identified as Dasarath Boora from Telangana, and Adi Ganesh, Fakruddin, and Sandeep from Hosur in Tamil Nadu. They were booked under the Goa Protection of Investment of Depositors Act and the Prize Chit and Money Circulation Schemes Banning Act, besides various sections of the IPC.

"The boy was found riding the two-wheeler on the wrong side of the road on Thursday. We have slapped a composite fine of ₹42,500 for violating traffic rules," he said.

The challan was issued under various heads, such as ₹500 for general offence, ₹5,000 for allowing a person to drive a vehicle with no valid papers, ₹5,000 for riding a motorbike without driving licence, ₹5,000 for driving against the flow of traffic, ₹1,000 for riding a two-wheeler with more than two persons and ₹1,000 for riding a motorcycle without helmet, they said.

With reference to the advertisement for the "Expression of Interest for System Integrator to Develop Digital Platform for TN-RTP" published in *The Hindu* (English, All Edition) and *Daily Thanthi* (State Edition) dated :19.01.2020, the updated Expression of Interest providing the revised shortlisting criteria is published in our website (<http://www.tnrtpp.org>) only.

The last date of submission has been extended from 10.02.2020 to 24.02.2020. Any corrigendum will be posted on website (<http://www.tnrtpp.org>) only.

The Chief Executive Officer

Tamil Nadu Rural Transformation Project (TN

FROM PAGE ONE

Modi draws attention to Tamil concerns

India and Sri Lanka discussed enhanced security cooperation and intelligence sharing, especially after the ISIS-inspired Easter Sunday terror attacks last year. According to Mr. Rajapaksa, the two leaders agreed to hold a meeting with the Maldives leadership "as soon as possible" to re-operationalise a security cooperation trilateral arrangement amongst them.

On the issue of deferring the debt payment, and servicing the approximately \$60 billion total foreign and domestic debt his government faces, with about \$4.8 billion to be paid this year, Mr. Rajapaksa said, "If the Indian government takes this step, then other governments might agree to do the same thing, including China. The previous government took so many loans, they beggared the economy, and it is a mess. It all [now]

depends on the stand India takes."

Mr. Rajapaksa also said he had also requested further financing from India for his government's nationwide housing project, and discussed other Indian investments planned, including an LNG port, and a joint Indo-Japanese bid for building an oil terminal in Colombo's Eastern port.

'Rejected' projects

However, he made it clear that his government would not carry forward the oil projects in the eastern Trincomalee port that had been agreed to in an MoU signed by his predecessor Ranil Wickremesinghe in April 2017, or an Indian government plan to develop Mattala airport in the south, saying that those had already been "rejected".

(With inputs from Meera Srinivasan in Colombo)

Polling passes off peacefully in Delhi



Security personnel on guard outside the Jafrabad polling station in New Delhi on Saturday. • SANDEEP SAXENA

Shahdara SDM Debasis Biswal said that the polling officer, Udharm Singh, a municipal schoolteacher, had complained of chest pain and uneasiness after which he was rushed to a nearby hospital.

In another incident, a 59-year-old man standing in a queue to cast his vote at a polling station in Hari Nagar

died of a reported heart attack on Saturday morning. Police said that a PCR call was received at 10.30 a.m. about a man having collapsed outside a polling station in Hari Nagar.

The man was rushed to a hospital where he was declared dead. He was identified as Nitin Bhakru, a resident of Nanakpur.

BJP likely to gain over 2015 tally, say exit polls

Though the range of victory margin and the number of seats varied, the exit polls were unanimous in projecting AAP winning the battle for Delhi, with the BJP coming a distant second and the Congress party failing to make a mark once again.

India Today-Axis poll gave the numbers of seats in a range, with AAP projected to do a repeat of its 2015 performance and win anywhere between 59-68 seats. The BJP's range is between 2 and 11, as per this poll.

In their final exit polls that factored in the last hour of voting, ABP-C Voter put AAP in the range of 51-65 seats, BJP in the range of 3-17

seats and Congress between 0-3 seats. The Times Now-Ipsos exit poll predicted Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will retain his position with his party winning 47 seats against 23 for the BJP.

Republic TV-Jan ki Baat predicted AAP would get between 48-61 seats, the BJP winning between 9-21, while the Congress could at the most win one seat.

NewsX-Neta poll, which wasn't included in the NDTV poll of polls, predicted AAP to win 53-57 seats while the BJP would get 11-17 seats. The TV9 Bharatvarsh-Cicero predicted 54 seats for the AAP, 15 for the BJP and one for the Congress.

Naga People's Front seeks anti-CAA resolution

Law would not affect Nagas: Dy CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KOHIMA

Nagaland Assembly on Saturday witnessed noisy scenes, as the Opposition, the Naga People's Front, protested against the amended Citizenship Act, and insisted that an anti-CAA resolution be passed in the House, taking a cue from States such as Kerala and West Bengal.

Rejecting the NPF demand, Deputy Chief Minister Y. Patton said the law would not affect the Nagas, as the States with Inner Line Permit regime have been exempted from its purview.

Opposition leader T.R. Zeliang, NPF MLAs Chotisus Sazo and Chubmen Murry, during a discussion on matters of public importance said that the ILP would not

impede influx of illegal immigrants.

Opposition sceptical

Mr. Zeliang said Assam had not been entirely exempted from the purview of the law, making Nagaland, with its porous borders, susceptible to illegal infiltration. "Let us study the case and find out if the Centre is truly planning to accord citizenship to the persecuted. If that is the case, why only three countries – Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan – have been included in the law? Why not people from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan and the Buddhists from Tibet? Does this Act truly stand for what the Central government claims, or is it a law to garner votes?" he said.

Reports suggest that with U.S. President Donald Trump set to visit India later this month, American negotiators are pushing hard for the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers to facilitate access to the Indian market for

1,000 denied government jobs in Tamil Nadu due to fake papers

Certificates of applicants under sports quota for TNUSRB found to be 'ineligible'

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

Close on the heels of the recruitments-for-money scam in the TN UPSC, a major fraud in the recruitment of police constables, prison warders and firemen by the Tamil Nadu Uniformed Services Recruitment Board has surfaced with at least 1,000 candidates, who had cleared the written examination/physical efficiency test and qualified for appointment under the Sports Quota, found to have submitted "ineligible" certificates.

The TNUSRB had notified the recruitment of 8,888 Grade-II Police Constables, Grade-II Jail Warders and Firemen late last year.

About 3.25 lakh candidates appeared for the written exam in 32 districts. The physical efficiency test was then held in 15 centres for 47,000 candidates who passed the examination.

Nearly 8,800 candidates

C Their candidature was brought under the General or Reserved Category as applicable. Of the 1,000, about 200 candidates, whose cut-off marks fell within the range set for reserved categories, became eligible for appointment

SENIOR POLICE OFFICIAL

who qualified for appointment were called for certificate verification. However, during this process it was found that at least 1,000 candidates, claiming appointment under the 10% sports quota, had submitted "ineligible" certificates.

The associations that issued the sports certificates were not recognised by the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu (SDAT) and hence not competent to issue

such certificates.

"We sent out emails to all the 1,000 candidates saying that their certificates were ineligible/ not recognised by the SDAT and hence they were not entitled to be considered for recruitment under the sports quota," a senior police official told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

"Their candidature was brought under the General or Reserved Category as applicable. Of the 1,000, about 200 candidates, whose cut-off marks fell within the range set for reserved categories, became eligible for appointment. As many as 800 others became ineligible," he added.

Parrying questions on whether one sports association or centre had issued the certificates, a senior police official in the Police Headquarters said a special team was analysing the veracity of the certificates and the antecedents of the issuing

associations.

"It was like some unknown sports association certifying that the candidate played a match in a neighbouring State and hence represented Tamil Nadu in an inter-State tournament. Appropriate legal action – both against the associations and candidates – will be taken if it is found that the certificates were issued on payment of money with an intention to commit fraud," the official said adding that no decision had been taken yet on referring the matter for criminal investigation.

However, a allegation that many candidates who were coached in a particular centre in Vellore had the TNUSRB examination was verified and found to be baseless. "A detailed analysis of the OMR conning sheet and answer scripts was done to check any suspicious pattern. The allegation was not true," the official said.

Kamal Nath warns RSS workers of legal action

'Do not coerce tribals of M.P.'

STAFF REPORTER
Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Saturday warned RSS workers of legal action if they went ahead with their plan to "coerce" the tribals of the State into declaring themselves Hindus during the 2021 census.

"Being the Chief Minister, I'll not allow the RSS to go ahead with its plan, at any cost, of coercing the innocent tribals, having the largest population in Madhya Pradesh, ... into declaring a particular religious identity during the census," he was quoted as saying in a note released by the government.

The note was in response to media reports on the plan. Rejecting the basic identity of tribals, the RSS was referring to them in its literature as 'vanavasi' (forest-dwellers), the note said. "The Chief Minister will not allow anyone at any cost to spew venom in the lives of peace-loving tribals."



When the RSS failed to get the National Register of Citizens implemented nationwide, it was attempting to take its "dangerous plans" through another route, the note said. "This is another of the divisive plans of the RSS that has come before the country."

Recently, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat visited Bhopal and Guna to review the BJP's campaign on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and assess the party's waning popularity after it ruled the State for 15 years until 2018.

Only went to plead with the Minister: Manickam

MP had rushed into well of Lok Sabha

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

A day after Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan accused Congress members of trying to assault him and snatch his papers, Manickam B. Tagore, the man at the centre of the controversy, said he didn't storm into the well of the Lok Sabha with the intention of assaulting the Minister.

If the original CCTV footage from the Lok Sabha is released to the public, it will be clear that it was never my intention to assault the Minister. He was sitting in the



second row, and I had only gone to plead with him to stop making such a disgraceful statement [against Rahul Gandhi].

Mr. Tagore, who represents Vizhupuram, told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Tagore said he did not think it was a mistake to walk into the well.

"If our voice is not heard in a democracy, going to the well is the only option available to us." After the scuffle, he met Speaker Om Birla, who assured him that the CCTV footage would be scanned before any action was taken.

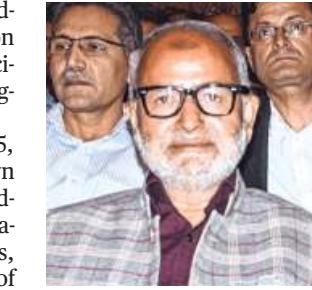
Mehbooba's aide is the sixth regional leader to face the stringent Act

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Senior Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader and former Minister Naeem Akhtar, 68, was booked under the stringent Public Safety Act (PSA) on Saturday, and became the sixth mainstream leader to be booked under it.

An official said Mr. Akhtar, considered a close confidante of party president Mehbooba Mufti, was shifted from the MLA Hostel sub-jail to M-5 government accommodation here on Saturday morning after the PSA notice was served on him.

Mr. Akhtar was a government spokesman of the PDP-BJP alliance in 2015-18 and



Naeem Akhtar

Abdullah also faced the PSA.

However, two NC leaders, ex-speaker Mubarak Gul and political adviser to Mr. Omar Abdullah, Tanvir Sadiq, were released from the MLA hostel and shifted to their residences. Only eight leaders now remain detained in the

MLA Hostel, including J&K Peoples Movement chief Shah Faesal.

The police claimed that two persons, including an LLB student, were held in Bandipora for pasting provocative posters of the banned militant outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba in Hajin area.

The police also seized two laptops on which the accused had allegedly used to create posters and paste them to disrupt peace in the area.

They were identified as Irfan Ahmad Bhat and Asif Ahmad Parrey. "Irfan is an LLB student while Asif was a sim card retailer," the police said.

Congress MP flags faulty engines in domestic airlines

Civil Aviation Minister asked to take proactive measures

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress Rajya Sabha member Partap Singh Bajwa has written to Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri to take proactive steps in ensuring that domestic airlines flying Airbus A320-Neo aircraft modify their faulty engines immediately.

Mr. Bajwa said the approach of the safety regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is half baked.

"The DGCA is already aware of the reliability issues with the Pratt and Whitney engines

C The DGCA is already aware of the reliability issues with the Pratt and Whitney engines

PARTAP SINGH BAJWA
Rajya Sabha member

if the other engine develops a technical issue," he said.

The MP said instead of sticking to its deadline of January 31 for airlines to mod-

ify engines, the DGCA extended the deadline by another five months.

"They have allowed this despite the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) putting out a stern warning in December 2019 that using these aircraft with one modified engine is based on the belief that it would never fail and both engines would not stall at the same time. This half-baked approach to safety puts lives at risk," Mr. Bajwa said.

"The IndiGo, for example, has 106 of these aircraft operating at the moment and the GoAir 41. Reports suggest that IndiGo still has to install these new engines in about 70 of their aircraft...." he said.

All senior party leaders, MPs and MLAs attended the meeting at former Chief Mi-

Bihar polls: RJD's revamp focuses on EBCs and Dalits

Party rejigs list of district presidents in strategy meeting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

With State Assembly polls just months away, Bihar's Opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) on Saturday held a preparatory strategy meeting that featured a revamped list of district presidents.

With the RJD now gearing up for the upcoming elections, scheduled to be held in October-November, the party has rejigged its organisational hierarchy with an increased focus on the Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs) and Dalits, while retaining the emphasis on its traditional M-Y (Muslim-Yadav) vote bank.

All senior party leaders, MPs and MLAs attended the meeting at former Chief Mi-

nister Rabri Devi's official residence at 10, Circular Road, to mull over the likely strategy for the upcoming elections and the Budget session of the legislative Assembly beginning on February 25.

Lalu, Tejashwi absent
Leader of the Opposition and party chief Tejashwi Yadav too was present at the meeting.

"Though, there was no fixed agenda to discuss in the meeting, we mulled over the party's strategies for the upcoming State Assembly election," said a senior party leader, speaking on condition of anonymity.

After the meeting, senior leaders told reporters that

the coming days would see a large number of ruling JD(U) leaders joining the RJD as most of them were "unhappy with the party leadership's stand on the CAA and NRC".

On Saturday JD(U) MLC Javed Iqbal Ansari met the imprisoned Mr. Prasad at the government hospital in Ranchi and questioned party president Nitish Kumar's leadership.

"About 30-35 JD(U) leaders are in touch with our party chief Lalu Prasad and party leader Tejashwi Yadav," asserted RJD MLA and former minister Shiv Chandra Ram. "Most of them are unhappy with their party leadership's stand on CAA and NRC," he added.

Farmers groups have urged the Central government to show the same political will as during the RCEP talks



Fragile farms: Cotton cultivators could be especially threatened by an adverse deal, activists said. ■ M. SRINATH

Farmer groups have urged the Central government to show the same political will as during the RCEP talks

major crops including corn, cotton, soybean, wheat and nuts. The U.S. is also keen on reaching a deal to open up the Indian dairy market, which had been hindered by the fact that the U.S. cattle feed often includes non-vegetarian elements.

Indian farm lobbies worry that this could have a disastrous impact on domestic farmers, already facing a struggle to get remunerative prices for their produce.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi needs to show the same political will that he displayed during the RCEP talks and continue to stand firm for the interests of small and marginal farmers," said S. Kannaiyan, who heads the

INTERVIEW | MAHINDA RAJAPAKSA

'If India agrees to postpone debt by 3 years, we can convince others too'

The previous government took so many loans, they beggared the economy, and it is a mess, says Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

On his first visit after being sworn in as Sri Lanka's Prime Minister and following talks with PM Narendra Modi, Mahinda Rajapaksa looks forward to debt-restructuring and completion of joint projects with India. He, however, says his government will not pursue projects of the previous government.

No agreements were announced after your meeting, especially on the \$400-million Line of Credit offered by India for infrastructure. Tell us about the talks.

■ We did speak about several agreements and we have agreed to some of the projects that [the Indian side] were interested in. It was a fruitful and successful meet, for both sides, I would say. The housing project is something that is a priority area for us, and we asked for more funding for that. We have a new initiative to cover the whole country, every village, and we should like to get some support for that.

Apart from housing, there were several projects we discussed.

In April 2017, the previous Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe had also signed a MoU on economic cooperation for infrastructure projects, including energy and oil projects in Trincomalee that India has been keen on. Were those discussed?

■ Former President [M.R.S. Sirisena] actually rejected all the projects PM [Wickremesinghe] had signed. We are not responsible for those projects.

The Mattala [airport] project is also out. Our govern-

ment has a firm policy on not allowing any national resources to be given to foreign control.

An additional \$50 million from the LoC have been earmarked for security cooperation, especially after the Easter bombings. What was decided about that?

■ We have decided that we must have more intelligence sharing now, and increase the technical assistance [from India], as well as training. On the Easter bombings, we have an ongoing investigation into the conspiracy, and a commission is looking into it. We hope that India will continue to help us on that. In addition, we want to continue our earlier [pre-2015] project for tri-lateral terror and security cooperation between Maldives-India-Sri Lanka. We might have the meeting for that as soon as possible, pos-



SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

pite knowing we would lose them. But nothing moved after that. We are now expecting to hold our parliamentary elections this April, and after that the provincial council elections. We will appoint a team to go to Jaffna to discuss the way forward.

There has been a controversy over the decision to drop the national anthem in Tamil during Sri Lanka's national day ceremony. How can you reassure Tamils if this is the signal sent out?

■ But if you look around the world, the national anthem is sung primarily in one language. In India, you have so many languages, yet on your national days, you sing it in one language. Our structure is the same. When I go to Jaffna, to a Tamil school, they sing the anthem in Tamil. We have no objection if people want to sing it in their way.

Some political figures are raising this issue; the general public is not interested in this issue.

Your biggest challenge this year will be servicing the domestic and foreign debt, which totals about \$60 billion. How do you plan to deal with this issue?

■ Yes, it is a worry. This is something we discussed with the Indian government as well, and have asked if we could get a moratorium on all loan repayments for three years, until we can revive the economy. If the Indian government takes this step, then other governments might agree to do the same thing, including China. The previous government took so many loans, they begged the economy, and it is a mess. It all depends on the stand India takes.

Given that the President is

also your brother, could the tussle over the 19th amendment [President-PM power structure] cause problems between you?

■ No, no, no. First of all, we have to get rid of the 19th Amendment...The way the present Constitution is structured and the confusion with the 19th Amendment, only two brothers like Gota and I can handle this. (Laughs). Otherwise no President and PM will ever agree on this issue.

Finally, what does it feel like to be back here as Prime Minister, after five years, when you visited, but were out of power?

■ Well, I am grateful to PM Modi for inviting me and receiving me – both when I was out of power and now. I never felt the difference, in that sense.

BJP supporters, anti-CAA group clash at book fair

Scuffle began after activists objected to BJP leader's visit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Violence erupted at the International Kolkata Book Fair on Saturday when a group of civil rights activists began protesting against Bharatiya Janata Party leader Rahul Sinha who visited the venue. A scuffle broke out between BJP supporters and protesters against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) when Mr. Sinha visited the stall of the Bharatiya Janata.

Police personnel deployed at the venue had to intervene to control the situation. Video footage aired by local television channels showed the protesters, including students, clashing with the police. In some videos, the police are seen beating the protesters. Several protesters were taken into police custody.

Ranajit Sur, vice-president of the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights, a civil rights organisation, said the police had "deliberately attacked the protesters."

"Something like this has never happened at the book fair. We had no plans of protests. Only a few people were raising slogans," Mr. Sur said. The police closed gate number 7, one of the main



Police personnel detaining protesters after a clash at the Kolkata Book Fair on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Tribal front protests in Tripura

CORRESPONDENT
AGARTALA

The Gana Mukti Parishad (GMP), the tribal front of the CPI(M), held a rally in Agartala on Saturday to protest against the imposition of the CAA in Tripura. The GMP also

sought empowerment of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council. Senior CPI(M) leaders, including former CM Manik Sarkar, tribal leader Aghore Debbarma and GMP chief Jitendra Choudhury led the rally.

gates to enter the venue. Later in the evening, the protesters who were detained allegedly assaulted the police. Videos from Biddannagar North Police Station, where the protesters were taken after the violence, showed a few protesters assaulting a policewoman.

BJP leader Rahul Sinha said he would not comment on the protesters as it would mean giving them undue credit. "Our fight is with the Trinamool Congress. The people have discarded them [the Left parties]. We are not fools to allow them to steal the limelight by getting into a fight with them," he said.

The argument that women officers are not trainable in specialisation envisaged for permanent commission of women officers, skewed cadre structure, lower physical capabilities etc. are grounds/excuses that follow the pattern of regressive mindset, rather than being based on experience or statistics," said their 19-page written submission.

The officers termed the note "misconceived and based on misleading and erroneous basis".

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Japan scrambles to contain coronavirus

Tokyo is also preparing to host hundreds of thousands of visitors for Summer Olympics in July

MOTOKO RICH
EIMI YAMAMITSU
TOKYO

Japan already had several confirmed coronavirus cases when a giant cruise ship arrived at the port of Yokohama last week.

Now, with the disclosure that 64 people from that ship have tested positive for the virus, Japan is scrambling to prevent a larger outbreak even as it prepares to welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors for the Summer Olympics starting in Tokyo in July.

The Japanese government on Monday quarantined the ship, the *Diamond Princess*, with more than 3,700 crew and passengers aboard, after learning that a man who had disembarked in Hong Kong on January 25 had tested positive for the virus.

In the days since, it has become a fixture in Yokohama's harbour, making a slow circuit toward shore for supplies and then back out to sea for quarantine. Japanese health workers have screened 279 people from the ship who showed symptoms or who had come into contact with the infected man.

The Health Ministry said on Friday that the people infected with coronavirus had been taken to hospitals across several prefectures. The remaining passengers and crew members have not yet been tested and will remain quarantined for 12 more days. Some passengers shared concern about the virus' spread and about the days ahead stuck in their cabins.

Masako Ishida, 61, said Friday that all passengers had been given a thermometer. "We were screened on the first day by quarantine officers, but there hasn't



On alert: Children wearing masks at the Ice Festival in Hwacheon, South Korea, on Saturday. ■ REUTERS

been anything ever since," she said. "We're told to report immediately when we feel we have a fever."

Ms. Ishida, who is traveling with her husband and mother, said she was trying to remain calm. But she was also looking forward to leaving her cabin.

Missed cases

The high rate of coronavirus cases among those tested was a point of concern for some infectious disease specialists. "That's a lot of positive cases," said Dr. Peter Rabinowitz, who is co-director of the University of Washington MetaCenter for Pandemic Preparedness and Global Health Security.

Dr. Rabinowitz said that given the relatively low rate of testing among all passengers, it was possible that cases had been missed. "I would think that this would be a very serious situation for the public health department to be evaluating and doing all they can to try to limit the spread," he said.

Other public health specialists said it was difficult to draw too many conclusions yet from what appears to be

a high rate of infection on the ship. The Japanese government has asked another cruise ship, the *Westerdam*, not to make a scheduled stop in Okinawa. When the *Diamond Princess* stopped in Naha, Okinawa, last Saturday, about 2,600 passengers left the ship for a few hours and traveled by buses and taxis. Health officials are trying to trace their routes.

Japan has also recorded 25 cases of coronavirus infections among citizens who had returned from Wuhan. A charter flight that returned to Tokyo on Friday had 198 passengers aboard, including non-Japanese spouses and family members.

Experts said Japan's health care system should be equipped to handle the number of cases in the country right now. About 60 facilities across Japan have test kits for the coronavirus, and the hospitals that have accepted patients have specialised isolation units and staff members trained to handle infectious diseases. ■ NY TIMES

China turns to Artificial Intelligence, big data

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

As Chinese authorities race to contain the spread of the coronavirus, which has infected more than 34,000 people and killed more than 700 in China, Beijing is turning to a familiar set of tools to find and prevent potential infections: data tracking and artificial intelligence.

Several Chinese tech

firms have developed apps to help people check if they have taken the same flight or train as confirmed virus patients, scraping data from lists published by state media. In Guangzhou, southern Guangdong province, robots at one public plaza have even been deployed to scold passers-by not wearing masks, according to state-run *Global Times*.

Several Chinese tech

5 British nationals test positive in France

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Five British nationals, including a child, have tested positive for the new coronavirus in France, the Health Minister said on Saturday, adding that they had all stayed at the same ski chalet. France has now detected a total of 11 cases of the novel coronavirus, and the new "cluster" is centred on a Briton who had returned

from Singapore and stayed in Contamines-Montjoie, near Mont Blanc in the French Alps, Health Minister Agnes Buzyn said. "They show no serious signs" of a life-threatening infection added Ms. Buzyn, herself a doctor. The Briton at the centre of the new cases is now in Britain and was not counted among the French tally, she told a press conference.

Malaysian Hindus defy fears to mark festival

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BATU CAVES

Hindus gathered in temples across Malaysia on Saturday to celebrate the annual Thaipusam festival, despite concerns about the deadly coronavirus outbreak.

Massive crowds descended on the Batu Caves temple complex on the outskirts of capital Kuala Lumpur to

participate in the event, where Hindus showcase their devotion to the deity Lord Murugan.

Worshippers walked barefoot up 272 steps to reach the temple – an important religious site for Tamil Hindus – armed with gifts including milk pots which are eventually smashed as offerings.

Thailand soldier kills 20 people in shooting rampage

Incident took place in the northeastern region of Thailand

REUTERS
NAKHON RATCHASIMA/BANGKOK

A Thai soldier killed at least 20 people in a shooting rampage in northeastern Thailand on Saturday, posting messages on Facebook during the attack, and was holed up in a shopping mall nine hours after he first struck, authorities said. Security forces blocked the street leading to the Terminal 21 mall in the city of Nakhon Ratchasima.

Groups of soldiers and police could be seen heading in as rescue workers waited nearby, nearly 10 hours after the soldier began his attacks in another part of the city.

Earlier, security forces had stormed the mall and helped hundreds of people escape, but the gunman was still at large inside, said Defence Ministry spokesman Kongcheep Tantranwanit.

250 km from capital
The soldier opened fire in several places, including a house and an Army base, before heading to the mall in Nakhon Ratchasima, which is about 250 km from the



Motive unclear: A screenshot from the Facebook page of Jakrapanth Thomma, the shooter. ■ AFP

capital Bangkok, police said.

Local media showed footage of the soldier getting out of a car in front of the mall and firing off a series of shots, sending people fleeing for cover. "We don't know why he did this. It appears he went mad," Mr. Kongcheep said.

Mr. Kongcheep said at least 20 people had been killed and it was not clear whether the gunman had taken hostages in the mall. "It's not known how many are still inside," he said.

Police identified the suspect as Jakrapanth Thomma. During the attack he posted

"Death is inevitable for everyone" on his Facebook page and later asked "Should I give up?" Facebook said it had removed the suspect's account.

Thai media said the suspect's mother was being taken to the mall to try to persuade him to give up. Video showed her in tears saying "why did he do it?" as she got in a police vehicle.

Nakhon Ratchasima is one of the biggest cities in northeastern Thailand, a rice growing area and one of the poorest parts of the country, which has a population of 69 million people.

Pak. Taliban leader killed in Afghanistan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PESHAWAR

The Pakistani Taliban has confirmed that one of its key leaders and another member of the group were killed in a clash with security forces in Afghanistan.

In a statement published by the SITE monitoring group Friday, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) said Sheikh Khalid Haqqani, who served on the group's con-

sultative council and had been a deputy leader, had been killed January 31. "Haqqani embraced martyrdom while fighting with slaves of the United States", the TTP said.

Haqqani's close confidant Qari Saifullah Peshawari was also killed in the clash that took place inside Afghanistan during a "mission", said a senior Pakistani Taliban leader.

Haqqani was not thought

to be related to the Haqqani network, which is also affiliated to the Afghan Taliban.

Both Islamabad and Kabul have long accused each other of allowing militants to shelter in the border regions. "Haqqani, also a writer of several books on different topics, was known for giving a befitting reply to so-called torch-bearers of democracy," the TTP said in its statement.

Trump defends removal of impeachment witness

Vindman was insubordinate: President

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Saturday defended his decision to fire an Army officer who gave damning evidence against him during the impeachment probe.

Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Vindman was escorted on Friday out of the White House, where he worked on the National Security Council as an expert on Ukraine. His lawyer called the move an act of revenge by the President, two days after he was acquitted by the Senate.

Mr. Trump attacked Vindman in a tweet on Saturday. "Fake News @CNN & MSNBC keep talking about Lt. Col. Vindman as though I should think only how wonderful he was," Mr. Trump wrote.

"Actually, I don't know him, never spoke to him, or met him (I don't believe) but, he was very insubordinate, reported contents of my 'perfect' calls incorrectly." "In other words, OUT."

Democrats prepare for a tight New Hampshire contest

Sanders, Buttigieg finished at the top in the Iowa caucus, where technical problems delayed the results



Contest intensifies: Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders at the debate in Manchester, New Hampshire, on Friday. ■ AFP

the candidates could claim before New Hampshire's contest on Tuesday and cast a pall as the Democratic Party began the process of picking a nominee to face Republican President Donald Trump in November.

At the presidential debate on Friday, Mr. Biden conceded that he likely would not

win the State, prompting local media to ask afterward whether he was writing off New Hampshire. His campaign maintained that Mr. Biden would continue to campaign in the days leading up to the primary and expected to finish competitively.

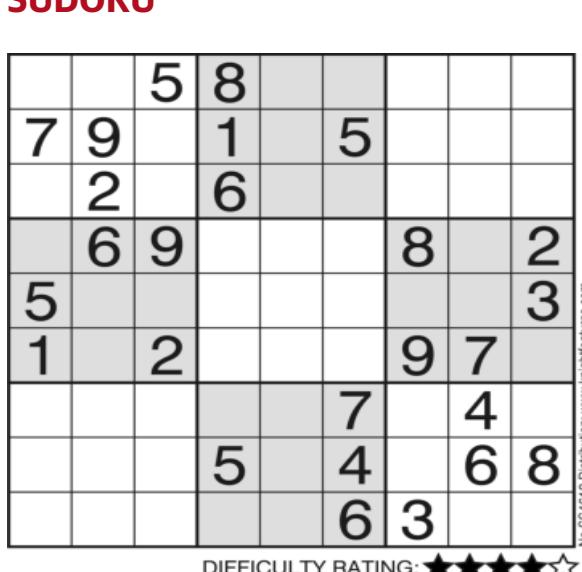
Mr. Biden was the only

top-tier contender absent from Saturday's presidential forum on reproductive rights and the courts in Concord that drew eight other Democratic candidates, including Mr. Buttigieg, Mr. Sanders and Ms. Warren. There is broad consensus among the Democratic candidates on abortion rights, an issue that is drawing intensified debate amid Republican-backed State laws that restrict a woman's right to end a pregnancy.

Mr. Sanders rejected expanding the high court, an idea embraced recently by some leading Democrats, saying it would inevitably lead to Presidents of both parties taking turns packing the court with more justices.

He did vow to apply a litmus test for any judicial appointment – the 1973 Supreme Court ruling *Roe v. Wade*, holding that a woman has a constitutional right to abortion. "I will never nominate anybody to the Supreme Court or any federal court who is not 100 percent pro-*Roe v. Wade*."

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Predictive model designed by U.S.-based statistician gives 71% chance to *1917* for a 'Best Picture' win this weekend

VIGNESH RADHAKRISHNAN
The Oscars are predictable. And there is science behind such predictions.

While the degree of accuracy varies, from one predictive model to another, one nominee stands out in each category, every year. For instance, it can be predicted with 99.8% certainty that, this year, Joaquin Phoenix is going to win Best Actor in a Leading Role for *Joker*. Whereas in the Best Picture category, the win probabilities are relatively more closer, with *1917* at 71%, *Joker* at 10% and *Parasite* only at 2%.

But how do statisticians predict the Oscar winners? More importantly, how many past winners coincide with the predicted?

Considering the patterns
While the mathematical model involves complicated equations, the basic premise is simple. Even played the game of battleship? When the odds of spotting an ene-

my ship are initially slim, the probability increases as the game goes on. The Oscar predictions follow the same principle: when an exercise repeats itself over a period, it creates enough patterns to guess the future outcomes.

With the 92nd Academy Awards to be presented on February 9, mathematicians have 91 previous results as data to build a model using which the future winner can be predicted.

Iain Pardoe, who has a doctorate in Statistics from the University of Minnesota, has built one such model. He uses three basic patterns. First, the Academy members involved in deciding the Oscars are also present in the panel which decides the Golden Globes, Directors Guild of America, Screen Actors Guild, BAFTA etc. Thus, their choices can't wildly vary between the two awards. For instance, of the 64 Best Picture winners from 1943 to 2006, 34 had previously won

the Golden Globes. Thus, the awards preceding the Oscars is an important data point.

Second, winners of the Best Picture and Best Director are often represented by multiple nominees in other categories. For instance, between 1938 and 2006, only three movies have won the Best Picture without also receiving a Best Director nomination. Thus, the inter-relationship between nominations adds to the final probability.

Third, past nominations of the lead actors and directors increases their chance of winning. Whereas, past wins decreases the chance of a repeat in case of Lead Actor (male) and Lead Actor (female). Weights are then assigned based on which of the above assumptions correlates strongly to the past Oscar winners. Using that relationship, the 2019 winners are predicted. The graphic shows the predicted winners in the four major categories

– Best Picture, Best Actor in a Leading Role, Best Actress in a Leading Role, Best Director and Best Supporting Actor/Actress.

High success rate
Between 1938-2018, the model has accurately predicted 71% of the Oscar winners.

The odds become better, with a 80% success rate, when only the last 14 years are considered. However, the Academy has thrown up surprises on many occasions, especially in the Best Picture category – as it represents a collective effort and not an individual's brilliance.

Notable exceptions in recent years: 2016 winner *Moonlight* (had only 2% probability of winning, but beat *La La Land* which had a 97% chance); 2015 winner *Spotlight* (with just 6% probability beat *The Revenant* which had 56% chance).

How they stack up

How the nominees were ranked on the prediction scale

BEST DIRECTOR	Sam Mendes	84%

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IRDAI revises stewardship code for insurers

N. RAVI KUMAR
HYDERABAD

Insurance regulator IRDAI has come up with revised guidelines on the Stewardship Code for Insurers, or the set of guidelines for insurance firms on their engagement with companies in which they have invested.

"All the insurers need to review and update their existing stewardship within three months," IRDAI Member (F&I) Pravin Kumbhe said, issuing the revised guidelines, which, among other aspects, favoured an oversight role for the insurance companies in the investee firms.

"Insurers should have mechanisms for regular monitoring of their investee companies in respect of their performance, leadership effectiveness, succession planning, corporate governance, reporting and other parameters they consider important," the regulator said.

Setting a three-month deadline for the insurers to update their stewardship policy and get the same approved by their board of directors, IRDAI sought to highlight how insurance companies ought to have an active role in the general meetings of investee companies and engage with the management to improve governance.

Eye on better returns
"This will result in informed decisions by the parties and improve the return on investments of insurers, which will ultimately benefit the policyholders," the communication said.

The insurance regulator had issued a code for stewardship in March 2017, which the insurance companies needed to adopt from 2017-18.

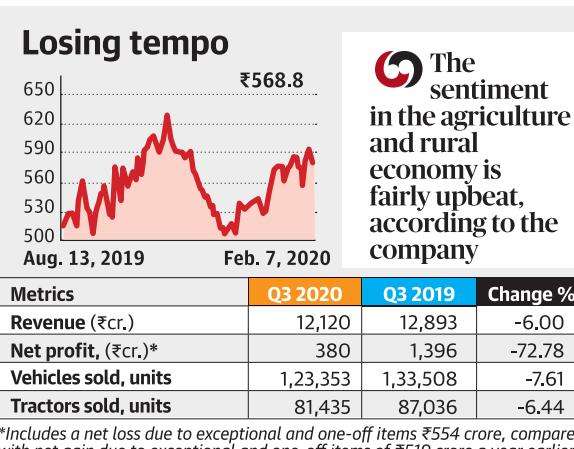
M&M net slumps 73% on sluggish sales

'Good monsoons, festive demand, better liquidity, new launches help moderate de-growth in industry'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. (M&M), along with its 100% subsidiary Mahindra Vehicles Manufacturers Ltd. (MVML) reported a 73% decline in net profit at ₹380 crore for the quarter ended December 31, due to sluggish vehicle sales. This compares with a ₹1,396 crore net profit a year earlier.

Revenue declined 6% to ₹12,120 crore. During the quarter, the company sold 1,23,353 units compared with 1,33,508 units in the same period last year, down 7.6%. Tractor sales fell 6.4% to 81,435 units. Exports, including vehicles and tractors, were down 22% to 9,633 units. "The results of Q3 FY2020 include a net loss on account of exceptional and one-off items ₹554 crore



compared to a net gain on account of exceptional and one-off items of ₹519 crore in Q3 F2019," the company said in a statement.

The company said that in Q3 FY2020, both the Indian auto and tractor industries had shown signs of trend re-

versal and have seen moderation in the double digit de-growth seen in the two immediately preceding quarters. "Good monsoons, the festive season demand, improved liquidity conditions, new launches, especially in the utility vehicle

The sentiment in the agriculture and rural economy is fairly upbeat, according to the company



Anand Mahindra

(UV) segment and special schemes offered by OEMs for the auto industry were the key reasons for this moderation in de-growth," it said.

"The unseasonal rains in the month of October 2019 did cause some damage to the kharif crop, but the sentiment in the agri and rural economy is fairly upbeat with good sowing of rabi crops supported by very good water reservoir levels and the government's announcement for thrust on in-

fra projects," it said. For the quarter ended December, M&M, on a standalone basis, reported revenue of ₹12,345 crore as compared to ₹13,070 crore in the same period last year. Net profit was ₹307 crore compared with ₹1,077 crore a year earlier.

Chairman to continue
The company also said that following the Securities and Exchange Board of India deferring the deadline for compliance with norms relating to the post of chairman, M&M's board had requested Anand Mahindra to continue as executive chairman till his original term of appointment ended on November, 11, 2021. Mr. Mahindra has acceded to the request.

Dr. Pawan Goenka and Dr. Anish Shah would continue to report to Mr. Mahindra.



Higher orders are expected for apparel and made-up exports from India before this fiscal end. • S. SIVA SARAVANAN

Utilise shift in orders from virus-hit China, textile exporters urged

'Importing nations making enquiries'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE

With several businesses said to be affected in China due to the coronavirus, the Indian textile and clothing sector should seize the opportunity in global trade, T. Rajkumar, chairman of the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry, said.

"We expect China will take 3-4 more months to return to normalcy [following the outbreak of the coronavirus]. Indian textile and clothing exporters should be aggressive and tap overseas orders that will shift from China," he told mediapersons here.

Cipla has acquired the four brands, namely CPink, CDense, Productiv and Folamine to further strengthen its presence in the women's health segment, Cipla said in a filing with the BSE.

The nutraceutical products, to be sold under the four umbrella brands, would address various health needs for conditions arising due to nutritional deficiencies or insufficiencies, it added.

Higher orders expected
"We hear that several businesses have been hit in China, especially during the last one week. Indian exporters are beginning to get enquiries from importers in different countries as they cannot source from China now."

"I expect higher orders for apparel and made-up exports from India even before the end of this financial year," he added. Countries such as Bangladesh that are

strong in garment exports may also face challenges as they import raw material. For Indian exporters, the entire textile value chain is available. They should reach out to buyers and tap opportunities, he said.

On the announcements in the Union Budget, Mr. Rajkumar said that abolition of anti-dumping duty on PTA would lead to 20-25% of textile mills switching over to synthetic yarn production from cotton. The anti-dumping duty on PTA was \$26 to \$160 a tonne depending on the country from where it was imported.

With removal of the anti-dumping duty, the raw material for production of MMF (man-made fibre) will be available at international price.

At present, cotton yarn production in India is higher than synthetic yarn.

Several mills will move to MMF now, he said.

Textile Secretary Ravi Kapoor will visit Coimbatore on February 12-13 and hold meetings with representatives of textile associations from the southern State, Mr. Rajkumar said.

Economy revival is around the corner'

PSU productivity can zoom 3-fold if govt. lowers stake to 50%: Vedanta's Agarwal

PIYUSH PANDEY
MUMBAI

Even as the country's economy is under pressure amid the slowdown, Vedanta Resources chairman Anil Agarwal believes that a revival is just around the corner.

"The way the government is taking bold decisions, I am confident that the economy will bounce back over the next 12 months. I would urge my fellow countrymen to give this government a chance and let them continue with the good work," Mr. Agarwal said in an interaction with *The Hindu*.

Lauding the government for recognising the role of entrepreneurs in nation building, Mr. Agarwal said that the Union Budget's focus on transparency and reducing tax litigation would go a long way in propelling India to become a \$5 trillion economy," Mr. Agarwal said.

He also welcomed the government's thrust on disinvestment, while stressing that public sector companies and banks needed to be run independently for better



Anil Agarwal

productivity. "There is a lot of value erosion that is happening right now. I am sure that the productivity of these public sector units can increase threefold if they are allowed to function independently. And for this to happen, the government needs to bring down their stake in these companies to 50%," he said.

On the Budget's disinvestment target of ₹2.1 lakh crore, Mr. Agarwal said: "The government is on the right track. They are looking to sell stake in Air India and BPCL. Hindustan Zinc disinvestment is also on the cards."

Stating that the rules of doing business have changed, Mr. Agarwal lauded the government for creating an ecosystem where only sound business ideas become successful today. "India is the largest start-up in

the world, and the focus on transparency is a big boost for the younger generation," he added.

Pitch for oil exploration
Making a strong pitch to boost oil exploration, Mr. Agarwal said: "India has huge oil reserves. Except Cairn, there is no other oil producer in the private sector. We need at least 50 more companies. If any major crisis hits the Gulf, [the country] will have no supply of oil. So, it is important that we produce at least 50% of our oil requirements.

"The government should bring in a regime of self-certification wherein companies can start off with exploration activities once they get the environmental clearance. Also, it is important that explorers get international price for their output," Mr. Agarwal said.

The nutraceutical products, to be sold under the four umbrella brands, would address various health needs for conditions arising due to nutritional deficiencies or insufficiencies, it added.

Lamborghini electric cars will take time'

Technology in EVs not evolved yet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Luxury carmaker Automobili Lamborghini is not in a hurry to introduce full electric cars globally, said a senior executive.

"Yes, almost all automakers are getting into the electric vehicle space, but for us [that] time is still far away," said Sharad Agarwal, head, Lamborghini India. "The technology in the electric vehicle space has not yet evolved. We have to see whether the car will give the same performance lap after lap."

Mr. Agarwal said that Lamborghini had showcased the vision of future mobility with the electric version of Terzo Millennio



Sharad Agarwal

in 2017. On the domestic market, he said it was a strategic market for Lamborghini and that it would continue to invest in marketing, networking and after-sales.

While the super luxury segment recorded a contraction in calendar year 2019, Lamborghini posted 18% to 20% growth, he said.

Capacity issues at top airports will continue as flyer count rises

Slowdown, Jet's closure no dampener on air travel: Crisil

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

Congestion at India's top four airports Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad will continue in the medium term as the number of air passengers has seen a rise despite the slowdown in the economy and closure of Jet Airways, Crisil Ratings said in a study.

These four airports handle more than half of air passenger traffic in India and currently operate at over 130% of capacity utilisation. With healthy traffic growth projected in the near future, this operating rate is expected to rise further in next 12 months, it said.

This, despite a ₹38,000-

crore capex being undertaken by operators between 2020 and 2024. The capex, the highest to be incurred in any continuous five-year period, is largely debt-funded.

"Capacity at these four airports will increase a cumulative 65% to 228 million annually [from 138 million now] by fiscal 2023. However, traffic is expected to grow strong at up to 10% per annum over the same period," Manish Gupta, senior director, Crisil Ratings, said.

"Because the additional capacities will become operational in phases only around fiscal 2023, high passenger growth will add to congestion till then," he added.

High utilisation will ride on pent-up demand (accumulated in 2019 as traffic was impacted with the grounding of Jet Airways) and one-off issues with new aircraft of certain airlines. Further impetus will also come from improving connectivity to smaller cities and reducing fare difference between air and rail, Crisil Ratings said.

Ankit Hakhu, director, Crisil Ratings, said: "These airports operate on a hybrid model, where non-aero revenue stream partially subsidises the airport user fee. Hence rising traffic and increasing monetisation of non-aero assets will pave the way for a more balanced regulatory regime."

Mr. Agarwal said that Lamborghini had showcased the vision of future mobility with the electric version of Terzo Millennio



Pilgrims' progress: IHCL has set up hotels at key spiritual locations, including Madurai. • K. GANESAN

thinning footprint in this sector which is growing exponentially," said Puneet Chhatwal, MD & CEO, IHCL.

"Religious and spiritual tourism within domestic tourism is a largely untapped market. IHCL is committed to filling the gap in this sector which is growing exponentially. The opportunities across market segments and price points are immense," the company said.

IHCL was also behind the famous *Ganga Arti* that takes place in Varanasi.

As per IHCL's research, destinations like Varanasi, Ajmer, Amritsar, Goa and Kerala are visited more by domestic travellers while international travellers are inclined towards Amritsar, Nashik and Madurai, more from a cultural exploration perspective.

Dharamshala, Haridwar, Katra, Mecca, to name a few," he added.

Recently, IHCL signed up for Vivanta Dharamshala, a 100-room hotel offering panoramic views of the Dhauladhar mountains in the Himalayas. It is a short distance away from McLeodganj, famous the world over as a hub of Tibetan Buddhism and home to the Dalai Lama. It is a greenfield project slated to open in 2023.

IHCL is well-positioned to capture the demand at these key spiritual destinations, executives said.

IHCL, with all its brands, is a dominant player in many other cities of spiritual significance including Nashik,

JALANDHAR SMART CITY LIMITED
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Notice Inviting Tender (NIT), National Competitive Bid (NCB)
Bid reference No.: 29/JSCl/2019-20

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

"DEVELOPMENT OF A SPORTS HUB AT BURLTON PARK IN JALANDHAR CITY UNDER JALANDHAR SMART CITY MISSION ON PPP (DBFOT) MODE"

Jalandhar Smart City Limited (JSCl) invites online unconditional bids through e-procurement portal <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from eligible bidders under National Competitive Bidding (NCB) with Single Stage-two envelopes bidding procedure for the following works.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (₹)	Earnest Money (₹)	Tender Fee (₹)	Concession Period
1.	"DEVELOPMENT OF A SPORTS HUB AT BURLTON PARK IN JALANDHAR CITY UNDER JALANDHAR SMART CITY MISSION ON PPP (DBFOT) MODE"	250 Crores (Approx.)	2.5 Crores	20,000/- + GST	30 Years

Important dates of the RFP are as below:-

Availability of Tender Online for Bidding

From To Last Date & Time for Online Submission of Bids

11.02.2020 1700 hrs 26.02.2020 1700 hrs 28.02.2020 1000 hrs Date & Time of Opening of Tender

Technical Bid Financial Bid

11.02.2020 1700 hrs 26.02.2020 1700 hrs 28.02.2020 1000 hrs To be intimated later

1. The Pre-Bid meeting



LIC stake sale

What does the government's plan to sell a part of its holding in Life Insurance Corporation entail?

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR & MANOJIT SAHA

The story so far: In the Union Budget speech on February 1, Union Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman announced that the government proposed to sell a part of its holding in Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) by way of an initial public offering (IPO). The state insurer was established in 1956 through an Act of Parliament. Governed by the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956, every LIC policy is guaranteed by the government. Explaining the rationale for divesting the government's stake in LIC, Ms. Sitharaman said that listing would bring discipline while giving retail investors an opportunity to participate in wealth creation.

What is the implication for policyholders? Before the government divests a part of its stake through a public issue, it will have to ensure that it amends the LIC Act, which among other things, ensures a sovereign guarantee for all policies under Section 37 of the Act. The Finance Ministry is in talks with the Law Ministry to amend the Act. The top brass of LIC are, however, banking on a government assurance on the issue. In a media interaction on Friday, LIC Chairman M.R. Kumar said: "There is no implication for policyholders. The Finance Minister has clarified that sovereign guarantee will continue. That being the case I don't think there is anything to worry for the customer."

Will listing change LIC's operational approach or investment policies?

LIC is the biggest institutional investor in the Indian equity markets. According to media reports, LIC's gross investments in equity are set to touch an all-time high of ₹2,000 crore in the financial year 2019-20. In comparison, foreign portfolio investors had invested just over ₹65,000 crore into Indian equity up to February 8, according to data posted on the National Securities Depository Limited website.

In FY19, LIC had invested a little less than ₹69,000 crore in equities. The numbers clearly show the clout that LIC enjoys in the equity market. The government has used LIC on many occasions to stabilise the markets.

Analysts say there is no doubt that a listing through an initial public offering has its benefits including improved accountability, transparency and better compliance with governance norms

Questions were raised in the market at the time about its investment policies but since LIC was completely owned by the government, not much came of it. Analysts say this is the interesting part about the proposed listing. The listing would usher in benefits including increased accountability, transparency and due process. There would be independent directors on board who could question the rationale for investments. Further, shareholders too could question the company on its investments. "We are yet to do the math," said Mr. Kumar when asked how investment norms would change post the proposed listing. "Generally, whether we are listed or not, we have to follow the same investment [norms]," he added.

Could listing change the payout structure at LIC? Quite likely, according to analysts. Currently, LIC pays 5% of its surplus to the government and the balance 95% to policyholders. This makes it possible for the state-owned insurance company to give a higher bonus on the policies compared to private players, who typically give 10% of their surplus to shareholders and the balance 90% to policyholders. With outside investors becoming shareholders, with a few even gaining seats on the insurer's board, there could be a demand to tweak the mix between shareholders and policyholders. Further, the norms of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on corporate governance would require the insurance company to make timely and quick disclosures about defaults among other things. LIC is a significant player in the debt segment as well and would have to make additional disclosures to retail shareholders.

Does LIC have bad loans?

At a time when all banks are reeling under the pressure of bad loans there is intense speculation on LIC's non-performing assets (NPAs). While media reports have posited that LIC has about 6% gross NPAs. Mr. Kumar, however, clarified that on an overall basis, it was not even 1%. He said, "For us, most investments are in equity, government securities and a small part in corporate debt. The 6% is possibly in corporate debt. But overall, it is hardly 1% in gross [terms]. Since we made provisions, net [NPAs] is 0.04%." LIC's total assets amounted to ₹32.26 lakh crore as of September 2019.

A window into novel coronavirus transmission

What does the World Health Organization have to say about the main driver of the viral spread?

R. PRASAD

The story so far: The spread of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in mainland China continues unabated. On February 7, mainland China recorded 3,399 new confirmed cases of the virus and 86 deaths taking the total number of confirmed cases to 34,546 and deaths to 722. Hubei province, the epicentre of the outbreak, reported 2,841 new cases and 81 deaths on Friday. During the February 7 media briefing, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said it is "too soon to say if China's outbreak has peaked". There were three cases in India, as on Saturday.

Is the number of cases reported from mainland China increasing?

There has been a steady increase in the number of confirmed cases from January 28 (1,459) to February 4 (3,887) before showing a slight dip for two consecutive days – February 5 (3,694) and February 6 (3,142). But the trend again changed on February 7 when more cases (3,399) were reported than the previous day.

Referring to a diagram that shows the distribution of cases over time, Dr. Tedros cautioned the public on Friday not to read too much into the new data saying the "numbers could go up again".

Which countries/regions outside mainland China have reported novel virus cases?

As of February 7, 28 countries/regions have reported 323 cases of the 2019-nCoV. Singapore has reported the most number of cases: 33. Thailand is next with 32. Hong Kong has 26 cases (including one death); Others are Japan (25); South Korea (24); Taiwan (16); India (3), the U.K. and the Philippines (including one death); and a ship in Japan territorial waters has 64 cases.

How many human-to-human transmissions have been seen outside mainland China?

As of February 4, the WHO says 27 cases of human-to-human transmission of the novel coronavirus have been reported from nine countries outside China.

The first case of human-to-human transmission outside China was reported from Vietnam. It was followed by Japan, Thailand, South Korea, Germany, Singapore and the U.S. About 10 days ago, 15 healthcare workers in mainland China were reported to have been infected through such transmission. The main route of transmission currently in China is through human-to-human transmission as the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan city, which is considered as the source of the virus, was shut down on January 1.

According to a study published on February 7 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, based on 138 hospitalised patients admitted between January 1 and 28, the presumed human-to-human hospital-associated transmission was suspected in 41% of patients.

Can the virus be transmitted during the incubation period?

China's National Health Commission Minister had warned that the novel virus might be spreading even during the incubation period when symptoms do not show up. Then on January 30, *The New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)* reported that a Chinese woman who had shown no sign or symptoms of infection had transmitted the virus to a German during the incubation period, thus confirming what China had said.

But the journal, *Science*, later reported that The Robert Koch Institute (RKI), the German government's public health agency, and the Bavarian Health and Food Safety Authority found out from the Chinese woman that she did have a few symptoms while in Germany. According to *Science*, she "felt tired, suffered from muscle pain, and took paracetamol, a fever-lowering medication".

So it was not a case of a person transmitting the virus during the incubation period, as the letter in *NEJM* pointed out.

What is WHO's position on virus transmission during the incubation period?

Closely related to SARS

The new coronavirus first identified in the Chinese city of Wuhan appears to be similar to the one that caused severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and there is evidence it originated in bats

1. Animal disease reservoir Bats thought to be original host of SARS – which caused 2002-03 epidemic – and new virus, named 2019-nCoV

2. Intermediate host Other animals infected by blood, saliva, urine or faeces of bats

3. Transmission to humans Virus "jumps" species barrier, possibly via close contact with infected animals, and may then be spread person-to-person

4. Adaptation: Changes in surface proteins can allow virus to attach to new host cell, either by mutation or recombination (mixing of different viruses)

5. Infection: Both SARS and 2019-nCoV can bind to cells using same receptor, known as ACE2, allowing virus to get deep into human lungs. This may explain pneumonia-like symptoms of patients

Glycoproteins play a part in important cellular functions such as cell adhesion. Spike glycoprotein Cell wall HOST CELL Infection ACE2 receptor Ribonucleic acid (RNA) carries genetic code of virus.

Analysis shows 2019-nCoV infections to be 80% identical to SARS and 96% identical to bat version of virus

Source: Graphic News – Business Insider, Nature, NCBI, Picture: Getty Images

According to a study, based on 138 hospitalised patients admitted between January 1 and 28, the presumed human-to-human hospital-associated transmission of the virus was suspected in 41% of patients

WHO's situation report posted on its website on February 1 says: "WHO is aware of possible transmission of the novel coronavirus from infected people before they developed symptoms. Detailed exposure histories are being taken to better understand the pre-clinical phase of infection and how transmission may have occurred in these few instances."

It then stresses that "asymptomatic infection may be rare, and transmission from an asymptomatic person is very rare with other coronaviruses, as we have seen with Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) coronavirus. Thus, transmission from asymptomatic cases is likely not a major driver of transmission".

The main driver of the novel coronavirus transmission is people who exhibit overt symptoms. WHO says such people will spread the virus more readily through coughing and sneezing.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden says on its website that scientific evidence on coronavirus causing severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) "does not infect at all during the incubation period. There is therefore much to suggest that [something similar] would also apply to the new coronavirus".

Can people exhibiting mild symptoms transmit the virus?

Two laboratories have been independently monitoring patients exhibiting few or minor symptoms and being treated in Munich. Their press release says: These patients have "symptoms of common cold rather than viral pneumonia".

The doctors here could isolate the infectious virus from the pharynx. Both laboratories "found signs of viral replication in the pharynx" besides the lungs.

Based on these observations they say that persons who have "mild or early symptoms of common cold (sore throat, signs of sinusitis, feeling unwell without fever)

may be able to transmit the novel coronavirus to other persons".

The release says: "Because of the immediate relevance for infection control, the participating institutions have decided to release this information prior to completion of studies and formal scientific publication." The observations have not been published in any journal post peer-reviewing. The findings have not been independently verified by other laboratories, either.

What do people with mild symptoms spreading the virus mean for infection control?

The Chinese woman who infected the German colleague is an example of a person exhibiting mild, non-specific symptoms spreading the virus to others.

If further studies find that some people infected with the virus have only mild symptoms, it would mean that many people might have gone or will go undetected. So the actual number of cases might be higher. More studies are needed to confirm if people with mild, non-specific symptoms might be spreading the virus and infecting others.

Like in the case of Zika, can the novel virus be transmitted from mother to child (vertical transmission)?

In China, a baby born to a mother who tested positive for the virus was found to have been infected 30 hours after birth. "This reminds us to pay attention to mother-to-child being a possible route of coronavirus transmission," chief physician of Wuhan Children Hospital's neonatal medicine department, Zeng Lingkong, told Reuters.

But it is also possible that the baby was infected after birth probably due to close contact with the mother. No details are yet available to confirm or refute the claim by the Chinese doctor.

It is considered vertical transmission (mother-to-child) if the virus is transmitted from the mother to the foetus, during delivery or from breastfeeding. According to WHO, there have been no reported cases of vertical transmission in the case of SARS or MERS. However, both SARS and MERS were responsible for severe complications during pregnancy.

According to *The New York Times*, the hospital disclosed details of a second case involving an infant who was born healthy but got infected 16 days later. The mother and the baby's nanny were diagnosed with the virus after the baby was born. A three-month-old baby was infected too.

Though the median age of patients is between 49 and 56 years, these three cases suggest that even infants and babies can get infected with the novel virus.

Does a negative result mean the person is not infected with the novel coronavirus?

Not always. There have been at least a few instances when people have initially tested negative for the novel coronavirus before being testing positive. It is not clear at what stage of infection the initial tests and final tests were done.

Of the 1,155 people tested as of February 6 in India for the novel virus, only three have been found positive. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare press release (of February 6) says all 645 evacuees from Wuhan have tested negative. Totally, based on information on Saturday, 1,449 samples have been tested and 1,446 samples were found negative except for three samples which had tested positive from Kerala.

Dr. Li Wenliang, an ophthalmologist in Wuhan, believed to be a whistle-blower of the coronavirus outbreak, felt unwell and started coughing after treating a patient who later developed a fever. Dr. Li's test results came back negative a few times before his infection was confirmed. He died on February 7.

Similar cases have been reported elsewhere. In Canada, a Chinese woman initially tested negative before further tests confirmed infection. In Canada again, a student from Wuhan, who was asymptomatic, initially tested negative. A second test confirmed the case as positive. In Japan, a person who returned from Wuhan had symptoms such as fever and coughing but initially tested negative. An additional test discovered the infection, says a February 1 report.

The failure to detect at the first instance could be due to early stage of the infection. "Our testing procedures are evolving and getting more and more precise," Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr David Williams, said in a statement.

What is the debate around RO water?

Why does the Environment Ministry want to regulate reverse osmosis-based water filtration systems?

JACOB KOSHY

The story so far: The Union Environment Ministry has issued a draft notification that seeks to regulate membrane-based water filtration systems in areas where the source of water meets drinking water norms of the Bureau of Indian Standards. This primarily affects reverse osmosis (RO)-based water filtration systems and the rules, at least in letter, effectively prohibit homes from installing domestic RO systems.

What are reverse osmosis (RO) systems?

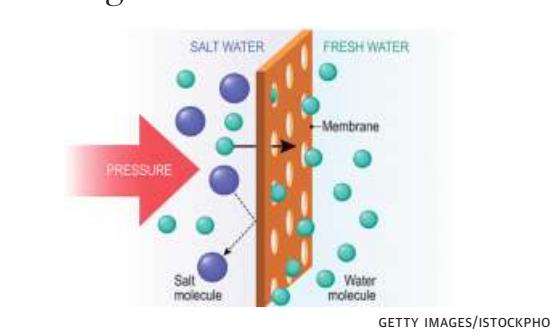
RO was originally a technology devised to desalinate sea water. The idea exploits the principle of osmosis. Take a tube, twist it into a 'U'-shape and insert a semi-permeable membrane (a material with very small holes that will allow only certain molecules to filter through) at the point where the tube curves. Fill half the tube with salt water and the other with freshwater. Over time, fresh water will cross over into the salty arm until the proportion of salt and water in both arms is the same. This is due to osmotic pressure which dilutes a region with a higher concentration of solute (in this case, the salt).

Say you wanted to readjust this tube and have all the salt in one arm and pure water in the other. You would need to create some external pressure that will counter the osmotic pressure and suck all the water from the salty arm into the freshwater arm while leaving the salt behind. This is the essential principle of an RO system.

RO desalination came about in the late 1950s and primarily in large industrial settings to convert brackish sea water into potable drinking water.

However, it is possible to deploy a wide array of membranes and multiple stages of filters to filter a wide variety of solutes – arsenic, fluoride, hexavalent chromium, nitrates, bacteria – that come mixed in water. This has led to an industry of home-RO systems that are installed in a multiplicity of ways to provide potable water.

To create external pressure, RO relies on a pump and electric motors. It uses "activated carbon" components, such as charcoal and carbon black that can filter out



contaminants as well as organic substances such as bacteria. It all depends on the filtering material and the number of filters that incoming tap water must pass through.

What is the problem with RO?

In making tap water pass through multiple stages of cleaning, RO systems end up wasting a lot of water. Anywhere between three-five times more water is wasted by them than they produce and given the challenges that cities and government face in providing potable water, environmentalist groups have convinced the National Green Tribunal to ban the use of RO systems in Delhi. It is as part of this legal dispute, which began in March 2019 that led the Environment Ministry to move to regulate RO systems.

Another concern with RO is that it filters out calcium, zinc, magnesium, which are essential salts needed by the body; drinking such water over time could be harmful. However, many manufacturers claim to overcome this challenge by "post-treatment". The average RO system only aims to reduce Total Dissolved Solids, ensure water is odourless and has a pH from 6.5-8.5. The National Institute of Virology (NIV) claimed that most filtration methods did not eliminate Hepatitis E virus. A combination of filtration systems can eliminate most contaminants.

But opponents of RO systems say this increases costs and reduces the incentive for public-funded water distribution systems to supply clean water to the vast

majority of the country who can ill-afford such systems.

How is the quality of piped water in the country?

Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, the Prime Minister has committed to provide tap water to the entire country by 2024. However, studies show that the existing quality of piped water is deficient in much of India. Last year, the Department of Consumer Affairs undertook a study through the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on the quality of piped drinking water being supplied in the country. In Delhi, all samples drawn from various places did not comply with the BIS's requirements. Most from Mumbai were found to comply, the report claimed. In Hyderabad (Telangana), Bhubaneswar (Odisha), Ranchi (Jharkhand), Raipur (Chhattisgarh), Amravati (Maharashtra) and Shimla (Himachal Pradesh), one or more samples did not

comply and none of the samples drawn from 13 State or Union Territory capitals, Chandigarh, Thiruvananthapuram, Patna, Bhopal, Guwahati, Bengaluru, Gandhinagar, Lucknow, Jammu, Jaipur, Dehradun, Chennai, Kolkata, complied with the requirements.

One concern with RO is that it

SNAPSHOTS



Fireflies under threat
Along with familiar hazards of habitat loss and pesticides, night lighting proves to be an added menace that plays havoc in courtship behaviour of fireflies. In a worldwide assessment published in *Biosciences*, researchers concluded that some of the 2,000-plus firefly species may face extinction threats.



Mammoth's end
The world's last woolly mammoths suffered from serious genetic defects due to inbreeding that may have hampered sense of smell and male fertility. Scientists decoded the genome of one of the last mammoths from Wrangel Island off Siberia's coast. The study has been published in *Genome Biology and Evolution*.



Pluto's beating heart
A new study published in *Journal of Geophysical Research: Planets* finds that Pluto has a 'beating heart' of frozen nitrogen that may control the winds on its surface, giving rise to various structures there. Pluto's thin atmosphere consists mostly of nitrogen, small amounts of carbon monoxide and methane.



Silent sand-shake
Sand dunes can interact and 'communicate' with their neighbouring dunes, actually repel them, according to a new study published in *Physical Review Letters*. Identical dunes close to each other move further apart with time, the researchers observed. Turbulent swirls from the upstream dune push the downstream dune away.

How bats harbour several harmful viruses without falling sick

Bats avoid excessive virus-induced inflammation, often a cause of severe diseases in humans

R. PRASAD

Bats serve as natural hosts for numerous viruses including Ebola virus, Nipah virus, coronaviruses such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and the 2019 novel coronavirus that has infected nearly 10,000 people and killed over 200 others. Even as these viruses cause harm in humans, they rarely if at all cause any harmful effects in bats. This is the case even when the viral load is extremely high in bats.

A study carried out last year and published in the journal *Nature Microbiology* revealed the mechanism responsible for bats to harbour numerous viruses without themselves getting affected and also live long. Compared with terrestrial mammals, bats have longer lifespan.

How bats differ

The reason why bats can harbour these viruses without getting affected is simply because bats can avoid excessive virus-induced inflammation, which often causes severe diseases in animals and people infected with viruses.

When pathogens infect humans and mice, the immune system gets activated and typical inflammatory response to fight the microbes is seen. While controlled inflammatory response to fight infection helps



Resilient mammal: The inflammatory response is dampened in bats immaterial of the variety of viruses that are present and the viral load. ■ ANTON CROOS

keep humans healthy, it can contribute to the damage caused by infectious diseases, and also age-related diseases when the inflammatory response becomes excessive.

In complete contrast, the researchers found that the inflammatory response is dampened in bats immaterial of the variety of viruses that are present and the viral load. The researchers from Duke-NUS Medical School, Singapore used three different viruses – Melaka virus, MERS coronavirus and influenza A virus – and tested the responses of immune cell and other cells (peripheral blood mononuclear cells and bone-marrow derived macrophages) of bats, mice

and humans to these viruses. While inflammation was high in the case of humans and mice, it was significantly reduced in bats immune cells.

Disease tolerance

"This supports an enhanced innate immune tolerance rather than an enhanced antiviral defence in bats," they write. "This may also contribute to our understanding of the role of the inflammation in disease tolerance in bats as reservoir hosts" they say. This is in complete contrast to what is seen in mice and humans for disease-causing zoonotic viruses.

The researchers found that significantly reduced inflammation in bats

was because activation of an important protein – NLRP3 – that recognises both cellular stress and viral/bacterial infections was significantly dampened in bat immune cells.

Studying further, the researchers found that reduced activation of the NLRP3 protein was in turn due to impaired production of mRNA (transcript). Since mRNA production is impaired the NLRP3 protein production gets compromised leading to less amount of the protein being produced. But this was not the case with mice and humans – there was no impairment to mRNA production so the NLRP3 protein was unaffected.

Four variants

The NLRP3 protein is found as four variants in bats. The researchers found that the function of all the four variants was dampened compared with human NLRP3. To test if their finding on NLRP3 hold true in evolutionarily distant bats, the researchers studied two very distinct species of bats – *Pteropus alecto*, which is a large fruit bat known as the Black Flying Fox, and *Myotis davadii*, a tiny vesper bat from China.

The variations have been found to be genetically conserved through evolution. Further analysis comparing 10 bat and 17 non-bat mammalian NLRP3 gene sequences confirmed that these adaptations appear to be bat-specific.



Energy transfer: The milk swirls in large blobs, dissolves into smaller blobs, then gets dispersed in the coffee decoction. ■ GETTY IMAGES

A new way of getting a sense of how time flows

The way energy flows can determine the direction of the 'arrow of time'

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

The concept is readily illustrated taking the example of milk being stirred into coffee decoction in a cup. First the milk swirls in large blobs, then it dissolves into smaller and smaller blobs until it gets dispersed in the decoction. Therefore, there is a transfer of milk from large blobs to smaller blobs and then to still smaller blobs. In the same way, energy gets transferred from a large scale to the small scale, thereby defining a direction for the arrow of time.

Physics and time

The laws of elementary particle physics remain the same when time is reversed. That is, take the questions which govern gravitational, electromagnetic and strong-nuclear forces and replace "t" by "-t" and the equations are invariant. Does this mean that time reversal is indeed a possibility? We do not see it in practice, hence there must be something defining the arrow of time. This is the second law of thermodynamics, which says that a quantity known as the entropy of the system will either remain a constant or increase with time. The entropy is directly related to the disorder in a system. The more the entropy the greater the disorder. So, we can break an egg and go from an ordered state into a disordered state, but the reverse – broken bits of egg joining to form a whole – does not happen. Thus, the direction of increasing entropy determines the arrow of time. This is a popular way of defining the arrow of time.

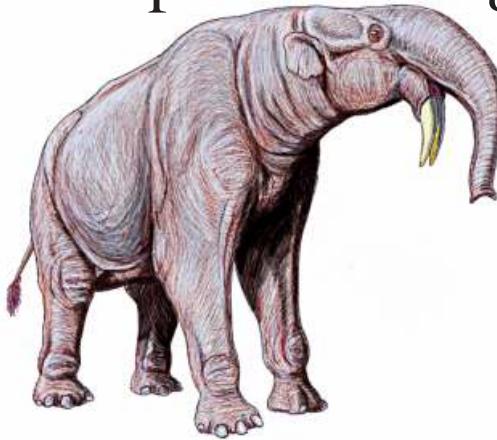
Oscillating universe

"The second law of thermodynamics encounters difficulties in explaining cosmological arrow of time for oscillating universe. However, energy transfers can predict the arrow of time for the collapsing universe," says Prof. Verma.

In a gravitating system, such as the collapsing universe, cluster or star formation is somewhat similar to the formation of cyclones or hurricanes. "[In contrast to the example of coffee] here the energy flows from small scales to large scales. For such systems, the clustering or structure formation is in the forward direction of time," he adds in explanation.

Finding the elephant's long-lost relatives in Kutch

ASWATHI PACHA



Large mammal: An artist's impression of *Deinotherium* showing flatter skulls than elephants. ■ WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

It was a pleasant January winter morning last year and Ningthoujam Premjit Singh along with his team was out on their excavation work at Kutch. When he stumbled upon a premolar tooth of about 6 cm width and 7 cm length, little did he know that what he held belonged to an extinct ancient elephant called *Deinotherium indicum*.

First occurrence

Interestingly, this turned out to be the region's first occurrence of the mammal which weighed between eight and 10 tons in weight. Dr. Singh adds that this new find also expands the distribution range of this species, hitherto only known from two or three localities (Tapar of Gujarat, Haritalyangar in Himachal Pradesh, and Piram Island off the coast of Gujarat). It also increases our understanding of the variations in dental morphology of the

South Asian *Deinotheres* species. Dr. Singh is a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Geology at Panjab University and the first author of the paper recently published in the *Journal of Paleontology*.

Biostratigraphy

Using a technique called biostratigraphy, it was noted that *D. indicum* lived roughly between 11 and 7 seven million years ago in India. In

biostratigraphy, the presence of certain species from a known time period can be used to estimate the age of a deposit containing the same species in a different locality. "Remains of *D. indicum* have been found in well-dated Siwalik deposits from Haritalyangar of Himachal Pradesh. Based on the similarity in species, we inferred a similar date for the Kutch's *D. indicum*," Advait M. Jukar from the Department of Pa-

leobiology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution explains in an email to *The Hindu*. He is the co-first author and corresponding author of the paper.

He adds that definite dates can only be procured when paleomagnetic and radiometric studies are performed on the rocks that these fossils came from.

When asked how morphologically different this species is from today's elephants, he explained that though they had similar large bodies with column-like limbs, their heads were very different. "They had flatter skulls, and a set of downwards pointing, curved tusks only on the lower jaw. Analyses of their skulls have shown that they probably also had a short, slightly bulbous trunk. If you looked inside their mouths, all of their teeth would have erupted and were used in chewing at the same time. Modern elephants have only one tooth

in use on each side of their jaw," explains Dr. Jukar.

Distant relative

This species was a fairly distant relative of today's elephants, both evolutionarily and in time. The deinotheriidæ, the family that includes *D. indicum*, was first found in the fossil record approximately 28 million years old in Africa, but the family that includes modern elephants doesn't appear until about eight million years ago.

The team plans to continue their studies in the Tapar beds of Kutch as it may be hiding many more fossils. "The plan now is to keep describing different species until we have a solid understanding of the diversity of vertebrates from western India. We hope to create a dataset of species occurrences through time in western India and compare the trends in diversity seen there with those seen in the well-studied fossil record from the Siwaliks," adds Dr. Jukar.

IIT Madras: candle flame oscillators shine light on combustor stability

Studying flames of candle bunches, the team understood how combustors used in rockets work

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

cycling start gradually and remain sustained for a longer time. This causes dilatation of the arterioles in the muscles in order to supply more blood to the exercising muscles. By increasing the venous blood flow from legs to the heart and by reducing the resistance in the arterioles, the heart is able to pump blood with ease. Regular aerobic exercise reduces blood pressure and improves cardiac function.

This week's questions

Unlike when connected directly to an electrical socket, why does it take a long time to charge a mobile phone when connected to a computer through USB?

What is fast charging seen in certain mobile phones? Does fast charging reduce the longevity of the battery?

What is the force that drives blood flow from the limbs to the heart against gravity?

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

interaction of these flames with the acoustic field (pressure variations) collectively results in the onset of thermo-acoustic instability. In order to understand the interaction between multiple flames in a much simpler and economical environment, we started to study candle-flame oscillators," says R. I. Sujith in whose lab these experiments were carried out. He is a Chair Professor in Department of Aerospace Engineering at IIT Madras.

We know that Apollo 11 successfully landed men on the Moon in 1969. Stories of the failures that paved the way to this success are less known. One such failure was due to thermo-acoustic failure of the F1 engine of the rocket during a test stand in 1962. When NASA tried to test how to launch the rocket, it just blew apart. The reason was uneven burning of the fuel. Like a candle whose flame flickers due to uneven presence of oxygen around it, the flames inside the F1 engine flickered, only at a higher frequency - an instability that blew the rocket apart. This is called a thermo-acoustic instability, which is another name for high-amplitude pressure oscillations, in the combustor.

Combustors contain several flames due to the presence of multiple fuel injection systems. "The

use of stacks of candles tied together, and studying pairs, and quartets, of such candles, an IIT Madras team of researchers has come up with interesting inputs that will help in building combustors in rockets.

The thermo-acoustic instability problem, and others like it, can be understood, albeit in a scaled-down manner, by studying stacks of two or three candles tied together so that their flames merge. The flames of such candles, when placed beside other candles, oscillate in synchronicity and show a rich variety of phenomena. The IIT Madras researchers have studied such candle flame oscillators and shown experimental manifestations of some phenomena that have hitherto only been known theoretically in oscillators. The research on this has been published in the

journals *Scientific Reports* and *Physical Review E*. One such phenomenon is amplitude death, which is the complete quenching of oscillations due to a coupling between the different flames. Another phenomenon is phase-flip bifurcation, which is an abrupt change from in-phase synchronisation to out-of-phase synchronisation.

First study

"Our candle study is the first to experimentally prove the existence of both states in a single system. The coexistence of these two states in a single system brings the

possibility of evading undesirable states in various other oscillators," says Prof. Sujith an author of the papers, in an email to *The Hindu*. He explains how studies on neural diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease model these conditions as a consequence of the occurrence of the amplitude death state in the neural oscillators. On the other hand, there are systems such as thermo-acoustic oscillators and oscillations of bridges and skyscrapers, where amplitude death is actually a welcome thing.

"The coexistence of the states of amplitude death

and phase-flip bifurcation in a single system gives rise to the possibility that a system in which amplitude death state is undesirable can transition to a state of phase-flip bifurcation by varying a system-specific control parameter," says Prof. Sujith.

Useful inputs

The experiments gave the team useful inputs into the original problem they were interested in - thermo-acoustic phenomena in combustors: "We got very relevant information about placing the injectors or flame locations in the combustor such that they would be inherently stable (or in an amplitude death state)," says Prof. Sujith.

He adds that they believe the study on four candle flame oscillators would help in understanding the interaction of multiple thermo-acoustic systems (more than two), which is practically used in can or can-annular type of gas turbine combustor.

"Thus, we will be able to simultaneously control the thermo-acoustic oscillations in all the combustors. We are planning to build a test rig of this type," he says.

Two varieties

The researchers focused on two basmati rice varieties: Basmati 334 from Pakistan, known to be drought tolerant and resistant to bacterial blight, and Dom Sudif from Iran, an aromatic long-grain rice that is one of the most expensive on the market.

Most genetic material in basmati comes from japonica – a rice group found in East Asia – followed by the rice group aus found in Bangladesh.

The researchers aim to work with the scientific and rice breeding communities to identify important genes, see what makes the basmati group unique, and even develop molecular markers to help breed new varieties.

Basmati rice genome sequenced

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Scientists have mapped the complete genome of two basmati rice varieties, including one that is drought-tolerant and resistant to bacterial disease. The findings, published in the journal *Genome Biology*, also show that basmati rice is a hybrid of two other rice groups.

Despite the economic and cultural importance of basmati and related aromatic rice varieties, their evolutionary history is not fully understood, the researchers said.

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Synchronicity: The candle flames placed close together oscillate and show a rich variety of phenomena. ■ R.I. SUJITH

CM YK

AN-ND-E

Teaching Rohingya children in Bangladesh

The UN and Bangladesh are working together to expand access to education for refugee children

COX'S BAZAR



It is universally accepted that education plays a key role in every child's development, but it is even more critical for the displaced Rohingya children, adolescents and youth. Without adequate opportunities for learning and hope for the future, they are more vulnerable to trafficking, child marriage, exploitation and abuse.



Arun Devnath
is a journalist
based in Dhaka

Taylor stands tall as Black Caps seal one-day series

Jamieson makes a memorable debut; India pays the price for rickety middle-order



Surprise packet: Kyle Jamieson not only came up with a vital contribution with the bat but also picked up two wickets as New Zealand ruled Eden Park. ■ AP

INDIA IN NZ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AUCKLAND

New Zealand exorcised the ghosts of a nightmarish T20 whitewash with a series-clinching 22-run victory against India in the second One-Day International here on Saturday.

Revenge, as they say, is a dish best served cold! And, on a chilly Auckland night, New Zealand defended a total of 273 by restricting India to 251 in 48.3 overs, taking an

unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Hat-trick

The victory also completed a hat-trick of ODI wins for the Black Caps starting from their World Cup semifinal in Manchester last year.

The victory was more creditable as regular skipper Kane Williamson and top bowlers Trent Boult and Lockie Ferguson were unavailable.

New Zealand's 6 foot 8 inch debutant Kyle Jamieson

(2/42 and 25 off 24 balls) won the Player-of-the-Match award for an all-round show.

Ravindra Jadeja (55 off 73 balls) and Navdeep Saini (45 off 49 balls) raised visions of pulling off an improbable win with a 76-run eighth-wicket partnership.

Tim Southee, despite running temperature, was brilliant with the new ball as his in-cutter got rid of Virat Kohli but it was poor shot selection from a well-set Shreyas Iyer (52) and Kedar Jadhav (9) in

the middle overs that cost India dear.

The inexperienced opening pair of Mayank Agarwal and Prithvi Shaw had another poor day.

Earlier, the in-form Ross Taylor produced a rearguard act with an unbeaten half-century to rescue New Zealand to a competitive 273 for eight 50 overs.

Taylor scored 73 not out (74b, 6x4, 2x6) – his 51st half-century – and put on 76 off 51 balls for the ninth wicket with Jamieson to lift the hosts from 197 for eight.

STAT SPHERE

1 This is India's first series loss, across formats, since the 2019 World Cup. In 12 bilateral series since then and prior to this reverse, the team had won 11 and drawn 1

1 Taylor averages 81.81 in ODIs in New Zealand since 2016 -- the highest among all batsmen with more than 300 runs in the country during this period

1 Saini's 45 (49b) is his highest score in First Class cricket, bettering the 42* (42b) he made for Delhi (vs Orissa, Ranji Trophy, January 2015)

5 The 64 runs conceded in the second ODI is the fifth costliest spell in Bumrah's ODI career, and worst figures since the start of 2018

6 New Zealand has won an ODI series against India after six years, the Black Caps' first since the 4-0 victory at home in January 2014. India's winning streak of three ODI series has also ended

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1 Saini's 45 (49b) is his highest score in First Class cricket, bettering the 42* (42b) he made for Delhi (vs Orissa, Ranji Trophy, January 2015)

TV PICKS

NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6 a.m.**Women's T20I tri-series:** Australia vs England, Sony Six (SD & HD), 6.10 a.m.**Bushfire Cricket Bash:** Sony Ten 1 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 9.45 a.m.**Pakistan vs Bangladesh:** 1st Test, Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 10.30 a.m.**U-19 World Cup final:** India vs Bangladesh, Star Sports 3, 1.15 p.m.**South Africa vs England:** 3rd ODI, Sony Six (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.**Tata Open Maharashtra:** SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 3 p.m.**PBL:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 7 p.m.**ISL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m. & 10 p.m.**Bundesliga:** SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 8 p.m. & 10 p.m.**Serie A:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m., 10.30 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Monday).

IN BRIEF



Tatum on a high as Celtics downs Hawks

Boston Celtics, third in the Eastern Conference behind Milwaukee Bucks and Toronto Raptors, notched up its sixth straight victory, a 112-107 win over Atlanta Hawks. Jayson Tatum scored 32 points – his second straight game of 30 or more – as the Celtics overcame injury absences of Jaylen Brown and Gordon Hayward.

The results: 76ers 119 bt Grizzlies 107; Wizards 119 bt Mavericks 118; Celtics 112 bt Hawks 107; Raptors 115 bt Pacers 106; Thunder 108 bt Pistons 101; Suns 127 bt Rockets 91; Kings 105 bt Heat 97; Jazz 117 bt Trail Blazers 114. AGENCIES

Otamendi slots five for Rajinigandha Achievers

NEW DELHI Daniel Otamendi scored five goals as Rajinigandha Achievers posted a 6-5 victory over ASC Col. Girdhari Singh team in the semifinals of the Radha Mohan Rajinder Mohan Gold Vase polo tournament at the Jaipur Polo ground on Saturday.

In the final, to be played at 3 p.m., Achievers will face Jindal Panther which beat El Dragon Polo 7-6.

The results (semifinals): Jindal Panther 7 (Phil Seller 4, Simran Shergill 2, Akshai Malik) bt El Dragon Polo 6 (Siddhant Sharma 3, Abhimanyu Pathak 2, Dhananjay Singh). Rajinigandha Achievers 6 (Daniel Otamendi 5, Kuldeep Singh Rathore) bt ASC Col. Girdhari Singh 5 (Naveen Singh 3, Vishal Chauhan 2).

Riddhiman posts win

GURUGRAM: Riddhiman Ojha defeated Shubham Sehrawat 6-4, 1-6, 7-5 in the first qualifying round of the boys event in the Asian under-14 tennis tournament on Saturday. The proceeds of the tournament go to CanKids, an organisation trying to create awareness, raise funds, increase research and improve survival for children with Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia (ALL).

The results: Qualifying event: Boys (first round): Pranav Vadhera bt Yohance Badyal 6-1, 6-2; Jash Shah bt Vedit Singla 6-3, 6-2; Riddhiman Ojha bt Shubham Sehrawat 6-4, 1-6, 7-5; Himank Singh bt Nirvan Singh Gill 6-1, 6-0; Dhruv Sachdeva bt Naveen Ramesh 6-2, 6-0; Mayank Sharma bt Karmanya Jain 6-0, 6-2.

Girls (first and final round):

Shagun Kumari bt Angelina Lahori 6-2, 6-1.

Pritam stars for Neroca

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
IMPHAL

Pritam Singh struck a hat-trick to help Neroca FC outplay city rivals TRAU FC 5-0 in the reverse leg of the Imphal derby in the I-League here on Saturday.

The result: Neroca FC 5 (Tetley Adhaj 50, Imran Khan 58, Pritam Singh 60, 66, 90+3) bt TRAU 0.

League stage heading for an exciting finish

Gujarat and Saurashtra assured of a place in the quarterfinals; Kerala relegated

RANJI TROPHY

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Mumbai has won the Ranji Trophy 41 times. To win its 42nd title, it will have to wait till next year at least.

We can say that with certainty even with a round of matches in the preliminary league remaining this season. That was after Mumbai failed in its desperate bid to force a win against Saurashtra on Friday at Rajkot, though it was just three wickets away.

Only on February 15, when the matches in the last round conclude, would we know who will advance to the knock-out stages and who will be relegated. Mumbai's conqueror Saurashtra and Gujarat have already done enough to book their places in the last eight, with a game in hand.

The top five teams, out of the 18, from the top tier, combining Groups A and B, will reach the quarterfinals. Going into the final round, Gujarat is leading the table with 29 points, followed by Saurashtra at 28.

All to play for

The race for the remaining three spots is wide open. Andhra, placed third at the moment with 27 points, looks best-placed to claim one of those berths. Even if it loses its away game to Gujarat it will still have a chance to make it.

Bengal (26), Karnataka (25) and Punjab (24) are better placed than the others. Uttar Pradesh (20), Tamil Nadu (19), defending champion Vidarbha (18) and Delhi (18) will not have just have to win their matches but need favourable results from others.

Kerala, which had qualified for the knock-out stages for the last two seasons, is one team that could afford to follow the final round of matches with total disinterest. It is already relegated to Group C, having drawn its last match with Vidarbha at Nagpur, where inclement weather made even the completion of the first innings impossible.

One more team will join Kerala from Groups A and B. It could either be Hyderabad, which is lying last with six points, five below Madhya Pradesh.

From Group C, one team will be relegated to the Plate Division. It will be either Utarakhand (two points) or Tripura (six).

Two teams from the group will make the quarterfinals. Jammu & Kashmir (39 points), Odisha (35), Services (33), Haryana (30) and Maharashtra (28) all can afford to hope.

From the Plate Group, one team will advance to the last eight. Goa (43 points), Pondicherry (41) and Chandigarh (36) are the leading contenders.

It would be interesting to follow the final round of 18 matches in the preliminary league of India's premier domestic tournament, starting on February 12.



Onward ho! Gujarat has earned enough points to make the last eight this season • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

JOHANNESBURG

Fast bowler Dale Steyn is set to return to international cricket after an absence of almost a year after being named in South Africa's squad for three T20Is against England next week.

Steyn, 36, retired from Tests last year after a series of injuries but said he remained available for the country's white-ball teams.

Chauhan, Gulia win silver

BOXING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**NEW DELHI**

President's Cup silver medallist Gaurav Chauhan (91kg) and former youth world champion Jyoti Gulia (56kg) claimed a silver each as India finished their campaign with five medals at the 64th Bocskai Memorial tournament at Debrecen in Hungary.

Chauhan, a South Asian Games gold medalist, went down fighting against Kazakhstan's Aibek Oralbay in the final after getting a walkover in the semi-finals.

Manisha lost her final bout against Russia's Liudmila Vorontsova. Prasad was beaten by Kazakhstan's Makhmud Sabyrkhan.

Sathyian said he was excited at becoming the first Indian to play in the League. The 27-year-old credited his coach S. Raman for the development.

Some of the top players, including World No. 5 Harimoto Tomakazu, World No. 15 Jun Mizutani (both Japan) and South Korea's World No. 20 Lee Sangsu, will play in the Japanese professional T-League with Okayama Rivets Club for the 2020-21 season. The league will begin in September.

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SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

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CMK

Krishna's 'trick' sends ATK into the playoffs

ISL

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA**KOLKATA**

Roy Krishna scored a hat-trick to help ATK down Odisha FC 3-1 in an ISL fixture at the Salt Lake Stadium here on Saturday. Krishna's outstanding effort saw ATK progress to the playoffs after a break of two seasons.

The host also returned to the top of the standings (33 points), edging out FC Goa on goal difference. Odisha's reply came through Manuel Onwu.

The first half was an insipid affair with none of the sides looking too eager to step on the accelerator. ATK enjoyed a bigger share of the ball possession and could have found the breakthrough in the seventh minute but Edu Garcia, ATK's Spanish midfielder, failed to reach a Prabir Das cross.

Things changed quite dramatically after the break as ATK started finding the route to Krishna in the attacking zone. Krishna opened his scoring off a set-piece in the 49th minute when he broke loose from his marker and volleyed home a corner from Javier



Kolkata's pride: Roy Krishna is chaired by ATK teammates after the stellar show. • RAJEEV BHATT

Hernandez. The Fijian striker shocked the opposition defence while creating the space to finish.

Spectacular goal

ATK kept looking for the insurance goal and was rewarded, thanks to a brilliant solo from Krishna. He latched on to a long ball from defender Armando Soza Pena and made a darting run through the left wing to elude his marker and volleyed home a corner from Javier

trol as he chipped over the Odisha goalkeeper Ramon Dorronsoro. It was easily the most spectacular goal of the evening.

Krishna completed a hat-trick three minutes later, making the most of a shattered Odisha defence and slotting home a precise cross from Jayesh Rane. Krishna took his tally to 13 and is on top of the goal-scoring charts.

The result: ATK FC 3 (Roy Krishna 49, 60, 63) bt Odisha FC 1 (Manuel Onwu 67).

Ranji Trophy standings

Group A & B

Team	M	W	L	D	N/R	NRR	Pts
Gujarat	7	4	0	3	0	1.192	29
Saurashtra	7	3	1	3	0	1.232	28
Andhra	7	4	1	2	0	1.316	27
Bengal	7	3	1	3	0	1.537	26
Karnataka	7	3	0	4	0	0.978	25
Punjab	7	3	2	2	0	1.366	24
Uttar Pradesh	7	2	0	5	0	1.318	20
Tamil Nadu	7	2	2	3	0	1.205	19
Vidarbha	7	2	2	3	0	1.125	18
Delhi	7	2	1	4	0	0.952	18
Rajasthan	7	2	4	1	0	0.863	16
Railways	8	1	4	3	0	0.871	16
Baroda	7	2	3	2	0	0.615	14
Mumbai	7	1	2	4	0	1.191	14
Himachal	7	1	1	5	0	0.807	13
Madhya Pradesh	7	0	2	5	0	0.901	11
Kerala	8	1	5	2	0	0.760	10
Hyderabad	7	1	6	0	0	0.478	6

Group A: Delhi v Rajasthan (New Delhi); Gujarat v Andhra (Nadiad); Hyderabad v Vidarbha (Hyderabad); Punjab v Bengal (Patiala).

Group B: Karnataka v Baroda (Bengaluru); Mumbai v Madhya Pradesh (Mumbai); Saurashtra v Tamil Nadu (Rajkot); Uttar Pradesh v Himachal (Lucknow).

Group C: J&K v Rajasthan (Srinagar); Odisha v Bihar (Bhubaneswar); Services v Haryana (Panaji); Maharashtra v Jharkhand (Cuttack); Assam v Tripura (Guwahati).

Plate

Team	M	W	L	D	N/R	NRR	Pts

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India stuns World champion Belgium

Stand-out performances by goalkeepers Sreejesh and Krishan Pathak deny the top-ranked side

FIH PRO LEAGUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Bhubaneswar

The Indian men's hockey team's sensational run of form continued as it stunned World Champion Belgium 2-1 to seal its third win on the trot in the FIH Pro League here on Saturday.

After defeating World No. 3 the Netherlands in its opening two matches, India beat World No. 1 Belgium in a thrilling match at the Kalinga Stadium here.

Mandeep Singh scored a field goal in the second minute of the match before Gauthier Boccard equalised for the European champion in the 33rd minute with a powerful drag flick from a penalty corner. Ramandeep Singh scored the decisive goal in the 47th minute, via a penalty corner, to give World No. 4 India a victory in front of a frenzied crowd.

Moving up

With this victory, India consolidated its ranking from



Strike! Ramandeep Singh picked up a rebound off Belgium's first rusher in the penalty corner to score India's winner.

■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

No. 5 to No. 4 for the first time since the World ranking system was introduced in 2003. The two sides meet again on Sunday at the same venue.

India did well to halt Belgium's winning streak in the ongoing FIH Pro League. Coming into this match with

identical 4-2 wins against Australia and 6-2 and 3-1 triumph against New Zealand, Belgium struggled to convert its chances against India.

Despite dominating with ball possession, the Belgian unit could not muster much success inside the circle.

The Belgians were denied

thanks to stand-out performance by Indian goalkeepers PR Sreejesh and Krishan Pathak backing up India's defence by stalling pretty much every opportunity created by the visiting team.

Pathak, who was named Player of the Match, said:

"We started well and worked

very hard. We are very proud of our defence of our penalty corners."

The victory was also India's 50th win against Belgium.

The result: India 2 (Mandeep Singh 2, Ramandeep Singh 46-pc) bt Belgium 1 (Gauthier Boccard 33-pc).

Babar and Masood score centuries

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
RAWALPINDI

Sparkling hundreds from Babar Azam and Shan Masood put Pakistan in command against Bangladesh on the second day of the first Test here on Saturday.

Azam scored a career-best unbeaten 143 for his third successive hundred in as many Tests – fifth of a burgeoning career – while opener Shan Masood made 100 as it pulverised a hapless Bangladeshi attack at the Rawalpindi stadium.

At close, Azam was still batting with Asad Shafiq on 60, piling agony on the visitors during their unbroken 137-run stand for the fourth wicket.

It could have been early exit for Azam had Ebadot Hossain not dropped him off Islam at long-off when he was on only two.

The scores: Bangladesh 233

in 82.5 overs vs Pakistan 342 for three in 87.5 overs (Shan Masood 100, Babar Azam 143 batting, Asad Shafiq 60 bat-

ting).

Blow to Roma's CL qualification chances

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MILAN

Roma's chances of qualifying for next season's Champions League suffered another blow as a 3-2 home defeat by Bologna extended the capital club's winless streak to three Serie A games.

Riccardo Orsolini took advantage of an error by English defender Chris Smalling to grab a 16th minute advantage for Bologna, at the Stadio Olimpico, before Stefano Denswil's dreadful own goal drew Roma level just six minutes later.

But Gambian international Musa Barrow scored excellent individual efforts either side of half-time to send Bologna on its way to victory.

Everton beats Palace

In the Premier League, Everton moved up to se-

venth and within five points of the top four as its resurgence under Carlo Ancelotti continued with a 3-1 win over Crystal Palace on Saturday.

The results:

Saturday: Premier League: Everton 3 (Bernard 18, Richardson 58, Calvert-Lewin 88) bt Crystal Palace 1 (Benteke 51).

LaLiga: Levante 2 (Rochina 20, Roger 28) bt Leganes 0; Getafe 3 (Jorge Molina 58, 67, Mata 87) bt Valencia 0.

Serie A: Fiorentina 1 (Chiesa 32) lost to Atalanta 2 (Zapata 49, Malinovskiy 72).

Bundesliga: Wolfsburg 1 (Steffen 50) drew with Fortuna Duesseldorf 1 (Zimmermann 13); Werder Bremen 0 lost to Union Berlin 2 (Bulter 52, 72); Freiburg 1 (Waldschmidt 40-pen) bt Hoffenheim 0; Schalke 1 (Kutucu 63) drew with Paderborn 1 (Gjasa 82).

Friday: LaLiga: Alaves 2 (Perez 46, Burki 66) bt Eibar 1 (Orelana 83).

Serie A: Roma 2 (Denswil 22-og, Mkhitarian 72) lost to Bologna 3 (Orsolini 16, Barrow 26, 51).

Vesely claws back from the brink

Takes on Gerasimov in the summit clash; Indian duo loses in last four

TATA OPEN

N. SUDARSHAN
PUNE

Jiri Vesely rose from the dead for the second day running, saving four match points in the deciding set tie-break, to beat second seed Ricardas Berankis 6-7(8), 7-6(3), 7-6(7) and enter the final of the Tata Open Maharashtra.

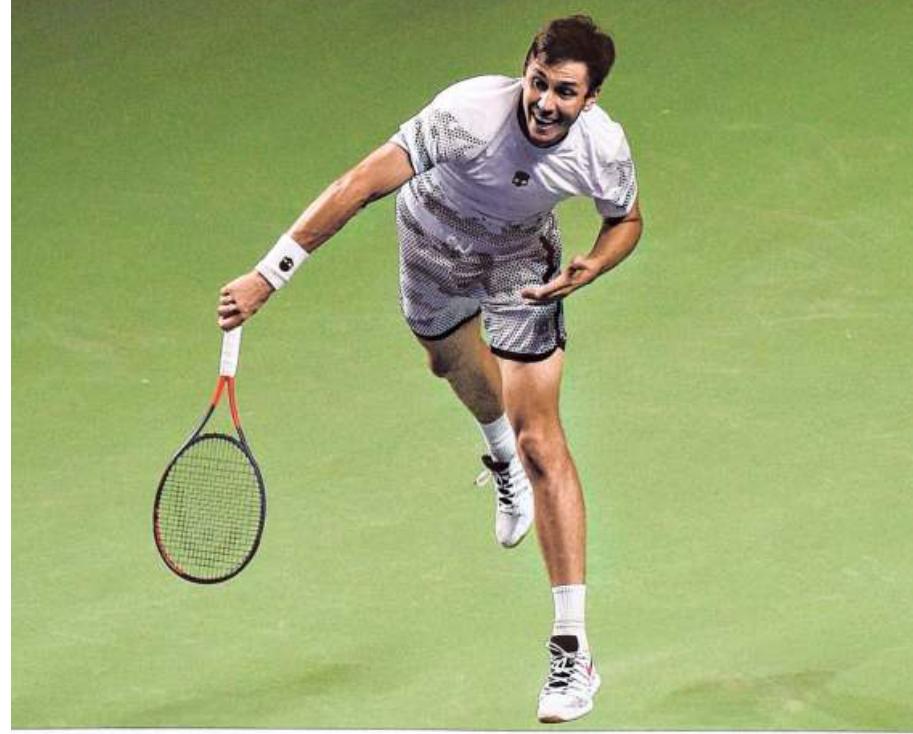
Sunday's summit clash will be his first at Tour-level in nearly five years (since Bucharest in April 2015), where he will play Egor Gerasimov of Belarus who beat James Duckworth 7-6(2), 6-4.

For the 27-year-old Gerasimov it will be a first-ever appearance in a final and if he can summon the same power-packed game that felled Korean fourth seed Soonwoo Kwon and then Duckworth, Vesely will have a match on his hands.

Dream come true

"I have been dreaming about this," said Gerasimov, the World No. 90. "I was waiting for this result. I have not played consistently for the last two years. Lost half the time to injuries and the other half recovering. So I am really happy."

To counter him, Vesely will need to do a lot more than he did against Berankis. After battling from a set and a break down, the Czech seemed spent in the final tie-break. But he recovered to wipe out Berankis' first two match points by forcing him into forehand errors before the Lithuanian, so clinical at the net until then, was overcome by anxiety and met a volley a fraction early to dump it into the net.



Powering through: Egor Gerasimov got past James Duckworth to make his first final. ■ R. RAGU

The fourth opportunity at 7-6 was fluffed when an inside-out forehand flew just wide. Vesely brought up his first match point immediately after with a thunderous ace – one of 28 he blasted – and converted it when Berankis sent a backhand wide.

Lack of rhythm

From the start, the contest never settled into a rhythm. In each of the three sets, the duo traded breaks early on before fighting each other to a standstill. The Berankis backhand held firm for much of the first set but broke down thrice in the opening tie-break alone.

Vesely, as a result, had four set points, including two on his serve, but only

that his serve didn't work and his forehand proved worse. At 6-4, he crashed an easy mid-court ball into the net with both his opponent and the court at his mercy. The set fell Berankis' way following a double-fault.

In the second, Vesely cleared his head and came up with five top-notch holds, across which he lost a solitary point. He carried this momentum into the tie-break, winning it for the loss of just three points.

With the match on a knife's edge deep in the third set, Vesely moved for the kill in the ninth game. But on breakpoint at 30-40, Berankis, after a not-so-perfect half-volley pick up, came up with a stunning reflex fore-

hand to get to deuce.

Two forehand shanks from Vesely helped Berankis hold on and then drag the match into yet another tie-break. Once there, he nearly left Vesely ruing that missed opportunity but it was not meant to be Berankis's day.

Later in the doubles semi-final, the all-Indian pair of Purav Raja and Ramkumar Ramanathan was beaten by Jonathan Erlich and Andrei Vasilevski 7-6(3), 6-4.

The results (semifinals): **Singles:** Jiri Vesely (Cze) bt Ricardas Berankis 6-7(8), 7-6(3), 7-6(7); Egor Gerasimov (Blr) bt James Duckworth (Aus) 7-6(2), 6-4.

Doubles: Jonathan Erlich (Isr) & Andrei Vasilevski (Blr) bt Purav & Ramkumar 7-6(3), 6-4.

before Sakai came back strongly with a fine blend of big smashes and solid defence to win seven points in a row. Sai Praneeth committed quite a few unforced errors and lost the momentum.

It was left to World No. 2 Tai Tzu Ying to win the Trump for Raptors against the young Rituparna Das and take the contest to the decider. However, this was not before Rituparna continued her impressive show and made a fight of it.

In the final on Sunday, Raptors take on North Eastern Warriors.

The results: Bengaluru Raptors
bt Pune 7 Aces 4-3 (Arun George & Rian Agung Saputro lost to Chirag Shetty & Hendra Setiawan (T) 12-15, 10-15; Brice Leverdez bt Mithun Manjunath 15-14, 9-15, 15-6; B. Sai Praneeth lost to Kazumasa Sakai 11-15, 13-15; Tai Tzu Ying (T) bt Rituparna Das 15-12, 15-12; Chan Peng Soon & Eom Hye Won bt Chris Adcock & Gabrielle Adcock 15-13, 15-10).



Striking back: Raptors' Tai Tzu Ying won the Trump match against Aces' Rituparna Das. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

Agung Saputro. In men's singles, World No. 39 Brice Leverdez of Raptors put his team back in the hunt, warding off a spirited challenge from the 21-year-old World No. 131 Mithun Manjunath, a trainee of the Prakash Padukone Academy.

The highlight of the match was the 49-stroke rally which Leverdez won in the

third game when it was 6-12. Aces then recorded the biggest upset of the day when World No. 73, Kazumasa Sakai, shocked World championship bronze medalist and Raptors skipper B. Sai Praneeth in the second men's singles.

World No. 11 Sai Praneeth, the crowd favourite, was leading 11-8 in the first game

Ankita wins another doubles title

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU
NONTHABURI (THAILAND)

Ankita Raina, seeded No.1 with Bibiane Schoofs of the Netherlands, won her second successive doubles title here with a 6-2, 3-6, [10-7] victory over Miyabi Inoue of Japan and Jia-Qi Kang of China in the final of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament on Saturday.

Third win with Schoofs

This is the 18th career doubles title for the 27-year-old Ankita in the professional circuit, and the third with Schoofs.

The two had won their first title in Belgium in 2017.

The results: Bibiane Schoofs (Ned) & Ankita Raina bt Miyabi Inoue (Jpn) & Jia-Qi Kang (Chn) 6-2, 3-6, [10-7].

Ankita, who had completed a doubles last week, could not enter the singles this week as she was sche-

duled to compete in the Fed Cup in Nur Sultan, Kazakhstan, which subsequently got postponed owing to the coronavirus outbreak in China.

Double strike:

Musa Barrow, left, came up with an excellent individual effort either side of half-time to give Bologna victory. ■ AFP



Chan-Won duo clinches it for Raptors

PBL

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

The mixed doubles pair of Chan Peng Soon and Eom Hye Won clinched the decider against Chris Adcock and Gabrielle Adcock to help defending champion Bengaluru Raptors record a thrilling 4-3 win over Pune 7 Aces in the second semifinal of the Premier Badminton League here on Saturday.

With the scores tied 3-3, Chan and Won raised the bar to get the better of former World championship medallists of Pune to the delight of the lustily cheering Raptors fans.

Earlier, in the first men's doubles match of the evening, the 35-year-old Hendra Setiawan, former Olympic and World champion, and current World No. 10 Chirag Shetty gave a splendid start in what was the Trump match for Aces, outslugging Arun George and Rian



Striking back: Raptors' Tai Tzu Ying won the Trump match against Aces' Rituparna Das. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

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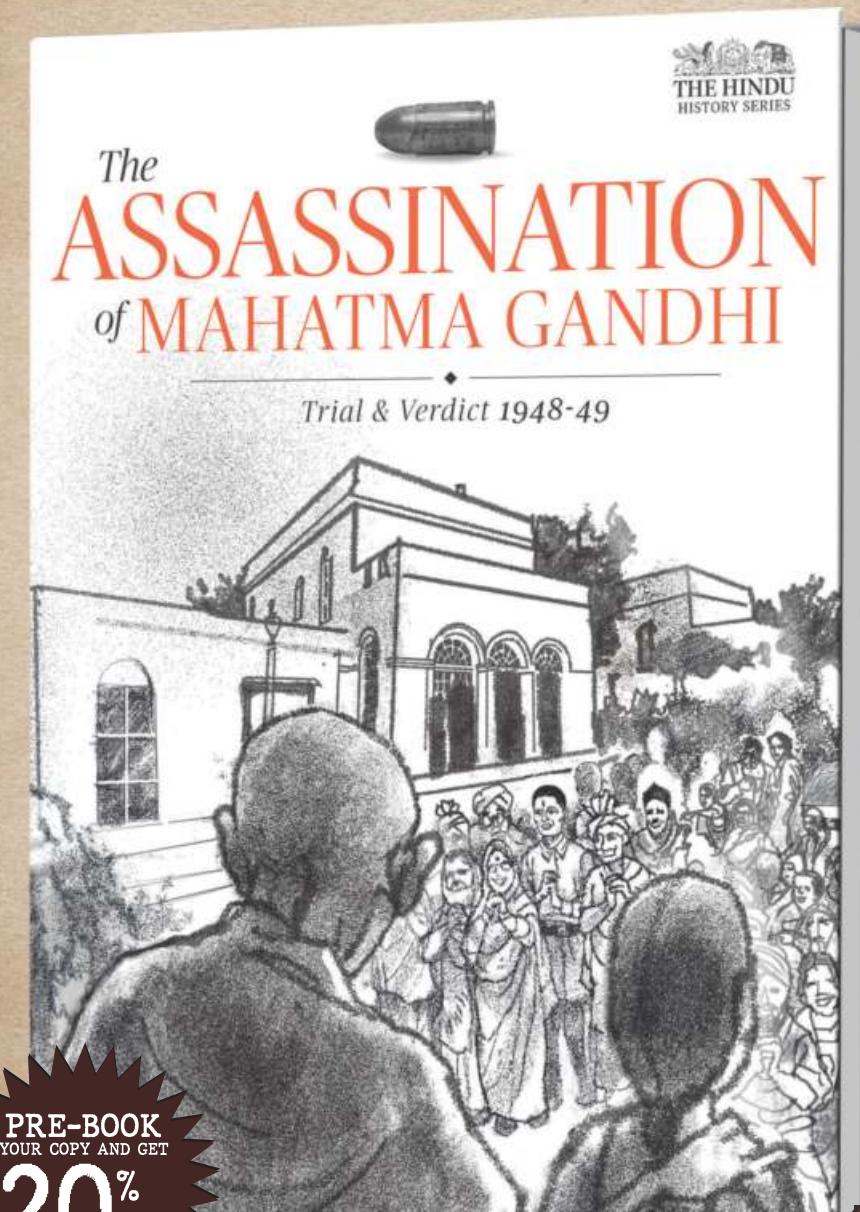
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India dominates Australia, stays alive

Shafali's onslaught eclipses Gardner's knock; Smriti scores a fifty

TRI-SERIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE
Smriti Mandhana struck a sublime half-century as India finally produced a good batting display to record a seven-wicket win over Australia here on Saturday, keeping its hopes alive for a place in the final of the women's T20 Tri-series.

Australia posted 173 for five courtesy a 57-ball 93 from Ashleigh Gardner and Meg Lanning's 22-ball 37 after India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur elected to field at the Junction Oval.

India then overhauled the target in 19.4 overs, largely due to opener Shafali Verma's 49 off 28 balls and Smriti's 55 off 48 balls.

With the win, India moved to second in the points table, behind England. The winner of the final league match between Australia and England on Sunday will decide the finalists for the title clash on February 12.

After two failures, 16-year-old Shafali gave India a flying start with her innings containing eight fours and a six. Her senior opening partner Smriti on the other hand anchored the chase with a solid knock comprising seven fours.

After Shafali was caught by Nicola Carey off Ellyse Perry, Jemimah Rodrigues came made a 19-ball 30, studded with five hits to the fence. Her innings was cut short when she holed out to Alyssa Healy off Megan Schutt's delivery in the 13th over.

Skipper Harmanpreet (20



Delightful: Smriti Mandhana anchored India's chase with a solid knock comprising seven 4s. ■ GETTY IMAGES

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA

Alyssa Healy c Arundhati b Deepthi O (3b), Beth Mooney c Smriti b Harleen 16 (17b, 3x4), Ashleigh Gardner c Deepthi b Radha 93 (57b, 11x4, 3x6), Meg Lanning c Smriti b Deepthi 37 (22b, 6x4), Rachael Haynes (not out) 11 (11b), Ellyse Perry lbw b Rajeshwari 13 (10b, 1x4, 1x6), Sophie Molineux (not out) 1 (1b); Extras (nb-1, w-1); Total (for 5 wkts. in 20 overs): 173.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-0 (Healy, 0.3 overs), 2-62 (Mooney, 8.2), 3-141 (Lanning,

INDIA BOWLING

Deepti 4-1-27-2, Shikha 4-0-36-0, Rajeshwari 4-0-34-1, Radha 4-0-34-1, Arundhati 2-0-21-0, Harleen 2-0-21-1.

INDIA

Shafali Verma c Carey b Perry 49 (28b, 8x4, 1x6), Smriti Mandhana lbw b Carey 55 (48b, 7x4), Jemimah Rodrigues c Healy b Schutt 30 (19b, 5x4), Harmanpreet Kaur (not out) 20 (20b, 1x6), Deepthi Sharma (not out) 11 (4b, 2x4); Extras (b-4,

lb-3, nb-1, w-4) 12; Total (for three wkts. in 19.4 overs): 177.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-85 (Shafali, 8.2 overs), 2-122 (Jemimah, 12.3), 3-164 (Smriti, 18.3).

AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Jonassen 1-0-11-0, Perry 4-0-33-1, Schutt 4-0-26-1, Molineux 1-0-14-0, Kimmence 4-0-37-0, Gardner 2-0-22-0, Carey 3-0-27-1.

Toss: India.

Player-of-the-Match: Gardner. India won by seven wickets with two deliveries to spare.

Rain plays spoilsport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LINCOLN (NEW ZEALAND)

Not a single ball could be bowled as rain washed out the second day's play of the four-day unofficial Test between India-A and New Zealand-A here on Saturday.

With no action possible in a day of disappointment, New Zealand-A remained at its overnight score of 276 for five in 90 overs.

Dane Cleaver (46) and Daryl Mitchell (36) were at the crease after the stumps were drawn following the end of first day.

The opening unofficial Test between the two sides had ended in a draw.

The scores:

New Zealand-A 276/5 in 90 overs (Glen Phillips 65, Avesh Khan 2/57, Mohammad Siraj 2/58) vs India-A.

Philander reveals reason behind his retirement

Fast bowler also talks about controversial selection decisions in South African cricket

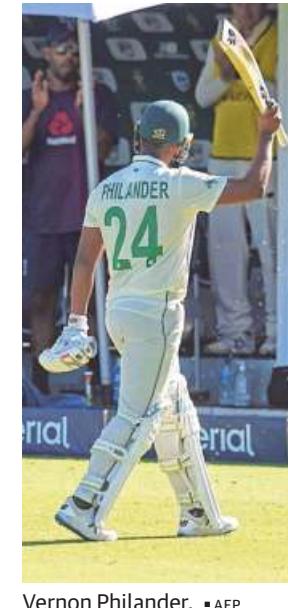
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CAPE TOWN

South Africa fast bowler Vernon Philander has said "chaos" in the country's cricket administration hastened his decision to retire from international cricket.

In an interview with the Afrikaans-language newspaper *Rapport*, Philander also said that a controversial decision to select him for the 2015 Cricket World Cup semifinal in New Zealand had affected him as well as Kyle Abbott, who was left out of the side despite being in outstanding form.

Philander, 35, retired from international cricket after the final Test against England last month, having announced his decision before the series started.

He said the problems in Cricket South Africa's administration, which led to the



Vernon Philander. ■ AFP

suspension of chief executive Thabang Moroe and calls for the board to resign, had been a factor in his decision to quit the South African team and sign a Kolpak deal with English county Somerset.

"As a player, you get to the point where you've had enough," he said. "CSA's former management only started looking after themselves, the players were the last ones they worried about. Too many things went wrong in the last while, I had to decide what is the best road ahead for me. Then I decided to retire."

"I am 35 now, with a decent career behind me, but I would have considered playing longer if not for the chaos in our cricket administration."

He said that recent changes, which include the ap-

pointment of former captain Graeme Smith as interim director of cricket, had brought "more credibility

back now at CSA. Hopefully we'll see a turnaround in fortunes at administrative level and on the playing field."

Philander gave his version of one of the most controversial selection decisions in South African cricket history, when he was selected for the 2015 World Cup semifinal against New Zealand in Auckland.

Philander had been injured during the tournament and did not play in South Africa's convincing win over Sri Lanka in the quarterfinals.

Philander said that although he and Abbott were good friends, "both of us took a bit of a knock because of what happened there."

South Africa was beaten in a dramatic semifinal.

The team management wanted to field an unchanged team but it was widely reported that on instructions from South Africa they were forced to pick a fit-again Philander ahead of the in-form Abbott because the quarterfinal team had included only three players of

colour, instead of the target of four.

"It's blatantly and openly told the coach (Russell Domingo) that the best player should play," said Philander.

"He told me: 'You are the best player for the day, you're playing. But they were clearly not open and honest with me and Kyle. There were definitely things going on behind closed doors."

Philander said that although he and Abbott were good friends, "both of us took a bit of a knock because of what happened there."

South Africa was beaten in a dramatic semifinal.

Abbott became a high-profile Kolpak signing when he announced an agreement to play for Hampshire midway through a Test series against Sri Lanka in January 2017.

Ijaz, had originally denied being involved in a plot to encourage players to underperform deliberately in the PSL 2018 game between Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi in Dubai.

Federer tops Nadal in South Africa

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CAPE TOWN

Roger Federer wasn't going to lose this one to Rafael Nadal.

Not on what felt like a homecoming for Federer, who beat his great rival 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 in an exhibition match at a soccer stadium here on Friday.

It was Federer's first match in his mother's country of birth, and the country Federer rates as his second home.

Almost everything was for Federer on the night. The caps and T-shirts with RF logos all across the crowd. The coin for the toss, a newly-minted 20 Swiss Francs with Federer's image on it. Federer recently became the first living Swiss to be engraved on one of the nation's coins.

Even South Africa's biggest sports stars were in awe. Siya Kolisi, South Africa's rugby World Cup-winning captain, came out pre-match to present Federer with a South Africa team jersey with Federer's name on the back.

He was asked who he was supporting. "Definitely Team Roger," Kolisi said. "Sorry, Nadal, I love you, too."

Nadal smiled graciously

on the other side of the net.

The exhibition at Cape Town Stadium was to raise money for the Roger Federer Foundation, which supports early childhood education in six southern African countries, including South Africa. The foundation was hoping to top \$1 million from the exhibition. It raised \$3.5 million.

Also, a crowd of 51,954

came to the Cape Town Stadium – built for the 2010

soccer World Cup – to watch

Federer and Nadal turn it on.

That's the biggest crowd ever

on record for a tennis match.

Organisers said the demand for tickets was in the region of 200,000 requests.

"It was a magical even-

ing," Federer said.

The 38-year-old Federer,

winner of a record 20 Grand

Slam singles titles, and the

33-year-old Nadal, with 19

Slams, laughed and joked

regularly between points.

But they were typically

competitive when the ball

was in play.

Federer won the first

point with a high backhand

volley, and broke in the first

game on the way to taking

the opening set 6-4.

"We tried our best as al-

ways," Nadal said. "It's a life-

time experience playing in

front of such an amazing

crowd in an amazing stadium.

It was a big pleasure for

me to be part of it."

Federer won with a dainty

drop shot on match point.

Nadal gave everything to get

there, and was going so fast

he couldn't stop in time and

had to leap over the net.

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It was

Magazine

**SPOTLIGHT**

Why Bose Krishnamachari frames words like 'casteism' in giant golden mounts in his new show **p5**

**WIDE ANGLE**

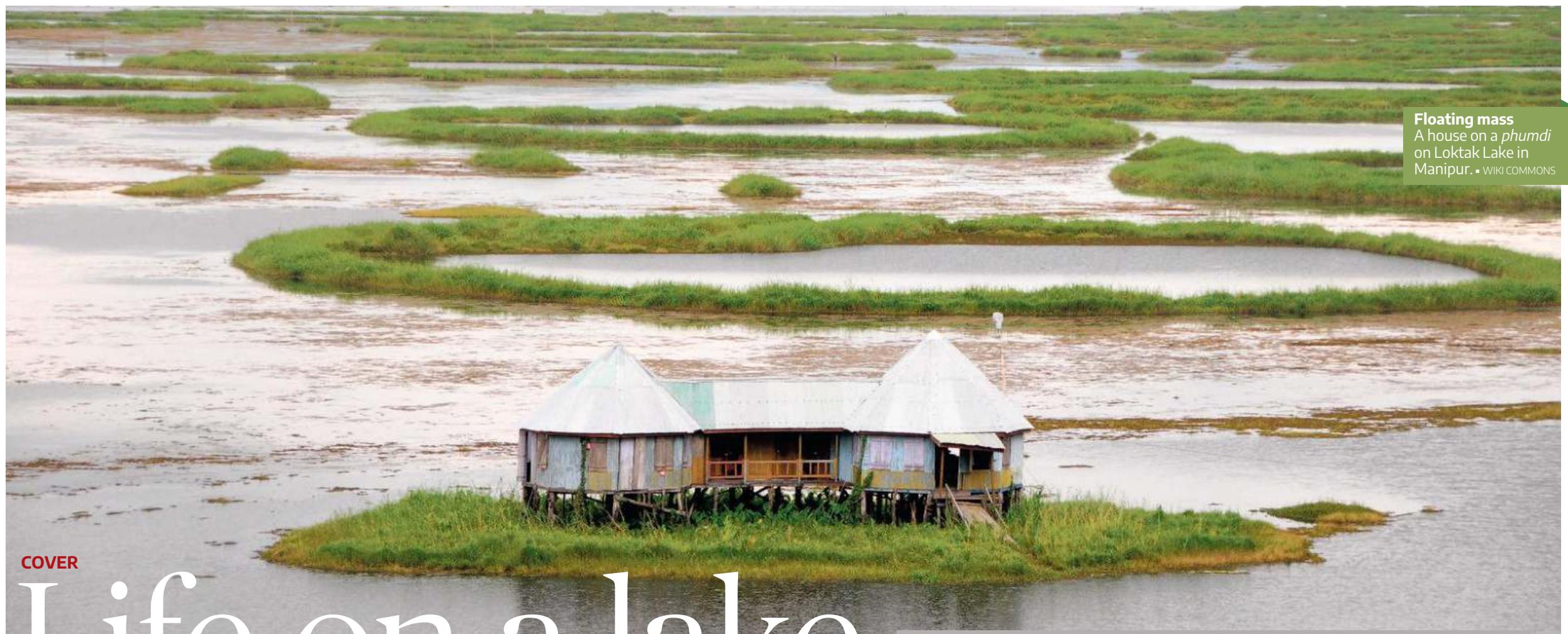
Awards for Indian women scientists are a rare thing. Meet the two women who won this year's Infosys Prize **p6**

**60 MINUTES**

We have a moral responsibility to protect wildlife and their habitats, says wildlife biologist George Schaller **p12**

**LITERARY REVIEW**

Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line, a novel about street kids, is full of tragedies, yet they are no match for the real brutality in children's lives **p8**



Floating mass
A house on a *phumdi* on Loktak Lake in Manipur. • WIKI COMMONS

COVER

Life on a lake

Not even World War II devastated the Loktak lake and its ecology the way a hydel project, launched 50 years ago, has done **p3**



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When a drug turned killer

A doctor recounts how a medicine with a toxin in it killed several children in Chennai 46 years ago

V.R. Ravi Kumar

One night in August 1973, as the duty paediatric surgeon at the Institute of Child Health at Egmore in Chennai, I was called to see an 18-month-old child facing acute renal failure.

A general practitioner had earlier treated the infant for fever. A nephrologist from the government general hospital was then called to see the child. A peritoneal dialysis was tried, but the child did not recover.

Within a week, every day brought one child or two with kidney failure to the institute. So its director, V. Balagopal Raju, convened a meeting of all specialists. By month-end, more than 15 children underwent peritoneal dialysis, but none of them survived and the cause was still not known.

Some time earlier, a relative of one of my colleagues had started a pharmaceutical company and he met me with his products. Introducing a paracetamol solution with vitamin C labelled Pimpol C, he gave me a couple of bottles as samples, saying the transparent clear solution had a palatable taste. I took one bottle to the clinic. The sample kept at home fell from the cupboard and broke.

Next week, a child from my neighbourhood, who had seen me a week earlier, was admitted with acute renal failure. A sense of fear gripped me since I had a one-year-old son and a daughter of three years.

I went through the history of the illness of the child and the drugs administered. The only new drug was the Pimpol C sample given for fever from the clinic. It struck me like lightning that this solution could be responsible for the renal failure. I ran to the next block in the hospital

The institute director immediately drafted a letter for AIR to broadcast that Pimpol C was a toxic drug and should not be given to children



Dialling back half a century

Only VIPs and the rich had phones back then

M.R. Anand

Now almost everyone of us, rich and poor, young and old, men and women, has a mobile phone. But 50 years ago or even less, a phone was a luxury, a rarity. If you had a phone, you were a VIP or rich. Even the school I went to, which had some 500 students, did not have a phone connection.

The street where we lived in the 1960s had some 50 houses. Only two of them had phone connections. While one belonged to an official of the Telephones Department, the other was of a rich businessman. The rest of the inhabitants of our street used to go and stand at the gates of either of these privileged houses for permission to make a call.

The Telephones Department official who did not have to pay for the calls charged us 50 paise for one. But the businessman allowed free calls. But his Doberman was always waiting for an opportunity to charge at us. "Don't be scared of him. He won't bite you. I am here," he would say as he guided me to the corner of the hall where the black glistening instrument stood on a pedestal. The dog would now sit at arm's length and watch the intruder with a suppressed fury.

At times, the businessman would leave the room leaving me alone with his Doberman. On such occasions, even if I noticed a small movement in the dog, my heart used to come to my mouth and I stopped talking. How on earth could one talk in such a condition!

Having lived in both eras, I could not help comparing the old times with new. Then we had to beg and take risks just to make a phone call. Now every one of us is a phone booth in which course, we voluntarily imprison ourselves.

mr.m.r.anand@gmail.com

Wrong Mix-up in Drug: 14 Children Die in City

MADRAS, Aug. 23 At least 14 children have died in the City recently following administration of a drug manufactured by a local firm. This is the third such death at the Children's Hospital, Egmore, in Tamil Nadu, Express.

The drug produced as a syrup was intended to be administered for bringing down the temperature and for relieving aches and pains.

The authorities of the hospital said all the 14 cases were brought to the hospital in serious condition after the drug was administered by the general practitioners.

Following complaints, the State Drug Controller had seized stocks of the drug in the market and sent samples to the King Institute, Guindy, for examination. The test has shown that the syrup contained the toxic substance "Di-ethylene Glycol".

Anaesthetists, Institute of Child Health and Children's Hospital, Egmore, said all the children suffered from acute renal failure.

The deaths are suspected to be due to administration of Propylene Glycol instead of Paracetamol.

The Andhra Pradesh Government would issue orders to its drug inspectors all over the State to impound the drug. Pimpol C

drugs received from the Tamil Nadu Government—PTI and UNI.

Drug Stocks in Mysore Frozen

BANGALORE, Aug. 28 The Drugs Controller, Mysore, has issued orders for total freeze of the entire stock of the Pimpol C syrup and Pimpol C tablets Nos. 101, 102 and 103.

Announcing this, an official Press release said here today that only limited supplies were intended by the manufacturer to be distributed in Mysore State and that they were frozen.

The Andhra Pradesh Government would issue orders to its

drug inspectors all over the State to impound the drug. Pimpol C

drugs received from the Tamil Nadu Government—PTI and UNI.

The Tamil Nadu Government had alerted the neighbouring States of Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, and Karnataka about the use of the Pimpol C syrup which has been found to cause the death of at least 14 children in Madras.

The Health Minister, Mr. K. An-

thony, has directed the medical director to take immediate action.

It is learnt that another drug manufacturer who intended stocks

for Mysore State as a source for other types of medical preparations, refe-

red to the Health Minister, Mr. K. An-

thony, has directed the medical

director to take immediate action.

He was not convinced that paracetamol in normal dosage would cause renal failure and made light of it. He asked if soda was mixed with whisky, brandy or gin, was soda responsible for the drunkenness since it was the common denominator.

However, Dr. Raju went through

all the details and was convinced

that Pimpol C was the culprit.

He got the samples of Pimpol C brought by us and sent it urgently by a messenger to the State Drugs Controller's office.

He called up Narasimhan, the

Drugs Controller, to analyse the samples and asked him to give the report immediately.

At 6 p.m., Mr. Narasimhan called

to say that all the samples contained

diethylene glycol as the solvent,

highly toxic to the kidneys. The usual solvent is propylene glycol.

Dr. Raju immediately drafted a

letter to All India Radio to broadcast

that Pimpol C was a toxic drug and

should not be given to children. He

asked me to hurry to the radio station,

which broadcast the message imme-

diately and repeated it for the

next 48 hours. Dr. Raju called a press

conference and all the leading dailies

carried the report the next day.

Enquiry begins

I visited the house of the first child in

a slum at Tondiarpet and requested

the parents to show the prescription

and the drugs administered before

hospitalisation. The mother went to

the backyard and brought the empty

medicine bottles. One was of Pimpol C.

Within 48 hours, after visiting the

house of every child who had died,

the enquiry revealed that all of them

had Pimpol C. Before long, it was

proved beyond doubt that all the

children who died of renal failure

had Pimpol C.

We met a senior Professor at the

institute to take immediate action.

He was not convinced that paracetamol in normal dosage would cause renal failure and made light of it. He asked if soda was mixed with whisky, brandy or gin, was soda responsible for the drunkenness since it was the common denominator.

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First drafts of a tragedy

Snatches of reports and articles in The Hindu on the toxic formulation

that killed several children in Chennai in August 1973.

▪ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

The Cough Syrup Tragedy

By M. Sridhar

Professor of Pharmacology, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

samples of it to the parents are requested to contact their immediate family and withdraw the medicine.

Dr. Balagopal Raju said that 25 children had died as a result of such accidental mix up of injuries.

The Tamil Nadu Government, in a press note to-day, warned the people against use of the drug, and called on parents and guardians to turn over the drug to the Drugs Controller.

The authorities of the hospital said all the 14 cases were brought to the hospital in serious condition after the drug was administered by the general practitioners.

Following complaints, the State Drug Controller had seized stocks of the drug in the market and sent samples to the King Institute, Guindy, for examination. The test has shown that the syrup contained the toxic substance "Di-ethylene Glycol".

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Following



WATER WORLD

Manipur's unique Loktak lake and its *phumdi* ecosystem is choking because of a catastrophic policy decision taken 50 years ago

And slowly dies a lake

Trishna Mohanty

At 2.00 a.m., I wake up to the makings of a disaster; the lake is rising beneath me as rain charges down like a mob spiralling out of control. I am separated from the lake only by a tent resting on a mat of bamboo poles over a *phumdi* (an organic mass floating in the lake), relying on the physics of buoyancy that generations of Meitei fisherfolk have mastered.

Dawn reveals the damage. The part of the *phumdi* on which my tent is pitched has nearly separated from the rest of the mass. Had the rain continued any longer, I would have been drifting on the lake on my own little island.

As the fishermen fix the *phumdi*, I hike up a hill and look at the vast expanse of Loktak Lake. The overcast sky has rendered it a deep blue. Green rings – *athaphum* (circular fish culture ponds) – speckle its surface until the horizon where a long chain of mountains stand guard. Small huts sit on their peripheries, mere specks. Fishermen navigate their *he* (canoes) through the lake, splitting water and drawing tangents over the vegetation everywhere.

Malem, however, is unmoved by the sight in front of him. For the octogenarian, it brings back old memories. "My father and I were out fishing that day in March 1944. We had caught heaps of pengba, ngaton and khabak, and we were ready to head to the market. Suddenly, the earth rumbled and the water started trembling." They instinctively dropped to the ground. "Three Japanese warplanes roared over us. That's when we knew World War II had reached here, right in our backyard."

As the Battle of Imphal and Kohima raged, his father told him, "This is our greatest test. If we survive this, we will survive it all." He was wrong, says Malem. "We have never had a greater adversary than the Ithai Barrage – not even the war."

Lady of the lake

Legend has it that Loktak was formed when gods wooed the valley's people. The lake has witnessed the very idea of Manipur take shape. It was on its shores that the beloved Meitei folklore of princess Thoibi and Khamba and their timeless romance came to life. Poubi Lai, a mythical creature integral to the Meitei belief system, is believed to reside in the heart of the lake.

The town of Moirang, on its bank, was the headquarters of the Indian National Army where they established a provisional independent government after defeating the British.

Loktak is not just a lake. For Manipuris she is Loktak Lairembi (Goddess Loktak), and for the several thousands of fishermen who depend on her for their livelihood, she is *ema* (mother). And although she is the fountainhead of Manipuri culture, her own identity has been in a state of flux for decades.

Before the 80s, Loktak Lake as we know it today did not exist. Back then, it was one of 20-odd wetlands in the region that merged into one water body during monsoon and in drier seasons fell apart.



Water of life (Top to bottom) Fishermen return with the day's catch from Loktak Lake; the *phumdis*, which are the fundamental unit of life for many Meitei fishermen; a woman smokes fish inside her home; and a fisherman sorts out his catch. • RITU RAJ KONWAR; GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK & TRISHNA MOHANTY

Together, helmed by the *phumdi*, they nurtured a unique ecosystem that fostered all forms of life.

A floating assortment of soil, vegetation and organic matter in various stages of decay, the *phumdi* clump together to form islands that move around freely on the lake, their shape and size morphing through the year. For Meitei fishermen who have inhabited the region for centuries, it is the fundamental unit of life.

They build their houses (*phumsangs*) on top of it and carve out the *athaphum* by cutting *phumdi* into rectangular strips, tying them together and arranging them in a circle. After divers anchor it down with heavy rocks, a huge net is cast within the *athaphum* and left for anywhere from 15 days to two months. Fish in the *athaphum* are fed rice and the husk of grains. The entire community comes together on the day of the catch, which can be a day-long affair.

Edible plants, roots and fruits growing on the *phumdi* are a major part of the diet of not just the lake people but across Manipur. Like any living organism, the *phumdi*'s life cycle is regulated by the seasonal fluctuation in water level. In the dry season, they sink to the lake bed where their roots absorb nutrients from the soil. During monsoons they float back to the surface.

Meitei fishermen play a key role in this cycle by getting rid of the dying biomass. When the water level is low, they burn the *phumdi* in heaps, and when the lake is brimming, they cut up *phumdi* strips and carry it in their *he* to water channels from where the currents take it out to sea. This ensured that the lake stayed in good health and was conducive for fish to spawn.

Loktak once thrived in this symbiotic relationship. Once considered extinct, the population of brow-antlered deer found only on Loktak's largest *phumdi*, the Keibul Lamjao National Park, rose. Huge shoals of fish came in from the Chindwin-Irrawaddy river system in Myanmar through the Manipur river. Fishermen often faced a delightful problem – the pro-

blem of plenty. The fishing community prospered, and with Loktak as its lifeline, so did Manipur.

Sea change

Then things changed dramatically for Loktak, and for Manipur. A single decision set off a chain reaction of catastrophic events no one could have anticipated.

In the 70s, the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited (NHPC) pitched an ambitious project to the Manipur government – a power station to harness the hydropower potential of Loktak Lake. The 105 MW capacity power station would provide cheap electricity to Manipur and its neighbouring States. It would also provide lift irrigation for 23,000 hectares of land in the valley. The State government approved the project without making any effort to study its impact on the lake's ecosystem and on livelihoods.

In 1983, NHPC constructed a barrage at the confluence of the Manipur and Khuga rivers – two of the five major rivers that drain into Loktak Lake – near Ithai village. The Ithai Barrage was to act as a barrier and create an artificial reservoir with the



fish, all of them the size of my little finger. The catch is worth ₹10. For Ibomcha, this is usual. At 39, he has never seen the lake in its prime.

The barrage has blocked the route of migratory fish coming into the lake from Myanmar and so Loktak can no longer meet the demand of an entire State. In a bid to salvage the situation, the fisheries department introduced one lakh fingerlings brought in from Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. This has become an annual ritual now, one that has gradually wiped out several species of fabou nga (native fish) found in the lake.

Meitei fishermen are now forced to rethink their age-old methods. For one, they have swapped their traditional cotton nets for nylon ones made in Myanmar so that the weeds don't tear them. The nets have also become longer to catch more fish. Traditional shallow-water fishing methods have all but disappeared.

Some fishermen have made an unusual addition to their fishing arsenal – batteries to stun the fish with a jolt of current, which often ends up paralysing or sterilising the fish that get away. Law enforcement was invoked, many fishermen were jailed, and now the practice has finally stopped.

With fish populations dwindling, the unspoken laws of the community suffered. Now, the only law is the one of survival.

My only home

Malem and I are about to make our second pit stop. Before us is an islet with just enough space to accommodate two ramshackle *phumsang*, their roofs fitted with solar panels. On some parts of the islet, the vegetation is taller than me. A dog barks at us as we reach the shore. Cats, geese and four ducks look on. They do the important job of keeping water snakes and other dangers at bay. A haphazard, bobbing walkway made of bamboo poles leads to the entrance of the *phumsang*.

The single-room shack is bare. Utensils, a mattress, a solar-powered battery, and a clay stove is all the middle-aged couple have. There is no electricity, the NHPC never delivered on its promise. On the stove, the woman smokes two varieties of fish. Since an entire day's work often yields only a meagre catch, most fisherfolk smoke the catch of several days together before heading to town to sell it.

The couple's two children stay in Moirang with relatives, they tell me. There was a time when they all lived together. In November 2011, *phumsang* all over the lake were burnt down by the Loktak Development Authority (LDA) and the couple, unsure of the future, sent their children away. The LDA was constituted by the Manipur government in the 80s to check the lake's deterioration; it enforced the Manipur Loktak Lake (Protection) Act in 2006 to clear the lake. Fishermen were asked to leave the *phumdi* in exchange for compensation. Most refused. This was their only home, their only land.

Aided by armed policemen, in an illegal and violent operation, the LDA burnt down 777 huts; Malem's was one of them. The lake was partially cleared of *phumdi* and *athaphum* and the latter were declared illegal.

Yet, their numbers have increased in the last few years. The centuries-old form of aquaculture is monumentally labour intensive and the returns poor, but for many, it is the only way to survive. The benefits outweigh the risk of getting caught. And who knows risk better than people who have built entire lives on a floating piece of land.

Malem and I are now heading back. The sun, minutes away from setting, casts an ethereal golden-orange hue over the lake. I am listening to Malem talk about that night when his house was burnt down by the LDA. At 18, he had built it himself with the help of a few friends. In a single night, 60 years of belongings and memories went up in smoke. At 78, he had to start life over again.

"Why didn't you just leave?" I ask.

After all, tens of thousands of fishermen have migrated to Imphal in the last couple of decades, to pull rickshaws or do whatever odd job they can find. Malem looks at the lake as the sun sinks into its waters. "Ema is dying... I may not be able to save her but I can be with her in her final moments. It's the least that I can do."

The writer and travel photographer has a penchant for the unseen India.



The barrage has blocked the route of migratory fish coming into the lake from Myanmar and so Loktak can no longer meet the demand of an entire State



Journeys Stills from *Sthalpuran* and *Trijya* (second from top).

BIG SCREEN

A road runs through it

Marathi filmmaker Akshay Indikar's *Sthalpuran* has been picked up for the Berlinale, while *Trijya*, his first film, went to Shanghai and Tallinn

Namrata Joshi

A road runs through both of Akshay Indikar's Marathi feature films. In his debut feature *Trijya* and his second film *Sthalpuran—Chronicle of Space*, the road is a dominant image, always stretching ahead of the itinerant protagonists.

Travel reflects in 28-year-old Indikar's own roots too. He belongs to the Gondhali nomadic tribe in Karnataka. "My ancestors used to travel on horses, pitch tents where work took them. They are supposed to be worshippers of the mother goddess Tulja Bhavani; they would narrate folk tales mixed with mythology," he says. Indikar laughs sardonically at the fact that his 'homeless', 'migratory' grandfather would not have been able to provide any documentation for Indian citizenship today.

Trijya premiered in Shanghai and went to the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival; *Sthalpuran* has been picked up to compete in the forthcoming Berlinale in the Generation KPlus section, devoted to films about children and young people. Like some of the best in recent Marathi cinema – *Vihir, Shala, Killa – Sthalpuran* also looks into the child's mind but does so with a philosophical and metaphysical voice.

Full circle

"The road to school is more beautiful than the school," says the simple diary entry of the bespectacled eight-year-old geeky boy who is the focus of *Sthalpuran*. His life is in an upheaval without him being able to articulate the turmoil. "Don't know where father has gone, even sister doesn't know," he writes. We don't get to know for sure either. Is he dead? Has he abandoned the family? Is he just an illusion?

It all starts with a train journey. The first ominous note in the diary says that the mother is not willing to say if they will ever return to Pune.



The film ends with another diary entry about the sister attaining puberty: "Everyone is saying Minu has come of age". The little boy wonders what the phrase means, little realising how much an absent father has made him grow up. Things have a way of coming full circle.

Indikar's meditative frames underline the sense of calm with which the stoic family seems to take things in its stride. His filmmaking is also minimalist. Against the family's silence, there is the rain and thunder, the roaring sea and the deluge of water. They fill the frames of *Trijya* as well. Water, he thinks, is an element that unites.

Nature becomes a kind of refuge in Indikar's cinema. It may help build the film's mood, but more than that, it lays bare its metaphysical core. "We are one with nature as well, the water within our bodies and outside. I like how the duality

gets resolved in the Advait philosophy," he says.

He likes the sound, texture and sensuality of water. Water is also something that signified a sense of craving in childhood. "Solapur is barren dry region. Water was supplied once in 15 days and we would be up at 2 a.m. filling it up. Rain is also a dream."

In *Sthalpuran*, Indikar's camera views things from a distance. He doesn't plant the viewer in the child's world but seems to give us binoculars to get close to him and his family – while we remain aware of ourselves as outsiders. Old film songs seem to play on the radio: K.L. Saigal's 'Gham diye mustaqil kitna nazuk hai dil' in *Sthalpuran* and the classical strains of Kumar Gandharv, Mallikarjun Mansur and Kesarbai Kerkar in *Trijya*.

The hero of *Trijya* could be the grown-up boy of *Sthalpuran*. Does

he see his own reflection in them? Indikar has definitely been as peripatetic as his protagonists. For someone who as a child wanted to do something larger than life, like become a magician, he joined theatre only to give it up for its linguistic politics. Exposure to world cinema and the autobiographies of V. Shantaram, Dada Kondke and Charlie Chaplin made cinema seem like a secular medium; he could also "celebrate his loneliness in the darkness of the cinema hall."

Peace in chaos

He joined FTII but quit at the end of the second year, disappointed that it was churning out filmmakers to feed the industry rather than nurture independent voices. "I didn't want to work in Mumbai. I wanted to make films in my own language and on a small scale. You can't play with characters if they talk in a language alien to you as a filmmaker," he says. He started off with a docu-fiction film on the iconic writer Bhalchandra Nemade, titled *Udaharnartha Nemade*.

The protagonists in both *Sthalpuran* and *Trijya* reflect the sense of loneliness and alienation he felt while moving to Pune. "It is contradictory but they are all about finding peace in the heart of chaos."

Indikar uses folk traditions such as Dashavatara in *Sthalpuran* and a Chitrakathi performance in *Trijya*, a way of going back to his own family's migratory, performative roots. He wants to explore the oral folk traditions of India more acutely and widely and is working on a documentary on Vedic Lavani, a metaphysical, spiritual form of Lavani, different from the erotic one that is popularly known.

He is also working on a feature film called *Construction*, the love story of an archaeologist and an architect. One digs up the past, the other builds the future, and somewhere between the two is what is to become of the Indian identity.

High drama
A still from the 'Be Black, Baby' sequence in the 1970 film *Hi, Mom!*

can't intellectualise it," a black interviewer tells his WASP respondent, "you have to live it." What follows is a hilariously, deliberately reductive version of "living it".

When eager wannabe liberals show up for the participative theatre experience they were promised, they are made to edge closer to the lives of those whom they claim to feel empathy for – and it's more discomfiting than they expected. Roles are reversed: the black performers, made up in whiteface, smear soot on the faces of the white audience ("It's going to ruin my make-up," squeals a woman who was clearly not expecting to be so inconvenienced) and force-feed them soul food ("To be black and to feel black, you have to eat black").

Role reversal

Things quickly escalate, from a purse being taken away, to the threat of violence and rape. Just as the audience members are being assaulted by the black performers (who are now thoroughly in character as white oppressors), the De Niro character, Jon, shows up as a policeman. And then – this might sound familiar to anyone who has followed recent developments in Indian universities like JNU – instead of protecting the victims, the cop starts haranguing them, demanding ID, and siding with the assaulters.

Both familiar and audacious as all this is, what follows is side-splitting: once their ordeal is over and they know they are safe, the traumatised audience starts gushing about the experience. "Great theatre! I'm going to tell all my friends to come for this [...] It really made you feel what it's like to be a negro... uh, to be black." In the end, that's what it was for them – great theatre, to be intellectualised from a distance.

The sequence is a lacerating commentary on the delusions of the well-intentioned, how someone else's reality can be too much to handle up close no matter how righteous you are feeling – and how, once you're confident about the status quo being restored, you easily revert to the same homilies as before.

There has been much talk about the debt that Todd Phillips's *Joker* owes to Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* – both films being about anarchist violence as a response to a hopelessly unjust world. But six years before De Niro's iconic role as Travis Bickle (and half a century before his supporting part in *Joker*), *Hi Mom!* dealt with this theme too – and neither of those other films, for all their virtues, contains anything as formally experimental and as unnerving as the 'Be Black, Baby' scenes.



Jai Arjun Singh is a Delhi-based writer and film critic who finds it easier to concentrate on specific scenes as he grows older.

SCANNER



Ganesh Pyne show

An exhibition on Ganesh Pyne, the late painter and draughtsman, is on view at Akar Prakar, Kolkata, until March 31. It features not only the paintings and jottings Pyne was known for, but also a collection of photographs and photo collages of him shot by artist Veena Bhargava, who has focused extensively on Pyne's life and art over the years.



NSD theatre festival

The 21st edition of Bharat Rang Mahotsav, the National School of Drama's annual festival, is on until February 21. Featuring 101 plays – 91 selected from across India and 10 from abroad, with many languages represented and even one non-verbal performance – it is the country's biggest theatre festival.



On trans lives

Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen, a film by Sam Feder that premiered at Sundance, examines transgender representation on film and television over the course of the past century, starting with the 1914 silent film *A Florida Enchantment*, and features detailed interviews with transgender writers, actors and directors.

ONE MOMENT PLEASE

Be black, baby (but not so much)

In a stunning sequence in a 1970 film, white people are made to live out black lives

Two recent events inspired me to revisit a favourite sequence (or really, a film-within-a-film) from an underseen but vital American movie that turns 50 this year. The first incident was after a screening I curated, where the conversation touched on the problematic tradition of "brownfacing" an actor – or, more generally, using someone from a privileged background to play an under-privileged character.

The second was the experience of visiting Shaheen Bagh, the hub of the Delhi protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). It was especially invigorating to be there on New Year's Eve: to see the quiet resilience of the women leading the protest, listen to the poetry being read, the displays of subversive humour, the many little ways in which underdogs can use wit and satire to target the powerful. And yet, throughout, I was aware of my position as someone who was showing a modicum of support (for a few hours) without having much directly at stake – and with no real understanding of what it's like to be from a class or community or demographic that is under immediate threat.

And I thought again of the virtuous white New Yorkers in 'Be Black, Baby'.

This is a segment – three segments, to be exact – within *Hi, Mom!*, a funny, uneven, savagely political 1970 film made by Brian De Palma. The main narrative involves a deviant amateur filmmaker (played by a pre-stardom Robert De Niro) videotaping people without their knowledge, but woven into this story are the 'Be Black, Baby' interludes, shot in grainy black-and-white with a handheld camera, to resemble a low-budget documentary.

Here is the basic premise of 'Be Black, Baby': a troupe of African-American theatre performers goes around asking white people if they know what it is like to be black, and offering them first-hand experience. "You

STAGE WHISPERS

How to WOO viewers

If you want to attract and keep audiences, engage and be engaging

I'd like to think I know a little something about the struggles of cultivating an audience for theatre. Whether it is for a certain kind of content, which we have been doing for the past 20 years, or for a new venue on its journey from anonymity to becoming a cultural hub. A few years ago, I ventured into the world of curation, to try to develop a performance space, and while I was moderately successful, it made me realise how difficult it is to develop an audience and then maintain it.

Reaching out to a potential audience, diversifying the current audience mix, converting people who are inclined to attend, but don't, into attendees, getting current audience members to attend more often; these are difficult but important challenges. In the last month, we have performed at two very distinct outstation venues. One was celebrating its ninth anniversary, but has generally struggled to get a steady flow of viewers. Despite being a lovely venue, one can attribute this to geography and location, or perhaps the lack of aggressive outreach. The other venue was brand new, well located and backed by decent marketing. However, it is in a city whose people aren't used to regular theatre. But we discovered that they were fascinated with stand-up comedy, so we baited them with that. Once they showed up and learned of the existence of a fun and attractive venue, with the added advantage of a great restaurant attached, perhaps they will show up again. One can hope.

Millennial code

Something that does seem to be working, though, is cracking the millennial code. Creating and retaining younger audiences is critical for the future of the art form. Q Theatre Productions saw this back in 1999 when it came up with Thespoo, the country's first large-scale youth theatre festival. Participants had to be under 25, and hence, so was a lot of the audience. Theatres have ta-



ken this one step further with popular seasons for children – like Summertime at Prithvi, Summer Fiesta at NCPA and AHA at Ranga Shankara.

I remember the demographics of our audience began to change quite interestingly when we started working with younger actors and writers. Experimental venues have flourished with fresher content and again, the advent of stand-up comedy. Another thing that seems to work well, and this is supported by research here and abroad, is food and beverages. Younger audiences want to socialise before and after a show, so an attached café or bar really helps. It could seem sacrilegious to be moving away from "content is king" to creating "a wholesome some experience", but it really isn't, primarily because it works.

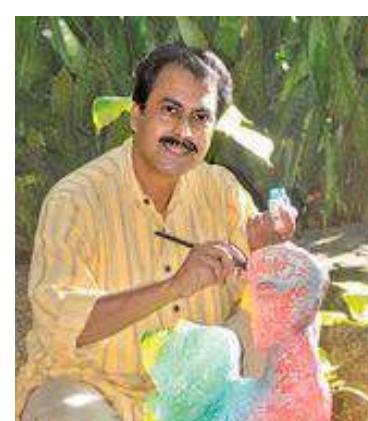
Building trust

Constant engagement with audiences is critical. Regularity really helped us create a loyal audience at a co-operative venue in Delhi. But the establishment and the performing group need to be on the same page, which is rare, and they both need to be unafraid to take a risk. There comes a point where we as creators or curators need to step off our high horses and ask, "What does the audience want?" The audience should not be a problem that needs to be solved. The key is building a relationship. Yes, it is a relationship that is often fraught with difficulties, suspicion and a lack of trust. But trust has to be gained. I read an article about how British playwright Howard Barker didn't care if the audience listened or not, or even if they understood. If they didn't, it wasn't for them. On the other hand, David Mamet has reportedly said that the audience is the only judge that matters. "If the audience members didn't laugh, it wasn't funny. If they didn't gasp, it wasn't surprising. If they did not sit forward in their seats it is not suspenseful."

Maybe we can take Mamet's idea further. If, despite all the marketing, social and otherwise, audiences don't turn up, could it be that they are simply not interested in what we are doing? Or merely that there is something more interesting on Amazon Prime? Nobody has the right to an audience; they have to be wooed, looked after and cherished. So perhaps we can wine and dine them. And perhaps we can loosen up and make whatever point we want to in an entertaining manner. And all this can be done without compromising on the quality of content.

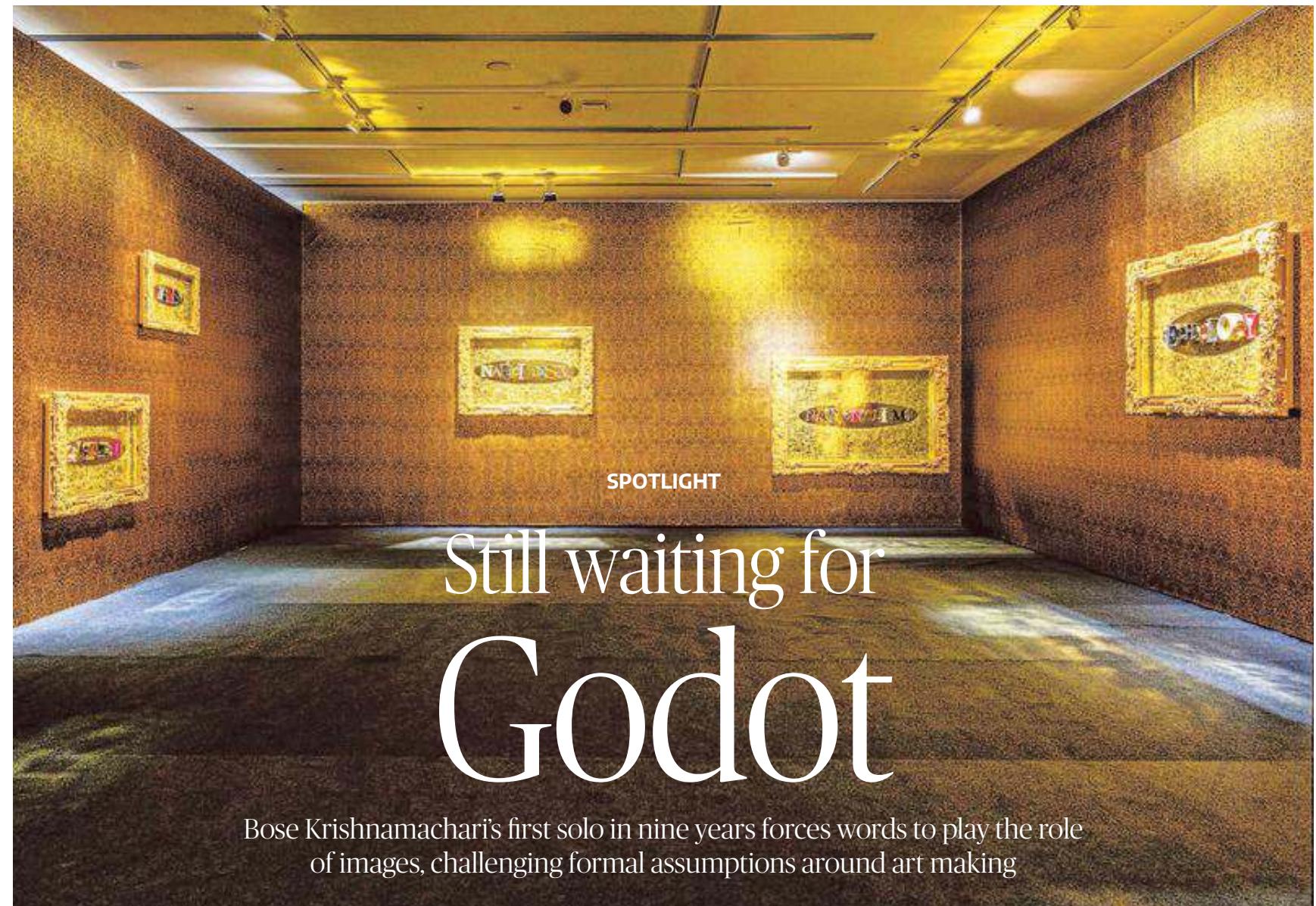
Akash Khurana, a theatre producer and director, is often broke. To cope, he writes and directs films and web series and occasionally acts, albeit reluctantly.

British playwright Howard Barker didn't care if the audience listened or not, or even if they understood. If they didn't, it wasn't for them



Sisir Sahana show

Forum Art Gallery in Chennai is hosting an exhibition of works by glass sculptor Sisir Sahana, titled 'A Dialogue with Soil' and on until March 7. Sahana, who is a professor in ceramics and glass at Visva-Bharati University and a globally exhibited artist, is known for his relief work in glass as well as his sculptures.



Vaishna Roy

Workers were still putting finishing touches to Bose Krishnamachari's ongoing solo show when I visited it at Kolkata's Emami Art, their bustle accentuating a sort of starkness unfolding in the outer spaces of the gallery. Walking into the cavernous room carved out in one corner, I stopped short, assailed by a feeling of having wandered into a chamber in the Versailles Palace of Louis XIV – such was the overpowering presence of gold and opulence and larger-than-life luxury that assaulted the senses.

In the dim-lit room, massive gild-edged frames dominated gold-and-black patterned walls and the carpeting hushed one's footsteps. Tentatively, I stepped closer and found giant letters winking and glinting out words within each frame: 'Capitalism', 'God', 'Religion', 'Casteism', 'Racism', 'Narcissism', 'Nationalism', 'Technology', 'Regionalism', 'Chauvinism'. Ten words that framed ten distinct thoughts, ten preoccupations with the present that Krishnamachari is trying to articulate.

For me, the artist's success lay in that moment – that without a word exchanged, the very first thought the show had summoned was that of the *Roi Soleil*, the Sun King with his absolutism, his famous '*T'et, c'est moi!*' (I am the state), his legendary self-obsession. Later, stepping back, one saw how Krishnamachari is also trying to contrast the maximalism of that room with the stark minimalism of the metal frames outside with their perforations in Braille that also spell out the same ten words, but now in a script that the sighted cannot decipher.

For Krishnamachari, the ten words are like the nine rasas, and by carving them out in various materials he seems to be trying to recreate the rasas in multiple ways, like a dancer experimenting with *abhinaya*. But what is also happening simultaneously is something he doesn't seem to have strived for – an overwhelming sense of irony. The framing of a word like 'casteism' or 'racism' or 'religion' within those giant golden mounts becomes quite a remarkable statement in irony, applicable not only to society but to art itself.

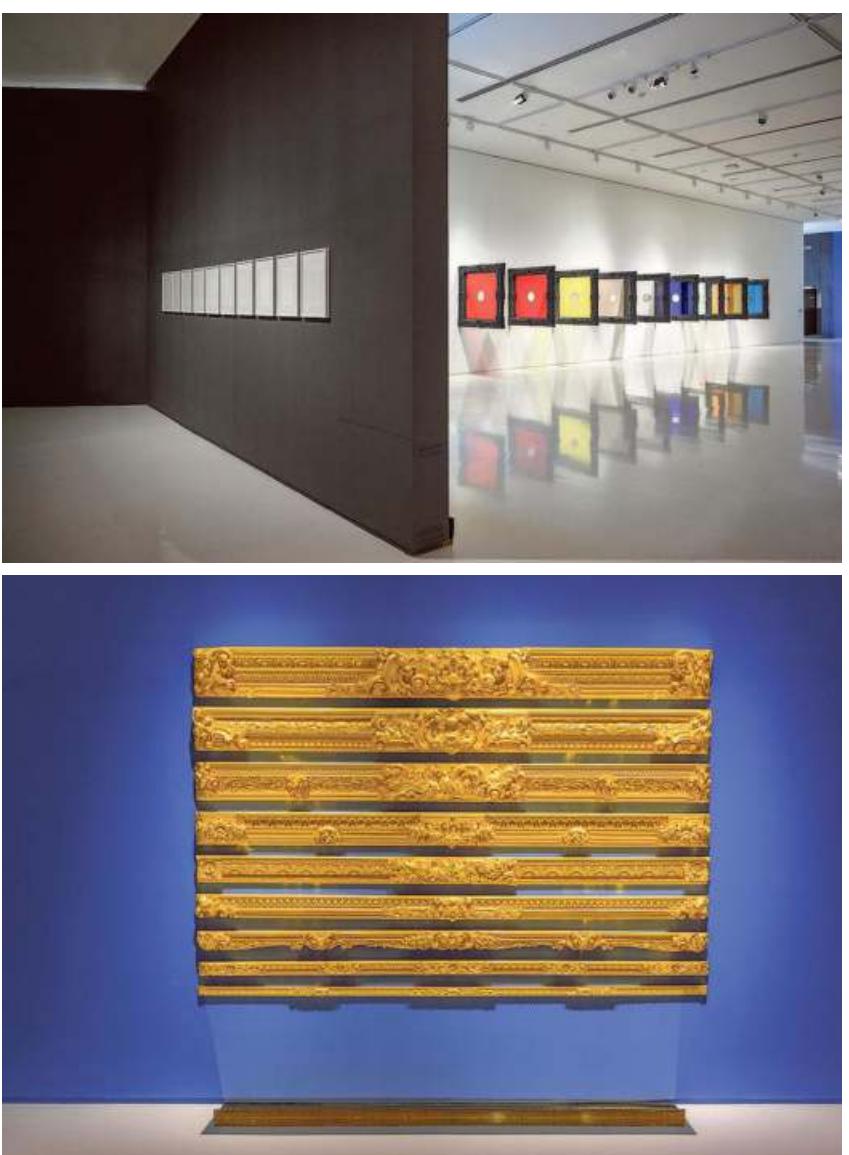
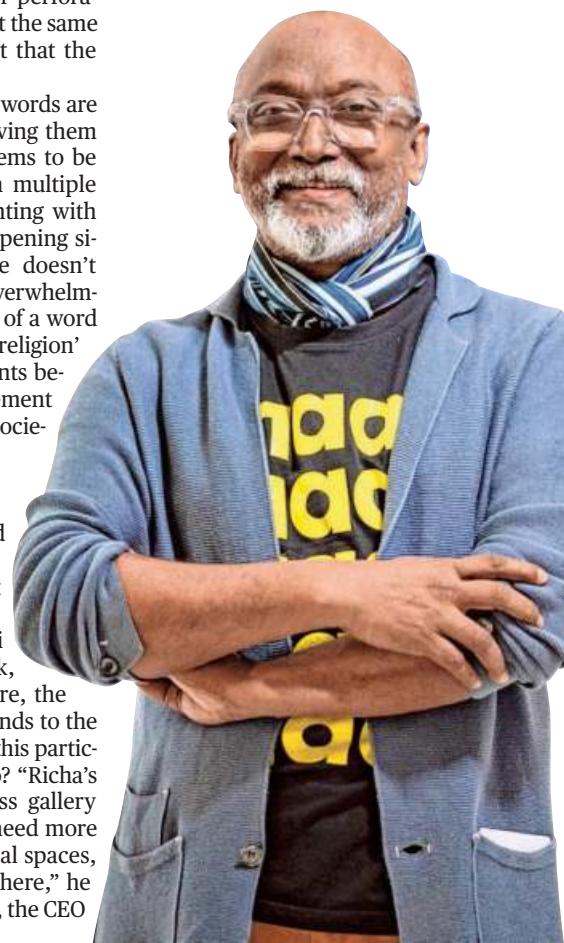
New vocabularies

In fact, this show was intended as the opening exhibition for Emami Art's launch in 2018 but wasn't completed on time. Krishnamachari visited Emami repeatedly before starting work, and although he seems unaware, the show deeply mirrors and responds to the grandiosities of the gallery. Why this particular venue for a comeback solo? "Richa's vision is to make a world-class gallery space, which is very rare. We need more such cultural and conversational spaces, which is why I agreed to open here," he says, referring to Richa Agarwal, the CEO of Emami Art.

This is not an easy exhibition; it doesn't yield quick pleasures or meanings, but that is in line with Krishnamachari's continuing attempts to dramatically change the way society consumes art. This solo, coming nine years after LaVA, the travelling archival show that he ran from 2005 to 2011 to challenge meanings of museums and displays, is as disruptive as that one, smashing preconceived notions of art making and challenging viewers to expand their vocabulary of art.

Why these ten words? "I filtered and edited and brought down all my experiences into these ten words, they are my obsession right now," he says. "They reflect my experience of society and political situations." Krishnamachari has always been a significantly political artist, a sensitivity he extends to the Kochi Biennale, which he co-founded with artist Riyas Komu and continues to co-curate, but "I don't make a revolution with it," he says. And that's largely true – even the present solo is not a loud declamation. It winks and dazzles and plays, creating multiple reference points. Artistically, it doffs a hat to conceptualism and to materialism, but also to craft, design and decor. In imagery, it engages with the idea of mirrors – the show is titled 'The Mirror

This is not an easy exhibition; it doesn't yield quick pleasures or meanings, but that is in line with Krishnamachari's continuing attempts to dramatically change the way society consumes art



Overpowering Bose Krishnamachari's works on display at the ongoing show at Kolkata's Emami Art gallery; and (left) the artist. ■ EMAMI ART

Sees Best in the Dark' – but it also tackles ambivalence by juxtaposing the stark with the sumptuous; it deals with ornamentation as superfluity; it exposes the danger of words and the hollowing out of their meanings.

Vehicles of meaning

It's interesting to trace how words have always been as important to Krishnamachari as images. He pays a lot of attention to how he titles his shows. LaVA was an acronym for Laboratory of Visual Art; in 1992, he created AmUseM Memoirs, where he played with 'amuse', 'aum', 'muse', 'museum'; he called the Nano car he painted the 'Maximum Nano'; and in this solo, he makes words play the role of images. This fixation with verbiage is an extension of the artist's continuous effort to imbue his works with a conscious symbolism, where form and content both become vehicles of meaning in a highly thought-out process. For example, beneath a wall with nine richly carved frames, he places a saw – "I wanted to show that there is a kind of danger in the ornamentation," he says.

And as much as his sheer joy with ma-

Delhi exhibition

Delhi's Creativity Art Gallery has launched an exhibition featuring 12 artists, on till February 29. The artists include Manish Chavda, Srinivasa Rao Potelu, Bhaskara Rao Botcha, Chintan Zalavadia, Farhad Hussain, Jagmohan Bangani, Tirupati Rao Addepalli, Rinku Chauhan, Pradeep Puthoor, Bolla Srinivasa Reddy and Satya Sai Mothadka.



Escaping Saudi

Screened at the Sundance Film Festival, *Saudi Runaway*, a documentary by Susanne Regina Meures, is about one woman's plans to flee the country to escape a forced marriage — an increasingly common phenomenon since last year. The protagonist, Muna, surreptitiously filmed herself and her life using her mobile phone.



WIDE ANGLE

It's the International Day of Women and Girls in Science on February 11. And for the two women scientists who won this year's Infosys Prize, their awards are not just personal but of universal significance

100% nerd, woman

Mrinal Shah & Nandita Jayaram

In 1999, while the software field was booming and the American dream shone bright, a young computer scientist was packing her bags to return to India. "When I told my advisor in the U.S. that my husband and I had decided to go back, he told me I was crazy. I told him I wanted to return because I wanted to put India on the research map of the world." And today, this is exactly what Sunita Sarawagi is doing.

Sarawagi, a professor of computer science at IIT Bombay, is one of the six winners of this year's Infosys Prizes. She won the award in the category of Engineering & Computer Science. According to the jury, Sarawagi was "one of the earliest researchers to develop information extraction techniques that went beyond the world of structured databases to the kind of unstructured data one finds on the World Wide Web."

A self-proclaimed "100% nerd," Sarawagi is constantly trying to strike a balance between high-quality globally-appealing research and India-related problems. One such problem with real-life implications was "address cleaning". While it is relatively easy for humans to make sense out of postal addresses, it's not so for computers, she said. "Indian addresses can be very messy. Your home address, the address of this hotel, can be written in many different forms, and it gets tricky for companies like Flipkart or Amazon to access information like the PIN code."

To solve this problem, she has been using machine learning, a form of artificial intelligence (AI) that gives computers the ability to 'learn'

rather than be pre-programmed to perform a task. Fortunately for Sarawagi, striking the balance between quality and relevance is a lot easier today as AI applications are everywhere in our app-driven lives.

Question of relevance

It's not as easy for researchers of fundamental science such as Manjula Reddy, a cell biologist at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad. She too won the \$100,000 Infosys Prize last month, in the Life Sciences category. For Reddy, who is renowned for her discoveries about the way bacterial cell walls behave, the obsession with 'relevance' can grow tiresome. "It is a slightly unrealistic pressure on people like us," she says. She compares scientific research to any artistic enterprise and believes the increase in the knowledge base is an application in itself. "It is relevant because it is important to understand nature's secrets, to know how organisms function."

Fundamental science, biology in particular, has a way of sparking off unintended life-changing applications. Reddy's work, for example, has been garnering eyeballs because of its promising implications in the face of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance has been named by World Health Organization as one of the biggest threats to global health, food security and development.

The misuse of the existing classes of antibiotics by humans is accelerating the emergence of bacteria that are immune to them. So critical is the situation that it is no longer sufficient to manage antibiotic use. We need new and effective antibiotics.

Revealing the secrets of bacterial cell walls puts Reddy in a great position to contribute towards a new



way to target disease-causing bacteria. It is no wonder that the Infosys Prize jury has recognised her "bold and creative experiments that provide novel insights into how bacterial cells physically grow, and suggest new ways to target antibiotic-resistant microbes."

Homegrown science

In contrast to the U.S.-trained Sarawagi, Reddy is almost entirely home-grown. She completed her Ph.D. from the same institute where she now works as a Principal Scientist. Interestingly, her path into science wasn't straightforward.

Though she enrolled for her Ph.D. in 1986, when she was in her early 20s, it was not until 2002 that she was able to complete it. She had to shift labs and restart her doctoral work due to bad luck as well as some compromises she chose to make for her family.

It was only in 2007, at the age of 42, that she earned the opportunity to start her own lab at CCMB. And for this reason, this award is much more than a personal one for Reddy.

"I feel it is for all women who struggled and then came to this stage," she said, adding that she received about a hundred emails from women she didn't know to say that the award motivated them. "In fact, ma-



Winning pair Sunita Sarawagi and Manjula Reddy. ■ THELIFEOFSCIENCE.COM & GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

ny women in CCMB itself came and told me that they now felt confident to tell their parents not to pressure them to get married."

Role models

Sarawagi too looks at this award as something beyond personal recognition. "I think awards help make youngsters feel that science is valued."

Awards for Indian women scientists are still a rare thing. The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize, the highest honour for an Indian scientist awarded by the government, has gone to only 18 women (3%) of al-

most 559 awardees since 1958, with women being awarded in only 15 of 62 years. The Infosys Prizes are among the few to buck this trend, with 16 women (23%) of 69 awardees. When asked about the measures that can be taken to keep diversity a priority, the current president of Infosys Science Foundation, S.D. Shibulal, shied away from the specifics, choosing to maintain that it's all about merit and nothing else. He did, however, point out that the age limit of 50 is relaxed to 55 for 'exceptional cases' including women who have taken a break in their career. "I think talent-spotting is the job of the

jury; a wide net is cast," he said.

One of those casting this net is Mriganka Sur, the jury chair for the Life Sciences award. In an interview during the 2018 ceremony, Sur stressed the need to focus on diversity, especially because "an explicit goal of the Infosys Prize is to put people up as role models for young Indians – and this means not only the boys." He wished to reassure those concerned that the jurors were balanced in terms of gender. However, it must be pointed out that in the 11 years of the prize's existence, there has never been a woman chairing any of the juries.

More reassuringly, Sur went on to articulate the vicious circle that acts as a hurdle in the pursuit of gender balance in science awards. "If the nominations are not there, you can't pick a winner. But for nominations to be there, there has to be a pool of talented women whose work is recognised, and for this, women need to get the job, they need the resources to make the scientific discoveries. More women in the scientific population is better for Indian science. Science cannot be done by 50% of the population!"

The writers are core members of the feminist science media collective TheLifeofScience.com

Awards for Indian women scientists are still a rare thing. The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize has gone to only 18 women (3%) of almost 559 awardees since 1958

GREEN HUMOUR BY ROHAN CHAKRAVARTY



PASSING BITE

The time of orange towels

The rise and rise of an IPS officer straight into the realm of midnight knocks on the door



Imagine what it might be like to be a high-ranking police officer in north India today. There you are, a bright boy, good at both sports and studies, adept at languages, and also perhaps science or economics. You do well in school and college and then sit for the Public Service exams. You want to contribute to society, you want a steady job and you also want an interesting life. So you opt for the Indian Police Service. You pass and are sent for training. You graduate and get commissioned into a State cadre. After donning your uniform you salute the Tiranga and take your oath on the Constitution of India. It's a proud day for you.

As your career progresses, there are more ups than downs. You are a good officer, brave, intelligent, but some cases go wrong – maybe there are a couple of deaths in custody – not your fault directly, just that your subordinates got a bit over-enthu-

sastic. However, these are handled; you handle it for your boys and your superiors handle it for you and all is good. You crack a few good cases, manage a few tricky situations and you climb up the promotion ladder. You are a smart guy and very much a team player; your colleagues have their needs; so do you; so yes, you take your normal share of bribes but nothing too outrageous.

An honourable man

And you know which side your paratha is buttered so you also do the bidding of whichever politicians happen to be in government; but again, nothing too extreme, almost always within limits, as far as possible keeping the law and general ethics in mind, not to mention preserving your self-respect. And of course the strong possibility that the people you are persecuting today might be in power after the next elections.

After a long innings, you find

yourself in the upper echelons of your State police force. You didn't get here by being naïve but neither did you make too many compromises – or so you feel. Essentially your honour is intact and you are a good man – or so you feel. The roulette wheel of politics spins and there appears in the country and then in your State a very different kind of regime. In many ways it looks and acts the same as other governments, except these people push the legal and moral envelope to such an extent that it goes into the shredder.

The chief minister of your State proclaims he is giving orders that criminals should be shot without trial. Quickly you realise this is not empty rhetoric – Shri CM-ji actually expects you and your colleagues to produce a body count of extra-judicial killings.

That's when it begins, The Time of The Towels. You do what your boss tells you to, knowing full well

it's a dirty job but someone has to do it. If you don't, several of your colleagues are waiting to pounce on your post. If you show a sliver of unwillingness, you know this regime is psychopathically vindictive and you will suffer. But at night, when you wake up from your nightmares, the dreams are not about shooting down small boys or forcing people to cremate their dead instead of burying them. The dreams are about folding towels and stacking them in neat piles in time for the CM's arrival at some guest house. As you sit up in bed, wiping your sweat with an orange face-cloth, you realise, yet again, that this is where you've arrived as a senior police officer in the Republic of India.

Ruchir Joshi is a filmmaker and columnist.

Literary Review



Mathrubhumi Book of the Year

Blue is Like Blue by Vinod Kumar Shukla, translated from Hindi by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra and Sara Rai, has won the inaugural Mathrubhumi Book of the Year Award 2020. It had also won the Atta Galatta Bangalore Literature Festival Book Prize 2019 for Best Fiction.



BBC 'Normal People'

The first trailer for BBC and Hulu's adaptation of Sally Rooney's *Normal People* is out. Daisy Edgar Jones plays Marianne and Paul Mescal, Connell. Due for a spring release, the 12-part drama was adapted by Rooney with Alice Birch and Mark O'Rowe.



Wolf Hall wins

Wolf Hall, Hilary Mantel's first book in the Thomas Cromwell trilogy, has won the public poll conducted by the Walter Scott Prize to elect the U.K.'s favourite historical novel of all time. *Wolf Hall* was voted by the public as the best.

THE LEAD

Déjà vu in Lahore

There are striking similarities between India and Pakistan: the dissimilarities mostly weigh in favour of Pakistan

Timeri N. Murari

Lahore is a fabled city beyond our reach in India. I had lived there as a child when my father, who was in the army, was posted in the city. That was a long time ago. But Lahore has always remained in my memory, as my mother died there; her ashes were immersed in the Ravi. I never expected to see Lahore ever again...

Last June, I found in my mailbox an invitation to a literary event to be held in Lahore from January 10 to 12, 2020. This was magical. The invitee was Yaqoob Khan Bangash, Director, Centre for Governance and Policy, IT University of Punjab, Lahore, and curator of the Afkar-e-Taza ThinkFest. In the lengthy invite, Yaqoob outlined its purpose ("New ideas"), and mentioned a list of distinguished past invitees. I accepted immediately. I was invited to launch my social history travelogue/ memoir, *Empress of the Taj, In Search of Mumtaz Mahal*.

Fingers crossed

Through several emails, we discussed that elusive document, The Visa, to that forbidden country. Its availability depended on our countries' mutual relationship at the moment of application. Under the two current governments, the situation did not look hopeful. We both had our fingers crossed over the months of correspondence and political uncertainties, made more intense by November. Yaqoob sent the link for the Pakistan visa forms; I was to get a conference visa.



Spot the difference 'The neighbourhood resembled old Delhi' ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Both the Pakistan and India governments will not issue tourist visas to each other's citizens. Yaqoob and I thought this was insanity but those were the editors. I wanted my wife to accompany me: as an Australian, she could possibly get a tourist visa.

I filled in the forms, added many passport-size photos and sent the documents to the Pakistan High Commission's visa office in Delhi late November. Yaqoob wrote: "Just a couple of weeks for the visas". Then, we waited. And waited. The silence was deafening. December, Christmas and then the new year. No visa still, with Yaqoob chasing from his end. By January 6, we were resigned. I would never see Lahore again.

On January 8, 5 p.m., Yaqoob sent the message, "Conference visa granted". I had to pick it up on January 9. Then another message – my wife's

tourist visa was cancelled. Yaqoob asked me to call the chancellor at the High Commission. It was 9.30 pm. He did answer, was very friendly, consulted papers, and said my wife's tourist visa was reinstated.

Tit for tat

I spent half the night booking flights for us, first to Delhi, then to Amritsar: from there we would cross the Wagah border into Pakistan along with the other Indian invitees. I wasn't told for how many days I would get a visa. I decided to return on January 13.

On January 9 afternoon, we met the courteous Pakistan staff in the visa office who disappeared with our passports. We waited two hours. They returned. Our visas were valid for seven days, and only to Lahore. India does the same – both governments keep themselves busy playing tit for tat, like chil-

dren. We met the chancellor, Mr. Saeed Ali, also courteous, laying out tea and biscuits, conversing and wishing us a good journey. The next day, on the Delhi-Amritsar flight, we met the five other invitees, including Mani Shankar Aiyar, a friendly man and a great raconteur. He arranged taxis to the Wagah border.

Warm welcome

Crossing was both an emotional and physical journey. I was returning after many years. Passports were minutely examined, the details noted in ledgers and computers by at least eight officials on the Indian side. Finally, stamped. We walked across the border, passing the crowds filling the small stadium for watching the daily display of strutting soldiers.

In Pakistan, the same minute examination of passports, notes entered in ledgers/com-

puters, also by eight or nine officials and the police. Stamped. Their welcome was warmer and more courteous.

Finally, I met Yaqoob waiting for us: a charming man with the distracted air of someone hosting over 150 invitees from all over the world and Pakistan. My first questions to him was, "Where is Lucknow Road, Lahore Cantonment?" That was our home address then. He had never heard of it, nor had any Lahori I asked. Road names had changed, they said. It was there under a new alias. I would never find it.

At Lahore Fort

In the hotel, the first familiar face, Sir Venkatraman (Venki) Ramakrishnan, whom I had met at The Hindu Lit Fest. The welcome dinner, on a bitterly cold night, was at Lahore Fort, first built by Emperor Akbar in 1575, with his descendants ad-

ding their flourishes – Shah Jahan the marble pavilions and Aurangzeb the massive battlements flanking the main gate. It was the chance to meet the others, including Mark Lyall Grant, ex-U.K. High Commissioner to Pakistan, and the historian Kim Wagner, whose book on 1857 I had read recently.

Also, there was my host for the book launch, Dr. Nadhra Khan, Associate Professor, History and Art, Lahore University. A bright, attractive woman who had not had enough time to read the entire PDF manuscript of my book (Indian books are banned in Pakistan and vice versa). The great feast took up two long tables, with the lit-up fort as the backdrop. Venki had a hard time finding vegetarian food, the only offering being pasta.

The conference venue was the Alhamra Arts Council. On January 11, the first speaker was Grant, on 'International Governance and the Future of the State'. He tried to reassure us by saying there was hope despite the rise of right-wing nationalist governments around the world. The talks by the others covered every subject, from politics, history, books to governance.

Same people

As I had written my novel, *Taj*, with Jahangir as a character, I had to visit his tomb in Shahdara, in the outskirts of Lahore. In the afternoon, Maureen and I headed off first to see Lahore Fort in daylight. The roads were wide, smooth for the most part, no sign of garbage, and the shops, including Anarkali market, crowded. When we reached the fort, the crowds – families with children, all in their finery – were overwhelming.

Many went out of their way to say a 'hello' to us, others waved as we passed. As many Lahoris I met commented, "We're all the same people." And I agreed. We found everyone – drivers, shopkeepers, even the police – courteous and friendly.

Lahore Fort is similar to Red Fort, but grey granite and twice as large. On our way to the tomb, we crossed a bridge. The driver pointed down to the river Ravi. I looked at the cold waters, struggling with memories.

There were few visitors to the tomb, the garden was huge. Jahangir's tomb was at one end, and far at the opposite end, Mehrunissa's. She had designed both. We could take photographs inside. But there were signs of neglect too. On the way back to this exuberant city, we discovered that Delhi and Lahore have matching traffic jams. You could read *War and Peace* waiting for the traffic to move.

That night, we had dinner in the striking Haveli Barood Khana in old Lahore. The neighbourhood resembled old Delhi.

On January 12, the first talk was by Sir Venki on the gene machine. We heard others – on the Amritsar massacre, a Chinese world order, Savarkar and the origins of Hindutva. At my book launch with Nadhra, a retired professor of English from Lahore University spoke glowingly about my book.

I woke up on January 13 panicking. I had booked the Amritsar flight for 12.45 p.m. Mani cheerfully informed me that I would never make it through Wagah in time for the taxi to the airport. It was pouring rain as we raced to the border. At least the porters knew the routine. Same show of passports to everyone. On the Pakistani side, we were welcomed, ushered through with a quick stamp, and the immigration officer shook hands. We crossed the no-man's land in the rain, dragging our suitcases to India.

There was a bus and we waited in it to take us to the Indian immigration and customs building. Time was flying. More passport checks, finally out by 11.15 p.m. We had 45 minutes to check in. We called for a taxi and the one that came was an ancient Maruti van. The old Sikh driver started off: his van did not have wipers and he drove by sheer instinct, as we could not see the road in the rain. We reached the airport with five minutes to spare.

In those few days in Lahore, none of the English language newspapers had mentioned India, in any context. The first Indian newspaper I opened headlined a comment by our PM on Pakistan.

The writer is a novelist and playwright.

On the way back to this exuberant city, we discovered that Delhi and Lahore have matching traffic jams. You could read *War and Peace* waiting for the traffic to move



THE HINDU PRIZE 2019 SHORTLIST

'The seed of the novel lies in disbelief'

Shubhangi Swarup, whose *Latitudes of Longing* has been shortlisted for The Hindu Prize for Fiction, talks of the larger web of life and the necessity of humility in our relationship with nature

One where natural history is the framework to our lives, not political borders or artificial plots.

You engage with climate change in the novel. What kind of research went into it and what conclusions regarding the environment have you arrived at on the basis of your extensive travels and studies?

It surprises me when my novel is termed as magic-realism or ecological fiction. It just shows how delusional the genre of 'realism' has become. We as a modern society aren't invested in the environment sciences, natural history and larger



Your novel is full of solitary people. Is writing a solitary act?

My characters carry a profound solitude within them. Not only does it remain with them throughout, it also leads them to form bonds with other people, and with forces of nature. Writing, in a similar way, has helped me go deep within, and leap as far outside. Solitude as an experience can't be reduced to a physical space or state of mind.

Parts of the novel were written in exotic locales all alone, but majority of it was written in a crowded house shared by nine people, where nothing, not even the page, was sacrosanct.

The current discussions around climate emergency are myopic and solipsistic. They are devoid of the awe, love and personal investment our planet deserves

Sometimes, my niece would scribble over things, or a family member note a number down on my manuscript.

In what ways does your work as a journalist feed into your fiction-writing?

My work as a journalist trained me to plan my research trips impeccably, to always have a plan B, sometimes even a plan C, but most importantly, to know that almost all plans fail, yet one succeeds. I took seven years to write the novel, as I had to manage day jobs along with the travels and writing.

Journalism taught me the value of deadlines, and sticking to them in the face of uncertainty.

Anusua Mukherjee

Shubhangi Swarup's debut novel, *Latitudes of Longing* – acclaimed as the "novel of the year" by its publisher, HarperCollins – has been getting rave reviews ever since its publication in 2018. Expertly blending the natural with the supernatural (the cast includes a yeti searching for human company), Swarup explores fault lines that are as much geographical as psychological. One of

the first Indian novels to engage with environmental changes, *Latitudes of Longing* features nature as a living, breathing entity. Excerpts from an interview:

***Latitudes of Longing* is such a rich and strange novel: how did you conceptualise it?**

■ The seed of the novel lies in disbelief, for there exist patterns, connections and truths in nature that are beyond human grasp. When you are standing in the high-altitude desert

of Ladakh, the fossils and shells tell you a different tale and history. They tell you that it was once a seabed, just as the Andaman islands are mountain peaks sticking out of the ocean. The gems found in Myanmar speak of the profound geological violence witnessed by the region, and how the violence connects it to the Himalayan glaciers and valleys, and oceanic islands. A tectonic fault line is the narrative thread of my novel, and when you shift your gaze this way, a very different story emerges.



web of life that nurtures us. As a result, the current discussions around climate emergency are myopic and solipsistic. They are devoid of the awe, love and personal investment our planet deserves.

And without this fundamental respect and awe, various catastrophes will keep occurring, if not this one. So let climate emergency be that necessary trigger for reflections, right from individual to civilisational. We don't need manic fluctuations in temperature to include rainforests and blue whales in our national discussions, novels or films. We just need humility.

Journalism taught me the value of deadlines, and sticking to them in the face of uncertainty.

■ SHIV KUMAR
PUSHPAKAR

MYSTERY

How do we treat our children?

Anappara's world of street children, though filled with colour and sound and texture, has a curious innocence about it that doesn't quite accord with reality

Jerry Pinto

There is a family of five – which seems to be growing – on the street where I live. They have three children, all under the age of five. These children live in a state of near-total freedom. They wander the street at will, they dress in clothes donated by the middle-class mothers of the area and they discard these clothes when they are dirty. They play with puppies and kittens and once a stray goat that bit through its leash and was found wandering the streets. They seem fascinated by stones and sticks and leaves, almost as much as by the teddy bears and stuffed toys they are sometimes given. They seem like aliens sometimes, aliens because their lives are never going to be anywhere comparable to mine.

Morality play

And so I enter Deepa Anappara's world, the one she hath wrought in *Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line*, defenceless. I understand that she has chosen to take on the voice of a boy, and naturally he is a prodigy. All the children of literature are prodigies even when they are presented as simple, even when they are awshucking their way into literary history. If they were not special, if they were not capable of representing and giving nuanced witness to their interior landscapes, we would not be interested in them. They would be just William and he wasn't a slouch either.

In this defenceless state, I am also without my moral compass, such a useful thing, I should never have left home without it. So I am no longer worried about whether the street child has been represented or has been given a voice or has been

appropriated. I give up any attempts at applying what little I know about street children – several years with Childline, watching street boys who loved Jeroo Billimoria, the founder of the call number 1098, test her by throwing puppies at her, because they knew she was terrified of dogs. I was then an outsider, as I am an outsider after a decade of visiting the kind of school Ms. Anappara describes in her novel for Meljol, to check whether the social and financial education scheme which is now in a hundred countries across the world, is functional.

(We are all outsiders. We were once children, we share that, all of us, from Donald Trump to Baba Amte. Picasso says we could have all been geniuses if we stayed children. The children I meet seem to be striving not to be children. And some of us get stuck at adolescence, more's the pity.)

I feel like I am in a morality play and even Good Deeds won't be my guide. I will therefore be guided by the brute instinct that lies under every novelist's desire to recreate the universe. It's called Story and it has a huge appetite for what happens next and for the dirty details. Story comes away half-filled from Anappara who can keep things moving, who has an eye for detail, who brings in colour and sound and texture. But there is also a curious innocence about this and this innocence means Story has overdosed on nursery food.

Do you agree?
What is childhood? I once asked a group of young people. No one could answer. Legally, it is simple. If you are not 18 years old, you are a child. Do you agree?

How should childhood's innocence be treated. With reverence

and tenderness. Do you agree?

If you do, how will you treat a five-foot-five-inch male person, 60 kilos, who has reached the age of 17 years and 362 days and has just raped and killed a woman? Is he a child? Do you want to treat him as a child?

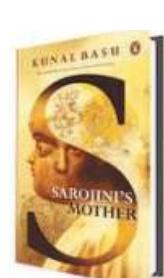
How do you want to treat children? We love children in this country. You take a baby out and watch how people's responses walk the fine line between the gentle and the vicious. Let us now pinch the baby's cheeks. This underlying violence produces some extreme moments. We beat children to death. We shake them to death. We set cameras to watch as they die in tubewells and in drainage pipes. We kidnap them and rape them and kill them.

That is why there are no street girls, only street boys; it takes about four hours before an unescorted girl who comes to the city ends up in a brothel and is raped by a truck driver with AIDS who believes that he will be cured by sex with a virgin... okay, I'll stop.

Childhood is a beautiful thing when it is protected but it takes a village to protect a child. It is a terrifying and brutal thing when the village says: There are certain children who deserve protection by virtue of their birth and there are others whom we can allow you to rape and brutalise and kill because they aren't, well, they aren't our children.

Deepa Anappara's book is framed as a mystery. Mysteries work when societies care about the uniqueness and magic of a single human life. Mysteries work when justice can be assured. *Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line* tries very hard but its tragedies will never match the brutality of how our children live.

The writer is a poet and novelist.



Sarojini's Mother
Kunal Basu
Penguin/Viking
₹599

beyond the comfort zone. His latest novel, *Sarojini's Mother*, also set in contemporary Kolkata, tells the story of two people, a daughter looking for her 'real' mother and an Elvis Presley lookalike who helps her. In the periphery lurk others from poor and rich worlds, who steer Sarojini (or Saz) and her guide Chiru Sen (Elvis) towards their goal through the teeming city with its highs and lows.

Saz Campbell has arrived in India to search for her biological mother. She was adopted and taken to England when she was little but her 'hippie' mother Lucy cannot give her details of her past. All Saz can tell Elvis is that according to her mother, the orphanage was in a crum-

bling villa with a "smell of burning flesh". With a stroke of luck, the villa is found. Saz meets Jamuna, who lives in a slum and claims to be her mother. "Slum is an ugly word. It makes you think of other ugly words. Like dark, dirty, dingy, dangerous." The ominous alliterative warning doesn't bother Saz, who begins spending most of her time with Jamuna.

The twist in the tale occurs when another person, Urvasi, turns up, also claiming to be Saz's mother. Will Saz find her real mother? Will this give her a reason to live on? There are no easy answers, but while we wait, Basu takes us on many a ride through the cobblestone streets of Calcutta. And the ride on Tram No. 36 is just one of these.

SOCIAL REALISM

A ride on Tram No. 36

Kunal Basu's latest novel is an exploration of the lanes of contemporary Kolkata

Sudipta Datta

The literary world of Kunal Basu began, in his first few novels, with historical fiction that explored the British opium trade, Mughal miniatures, racial science in the Victorian era, and the reach of syphilis. With his collection of short stories, *The Japanese Wife*, he delved into other genres and embarked on deep character studies. Then, with his fifth novel, *Kalkatta*, he turned to the contemporary, looking at people living on the margins of the city. Through the lens of a gigolo, a Bihari Muslim, Basu led readers to the underbelly of Kolkata – places which "smell of dead cows and pigeon droppings", where mothers wonder why the streets are "paved half and half, with dirt and gold."

In interviews, Basu has said that he is drawn to the unexplored and to life



The Vault of Vishnu

Ashwin Sanghi
Westland
₹399

Juxtaposed with a Pallava prince, a Buddhist monk travelling to India, a Neolithic tribe fighting to preserve their knowledge, is a reclusive scientist deciphering ancient texts and an investigator with a complex past, who must maintain the balance of power in the new world.

BROWSER

Like Blood on the Bitten Tongue

Akhil Katyal

Westland

₹499

In this collection of poems, Katyal combines Urdu and Hindi traditions of poetry with English forms. He captures an old city's throbbing heart in verse shot through with empathy, taking a stance against fashionable cynicism.



PROFILE

'I desire only the body'

Odia poet Akshaya Bahibala's visceral, pungent poetry of life from the streets is upending mainstream notions of lyricism



Heartspeak Bahibala (right) with his partner during their 'Poems on the Road' tour in 2019. ■ R.V.S. PRASAD

Abinash Dash Choudhury

I meet Akshaya Bahibala in Bhubaneswar's Walking Bookfairs, an independent bookstore that he runs with his partner. The store, quite like his work, lies hidden – among eateries and other shops – and only a few venture there. As Bahibala reads out from his works to a small gathering – which he hosts from time to time – his poetic craft reveals itself: a seamless weave of his experiences and observations expressed through metaphors and symbols in colloquial Odia.

Stripped bare

To be counted as a poet or not, is a question that follows Bahibala wherever he goes. Faced with ruthless criticism and charges of obscenity from the conservative, Brahmanical Odia literary establishment, he has been banished from the hall of poets because of his free verse, which deviates from the established poetic dictation and depicts the ordinary.

"No publisher accepted my work as 'poetry', or as literature, for that matter. They said it was half story, half poetry and not up to the mark," says Bahibala with a smile. After multiple rejections, he finally decided to self-publish. He has three poetry books and one short story collection to his credit.

Bahibala, which literally translates into 'bookseller', a title he gave himself, comes from a modest background. Born in Puri in 1980, he went to government schools in districts all over Odisha. Leaving home at a young age, he travelled to Goa, Kolkata,

and other places to earn a living, sometimes working as a waiter, sometimes selling books – taking up whatever work he could find.

With his meagre earnings barely enough to meet basic needs, he never thought of taking up writing for a living. "Neither was I studying literature nor was I fraternising with contemporary writers – how could I even dare to dream?" he asks.

The Odia literary sphere has largely remained chained to the canons. By poetry, what is indicated is poetry in standardised

Bahibala takes his poetry to the streets, the source of his art. And he reads them out to the people for whom his poetry is created

form and diction. Bahibala's writing smashes those expectations.

When Bahibala started putting together his poetry into slim volumes in his mid-30s, his intentions were clear: to shatter societal façades, slice them open to reveal inequalities – and he does all that with a cold-blooded honesty. One of his recurring motifs is, not surprisingly, nudity.

*I desire only the body.
The body, and body's touch.
When I burn in desire, or cry
I search for another body.
Why, you ask?
Because, I cannot touch a soul.*

Real utterance

The language in which he captures the "*langala deha*" (naked bodies) is itself naked – approximating real utterance as opposed to the commonly held view of

poetry as terse, abstract lyric.

His poems on the city space are profound meditations on existing inequalities. Through his experience of inhabiting the city's edges, he interrogates the construction of the centre.

Of the streets

Bahibala takes his poetry to the streets, the source of his art. And he reads them out to the people for whom his poetry is created. The ones who I write about must receive what is written. Often, they do not like my poetry even when they can see themselves there, because they are taught to like poetry in a different way. They think of themselves as unworthy of being written about. We have taught an entire class of people to hate themselves," he says.

Does it bother Bahibala that he is not called a poet in literary circles? "I never wanted to be a poet, in any case. And poets do not do what I do – publish and distribute, run a bookstore or wait at tables. Poets here have historically been Indian Administrative Officers who are imagining the summers of Bhubaneswar as Wordsworth did," says Bahibala.

Powerful, sharp, urgent, visceral and often harsh, his works are thoughtful commentaries on contemporary life in a city anywhere in India. They are yet to be experienced by a larger audience, as his works await translation.

The writer is a post-graduate student of Comparative Literature in Jadavpur University, Kolkata.

NOVELLA

Like a slow, sad song

A poignant story of loneliness and finding hope in unexpected places

Vineetha Mokkil

Veteran actor Pankaj Kapur successfully dons the hat of a novelist with *Dopehri*, originally written in Hindustani and now translated into English. Kapur had performed *Dopehri* more than 50 times on stage in India and abroad before it appeared in book form.

This slim, elegantly designed novella set in Lucknow has a big heart. The story revolves around 65-year-old Amma Bi, who lives all by herself in her huge, desolate Lucknow *haveli*. With nothing but her late husband's life-size portrait and vintage car for company, Amma Bi is staring at the abyss of loneliness. Her house help, Jumman, whom she "doesn't like one bit", happens to be the only one "who saw and heard her in her old age". Though Amma Bi has dedicated her life to family and relation-

ships, she finds herself painfully alone at this stage of her life.

Every evening, she hears the sound of phantom footsteps in her courtyard. Every night is a burden, every waking hour a pain. Kapur paints Amma Bi's interior landscape poignantly. Her melancholic phase followed by her life-affirming transformation – thanks to the arrival of Sabiha, a lively young woman whom she takes on as tenant and grows very close to – is convincingly portrayed.

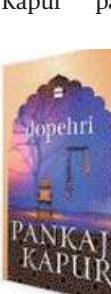
The city of Lucknow, as much a character as the cast of the novella, comes alive in Kapur's descriptions. The grandeur of Lucknow's monuments, the hustle and bustle of the city, the kites flying in the bright blue sky are all cap-

tured in cinematic detail. Flashes of insight add texture to the setting and make it an integral part of Amma Bi's story.

Dopehri is well-paced for the most part. But Kapur rushes to tie up loose ends and reach a satisfying resolution towards the end. The languid pace of the initial part is to be savoured.

Like a slow, sad song, it reaches the reader's heart, lingering long after you stop turning the pages. Anyone who has endured loneliness and found companionship and hope in unexpected places is sure to relate to these characters and be drawn into this book.

The writer is the author of *A Happy Place And Other Stories*.



Dopehri
Pankaj Kapur,
trs Rahul Soni
HarperCollins
₹299

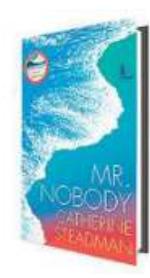
Mr. Nobody

Catherine Steadman

Ballantine Books

₹1,855

A man is found on a British beach, with no identification and unable to speak. Neurologist Dr. Emma Lewis is asked to assess the patient. She has a past she has buried and the patient seems to know the one thing about her that nobody is supposed to know.

**The Vault of Vishnu**

Ashwin Sanghi

Westland

₹399

Juxtaposed with a Pallava prince, a Buddhist monk travelling to India, a Neolithic tribe fighting to preserve their knowledge, is a reclusive scientist deciphering ancient texts and an investigator with a complex past, who must maintain the balance of power in the new world.

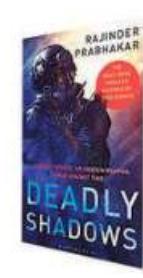
Deadly Shadows

Rajinder Prabhakar

Bloomsbury

₹399

A series of attacks happens in remote parts of India. Do they foreshadow something more catastrophic? Adit Ohri, an elite operative of the 53 SAG, a secret force, is assigned to chase a lead from his past and find those behind the attacks. It leads him to a shocking truth.

**Mr. Nobody**

Catherine Steadman

Ballantine Books

₹1,855

A man is found on a British beach, with no identification and unable to speak. Neurologist Dr. Emma Lewis is asked to assess the patient. She has a past she has buried and the patient seems to know the one thing about her that nobody is supposed to know.

PERSONALITY

An unusual life

A deep scrutiny of the world of scientist extraordinaire J.B.S. Haldane whose achievements were many

Jacob Koshy

It's rare for a 20th century scientist, who hasn't bagged a Nobel Prize, to be worthy of a biography. John Burdon Sanderson Haldane (JBS) who died in 1964 already inspired two and *A Dominant Character: The Radical Science and Restless Politics of J.B.S. Haldane* by journalist Samanth Subramanian, is a new, 21st-century take on the pioneering biologist, ardent Marxist, polymath, anti-establishment newspaper columnist, ordained as the 'last man who knew all there was to be known'.

Evolution biology

When Europe was in turmoil in the early part of the 20th century, scientists were co-opted by governments at an unprecedented scale to gain an edge on the battlefield. Ideology, nationalism, racism were all stirred with the fadle of evolutionary biology, the other great scientific revolution of its time along with quantum physics.

'Evo bio', fashioned by the rudiments of the science of genetics, was a nascent science that probed the mechanism of heredity, the inter-connectedness of life and how this put man in relationship to other beings. One central question was whether genes passed onto offspring could be altered to exhibit desired behaviour. Could winter-varieties of wheat be dunked in cold water and have their genes re-programmed, thereby making them thrive in spring? No, suggested experiments on fruitflies, observations on the evolution of species and theory – J.B.S. played a major role in explaining all this.

Trofik Lysenko, Soviet biologist and Josef Stalin's favourite scientist, insisted otherwise. Because he had the dictator's ear, Soviet scientists who disagreed with Lysenko were isolated, even killed and the redoubtable Haldane, high priest of scientific precision and committed to the dignity and equality of scientists and workers everywhere, was found lacking in his condemnation of Lysenko.

Politics vs. science

J.B.S. was a prominent member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Did politics interfere with his science? He was a patriot – having fought for Britain in World War I and taking on the fascists in Spain – but was also believed to be a Russian spy. Disgusted with Britain, he chose to spend the winter of his life in Bhubaneswar to galvanise biology research in India but true to form, fell out with P.C. Mahalanobis – eminent statistician entrusted with formulating India's planned economy – who brought J.B.S. to the Indian Statistical Institute.

Wearied by Indian bureaucracy he called the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the network of national labs conceived to aid India's industrial development, the 'Council for the Suppression of Independent Research.'

Subramanian's biography is an exquisite literary expedition into J.B.S.'s boyhood, his family history, his schooling. As the son of John Scott Haldane, a physiologist, who didn't shrink from self-experimentation in the pursuit of scientific truth, J.B.S. imbibed early on that science was about putting oneself at risk to get at the core of deep, interesting questions.

Haldane's personality, his accomplishment, calibre and the time that he inhabited makes him a naturally compelling subject and much of the facts of his life are well documented, Subramanian gives compelling context.

From the history of the development of biology to the Spanish Civil War, Subramanian skillfully mixes archival research and deep scrutiny of J.B.S.' work to portray – what can be safely assumed – a breed of scientist almost impossible to imagine today.



A Dominant Character: The Radical Science and Restless Politics of J.B.S. Haldane
Samanth Subramanian
Simon & Schuster
₹799

ECONOMY

The dramatic Asian revival

Deepak Nayyar explains why despite challenges like rising inequality there has been a remarkable economic transformation in the region, making it an engine of global growth

Harsh V. Pant

Asia's rise has been a much talked about subject of both academic and policy discussions. It has been clear for a while that the centre of gravity of global economy is, slowly but steadily, shifting to Asia. Deepak Nayyar examines this shift with an intellectual rigour and analytical finesse that has often been missing from this discussion.

Juxtaposing his work against Gunnar Myrdal's landmark book *Asian Drama* which was pessimistic about Asia's economic prospects, Nayyar outlines the remarkable economic transformation in Asia over the last several decades, making the region the veritable engine of global growth. This brings Asia back to the heart of the global economy from its heyday of 1820 when the region accounted for more than one-half of the world income and two-thirds of world population.

Patterns in divergence

Nayyar's work surveys the last 50 years and provides a data-rich account of the economic development in Asia. It situates this evolution in the wider historical and social context as it underlines the factors that have shaped the economic trajectory

of Asia. This brings out the divergences in the historical experiences of Asian countries in the realm of their economic policies. Given the divergences in Asia, this is a remarkable exercise which manages to divine some patterns in the region. These range from the role of investment and savings as well as education to the role of governments in providing the right balance between the state and the market. That he manages to examine broad trends even while being granular in examining individual countries is a tribute to Nayyar's scholarship.

While most of the book is about examining past trends in Asia, the last chapter is about future challenges. This is a particularly challenging time for the global economy when most of the assumptions of the post World War II economic order are being challenged, mostly by those who had set up this order in the first place. So while the economic transformation in Asia makes the continent a natural pivot of the emerging global economic order, the challenges are huge and are mounting.

Jobless growth

Nayyar talks about growing inequality and jobless growth, the middle-income trap and the need to raise productivity levels and innovation

Just talking of China and India and their bilateral relationship would make the difficulties inherent in the so-called Asian century apparent

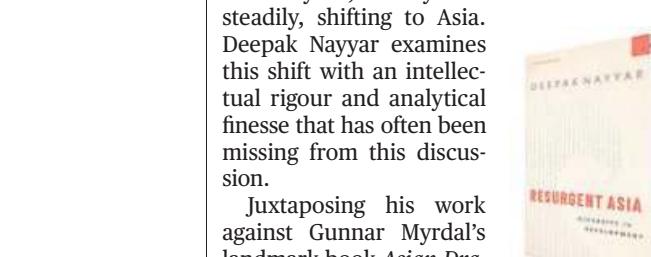
would make the difficulties inherent in the so-called Asian century apparent. Asian economies might certainly continue to dominate the global economic trajectory, but there is a long leap from there to assuming that this century will be of Asia.

China's rise

We have already moved on to the Indo-Pacific with all its contending claims and counterclaims. Meanwhile, key economies in the region, including China and India, are slowing down amid underlying conflictual tendencies. The West, especially the U.S., is more determined than ever to preserve its technological advantages over its most likely competitor, China. And China's rise in Asia is forcing regional players to recalibrate not only their strategic postures but also economic policies.

At a time when the term 'Asia's rise' is thrown around glibly, this book should be read by everyone who is interested in understanding the economic history of the region and what the rise of Asia actually implies. This century may or may not be Asia's but as Nayyar rightfully argues circa 2050, Asia "will have an economic and political significance in the world that would have been difficult to imagine fifty years ago, even if it was the reality in 1820."

The writer is director, Studies at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, and professor of International Relations at King's College London.



Trending The balance of power is shifting towards Asia, but there are geopolitical complications.
• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK



FOCUS

Taking on Harvey Weinstein and a colluding system

How two NYT journalists got women to speak out against the Hollywood mogul and also go after other perpetrators

Radhika Santhanam

In *She Said*, an unputdownable, thrilling account of *The New York Times'* investigation into the sexual allegations against Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein, journalists Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey are less interested in Weinstein the predator and more eager to draw attention to how the system enables perpetrators. They explain how lawyers and HR personnel, tabloid writers and publishers, managers and publicists, and family and friends work tirelessly and shamelessly to keep the producer's image clean. Weinstein's team even hires an Israeli firm to spy on the "cockroach journalists". The nauseating pattern in Weinstein's behaviour becomes clear to the journalists soon enough. The women, all unbeknownst to one another, not only narrate the same sequence of events – the bathrobe, the champagne, the hotel suite, the massage, the shower – but also use the same language in describing the experiences that leave them scarred, angry, helpless and compromised.

Tale of cover-ups

But first, getting women to speak even off the record becomes a challenge for Kantor and Twohey. The women are gagged by settlements with shockingly restrictive clauses. They are prohibited from recounting their experiences, keeping evi-

dence, or listening to other survivor's stories. But their accusations have no impact on Weinstein's life or actions. The reporters realise that merely recording the experiences of women will not be enough; legal and financial trials need to be exposed. They write: "The settlements didn't prevent the story; they were the story, a tale of cover-up that illuminated the alleged wrongdoing."

The book begins on an ironic note. When Kantor first writes to Rose McGowan months after the actress accuses an unnamed producer of having raped her, she declines to speak because of her previous experience of sexism at *The New York Times*. Kantor doesn't give up. She and Twohey doggedly pursue sour-

ces, knock on doors unannounced, pore over complex legal documents, and continuously corroborate statements. *She Said* is as much a hat-tip to old-fashioned investigative journalism involving patience and grunt work as it is about a systemic problem across the world.

In what is the most gripping part of the book, the journalists document the final hours before publication. Weinstein storms into *NYT* to intimidate the journalists and later calls them, alternatively bellowing ("I am a man who has great resources") and whimpering ("I'm already dead"). Women who are not ready to go on record suddenly change their minds. The lede is rewritten in the last few hours. All the chaos and an-

icipation that characterise a newsroom before the publication of an important story is captured in these pages.

Women villains

The heroes of the book are the women, of course. Ashley Judd risks a successful Hollywood career to go on record. Zelda Perkins, a Miramax assistant, quits her job after she unsuccessfully confronts her boss about his attempt to rape another assistant, Rowena Chiu. Despite the emotional trauma following the loss of her marriage, and before a second mastectomy surgery, Laura Madden too agrees to go on record. But many of the villains too are women. Lisa Bloom, who champions herself as an

advocate for women, bends over backwards to help Weinstein. "You should be the hero of the story, not the villain. This is very doable," she writes to him in a letter, listing the various ways in which he can be protected. The message is clear: in this toxic system, women are as much the perpetrators as the men.

If the book falls short anywhere, it is towards the end. The detailed descriptions of the Brett Kavanaugh hearings capture the shortcomings of the system and the #MeToo movement, but have little to do with Kantor and Twohey. But this is a minor issue in what is otherwise an exceptional work of journalism and storytelling; the *All the President's Men* of today's age.



She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement
Jodi Kantor & Megan Twohey
Bloomsbury
₹599

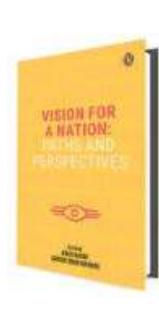
Vision for a Nation: Paths and Perspectives

Edited by Aakash Singh Rathore, Ashish Nandy

Penguin/Vintage

₹499

The first volume in the series titled *Rethinking India* has G.N. Devy, Sitaram Yechury, Kancha Iliajha Shepherd, S.Y. Quraishi, Neera Chandhok and others explore issues that confront the country.



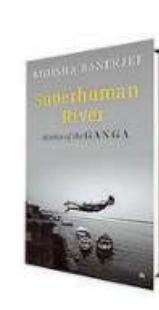
Superhuman River: Stories of the Ganga

Bidisha Banerjee

Aleph

₹499

For 10 years, Banerjee explored the Ganga from its source to the sea. In 2014, the Modi government launched 'Namami Gange', but ground realities show little or no progress, prompting the writer to ask: "Will the Ganga ever be clean?"



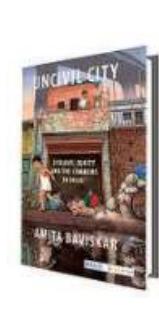
Uncivil City: Ecology, Equity and the Commons in Delhi

Amita Baviskar

Sage/Yoda Press

₹1,195

As cities have overtaken the countryside as habitat for most of humanity, the question of their ecological capacity to sustain lives has become critical. A sociologist argues that only citizenship and civility will help.



When Time Stopped

Ariana Neumann

Simon & Schuster

₹599

As a child in Venezuela, Neumann is puzzled when her father wakes up at night screaming in a language she doesn't recognise. From a box of papers her father leaves for her when he dies, she meticulously uncovers the truth of his escape from Nazi-occupied Prague.



Notes from Armenia

Raul Dias

Picking an accommodation option that sits cheek-by-jowl with a primary school is always a risky proposition. One that is fraught with countless somnolence-threatening annoyances. From loud, early morning assembly calls and mid-day playground cacophony to afternoon marching band practice, the ultra-light sleeper in me has encountered it all.

But my recent stay at a family-run B&B in Yerevan – the pink-hued capital of Armenia – that shares a wall with one of the city's most popular public schools, showed me another, more surprising facet to Armenian academia. One that struck a home run in more ways than one...

Chess in school

With one of the most ambitious school chess programmes in the world, the chess-obsessed nation has made the game a compulsory subject on the national curriculum. An initiative of the then Armenian President Sersh Sargsyan – who was also president of the Armenian Chess Federation – since 2011, children studying in grades two to four have two weekly chess lessons that are graded just like any other school subject. And just like the one next door, these classes are often conducted in school playgrounds that have sets of purpose-built concrete chess tables in a designated corner.

To keep up with this new de-



mand, Armenia now has more than 4,000 qualified chess teachers in its school system, besides national champions like Levon Aronian as visiting faculty. The once number-two chess grandmaster in the world, also known fondly as Armenia's David Beckham, today regularly coaches kids in chess at schools across the country. Interestingly, a 2009 BBC World Service report titled *Armenia: the cleverest nation on earth* shows that with its population of a little over three million, Armenia is among the world leaders in chess, with one of the highest numbers of chess grandmasters per capita.

Grandmaster Tigran Petrosian
So, where and how did it all begin for this Armenia-chess love affair? Curious, I visit the Tigran Petrosian Chess House – the 'Ground Zero' of all things chess in the Caucasian state. Nestled on Yerevan's leafy Khanjyan Street and built in the early 1970s in the typical Soviet brutalist architectural style, the building is named after the Soviet Armenian grandmaster Tigran Petrosian, who became the World Chess Champion in the 1960s.

Chess apparently came to Armenia from India via the Arabs in the 9th century, when Armenia was under Arab rule

Here, I learn that although chess was institutionalised during the early Soviet period, the country has always had a historical love of the game that goes way back to the Middle Ages. This was proved with the discovery of an ancient chess set in the citadel of Dvin, the medieval capital of Armenia, in 1967.

At Yerevan's imposing grey basalt Matenadaran museum of manuscripts, a digital copy of *Shatranj: The Book of Chess* (1936) by Joseph Orbeli and Kamilla Trever tells me more as it augments the India-Armenia chess connection. Called *chatrang*, a word derived from the Sanskrit term *chaturanga*, which translates to 'four arms' (representing elephants, horses, chariots, and foot soldiers), chess apparently came to Armenia from India via the Arabs in the 9th century, when Armenia was under Arab rule.

"*Shakh yev mat*," is a victory cry I

hear all of a sudden as I settle down with my 200-dram (\$30) blueberry softy cone at a bench outside the Moscow Cinema on Yerevan's arterial Abovyan Street, next to a giant pedestrian chess set. But then, the Armenian equivalent of "checkmate!" is something I've been hearing at almost every public square and city park I've sauntered past in the last few days. There's probably nary a public space in Yerevan that doesn't have at least a couple of chess tables, with players of all ages hunched over an intense game of *chatrang*.

On a free walking tour of Yerevan, as a passing shot, our guide Varko lets us in on a little-known chess world secret. As it so happens, Garry Kasparov, the former Soviet grandmaster, and easily the world's best ever chess player, is of Armenian heritage, though he was born in Baku, Azerbaijan. Apparently, his original surname was Kasparyan – with the ubiquitous finale of an Armenian surname, which usually end in "ian" or "yan".

The Mumbai-based writer and restaurant reviewer is passionate about food, travel and luxury, not necessarily in that order.

GOREN BRIDGE

NORTH	♦ A Q 8 3	EAST	♦ 5 2
♦ J 5 2		♦ K Q 4 3	
♦ K 4 3		♦ A 10	
WEST	♦ K 9 7 6 4		♦ Q J 8 6 5 2
♦ 4 3		♦ A 9 4 3	
♦ 9 8 5		♦ J 2	
♦ 9 4 3		♦ Q J 8 6 5 2	
SOUTH	♦ J 10		
♦ K 10 8 7 6			
♦ A 10 7 6			
♦ K 7			

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♦ Pass 1♦ Pass
2♦ Pass 3♦ Pass
3NT Pass 4♦ All pass
*Game forcing, might not have clubs
Opening lead: Four of ♦

Good genes

Neither vulnerable, South deals

Bob Jones

This deal was reported by American expert John Hurd, who was South and declared the hand. East was Kevin Rosenberg. Rosenberg is the son of Michael and Debbie Rosenberg, both leading American players and contributors to the game of bridge on many levels. Among their many activi-

ties in support of bridge, they are both avid supporters of youth bridge in the USA. In recent years, Kevin has been forging an expert reputation of his own.

This deal was played in a pairs competition, where an overtrick or an undertrick can make all the difference. South won the opening club lead with dummy's ace and led a heart. Kevin smoothly played the queen and

South covered with the king, winning the trick. Look at this from declarer's point of view. What was the likely layout of the trump suit? Two possibilities came to mind. East could have the obvious ace-queen doubleton, or West might have ducked his ace with ace-nine-four-three, hoping South would play a heart to the jack next. Either way, the winning play was clear. South ran the eight of hearts and was shocked when this lost to the nine. Kevin had created an extra trump trick out of thin air while earning the respect of both opponents and his partner's admiration. Well done!

The Mumbai-based writer and restaurant reviewer is passionate about food, travel and luxury, not necessarily in that order.



QUIZ

The crowd makes the ballgame: Ty Cobb

Berty Ashley

On February 9, 1895, YMCA physical director William Morgan created a new game called 'Mintonette' deriving the name from Badminton and the rules from Tennis and Handball. Just four years earlier Basketball had been invented but Morgan developed this game for older members who wanted to play a less rough game. Eventually the name we now know came about due to the nature of players passing the ball within the same side of the court. What's the game?

On February 9, 1900, this event made its debut. Known as the World Cup of its sport, it is contested annually between teams from competing countries in a knock-out format. Initially only Great Britain and United States took part; now 135 countries do. The cup is named after player Dwight – who donated the silver bowl given to the winner. He was a member of the U.S. team that won the first two championships. What is the name of this cup in which India was runner up thrice?

Born on February 9, 1992, this English gentleman is regarded as one of the greatest spin bowlers in cricket history. In 1956, he achieved a record that stands unequalled to this day. In a test match at Old Trafford he took 19 wickets against Australia. The one solitary wicket that got away was J.W. Burke who was caught off a ball by G.A. Lock. Who was this extraordinary player who was the first person to win the 'BBC Sports Personality of the Year' award?

This sport is a faster variant of baseball played with a larger ball and smaller playing area. It was suita-



Easy like Sunday morning

ble for indoor play so that baseball players could still maintain their skills during winter. The main difference between baseball and this is that the ball is delivered with an underhand motion. The name for this game came from the earlier version where the ball used to be made from a material not as hard as the one used for baseball. What is the sport?

This is a variant of football which is played on an indoor hard court between teams of five players each in a field smaller than a regular football field. The name comes from the shortening of the phrase in Spanish for 'hall football'. It is based on football but took some rules from other sports, such as five team players (basketball), goalkeeper rules (Water Polo) and field/goal sized (handball). What is the sport?

In 1920, a sports magazine wrote a letter suggesting that a team of 12-

20 professionals from the U.S. be chosen to play in the British open, till then, no American had ever won it. They suggested a warm-up tournament and they got a wealthy businessman, Samuel Ryder to sponsor it, naming the tournament after him. This led to the start of a now famous biennial tournament which alternates between British and U.S. venues. Which sport is this?

This sport is thought to have originated in Fleet Street prison, when prisoners used to hit balls off the walls with racquets. This was then adapted by boys at Harrow school, who used a punctured ball and discovered that this flattened on impact and bounced off, leading to a greater variety of possible shots.

It is believed that the name of this sport comes from the sound of this impact or what happened to the ball upon impact on the wall. What is this sport?

This sport is a faster variant of baseball played with a larger ball and smaller playing area. It was suita-

Friends Gordon Smith, Bobby Johnstone, Lawrie Reilly, Eddie Turnbull and Willie Ormond of the Hibernian Football Club.

Gordon Smith, Bobby Johnstone, Lawrie Reilly, Eddie Turnbull and Willie Ormond of the Hibernian Football Club were all part of the Three Time League Championship winning team. They helped the team reach the semi-finals of the European cup. By what name were they known that should remind you of a popular children's series by Enid Blyton?

This term which comes from a certain sport has become part of the English language now and means a 'forceful, dramatic move, especially against someone'. In the sport it refers to a forceful shot in which the player jumps right to the scoring area and forces the ball in. It has become such an integral and entertaining part of the sport that separate competitions are held only for this move. What is this move?

This term seems to arise from the fact that when a bowler takes a certain number of wickets, their club shows their appreciation by gifting them with a piece of headgear. What is this term that is now used across sports (and even outside sports) to refer to someone achieving something in a specific number?

A molecular biologist from Madurai, our quizmaster enjoys trivia and music, and is working on a rock ballad called 'Coffee is a Drink, Kaapi is an Emotion'. @bertyashley

ANSWERS
1 Davis Cup in Tennis
2 Jim Leyland
3 Softball
4 Davis Cup in Tennis
5 Golf
6 Snooker
7 Football
8 The Famous Five
9 Slim Dunk
10 Hat Trick

LETTER FROM A CONCERNED READER

Who likes Spartacus?

Madam, Sir,

Did you see the sad news? Kirk Douglas has left this world. Saddest of all sad news. Actor means Kirk Douglas. These days some idiot will grow one beard and wearing cooling glass means actor. But real actor means Kirk Douglas.

When I saw the news, I put one phone call to Dr. Shankaramon. I said, "Doctor, doctor, I think Kirk Douglas has died." He said, "Oho Mathrubootham, how many times I have to say just because I am doctor I am not god, ok no problem, what is the flat number? I will come and try something. Maybe I can try electric shock."

I said, "Kamanatti rascal, porambokku karumam sori nayi paradesi muttaal manda shiromani madaya, I am talking about great actor Kirk Douglas. You will go to Hollywood and give electric shock? Rascal, Hollywood police will



• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

names on WhatsApp so that boy can buy properly." "No problem, I will send," I said. Then I recorded all the abuses in Tamil and Malayalam in one voice message and sent it to Usman. Enjoy Usman, foolish man.

Finally, I went to Mrs. Mathrubootham. I said, "Kamalam, the great Kirk Douglas has departed this world." She came into room and said, "Yes, I know, old man. Whole day I am feeling sad. What a hero he was." I said, "Too much hero. Scenes of *Spartacus* are still flashing in my mind after 60 years." She asked, "What is your favourite film of Kirk Douglas?" I said, "Easy question, it is *Spartacus*." She said, "Okay, what is your favourite film after *Spartacus*?"

I said, "I don't know, I have to think. Which films you have enjoyed Kamalam?"

She said, "*Spartacus* was classic. But *Lonely are the Brave* is even better. And have you seen *Lust for Life*? Let us thank the god for all these experiences. It is a blessing only." I said, "Yes, yes 100%."

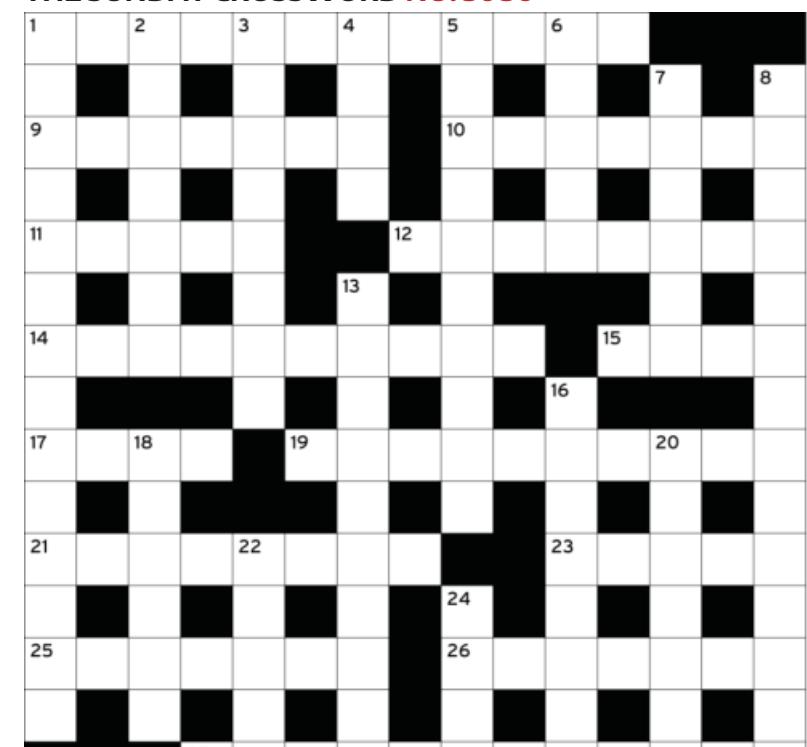
Then she said, "But old man, you tell me two or three good Kirk Douglas films you are liking, we can get DVD and watch together." I said, "Kamalam, first of all, there is *Spartacus*, it is a classic." Then she said, "Old man, how many times you will say *Spartacus*. Everyone has seen *Spartacus*, whether you have seen any other film? Or you are fraud fan just putting big talk?"

Madam/Sir, I immediately went into bedroom and closed the door and I said in loud voice, "Kamalam, how dare you say such things?" Then I went on Internet to urgently read Wikipedia entry of Kirk Douglas.

If he has only one super-hit film means it is my problem? Nonsense. Kirk Douglas and all too much hype.

Yours in exasperation
J. Mathrubootham

THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 3086

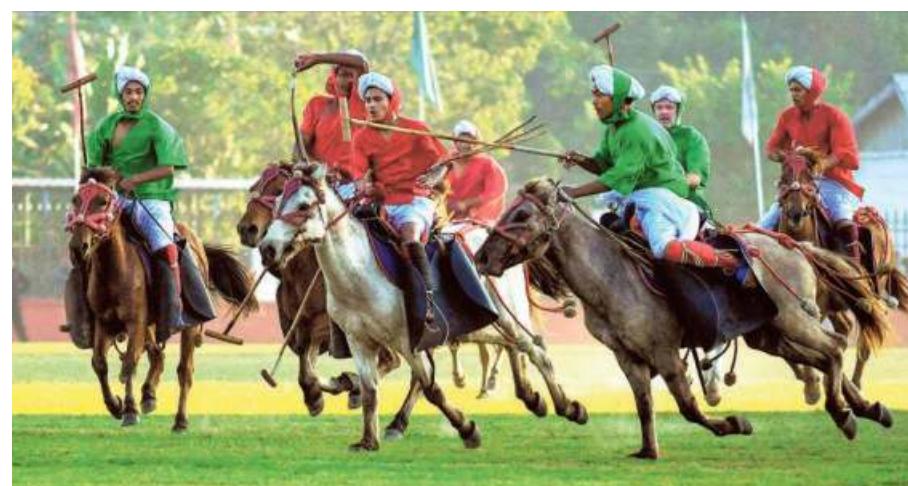




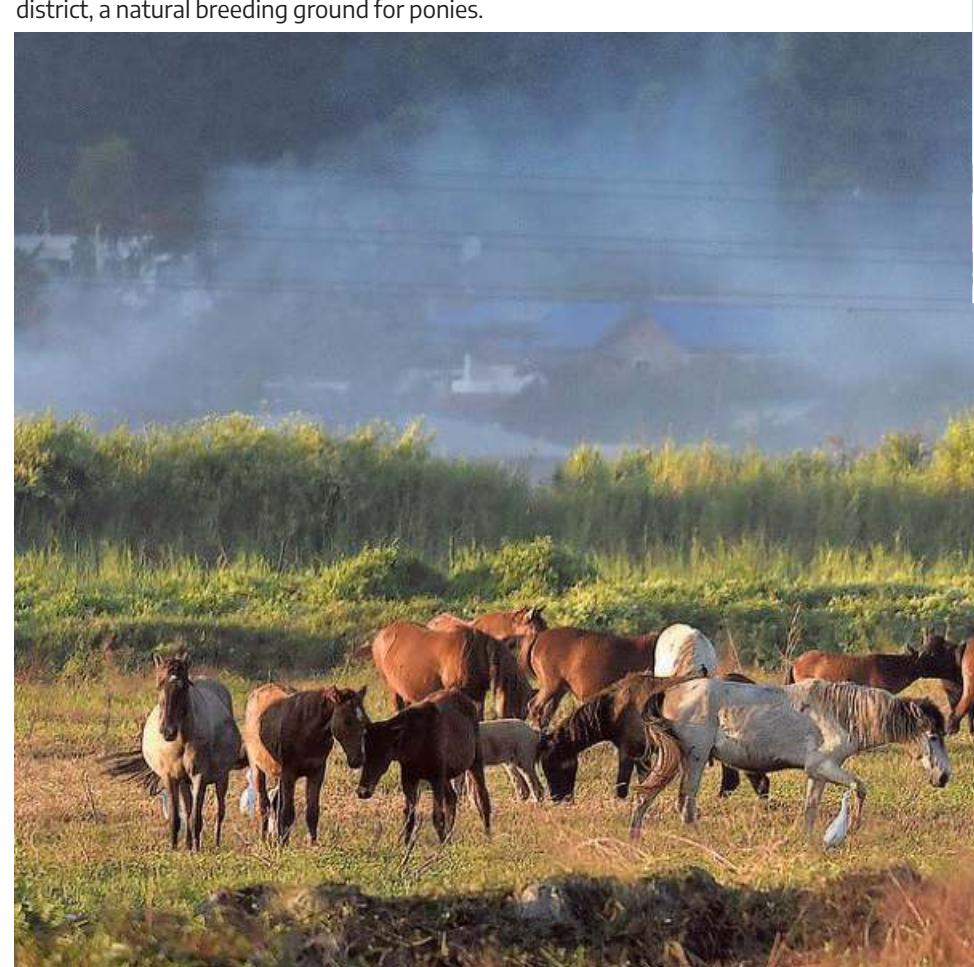
Saddled up Manipuri men and their native ponies get set to play the traditional game of Sagol Kangjei in Imphal.



Horsing around Ponies roam free at Lamphelpat.



Game's on At a polo match in Imphal.



Grazing ground Ponies graze inside the NIT complex at Lamphelpat in Imphal West district, a natural breeding ground for ponies.

Polo's first PONIES

Known for its stamina and speed, the Manipuri pony is one of India's five indigenous horse breeds

Ritu Raj Konwar

Sagol Kangjei, from which the modern game of polo originated, rides on the back of an indigenous breed of horse. The Manipuri pony is now a threatened breed, its numbers slowly decreasing. Rapid urbanisation has left the animal with no grazing ground. Even Waithou in Imphal has lost a once flourishing grazing field.

Considered descendants of the Asian wild horse, Manipuri ponies have been recognised as one of the five indigenous horse breeds of India; the others being Marwari, Kathiawari, Zanskar and Spiti. Smaller than the other breeds, the Manipuri pony is well known for its stamina, speed and ability to survive harsh weather.

These horses once enjoyed special status in Manipuri society, and were used only for sport and rituals. As a conservation measure, the State government now hosts an international polo tournament where all teams have to ride the Manipur pony. A pony sanctuary is also being set up at Heingang to preserve the breed.



Melting pot All players have to play polo only on Manipuri ponies in Imphal.



Fodder Villagers in Imphal walk home with grass to feed their ponies.



Get set A man in traditional gear gets ready for a round of Sagol Kangjei.

60 MINUTES WITH GEORGE SCHALLER

'India can never turn its back on tigers and say they're safe'

Over half the world's remaining tigers are in India — but they need constant, constant monitoring, says the wildlife biologist

- Born in Berlin and moved to the U.S. as a teen
- One of the first, in the 1960s, to publish insights into wild gorillas
- Has written over 15 books on wildlife including African lions and pandas
- Stayed in Kanha National Park in 1963-64 to study tigers

Divya Gandhi

George Schaller, the eminent American wildlife biologist, conservationist and author, has spent a lifetime studying some of the world's most elusive species: mountain gorillas in central Africa, snow leopards in the Himalayas, giant pandas in China, and jaguars in South America. He is senior conservationist at the New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

Schaller, who visited Bengaluru recently, talks of how India's tiger census techniques may not be accurate, that local communities must benefit from tourism in protected areas, and that his hugely diverse range of interests could owe

to his "short attention span". Edited excerpts from an interview:

There has been a lot of jubilation over the rise in tiger numbers in India; but scientists, including from WCS, have said the census methodology was flawed, that the numbers could be unreliable. What are your views?

Local governments have not always used accurate census techniques. And so the figures you've got are very approximate. So when you say they have increased by this much — that's propaganda.

But the point is that given the global situation of tigers, with country after country — Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia — where the tiger's gone, and other places where they're on the decline, the main

country where the tiger has a very good chance of survival is in India. About half the remaining tigers in the world are right here in India, and India has made a major effort to protect its reserves. This hasn't always been successful, like Sariska for example, where all the tigers were poached. That was a valuable lesson.

You can never just turn your back and say, oh, they're safe, or they're increasing. You've got to constantly, constantly monitor what's going on. No state likes to say there are fewer tigers — they always like to say there are more tigers than the last census. And tigers are extremely difficult to census.

Has the focus on 'charismatic' animals like the big cats shifted attention away from other

species that are equally — or more — threatened?

Charismatic is a Greek word that means gift of grace. It's a lovely word. I spent a good part of my life looking at so-called charismatic animals, from gorillas, to tigers, to giant pandas. But if you are a journalist and want to get the public's attention and want to educate them, if you start talking about earthworms you will have a hard time.

But if you write a solid piece about tigers — and that if you protect tigers then you have to protect their prey animals, see what vegetation their prey animals eat — you get a rounded picture by just paying attention to what a charismatic animal does to the rest of the community. And if you

remove it, you suddenly have problems. People complain about wild pigs going into the fields. If you had enough predators, they would keep the pigs down. And also they're beautiful. I mean, if you're talking about conservation, you're also talking from your heart, not just your mind because you respond to the beauty of an animal. You can't sit next to a tiger without being impressed by its power and beauty.

You have said that you 'couldn't possibly imagine doing good work without being emotionally involved' with your subjects. You study them but also champion their cause. How easy is it for a scientist to make time for both research and advocacy? If you call yourself a scientist you

want to collect solid information. Then you have two things you must do. You must give the information to the government and push the government to improve things. You also have moral responsibility to tell the public what you're doing, what you found out and how they can help. Yes, you're emotionally involved, and it's a moral responsibility to protect wildlife and their habitat.

Conservation in India, especially in tiger reserves, often comes at the expense of tribal communities — they are routinely evicted from protected areas or barred from collecting forest produce, for instance. Must India move away from concepts such as 'inviolate' people-free forest areas that are derived from American practices?

In India, you have to develop an Indian system that works with communities. You cannot protect an area that has communities living inside. You have to have areas that

No state likes to say there are fewer tigers — they always like to say there are more than the last census. And tigers are extremely difficult to census

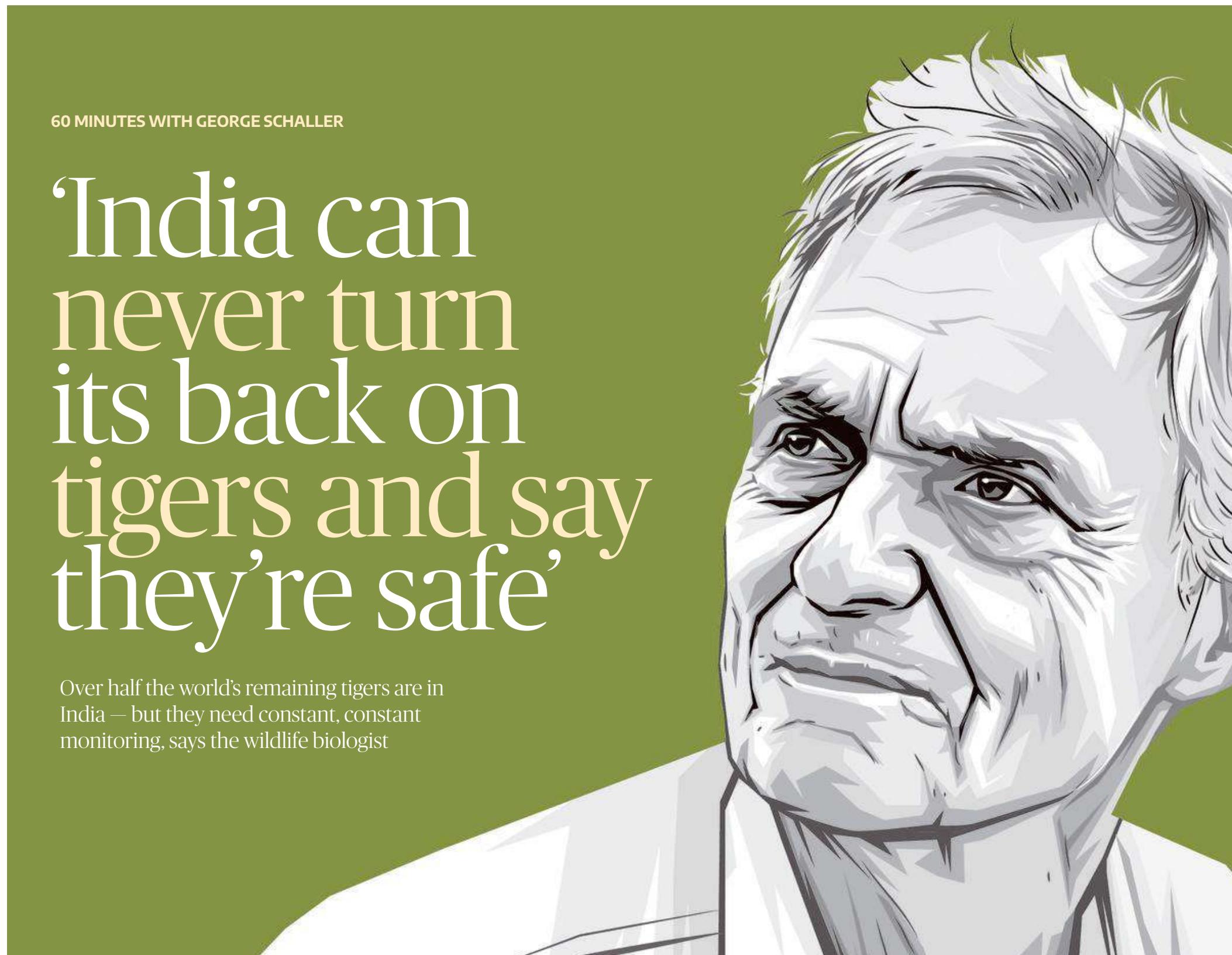
are strictly protected for all species that are there. Communities in the area have to benefit, particularly through monetary benefits. If it's a national park, most of the entry fee should be devoted to communities living in the region, to build medical facilities, build schools, benefit them by giving them jobs. It can be done. But I've noticed in most reserves in India that money doesn't go to the communities.

You have worked on giant pandas and mountain gorillas, the Tibetan antelope and Bengal tigers; how do you choose your hugely diverse subjects that are spread so vastly across the globe?

I have a short attention span. My family and I lived for over three years in the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania to study lions and other predators and their prey, and it's the most lovely place in the world to study wildlife.

And so I decided, well, I must look at the Himalayas, and my wife and kids were not happy that we were leaving. There are so many wonderful places in the world that we can't let get destroyed; so if I can shout a little bit about some beautiful spots and somebody listens, that is a tremendous pleasure.

Look at the changes that have happened in India in the past half century. There were very few people really interested in nature when I started here, and look at all the people that are really concerned about nature. There's a real important core here in India that is trying to help nature.



Beijing in the time of corona

As the Year of the Rat dawns, empty streets, shuttered shops and masked residents mark the once bustling metropolis

Shruti Bajpai

Winter in Beijing is often marked by a kaleidoscope of stark colours: a monotonous grey that swaddles bare trees dotted by fragile bird nests; a shroud of white that covers the city on the rare days of

snow; the deep olive-green winter uniform of guards who stand motionless outside government buildings; and the indelible red of the flag that flutters atop buildings.

This winter, yet another colour has enveloped the normally bustling capital of the middle kingdom — the pallor of emptiness.

As cases of the Wuhan novel coro-

navirus rise by the day, Beijing has fallen silent. And empty. Its 23 million people have either left the city or are in a self-imposed quarantine in their homes.

I live in Beijing, in a stereotypical expat bubble — a sterile cocoon of tennis courts, dog parks, Pilates afternoons and coffee mornings. Ever since news of the virus broke, the

Quarantine A walker on a deserted business street in Beijing, its red New Year lanterns looking forlorn. • AFP

complex has been emptying out rapidly. Some residents have escaped to their home countries; yet others, already out for the spring festival holiday (known as Chinese New Year to the outside world) that coincided with the start of the epidemic, have decided not to return for the foreseeable future. A government order closing all schools has made the exodus easier. Some embassies and companies have even ordered their loved ones back home to leave at the earliest opportunity. But we are here. This is now our home.

The decision to flee Beijing seems to be led more by a palpable sense of paranoia than plain common sense. There is a relentless, often unforgiving frenzy of social media posts that is spreading faster than the virus itself. For those of us who have chosen to stay, there is intense pressure from loved ones back home to leave at the earliest opportunity. But we are here. This is now our home.

Eye witness

Eager to bear witness to these extraordinary times facing the city, I decided to break my self-imposed house arrest and take a walk along the city centre. It was a cold Saturday afternoon, with clear skies, a perfect day for being outdoors. Yet, alley after alley looked deserted; swathes of concrete stretched endlessly on empty main streets with only a trickle of traffic, as I struggled to make peace with my new accessory, the ubiquitous surgical mask, a requirement for all outdoor travel in the city and the most visible symbol of the epidemic in China.

The late afternoon sun cast long eerie shadows of me and a few masked passers-by, all of us trying to

make sense of this new normal in our lives, hopefully a temporary one. We were the veritable extras, walking our measured walk, on the sets of a sci-fi thriller, a cross between the Hollywood hits *Contagion* and *The Quiet Place*.

Not far away lay the expansive Tiananmen Square, exaggerated by its emptiness. Chairman Mao's unsmiling portrait loomed large; he was the only unmasked face in the entire square. A few tourists walked about, eager to tick Tiananmen Square off their travel itinerary, hurriedly posing for masked selfies as bemused guards looked on.

Everyone's gone

At the far corner, Qianmen Street, usually a delightful pedestrian stretch, looked almost abandoned, with empty stalls and shuttered shops plastered with government notices about the temporary closure of public places. Red lanterns — decorations from the abruptly cancelled spring festival celebrations in the city — swayed listlessly from lamp-posts. The Year of the Rat seemed all but forgotten in the wake of the epidemic.

I sipped my watery but much welcome coffee at an empty McDonald's café, one of the few still open in the area, absorbing the starkness around me. A young couple sat at the other end, unmasked and abashed in their togetherness, almost thankful for the space this populous city had suddenly given them. A few public buses drove past,

I struggled to make peace with my new accessory, the ubiquitous surgical mask, a requirement for all outdoor travel in the city and the most visible symbol of the epidemic in China

carrying only a smattering of passengers who looked out vacantly from behind their masks. Public transport is active, but the passengers have stayed away. On my way back home, I passed by one of the largest general hospitals in the city. A fleet of ambulances was parked outside, on red alert, ready to attend to any call for medical help. A few nurses hung around by the sidewalk, sharing a light moment, eager to escape the cacophony of their work and soak in the silence on the streets.

Around the city, bright red banners previously carrying nationalistic messages were now replaced by extortions to people to maintain personal hygiene. "Wash your hands frequently," reminded one, "Always wear a mask," admonished another. A lone *kuaidi* (Chinese for express delivery) van stood parked outside my compound, its driver standing alongside, as if on a never-ending smoke break. China's *kuaidi* population, the backbone of its vibrant e-commerce industry, suddenly finds itself left with very little work.

Yet, in the midst of all the hysteria — the daily updates on fatalities and recoveries, the unabated series of cancelled flights and closing of borders — there is a strange sense of connectedness in the city, something I have never felt before.

The masked grocer down the road smiles from her eyes as she deftly bags the things I have bought; the security guard at the gate is happy to greet me, one of the few still left in the ghost compound he protects. Even strangers I meet on the street hold their gaze just a bit longer. It is as if our eyes are searching for some form of slight camaraderie even though our brains warn us to steer clear of human contact.

The Beijing-based writer is a cultural commentator.