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RTI pleas for information on CBI Director Alok Verma's removal denied
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478 Rohingya arrested along India-Bangladesh border since 2015
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Kuldeep, Jadeja put India in a strong position in Sydney Test
page 17

NEARBY

ED seeks warrant against Robert Vadra's PA

NEW DELHI
 The Enforcement Directorate on Saturday moved a Delhi court seeking issuance of an open-ended non-bailable warrant against Manoj Arora, personal assistant to Robert Vadra, in a money laundering case.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 11

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In a first, Mallya declared a 'fugitive economic offender'

Special court's ruling comes on ED's plea under Fugitive Economic Offenders Act

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

Absconding liquor baron Vijay Mallya on Saturday became the first person to be declared a fugitive economic offender by the special court hearing cases under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (FOEA).

The FOEA, which became a law on July 31, 2018, allows for declaring a person as an offender after an arrest warrant has been issued against the individual and the value of offences exceeds ₹100 crore.

Another condition for declaring a person a fugitive

Dubious distinction

Vijay Mallya became the first Indian to be declared a fugitive economic offender

- The FOEA, which came into effect on July 25, 2018, allows for declaring a person an offender after an arrest warrant is issued and the value of offences exceeds ₹100 crore
- Another condition

economic offender (FEO) is when the individual refuses to return to the country to face prosecution.

As per the new law, a special FOEA court can order the confiscation of a FEO's properties, including those



which are benami, and the proceeds of crime in and outside India. Once properties are confiscated, the Union government has the right over them, and it can dispose them after 90 days.

Judge M.S. Azmi said the court was partly allowing the Enforcement Directorate's application, through its counsel Hiten Venegavkar on June 22, 2018, which sought to declare Mr. Mallya a fugitive economic offender and confiscate all his properties, estimated to be worth ₹12,500 crore.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

As cattle market collapses, stray cows raid U.P. farms

With no money to feed them, farmers abandon animals

OMAR RASHID
MOHANLAGANJ

It could take Vijay Rawat a week's labour to build a temporary fence of Babool tree branches and twigs around his 2.5 bigha field. The thorny plants make the process arduous; he has already suffered cuts and scratches. But if he wants to protect his valuable crops, there is little choice. He cannot afford a wire fence.

For farmers like him, stray cattle are turning into a source of huge loss: the animals raid fields in large numbers, trample on the crops and devour whatever they find. Hoof marks in his field indicate that some damage has already been done.



New menace: It is common to find herds of bulls and cows grazing in farmlands or orchards. ▶ OMAR RASHID

Yogi Adityanath government for the menace.

"Make some arrangement soon or I will not vote for the BJP in 2019," said Mr. Rawat, who voted for the party in 2014 and 2017.

SUNDAY SPECIAL

Farmers, cutting across political lines and castes, claim the menace of stray cattle got worse after March 2017 when Yogi Adityanath came to power, owing to the fear of vigilante groups (who disrupt cattle transport), the collapse of local cattle markets and fairs, a fall in the value of non-milking cows and bullocks and the campaign against illegal

slaughterhouses.

Last week, angry villagers in Firozabad and Aligarh even locked up stray cattle in government schools to draw the State's attention.

Both men and women have been forced to defend their fields with lathis or stay up on machans for vigil at night.

Rohit Rawat, who lives in Mohanlalganj's Hulas Khera, known for its archaeological site, confesses that his family released a bullock in the open last year owing to financial burden. "We could not feed it, what else," he says.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Cong., NCP reach deal on Maharashtra seats

Consensus on 40 Lok Sabha constituencies; final decision likely in meeting today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) are likely to conclude the seat-sharing talks for the Lok Sabha election on Sunday.

Senior leaders said a consensus had been reached on 40 seats and a final meeting would take place at the residence of Congress

leader Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil later in the evening.

"We are hoping to resolve the issue by tomorrow or at the earliest and are also talking with other splinter groups to join the grand alliance," said former Maharashtra Finance Minister and senior NCP leader Jayant Patil.

Sources said NCP chief Sharad Pawar and Congress

president Rahul Gandhi had asked their State units to resolve disagreements over the remaining seats of Ahmednagar, Pune, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Nandurbar, Yavatmal, Aurangabad, Raigarh and Kolhapur.

The NCP on Saturday held a party meeting to resolve the issues regarding seat sharing and candidate list.

The party discussed demands from the Congress for the Ahmednagar seat, where Mr. Vikhe Patil's son is keen to contest. The Congress has additionally expressed interest in the Pune and the Raigarh seats while the NCP is keen on the remaining eight seats, party leaders said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

SP, BSP agree on tie-up 'in principle'

Will not field candidates from Amethi, Rae Bareli: SP leader



On course: SP leader Akhilesh Yadav and BSP chief Mayawati held a series of meetings to finalise the alliance. ▶ FILE PHOTO

said. The two leaders also met on Friday, he said. "Talks are going on to accommodate some smaller parties in the alliance."

He admitted that the Rashtriya Lok Dal, which has a presence in western U.P., is among these parties.

Asked about the possible inclusion of the Congress in the U.P. alliance, Mr. Chaudhary said, "This will be decided by Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati." But he added the

alliance would not field candidates in Amethi and Rae Bareli, leaving the two Lok Sabha constituencies for Congress president Rahul Gandhi and United Progress Alliance chief Sonia Gandhi.

U.P. BJP spokesperson Herro Bajpai told presspersons here, "This is an opportunistic alliance and it is completely anti-people. The BJP will register massive wins in U.P. in the 2019 Lok Sabha election."

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 10

U.P. mining scam: CBI may probe Akhilesh role

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The CBI on Saturday said the role of the mining Ministers in Uttar Pradesh between 2012 and 2016, which includes Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, may be probed in connection with a fresh case of alleged illegal mining of minor minerals registered on the direction of the Allahabad High Court.

Mr. Yadav, then Chief Minister, held the additional portfolio of Mining between 2012 and 2013.

The CBI has lodged the FIR against 2008-batch IAS official and then Hamirpur District Magistrate B. Chandrakanta and 10 other individuals, besides unknown officials and persons.

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JATIN ANAND
DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Suspense over whether the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party would come together for an alliance against the BJP continued a day after high-profile resignations – of Ajay Maken as the Delhi Congress chief and H.S. Phoolka from AAP – triggered speculation about the proposed association.

While sources in the AAP said there was "still a 50-50 chance" that the alliance would go through, some Congress Working Committee members said they "did not trust" AAP leaders communicating with them about it after the departure of Ashish Khetan, a close aide of Delhi Chief Minister and AAP national convener

Arvind Kejriwal.

"The party [Congress] is not even considering [an alliance with] the AAP; a call will be taken by the national leadership after finding Mr. Maken's replacement," a Congress source said.

Mr. Khetan, when contacted by *The Hindu*, declined to comment on the issue saying he was out of electoral politics for good.

Birthday wishes

On Saturday, Mr. Kejriwal took to Twitter to extend birthday wishes to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Ms. Banerjee, according to Congress sources, had broached the topic of a like-minded alliance between the two sides for the Lok Sabha polls in Delhi.

Sources in the AAP said

they were certain that the Congress would demand three out of four crucial parliamentary seats in the Capital – East, South, Chandni Chowk and New Delhi – if an alliance was agreed upon.

"As far as the AAP is concerned, East and Chandni Chowk have the potential to snowball into an issue in addition to the South Delhi seat. In either case, the party will risk alienating its own leaders in Punjab if any sort of association with the Congress materialises," an AAP source said.

Punjab opposition

While the AAP's national council and national executive meetings held last month did not rule out the possibility of the party joining an alliance, the Punjab

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

IN BRIEF



Phoolka meets BJP leader on his birthday

NEW DELHI

Days after resigning from Aam Aadmi Party, a prominent lawyer and Punjab MLA H.S. Phoolka met senior Bharatiya Janata Party BJP leader and Union Minister Vijay Goel on the occasion of his birthday here on Saturday. Mr. Goel, terming Mr. Phoolka a "good friend" and lauding his legal battle for the victims of 1984 riots said: "He quit AAP recently. Better late than never." STAFF REPORTER

Water supply to be affected today

NEW DELHI

Water supply in several parts of the Capital will be affected on January 6 [Sunday] as the supply from the Chandrawal plant will be shut between 12 noon and 6 p.m., the authorities said. "Areas include Civil Lines, Kamla Nagar, Karol Bagh, Model Basti, Sadar Bazar, Patel Nagar, New Rajinder Nagar, parts of Cantonment areas and south Delhi, among others," Delhi Jal Board stated. STAFF REPORTER

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	407	Gurugram	404
Ghaziabad	417	Faridabad	415
Noida	403	Greater Noida	414
Good 0-50	Satisfactory 51-100	Moderate 101-200	
Poor 201-300	Very poor 301-400	Severe >401	

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY
AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS | SOURCE: CPCB

IIT Delhi alumnus pledges ₹10 crore

STAFF REPORTER

Indian Institute of Delhi alumnus Amarjit Bakshi, who is also the founder and managing director of Central Park and Continental Engines, has pledged support of ₹10 crore to IIT Delhi, the institute said on Saturday.

Mr. Bakshi will be paying the amount to the institute on a ₹1 crore per year basis.

"His support is significant as it will go a long way in augmenting IIT Delhi's endowment fund, which the institute envisages to put in place to pursue its vision and mission that now contains reiteration of goals such as internationalisation, interdisciplinary activities and industrial connect under the status of Institute of Eminence," the institute said. Professor V. Ramgopal Rao, Director IIT Delhi said: "As an Institute of Eminence, we have very high aspirations and alumni contributions will go a long way in achieving these objectives. Mr. Bakshi is a pioneer in his field and I am sure that this contribution will motivate many of our alumni to come forward and give back to the institute."

'A quilt and a cot are all that's left of my home'

Says 38-year-old survivor of Moti Nagar factory collapse; kin of deceased told to come again today as post-mortem is delayed

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Rakesh, one of the survivors of the factory collapse in west Delhi's Moti Nagar, was discharged from Acharya Shree Bhikshu Hospital on Friday late though he believed he needed treatment for his injured back.

Soon after this, the 38-year-old headed straight to Moti Nagar police station to seek permission to enter his home in the godown of the factory which collapsed. He returned home hoping to salvage some of his belongings, but all he could find were his quilt and cot. The rest had been reduced to rubble.

"I went to the godown and saw everything had broken down. There were only pieces of bricks and some clothes. I found my quilt and cot and came out. There was nothing left," the victim said.

The two-storey ceiling fan factory collapsed following a furnace blast in Moti Nagar on Thursday at 8.45 p.m.

He is not a factory worker but used to work and reside in the adjacent scrap godown where the debris from the factory fell. The incident claimed the lives of his two uncles — Munger and Ramphal.

Belonging from Uttar Pradesh's Sultanpur, he felt homeless after stepping out of the hospital. "I have been staying at the godown for



Remains of the factory at Sudarshan Park in Moti Nagar on Thursday. (below) Rakesh, a survivor who lived in the godown of the factory. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR AND HEMANI BHANDARI



more than 10 years, he said.

His relatives told him that "a lot of policemen have been deployed near the factory and they are not letting anyone in".

He then met an investigator who told him to call in case he is denied entry.

On trying to enter the street, he was stopped by officers on duty but a call helped him through.

Last rites

An acquaintance from the village has given shelter to Rakesh and his relatives till they leave for the village with the bodies for the last rites. A temporary arrangement for

10-odd people has been made in a small room on the first floor in the next street.

Rakesh who did not get time to nurse his injuries, on Saturday afternoon, was trying to arrange an ambulance to take the bodies to the village.

However, to their disappointment, the post-mortem was not conducted on Saturday and they were told to wait another day.

"Doctors left at 1 p.m. on Saturday. We were waiting for hours for the post-mortem. They are saying that they will conduct the post-mortem on January 6 [Sunday]," he said.

Another family waited for the same on Saturday and regretted "coming late".

"I lost my nephew Sanjay to this incident. He had joined only two months ago and had come to Delhi for the first time. They have asked us to come again on January 6 [Sunday]," said the victim's uncle, standing outside Moti Nagar police station.

Fire at the same factory

A worker at the ceiling fan factory, on the condition of anonymity, said a fire broke out in the factory a little over a year ago due to leakage in LPG cylinder.

One Upender sustained severe burn injury in the incident. However, the owner paid for his treatment and the matter was never reported to the police.

Three locals acknowledged the incident. When asked about the same, police sources denied knowledge of any such incident and said it has not come up in their investigation.

Owner's 'partner' held; not named in papers

Role of building owner being ascertained

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The police on Saturday arrested the factory owner's partner in connection to the collapse where seven people were killed in west Delhi's Moti Nagar.

In the two-day-old incident, eight persons were injured, they said, adding that the factory collapse was triggered by furnace blast.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Monika Bhardwaj said owner Ankit Gupta's partner and relative Sumit Gupta has been arrested.

There are no documents where he is named a partner in the factory but workers gave their statements wherein they stated that he was taking care of the work on the ground floor and also used to give salaries to the employees.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

poration and Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation for a response asking the orders given, if any, in connection with the factory.

Sources said that they are yet to receive a response.

The role of building's owner Anil Tyagi in connection with the condition of the building is being ascertained.

Tyagi had rented the floors to Ankit, sources added.

Case registered

The police had registered a case under Sections 304A (causing death due to negligence), 287 (negligent conduct with respect to machinery), 288 (negligent conduct with respect to pulling down or repairing buildings) and 337 (causing hurt by Act endangering life) of the Indian Penal Code.

BJP leader demands judicial inquiry

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly Vijender Gupta on Saturday demanded the ordering of a judicial inquiry by the Lieutenant-Governor into the factory collapse accident.

He said the accident which claimed seven lives was one of several of its kind recurring in the Capital for which the administration was answerable and needed to be held accountable even as he demanded that the Delhi government pay "adequate compensation" to the next of kin of those who lost their lives and provide free quality treatment facilities to the injured.

"Such incidents recur time and again in different parts of Delhi but the administration keeps waiting for the next accident without taking any lessons...It has also come to the fore that this factory was being run violating all norms and had also been served a notice for sealing," Mr. Gupta said.

Demanding a special committee be constituted to survey and identify areas with similar issues in the city, the leader said preventive measures needed to be taken immediately to avoid similar tragedies in future.

"This is not the first such disaster...if administration had taken some action by taking lessons in a similar factory disaster in Moti Nagar in April 2015, the present disaster could well have been avoided. If the administration still takes no action in the present case, the possibility repetition of such incidents cannot be ruled out," he added.

Sisodia welcomes no-detention policy, calls for systemic change

Speaking at an NCERT event, he said curriculum needs changes

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality saw a marginal improvement on Saturday with the pollution level coming down to the "very poor" category briefly after being "severe" due to unfavourable meteorological conditions.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board data, the overall air quality index (AQI) in the city was 397 but for a brief time, it had reached 417.

Twenty-four areas in Delhi recorded "severe" air quality while Gurugram recorded "very poor" air quality, it said.

The overall PM2.5 level in Delhi was recorded at 275 while the PM10 level was at 429, the CPCB said.

In the NCR, Ghaziabad and Noida recorded "severe" air quality while Gurugram recorded "very poor" air quality, it said.

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Twenty-four areas in Delhi recorded "severe" air quality while Gurugram recorded "very poor" air quality, it said.

Learning outcomes

Arguing that the government sets learning outcomes for the curriculum taught in

schools like chapters or textbooks being introduced but, "unfortunately these learning outcomes...were based on examination outcomes."

The Minister added that the teacher does not keep learning outcomes and rather the mind becomes "captured" of the questions asked in last five years in the subject".

There is a need to change the approach towards exams and teaching techniques, he said.

"We also need to revisit our NCERT textbooks. Everything changes with time. Today, the challenges are not the same, which were faced two decades ago. Then why not redesign and change our curriculum according to the need of the time. We must make changes to our NCERT books so that our future, our children are more equipped to excel in the world," he said.

Intellectually challenged persons have right to live with dignity, says SC judge

ICMR research shows that in Delhi 8%-10% of population suffers from illnesses like depression, anxiety and schizophrenia among others, with only 10-20% getting treatment

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge Justice A. K. Sikri on Saturday raised concerns about the rights of persons with mental illness citing an incident of an asylum in Uttar Pradesh where many intellectually challenged persons were chained.

He said: "This is happening in 2019 where we are talking about legal rights of the intellectually challenged persons. It is no more a health issue now....it is an issue of their human rights as they are not getting a suitable environment which they need. They have the right to live like any other person."

They are also citizens of

this country and have the right to live with dignity, he said, adding that their rights to live have been violated by the authorities itself.

National seminar
Justice Sikri was speaking at the two-day national seminar on "homeless and other unmet persons with mental illness", which began in the Capital.

Speaking at the seminar, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said: "If a person is studying in top institutes like IIT, then the student should not forget to contribute to the society. Now, the time has come when we need to give back at least something to the society."



(From left) Former SC judge Justice Madan B. Lokur, SC judge Justice A.K. Sikri, and Health Minister Satyendar Jain at a seminar in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

The seminar is being organised by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLNA),

Indian Psychiatric Society (IPS), Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Science (IHBSA) and the State Mental Health

Authority (SMHA).

Understanding that there is a scarcity of resources for mental health rehabilitation especially in government

settings, the stakeholders stressed the need for collaborative care provided by different sectors in this area. Data shared here showed that a few homeless people are lucky to be rescued and get timely mental health treatment.

"The research conducted by Indian Council of Medical Research on urban mental health across three cities, including Delhi [2004 and 2009], states that approximately 8%-10% of the population in Delhi suffers from psychiatric illnesses like depression, anxiety and schizophrenia, among others with only 10-20% getting treatment. This gap in health interventions is more striking for those with

severe mental illnesses who are homeless or living with families, considering the illness-related difficulties in help-seeking," noted a release by the group.

Outreach services
Judicial orders in a few prominent cases have provided outreach services but this has not reached deeper levels to benefit the underprivileged groups, the experts said, adding that the implementation is incomplete and insufficient largely and also non-existing in some parts. "The conservative estimate states that at least 5,000 women and children are homeless in Delhi [NCW Study, 2004]. Apart from homeless people

on streets, based on experience from clinical data of hospital and community outreach clinics, it has been found that there are several thousand people who are intellectually challenged, living in families who are brought to a hospital for treatment," added the release. The seminar is aimed at assessing the magnitude and nature of the problem and document all possible initiatives that can be taken in this area with direct or indirect impact.

It also looks at the identification of good practice (replicable) models of service delivery in this area.

(With PTI inputs)

AN-NDNE

IN BRIEF



Restaurant owner shot dead by masked men

NEW DELHI
A 28-year-old restaurant owner identified as Anil Maan alias Bantu was shot dead by masked men in Rohini's Sector 17 on Friday evening outside the restaurant. The victim was with his driver and two other persons in his car, when four men in another vehicle, intercepted him and fired multiple rounds. The others managed to escape. The police have registered a case and begun probe.

JNUSU calls two-day strike against varsity

Students' body claims JNU spent ₹13 lakh to host spiritual gurus

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) on Saturday called for a two-day strike on January 8 and January 9, to protest against the university administration's "financial corruption".

The JNUSU alleged that while the university denied registration to a visually challenged student who was failed due to lack of facilities due to paucity of funds faced by the varsity, the JNU administration had spent ₹13 lakh to host spiritual gurus Sri Ravi Shankar and Sadhguru.

"The JNU V-C in massive corruption has been diverting money meant for seminars and academic conferences for construction of statues on campus and renovation of homes of senior officers

JNUSU STATEMENT
The JNU V-C in massive corruption has been diverting money meant for seminars and academic conferences for construction of statues on campus and renovation of homes of senior officers



vernment towards destruction of public education and universities through fund cuts, seat cuts, decimation of reservation and so on," the JNUSU added.

Further, the students' body alleged that the administration has administered an 80% fund cut to library, has not disbursed the merit-cum-means scholarships to undergraduate and post-graduate students, while increasing the expenditure on security by 89%.

"JNUSU sees this extravaganza as part of a larger policy of the Narendra Modi go-

vernment towards destruction of public education and universities through fund cuts, seat cuts, decimation of reservation and so on," the JNUSU added.

Stating that the strike called is in solidarity with the all-India general strike called by trade unions, the students' body said, "JNUSU condemns this massive muzzling of tax payers' money by the JNU administration and the government".

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Anto Alphonse said the victim has been identified as Ikra, resident of Dwarka's Adarsh Apartments in Sector 16 and the accused has been identified as Ankit (23).

The police said that Ikra came out of the colony gate and was walking towards the road when the e-rickshaw was coming.

"The driver applied brakes and the rickshaw overturned causing fatal injuries to the minor," said a senior police officer.

Case registered
The police have registered a case on charges of rash and negligent driving and causing death due to negligence and arrested the accused.

The vehicle has also been impounded, said the senior officer.

Minor killed in accident

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A three-year-old girl was killed when she came under an e-rickshaw in Dwarka North on Saturday afternoon. The police have arrested the accused driver.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Anto Alphonse said the victim has been identified as Ikra, resident of Dwarka's Adarsh Apartments in Sector 16 and the accused has been identified as Ankit (23).

The police said that Ikra came out of the colony gate

and was walking towards the road when the e-rickshaw was coming.

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Wanted extortionist arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A 46-year-old extortionist, who was wanted in numerous cases, at pan-India level was arrested by the sleuths of Special Cell of Delhi Police under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA).

The Delhi police declared a bounty of ₹50,000 on him. On Friday, the police arrested Surender Singh Sodhi alias Shammi of Shakarpur. One pistol and five live cartridges were recovered from his possession, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Pramod Kushwah said. Shammi is infamous not only in Delhi but also in Mumbai and Haryana as he has several cases against him.

Brand connect initiative

Acharyas for government schools

Acharyas for a Better Community started by Harsha and Naveen is a Bangalore-based NGO that gathers volunteers to teach students in government schools as well as help with their infrastructural requirements.

It was informally started in 2015 with 10 to 15 people and registered as a trust in 2017. It

to participate in sports and painting competitions. Some of the initiatives undertaken by these volunteers are for infrastructure requirements, like setting up of libraries, computer labs and painting the classrooms.

Rather than having a uniform model that works across all schools, they work accord-

ing to the specific needs of each school, which are identified along with the school's principal and teachers.

"Our volunteers share a passion for teaching, and passion for teaching, and curriculum developers. Allocating slots according to these external factors is one of our major challenges," says Vamsi.

ABC continues to change the way government schools function in Bangalore and encourage more volunteers to participate in this change.

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als, homemakers, students, and curriculum developers. Allocating slots according to these external factors is one of our major challenges," says Vamsi.

The NGO not only participates in the teaching process of schools but also focuses on other extracurricular activities. A programme called 'Run to Sun' is conducted by ABC to encourage students

are from diverse backgrounds, including IT professionals, students, and curriculum developers. Allocating slots according to these external factors is one of our major challenges," says Vamsi.

ABC continues to change the way government schools function in Bangalore and encourage more volunteers to participate in this change.

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Consumer panel rejects plea against bank

Says it is not liable to refund ₹5 lakh after cheque of same amount got lost in transit

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The State Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum here has dismissed an appeal seeking directions to Canara Bank to refund ₹5 lakh, after a cheque deposited with the bank was not encashed.

While stating that the bank was deficient in services as it failed to track the cheque, the consumer panel dismissed the complai-

rant's contention that the bank was not liable to refund the amount.

the State consumer panel said.

A district consumer forum had earlier held that the bank was deficient in services as it failed to inform the complainant that the cheque had been lost in transit.

Funds not received
"The [bank] was under obligation to pay the amount of cheque only after receiving the fund from the bank of the borrower. In the present case, no such funds were received. In these circumstances, [Canara Bank] cannot be directed to pay the cheque amount to the complainant along with interest as has been prayed,"

appeal filed by the complainant that sought refund of the cheque amount, owing to "financial losses".

"There is also no evidence led by the complainant to show that there was loss caused to him as much as that the cheque had been misused or encashed. In these circumstances, bank cannot be held liable to pay the cheque amount to the complainant," the consumer panel said.

Celebratory firing: father arrested for son's death

Yasin emerged as the prime suspect in several videos that were obtained

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Police (North-East) Atul Thakur said that the accused has been identified as Yasin Malik, father of the victim Rihan Malik.

Weapon recovered
The police said that during investigation in which several videos were obtained and

scanned, Yasin emerged as the prime suspect.

"Initially, he tried to mislead the police but during sustained interrogation, he informed that he took the weapon from one Ravi Kashyap and fired in celebration which hit his son. He then gave the weapon back to Ra-

vi," Mr. Thakur said adding that Ravi has also been arrested and the weapon of offence has been recovered.

Rihan Malik, a Class III student of a private school, was attending a birthday party-cum-New Year celebrations when the incident happened.

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Plea against soft drink firm rejected

Consumer panel cites lack of evidence

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A complaint seeking compensation of ₹4 lakh from Hindustan Coca-Cola has been dismissed by a District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum here after the complainant failed to prove allegations of a packet of tobacco being found in a coca cola bottle.

Dismissing the complaint on grounds that evidence to prove the allegations was not provided, the consumer panel said, "Whenever the complainant was directed to produce the bottle, he did not appear [before the forum]. The complainant has failed to prove his case. Hence, the complaint is dismissed."

The directions came after a city resident moved the consumer forum stating that a 200 ml bottle of Coca-Cola bought by him had a tobacco packet inside the bottle.

Sentiments hurt

"It is submitted that the complainant being Sikh by religion, had never touched any cigarette or pouch of tobacco and thus, it had hurt

his religious sentiments. It is further submitted that the complainant saw a pouch of Rajdarbar inside the bottle and asked the shopkeeper to explain the deficiency, but he had no reply," the consumer forum observed while noting the allegations made.

It was also alleged that a company representative who inspected the bottle had informed the complainant that "such incidents are very common and the company is not bothered at all".

However, the company challenged the presence of a pouch inside any Coca-Cola bottle and contended that the complainant had never produced the said bottle for inspection before the consumer panel nor did he get it tested through a registered government laboratory.

Noting that the complainant failed to produce the said bottle before the panel despite multiple dates given, the Bench dismissed the complaint stating, "We are of the view that the complainant has failed to prove the allegation made in the complaint."

Kumbh: 24 Ghaziabad units to remain shut

To keep the Ganga clean during fair

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GAZIABAD

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06/01/2019	BIO-DATA/Personality/ DAF overview	6:00 PM	K. D. Sir (Director Nirman IAS)
07/01/2019	Future Foreign Policy Discourse of India	11:30 AM	C. Uday Bhaskar Sir (Noted Defence Analyst)
09/01/2019	Socio- Political Burning Issues	5:30 PM	Shri Anand Pradhan Sir (IIMC)
11/01/2019	How to tackle hypothetical / situational questions	6:00 PM	Vijay Sir (Ex. IAS Allied)
12/01/2019	Police Reforms & Other Issues Related to Policing	6:00 PM	Shri Vikram Singh Sir (Ex. DGP UP, V.C. Noida International University)
13/01/2019	International and Economic Issues	6:00 PM	Dr. Rahees Singh Sir (Expert External & Economic Policy & MORE)

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Zeliang slams State govt. over grant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DIMAPUR

The Opposition Naga People's Front on Saturday questioned the ruling Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party-led People's Democratic Alliance government as to why it was delaying the release of ₹185.09 crore grant-in-aid to the Rural Development Department despite being cleared by the State Finance Department.

The Finance Department had released ₹185.09 crore to the Rural Development Department the same month, Leader of Opposition, T.R. Zeliang said at a press meet here.

The fund was supposed to be given to the village development boards under the Rural Development Department, Mr. Zeliang said.

Mr. Zeliang also claimed that the Government of India had sanctioned ₹185.09 crore as additional grant for the State on November 8, 2017, when he was the Chief Minister.

Women safety: PM raps Patnaik

Says Odisha lags behind other States in health, safety of girls and women

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BARIPADA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Saturday launched a scathing attack on the Naveen Patnaik government alleging the State of having poor record pertaining to women safety.

He urged the government to reinvestigate an alleged seven-year-old gang rape case, in which the accused were exonerated recently. "Odisha should avail benefits of programmes being executed by the Centre. It is sad that the State government is not serious about safety of girls and women. Despite being in power for two de-



cades, the Patnaik government has lagged behind others in health, safety and employment for girls and women," Mr. Modi said at a public meeting here.

"The Centre has made provisions up to capital punishment for those who perpetrate violence against our

daughters. However, there is a question mark when it comes to safety of daughters in Odisha," he charged.

"The State government has not been able to give justice to the girl who had faced violence seven to eight years ago in Puri. I urge the government to reinvestigate the case to send a strong message to people who carry out violence against girls and women," Mr. Modi said.

Women cadres of both the BJP and the Congress have been carrying out demonstrations against the State Agriculture Minister Pradeep Matharathy for his reported statement supporting

the acquittal of the two accused in the said rape case.

"One of the brightest examples of changing intention and policy is Mission Indradhanush. It had been going on for decades. Till 2014, the immunisation coverage had not touched even 60%. It would have taken a few more decades if the programme was executed with the same pace. Over 2.75 crore children and 85 lakh pregnant women were immunised in India. Odisha has only five lakh children and 1.5 lakh women among them," the Prime Minister said.

(See also Page 10)

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Jagat Singh is BSP's candidate in Alwar

Election was countermanded after death of BSP candidate

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR



Jagat Singh • FILE PHOTO

Former External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh's son Jagat Singh will contest as the Bahujan Samaj Party candidate from Ramgarh in Rajasthan's Alwar district in the State Assembly election to be held on January 28. The election was earlier countermanded after the death of the then BSP candidate Laxman Singh.

Following the postponement of election in Ramgarh, polling was held in 199 Assembly constituencies in the State on December 7, 2018, in which the Congress won 99 seats and crossed the halfway mark with the support of its ally Rashtriya Lok Dal to form the government.

Mr. Singh, 50, was elected an MLA on the BJP's ticket from Bharatpur's Kaman seat in 2013, but the party did not field him in 2018. He was the Congress MLA from Alwar's Laxmangarh constituency from 2003 to 2008.

BSP State president Sitaram Meghwal, who declared Mr. Singh as the party's official candidate from Ramgarh, told *The Hindu* on Saturday that he would file his nomination papers on Monday.

Mr. Meghwal said the BSP was in a "strong position" in Ramgarh and the party workers had accepted Mr. Singh's candidature, as he was a two-time MLA. "I visited Ramgarh and met the people from various sections. The atmosphere is favourable and we hope for the BSP's victory," Mr. Meghwal said.

The BSP has won six seats in the recent Assembly election, four of which were in Alwar and Bharatpur districts. Addressing a press conference after the Cabinet meeting here on Saturday, Minister for Public Relations P.C. Sharma and his Ministerial

22 Budaun asylum inmates handed over to families

Days after SC called their chaining atrocious and inhuman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BUDAUN (U.P.)

C ... Something has to be done immediately for these poor people

JUSTICES A.K. SIKRI AND S. ABDUL NAZEEB
Supreme Court Bench on January 3

Following the displeasure shown by the Supreme Court over the chaining of intellectually challenged persons in a faith-based asylum here, the district administration freed 22 persons on Saturday and handed them over to their family members.

Senior Superintendent of Police Ashok Kumar said, "In pursuance of the recent Supreme Court observations, the district administration and police reached the faith-based asylum on Friday night and freed 22 intellectually challenged patients who were kept in chains. They were then handed over to their family members."

Sub-Divisional Magistrate (Sadar) Paras Nath Maurya said, "In accordance with local belief, a number of intellectually challenged pa-

tients reach here. The patients (in the name of divine treatment) are kept in chains, so that they cannot run away."

On January 3, the Supreme Court said chaining of intellectually challenged people could not be allowed and termed it as "atrocious" and "inhuman".

A Bench comprising Justices A.K. Sikri and S. Abdul Nazeer said chaining intellectually challenged people was violative of their rights under Article 21 of the Constitution, which dealt with life and personal liberty, adding that their dignity could not be compromised.

It made the observations

while hearing a public interest litigation filed by advocate Gaurav Kumar Bansal, who had alleged that intellectually challenged persons were kept chained in a faith-based asylum in Budaun district of Uttar Pradesh, in violation of the provisions of the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017.

The court perused the photographs of the patients who had been chained and said it was a matter of great concern.

"These are mentally challenged persons. You (petitioner) have placed the photographs and they all are chained. It is atrocious," the Bench observed, adding that "something has to be done immediately for these poor people".

The court asked the petitioner to call a law officer of the Centre so that appropriate interim orders could be passed.

Make separate OPD, ICU for swine flu patients: Minister

Rajasthan CMO directed to set up screening action force

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR

Ashok Gehlot • FILE PHOTO

The Rajasthan government on Saturday directed health department officials to make arrangements like isolation wards, separate OPD and ICUs for swine flu patients in hospitals in the wake of spurt in H1N1 influenza cases in the State.

120 positive cases
Swine flu has claimed three lives and 120 positive cases were found in the State in last four days. Health Minister Raghu Sharma has also directed the Chief Medical and Health Officers to set up rapid action force for door-to-door screening in the flu

There is adequate stock of medicines to deal with the situation, he said.

Last Saturday, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had also directed Health officials to check the spread of swine flu with special focus on the five districts where the number of cases has seen a spurt in recent months. During a meeting, Mr. Gehlot asked the officials to focus on Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kota, Udaipur and Baran districts.

A total of 22,172 people in the State were tested for swine flu from January 1 to December 28 last year. Out of them, 2,315 were diagnosed positive and 218 had died.

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एतद द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि इस कार्यालय द्वारा आमंत्रित अति अल्पकालीन निविदा आमंत्रण सुचना संख्या 12 / 2018-19, P.R. 198876 District (18-19) - D, योजना- दूरी झरना का विकास कार्य में निम्न आशिक संशोधन किया जाता है :-

- (1) निविदा प्राप्ति का स्थान -रामगढ़ थाना परिसर, रामगढ़
- (2) निविदा खोलने का स्थान एवं समय -जिला परिषद कार्यालय, रामगढ़ 04 बजे अपराह्ण अन्य शर्त यथावत रहेगी।

[बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ]

PR 199102 (District) 18-19 #D

जिला अभियंता
जिला परिषद, रामगढ़

प्रिय उम्मीदवारों को धन्यवाद

प्रिय उम्मीदवारों को

IN BRIEF



'None will be spared in blood transfusion case'

CHENNAI
T.N. Health Minister C. Vijaya Baskar on Saturday told the Assembly that action would be taken against all those responsible for the transfusion of HIV-infected blood into a pregnant woman at a hospital in Virudhunagar.

Bank employees to join strike on Jan. 8, 9

MUMBAI
Employees of commercial banks will join the nationwide strike on January 8 and 9 called by 10 central trade unions against the government's alleged anti-worker policy, the All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA) said.

IndiGo flight returns after technical snag

P&W engine on Airbus 320Neo fails

MURALI N. KRISHNASWAMY
CHENNAI
An IndiGo Airlines flight (6E923) on the Chennai-Kolkata sector returned to Meenambakkam's Kamraj airport a little over an hour after take-off on Thursday after experiencing a technical snag.

The flight, operated with a twin-engine Airbus A320Neo (VT-ITW), and with a scheduled departure time of 7.35 p.m., took off at 8.10 p.m.

However, 30 minutes into the flight, the crew experienced an engine issue around 20,000 ft and off the coast of Chennai. The crew then decided to return and made a safe landing at Meenambakkam around 9.19 p.m. The jet, which has Pratt & Whitney PW1100G geared turbofan engines, continues to be grounded at Chennai airport as on Saturday.

Confirming the incident, the airline's corporate communications team, said,



"Flight 6E923 returned to Chennai after take off due to a technical caution noted by the crew. The crew followed the normal operating procedures and asked for a priority landing. There was no engine shutdown and no emergency landing was declared as per the report."

A senior Chennai airport

(With PTI inputs)

Pumping of water starts in main shaft of Meghalaya mine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Personnel of agencies engaged in rescuing 15 miners trapped in a Meghalaya coalmine since December 13 began pumping out water from the main shaft on Saturday, the seventh day of the renewed operation.

An East Jaintia Hills district spokesperson said the agencies succeeded in installing two high-power submersible pumps in the main shaft and begin pumping out water on Saturday afternoon.

"The level of the water will soon be determined by the Navy divers for diving," he said.

The operation in the main shaft was possible after Od-



Rescuers pumping water from an old shaft, in this photo taken on January 1. •PTI

isha Fire Service personnel began pumping out water from adjoining shafts on Thursday.

Five days
But seepage has slowed down their progress, with

Snowfall claims 7 lives in Kashmir

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR

Snowfall brought normal life to a standstill in Kashmir on Saturday, with both surface and air traffic remaining suspended. Seven people have died in separate incidents in the past 24 hours.

Five persons of a family, including two minor boys, were found dead inside their rented accommodation in Srinagar's Bemina.

The police said preliminary reports suggest they died of asphyxiation caused

by a gas heater. "The bodies could not be airlifted to their native village of Tangdhar in Kupwara, which is cut off due to snowfall. The bodies will be airlifted on Sunday morning," said Syed Abid Rasheed, Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar.

Passengers stranded
A 75-year-old woman died at Sadhna Top on the Kupwara-Tangdhar Road in north Kashmir. She was stuck, along with over five dozen commuters, on the snow-

locked highway. "The stranded passengers will be rescued on Sunday," said Khalid Jahangir, Deputy Commissioner, Kupwara.

A man from Bandipora died after he accidentally slipped off the rooftop while clearing snow.

The snow also shut the Srinagar-Jammu NH and affected inbound flights at the Srinagar airport. "Only five out of the 24 scheduled flights were able to operate in the afternoon," said an official.



Stranded passengers on a road due to snowfall.

Shivji" in neck, was found dead on 02.05.2014 at river bank of Yamuna, Shyam Ghat, Jagatpur near Wazirabad, in the jurisdiction of P.S. Timarpur. In this regard a FIR No. 293/14, u/s 302/2014 dated 02.05.2014 has been lodged at P.S. Timarpur, Delhi.

If any one having any clue about deceased girl may kindly inform the undersigned and contact on following numbers.

SHO
P.S. Timarpur, Delhi
Ph.No.: 011-23812734, 23814421
Mob.: 8750870129

IN BRIEF

CHENNAI

For Kannan Jegathala Krishnan, 42, the chance to speak at the Indian Science Congress at the Lovely Professional University here was a first step towards convincing the world that he's the greatest physicist ever.

"The 20th century was that of Einstein, and in some years, this century will be the one of Krishnan. It has to be," the management-graduate-cum-electrical engineer who is not a physicist declares.

Mr. Krishnan carries a thick sheaf of printouts of emails sent to presidents, prime ministers, physicists

and senior officials in universities such as Oxford, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Stanford University, most of them unsolicited and unacknowledged. The few replies are requests to stop spamming them.

An Indian scientist, who didn't want to be identified and who has interacted with Mr. Krishnan told *The Hindu* that he was "impossible" to converse with on physics.

"A colleague and I heard him out but it wasn't a discussion about theory. It was quite bizarre," he said over phone.

Catherine Braiding, a physicist at the University of

New South Wales rebuked him in a note thus: "Dude, in order to prove that someone said something, you need to show an example of him saying it, not that you spammed him once about it."

'Him' here refers to the late physicist Stephen Hawking and the connecting link

At Science Congress, a 'Vedic' rebel seeks physics glory

Annual event hears a listed speaker tell teachers that Einstein was wrong

JACOB KOSHY
JALANDHAR

For Kannan Jegathala Krishnan, 42, the chance to speak at the Indian Science Congress at the Lovely Professional University here was a first step towards convincing the world that he's the greatest physicist ever.

"The 20th century was that of Einstein, and in some years, this century will be the one of Krishnan. It has to be," the management-graduate-cum-electrical engineer who is not a physicist declares.

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claimed by Mr. Krishnan to Hawking is Union Science Minister, Harsh Vardhan.

Last March, the Minister claimed at the 105th Science Congress in Imphal that Stephen Hawking said that the Vedas might have a theory superior to that of Albert Einstein's E=mc² equation. Dr. Vardhan never revealed the source of his information and wanted journalists to find out. The media traced the source to a 'Stephen Hawking' Facebook page which had no connection to the scientist.

"I am the source of his information," claims Mr. Krishnan. As evidence, he shows several photos of Dr. Vardhan and him in conversation and some text messages. These messages, perused by *The Hindu*, are generic and

don't reflect a conversation.

On Friday, Mr. Krishnan delivered a talk at the 'Rashtriya Kishore Vaigyanik Sammelan', a regular event held at the Science Congress with an audience of children and their teachers. A spokesperson for the LPU confirmed that Mr. Krishnan addressed his audience, but that he'd been vetted by the Indian Science Congress Association.

The Indian Science Congress, though funded by several government departments, has invited controversy and criticism over the rigour of speakers and papers. In the 2015 Congress in Mumbai, there were lectures on how certain Vedas texts described advanced avionics and flying planes.

Mr. Krishnan claims that

Einstein was wrong on relativity. The scientist's big idea, that gravity was a result of matter and space interacting with each other and not a distinct force, was "incorrect".

Vedic explanation

Rather, he says, space is like an enveloping, compressive force. This has its basis in the Vedas. During compression, there are repulsive forces generated and out of these pop different fundamental particles. The Higgs boson (a particle that plays a role in matter acquiring mass) and nicknamed the 'God Particle' is the 'wrong God' among particles. Rather it's the 'top quark' (one of the particles that make up protons and electrons) that

should be the 'God particle,' Mr. Krishnan argues. He has little by way of backing but says he doesn't need evidence or the mathematics to back his theories simply because landmark experiments—such as the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) smashing protons at unprecedented energy to discover new phenomena—are proof enough.

Mr. Krishnan doesn't have formal physics degrees but says that he has spent the last five years trying to resolve conundrums of physics. This has meant altercations with his Ph. D supervisor in Melbourne, a slew of ad-hoc jobs and being labelled "mentally unstable" by the supervisor. His wife, he says, is a government doctor. He plans to relocate to India for good.

MGNREGA scheme faces fund shortage

Employment given was 32% lower than work demanded'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The incident is the latest in a series of cases involving the Pratt & Whitney engine.

official said the crew did not declare an emergency, adding that the airline had arranged another aircraft for the passengers. He said an aircraft airworthiness official is investigating the incident.

The January 3 incident, which came to light on Saturday, is the latest in a series of cases involving a Pratt & Whitney engine. IndiGo has borne the brunt of these problems in the A320Neo planes powered by P&W engines since their induction in its fleet in 2016.

When contacted, Civil Aviation Secretary R.N. Choubey said, "Ministry has taken serious note of the incident and we will review it on Tuesday."

Meanwhile, the government's apex aircraft investigation body AAIB has rushed a team to Chennai to assess the incident and take a call on the probe.

"There are three more months to go and this is when the lean agricultural

Cash crunch

99% of the funds have been spent, with three months left in the current financial year

Total allocation: ₹59,032 cr.

Total expenditure, including payment due: ₹58,701 cr.

Amount left: ₹331 cr.

₹76,131 cr. amount needed to meet last year's work demand, says study



season is upon us, when demand for MGNREGA employment peaks, intensifying the suffering at a time when work is needed most," said Nikhil Dey, an activist with the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan. "Rainfall deficits and drought this year are likely to worsen the situation, as we saw in 2015-16 when the demand and need for work was higher than normal."

A team of independent researchers led by Azim Premji University's Rajendran Narayanan has found that employment provided was already 32% lower than work demanded during 2017-18. Their ongoing study is analysing government data on the demand generated, em-

ployment provided, and fund availability in 3,500 panchayats across 10 representative States last year.

In monetary terms, using this data to estimate national allocation, this means that ₹76,131 crore is the minimum amount needed to meet the registered work demand last year, almost 30% higher than the current allocation, said the study.

"This shows that the employment provided is wilfully capped based on the funds available. On the ground, we are seeing that State governments and field functionaries are compelled not to register demand for work in order to contain the payment liabilities of the governments," said Mr. Dey.

3. Vocational Educational Courses

Applications from the existing Institutions offering Technical Programmes in Engineering and Technology/ Pharmacy/ Architecture/ Planning/ Applied Arts and Crafts/ Design/ Hotel Management and Catering Technology/ MCA/ Management at Diploma/ Post Diploma Certificate/ Under Graduate Degree/ Post Graduate Diploma/ Post Graduate Degree Levels affiliated to University/ Board or Standalone Institutions". The Institutions approved by the Council of Architecture/ Pharmacy Council of India in the previous Academic Years/ Existing Institutions offering Courses in Applied Arts and Crafts/ Vocational (Technical) Programmes/ Non-Technical Institutions conducting MCA/ MBA, without the approval of AICTE and seeking approval for the first time from AICTE, shall submit an application as a new Technical Institution. Institutions Deemed to be Universities seeking approval for the first time from AICTE (in compliance to the order dated 03.11.2017 passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court Order CA No.17869-17870 /2017) shall submit an application as a new Technical Institution. State and Central Universities/ Constituent Colleges/ Private Universities, if interested in seeking approval from AICTE for the first time may submit an application as a new Technical Institution.

2. Existing Technical Institutions

Applications from Existing Technical Institutions offering Technical Programmes in Engineering and Technology/ Pharmacy/ Architecture/ Planning/ Applied Arts and Crafts/ Design/ Hotel Management and Catering Technology/ MCA/ Management at Diploma/ Post Diploma Certificate/ Under Graduate Degree/ Post Graduate Diploma/ Post Graduate Degree Levels affiliated to University/ Board or Standalone Institutions for

- Change of Site/ Location
- Conversion of Women's Institution into Co-ed Institution and vice-versa
- Conversion of Diploma Level into Degree Level and vice-versa
- To Start new Programme(s)/ Level(s) in the existing Institutions
- Extension of Approval to the existing Institutions/ Continuation of approval after a break in the preceding Academic Year/ Restoration of Intake
- Extended EoA
- Increase in Intake/ Additional Course(s)
- Introduction of Integrated/ Dual Degree Course
- To start Diploma in Degree Pharmacy Institutions and vice-versa
- Merger of Institutions under the same Trust/ Society/ Company operating in the same Campus
- Closure of the Institution
- Conversion of Management Institutions running PGDM Course into MBA Course
- Conversion of Second Shift Course(s) into First Shift Course(s)
- Closing of MBA Programme and Introduction of MCA Programme and vice-versa
- Introduction/ Continuation of Fellowship Programme in Management
- Introduction/ Continuation of supernumerary seats for FN/ OCI/ PIO/ Children of Indian Workers in Gulf Countries
- Introduction/ Continuation of seats for Non Resident Indian(s)
- Change in the Name of the Course(s)/ Merger of the Courses/ Reduction in Intake/ Closure of Programme(s)/ Course(s)
- Merger of Lateral Entry Separate Division in Second Year Engineering and Technology/ MCA to First Year Regular Courses
- Change in the Name of the Institution or affiliating University/Board
- Change in the Name of the Bank
- Change in the Name of the Trust/ Society/ Company
- Collaboration and Twinning Programme between Indian and Foreign University/ Institution in the field of Technical Education, Research and Training

4. Submission of online applications for the session 2019-20 in respect of all approvals as above shall begin on 14th January, 2019 and end on 3rd February, 2019.

The last date for submission of online application with penalty (as per the provisions of APH 2019-20) for Extension of Approval based on self-disclosure for existing Institutions is permitted up to 8th February, 2019. It may be noted that there shall be no further extension of date.

All applicants are requested to read carefully and thoroughly the AICTE Approval Process Hand Book 2019-20 and All India Council for Technical Education (Grant of approval for Technical Institution) Regulations, 2018 which are available at www.aicte-india.org, before submitting online applications on AICTE Web Portal for the Academic Session 2019-20.

Note: All the Institutions are requested to visit AICTE Website at "www.aicte-india.org > Approval Process 2019-20 Quick link" regularly for all General Notifications, Updated Information and Official Communications related to Approval Process 2019-20. There will not be any other individual communication to the Institutions.

Advt. No: Approval/01(01) 2019

Prof. ALOK PRAKASH MITTAL
Member Secretary, AICTE

FROM PAGE ONE

Mallya declared a 'fugitive offender'

The court said it would consider the second part of the application, on confiscation of properties, when it hears the matter on February 5, when all intervenors in the case would be heard.

The intervenors include the State Bank of India, Diamo Plc, Standard Chartered Bank, Mr. Mallya's step mother, Ritu Mallya, the official liquidator of the Karnataka High Court and Heineken NV.

When senior counsel Amit Desai, representing Mr. Mallya, sought a stay on the order as he wanted to move an appeal to the higher court, the judge declined stating that the court had no power to issue such an order.

As market collapses, stray cows raid farms

Farmers say the local cattle market at Mau has seen a fall in the sale of non-milking cows and bullocks as they have no takers. "It's a good thing cow slaughter came to a halt, but so did the market," said Mr. Rawat in Jabaroli.

A few kilometres away, among the vegetable sellers squatting at a local bazaar is Radhe Mohan.

Mr. Mohan, an OBC Kashyap, whose family grew potatoes and green vegetables on their 10 biswa land every year, did not dare grow the crops this season.

He was forced to source vegetables from a mandi and sell them at the bazaar for a living. "The animals come and destroy everything," he rued. Fear of police action, vigilante groups and religious beliefs prevent him from using force against the raiding cattle, he said.

Tapping the anger
Samajwadi Party leader R.K. Chaudhary, who was runner-up from Mohanlalganj in 2014, is trying to capitalise on the anger brewing among farmers. On December 27, he tried to lead a group of aggrieved farmers and around 700 stray cattle to the tehsil headquarters as protest, even leading to a lathi-charge. If the problem of stray cattle was not resolved within a month, Mr. Chaudhary said he would bring one lakh stray cattle from across U.P. to 5, Kaliandas Marg, the official residence of the Chief Minister in Lucknow. "We will hand them over to Yogi, you take care of your animals," said Mr. Chaudhary.

In Hulas Khera, Gyan Chand Dikshit, a Brahmin farmer whose four-bigha field was heavily damaged by stray cattle, says: "In the eyes of the farmer, the Yogi government has fallen." He expects stray cattle issue to be a factor in the 2019 election. "Whichever government comes will have to find a solution because at this rate people will be dying of starvation," said Gyan

der.
The ED had filed two separate complaints registered under PMLA for investigation of money laundering against Mr. Mallya, Kingfisher Airlines Limited (KAL) and United Breweries Holdings Limited (UBHL). The agency has reported to have attached assets worth approximately ₹ 4,234.84 crore, claiming them to be proceeds of crime from both the entities.

Mr. Mallya, who left the country in March 2016, was arrested by the U.K. Metropolitan Police's extradition unit on April 18, 2017. On December 10, 2018, a U.K. court ordered that Mr. Mallya could be extradited.

Rahul misled nation: Modi

Says country can see through conspiracy hatched to weaken defence sector

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BARIPADA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here on Saturday that Rahul Gandhi's "childishness" had been exposed by the manner in which he was raking up the Rafale deal, and said the Congress leader was misleading the country on defence procurement.

"You must have seen how the country's first woman Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman elucidated a critical subject like defence and her inner truth in Parliament yesterday using her skill and competence," Mr. Modi said at a public meeting here. "I congratulate Nirmalaji for the accomplishment."

"The Defence Minister has exposed the intentions of those who misled the country, played politics with national security and used Parliament for their own entertainment, besides their childishness, before the country," Mr. Modi said.

Sustaining his attack on the Congress over defence procurement, Mr. Modi said: "Now, the country can see through how a conspiracy was hatched to weaken our defence sector between 2004 and 2014 and figure out all finer points of the plot. When our government is bringing the defence personnel from the clutches of the conspirators, it is sting-



Attack continues: Narendra Modi speaking at Baripada in Odisha on Saturday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

ing them like thorns."

The Prime Minister also returned the fire on the *chowkidar chor hai* barb of the Congress president saying, "At any cost they want to get rid of the *chowkidar* from their path. Anywhere, *choron ki jamat* [troop of thieves], in a society or house or in an apartment, tries to remove the security guard first."

Secret is out

"The truth is now stinging them because their secret is getting exposed. Recently, media reported about a middleman in helicopter purchase... Christian Michel, who had been extradited

from abroad. One of his letters has come out in public domain. It reveals that he had contacts with top leadership of the Congress and Ministers," Mr. Modi said.

"He had access to the Prime Minister's Office. He used to have knowledge of every file movement in the PMO. Perhaps, the middlemen had more information than the Prime Minister used to have. Moreover, proceedings of the Cabinet Committee on Security, which takes crucial decisions on national security and procurement of weapons, were being supplied to the middlemen. He used to send the information overseas and sell details of

decisions taken by Ministers outside," the PM alleged.

"It cannot be understood if the Congress had run a government or managed *durbar* [court] of Michel mama [uncle]. I am now making it clear that those who had a role in safeguarding the interests of middlemen instead of the country would be taken to task. "My government is constantly taking big and important decisions. Should we not rectify the wrong decisions taken by previous governments? Should not those who had done injustice to defence personnel be taken to task? I assure you that law will not spare anybody," Mr. Modi said.

Development should be poll plank for NDA: Chirag

LJP leader wants alliance to keep contentious issues at bay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SHEIKHPURA (BIHAR)

The Lok Janshakti Party, a BJP ally in Bihar, on Saturday disapproved of contentious issues like the Ram temple and triple talaq being raised ahead of the Lok Sabha polls and expressed apprehension that deviating from the development plank could harm the NDA.

LJP parliamentary board chairman Chirag Paswan expressed the view at a press conference in the district, which comprises a part of his Lok Sabha seat Jamui.

"Development should be the poll plank for the NDA, which, I am confident, will help the coalition win more than 35 of the 40 seats in Bihar. I am hopeful that the election will be fought on the issue of development and contentious issues like the Ram temple and triple talaq will be kept at bay. These may harm the coalition's prospects," he said.

The young MP, who is the son of Union Minister and the LJP's founding president Ram Vilas Paswan, had ex-



LJP leader Chirag Paswan ■ FILE PHOTO

the LJP's claim over the Munger Lok Sabha seat stood as of now.

"Neither of our allies (BJP and JD-U) has approached us expressing the desire to contest the seat. But if we are asked to give up our claim on the seat and offered some other constituency, it will be duly considered," he added.

LJP vice-president

Munger is currently represented in the Lok Sabha by Veena Devi, wife of mafia don-turned-politician Suraj Bahadur Singh who is a national vice-president of the LJP.

He has been fielding his wife in elections following his conviction in the murder case of former Bihar Minister Brij Bihari Prasad in 2008.

Speculation has been rife that the JD(U) may insist on the seat for Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh, a Minister in the Nitish Kumar Cabinet, who had won the seat for his party in 2009, but had lost it to Ms. Devi five years later.

"Acting on the Allahabad High Court directive in 2016,

CRPF jawan injured in J&K firing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

An encounter, which erupted between the Army and militants on Saturday morning in Pulwama's Tral area, continued late in the evening as soldiers continued to comb the site to trace the militants. One CRPF jawan was injured in the gunfight.

A police official said a "fierce" fire was exchanged between militants and security forces when a group of militants was spotted hiding inside a residential building of Arivalp area. "The exchange of fire stopped in the afternoon. An operation is on to trace the militants," said the police.

During the encounter, a two-storey house, where at least two militants were believed to be hiding, was gutted. A top Hizbul Mujahideen commander was reportedly hiding in the area.

Three protesters were injured in clashes in parts of Tral after the encounter.

former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

The AAP is in a fix following the life sentence awarded to former Congress leader Sajjan Kumar.

Centre rejects request for info on CBI chief's removal

CVC cites relevant sections of RTI Act to defend move

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre has denied RTI requests for information on how Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Director Alok Verma was divested of his powers last October. It is also unwilling to provide information on the ongoing selection process to appoint his successor, once his term finishes end of the month.

On October 23, 2018, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) and the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) invoked powers of superintendence over the CBI to issue orders divesting Mr. Verma of his powers. The legal validity of those orders is now under challenge in the Supreme Court.

National Campaign for People's Right to Information co-convenor Anjali Bhadra filed RTI requests with both the DoPT and the CVC, asking for copies of the relevant orders as well as related file notings and correspondence.

Her requests were denied by the CVC, which cited Sections 8 (1) (g) and (h) of the RTI Act that provide exemptions for information endangering someone, identifying a law enforcement source or impeding the process of an investigation. The DoPT said all orders issued on that date were available on its website. However, the order on the CBI Director was not

available there, said Ms. Bhadra. The DoPT also said information on file notings and correspondence were not available with it.

'Transparency vital'

"In a democracy, it is important to have transparency in the appointment and removal of key players in our institutions," said Ms. Bhadra. "The government is also not sharing information on the process to appoint his successor."

RTI queries regarding the meetings of the selection committee, shortlisted candidates, or the criteria involved in shortlisting, were all returned with a summary response from the DoPT that the process, "has not attained finality." The replies noted that in accordance with a Supreme Court order, all IPS officers of the four seniormost batches would be considered for the post.

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'Congress playing politics with loans'

PM accuses party of cheating farmers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the Opposition Congress, without naming the party, on Saturday of misleading and cheating farmers of the country in the name of loan waiver.

He was laying the foundation stone for the remaining part of the North Koel Reservoir, also known as Mandal Dam project, in Palamu district of Jharkhand. On completion, the dam will irrigate 19,604 hectares in Jharkhand and neighbouring Bihar.

"Earlier, they forced farmers to take loans and now they are using the issue to play politics... had they completed this North Koel Reservoir project on time, farmers of this area would not have had to borrow and plunge themselves into poverty... for us farmers are *an-nadata* (food provider) but for them (previous governments) they were a mere vote bank," he said. "My government works for the benefit of the farmers, to strengthen their hands by completing such irrigation projects... most of which are in the last stage of completion."

"We're spending ₹ 90,000 crore, or about ₹ 1 lakh crore, on irrigation projects, and if I wanted to do politics I would have distributed all the money among the farmers. But, I chose to spend them on irrigation projects so that even their next generation will benefit," he added.

Slamming the previous governments, Mr. Modi said they had little concern for the farmers and the "delay in completion of the Mandal Dam was proof of that". The work in Barwadih block began in 1972, but was stalled since 1993. "In these 25 years, the cost rose from ₹ 30 crore to ₹ 2,400 crore... isn't it criminal lethargy?"

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

Thousands of villagers took out a march in Palamu district on Friday to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding compensation against their likely displacement by the North Koel Reservoir project. However, they were stopped midway, taken into custody by the police and released on Saturday.

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Slamming the previous governments, Mr. Modi said they had little concern for the farmers and the "delay in completion of the Mandal Dam was proof of that". The work in Barwadih block began in 1972, but was stalled since 1993. "In these 25 years, the cost rose from ₹ 30 crore to ₹ 2,400 crore... isn't it criminal lethargy?"

CBI may probe Akhilesh role in U.P. mining scam

FIR registered against SP leaders, IAS officer, lease holders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday said the role of the mining Ministers in Uttar Pradesh between 2012 and 2016, which includes Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, may be probed in connection with a fresh case of alleged illegal mining of minor minerals registered on the direction of the Allahabad High Court.

Mr. Yadav, then Chief Minister, held the additional portfolio of Mining between 2012 and 2013.

DM also named

The CBI has registered the FIR against 2008-batch IAS official and then Hamirpur District Magistrate B. Chandrakala and 10 other individuals, besides unknown officials and persons. Among those named in the FIR are SP MLC Ramesh Kumar Mishra and Sanjay Dixit, who fought the 2017 election on Bahujan Samaj Party ticket.

"Acting on the Allahabad High Court directive in 2016,

we instituted seven preliminary inquiries on allegations of illegal mining in seven districts. Two of them (related to Kaushambi and Shamli) were earlier converted into regular cases, while the third pertaining to Hamirpur was registered on January 2," said an agency official.

The official said searches were carried out on Saturday on 14 premises of the accused persons in Delhi, Hamirpur, Lucknow, Kanpur and Jaunpur. The FIR alleges that public servants allowed illegal mining of minor minerals between 2012 and 2016 by the fraudulent granting of fresh or renewed leases. Officials also allegedly permitted mining by the existing lease-holders during the "obstructed period" when the National Green Tribunal had barred the activity. The leases were also issued in violation of a May 2012 order of the State government for e-tendering.

The agency alleges that Ms. Chandrakala allowed mining in violation of the e-tendering order.

Michel remanded in judicial custody

Case pertains to money laundering

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Saturday sent Christian Michel, the alleged middleman in the AgustaWestland VVIP chopper deal, to judicial custody in a related money laundering case.

Special Judge Arvind Kumar sent Mr. Michel to judicial custody till January 26 when the Enforcement Directorate produced him in the court on completion of his 14-day police remand.

Mr. Michel has been remanded to judicial custody till January 27 in the corruption case being probed by the CBI.

Probe fruitful, says ED

Earlier, Special Public Prosecutors for the Directorate, D. P. Singh and N. K. Matta, submitted before the court that the probe had so far been fruitful.

The Directorate arrested Mr. Michel on December 22.

Christian Michel, a British national, was extradited to India from the United Arab Emirates on December 4. His role in the purchase of 12 helicopters surfaced in 2012 as a middleman for swinging the deal in favour of AgustaWestland and making illegal payments to Indian officials.

The probe agency filed a charge sheet in the case in 2017. It alleged a loss of ₹ 2,666 crore to the exchequer due to the scam.

Cong., NCP reach deal in Maharashtra

The NCP is likely to field prominent public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam, who had helped State prosecute suspects in the 1993 Bombay bombings, and most notably 2008 Mumbai attacks, party sources said. "He is a bright lawyer and is capable to work in politics and so if he joins it will be good," NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal said reacting to the development. The two parties had parted

IN BRIEF

J.P. Nadda BJP's U.P.
in-charge for LS polls

NEW DELHI
The BJP on Saturday appointed Union Minister J.P. Nadda as Lok Sabha election in-charge for Uttar Pradesh, days after it made similar appointments for 17 States. Party sources clarified that Govardhan Zadaphia, a Gujarat leader who was a critic of the PM Modi, would be one of the six co-in-charges for the State. PTI

Farmers distressed under BJP's rule: Rahul

NEW DELHI
Congress president Rahul Gandhi hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday over clashes in a Gujarat village between the police and farmers, saying the latter were "distressed" under the BJP's rule. "Modiji is beating his chest over the Congress's loan waiver. He has said for the Congress, farmers are a vote bank. Now see the condition of the farmers in Gujarat," Mr. Gandhi said on Facebook. PTI

Smriti hints at uncertain political scenario

JALANDHAR
Union Minister Smriti Irani said here on Saturday that she was not sure if she would be available for the inauguration of the Indian Women Science Congress in 2021. At the inaugural session of the Women Science Congress here, she said 2019 would not be an easy year. "I don't know the scientific probability of me being around in 2021," she said. PTI

Plea to ban trailer of Accidental Prime Minister
NEW DELHI
A plea was filed in the Delhi High Court on Saturday seeking direction to the Centre and the censor board to suspend the trailer of the upcoming movie *The Accidental Prime Minister*, alleging that it defamed the constitutional post. The petition is likely to come up for hearing on Monday. The plea filed by Pooja Mahajan alleged that provisions of the Cinematograph Act were being misused. PTI

Honouring the Guru



Getting together: Sikhs have langar (free meal) on the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh, in Jammu on Saturday. PTI

Shah sees BJP surge in northeast in 2019 polls

'50 seats from the region and Bengal'

SYED SAJJAD ALI
AGARTALA

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national president Amit Shah said on Saturday that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is expecting to win 300 seats in the Lok Sabha election, with a contribution of nearly 50 seats from the northeastern region and West Bengal. He said the party is in the process of preparing a wide-ranging poll manifesto, based on feedback from all State units.

"There is no challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the NDA. We are going to win 300 seats in Lok Sabha poll," Mr. Shah said at a news conference here.

Barred at the border: record arrests of Rohingya in 2018

Number of detentions spiked last year; BSF focusses on 'push-back' to prevent entry; porosity of border in West Bengal poses a challenge

SHIV SAHAI SINGH
KOLKATA

Between 2015 and 2018, the Border Security Force (BSF) arrested around 478 Rohingya along the India-Bangladesh border, with 230 held in 2018 alone.

While the number of arrests in 2015 and 2016 were 54 and 71, respectively, it rose to 123 in 2017.

The figures were tabled in the Lok Sabha on January 1 by the Union Home Ministry in response to a question by K. Gopal, AIADMK MP.

No influx

Senior BSF officials operating along the India-Bangladesh border said the agency had apprehensions of large numbers of Rohingya trying to enter the country after August

2017, after nearly 7,00,000 fled Myanmar. However the expected influx did not take place. "Because of the designated camps set up by the Bangladesh government, Rohingya did not try to cross over to India in large numbers," a senior BSF official told *The Hindu*.

Of the 478 Rohingyas, who have been apprehended, some have been arrested not for trying to enter the country but while attempting to leave, BSF officials said.

Home Ministry estimates say there are around 40,000 Rohingya in India, of whom only 16,000 are said to be registered with the United Nations.

After the arrests along the border, the Rohingya are handed over to the police, their pre-

Border arrests

The BSF arrested a record number of Rohingya on the Bangladesh border in 2018

YEAR: NUMBER OF ARRESTS

2015: 54	Total
2016: 71	
2017: 123	
2018: 230	(till November 2018)

Border with Bangladesh:
4,096.7 sq km

Border with fencing:
2,785.5 sq km



Because of the designated camps set up by the Bangladesh government, Rohingya refugees did not try to cross over to India. ■ AFP

who book them under the Foreigners Act. "Once Rohingya are arrested and handed over to the police, their presence in the country becomes official. The only process left with the agencies to send them to their country is

through deportation which can take lot of time," another BSF official said. Earlier this month, five Rohingya from

The border in West Bengal is said to be the most porous stretch and used for illegal crossings. As recently as December 21, 2018, a group of 14 Rohingya, including six children, were apprehended for illegally entering the country at Habra in the State's North 24 Parganas. Rohingya apprehended in other States like Manipur have also claimed that they had entered India through West Bengal.

"The porosity in West Bengal-Bangladesh border is different than in other north-eastern States. This is because of villages with dense population extending till the international border are located on the both sides of the border in the region," a BSF official said.

It's a politically motivated prosecution, alleges Nirav

'Allegations are frivolous; ED has concealed and suppressed replies sent'

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

Fugitive diamantaire Nirav Modi, a prime accused in the Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud case, told a court here on Saturday that he could not return to India because of safety concerns and the "politicisation" of his case.

In his reply, filed through his lawyer, to an application filed by the Enforcement Directorate on July 10, 2018, seeking to declare him a fugitive under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (FEOA), Mr. Modi said, "The motivation for the prosecution by PNB is (a) the desire of the bank (the complainant) to avoid its liability towards its co-bankers; (b) to put the blame on previous actions by present management to avoid any criticism regarding poor financial performance by PNB Bank."

Mr. Modi further said the motivation for his prosecution by the bank was, "Deriv-



NIRAV MODI
It is clear that it is merely a bald assertion made in a callous manner by the ED... Never refused to come to India but was forced to remain abroad which fact was clearly communicated to the agency. There is fear of life and safety as violent threats are illustrated by the burning of effigy

ing of political mileage by the ruling party by claiming clean-up and to project itself as a strong-headed party having zero tolerance for corruption and claiming the recovery of the public money, lost by Opposition party in whose regime the funding was granted, by attaching assets."

Terming the ED's allegations frivolous, Mr. Modi said the agency had concealed and intentionally suppressed replies sent by him.

He said, "they have summoned the alleged fugitive accused three times on February 15, 17 and 22, 2018 which were duly replied by him."

Frequent exchanges'
He said, "Various correspondences were exchanged between him and PNB wherein he proposed to settle the amounts due, however ED while filing the application under the Fugitive Economic Offender Act has not even

mentioned about the said correspondences."

He goes on to say that he is a NRI who usually travels and stays abroad for work. When he left, PNB had not filed a case and hence he had no reasons to leave the country.

Moreover, the ED has merely mentioned that Mr. Modi left under "suspicious circumstances" without even giving any explanation/elaboration as to what those "suspicious circumstances" are.

"It is clear that it is merely a bald assertion made in a callous manner by one of the premier investigating agencies like ED" and he "never refused to come to India but was forced to remain abroad which fact was clearly communicated to the agency."

Emulating his uncle, Mehmood Choksi, Mr. Modi said, "There is fear of life and safety as violent threats are illustrated by the burning of his effigy."

Pay, tenure? This job invitation doesn't part with information

Centre issues notice for four vacancies at RTI panel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre's new advertisement for the remaining four vacancies at the Central Information Commission (CIC) still does not contain details of the tenure and salary of the position.

This is in accordance with the government's plans to amend the RTI Act to give itself the power to set the tenure and salaries of Central and State Information Commissioners, in a move that critics warn will undermine the autonomy of these institutions.

Deadpan details
The advertisement issued on Friday by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) simply says, "The salary, allowances and other terms and conditions of service of the Information Commissioner shall be as may be specified at the time of appointment



The government wants to give itself the power to set the tenure and salaries of Information Commissioners.

of the selected candidate."

The Centre has previously defended such vague language in a Supreme Court hearing by saying that it planned to amend the RTI Act. Following push-back from Opposition parties and RTI activists, the government withdrew its stated plans to introduce the amendment Bill in Parliament during the monsoon session.

"Which person of eminence will apply for the position without any firm details on the terms of employment," asked National Campaign for People's Right to Information co-convenor Anjali Bhadrwaj. "Only pliable candidates can be expected to apply," she said. She is a petitioner in a Supreme Court case on vacancies in Central and State Information Commissions. Ms. Bhadrwaj noted that despite appointing four new Commissioners and a CIC chief, the DoPT has still not released details on their selection process, despite Supreme Court orders to do so.

India head of Sotheby's resigns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Gaurav Bhatia has resigned as Sotheby's India MD, nearly a month after he went on leave following allegations of sexual misconduct, the auction house said on Saturday.

Mr. Bhatia, who was the South Asia operations head and the driving force behind "Boundless: India", Sotheby's maiden auction in the country, put in his papers on December 20, 2018.

Mr. Bhatia is among prominent names in the Indian art world that were called out in the #Me Too movement.

ED seeks warrant against Robert Vadra's PA

Asks court for non-bailable permit in money laundering case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday moved a Delhi court seeking issuance of an open-ended non-bailable warrant (NBW) against Manoj Arora, personal assistant to Robert Vadra, son-in-law of former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, in a money laundering case.

The ED started the investigation on the basis of digital evidence recovered by the Income Tax (IT) Department during raids on the premises of Sanjay Bhandari,



ri, a fugitive arms dealer. The documents also included e-mails regarding a property in London valued at £1.9 million, the Directorate said in its application filed in the court.

According to the e-mail

exchanges between Sumit Chadha, a close relative of Bhandari, Mr. Vadra and Mr. Arora, Mr. Vadra was beneficially controlling the London property.

He was not only renovating this property through Mr. Chadha but also had arranged funds for the same, it said.

Mr. Arora was absconding following a raid on his premises. Thus, a Red Notice through Interpol is required to be issued, for which an open-ended NBW is a *sine qua non*, the Directorate further submitted.

Northeast protests Citizenship Bill

30 indigenous groups have called for an 11-hour shutdown on Tuesday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

At least 30 indigenous groups, including the North East Students' Organisation, have called for an 11-hour shutdown on Tuesday in protest against the Narendra Modi government's move to have the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, passed in Parliament.

The Bill seeks to legalise the stay of minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who migrated to India till December 31, 2014 allegedly due to religious persecution. Most indigenous groups in the northeast fear this Bill, if passed, would make the region, particularly Assam, a dumping ground for migrants.

"This Bill is unacceptable,



Clear stand: Protesters demonstrating against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in New Delhi last week. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

and the shutdown call is to let the Centre know they cannot come out with a regulation that threatens the existence of the Assamese and other indigenous people in the northeast." All Assam Students' Union president Dipanka Kumar Nath said.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Bill is expected to table its recommendations in the Parliament on Monday. The panel had rejected all the amendments suggested by the Congress and other parties to the draft of the Bill on December

31. On Saturday, the Citizen's Forum against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill launched a campaign to mobilise support against the Bill's passage.

Appeal to Editors
Its members appealed to the editors of all dailies in Assam to leave their editorial columns blank and television channels to run the upper or lower ticker black on Monday to register their protest against the Bill that "has violated the basic essence of the Constitution".

Harekrishna Deka, the forum's spokesperson and Assam's former Director-General of Police, said Monday would be observed as *Dhikkar Diwas* (condemnation day) across the State.

For and on behalf of ODISHA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LTD. C.G.M. (CPC) invites Tenders from reputed firms with previous experience in similar work for enlistment as rate contract holder for soil testing, survey, preparation of estimate and detailed project report for upcoming projects of OPTCL. Complete set of bidding documents are available at www.tenderwizard.com/OPTCL. w.e.f 08.01.2019 (11:00 Hrs.) up to 22.01.2019 (11:00 Hrs.). Interested Firms may visit www.tenderwizard.com/OPTCL. For detail, specification and subsequent addendum/corrigendum to tender. CR Advt. No.74/2018-19 Chief General Manager (CPC) Please connect us: optcl.odisha@optcl.com [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/OPTCL.Official) [Twitter](https://www.twitter.com/OPTCL.Official) [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/odisha-power-transmission-corporation-ltd/) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/optclofficial/)

WHO

Amos Oz
moderate voice

When Amos Oz, Israeli writer and supporter of a two-state solution to the Palestinian conflict, passed away last week, his daughter tweeted, "To those who loved him, thank you." Oz, a respected voice worldwide who died of cancer at 79, was often derided at home by the nationalist right for having "betrayed" his people by suggesting a way out of the crisis that should take in the Palestinian viewpoint as well.

What did he write about?

Over 50 years, Oz accounted for every aspect of a "divided land" through novels, essays, a best-selling memoir, interviews – he wrote about his country's rise following the Holocaust and life after, the struggles, contradictions, the push and pull between Jews and Arabs. In *Dear Zealots* (2017), he presents his case: "I am not sure we can end the fight with Arabs overnight. But we can try." He argues that granting of statehood to Palestine is "a question of life and death for the State of Israel." Last year, on the

70th anniversary of the birth of Israel, Oz told Deutsche Welle: "We cannot become one happy family because we are not one, we are not happy, we are not family. We are two unhappy families. We have to divide the house into two smaller next-door apartments." Relations between the two are at its worst and with U.S. President Donald Trump recognising Jerusalem as the Israeli capital last year, it has put more obstacles on the road to peace.

Why did he join a kibbutz?

Oz was born Amos Klausner in Jerusalem to Eastern European immigrants, his father a right-wing academic, and mother a story-teller who suffered from depression and took her life when he was 12. At 15, he went to live in a kibbutz by himself, changing his surname to the Hebrew for "strength." He worked as a canteen worker and tractor driver and held

various other jobs, but his heart was on writing. His 1966 novel, *Elsewhere, Perhaps*, chronicles the kibbutz life, the "strict symmetry" of the buildings, adding a "dimension of weightiness" to

the dwellers' world. As a child he admits to being a "little Zionist-nationalist fanatic – self-righteous, enthusiastic and brain-washed," but after fighting in the 1967 and 1973 wars, he realised that "there are two sides to a story; that conflicts are coloured not only in black and white." The boy-narrator in his book, *Panther in the Basement*, is full of righteousness but soon learns that there are things in the world that can be seen in a different way.

Where does he stand?

Though he pushed for a two-state solution, Oz was wary about dealing with the hard-line Hamas in Gaza. "There is no point in even fantasising that after 100 years of bloodshed and anger and conflict Jews and Arabs will jump into a honeymoon bed and start making love, not war," he said in the interview to Deutsche Welle. In *Dear Zealots*, he writes, "Now comes a little confession. I love Israel even when I can-

not stand it." The powerful stories, of loss and longing where the personal and political overlap, that enrich most of his books will be his legacy. Oz's beautiful memoir, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, is the tragic tale of his mother's suicide as also the city of Jerusalem in the 1940s, full of "open hearts and capacious souls." His non-fiction goes straight to the point of his politics. *Think Help us to Divorce: Israel and Palestine - Between Right and Right*, which offers ways to resolve the problem.

Is there hope of a solution?

A deal seems remote since the U.S.-led negotiations stopped in 2014, and violence has escalated on the border along Gaza. Palestinian negotiator Hanan Ashrawi pointed out that Oz's death "deprived Israel and the dwindling peace camp of another rarity," while Israeli President Reuven Rivlin said his passing was a moment of "great darkness."

SUDIPTA DATTA



ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

WHAT

The lowdown
on blood
transfusions

WHAT IS IT? A young pregnant woman in a government hospital at a rural centre in south Tamil Nadu's Madurai district made an explosive revelation mid-December. Expecting her second child, she heard from doctors, after she was admitted following a bout of sickness, that she had tested positive for HIV.

Later, as the story unravelled, in full

media glare, it turns out she had acquired the virus after a blood transfusion in a district hospital following a diagnosis of anaemia. This opened up a Pandora's box, and fear and distrust pervaded the community. Besides flagging the issue of the availability of safe blood in the State, it set in motion a sequence of events, mostly tragic, introspection, and some corrective action.

HOW DID IT COME ABOUT? The story did not end, or even begin, there. The blood donor, who had donated as a replacement donor when a pregnant relative required a transfusion, only discovered his HIV positive status after a test for a job interview. He rushed back to the hospital, laden with guilt, to inform authorities. By then, his blood had been transfused to the pregnant woman, and she had tested positive. His blood donation history retrospectively exposed chinks in the blood donation and trans-

fusion cycle in at least two instances. He had already donated blood in 2016, but his blood was discarded after he tested positive for HIV. However, though the HIV law mandates that the patient be informed with counselling about his/her status, in this case the donor remained in the dark. In the second instance, when he donated his blood in November last year, two years after the first, the lab failed to test and/or detect his infection, which was clearly not in the 'window period' where the virus may avoid detection. The donor was distraught, and attempted suicide, and died in hospital later.

A few days later, another pregnant woman claimed she had been transfused with HIV-infected blood at Kilpauk Medical College and Hospital in Chennai. While her claim has been contested stoutly, the two incidents have, nevertheless, rocked the State that once won plaudits for its prevention of transmission programmes.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF DONATION?

There is a chain of approved processes to be followed in blood donation, aimed at quality control and negating the possibility of transmitting infections. Every qualified donor is put through a basic clinical evaluation (blood pressure and pulse). If normal, a sample of the blood donated is tested for HIV, Hepatitis B and C, sexually transmitted diseases and malaria. Meanwhile, the donated blood is stored separately in an 'unscreened refrigerator.' If the sample clears these tests, or if the tests turn negative, the blood will then be moved to the 'screened refrigerator.' If it tests positive for any of the infections, another sample from the same blood bag is tested again. If positive, the bag is discarded. The HIV Act mandates that the blood bank inform the positive donor, besides referring to the appropriate department for further treatment. When a requirement crops up,

the blood bank does a grouping to confirm that the group is the same, does a cross-match with the recipient and releases it to the ward.

WHAT NEXT? The Madras High Court has sought a report from the Health Department. The National and State Human Rights Commissions have taken *suo motu* cognisance of the issue and asked for the State's response. The need, however, is to build confidence in the community that the most exacting standards are followed in collecting, testing and storing blood, and then in transfusing it. Even if this calls for a relook at the entire process, it must be done. It is as crucial as making sure no one dies because they could not get blood in time.

(*Assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts is available on Sneha's toll-free suicide helpline: 0442464 0050*)

RAMYA KANNAN

WHY

Australian
Open will
be different?

What are the changes?

■ Tennis loves its traditions. But the feeling, at least in the recent past, has been that of a sport trying to slowly chip away at its perceived anachronism. The plethora of changes announced ahead of next week's Australian Open, the first Grand Slam tournament of the year, is to be seen in that context. Two of them stand out – the introduction of a 10-point tiebreak at 6-6 in the deciding set and 'Heat Stress Index' to replace the old Extreme Heat Policy. Other changes include the use of serve clock – to be set at 25 seconds – to help speed up matches, Hawk-Eye review technology on all 16 courts, increase in the number of spots in the women's qualifying draw from 96 to 128, and the inevitable upgrade in the prize money pool.

Why were they needed?

■ The tiebreak rule has followed a similar move by Wimbledon, albeit at 12-12 in the decider, to prevent long-drawn matches from messing up the schedule.

tions for every player in the draw.

How will it impact players?

■ A final set super tiebreak means encounters like the one in 2017, where Ivo Karlovic defeated Horacio Zeballos 22-20 in the fifth set, will be a thing of the past. So will be Halep's memorable 4-6, 6-4, 15-13 win over Lauren Davis and the 6-3, 4-6, 9-7 semifinal triumph over Angelique Kerber, both last year. While it is sure to help players physically, the move has generated criticism, with many arguing that the women's game could have been spared. If anything, it was the men's game which needed trimming and there too it was felt that curtailing the end would deprive fans of drama. In the 2008 Wimbledon men's singles final between Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, it is the 9-7 final set scoreline that everyone remembers and not the initial phase of the match, went the theory. As to how the new heat policy – which takes into account air temperature, radiant heat, humidity and wind

speed – plays out is yet to be seen. But tournament director Craig Tiley's confirmation that none of 2018's contentious decisions to continue play would have been overturned under the new system has dampened hopes.

How will the tournament pan out?

■ A rejuvenated Djokovic, a six-time champion here, is a welcome change from last year. So is the return of Serena Williams, who skipped the 2018 competition because of pregnancy. Andy Murray's recovery after his hip surgery has been slower than expected and the searing Australian summer is the least ideal of conditions to put his body to test. The same may apply for Rafael Nadal, who is coming back from an ankle surgery. However, defending men's singles champion Roger Federer is as resplendent as ever. Caroline Wozniacki, the women's champion, who has stuttered of late, will hope for some of it to rub off on her.

N. SUDARSHAN

WHEN

1
January 2019

Wall for equality: On Tuesday, thousands of women in Kerala formed a 620-km human chain from north to south, in support of gender equality and access to the Sabarimala temple. Backed by the State government, they were protesting against the ban on women in the age group of 10-50 from visiting the temple. Last September, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court threw the temple open to women of all ages, which led to an outpouring of protests. On Wednesday, two women in their 40s entered the temple for the first time since the verdict, sparking fresh clashes. "I had earlier made it clear that the government will provide protection if any woman comes forward to enter the temple," said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Pictures show women on Kannur Road in Kozhikode, and artistes painting on a 30-metre canvas set up by the Kerala Lalithakala Academy to drum up support for gender parity. ■ K. RAGESH, S. GOPAKUMAR



are an integral part of the food culture among most communities.

Children skipping meals is worrying because malnutrition is a serious issue. According to the National Family Health Survey 4 (NFHS) data for Karnataka (2015-2016), 36.2% of the children below the age of five are stunted, while 26.1% are wasted. The survey also reveals that 10.5% of the children were severely wasted, while 35.2% are underweight.

The Central Food Technological Research Institute has sent a report to the Department based on its earlier research findings that both onion and garlic were found to enhance the bioavailability of iron and zinc from grain.

But the institute has stated that during its survey across 270 schools in Mysuru district between January and May 2017, it found the average calorific value of the meals supplied by the APF was more than a school-cooked meal. The APF has said in a statement that its cooked meals are in compliance with

the nutritional norms prescribed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

What is the government's stand?

Principal Secretary S.R. Umashankar said a final call would be taken after considering the feedback from students and teachers. The APF has had a series of meeting with several stakeholders, including officials of the State Food Commission and the Education Department. The government will have to either accept the dietary norms of APF or make alternative arrangements for supplying food.

Are health activists worried?

Around 145 health activists, experts and citizens, who are part of the Right to Food Campaign and the Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, have written to the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Chief Minister, stating that children are eating less as they find the food bland. Sylvia Karpagam, a public health doc-

tor and researcher who is one of the signatories, argued for cooking culturally appropriate food in de-centralised kitchens.

Activists have also demanded that eggs be served as part of the midday meals as it is a good source of protein. They want the contract with the APF terminated, and meals prepared by self-help groups and other community-based organisations in accordance with nutritional norms and cultural practices, using fresh local produce.

Veena Shatrugna, a clinical nutritionist and former Deputy Director of the National Institute of Nutrition, said, "Normally, phytates and oxalates found in vegetarian diets precipitate iron and zinc and prevent their absorption from the gut. Onion and garlic appear to enhance absorption of these minerals." This is significant, she pointed out, because around 50% to 70% of children in India are anaemic.

TANU KULKARNI

WHERE

In Karnataka,
row over
midday meal

The Karnataka government's midday meal programme in schools has run into controversy with one of its NGO partners in the mammoth welfare exercise, International Society for Krishna Consciousness's subsidiary Akshaya Patra Foundation (APF), refusing to include onion and garlic in cooking. Following this, the State government

has not yet signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to continue the programme with APF that supplies food to 4.9 lakh students in government and government-aided schools through its centralised kitchens in several cities. In Bengaluru alone, it provides meals to 1.83 lakh students across 1,212 schools.

In November, the Department of Primary and Secondary Education directed the foundation to include onion and garlic in the noon meal and start supplying hot milk instead of cold milk to the students. While the foundation has started supplying hot milk to some schools on a pilot basis, it has categorically said it will not add onion and garlic.

Why does it matter?

An official of the State Food Commission said it had received complaints about students skipping the midday meals as they did not like the taste of the food without onion and garlic, which

CM YK

Nations of noise and silence

If too much noise prevents thinking in India, too great a silence indicates a refusal to think in Denmark



THE CONTROVERSIAL INDIAN

TABISH KHAIR
is a novelist and academic who works in Denmark

It is strange that I should be writing this piece. I have highlighted how the language of literature goes beyond the expectation of 'communication' in other language usages, such as medical literature or business writing. Literature explores, along with 'communication', those aspects of language that might be considered 'non-communicative' in other fields: paradox, contradiction, aporia, silence, gap, noise. In other words, I have stressed the role of 'noise' in the language of literature, just as I have underlined the role of 'silence' in it. But this piece, written on a train from Copenhagen to Aarhus, is about the dangers of noise. And, inevitably, silence.

No two countries offer a greater con-

trast in this regard. India is the subcontinent of noise; Denmark is a land of silence. Partly, this is because Denmark is sparsely populated: my train is half-empty. Can we even imagine a half-empty train between, say, Delhi and Kolkata? Or, Patna and Gaya?

A matter of national character

But part of the difference is also a matter of national character. People talk softly here and seldom interrupt each other, cars do not honk, even political processions almost never indulge in shouting and loud sloganising. This might well be because, politically, Denmark has been built on compromise: on the negative side, it compromised with Nazi Germany; on the positive side, it has been run with a general degree of success by various political coalitions for close to a century now. It is impossible to imagine any single party coming to power in Denmark, and even though the party coalitions change, the nation seems to steer a steady course with regard to citizen's rights, internal well-being, and the national economy.

India is a nation of noise. It strikes me every time I go to India, and even more



forcibly when I return to Denmark. I recall the first question about Denmark that my mother asked when she visited me: "Is there a holiday today? Why is it so quiet?" And in those days I was living in Copenhagen, arguably a metropolis, while my mother had only known the taluk towns of Bihar!

Noise, within limits, is not necessarily bad. Amartya Sen says as much in his book, *The Argumentative Indian*. While I put greater stress on conversation than argument, perhaps because I have lived for many years in Denmark now, Profes-

sor Sen sees arguments as an essential part of ongoing conversations.

Noise curtails thinking

Yet, a point comes when noise reduces and even prevents thinking – and hence, the exploration of meanings and the exchange of understanding. I find this point being exceeded more often than not in contemporary India. This happens not just on the roads, with their deafening cacophony, and in many ordinary conversations, with their loud interruptions and tendency to

wards overlapping monologues, but also in the media, especially TV, and political debates of all kinds.

The medium of thinking, as the German-Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han constantly reminds us, is quiet. That is why our sages are depicted as meditating in forests and on remote peaks. That is why Moses returned from a lonely trek up a mountain with his commandments; Buddha attained enlightenment under a tree; Mohammad had his first revelation alone in a cave.

It is sadly in the nature of once-colonised and now desperately 'developing' nations to suffer from the worst effects of environmental degradation. We can see this happening to our rivers and mountains. We can see this happening to our towns and cities: the pollution level in Delhi is 'severe' this winter. But perhaps the worst kind of pollution that we suffer from is noise pollution, for it curtails thinking, understanding and working out the best solutions. Even arguments only work as long as they do not end a conversation.

But, as an Indian, I do not just relish the quietness that this Scandinavian country affords me. I also sometimes

question the extent of its silence. Because quietness, like noise, has its uses and its excesses. Maybe one can even distinguish between quietness and silence, and it is a pity that we do not have a similar qualification of signifiers when it comes to 'noise'. (Maybe I should switch to Hindustani here in order to distinguish between necessary noise and destructive noise: *awaaz* and *bakaas* might work!)

Quietness and silence

Anyway, a distinction can be made between quietness and silence in the social context. Quietness is necessary for thinking and communicating, and literature, when it uses silence, does exactly this: it halts the easy flow of words to suggest what the words cannot encapsulate. But quietness, when it insists on gagging all social and political noise, turns into a dangerous and absolute silence. All countries have versions of it. In Denmark, it largely consists of a refusal to discuss First World privileges in the context of the global neoliberal economy. If too much noise prevents thinking, too great a silence indicates a refusal to think.

The scam in the ROFL deal

The question that even Rahul Gandhi does not dare to ask



ALLEGEDLY
G. SAMPATH
is Social Affairs Editor, The Hindu



Some of you may not agree but I strongly believe that India's greatest achievement since Independence is the inking of the ROFL deal with the French and the handover of the offset component to Double A, a man whose patriotism and commitment to excellence is blindingly clear to all but a handful of pliable journalists. Thankfully, most of the media, and I include myself in this larger subset of The Non-negotiables, know an honest deal when they see one, and the ROFL deal is the world's most honest deal since Bofors.

So I was shocked when a foreign jholawala-type NGO worker started arguing with me about the ROFL deal. I couldn't make head or tail of what Jon Snow (name changed to protect his identity) was talking about. So I'm sharing the transcript of our conversation. If any of you can make sense of what seems like poppycock to me, do enlighten me over email. Here goes:

JS: Can India really afford this deal?

Me: I'm sorry, what?

JS: You are paying ₹1,600 crore for one plane. Is that the right priority for a country where malnutrition is rampant and millions are still illiterate?

Me: Excuse me, what's that got to do with anything?

JS: Isn't this money better spent on public healthcare and a good school system with well-paid teachers?

Me: Are you crazy? You know how much this deal is worth? ₹7.8 billion! We can't spend that kind of money on health and education. Besides, India's defence is already underfunded.

JS: But India has been the world's largest importer of arms for several

years! And in the ROFL deal, you're now paying ₹1,000 crore more per jet than in the original deal, aren't you?

Me: You know nothing, Jon Snow. Stop talking.

JS: Fine, why don't you enlighten me?

Me: Look, we may be paying ₹1,000 crore extra and getting 90 jets less than what we need. So what? This is a matter of national security. When it comes to national security, everything else is irrelevant. When I say everything, I mean everything – cost, transparency, legality, privacy, fundamental rights (including the right to life), and, of course, democracy. No price is too high for national security. You can't put a price on the life and liberty of Indian citizens.

JS: Are farmers Indian citizens?

Me: Hmm... that's a tough one. What if they are?

JS: They are killing themselves because you can't ensure a decent price for their produce. How will your ROFL jets save their lives?

Me: You are mixing apples and oranges. Chalk and cheese. Cholesterol and cow urine. Pakodas and –

JS: Okay, I get it! Tell me this: why don't you drive a Porsche 911 Turbo S Cabriolet?

Me: I can't afford one. Simple!

JS: What if you signed away your entire salary for the rest of your life, along with your father's pension, as EMI towards the price of the Porsche?

Me: If I did that, how would I pay my bills? What would I eat?

JS: A poor country that can't afford to feed its people, can't afford to pay

its teachers, can't afford to keep its cities clean is a country that can't afford to buy 36 planes at ₹1,600 crore apiece. Is this so hard to understand?

Me: I'm sorry, but you've no understanding of India's threat perceptions or the need to modernise our military capabilities.

JS: This is the real scam in the whole ROFL deal.

Me: What do you mean?

JS: It's a question that not even Rahul Gandhi dares to ask. The biggest scam is that there is no debate at all on whether India should be splurging on these super-expensive jets in the first place, on whether there isn't another way to secure your interests.

Me: Another way?

JS: You already have nuclear deterrence. On top of that, you have enough conventional weapons to pummel Pakistan ten times over. Even if you sold all your PSUs, rivers, mineral resources, and borrowed all you could, and put all of that money exclusively in your defence budget, you still won't achieve parity with China. So what will you achieve by acquiring 36 ROFL jets?

Me: You're nuts. And you're not even an Indian.

JS: Speaking of 'Indianness', why can't India make its own ROFL jets?

Me: You mean, like Make in India and all that?

JS: Yeah, why can't your scientists design it and HAL manufacture it?

Me: Well, if Indians start making their own ROFL jets, how will we maintain our status as the world's top importer of arms?

JS: Ah, now you are making sense. For a long time, I didn't quite understand the meaning of 'national security'. Now it's clear. It's all about keeping Western arms manufacturers in business, isn't it? No developing country can afford to ignore its obligations in this regard.

Me: If I did that, how would I pay my bills? What would I eat?

JS: A poor country that can't afford to

pay

down to just five needs, not necessarily in order of importance.

Respect law, be humane

First, the new government must enforce the rule of law. This means expelling arbitrariness from the exercise of power; political decisions must not be grounded in the caprice of a single individual or group. No matter how powerful or wealthy, no one must be above the law that must be applied even-handedly. There must not be one set of criminal laws for one group, and quite another for other groups. The rule of law must not be fractured by the diktat of a mob, as in recent cases of lynching. No criminal should be allowed to roam freely with impunity. Can the newly elected government for once side unambiguously with victims of collective violence rather than with perpetrators?

A related point: it is shameful enough that a civilised society discriminates on grounds of religion, language, race, gender or caste. But to target a group because of any one of these and kill, maim, oppress, or humiliate it is downright obnoxious. Will the elected government stop this abomination, do all it can to prevent any expression of hate or occurrence of violence, and build a more inclusive society?

Second, a government is expected to

provide relief to citizens in dire need of material help, say, to victims of cyclones and floods, or farmers in calamitous distress. Every government is also meant to undertake major structural reforms to alleviate chronic poverty. Underlying such efforts is the assumption of the impoverished as mere biological organisms who require food, nutrition, clean water and air. But a caring government must also view its beneficiaries as people who need and value friendship, family and community, who have the capacity to reflect and self-reflect, who need to tell stories about themselves and imagine new worlds. Will the new government design policies that look at human life in all its richness and com-

plexity and support organisations that attend to the social and psychological consequences of material deprivations?

Respect institutions

Third, our government must respect the independence of institutions. A society is sustained and nourished by collective effort. Nothing of significance is achieved by one group alone, but by apportioning tasks to different groups. As work is divided among groups with appropriate but different skill sets, each generates its own specific rules, norms and values. Institutions are practices governed by domain-specific rules and norms. If a nation is to realise its goals, it is crucial that public institutions such as

the university, the press, the judiciary, the Reserve Bank of India, the Election Commission, the police and investigating agencies remain in the hands of able, qualified personnel who possess a deep understanding of not only the point of these institutions but also how specifically each contributes to the overall functioning of society. Elected leaders must ensure that these institutions work in tandem to realise collective purpose; they must not capture and run them according to their whims. They must facilitate their respective functions rather than arbitrarily interfere, misuse or abuse institutions. How can a government appoint someone to head an academic institution without a clue about norms of intellectual production and scholarship? How can the Sahitya Kala Parishad, Lalit Kala Akademi or the Film Institute be administered by one with little understanding of art, literature or cinema?

Listen to criticism

Fourth, an elected government must listen to what ordinary people say about it – good or bad. It is even more duty-bound to pay heed to public-spirited intellectuals – all those whose entire social role is to assess, evaluate and criticise those who wield power or have the potential to cause systematic harm to

ordinary people. Those who can't stomach dissent or protest are unfit to rule.

Protect cultural heritage

Finally, every society selectively remembers a part of its past to pass it on to future generations. For, if we don't remember the past for the sake of the future, even our present is irrevocably destroyed. Indeed, no human society can grow unless future generations inherit the archives of the past. Our collective heritage is a usable past chosen to construct a collective future. Such cultural heritage can be found in tangible objects such as monuments and intangible objects such as ideas, values and symbols. Rather than exploit this heritage for narrow political gains, we need a government committed to rescuing it from destruction, to connect traces of the past with a living present. I am told there are hundreds of thousands of old Pali and Sanskrit manuscripts decaying in different parts of the country, pedagogies of traditional learning on the verge of disappearance, oral traditions becoming extinct, hundreds of languages fading away. These are irrevocable losses. Will the new government focus on protecting this fast-decaying heritage rather than spend its time in cursorily renaming streets and cities to suit its political agenda?

An old wish list for a new government

Regardless of the party or coalition in power, a list of what the country urgently needs in the immediate future



THE PUBLIC EYE
RAJEEV BHARGAVA
is Professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi

This is the year of the general election. Political analysts and psephologists have already begun to forecast which party will get the largest number of parliamentary seats, and if it fails to secure a majority, the alliance partners it would seek to form a government. Men, women and even children will play this guessing game. Passionate discussion, intense arguments and mudslinging will soon become a national pastime. I confess that I too will be irresistibly sucked into it.

But for now, I will desist. Instead, I share with the reader my personal wish list of expectations from the new government, regardless of the party or coalition that forms it. Suspending personal preference, and keeping in view our collective interest, I ask what the country urgently needs in the immediate future.

I have deliberately pruned this list



to just five needs, not necessarily in order of importance.

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14 SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

CAPSULE



Picky birds

A study shows that female birds of paradise select their mates for song, display and plumage colour, giving rise to a 'courtship phenotype'. This depends on the environment. While song is the predominant factor on canopies, courtship display takes precedence on the forest floor.



Root of acne

A study published in *Nature Communications* finds that those affected by acne have similar genetic mutations. These are mutations in genes responsible for hair growth and follicle formation. This lends support to the theory that hair follicle shape can help bacterial colonisation and subsequent inflammation.



Genetic protection

Several genes in general have been associated with risk of Alzheimer's disease (AD). Of these, one particular allele has been associated with high risk of AD. Research on African people with this allele showed that they are at lower risk of getting AD. The researchers attribute this to the presence of a protective genetic variant.



Nerve agents fixed
Researchers have developed a nanoparticle-based bioscavenger that can act on nerve agents, break down the organophosphates and render them harmless. Rats and guinea pigs given prophylactic treatment of this compound were protected on exposure to the nerve agent - sarin - over seven days.



Reviewing vision
A new study unsettles what was believed to be one of the best understood parts of the brain - the visual system. It shows that the brain area which perceives moving objects, does not receive stimuli from the visual cortex as believed but from an ancient sensory processing centre at the base of the brain called the superior colliculus.

ODD & END

Brainwaves block

To come up with creative ideas, the brain needs to bypass obvious, run-of-the-mill ideas. However, it has not been clear until now how the brain achieves this. A new study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* shows how this transpires. According to the study, brainwaves, known as alpha oscillations, in the right temporal lobe increase when the brain needs to shut off the obvious solutions. Higher levels of alpha oscillations help the individual come up with creative or out-of-the-box solutions. The study showed that stimulating the right temporal lobe with alpha frequency waves resulted in increased ability to inhibit obvious ideas. Previous studies have shown that creative people tend to avoid strong associations and reach creative ideas.

Molecular mechanism of prostate cancer subtype unravelled

It will help in the treatment, disease management of several SPINK1-positive tumours

R. PRASAD



A significant reduction in tumour growth was observed in chicken embryos and mice when microRNAs were introduced, say Bushra Ateeq (left), Vipul Bhatia (centre) and Anjali Yadav.

The molecular mechanism and pathobiology of SPINK1-positive prostate cancer subtype, the second most recurrent and aggressive in nature, that affects about 15% of patients has been finally unravelled. The study was done by a multi-institutional team led by Prof. Bushra Ateeq from the Department of Biological Sciences and Bioengineering at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur. The SPINK1-positive prostate cancer subtype derives its name from the excess amount of SPINK1 oncogene found in the cancer cells.

Excess production of SPINK1 gene responsible for tumour and metastasis is not restricted to prostate cancer alone but also seen in colorectal, lung, pancreatic, breast and ovarian cancers. The insights gained in this study might therefore help in the treatment and disease management of several SPINK1-positive malignancies.

In addition to excess amount of the SPINK1 oncogene, the researchers found that most cancer cells belonging to this subtype also have more than normal amount of a particular protein called EZH2. Also, the levels of two microRNAs (miRNA-338-5p and miRNA-421) produced in SPINK1-positive prostate cancer cells were much less.

"We found that the increased levels of EZH2 protein triggers the reduction in the synthesis of these two microRNAs in SPINK1-positive cancer cells. To validate the role of the two microRNAs in regulating the expression of the SPINK1 oncogene, the researchers introduced the microRNAs into the SPINK1-positive cancer cell lines. When the amount of microRNAs in the cell lines was

increased, the SPINK1 level reduced and there were marked changes in the oncogenic properties - the cell proliferation and invasion reduced.

"The observations made using SPINK1-positive cell lines were validated in chicken embryos and mouse models," says Anjali Yadav from the Department of Biological Sciences and Bioengineering at IIT Kanpur and one of the first authors of a paper published in *Clinical Cancer Research*.

In both chicken embryo and mouse model experiments, the SPINK1-positive prostate cancer cells were modified by introducing the microRNAs and were tested for tumour growth and metastasis.

"Tumour was found growing aggressively in mice of the control group but significantly reduced in size in the microRNA overexpressing group," says Vipul Bhatia from IIT Kan-

pur and the other first author of the paper. "A significant reduction in tumour growth was also observed in chicken embryos that were implanted with microRNA-modified prostate cancer cells."

Metastasis was also significantly reduced in both the lungs and bone marrow of mice implanted with microRNA-modified prostate cancer cells. But metastasis results were a little different in the case of chicken. While metastasis was less in the lungs, but both control and microRNA modified cancer cells failed to metastasise in the liver.

The researchers tested the effectiveness of epigenetic drugs to restore the levels of the microRNAs and reduce the expression of the SPINK1 gene using SPINK1-positive cancer cell lines that did not have the two microRNAs. "These drugs could restore the expression of the two microRNAs leading to a reduction in the SPINK1 expression. We could abrogate the SPINK1-mediated oncogenicity in terms of cell-cycle progression, stemness and drug resistance," says Prof. Ateeq. "We could see similar effects when we replenished the SPINK1-positive cancer cell lines with synthetic microRNAs."

"We will soon start studying the role of other RNA species which don't code for proteins but play an important role in SPINK1 gene regulation. We are also looking at other genetic aberrations that play an oncogenic role in the SPINK1-positive subtype," says Prof. Ateeq.

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Detecting ultralow levels of mercury in water

The sensor has high sensitivity and selectivity

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN



This technique can be used for biofluids or tissue extracts, wherein detection of such low concentration does matter, says Govindaraju.

ence under laser light. When water contaminated with mercury is added to this solution, the fluorescence is absent, and the molecules form a hydrogel. This method can detect only up to 5 nanomolar (0.1 parts per billion) of mercury in water.

However, the sensitivity drastically improves with a novel technique developed by T. Govindaraju's group in collaboration with that of Suresh Bharava of RMIT, Australia.

Sensitive detector

The small HPH molecules are organised on gold thin films coated on polystyrene beads. "The small molecule is a biamphiphile, because it has both hydrophilic (histidine) units on the surface and hydrophobic (perylene) core units," explains Dr Govindaraju in whose lab the technique was developed. The molecule has two arm-like projections on either side of the core,

one of which binds to the gold surface and the other is free pointing outwards. When mercury contaminated water is added to this mixture, the mercury ions bind to the free ends. When subjected to Raman spectroscopy, the response after mercury has bound to the particles is highly enhanced as compared to before the binding of mercury. This gives a measurable optical response. "Our system is capable of detecting attomolar [concentration], it can detect any concentration above this level with very high accuracy," says Dr Govindaraju. Although the technique has been demonstrated for water, it can come in useful for detecting mercury elsewhere too. "This technique can be used for any other sample, including biofluids or tissue extracts, wherein detection of such low concentration does matter," he adds.

Scientists unearth Asia's first fossil *Dioscorea* yam leaf

Leaf fossil could hint at Gondwanan origin of these plants

AATHIRA PERINCHERY



The leaf fossil was found in the Gurha lignite mine in Bikaner. • ANUMEHA SHUKLA/R.C. MEHROTRA

part of Rajasthan during early Eocene. Other fossil plants observed in the mine also suggest this historical climate in the area, which is now dry and consists of desert vegetation.

So what caused such a drastic change in climate? As the Indian subcontinent broke away from the super-continent Gondwanaland many millions of years ago and drifted towards the Equator, the resulting tropical weather created lush tropical forests here. As the landmass moved further north and away from the equator, dry vegetation replaced these forests, write the authors. Further, based on the location of other *Dioscorea* fossils across the world (from continents that used to be part of Gondwanaland) and the current pan-tropical distribution of *Dioscorea* species across the world, the scientists suggest in their study published in *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* that *Dioscorea* plants could be of Gondwanan origin. However, more fossil records would be required to confirm this, added Dr. Shukla.

Tropical forests

The team named their new find *Dioscorea eocenicus*: the first ever *Dioscorea* fossil recorded from Asia. Currently, species of *Dioscorea* in India are found in the humid, tropical forests of the country. Based on this, the team infer that such tropical forests must have flourished in this

Carbon microneedles: Low-cost, painless injections

Even after 15 insertions, the patch and needles remained intact

ASWATHI PACHA



The new carbon microneedles are 400 micrometres long and can pierce painlessly, says Richa Mishra (standing).

completed his post-doctoral research from the institute. He is one of the corresponding authors of the work published in *Nature Microsystems & Nanoelectronics*.

naging the pressure.

Drug delivery

"We are now working on developing a drug reservoir and micropump which can be attached to the patch for controlled drug delivery. Just like a band-aid, we can fabricate a dia-aid that can be used by diabetic patients for painless insulin administration," says Tarun Kantti Bhattacharyya from the Department of Electronics and Electrical Communication Engineering at the In-

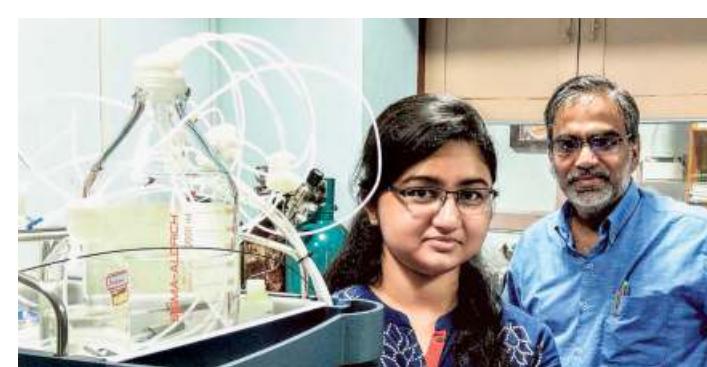
stitute and one of the corresponding authors of the work. "Though we cannot bring down the cost of insulin, this patch can reduce the device cost by almost 50%."

When a needle is inserted into the skin, it experiences resistance from the skin. A good needle should be able to overcome the forces to penetrate the skin. Using compression and bending tests, the researchers found that the needles did not break or bend when force was applied. The patch was tested on mouse models and even after 15 insertions, the patch and needles remained intact. "We found that the new carbon microneedles overcame the resistive forces of our skin and was able to successfully pierce the skin. And as the needles are only 400 micrometer long, it will be completely painless," says Richa Mishra, PhD scholar at the institute and first author of the work.

Silver atoms of nanoparticles are mobile, IIT Madras team finds

The rapid exchange of silver atoms in solution might have implications in real-life situations

R. PRASAD



Mixing of silver atoms is akin to the exchange of hydrogen and deuterium atoms when normal and heavy water are mixed, say Pradeep (right) and Papri Chakraborty.

nanoscience community. We have always been thinking that silver and gold particles are rigid, well defined structures even at the nanoscale. But we observed silver atoms undergoing dynamic changes in solution," says Prof. Pradeep. "Unlike bulk silver, silver nanopar-

ticles are not rigid and fixed at specific locations as we thought them to be." The results were published in the journal *Science Advances*.

The rapid exchange of silver atoms in solution might have implications in real-life situations.

At -20 degree C, the exchange rate was slower and took about 30 seconds to attain equilibrium distribution. The relatively longer time taken to reach equilibrium allowed the researchers to observe the in-between states of atom exchange. They found that the atom transfer rate is similar to that in water.

Slower exchange rate

The atom exchange rate slowed down drastically when silver nanoclusters were composed of 29 atoms - it took about three hours to reach dynamic equilibrium at room temperature compared with rapid exchange in the case of 25-atom clusters. The slower exchange rates allowed the researchers to study the dynamics in greater detail.

The exchange went through multiple steps. First, there was rapid exchange of atoms at the sur-

face of the nanoparticle. Then the exchanged atoms diffused into the core of the nanoparticle making more exchange at the surface possible. Finally, there was equilibration of the mixed isotope system.

"The difference in the exchange rate between the clusters made of 25 and 29 silver atoms is not due to the difference in the number of atoms but due to the ligand used for binding to the silver atoms," says Papri Chakraborty from the Department of Chemistry at IIT Madras and first author of the paper. "The ligand binds to each silver atom at just one site in the case of the cluster composed of 25 atoms. But it binds at two sites of the silver atoms in the 29-atom cluster thus rendering the structure rigid."

"Such dynamics can occur in any nanosystem. Fundamental insight the study provides is that nanoparticles are indeed molecules," Prof. Pradeep says.

HEALTHLINE RITESH KUMAR



"Elderly individuals with age-related hearing loss had more symptoms of depression." — Study in JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery

AROUND THE WORLD

Gender responses to brain cancer therapy



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Chemotherapy for a deadly form of brain cancer called glioblastoma is more effective in women than in men, a new study in the U.S. has found. The research sheds light on the molecular basis of sex differences in glioblastoma treatment and suggests that tailoring therapies to sex differences could lead to improved patient outcomes. The scientists used MRI-based techniques to analyse tumour growth every two months in a group of 63 glioblastoma patients (40 males and 23 females) who received standard-of-care treatments such as surgery and the chemotherapeutic drug, temozolomide (TMZ). The imaging revealed that the female patients displayed lower tumour growth rates in response to TMZ than male patients, indicating the female patients benefited more from standard-of-care treatment. The findings appear in *Science Translational Medicine*.

New source for hepatitis vaccine

A relatively abundant human gene family, VH1-69, may be a good place to source antibodies that may help make a vaccine for the highly diverse hepatitis C virus (HCV). The number of new HCV infections in the U.S.

increased threefold from 2010 to 2015, largely due to the increase in injection drug users caused by the opioid crisis. Hepatitis C can be cured by certain drugs, but these are expensive, thus limiting them to a small number of people. The broadly-neutralising antibodies (b-Nabs) from the gene family target a region called the AR3 of the virus. The study, discovered three new antibody-complex structures — AR3A, AR3B and AR3D — that target AR3. In further studies, the scientists said the VH1-69 gene family encoding this viral region leads to HCV-specific bNabs. The findings appear in *Science Advances*.

Saliva test for malaria



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

A new saliva-based test can rapidly identify individuals who harbour infectious reservoirs of the malaria parasite, according to a new study by researchers in the U.S. and Africa. The assay, while still at the proof-of-concept stage, could provide a non-invasive tool to epidemiologists and clinicians to track down and target this parasite reservoir (which is responsible for most malaria transmission) in low-resource settings. Malaria is a massive drain on public health across areas of the world such as sub-Saharan Africa, where it kills approximately 500,000 children each year. Curtailing transmission of the malaria parasite has proved difficult because some individuals infected with malaria have no symptoms. The test-developers examined saliva samples from 12 children with subclinical malaria and discovered 35 protein markers of the *Plasmodium falciparum* parasite, which causes most malaria infections in humans. They selected one protein marker, named PSSP17, and have designed a point-of-need diagnostic test based on a fluorescent antibody that detects the protein in saliva samples in three to 30 minutes (depending on how much of the protein is in the sample).

Teaching the body to self-care diabetes

Diabetes is caused by the inability of damaged or non-existing insulin cells to produce insulin, a hormone that is necessary in regulating blood sugar levels. Many diabetes patients take insulin supplements to regulate these

levels. Researchers in Norway have discovered that glucagon producing cells in the pancreas can change identity and adapt so that they do the job for their neighbouring damaged or missing insulin cells. This could possibly start a new form of treatment for diabetes, where the body can produce its own insulin. The researchers discovered that only about 2% of the neighbouring cells in the pancreas could change identity. However, even that amount opens doors to new treatment approaches. Cell identity is not a passive process but a result of signals from the surrounding cells. In the study, researchers were able to increase the number of insulin producing cells to 5% by using a drug that influenced the inter-cell signalling process. These results have only been shown in animal models.

Repeat miscarriages due to faulty sperm

Multiple miscarriages may be linked to the poor quality of a man's sperm, according to new research. The early-stage study investigated the sperm quality of 50 men whose partners had suffered three or more consecutive miscarriages. The research, in London, showed that compared to men whose partners had not experienced miscarriages, the sperm of those involved in the study had higher levels of DNA damage. The findings may open new avenues to finding treatments to reduce the risk of miscarriage. Until recently recurrent miscarriage was thought to be caused by health issues with the mother, such as infection or immune problems. Men's health, and the health of their sperm, was not analysed. A growing body of evidence now suggests sperm health dictates the health of a pregnancy. The findings appear in the journal *Clinical Chemistry*.

DEMYSTIFYING SCIENCE

What is inhalable m-RNA?

Messenger RNA, which can induce cells to produce therapeutic proteins, holds great promise for treating a variety of diseases. The biggest obstacle to this approach so far has been finding safe and efficient ways to deliver mRNA molecules to the target cells. Researchers in the U.S. have now designed an inhalable form of mRNA. They say this aerosol could be administered directly to the lungs to help treat diseases such as cystic fibrosis. The researchers also showed that lung cells in mice could produce a target protein, in this case, a bioluminescent protein. If the same success rate can be achieved with therapeutic proteins, this could be high enough to treat many lung diseases, they say. — Science Daily

CM YK

Read menu card, curb appetite

There is a proposal to make it mandatory for restaurants to declare calorie counts of food

AFSHAN YASMEEN

If you knew that the masala dosa you are relishing contained nearly 1,030 calories, would you reach out for that second helping? A recent study has demonstrated that the brain makes "sensible food choices" when calorie information is available on the menu card.

Read and eat

The study, published in the *PLOS One*, a peer-reviewed science journal, says seeing pictures of food with calorie information not only makes food less appetising but may also change the way our brain responds to food. When food images appeared with the calorie content, the brain showed decreased activation of the reward system and increased activation in the control system.

In other words, says the study, foods that you might otherwise be inclined to eat became less desirable once the calorie content was displayed.

For the study, 42 undergraduate students at the Dartmouth University, United States, were split into dieting and non-dieting groups. For the analysis their brain activity was measured while shown pictures of food with and without calorie information. They were then asked to rate their desire to eat the food.

The researchers observed that the self-reported desire to eat the food decreased when the subjects were shown pictures of food with calorie information.



However, nutritionists in India have mixed reactions to the applicability of this study to India. Those critical say that poor awareness about measuring calories and the "desire and longing for food" make it hard to implement in Indian restaurants

Lack of awareness

Dr. Rebecca Kurian Raj, Head, Nutrition and Lifestyle Clinic, St John's Medical College Hospital, Bengaluru, says people are not aware of how many calories they are consuming every time they eat out. "Restaurant food is high in calories and most of the time, one can get more than half the requirement of the daily calories in a single meal of masala dosa, sambar and chutney, which is about 1023.7

calories," she reckons.

Dr. Raj, was one of the authors of a multi-centre study that aimed to measure the calorie content of frequently ordered meals from sit-down and fast-food restaurants in five countries — India, Brazil, China, Finland and Ghana — and compare values with U.S. data. This study, published last month in the *British Medical Journal*, found variability in the amount of calories across restaurants because of differences in portion sizes and energy density (amount of calories for a given weight or volume).

She says, "The support of government-led initiatives to introduce mandatory calorie labelling in menus in restaurants, cafes and takeaway combined with significant efforts by the restaurants to

reduce portion size, calories and sugar in the meals could help individuals to make sensible food choices."

However, Veena Shatrujan, former Deputy Director of the Hyderabad-based National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), says calorie labelling on menu cards may not work in India given poor calorie literacy. "Even if the labelling is done, how many of us will bother to read it or keep daily counts?" she points out. "Individual response to calorie labelling is based on many factors including desire and longing for new processed foods introduced into the market every day. It will be really difficult to standardise responses across class and caste at this stage. We need to debate these issues. We also need more research on an ideal diet for Indians, vegetarians and non-vegetarians."

Draft regulations

But calorie-counts in restaurants are on the government's mind. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), a Union Health Ministry body, has issued draft packaging and labelling regulations making it mandatory for restaurant chains to declare on the menu cards, the calorie counts of all the dishes served at their outlets. It also intends to bring online food-delivery platforms and food aggregators under the ambit of these regulations.

FSSAI Chief Executive Director Pawan Kumar Agarwal says the organisation has been discussing these regulations with the restaurant-industry for over a year: "We

VEENA SHATRUJANA,
Former Deputy Director,
National Institute of Nutrition,
Hyderabad

had earlier urged restaurant companies to start printing calorie counts on their menu cards voluntarily... We are committed to enforce the rules."

However, the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Association of India (FHRAI) says this is not achievable in any serviced restaurant. FHRAI Vice President Gurbax Singh Kohli, argues that the calorie count for the same dish could vary dramatically due to various factors such as recipes and ingredients: "While the preparation of every food item changes with every chef, restaurants usually customise recipes to suit the choice of their customers," says Kohli, who also heads the Hotels and Restaurants Association Western India. While one customer may want his food to be prepared in olive oil, the other would want an extra topping of cheese. While the thought process is good, printing calorie counts on the menu card is not achievable and the authority should modify the draft rules.

yasmeen.yasmeen@thehindu.co.in

Seven in one



Doors open: The Médipôle Lyon-Villeurbanne — said to be the largest private hospital in France, and medical project that began in 2013, in Villeurbanne — finally opened its doors to patients on January 2. Its promoters have called it the "result of an innovative approach to hospital cooperation" as it brings together seven institutions in Lyon, including two institutions of the Capio group (Clinique du Tonkin, Clinique du Grand Large) and five institutions of Resamut (Clinique Mutualiste de Lyon, Union Clinic, SSR Les Ormes, SSR Center Bayard and SSR Pédiatrique La Brackenell). All their operations are now on a single site, while maintaining individual identity, legal autonomy and areas of excellence. The clear division of medical activities between the two partners allows "greater expertise and better health care". Built on a five-hectare plot, the facility will have 50 specialities and offer over 700 beds and 28 operating theatres. It is expected to receive 250,000 consultations each year. Picture shows staff preparing for the first surgeries, on January 2. • JEFF PACHOUD/AFP

Dementia patients can still learn

In a trial, therapists train patients in simple tasks to make daily life much easier

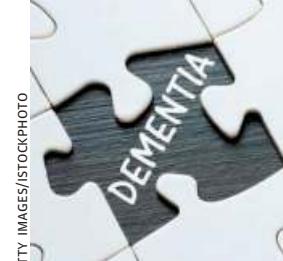
PAULA SPAN

He was a retired factory worker, living with his wife outside a small town in Wales, in the United Kingdom. Once outgoing and sociable, engaged in local activities including a community choir, he'd been jolted by a diagnosis of early dementia.

A few months later, at 70, he wouldn't leave the house alone, fearful that if he needed help, he couldn't manage to use a cellphone to call his wife. He avoided household chores he'd previously undertaken, such as doing laundry. When his frustrated wife tried to show him how to use the washer, he couldn't remember her instructions.

"He'd lost a lot of confidence," said Linda Clare, a clinical psychologist at the University of Exeter. "He was actually capable, but he was frightened of making a mistake, getting it wrong."

A t home
Dr. Clare directed a recent trial of cognitive rehabilitation in England and Wales in which the patient was enrolled. Cognitive rehabilitation, which Dr. Clare has been researching for 20 years, evolved from methods used to help people with brain injuries.



The practice brings occupational and other therapists into the homes of dementia patients to learn which everyday activities they're struggling with and which abilities they want to preserve or improve upon. Organising a visit with a friend, perhaps. Keeping track of the day's appointments and plans. Heating a prepared lunch without burning it.

In weekly sessions over several months, the therapists devise individual strategies that can help, at least in the early and moderate stages of the disease. The therapists show patients how to compensate for memory problems and to practise new techniques.

Cognitive rehab has its limitations. "We never suggest this can reverse the effects of dementia," Dr. Clare said. It will not raise participants' scores on tests of mental ability.

But she and other European researchers have demonstrated that people with

dementia can significantly improve their ability to do the tasks they've opted to tackle, their chosen priorities. Those improvements persist over months, perhaps up to a year, even as participants' cognition declines in other ways.

"They want to be enabled to manage their lives," said Dr. Clare. "It gives hope that they can handle everyday challenges."

This approach may represent the future for the growing number of older adults around the world with dementia. Trials of drugs to prevent or treat dementia have failed over and over. Even if some future treatment demonstrated effectiveness, millions of people and their stressed family caregivers need help now.

Different approach

"We can't wait another 20 years for some magic pill," says Laura Gitlin, dean of the College of Nursing and Health Professions at Drexel University, U.S. She has developed something called the Tailored Activity Program (T.A.P.), somewhat similar to cognitive rehab, which also brings occupational therapists into people's homes.

"We're trying to lay the scientific basis for nonpharmacological approaches,"

Dr. Gitlin said. "These studies signal that they can have powerful effects on people's lives."

In the United Kingdom, for instance, a government-supported trial involving 475 people with early-stage dementia found that after cognitive rehab, most participants attained their goals, while those in a control group did not, and they maintained improvement at three months and at nine months. (The study has not yet been published; Dr. Clare presented the results at a conference last year.)

A smaller trial of cognitive rehab by Belgian researchers, recently published in the *Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry and Neurology*, found that patients with early Alzheimer's disease remained better able to do their chosen activities after a year.

"More and more, people will understand how many preserved abilities there are in dementia, and that will help change minds," says Eric Salmon, director of the memory clinic at the University of Liege in Belgium and the senior author of that study.

In the United States, Dr. Gitlin's T.A.P. programme includes more patients with serious cognitive loss than cognitive rehab does.

Time to talk, period



RICA SINGH

Discussion of menstruation is largely taboo in our society. The stigma around it has resulted in a lack of information being shared between generations, particularly around the basic dos and don'ts when a girl begins her period.

One might say, so what? What is the need for them to know if their mothers and grandmothers never did? It is, in fact, crucial for girls to learn about the menstrual cycle. The lack of awareness around her first period can put a young girl, sometimes as young as 10, through mental trauma and fear over what is happening to her, combined with a sense of shame because of the age-old stigma around a menstruating woman. A girl often has to hide the fact from family members, friends, teachers and others.

I have often been asked about the need for a girl to talk to more people or speak about the subject openly. I would respond with a simple question: What is the need to make a girl feel inadequate because of her gender or biology? Why should we subject a young mind to the mental turbulence of dealing with physical change and a monthly occurrence which she cannot talk about, to the extent that she has to hide things such as the cloth that she is using?

Such restrictive views and practices not only expose young girls to infections but also create a feeling of inadequacy. A young girl entering a crucial stage of her life is often made to feel that she is inferior in the family. There are numerous instances of girls not being allowed to participate in family celebrations, functions, prayers, and, sometimes, attend school.

The statistics are unknown, but there are stories of girls dropping out of school in semi-urban and rural areas once they start menstruating. This is not only driven by a lack of appropriate toilet and sanitation facilities in schools, which governments and non-governmental organisations have been actively trying to fix, but also the outdated social practice of 'protecting' an adolescent girl by confinement, until she gets married.

In rural India, approximately 80% of girls miss school for three to four days a month, coinciding with the start of menstruation. A cloth is prone to leakage and staining and does not keep a girl comfortable or safe from infection during those days. The reason for women and girls not possessing sanitary napkins is driven by various factors, affordability being one. However, a lot of cultural factors work against girls/women accessing sanitary napkins, which stops a family from spending ₹30 on an average for a growing girl, or a woman in the family — it is not seen as a priority.

Foremost is the issue of denial. Women have been programmed not to discuss the topic openly, with most preferring to suffer in isolation and skip work or school. Then comes the distinct lack of awareness of better hygiene options, including sanitary napkins. Older women or friends may advise against it, calling it an avoidable expense or even a sin. Quite a few grocery outlets refuse to "touch" and stock sanitary napkins. There is also the issue of disposal.

We need to educate girls and women about the need for clean, dry menstrual hygiene products and the pitfalls of wrong methods. A high incidence of cervical cancer is reportedly linked to infections from soiled and damp cloth. A small amount of ₹25-₹30 for sanitary napkins will not only prevent infections but also allow a girl to live her life and ensure a woman does not lose two-three days of her livelihood each month.

There is a strong need for each of us to openly talk about periods. Let's talk periods and no longer stay silent.

Richa Singh is CEO, Niine Sanitary Napkins

Life after Gujarat violence

A journalist traces the stories of three very different men who participated in the mass hate crimes of 2002

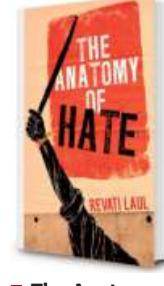
HARSH MANDER

India has been the site of recurring episodes of horrific hate violence, which target people disadvantaged by caste, religious identity and gender. In all such episodes – of Dalit atrocities, communal killings, lynching, gangrapes – we tend to imagine the perpetrators of these crimes who rape, murder and loot in frenzies of hate and bigotry, as faceless homogenous blurs of unmitigated evil.

We tend to forget that each of the men in these mobs (and they are almost always men) are also human beings with individual lives, aspirations, dreams, frustrations, and loves (hopefully) as well as hates. Most have families to which they go back to after their hands are stained with blood, and to the beds of wives and partners after they have raped other women. Who are these people? Why do they kill, rape and plunder? What do they do with their lives after violently acting out their hate?

Looking for answers

Revati Laul is that rare journalist who set out to find some answers to these questions after the brutal communal carnage of 2002 in Gujarat. A reputed investigative television and print journalist, Laul found herself obsessed with these very questions. Her stunning and disturbing book, *The Anatomy of Hate*, is the result of her quest for answers. This book was 14 years in the making. She took 10 years to talk to about 100 men who had joined in the crimes of 2002, and



The Anatomy of Hate
Revati Laul
Context/ Westland Books
₹599

to find among them persons who were willing to tell their stories of hate, guilt and complicity. There were finally three men whose stories she resolved to tell. It took her another four years to understand their stories in their complex layering, and to weave these into a book.

We meet in the pages of her book a college student, Pranav, who would accompany his host-mates to loot stores every night during the carnage, to stock themselves with expensive shoes and clothes from shops owned by Muslims. We are unnerved by their causal utter amorality, their complete freedom from any guilt or shame. We balk to read of a night when they decide to loot a food-store because their midnight shop-lifts had left them hungry. It matters little that it is owned by a Hindu. After they ransack it, they set it on fire, and later blame Muslims for it.

We meet Dungar, an Adivasi who is drawn into the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, attracted by the pow-



From the ashes: A survivor of the communal carnage of 2002 looks at photos of the victims at a programme in Ahmedabad. ■ PTI

er and status it accords him, and its call to Adivasis to give up liquor and meat. He is stirred when his leader invokes, 'You have one day. Burn the Muslims'; and on this call, Dungar sets fire to the homes and fields of his 13 Muslim neighbours, driving them out of his village.

And we meet Suresh Langdo, from Chharanagar, adjacent to Naroda Patiya in Ahmedabad, who boasts of raping and pulping to death Muslim women, and who is charged with murdering a preg-

nant woman and killing her foetus. And we encounter the irony of his marriage to a Muslim woman Farzana, who he batters, abuses, rapes and loves in turn.

The back stories

Laul draws us into their back stories. Pranav who is born into a privileged upper-caste, landed household, in a village with traditionally segregated Dalit and Muslim enclaves, rebelled as a teenager by having eggs, which were taboo, and liquor. Dungar

emerges as a spirited and intelligent Adivasi boy, ravaged by his father's drunken violence against his mother. His upper-caste teacher takes him under his wing, and becomes his role-model. The Sangh recruits him, and teaches him to see himself as Hindu, and to detest Muslims.

Suresh is born into a family of professional thieves and illicit hooch makers. His childhood is wrecked by polio that cost him one leg, and his teachers' taunts about his birth in a community of

thieves'. As a young man, he becomes notorious for robbery and raping women.

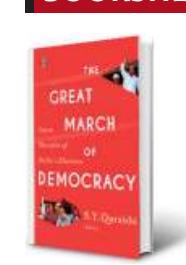
The most fascinating, and sometimes unexpected part of Laul's story is the descriptions of what course the lives of these three men took after their role in the communal carnage of 2002.

Changing tracks

Pranav is riven by remorse, becomes an atheist, and devotes himself to rebuilding the lives of the survivors of the carnage, and also to restoring goodwill in the social relations between Hindus and Muslims, by joint cricket matches, and engaging Hindus in the rebuilding of Muslim homes. Dungar becomes an archetypal power-grabbing politician. And Suresh's life plunges steeply downwards; his wife Farzana finally despairs of him and divorces him; he lands in prison, where perhaps he will spend the rest of his life.

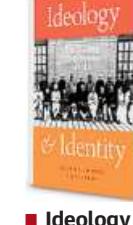
Laul does not offer us a morality tale. She does not write fiction. She tells us, in eloquent prose and careful detail, the stories of the life-trajectories of these three very different men who participated in the mass hate crimes of 2002. By so doing, she holds a mirror to us as a people: to who we are, what we have become, and what we can become. Their stories must concern us, if we are to both understand and hopefully one day end hate violence.

This is a rare book, brave and fiercely honest, unsettling, deeply troubling. Those who worry about the future of India cannot afford to miss it.



The Great March of Democracy: Seven Decades of India's Elections
Edited by S.Y. Quraishi
Penguin Random House
₹699

As India gears up for the Lok Sabha elections, the Election Commission of India marks the beginning of its 70th year. This book celebrates seven decades of India's democracy and the Election Commission's excellence and rigour, with a collection of essays written by analysts, politicians, social workers and public servants.



Ideology & Identity: The Changing Party Systems of India
Pradeep K. Chhibber,
Rahul Verma
Oxford University Press
₹895

Indian party politics, commonly viewed as chaotic and corrupt, is a model for deepening democracy and accommodating diversity. Using survey data from election studies and evidence from the Constituent Assembly debates, Chhibber and Verma show how education, the media, and religious practice transmit the competing ideas.

Tangled history

Exploring experiences of East India men and women, intrigues and intimacies

ARVIND SIVARAMAKRISHNAN

Commuting in from a south London suburb, I sometimes met former planters eager to talk with me, as we trundled past narrow Victorian terraces; the buildings, sullen in thin, grey rain, summed up the widespread indifference among Britons to many who had run their former empire. I wondered how my interlocutors coped with their loss – of the space and the light, of the big wooden-framed houses with creepers on the pillars and views over two ranges of hills to jagged, towering walls of rock and ice beyond.

Yet the planters may have known little of other British lives in India; Steve, the chef at my local pub in another city, used to tell me how, trained for Murmansk but sent to Bengal, he and his barrack-mates spent the war's closing months playing football with Bengali sides.

Rich mosaic

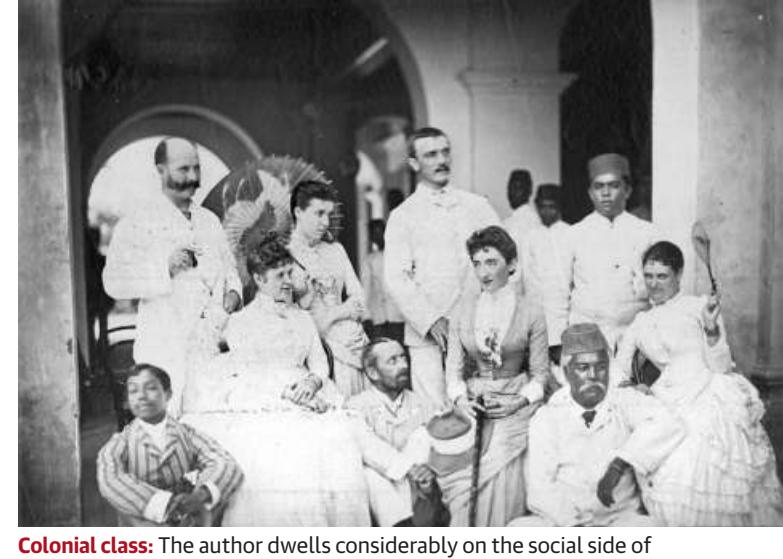
David Gilmour has attempted the immense task of describing millions of lives led by Britons over three centuries both in imperial Britain and in India. This is a mosaic of hundreds, possibly thousands, of stories, in a thematic account ranging from motivations and intentions through working lives to the colonials' social experiences – intimacies, domesticities, leisure, and etiquette.

The detail, drawn from a colossal amount of material, is extraordinary but not oppressive, and shows the complexity of this tangled history. Through the 18th century and into the 19th, it was predominantly English men who went to India to make money and go into politics back home. Enough succeeded to comprise a tenth of parliament, but many Scots went east to pay for unprofitable estates, or because they were second sons in family firms.

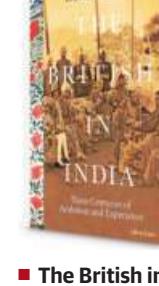
The East Indians were very corrupt; in a reference to the 1834 Poor Law, the reformer John Bright called the empire 'a gigantic system of outdoor relief' for the aristocracy.

The book's themes themselves travel, from voyages and journeys to and within India (one officer, stranded all night on a mudbank, was not eaten by crocodiles) to the world of the colonials, from the end of the Company's monopoly to many facets of imperial rule. The old Company hands thought the new exam-recruited Indian Civil Service officers frightful specimens from a lower class (these passages are delicious) but the latter were efficient, and their presence resulted from Britain's cleanup – itself derived from reforms the government had imposed on the Company – of the home civil service.

The stories indirectly show the origins and development of the Indian Army, the Indian Medical Service, the railways, and the Indian Civil Service. No one kind of person was involved, of



Colonial class: The author dwells considerably on the social side of the British during the Raj. ■ WIKI COMMONS



The British in India: Three Centuries of Ambition and Experience
David Gilmour
Allen Lane/ PRH
₹999

course, and at least some of the people were astonishing characters, immensely energetic and committed to establishing education and other systems (one official solemnised his own marriage, but the courts, possibly if improbably presaging Wittgenstein, ruled the ceremony invalid). Many were open to what they encountered; for a long time, Indians accepted without query decisions by British magistrates and senior officials, as they thought the rulings would be free of caste or religious bias.

Life in India

The social side occupies Gilmour most, and he rightly spends time on the lives of colonial women, almost all of whom made their own worlds without the props of official standing and duties.

The Indian elites figure often, and the scale of killing on various maharajas' hunts is startling.

The author might have said more about class distinctions among the colonials (of which, for example, M.S.S. Pandian wrote), though he notes that English officers found Scots colleagues less easy to rank socially. He is candid about the quiet reopening of army-approved brothels after British temperance crusaders had got them closed and venereal diseases spread rapidly. He is also uncensorious about sexual liaisons between colonials and Indians

in all classes, and about adultery among the colonials themselves. The thematic approach and the focus on colonial society, however, mean that crucial context often disappears. Indians played a progressively greater role in running imperial India, but by the early 1860s colonial disapproval of long-standing intimate involvements between the colonials and their subjects caused a 'forfeiture of understanding', with serious consequences for the nature of colonial rule – which nevertheless needed Indians' 'tacit consent'.

Yet Gilmour never considers what Indians were supposed to consent to, and misses the intensification of colonial racism in this period; furthermore, there is no mention of the mass destruction of colonial documents as Independence approached. Such material as still exists at Hanslope Park may never be declassified.

Slips and misses

Some of the author's language and terminology might also raise eyebrows; the name of one river is variably spelt, other names are misspelt (the East India Company spelt Sind correctly as Sindh), the First War of Independence is called the Rebellion, the princely states – whose political role is omitted – are sometimes called native states, and regional languages are called vernaculars. Ronald Ross becomes 'Robert Ross', and Gilmour may even, if unwittingly, aid the Scottish independence movement by spelling Kirkcaldy 'Kirkaldy'.

Gilmour is often uncomfortable about the fact of empire, but the texture, the inherent asymmetry, of everyday relations between the colonial rulers and their subjects rarely features.

The book concludes with an excerpt from Manmohan Singh's speech accepting an honorary Oxford doctorate, but whether that helps Gilmour confirm what look like consequentialist assumptions that colonial rule was not so bad after all is another matter.

The stories indirectly show the origins and development of the Indian Army, the Indian Medical Service, the railways, and the Indian Civil Service. No one kind of person was involved, of

course, and at least some of the people were astonishing characters, immensely energetic and committed to establishing education and other systems (one official solemnised his own marriage, but the courts, possibly if improbably presaging Wittgenstein, ruled the ceremony invalid). Many were open to what they encountered; for a long time, Indians accepted without query decisions by British magistrates and senior officials, as they thought the rulings would be free of caste or religious bias.

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On the road

An insight on journeys and more from a trip across continents

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR

Rishad Saam Mehta is an inveterate traveller. All he needs is the sight of a black tarmac and a set of wheels, and his reaction is Pavlovian: start the engine and get going.

Being a writer, who deals with automobile reviews, road-trips are part of his work. But his acute observations aren't entirely about horse-power and torque; they are also about people and diverse cultures within India and across continents.

It is a trait that was revealed in an earlier book *Hot Tea Across India*. And Rishad's droll insights are back in vogue through his latest writing endeavour *The Long Drive Home*. It is a tome packed with pithy lines, a wry sense of humour and helps us gaze at Germany's smooth highways, Russia's Tundra landscape, China's hot-pot dishes and Burma's lush paddy fields.

The book chronicles Rishad and his fellow enthusiasts' 20,121-km-drive from Munich to Mumbai over 54 days, shepherding two Audi Q7s. A

road-test that encompasses a study of people, weather cycles, urban and rural life patterns and the mandatory gushing about the cars they drive.

The last mentioned could be either seen as embedded journalism or innate instinct in men, to drool over their vehicles.

Rishad had always hoped to do the great-overland – driving from Europe to India. And once his mentor Hormazd Sorabjee pencilled him in for the journey, a dream became a reality.

"There is a route, and it is one that stretches back to halved antiquity – the ancient caravan road through Central Asia that was once the only



The Long Drive Home
Rishad Saam Mehta
Tranquebar
₹399

link between Western Europe and the Far East, and along which flowed trade, artistic traditions, languages, social customs, diseases, inventions, spices, gunpowder and religious beliefs," Rishad writes.

The lone deviation from the ancient route is one that is forced by geopolitics. He obviously could not drive a Maharashtra registered car through Pakistan and the paths were aligned through Europe, Russia, Mongolia, China, Burma and from there to Manipur's last border town Moreh before winding towards Mumbai.

The tricks he does to get a picture of the car next to a local monument; the search for a specific beer brand; the encounters with bemused immigration officials; or even the stoicism in dealing with broken bridges in Burma which forces his team to stay back for a fortnight, all make for an engrossing read.

And what do they yearn for just as they near the Indian border? A glass of tea laced with cardamom and ginger! Guess home is where the heart is.

Nothing to hide

Surviving an acid attack to tell a story of resilience

K. KRITHIKA

Towards the end of her account of being an acid-attack survivor, Reshma Qureshi writes, "As for those television journalists who called me inspiring yet blurred my face... Rather than accepting me for who I am, they have reinforced that I have a face I should be hiding." For many of us, acid attacks are headlines in newspapers and television channels.

Being Reshma brings you face to face with life in the aftermath of the attack. The simple direct narrative gives you a feeling of listening to Qureshi tell her story.

The youngest of five kids, Qureshi was much indulged by her siblings and parents. The acid attack had nothing to do with her. The actual target was her older sister who had left an abusive husband.

On May 19, 2004, on her way to an examination centre, Qureshi was attacked by her brother-in-law and his cousins. The latter held her



Being Reshma
Reshma Qureshi with
Tania Singh
Macmillan
₹599

hands down while the former emptied a bottle of acid on her head. "They never even removed the niqab to see my face," she writes. She was wearing her sister's niqab.

Qureshi offers, in agonising detail, the rest: dealing with bureaucratic apathy and medical negligence, the numerous procedures to reconstruct her face, her attempts at suicide and dealing with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, people who blamed her for what happened.

Qureshi's family rallies around her, and meeting Ria Sharma of the non-profit

Make Love Not Scars leads her to be the face of the campaign to end acid sales. As a result of her activism and fight to regain her life, she walks the ramp at the New York Fashion Week. "Many believe that my unparalleled success at the New York Fashion Week was a historical moment for acid attack survivors. I certainly hope so, for never again in the history of the world would I wish for a story like that to make global headlines."

Qureshi also deals with accusations of trivialising acid attacks by her participation in fashion shows.

Being Reshma also questions attitudes to acid attack survivors. Pointing out that they didn't have a choice – "we can't change our faces or our stories" – she blames society and the governments for a system that compels them to hide their faces while the attackers more often than not get away scot-free. It's hard not to be moved by this young woman's courage and resilience.

Based on the writer's personal experience of over a decade, this book brings alive the world of people most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, and some of the unlikely heroes among them. He gathered the stories while running the Gates Foundation's HIV/AIDS prevention programme Avahan. These are true stories of the lives of sex workers in India.



Kuldeep's guile makes survival tough for Aussie batsmen

With showers forecast over the next two days, India may have to race against time and overcome weather to pull off a victory at the SCG

OZ CHALLENGE

S. DINAKAR
SYDNEY

The ball sliced through the air, spun, dipped and turned. On view was skill, variety and deception.

Kuldeep Yadav, imparting serious revolutions on the ball, brought with him a dash of sub-continent magic to the Sydney Cricket Ground here on Saturday, which was a sea of pink on a day that has raised awareness for breast cancer and become symbolic with the New Year Test.

The Chinaman was on view, so was the wrong 'un. The surface continued to hold firm, but then a left-arm wrist spinner is not really dependent on the pitch.

Two to tango

Bowling in tandem with left-arm orthodox spinner Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep hunted for wickets. There was pressure on the Aussie batsmen from both ends and Jadeja had successes too.

Replying to India's mammoth 622 for seven, Australia was struggling at 236 for six when rain ended play early on day three of the fourth Test.

The Indian celebrations have already begun. From here, India will surely and deservedly triumph in its first Test series in Australia. Virat Kohli and his men stand on the brink of making history.

The only question that remains is the scoreline. Will it be 2-1 or 3-1 for India? With more showers forecast over the next two days, the Indians may have to race against time and overcome weather to pull off a victory



Foxed! Kuldeep Yadav's flight and dip forced the left-handed Travis Head into offering him a return catch. ■ AFP

at the SCG.

The Indians were hungry on the field. They swooped on the ball, held catches and displayed intent. And the Aussies collapsed from 128 for one.

This despite the openers Marcus Harris and Usman Khawaja putting on 72 for the first wicket.

With a strokeful 79 – the highest individual score by an Australian in the series – the left-handed Harris im-

pressed. He whipped the pacemen, cut the spinners if provided width and stepped down to drive through the off-side.

But then, Harris played on, dragging a Jadeja delivery from outside off. This Aussie line-up needs a crash course from Cheteshwar Pujara on the art of building an innings.

Kuldeep made survival hard for them. He used the crease capably, bowling

round and over the wicket to the left and right-handers. The Aussies struggled to pick his wrong 'un – the delivery turning away from the right-hander. They came forward more in hope than conviction.

And on occasions they sat back within the crease, the Aussie batsmen found themselves in trouble. It's hard to play Kuldeep off the pitch – you got to read the hand and pick the length.

He ended the 72-run opening association between Khawaja and Harris. The left-handed Khawaja attempted to step out and heave Kuldeep, but then this was a wrong 'un, not a Chinaman as the previous deliveries were. He was held at mid-wicket.

Falling into the trap

It was flight and drop that foiced the left-handed Travis Head after he had sashayed

down the track.

Kuldeep set up and then dismissed Tim Paine. He made the Aussie captain play a series of deliveries that were essentially his stock ball – drifting and spinning into the batsman. Paine was defensive on the front foot.

Then, Kuldeep, wickedly, got one to dip. Paine came forward and ended up playing over the ball.

The steady Jadeja had earlier dismissed the left-hand-

SCOREBOARD AUSTRALIA VS INDIA, FOURTH TEST, DAY 3

INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

622 for seven decl.

AUSTRALIA – 1ST INNINGS

Marcus Harris b Jadeja 79 (120b, 8x4), Usman Khawaja c Pujara b Kuldeep 27 (71b, 3x4), Marnus Labuschagne c Rahane b Shami 38 (95b, 7x4), Shaun Marsh c Rahane b Jadeja 8 (73b, 2x4), Travis Head c & b Kuldeep 20 (56b, 2x4), Peter Handscomb (batting) 28 (91b, 3x4), Tim Paine b Kuldeep 5 (14b, 1x4), Pat

Cummins (batting) 25 (41b, 6x4); Extras (b-4, lb-2): 6. Total (for six wkts. in 83.3 overs): 236.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-72 (Khawaja, 21.6), 2-128 (Harris, 42.6), 3-144 (Marsh, 48.1), 4-152 (Labuschagne, 51.4), 5-192 (Head, 66.2), 6-198 (Paine, 68.6).

INDIA BOWLING

Shami 16-1-54-1, Bumrah 16-4-43-0, Jadeja 27.3-9-62-2, Kuldeep 24-6-71-3.

Stat attack



(13.3 & 13.1)

Harris' 79 is Australia's highest individual score in this series

Bumrah's 16 overs in the first innings so far is the longest he has gone wicketless in the series. In the first Test in Adelaide, he had taken his first wicket in his 14th over in both innings

No team has ever lost a Test match after making a 600-plus total

Reaping the rewards of sticking to basics

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SYDNEY

Kuldeep Yadav has been a match-winner for India in the shorter formats. Now, he is beginning to make a mark in Tests.

He said here on Saturday that bowling with Ravindra Jadeja at the other end helped him.

"Jadeja bowls his overs quickly and bowls a good line so it gets easier to bowl from the other end. Then you can try different things and use variations. The wicket is quite good for spinners, there is turn and bounce," he said.

Motivation

The left-arm wrist spinner said senior spinners R. Ashwin and Jadeja had motivated him to bowl in the right areas in the nets when he was not a part of the Test eleven.

On foxing Usman Khawaja, Kuldeep said, "I was thinking of bowling the wrong 'un to him. I was bowling over the wicket and I knew that he would come after me and



Cut short: Marcus Harris got to the highest individual score by an Australian in the series before chopping Jadeja onto his stumps. ■ CAMERON SPENCER/GETTY IMAGES

maybe hit me through mid-wicket or mid-on. I was lucky that the wrong 'un pitched in the perfect area and straightened and he hit it to mid-wicket."

Playing his first Test of the series, Kuldeep conceded he was nervous. He, however, said, the nature of the pitch never bothered him. "For me pitches have never made a

difference, whether I am playing on a turning track or a flat wicket. For me it's a good wicket to bowl on."

Kuldeep did not have a successful outing in the Lord's Test last year and said he had learnt from the experience. "For a spinner it's very important to follow the basics, give a little flight, deceive the batsman in the air,

land in the perfect area and turn the ball."

The left-arm Chinaman bowler said Dhoni had helped him from behind the wickets in the shorter formats. "Rishabh also does, a wicketkeeper will tell you things. The more red-ball cricket you play, the more you learn."

Appreciative of India's

close catching and fielding, Kuldeep said, "We have the best fielding coach in R. Sridhar. I feel we are the best catching team in the world."

Australia opener Marcus Harris said, "Disappointing not to get 100 but it was good to spend some time in the middle and at least get a decent score. I played a poor shot to get out."

On the inability of the Australian batsmen to consolidate on starts, Harris said, "We haven't had a meeting yet. I got a start, a few of us got starts, but none of us went on for a big score. So it's pretty simple to work out what went wrong."

He said, "We are still fighting. Still a bit to play in the first innings. We are a young group and are trying to work it out and think on our feet. We're playing against the No. 1 side in the world."

India's left-arm wrist spinner has a busy two days

S. DINAKAR
SYDNEY

Left-arm wrist spin has come back to torment Australia again. More specifically Kuldeep Yadav. The talented Kuldeep whipped up a Test series-winning spell of four for 68 in the decider against Australia at Dharamshala in 2017.

And now he has returned to run rings around the Australians here in the fourth Test. He was enjoying himself at the SCG on Saturday.

Watching his bowling was the legendary leg-spinner Shane Warne. Actually, Warne has spent some time in India teaching Kuldeep some of his tricks.

Flipper guru
For instance, Kuldeep has revealed that he learnt bowling the flipper from Warne. The Aussie superstar is also Kuldeep's idol.

Whenever Kuldeep gets time, he watches videos of Warne's famous spells. He



Kuldeep Yadav. ■ AFP

will catch up with the Aussie maestro during the Test.

Another Australian Brad Hogg, a versatile wrist spinner who has played a significant role in Australia's ODI World Cup triumphs, has guided Kuldeep during the IPL.

Hogg was impressed by Kuldeep's potential, took

him under his wing at the Kolkata Knight Riders camp.

Talking about Kuldeep, Hogg told *The Hindu* a few months ago, "Kuldeep has a very quick-arm action that bamboozles the batsmen."

The Aussies have run into problems with left-arm wrist spin against Lakshman Sandakan of Sri Lanka.

Actually, Australia produced one of the finest left-arm wrist spinners in Chuck Fleetwood-Smith. He made his Test debut in 1935 and took 42 wickets in 10 Tests. He also finished with a whopping 597 First Class wickets.

More recently, in the 1990s, Michael Bevan, better known for his left-handed batting, was another practitioner of the art.

In his 29 Test wickets was a 10-wicket match haul against the West Indies in Adelaide, 1997.

Now, Australia is at the receiving end. Kuldeep has a busy two days ahead.

SA nearly there

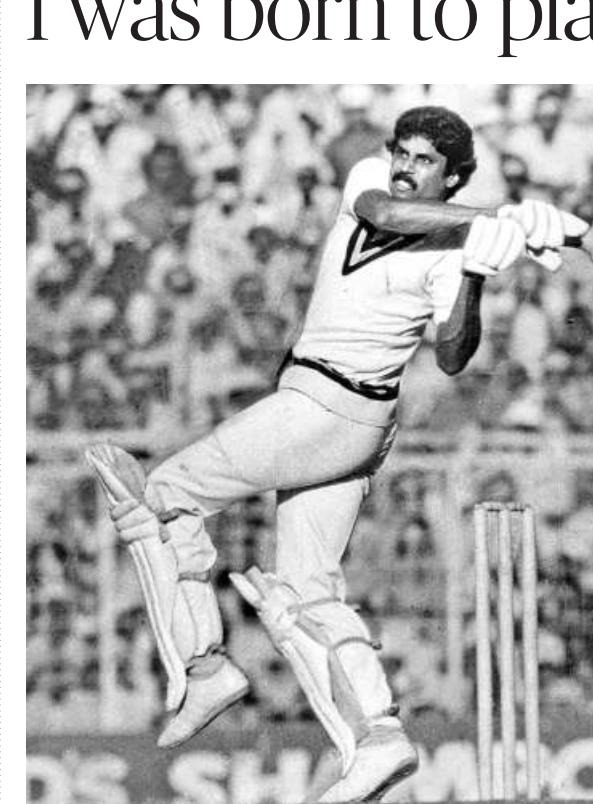
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CAPE TOWN

South Africa will have to return to Newlands on Sunday to score 41 runs to complete a series win over Pakistan.

Pakistan was all out for

294 in the last over of the third day of the second Test on Saturday.

South Africa won the first match in the three-match series by six wickets in Centurion.



Game-changer: Kapil Dev had it in him to single-handedly turn a match on its head. ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

KAPIL TURNS 60

VIJAY LOKAPALLY

Champions don't retire. They continue to command attention. Like Kapil Dev who turns 60 on Sunday.

What if he is not an active cricketer any more? He is involved with cricket as a media expert after having served the game as a player and coach.

He continues to be one of the most sought-after cricket personalities a good 24 years from the day of his retirement.

Anil Kumble described him the best. "For my generation, he was the supreme cricketer you looked up to. There was nothing he could not do on the field. He could win matches on his own. I can never forget the Lord's balcony, with Kapil holding the World Cup aloft. That was the inspiration for me to play cricket."

He brought credibility and class to the dressing room. I was privileged to have shared the dressing room with him. A great athlete who would have excelled at any sport," said Kumble.

He would have ended up with an enviable record of playing these Tests consecutively but for the selectors dropping him after the Delhi Test against England in 1984 for what they thought was a "bad" shot. India suffered a defeat in that Test.

That hurt!
Remembering that incident, Kapil did feel sad but also observed that he could have avoided playing that shot which cost him a place in the next match. He was brought back and never dropped again. But that episode continues to hurt him. "Representing the country and winning the World Cup are close to my heart. Life has been beautiful really."

Raman given two-year contract

G. VISWANATH
AHMEDABAD

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), following orders from the CoA head Vinod Rai, has awarded a two-year contract as head coach of the national women's team to former India Test opener W.V. Raman.

According to reliable sources, Raman was given the contract on Thursday (January 4).

A terrific left-handed batsman, Raman has been the India under-19 coach and filled in for Rahul Dravid when needed. He has been associated with the National Cricket Academy for the last three years.

Raman will receive a fee of ₹1.75 crores in the first year and ₹2 crores in the second, based on his performance in the first year.

CM YK

I was born to play cricket, says Kapil

VIJAY LOKAPALLY

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Anderson triumphs in a serve fest

The South African's better-rounded game proves decisive against Karlovic

TATA OPEN

N. SUDARSHAN
PUNE

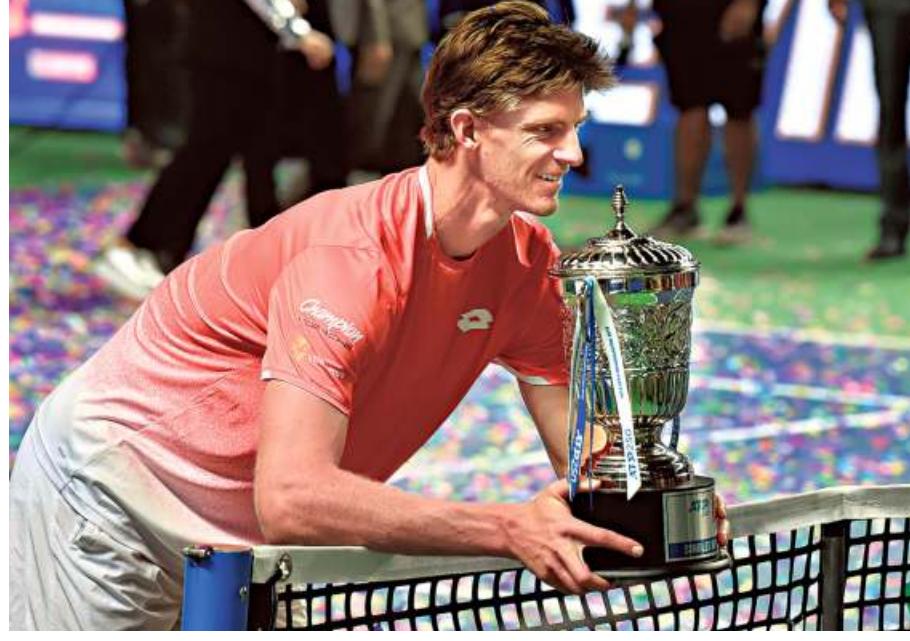
Top seed Kevin Anderson won a serve fest to clinch the singles title at the Tata Open Maharashtra here on Saturday.

The 7-6(4), 6-7(2), 7-6(5) defeat of Croatia's Ivo Karlovic contained no breaks of serve and a whopping 57 aces, of which 36 came from Karlovic alone.

The end was emblematic of all that had transpired for more than 2 hours and 40 minutes prior to that. At 5-4 in the final set tiebreak, the 6'11" Croat had the match on his racquet but could only watch as Anderson made two inch-perfect passes to first reverse the tide and then served a bullet ace to close it out.

Goes one better

This is the South African's sixth ATP Tour title and comes following his runner-up finish here last year. "It [2018 final] was not in my mind at all," Anderson claimed later. "A different opponent this time and an entirely different situation."



Pulling through: Kevin Anderson pocketed his sixth ATP Tour title after a tough final comprising three tiebreaks. ■ R. RAGU

The feeling was however unmistakable that Anderson should have sealed the match much earlier. The 32-year-old had two match-points on the Karlovic serve at 5-6 in the third set, but saw his opponent blast three aces and get away. It would be one of many escape acts Karlovic would stage through the evening.

On the day there was little doubt as to whose was the more explosive serve. But Anderson's was the better-rounded game.

The Karlovic backhand was almost always a defensive slice, used to buy time so that he could charge to the net, and his forehand, a little

more than a slap. Anderson, on the other hand, drove his hard from both wings.

What ensued was a game of cat and mouse – Karlovic stationed at the net and Anderson trying to beat the giant wingspan.

The World No. 6 passed Karlovic thrice in the 10th game of the first set and

Tall tales

■ Saturday's match was the tallest ATP Tour final in Open Era – 6'11" Karlovic playing 6'8" Anderson. The previous record was when John Isner (6'10") played Anderson at Atlanta in 2013

brought up two breakpoints only to fluff both. Four more were squandered in the second stanza as the World No. 100 galloped through the tiebreak.

"It's just different," Anderson said about Karlovic's style. "Like dealing with shorter points and when he is serving he just takes it out of your hand. One can't get too much of a rhythm going. First I had to take care of my service game and I did that very well."

At 2-1 in the final tiebreak, a disagreement over a line call almost tripped Anderson at the finish line. The subsequent points demanded steely nerves and the 2018 Wimbledon finalist had them in plenty.

The result (final): Kevin Anderson (RSA) bt Ivo Karlovic (Cro) 7-6(4), 6-7(2), 7-6(5).

"It is my first Tour title in

Delightful debut for Bopanna and Divij

Crowd support made a big difference, says the former

N. SUDARSHAN
PUNE

It was dream start for the Rohan Bopanna-Divij Sharan combine as the Indian duo secured the Tata Open Maharashtra doubles title with a 6-3, 6-4 win over Brits Luke Brumbridge and Jonny O'Hara.

For both the 37-year-old Bopanna and 32-year-old Divij, it was their first title in more than a year, after Vienna (2017) and Antwerp (2017) respectively.

"We were pretty solid," said Bopanna after the win. "They were more experienced as a pair and have played more tournaments together. But playing at home gave us an advantage and there was a lot of crowd support. That made a big difference."

Springboard

The victory, Divij felt, would provide a springboard going into the next tournaments, including the season's first Major, the Australian Open.

"It is my first Tour title in



Winning smiles: Rohan Bopanna and Divij Sharan couldn't have asked for a better start to their partnership. ■ R. RAGU

India," said Divij. Last year was good for me and I had some good results in big tournaments. But I never really made finals and didn't win a tournament, at least not a Tour event. So this gives us a lot of confidence going into the season."

Bopanna, though, was mindful of the upcoming challenges which are expected to be far greater in magnitude. "As the season progresses, the tournaments get tougher and competition higher," he said.

"We will work more on our returns, movement together as a team, etc. Our coach will be joining us in Australia. His perspective from outside will help. It's not just about the two tennis racquets but a whole team effort."

Sameer downs Kashyap

Saina wins Trump match but Raptors post win

PBL

G. VISWANATH
AHMEDABAD

Sameer Verma won the last point of a gripping match against the seasoned campaigner P. Kashyap with a jump smash and clinched a third win for Mumbai Rockets in the Vodafone PBL season 4 at 'The Arena by SE TransStadia' here on Saturday. The Rockets won the men's doubles thereafter to score an impressive 5-0 win against the Chennai Smashers. The Rockets had nominated Verma's clash against the Smashers' Kashyap as the Trump match and he did not let his team down and also justified his superior World ranking of 12 as against Kashyap's 44.

Verma, 24, took the court here with a clean record of four wins in the ongoing league. He was the odds-on favourite to put it across against Kashyap, but was outwitted in the opening game by his experienced rival who kept the shuttle in play with deft placements.

The Smashers were delighted when Kashyap took the initiative and the first game at 15-12. But as events unfolded in the second game, the younger and fitter man began to gradually take control of the match. Both played a variety of strokes and many points were decided after a tussle at the net. Once he levelled the game



Fighting hard: Sameer Verma, was outwitted in the opening game, but fought back to subdue P. Kashyap. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

scores, Verma grew in confidence and seemed better equipped to deal with his wily opponent.

The Rockets made a winning start though Anders Antonsen who won the first men's singles against Rajiv Ouseph and the mixed doubles pair in Kim Gi Jung and Pia Zebadiah Bernadet who beat the Smashers' Trump match pair of Chris and Gabby Adcock. Then the Smashers' South Korean, Sung Ji Hyun scored a crushing win against the Rockets' Anura Prabhudesai.

Warriors lose tie
Saina Nehwal received a tremendous reception from the crowd when she stepped on the court against Vietnam's Thi Thrang Vu in the first women's singles match in the tie between North East Warriors and Bengaluru Raptors. When she finished her match with a 15-10, 15-7 win, she received a standing

ovation. But the two points that came with Saina's Trump match win could not prevent the Raptors from winning the tie.

The Raptors clinched the tie when Sai Praneeth beat back the challenge posed by China's Tian Houwei.

The results: Mumbai Rockets 5 bt Chennai Smashers 0; Anders Antonsen bt Rajiv Ouseph 15-14, 15-11; Pia Zebadiah Bernadet & Kim Gi Jung bt Chris Adcock and Gabby Adcock (T) 15-14, 15-14; Anura Prabhudesai lost to Sung Ji Hyun 7-15, 8-15; Sameer Verma (T) bt P. Kashyap 12-15, 15-13, 15-9; Kim Gi Jung & Lee Yong Dae bt Or Chin Chung & Sumeeth Reddy 15-8, 15-10.

Bengaluru Raptors bt North East Warriors 4-3 (Mohammad Ahsan & Hendra Setiawan bt Liao Min Chun and Yeo Seong Seong 15-14, 15-11, K. Srikanth bt Tanongsak Saensomboonsuk 15-11, 15-12, Thi Thrang Vu lost to Saina Nehwal (T) 10-15, 7-15, Sai Praneeth bt Tian Houwei 12-15, 15-6, 15-7; Marcus Ellis & Lauren Smith lost to Ha Na Kim and Liao Min Chun 11-15, 9-15).

Rayo grabs nervy win

REUTERS
MADRID

La Liga struggler Rayo Vallecano grabbed a nervy 1-0 win at Real Valladolid on Saturday to boost its chances of top-flight survival, although it had to rely on a late penalty save to take all three points.

Midfielder Alvaro Medran gave the Madrid minnows a perfect start by scoring after 29 seconds, finishing off a smart team move from close range to score the fastest goal of the season so far in *La Liga*.

Valladolid was awarded a penalty in the 87th minute but Rayo's Macedonian goalkeeper Stole Dimitrovski guessed the right way to palm midfielde Michel's spot-kick away.

The results:

Saturday: Valladolid 0 lost to Rayo Vallecano 1 (Medran 1).

Friday: Levante 2 (Morales 58, Coke 86) drew with Girona 2 (Portu 31, Serrano 72); Espanyol 1 (Iglesias 9) bt Leganes 0.

Bulls have the last laugh

PKL

NANDAKUMAR MARAR
MUMBAI

Bengaluru Bulls converted its second appearance in the ProKabaddi League final into a winning one, coming from behind to beat Gujarat Fortunegiants 38-33 at the NSCI indoor stadium on Saturday. The winner took home ₹3 crore and the runner-up ₹1.80 crore.

Pawan Kumar received the loudest cheer. He topscored with 22 points from 25 raids, finishing with maximum raid points and most total points.

Fortunegiants took time to realise the final slipping away from their grasp and by the time they made attempts at damage control, it was gone. Sachin Tanwar went all-out from the start but his returns were low (10 points from 22 raids).

Bulls started with ace raider Kashilng Adake in the dugout, the catchers slipping into their groove to snare Tanwar on the first raid.

Bulls, who inflicted an all-out to move ahead 23-22, saw the tide turn in their favour. As the clock ticked away, the turnover of players on both sides turned frenetic before Fortunegiants lost their second straight final.

The result (final): Bengaluru Bulls 38 (Pawan Kumar 22) bt Gujarat Fortunegiants 33 (Sachin Tanwar 10, K. Prapanjan 5, Sunil Kumar 4). MVP: Pawan.

Celebratory mood: Bengaluru Bulls soak in the atmosphere after its title triumph. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

Bulls had six players in the dugout and were facing an all-out when Adake stepped in and did his bit with a leaping touch on rival skipper Sunil Kumar.

Leading 11-9 at this stage, Fortunegiants sent in Prapanjan to clinch the all-out by squeezing clear of two catchers. The Gujarat side, ahead 16-9 when the second half resumed, extended its catching form. Sunil pulled off a double-handed thigh hold on Pawan, whose inspired raid on his return to the mat later, marked a turning point. He twisted and turned to send out two Fortunegiants players.

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Tight contest
There was little to choose between Karnataka and Punjab and it all boiled down to the fifth set. The former sealed the issue on its third match point when Ravi Kumar successfully blocked a powerful spike from Hardeep Singh.

With the defeat, Punjab finished last (fourth) in the group, and will hope to qualify for the quarterfinals through the play-offs.

Railways had to thank Universal Angamuthu for its triumph over Services. He was instrumental in the contest not extending to the fifth, his well-angled smashes finding no answers in the fourth set.

Backed by a vocal crowd, Tamil Nadu raised its game by at least a notch or two in the match against Kerala, but it still was not good enough. The latter won 25-20, 23-25, 22-25, 25-19, 15-13; **Group B:** Haryana bt AP 25-14, 25-20, 25-21, Railways bt Services 22-25, 25-21, 25-21, 25-19.

Women: **Group A:** West Bengal bt Haryana 25-17, 25-20, 25-11, 25-11, 25-13; **Group B:** Karnataka bt Telangana 25-20, 25-12, 16-25, 17-25, 15-13; Kerala bt Maharashtra 25-19, 25-16, 25-20.

Madhu stars for Indian Railways

Tamil Nadu too has an easy outing against Delhi

NATL. BASKETBALL

RAYAN ROZARIO
BHAVNAGAR

Defending champion Indian Railways opened its campaign in the women's section with a resounding 82-47 win over Karnataka in the 69th senior National basketball championship at the Sisdar Sports Complex courts here on Saturday.

It was a totally new environment for the teams but Railways had seen the best and worst of it.

Settling down

They quickly settled down in the new indoor sports complex, inaugurated by Vijaybhai Ranjith, the Gujarat Chief Minister earlier in the day, and started firing on all cylinders.

Madhu Kumari (19 points) was at her best and got ample support from Sitamani (14) and Sruthi Menon (11).

Strong contender Tamil Nadu also had a relatively easy day out.

Important results: Men: Group A: Punjab 85 (Jagdeep Singh 21,



In full flow: Pushpa, right, with 22 points led the way as Delhi found Tamil Nadu too hot to handle. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Amritpal Singh 15, Gurvinder Singh Gill 14, Rajbir Singh 12, Arshpreet Singh Buller 10, Gaurav Patwal 10) bt Karnataka 77 (Anil Kumar 20, M. Harish 16, A. Aravind 16, Rahul Sarath 10); Rajasthan 89 (Sharad Dadich 31, Karan Khan 22, Gaurav Chandel 19) bt Gujarat 71 (Harpal Singh Vaghela 23, Indervej Gohil 15, Vivek Goti 14).

Group C: Punjab 83 (Anmolpreet Kaur 24, Rajandeep Kaur 21) bt Uttrakhand 19. **Group E:** MP 74 (Nima Doma Bhutia 25, Namrata 16) bt Bihar 54 (Divya Pandey 20, Kiran Yadav 12).

Group F: Rajasthan 64 (Nisha Sharma 33, Rashi Kotani 12) bt Assam 31 (Kiran Kumar 16); Jharkhand 59 (Amit 24, Jain Shokhan-

da 21, Ravi Bhardwaj 17). **Group C:** Delhi 63 (Vishal Hooda 15, Sunil Kumar 15, Arshdeep Singh 15) bt Mizoram 45 (Zonun Snaga 22, Lalrina Renthala 16). **Group D:** Himachal Pradesh 54 (Vikram Thakur 26) bt Nagaland 35 (Kevi-sitio 9). **Group E:** Maharashtra 73 (Ajinkya Asokrao Mani 18, Subham Yadav 11) bt J&K 51 (Iqbal 10); West Bengal 59 (P. Ragunath 17, Bhrigendra 16) bt Puducherry 45 (M. Achuthan 14); Haryana 66 (Rinku 17, Sahil 13) bt Bihar 45 (Sanjeev Kumar 17, Abhishek Pratap 12); Uttar Pradesh 63 (Pulkit 14, Tushar Singh 11) bt Jharkhand 27.

Women: **Group A:** Indian Railways 82 (Madhu Kumari 19, Sitamani Tudu 14, Sruthi Menon 11) bt Karnataka 47 (Lopamudra Timimaija 14, Anusha 11, Varsha Nandini 10); Tamil Nadu 64 (Pushpa 22, S. Sathyia 15, Dharshini 14) bt Delhi 49 (Raspreet Sidhu 15).

TV PICKS

PBL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 3.45 p.m. & 7 p.m.

Women's Challenger Trophy: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 8.45 a.m.

AFC Asia Cup: Star Sports 3, 4.15 p.m. & 9.15 p.m., Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7 p.m.

I-League: Star Sports 3, 1.50 p.m.

NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6 a.m. & 8.30 a.m.

La Liga: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 8.45 p.m.

FA Cup: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m. & 10 p.m.

Brisbane International: Sony Ten 2HD, 2.30 p.m.

Australia vs India: 4th Test, day four, Sony Ten 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5 a.m.

South Africa vs Pakistan: 2nd Test, day four, Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 2 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Djokovic loses to Agut in Qatar Open semifinal

DOHA Novak Djokovic lost in the Qatar Open semifinal to Roberto Bautista Agut 6-3, 6-7(6), 6-4 on Friday. "What happened? I lost the match. That's it," a clearly frustrated Djokovic said at the post-match press conference. It was the second time Agut had beaten Djokovic, both victories coming in the semifinal. The earlier one was in October 2016 in Shanghai. AFP



Sabalenka is champion at Shenzhen

BEIJING Top seed Aryna Sabalenka won the Shenzhen open on Saturday defeating three-time finalist Alison Riske 4-6, 7-6, 6-3. This was the Belarusian's fifth WTA final in the last 10 months and her first international trophy. The World No. 13 had a breakthrough season last year when she won titles at Wuhan and New Haven. AFP

India beats Argentina to level the Test series

NEW DELHI Dhrupval Godara struck seven goals in guiding the La Pegasus Polo India All Stars to a 9-8 victory over Argentina All Stars Polo team in the second Test match at the Jaipur Polo ground here on Saturday.

India thus drew level in the three-Test series, after having lost the first Test in Jodhpur 10-13.

With a handicap advantage of two goals, the Indian team led 4-2 at the half way stage, after three chukkers. The lead increased to 9-4 by the end of the fifth chukker, thanks to the heroics of Dhrupval.

However, the Argentinians dominated the sixth and last chukker, scoring four goals, two each through Joaquin Pitaluga and Eduardo Novillo Astrada, to bridge the gap. The third Test is scheduled for January 12, and there will also be the Ambassador's Cup, a day earlier.

The results: La Pegasus Polo India All Stars 9 (Dhrupval Godara 7, handicap 2) bt Argentina All Star Polo 8 (Joaquin Pitaluga 4, Eduardo Novillo Astrada 2, Cruz Novillo Astrada, Ignacio Arbelbide).

Vijay Sundar, Anirudh lose

SPORTS BUREAU

ANNING (CHINA)

Second seeds Anirudh Chandrasekar and Vijay Sundar Prashanth were beaten 6-4, 7-6(8) by the fourth seeds Ti Chen and Ray Ho of Chinese Taipei in the doubles final of the \$25,000 ITF men's Futures tennis tournament here on Saturday.

The Indian pair saved four match points at 2-6 in the second set tie-break, but missed two set points thereafter, before going down in straight sets.

The results: \$25,000 ITF men, Anning, China: Doubles (final): Ti Chen & Tay Ho (Tpe) bt Anirudh Chandrasekar & Vijay Sundar Prashanth 6-4, 7-6(8).

Federer clinches a record third title

Switzerland retains crown after beating Germany in the summit clash yet again

HOPMAN CUP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PERTH

Roger Federer became the most successful player in Hopman Cup history after leading Switzerland to a 2-1 win in an enthralling final of the mixed teams tournament here on Saturday.

In what is tipped to be the final edition of the unique tournament, the best was saved for last as Federer became the first player to win three Hopman Cups, teaming with Belinda Bencic for the duo's second consecutive title.

Full of drama

For the second year in a row, the Swiss beat the German pairing of Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber by claiming a deciding mixed doubles rubber loaded with drama.

It was Switzerland's fourth title overall, behind only the USA with six. Federer first



Success tastes sweet: Roger Federer and Belinda Bencic with the trophy. •AFP

won the Hopman Cup back in 2001 when he teamed with Martina Hingis.

The 37-year-old gave the Swiss the early ascendancy with a straight sets win over

Zverev, before Kerber squared the tie by beating a dogged Belinda Bencic to set

up the mixed doubles decider. Federer was a dominant figure in an extraordinary

New Zealand seals series

Thisara Perera's belligerent century goes in vain



So near, yet... Thisara Perera belts one to the boundary during his innings that nearly saw Sri Lanka through. •AFP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOUNT MAUNGANUI

A rolicking maiden century by Sri Lanka's Thisara Perera was ultimately in vain as New Zealand wrapped up the one-day series with a 21-run victory in the second ODI here on Saturday.

Chasing New Zealand's 319 for seven, Sri Lanka was on the ropes at 128 for seven when Perera opened up. He faced 74 deliveries and cracked 13 sixes and eight fours before he was last out and Sri Lanka was out for 298 with 22 balls remaining.

Earlier, Ross Taylor (90) and Colin Munro (87) swung the momentum New Zealand's way with a 112-run stand for the third wicket, while James Neesham hit a whirlwind 64.

The scores: New Zealand 319 for seven in 50 overs (Colin Munro 87, Ross Taylor 90, Henry Nicholls 32, James Neesham 64) bt Sri Lanka 298 in 46.2 overs (Danushan Gunathilaka 71, Thisara Perera 140, Ish Sodhi three for 55).

Constantine's hunger is still the same'

Performance has been the his sole yardstick, says Venkatesh

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA
BENGALURU

Shanmugam Venkatesh understands Stephen Constantine as well as anyone else. During his playing career, the midfielder excelled for the national team under the Englishman. Now, during Constantine's second stint in charge of India, Venkatesh is quietly making an impression as the assistant coach.

In an e-mail interview with *The Hindu* from the UAE, the 40-year-old discussed Constantine's coaching methods and India's plans for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. *The excerpts:*

You played under Constantine over a decade ago; now you're his assistant coach. What has the experience been like?

Truly speaking, it's exactly the same. The amount of aggression and hunger he had then is exactly the same he has now.

One thing which we have changed is our formation. Back then, we used to play as

mostly on-ground training sessions but not other stuff like gym, rehab, and sports science. We have a 24/7 medical team now who are just a call away from the players. Every single activity is monitored; players are screened in the morning. All that plays a vital role.

What kind of players do you, as the coaching staff, look for? We have a certain plan and we demand that the players execute that on the pitch. The players who fit the bill stay in the system.

A total of 47 players have debuted in less than four years and some of these youngsters are an integral part of the current squad: this establishes our philosophy. We are the second youngest team in this Asian Cup after Vietnam.

We have a 24/7 medical team now who are just a call away from the players

mostly on-ground training sessions but not other stuff like gym, rehab, and sports science. We have a 24/7 medical team now who are just a call away from the players. Every single activity is monitored; players are screened in the morning. All that plays a vital role.

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The team looks defensively organised...

They've been terrific but it's easier said than done. It's not only the goalkeeper's and the defenders' responsibility to defend.

Attacking is the best way to defend. It has been a collective effort to resist the opponent as well as launch a quick attack once we recover the ball. We have always stressed on a combined team effort.

The game against Jordan was the best and it'll be remembered for long. The players showed their mental toughness.

How has Constantine's coaching philosophy evolved?

His hunger is the reason we have qualified for the Asian Cup after eight years. The cause of the team's recent success is the coach's philosophy of believing in nothing but performance – be it a youngster or a senior player. Performance has been the sole yardstick for Stephen.

Ruffina should score over her rivals

MUMBAI The queen filly Ruffina, who has won 10 races out of her 12 starts in her racing career, should score over her rivals, in the F.H. Tapia Memorial Million, the main attraction of Sunday's (Jan 6) afternoon races.

Rails will be placed 2 metres wide from 1400m to 1200m and 5 metres wider from 1000m upto the winning post.

1 RAPID ASH PLATE (2,000m), Cl. V, rated 4 to 30, 1.00 pm: 1. Kennedy (2) L. Roche 60.5, 2. Silver Edge (1) Neeraj 60.3, Boomerang (3) S. Sunil 58.4, Retained Asset (5) Sandesh 57.5, 5. Fanfare (7) C.S. Jodha 55.5, 6. Romantic Eyes (6) R. Downey 54 and 7. His Master's Vice (4) Smit 51.

1 HOMI MODY TROPHY (2,000m), Cl. I, rated 80 and upward, 1.30: 1. B. Fifty Two (4) Trevor 60, 2. Supreme General (2) Bhawani 58.3, 3. Glorious (1) C.S. Jodha 50 and 4. Lord Of The Sea (3) Parmar 49.

1 GLORIOUSUS, 2. FIFTY TWO.

3 APRIL BLOSSOM PLATE (1,600m), Cl. IV, 1.00pm, 2. Flying Visit (8) R. Downey 61.5, 2. Golden Hind (3) Trevor 61.5, 3. Nobleman (7) L. Roche 57, 4. Flying Dragon (1) Parmar 56.5, 5. Its A Deal (2) Mer-

chant 56.5, 6. Unimaginable (4) Akshay 54.5, 7. Arreifice (5) Peter 53.5 and 8. Strong Values (6) Kuldeep 50.

1 FLYING VISIT,

2 GOLDEN HIND,

3 NOBLEMAN.

4 LONDONDERRY PLATE (2,000m), Cl. III, rated 40 to 66, 2.30: 1. Smasher (1) L. Roche 59.5, 2. Tar Heel (6) C.S. Jodha 52.5, 3. Bushops (4) Sandesh 51.5, 4. Kimberella (2) Nazil 51.5, 6. Boomerang (3) S. Sunil 58.4, Retained Asset (5) Sandesh 57.5, 7. Fanfare (7) C.S. Jodha 55.5, 8. Strong Values (6) Kuldeep 50.

1 AUGUSTUS CAESAR,

2 SMASHER.

5 KHEEM SINGH GOLD CUP (1,400m), Maiden, 3-y-o only, 3.00: 1. Blazing Bay (1) Bhawani 55.2, Trouvaille (2) C.S. Jodha 55.3, Black Cherry (4) S. Chinoy 53.5, Divine Glory (3) A. Gaikwad 53.5, 4. Divine Caesar (1) L. Roche 52.5, 5. Kimmerella (2) Nazil 51.5, 6. Boomerang (3) S. Sunil 58.4, Retained Asset (5) Sandesh 57.5, 7. Peerless (8) Sandesh 53.5 and 8. Starringo (5) Neeraj 53.5.

1 AUGUSTUS CAESAR,

2 SMASHER.

3 APRIL BLOSSOM PLATE (1,600m), Cl. IV, 1.00pm, 4-y-o & over, 2. Flying Visit (8) R. Downey 61.5, 2. Golden Hind (3) Trevor 61.5, 3. Nobleman (7) L. Roche 57, 4. Flying Dragon (1) Parmar 56.5, 5. Its A Deal (2) Mer-

C.S. Jodha 50.5 and 5. Perfect Star (4) Bhawani 50.5.

1 RUFFINA,

2 YOUR ROYAL MAJESTY.

7 P.D. BOLTON TROPHY (1,400m), Cl. IV, rated 20 to 60, 4.00: 1. Gazino (9) Chouhan 59.2, Wild Fire (7) Kaviraj 59.3, Riquewihr (1) Zeeshan 57.5, 4. Double Nine (5) Nazil 57, 5. Bateleur (8) Akshay 56, 6. Iron Age (11) Trevor 55.5, 7. Charging Tigress (6) Shubham 55, 8. Pricelessgirl (4) K. Pranali 54, 9. Oracle (2) Santosh 53.5, 10. Chaplin (3) Neeraj 52.5 and 11. Rising Brave (10) Parma 50.5.

1 IRON AGE, 2. GAZINO,

3. RIQUEWIHR.

8 PRADEEP VIJAYAKAR TROPHY (1,200m), Cl. IV, rated 20 to 46, 4.30 pm: 1. Eden Rock (3) Trevor 46, 2.00: 1. Eden Rock (3) Trevor 46, 2. Invictus Manoe (12) Baria 60.5, 3. Run Forest Run (4) Malam 60, 4. Regal Shot (7) Bhawani 59, 5. El Comandante (13) Sandesh 58.5, 6. Anavatek (8) Akshay 58, 7. Gloriant (11) Santosh 58, 8. Ustad Pedro (2) Hanuman 57.5, 9. Walk On (1) Jayakumar 57.5, 10. Firewings (5) S. Chinoy 55.5, 11. Officer In Command (14) Dashrath 54, 12. Furiosa (9) Parmar 50.5, 13. Grand Passage (2) Vishal 49.5 and 14. Nightfall (10) Zeeshan 49.

1. ANATEVKA,

3. RIQUEWIHR.

Day's Best : FLYING VISIT.

Double : IRON AGE – KINGSMAN.



Inauguration Ceremony for Providing & Laying of sewer line in Kakrola Group of Colonies under Matiyala Constituency

On Sunday, 06th January, 2019 at 3.00 PM

Venue : Peepal Chowk, near Sarvodaya School,
Kakrola (near Metro Pillar No.860)

Chief Guest

Arvind Kejriwal

Chief Minister, Delhi

In the presence of

Satyendar Jain

U.D. Minister, Delhi

Dinesh Mohania

Vice-Chairman, DJB

Gulab Singh Yadav

MLA, Matiyala Constituency

Highlights of the project:

- The work to benefit approx 90,000 residents of the area
- On completion of the project the overall hygiene of area shall get improved and the residents of these areas will get a better life

दिल्ली सरकार
आप की सरकार

Urban Development Department, Government of NCT of Delhi

दिल्ली सरकार
आप की सरकार

INDIAN NAVY

A N O C E A N O F O P P O R T U N I T I E S



Indian Navy invites applications from unmarried eligible Male candidates who have passed Engineering Degree or are in the final year of Engineering course in any of the under mentioned disciplines from a AICTE recognized institute with 60% marks till 5th/7th semester in regular/integrated course respectively.

Ser	Branch/ Cadre	Eligible streams of Bachelor of Engineering/Bachelor of Technology	Vacancy	Gender	PC/SSC
EXECUTIVE BRANCH					
(i)	Naval Armament Inspection Cadre (NAIC)	(i) Electrical (ii) Electrical & Electronics (iii) Electronics (iv) Applied Electronics (v) Electronics & Communication (vi) Electronics & Tele Communication (vii) Electronics & Instrumentation (viii) Instrumentation (ix) Instrumentation & Control (x) Micro-electronics (xi) Mechanical (xii) Control (xiii) Industrial Production (xiv) Industrial (xv) Production (xvi) Aero Space (xvii) Metallurgy (xviii) Metallurgical (xix) Chemical (xx) Material Science (xxi) Computer Science (xxii) Information Technology (xxiii) Computer (xxiv) Computer Application	12	Male	PC
TECHNICAL BRANCH					
(iii)	Engineering Branch [General Service (GS)]	(i) Mechanical (ii) Marine (iii) Instrumentation (iv) Production (v) Aeronautical (vi) Industrial Engineering & Management (vii) Control Engg (viii) Aero Space (ix) Automobiles (x) Metallurgy (xi) Mechatronics (xii) Instrumentation & Control	28	Male	SSC
(ii)	Electrical Branch [General Service (GS)]	(i) Electrical (ii) Electronics (iii) Tele Communication (iv) Electronics & Communication (v) Power Engineering (vi) Power Electronics (vii) Electronics & Instrumentation (viii) Instrumentation & Control (ix) Instrumentation	32	Male	SSC

**ONLINE REGISTRATION OPEN FROM
12 JAN 19 TO 01 FEB 19**



* 27 vacancies for General Services and three vacancies for Hydro Cadre.

NOTE: 1. Identity proof is mandatory for online registration. For details visit www.joinindiannavy.gov.in & Employment News dated 12 Jan 18.

2. Please read the instruction given in the website carefully before submitting your "e-Application" form. Candidates can also call on Toll-Free number 1800-419-2929 and press Option 7 to speak to a customer care representative from Monday-Sunday between 0800-2000 hrs.



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THE HINDU

JANUARY 6, 2019
INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

DELHI

SECTION 2



Xi urges Army to do everything it can to prepare for battle

page 3



Sculptors chisel away a mountain to create a temple in Telangana

page 2



IL&FS crisis shows gaps in NBFC regulation, data collection, says Garg

page 7



Cambodia's masked dance, targeted by the Khmer Rouge, is back

page 10

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IN BRIEF



Yen's surge is a red flag for world markets

LONDON A gradual rise by the Japanese yen in recent weeks culminated in a dramatic overnight surge – firing a warning shot for world markets and the global economy in 2019.

Historically, the outsize yen gains in short periods, such as the Russian default in 1998 and the global market meltdown in 2008, are a harbinger of stress for global markets.

BUSINESS ABROAD ▶ PAGE 8

Fed is aware of risks, Powell tells markets

ATLANTA/NEW YORK

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell sought to ease market concerns that the U.S. central bank was ignoring signs of an economic slowdown, saying he was aware of the risks and would be patient and flexible in policy decisions this year. Speaking after months of volatility in bond and stock markets, he avoided some of the communication missteps that have in the past roiled rather than calmed investors. He also pledged to stay in his job even if asked to quit by President Donald Trump, who has been critical of him.

BUSINESS ABROAD ▶ PAGE 8

Trump threatens a long shutdown

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Friday threatened to keep the U.S. government partially shut for months or years after he and Democratic leaders failed to resolve their dispute over his request for \$5.6 billion to build a wall on the Mexican border. Mr. Trump said he could consider declaring a national emergency. Mr. Trump is withholding his support for a Bill that would fully fund the government until he secures money for the wall.

WORLD ▶ PAGE 3

Former diplomat urges colleague to reach Seoul

SEOUL

Former North Korean diplomat Thae Yong-ho, who had staged a high-profile defection to the South in 2016, urged his missing colleague Jo Sung-gil to seek asylum in South Korea. Mr. Jo, who was until recently North Korea's acting Ambassador to Italy, disappeared with his wife after leaving the Embassy without notice in early November.

WORLD ▶ PAGE 3

Women all set to scale this 'prohibited' peak too in Kerala

Bar on their trek to Agasthyarkoodam goes, opening path to the mountain

G. ANAND
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Women are waging a different rights struggle in southern Kerala. Their goal: to trek to the summit of Agasthyarkoodam, the second highest peak in the State at 1,868 m, in the Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary in Thiruvananthapuram district.

The peak is, however, now within reach. The State Forest Department has yielded to a High Court order and lifted the long-standing ban on women undertaking the visit.

On Saturday, scores of women registered online with the Department for permission to trek to the mountain, as soon as book-



Struggle for tradition: Adivasi Mahasabha supporters protesting against the trek in Thiruvananthapuram, in this file image.

A High Court order has cleared the way for women to take the forest path to the summit.

Joining the struggle

Two other organisations, Pennoruma, headed by M. Sulfath, and Anveshi, led by former Naxalite leader K. Ajitha, joined WINGS in the

court battle to challenge the exclusion.

The organisations protested in front of the Secretariat and the Forest Department headquarters. They also petitioned the government. Their fight bore fruit in 2018, opening up the summit.

State Forest Minister K. Raju told *The Hindu* that women were welcome to trek to the Agasthyar hill, but the government would not be able to provide special facilities. "We cannot allow any new construction in the fragile bio-reserve. Moreover,

the facilities at the base camp are minimal and gender neutral. The Department issues only a limited number of passes on a first come, first serve basis. No passes are kept exclusively for women," he said.

The Adivasi Mahasabha

lost the fight in the High Court, but continues to oppose women entering the Agasthyar forests. Some of its members consider the climb a pilgrimage. Some shrines have also cropped up on the trek path. Chief Wildlife Warden Surendra Kumar said the government had disallowed religious expression inside the biosphere reserve.

SUNDAY SPECIAL

The High Court has forbidden any pilgrimage on the trek and disapproved of attempts to set up idols, light lamps or conduct rituals, he said. The Department has built a few toilets at the base camp for women. Forest officials have increased security along the path.

Spectacle on shore



New record: An aerial view of tourists at the Kursura Submarine Museum in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. It received a record 6.40 lakh tourists in 2018 as against 4.20 lakh in 2017. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

IIT-Guwahati teacher held for rape bid

Action follows a complaint from an insurance agent

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

An assistant professor of mathematics at the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) was arrested on Saturday for allegedly attempting to rape a woman, who visited him from Kolkata.

"We registered a case under Sections 354A (related to sexual harassment) and 354B (assault or use of crimi-

nal force on woman with intent to disrobe) of the Indian Penal Code. The victim said in the FIR that the teacher had attempted to rape her," a Kamrup district police officer said.

The IIT-G authorities said the woman, who had come to the campus before going

out with Mr. Srikanth in a car on Friday, did not lodge any complaint with them. "We received information about the arrest of the assistant professor today [on Saturday]. We are waiting for the legal proceedings," Laban Konwar, the institute's spokesperson, said.

The weather department has advised suspension of fishing in the Andaman Sea and adjoining southeast and east-central Bay of Bengal during the period, the official said.

The sea condition will be very rough over the Nicobar Islands till Sunday. People in the Andaman Islands are advised to remain in safe places, the official said.

The weather department has advised suspension of

east-central Bay of Bengal till January 7 and in east-central and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal till January 8.

Fishermen have been advised not to venture into the Andaman Sea and adjoining southeast and east-central Bay of Bengal during the period, the official said.

Tourists marooned

Tourists marooned on Thai islands hunkered down Friday as Pabuk struck, forcing airports and ferries to close

and bringing power blackouts, heavy rain and massive sea swells. Boats were recalled to shore across the Gulf of Thailand, while three key southern airports were

shut until Saturday, leaving tourists who remain on islands now cut off.

"Ten thousand tourists are still on Koh Phangan," said Krikrai Songthanee, district chief of the island of Koh Phangan and Koh Tao to the north from a direct hit. But it caused damage along coastal areas and a power blackout in large swathes of Nakhon Si Thammarat and Surat Thani provinces, authorities said.

(With inputs from AFP)

6 children, driver die as bus falls into gorge

12 injured in accident in Himachal



The mangled remains of the school bus at Sangrah in Sirmaur district. ■ PTI

he said. The injured were admitted to hospital.

Deputy Commissioner of Sirmour Lalit Jain asked Sangrah Sub-Divisional Magistrate Rajesh Dhirman to conduct an inquiry and submit a report within 15 days.

Mr. Jain also asked Mr. Dhirman to disburse an immediate relief of ₹20,000 to the families of those killed and ₹10,000 to those of the injured.

Nuh bears witness to failure of first 'mobile court'

The court, set up in a bus, was launched in 2007 to make the judicial system accessible to remote and backward areas

ASHOK KUMAR
NUH

On the drive south from Delhi towards Alwar, a left turn at Badkali Chowk in Haryana's Nuh brings one to the small town of Pingwan. About 7 km down the road, one encounters a black, rusted signboard that reads 'Mobile Court, Pingwan, Mewat' on the boundary wall of a modest building.

But the place is unusually quiet for a court. A solitary watchman, who appears to be in his 60s, is seated on a half-broken chair while two children play close by.

"It is a Wednesday. The court sits only on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays," the watchman says, explaining the lack of activity.

The town's residents

promptly direct visitors to the building when asked about the "mobile court", oblivious to the fact that the court, inaugurated more than a decade ago as the country's first mobile court, officially lost its 'mobile court' designation more than five months ago.

Set up in a bus, the court was inaugurated in August 2007 by the then Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan with the aim of making the judicial system accessible to remote and backward areas, and was slated to sit for one day each week at the four towns of Punhana, Shikrawa, Indiana and Lohinga Kalan.

Presided over by an Additional Civil Judge-cum-Sub Divisional Judicial Magistrate, it was staffed like



Going nowhere: The court was slated to sit for one day each week at four towns. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

a regular court and meant to conduct both civil and criminal cases through full-fledged trials.

But just a little over a year after its inauguration, the court gave up on mobility as both the lawyers and the local judicial officers found themselves facing difficulties

in operating it in a mobile form.

While it was a good initiative to provide "Sasta aur Sulabh Nyay" (affordable and accessible justice) to the people of Punhana, the lack of basic infrastructure was the reason for its failure, said Ferozepur Jhirkar Bar Association president Mumtaz Hussain.

Lacked key facilities "Since the mobile court was held in the open at four different locations in the interior areas, it became difficult to provide facilities such as stamp vendors, typewriters, photocopiers and more importantly the treasury to collect court fees," said Mr. Hussain.

"Despite the lawyers cooperating to their full to make the experiment a success, the court had to be fixed in a building in Punhana," he added.

The court was subsequently shifted to its present building in Pingwan after a year since the Punhana building had to be vacated for the Election Commission during the 2009 election.

After the District and Sessions Judge, Nuh, sought the discontinuation of the "mobile court" in 2013, the Punjab and Haryana High Court formally consented to it on July 17, 2018.

However, with the court now presided over by a junior judge, litigants have to travel to the Ferozepur Jhirkar Bar to file civil suits, defeating the purpose of door-step delivery of justice.

"It was an initiative taken in haste without considering the ground realities," said another lawyer, who did not wish to be identified.

As for the 'mobile court' bus, it now lies parked in the Ferozepur Jhirkar Bar campus – a testimony to the failed experiment.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA SHIMLA

Six children and the driver of their school bus were killed on Saturday when the vehicle fell into a gorge in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh, the police said.

The accident, in which 12 children were injured, occurred at Sangrah around 8 a.m. "A private bus carrying students of the DAV School, Renuka, fell into a gorge. Seven people – six schoolchildren and the driver – were killed," Sirmaur Superintendent of Police Rohit Malpani said.

Samir, 5, Adarsh, 7, Kartik, 14, and driver Ram Swaroop, 40, died on the spot. Abhishek, his sister Sanjana and Naitik Chauhan succumbed to their injuries at the Nahan Medical College,

CMK

BNND

IN BRIEF



Snowfall hits operations at Srinagar airport

SRINAGAR
Air traffic to and from Srinagar was partially restored on Saturday after remaining affected for nearly 24 hours due to snowfall, officials said. While all flights in the morning were cancelled due to poor visibility and snow accumulation on the runway, five flights operated late in the afternoon. PTI

6 felicitated for rescuing boat passengers

KENDRAPARA
Two minor girls were among the six people felicitated by Odisha's Kendrapara administration on Saturday for saving 10 villagers after their boat capsized in the Mahanadi on Wednesday. "They wasted no time and dived into the water. If not for their valour, the toll would have been higher," Collector Dasarathy Satpathy said. PTI

Women self-help groups to get interest-free loans

PURI
Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Saturday announced interest-free loans of up to ₹3 lakh for women self-help groups (WSHGs) in the State. Speaking at the 'Mission Shakti' convention here, Mr. Patnaik said the initiative would benefit about 70 lakh women. There are around six lakh WSHGs in Odisha. PTI

Wild elephants kill two men in Chhattisgarh

KORBA
Two men were trampled to death by a herd of wild elephants at separate places in Chhattisgarh's Surajpur district on Friday. They were identified as Ramlal Jaiswal, 52, and Ram Lekhan Sahu, 70. Their kin were given an immediate relief of ₹25,000 each. The rest would be given on completion of formalities, DFO B.P. Singh said. PTI

Making a temple out of a mountain

Conceived by Telangana CM, the 4-acre Lakshmi Narasimha temple has been built over a hillock in Yadagirigutta

SERISH NANISSETTI
HYDERABAD

Among the theories on the origin of the monolithic Kailasa Temple in the Ellora caves is one that says aliens chiselled through the hill from the top to create the mammoth temple from a single block of stone sometime in the eighth century during the reign of Krishna I of the Rashtrakutas.



Pakistan seeks ex-envoy Haqqani's extradition

ISLAMABAD
Pakistan has initiated a process of seeking the extradition of its former envoy Hussain Haqqani on embezzlement charges, a media report said on Saturday. The Interior Ministry has transferred a 355-page extradition dossier to the Foreign Office, to be sent to the U.S. State Department. PTI

3 dead, 4 injured in California shooting

WASHINGTON
Police in California on Saturday said three people were killed and four were injured in a shooting at a bowling alley near Los Angeles. Sergeant Ronald Harris confirmed that officers responded at 11:54 p.m. on Friday to reports of gunfire at Gable House Bowl. AFP

No timeline for Syria withdrawal, says U.S.

'We will maintain pressure on the IS'

REUTERS
WASHINGTON
The U.S. has no timeline to withdraw troops from Syria but does not plan to stay indefinitely, a State Department official said on Friday.

U.S.-backed forces are still retaking territory from the Islamic State in Syria, Pentagon officials said on Friday, two weeks after Washington said it would withdraw its roughly 2,000 troops there. At the time, President Donald Trump said the troops had succeeded in their mission and were no longer needed there.

The State Department of

Ex-N. Korean envoy urges colleague to defect to South

Thae Yong-ho, another defector, calls South Korea an 'outpost' for unification

REUTERS
SEOUL

Former North Korean diplomat Thae Yong-ho on Saturday urged an old colleague, who has gone missing in Italy, to defect to Seoul, following a report that he was seeking asylum in the U.S.

Jo Song-gil, 44, who was until recently North Korea's acting Ambassador to Italy, disappeared with his wife after leaving the Embassy without notice in early November, South Korean lawmakers said on Thursday.

Seeking asylum
Mr. Jo has sought asylum in the United States and is under the protection of Italian intelligence, Italy's *La Repubblica* newspaper said on Friday, citing an unidentified diplomatic source.

In an open letter, Mr.



North to South: Jo Song-gil, who reportedly disappeared from North Korea's Rome Embassy in November; and right, Thae Yong-ho, who defected to South Korea in 2016. AP

Thae, Pyongyang's former Deputy Ambassador to Britain, who said he went to the same university and worked with Mr. Jo before defecting to South Korea in 2016, urged Mr. Jo to follow in his footsteps.

To defect to the South is an "obligation, not a choice" for North Korean diplomats committed to unification,

Mr. Thae said, calling Seoul "the outpost" for that task.

"If you come to South Korea, the day when our suffering colleagues and North Korean citizens are liberated from the fetters would be moved forward," Mr. Thae said in the letter released on his website.

"If you come to Seoul, even more of our colleagues

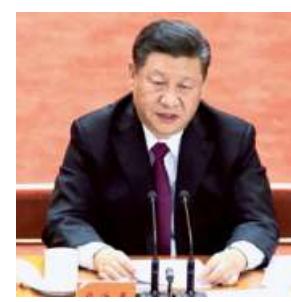
would follow suit, and the unification would be accomplished by itself."

South Korea could not be "heaven on earth" but a place where Mr. Jo can realize his wishes, Mr. Thae said, highlighting the ardent desire for unification among many of the roughly 32,000 defectors there. "The defectors may not be as wealthy as South Koreans," Mr. Thae added.

"But isn't it the only thing you and I, as North Korean diplomats, should do the rest of our lives – to bring about unification and hand over a unified nation to our children?"

Pyongyang requires diplomats going overseas to leave at least one child at home,

but those from the top echelons or seen as the most loyal to the regime get some exceptions.



Chinese President Xi Jinping. REUTERS

Be prepared for battle: Xi

President urges armed forces to enhance combat capability

REUTERS
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SHANGHAI

China's armed forces must strengthen their sense of urgency and do everything they can to prepare for battle, President Xi Jinping told a meeting of top brass on Friday.

China is keen to beef up its armed forces amid territorial disputes in the South China Sea and escalating tension with the U.S. over issues ranging from trade to the status of Taiwan.

Meeting with top brass

The official Xinhua agency said Mr. Xi told a meeting of the top military authority that China faced increasing risks and challenges, and the armed forces must work to secure its security and development needs.

Mr. Xi, who is also chairman of the Central Military Commission, said the armed forces must devise strategies for the new era and take on

forces. The order demands that troops hone their combat capability and that military units organize events on a regular basis to verify soldiers' ability.

Mr. Xi's comments followed his remarks on Wednesday that China still reserved the right to use force to achieve "reunification" with Taiwan and prevent the island's independence. The Taiwan speech came just days after U.S. President Donald Trump signed the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act into law, reaffirming the U.S. commitment to its security.

Mr. Xi's call for battle preparedness also came as acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan told the U.S. forces that he sees China as a key priority. "While we are focused on ongoing operations, Acting Secretary Shanahan told the team to remember China, China, China," reports from Washington quoted a U.S. defence official as saying.

Trump threatens to keep government shut for months

President also says he could consider declaring a national emergency and bypass the Congress to build the border wall



Fund the wall: U.S. President Donald Trump speaking to reporters at the White House on Friday. REUTERS

The source also said Mr. Trump brought up recent impeachment threats during those remarks, arguing that he had notched a strong performance as President and should not be a target for impeachment. He later told reporters that Nancy Pelosi, the new Democratic speaker of the House of Representatives, said Democrats were not looking to impeach him.

National security

A reporter asked Mr. Trump whether he had considered declaring a national emergency to build the wall.

"Yes, I have. And I can do if I want," Mr. Trump said. "We can call a national emergency because of the security of our country... I may do it. But we can call a national emergency and build it very quickly. And it's another way of doing it. But if we can do it through a negotiated process, we're giving that a shot."

Emergency powers have been invoked by previous U.S. Presidents during times of war.

Ms. Pelosi said Friday's meeting was "sometimes contentious" but that they agreed to continue talking. "But we recognise on the Democratic side that we really cannot resolve this until we open up government and we made that very clear to the President," she said.

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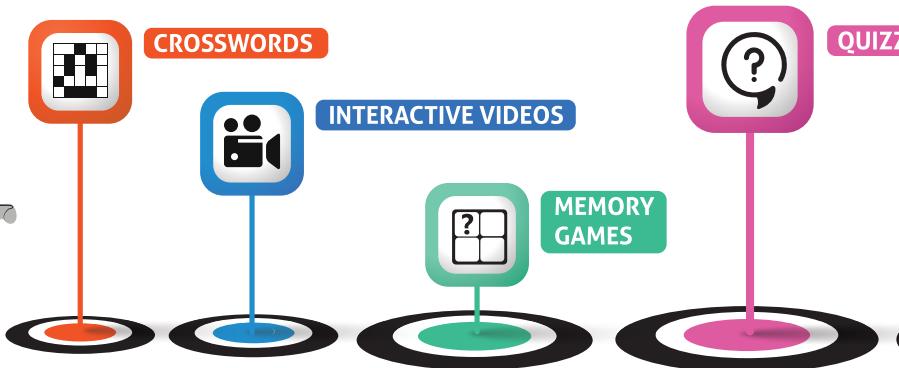
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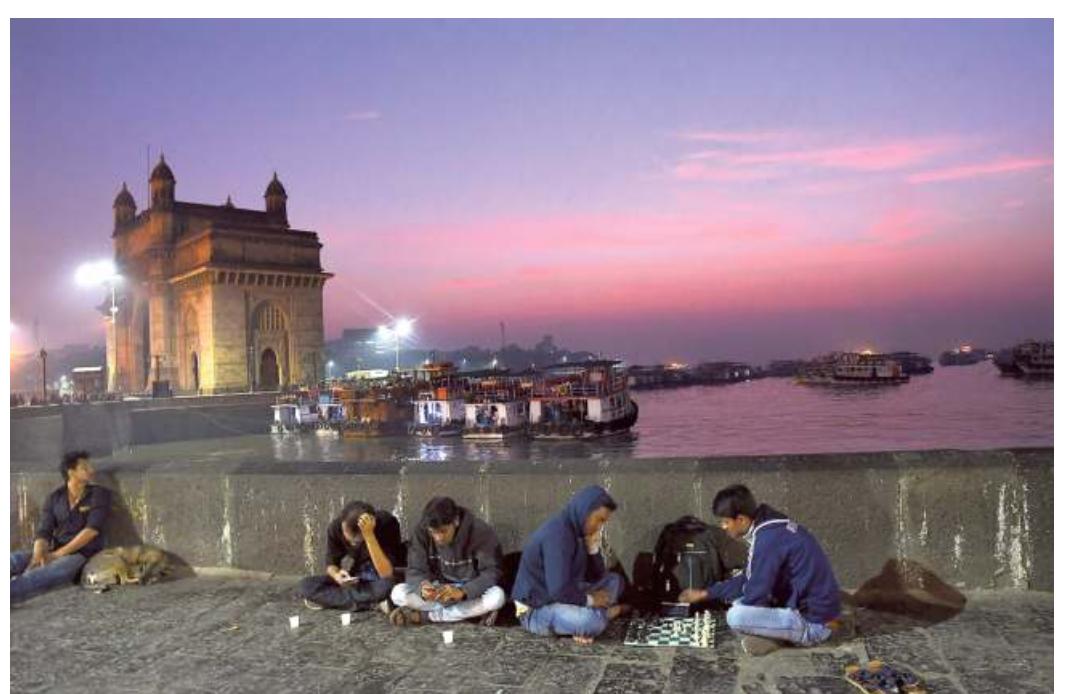
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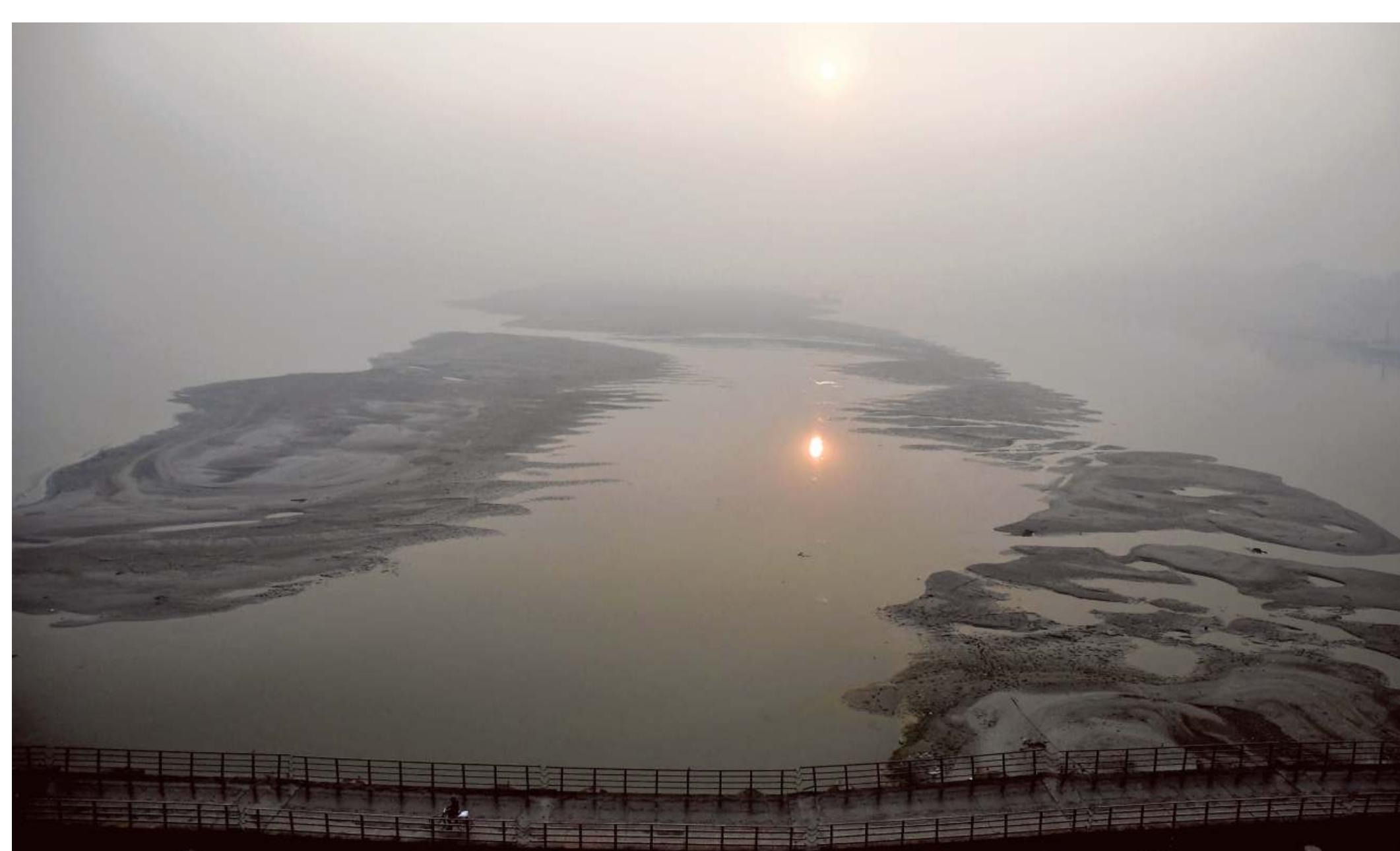
White dawn: Snow in the New Year thaws Kashmir's feeling of hopelessness, raising spirits in the Valley where the year gone by offered no let-up in bloodshed and political uncertainties. ■NISSAR



After-party languor: Revellers wrap up celebrations with a game of chess at the Gateway of India in Mumbai.



Wheezing morning: Smog blanketed New Year revelry in New Delhi, with air quality dipping to the hazard category. ■ R.V. MOORTHY



Quiet flows the Ganga
river in Patna flows
eternity like time, in
scale a New Year is
blip. ■ RANJEET KUMAR



War and peace: Braving the cold, lakhs of Dalits throng a memorial site at Bhima-Koregaon to pay homage to those who died in the war between the British and the Peshwa faction of the Maratha Confederacy on its 201st anniversary.



Diffuse light: Walkers brave the cold around the Kempe Gowda Tower at the Lalbagh Botanical Garden in Bengaluru.
■ K. MURALI KUMAR

First light

The sun unwraps 2019 across India
bright, hazy, gray, cold, resolute, chaste
as well as hopeful

TEXT BY G. ANANTHAKRISHNA

On the day 2019 dawned, hopes soared, lakes froze and man yearned to breathe free. In Kashmir, the temperature dropped minus 7 degrees Celsius, after nearly three decades, and the surface of Srinagar's Dal Lake became a sheet of ice. The National Weather Department issued cold wave warnings for several States, sweeping as far south as Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. In the national capital, the morning of the New Year was shrouded in smog, with the bleak winter sun unable to cut through the blanket of pollution from smoke and vehicular emissions. Citizens were told by the weathermen that they would have to put up with the chokehold of pollutants, and that there was no relief in sight soon. The air was less daunting in Mumbai, though. The bustling city was allowed to party through the night, and bars and pubs were permitted by the State government to remain open till 5 a.m.

A different kind of celebration was about to begin on the day of the year in Bhima Koregaon, where Dalits gathered freezing temperatures near the Victory Pillar for the annual commemoration of the battle between the British forces and Peshwa ruler. Down south, a latter-day movement was launched in Chennai on January 1, as the city put its best foot forward. Tamil Nadu government took the bold green step of letting single-use plastic, and prohibited its use in the State; the new year was celebrated with balloons that carried a "Happy New Year" message and made the point about alternatives such as cloth bags quite literally. Young and old Indians alike welcomed the arrival of 2019 in so many colourful ways, waiting for first light to shine on a brighter year ahead.



Village vibes: The sun rises over Punchakkari near the Vellayani freshwater lake in Thiruvananthapuram to chirps and warbles of migratory birds.

■ 9



Buoyant Chennai: The southern metropolis is on a mission in 2019, with balloons afloat spreading the message of a ban on single-use plastic that came into force in the New Year in the city.

6 DESPATCHES



KABUL

On invasions, wars and libraries

 In a press conference held on Wednesday in Washington, U.S. President Donald Trump made comments with regard to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent war.

"The reason Russia was in Afghanistan was because terrorists were going into Russia. They were right to be there," Mr. Trump told reporters, justifying the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, which culminated in an extended conflict that has continued till now, barring brief periods of peace.

"The problem is, it was a tough fight. And literally, they went bankrupt. They went back to being called Russia again as opposed to being the Soviet Union," he said, in defence of reducing the U.S. spending on what has become the country's longest war.

The statement angered many Afghans, who view many of the *mujahideen* fighters who fought Soviet forces as national heroes. Many of them also took to social media to point out that the very fighters Mr. Trump referred to as "terrorists" had in fact been supported by successive U.S. administrations over the years in their fight against the Soviets. "We didn't send terrorists to USSR in 79. USSR invaded us," Waheed Omar, the Afghan Ambassador to Italy tweeted, further pointing out that U.S. governments funded Pakistani intelligence, which resulted in further instability.

 President Trump's remarks on the Soviet invasion, in which he referred to *mujahideen* fighters as 'terrorists' and defended his proposal to cut down spending in the country, has angered Afghans

Many Afghans also spoke up against Mr. Trump's jibe at the Indian contribution to peace-building efforts. The U.S. President mocked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for saying that India built libraries in the war-torn country.

"You know what that is? That's like five hours of what we spend. And we're supposed to say, 'Oh, thank you for the library.' I don't know who's using it in Afghanistan," Mr. Trump told the media.

Indian assistance

While India has invested in several small infrastructure projects such as schools and libraries, the overall contribution made by New Delhi in development assistance of Afghanistan is close to \$3 billion, the largest among countries in the region.

"India, as a trustworthy partner in Afghanistan, has [contributed] and continues to contribute to the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan in a number of different ways," Javid Faisal, a former government official and a parliamentary candidate, told this writer. "We look forward to expanding our relations further in the best interests of the two brotherly countries," he said, in response to Mr. Trump's comments.

Echoing a similar sentiment, Illyas Kamavi, a civil activist from Nangarhar province, defended Indian's presence in the country. "Sure, India has its own interests, as every country does who supports us. But the role India has played here since 9/11 has been constructive," he explained to this writer.

He also speculated that Mr. Trump's changing strategy in Afghanistan was unlikely to impact Indian's relations with Afghanistan. "Afghans have engaged with Indians, not simply on the basis of common interests but also on the basis of long-standing political history," he explained, elaborating with the reference of political asylum-seekers in India.

"If we look recent history, Dr. Najibullah and his family preferred to go India during [the civil war] and Afghan jihad and they were accepted by the Indian state," he pointed out, referring to the former Afghan President who had sought asylum in India, but was later assassinated by the Taliban. "People of Afghanistan appreciate the support and cooperation of the Indian state in building Afghanistan," Mr. Kamavi said.



DHAKA

After the landslide come the challenges



Mostafa Kamal runs a car rental service in Dhaka but has another identity – he is the secretary of a unit of the Awami Motor Drivers League, a union that he claims was founded by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He gave a detailed account of how the recent general election was "manipulated". Having been entrusted with "gate protection" at a polling station, Mr. Kamal said he "allowed only Awami League (AL) voters to enter polling centers" so that people who intended to vote for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) "went back after standing for hours in the queue". "Not sure if this kind of election is entirely right," he said.

Following the landslide victory of her party, Ms. Hasina's challenge will now be to sell the results to her grass-root comrades, who are perhaps a little demoralised after defeating the Opposition in an 'Opposition-less election'. Her next challenge will be to continue providing political stability and ensuring uninterrupted growth. The task is incredibly difficult, given the challenges.

U.S. presence

A top government official told *The Hindu* that the government is "unsure of the moves of the United States in the Bay of Bengal". Pointing at St. Martin's, an island in extreme southeast of the country, on a map, the official said that the U.S. wants "for sometime its fleet [to be positioned] there with logistical support from Bangladesh". "It is within the submarine-launched ballistic missile range of both New Delhi and Beijing. It is dangerous for entire Asia and Bangladesh to have it [the U.S. fleet] at that pivotal point," the official said.

Another challenge for Ms. Hasina is to balance the two friends – China and India. In an interaction with journalists in Dhaka before the December 30 election, Ms. Hasina said that the country is looking forward to have both corridors – the BBIN [Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal initiative] and the BCIM [Bhutan-China-India-Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation] – in place. This may not be liked by New Delhi, which has no interest in the BCIM. The 2017 BCIM meeting in Kolkata was a damp squib. China, on the other hand, has stressed on the forum, thus making the balancing tricky for Bangladesh.

However, the most formidable internal challenge for Ms. Hasina will be to manage the

 Sheikh Hasina, after the overwhelming mandate given to her party in the election, will be tested on both domestic and international fronts. She needs to balance competing interests

very strong anti-Awami League and anti-India sentiment among a section of the religiously oriented Bangladeshi. Fierce clashes between two factions of Tablighi Jamaat, an apolitical Sunni missionary movement, a month before the election, indicated deep polarisation. A section of the organisation's Bangladesh chapter refused to have Maulana Muhammad Saad Al-Kandhalvi, an Indian Deobandi preacher, conduct the main prayer.

"The demand was to let the chief of Raiwind Markaz of Lahore conduct the *monazat* [the prayer]. The followers [of Raiwind] argued that Maulana Saad from Delhi's Nizamuddin Markaz is from a Hindu country. It indicates that other countries still influence Bangladesh's religious networks," said a senior official of Bangladesh's internal security.

The Raiwind Markaz group is also closely aligned with Hifazat-e-Islam, a radical Islamic outfit that controls part of non-mainstream education in Bangladesh. Interestingly, Hifazat backed the AL in the election. Top AL official Gowher Rizvi said the government was "working with Hifazat to broaden the curriculum so that they are not snared into radical and extremist ideologies".

The Awami League's manifesto claimed that "small shocks cannot stop the progress of Bangladesh"; only time will indicate if the imminent shocks are small or big.



WASHINGTON DC

A question of American citizenship



A proposed question in the 2020 Census, "Is this person a citizen of the United States?", has found itself the subject of much controversy and several court cases. One such case has been brought by the State of California and several cities. The plaintiffs argue that the inclusion of the question – which was last asked in the 1950 Census – violates the U.S. Constitution's Enumeration Clause.

The clause, which says, "Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed," determines how many Congressional seats each State gets. Anything that impacts counting could potentially impact representation in Washington where the seats in the 435 member House of Representatives (and hence those in the Electoral College) are apportioned according to State population.

States are concerned that asking a citizenship question will serve as a deterrent to those in the U.S. illegally, or to those who may be apprehensive of having their information shared with law enforcement, perhaps because they have defaulted on loans, or owe child support, etc. While there are laws to protect identifying information from being passed on to law enforcement and the FBI, these are not widely

 A question on citizenship, proposed to be included in the 2020 Census, has become the subject of controversy. States are concerned that it will deter many from participating in the exercise

known, or if known, do not adequately assuage concerns of respondents.

Undercounting could also result in States losing their share of \$800 billion in federal funding that is linked to population. Funding for schools, housing assistance, Medicaid, epidemic preparedness and national disasters could be impacted.

Not surprisingly, many State and local authorities were alarmed when Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross announced last March that the Census would carry a citizenship question. The decision, according to the administration, was to better enforce the Voting Rights Act – a law to ensure the equal protection of voting rights across race. Those challenging it are sceptical of the motives and believe that the question is being added to intimidate and deter immigrants, especially Hispanics, from participating in the Census and that Mr. Ross had made "shifting and inaccurate" statements about the need to include the question.

The biggest losers

Some 24.3 million people are likely to avoid participating in the Census, according to Robert Shapiro of Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business. Mr. Shapiro, a former bureaucrat, had overseen the Census in 2000. Comparing State-wise poverty rates to the national average, he argues that while the biggest losers in terms of Congressional seats will be Blue States, ironically, it is mostly Red States that will suffer funding losses. Additionally, the lack of funds will hit the poor disproportionately in these States.

In November, a New York court heard a case brought by 18 States and several cities, challenging the question's inclusion. While the Donald Trump administration could not get the Supreme Court to halt the case, it did succeed in preventing Mr. Ross being deposed over his reasoning for having the question included. The Supreme Court has agreed to hear arguments in February about whether Mr. Ross can be deposed over his motives. A few days ago, a top Democrat said Mr. Ross will be called before a House committee to testify about allegations that he misled Congress on the Census question.

Given that the subsequent census is only in 2030, the outcome of these battles will have far-reaching consequences.



COLOMBO

Some stark reminders for Sri Lanka's east



For Sri Lanka's Eastern Province, the new year began with two stark reminders.

It was the year 1948, when young American Jesuit priest Father Benjamin Henry Miller, or Fr. Harry Miller as he was better known, arrived in Batticaloa. He spent the next seven decades here, teaching at a local boys' school, serving as a priest in the Jesuit mission and living as a witness in the war-ravaged district that he had made his home. On January 1, 2019, he passed away at 93, after a lifetime of courageous work as a peace activist.

The island's Tamil-majority Northern Province has remained in the spotlight for the numerous war-time atrocities it suffered, but the east – home to Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese – has also had its share of massacres.

Batticaloa saw deadly attacks, murders and enforced disappearances intensify in the 1990s. As the founder-member of the Batticaloa Peace Committee, Fr. Miller diligently documented several thousand cases of missing persons, even as he tried reconciling the communities torn apart by years of war and mistrust.

A chronicler of testimonies

At a time when many religious leaders refrained from challenging either the armed forces that were on a rampage or the LTTE and other rebel groups that stifled any dissent, Fr. Miller felt the need to record testimonies of victims and their families, irrespective of who the perpetrator was.

In 1990, in one of the most gruesome incidents in the east, Army personnel assembled nearly 200 Tamil civilians, including children, from Sathurukondan and nearby villages in Batticaloa and summarily killed them. Fr. Miller's Peace Committee recorded an eyewitness account from the only survivor of the massacre. While his testimony remains a crucial record of the atrocity, the wait for justice in the case is nearing three decades now.

Fr. Miller's passing on New Year's day brought to focus his untiring work in Batticaloa for 70 years, and the many distressing episodes he recorded during that time.

In the neighbouring Trincomalee district, the first week of the year remains traumatic for many. On January 2, 2006, five boys – all of them high school students – gathered near the Gandhi statue at the sea front, little know-

 Fr. Harry Miller, who worked for 70 years as a teacher and peace activist in Batticaloa, passed away on January 1. His records provide accounts of the many war-time atrocities suffered by the district

ing they would be shot dead. The killing of the students, who have since come to be known as the 'Trinco five', has often been described as an emblematic case of war crimes and the lack of accountability in Sri Lanka. Just as the young boys began their year, perhaps with dreams big and small, they were gunned down, reportedly by the Special Task Force personnel.

"It was a shocking case in which the state has operated with blatant impunity; its disregard for the rule of law has been offensive and insidious. Numerous exposés and statements by human rights agencies have been released on the subject that provide overwhelming evidence of state complicity, but as usual the case has stalled," the University Teachers for Human Rights-Jaffna noted in one of its 2007 reports. The group of academics compiled elaborate evidence and information pertaining to the case, as it did for many crimes committed by the Army, the LTTE and the Indian Peace Keeping Force during the war years.

The 'Trinco five' case has not progressed much. Kasipillai Manoharan, the father of one of the students and a key witness, lives abroad following threats to his life in his hometown. While his fight for justice continues at international forums, the boys are remembered at Trincomalee's beach front at the dawn of every new year.



BEIJING

As Apple's sales figures head south in China



The sharp decline in sales of Apple products in China has had a cascading impact. It has jolted companies across the globe that sell components to the American icon. Workers in these companies are on tenterhooks, anticipating that reams of pink slips could soon circulate as Apple's sales head south.

But the impact goes far beyond the company's supply chain. Apple shares are bought by the big boys, including some multibillion-dollar hedge funds, spread across major financial centres such as London and New York. A rating of confidence in one of the most highly rated U.S. companies can undermine business confidence in general, threatening a much bigger global crisis. If Apple and its formidable ecosystem are facing headwinds, how will lesser companies hold their own in a tightening global marketplace? After Apple revealed its revenue estimate for the October-December quarter to be about \$84 billion, roughly 6-10% below its initial outlook, the markets shook immediately. On Thursday morning, shares in the California-based company slid by 10% from their closing price on Wednesday.

The drop had a ripple effect on Apple's suppliers. Catcher Technology, which makes housings for iPhones, closed at around 6% lower than the previous day. Stocks of the Foxconn Technology Group – a critical assembler

 The company's below-par performance in the country can be explained in terms of reduced consumer spending by the Chinese as well as the looming trade war with the U.S.

of iPhone products – were slimmer by 2%.

Japanese companies also felt the heat. Japan Display, the maker of liquid crystal display screens, mostly for Apple, had even earlier downgraded its sales outlook. The *Nikkei Asian Review* quoted its president and chief operating officer Yoshiyuki Tsukizaki as saying that the company was "carefully ascertaining the magnitude of swings in the mobile business". A cluster of Chinese companies too have taken a massive blow. The volume of Chinese machine tools, which include precision devices for making smartphones, apparently dived 90.6% year-on-year in November.

Narrowing of quality gap

Several intricate factors explain Apple's below par performance in China.

First, the quality gap between Apple products and those manufactured by competitors such as Huawei is arguably narrowing. Besides, Chinese high-end products are much cheaper, driving value-for-money consumers away from their iPhone addiction. For instance, the iPhone XR variant sells for around \$1,018. But some of the latest offerings from Huawei go for less than half of that tag.

In general, consumption power in China is on the decline, as the economic slowdown begins to bite. Statistics show that for the first time in November, year-on-year retail sales grew only by 8.1% – the sharpest decline in 15 years. Vehicle buys have been declining for five months in a row, while smartphone sales have been consistently tapering.

Getting consumer loans from banks has also become harder. Further, the trade war between China and the U.S. has also fuelled the drop in Apple sales. In a letter to investors, Apple CEO Tim Cook acknowledged that the ongoing trade war was making a negative impact. "We believe the economic environment in China has been further impacted by rising trade tensions" with the U.S., he observed.

The danger with the trade war is that it breeds nationalist sentiments. On the ground, it can translate into angry calls for an economic boycott, as happened when South Korea deployed the THAAD anti-missile system, much against China's wishes.

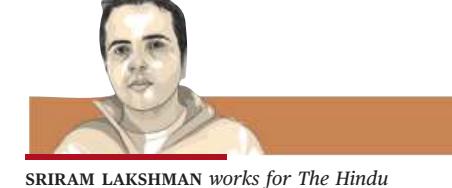
China and the U.S. have to avoid a political crisis, which can snowball into a full-scale economic war, endangering supply chains of the entire global economy.



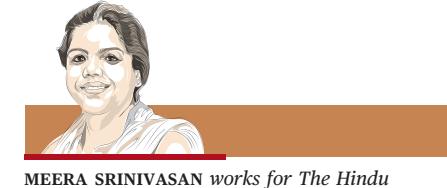
RUCHI KUMAR writes for The Hindu and is based in Kabul, Afghanistan



SUVOJIT BAGCHI works for The Hindu and was recently in Dhaka, Bangladesh



SRIRAM LAKSHMAN works for The Hindu and is based in Washington DC



MEERA SRINIVASAN works for The Hindu and is based in Colombo



ATUL ANJEA works for The Hindu and is based in Beijing

IN BRIEF



Govt. amalgamates 3 regional rural banks

NEW DELHI The Centre has amalgamated three regional rural banks (RRB) – Punjab Gramin Bank, Malwa Gramin Bank and Sutlej Gramin Bank – into a single RRB with effect from January 1. In a filing to the BSE, Punjab and Sind Bank, one of the sponsor banks of the RRBs, said the government, after consulting the sponsor banks of the RRBs, felt that in the interest of the banks and the areas served by them, they should be amalgamated. PTI

UBI, Srei Finance enter pact for MSME finance

KOLKATA United Bank of India and Srei Equipment Finance have entered into an agreement for financing the MSME and agriculture sectors. Under the pact, UBI would leverage its low-cost loans with Srei to enable purchase of equipment and vehicles in a seamless manner, a UBI statement said. UBI MD and CEO Ashok Kumar Pradhan termed the pact as a "saviour" for the MSME units "starved" of low-cost funds to compete globally.

Industry body seeks parity in GST on snacks

INDORE The Federation of Sweets & Namkeen Manufacturers has demanded parity in GST rates on branded and non-branded snacks. Currently, 12% GST is charged on branded snacks and 5% on non-branded products. The federation demanded the GST on branded snacks be reduced to 5%. "This anomaly has been increasing the complexities for traders and encouraging unhealthy competition," said federation treasurer Firoz Naqvi. PTI

IL&FS crisis shows gaps in NBFC regulation, data: Garg

No point of contact at the lending agencies or organisations to represent them'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The recent Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS) crisis points to several lacunae in the regulation of non-banking finance companies as well as lack of data and interaction, Economic Affairs Secretary S.C. Garg said on Saturday.

Speaking at a CII event, Mr. Garg said, "IL&FS crisis shows there are lots of gaps not only in terms of regulations, but also in data collection, information, interaction with the government or the regulators."

"Today, we don't even know who to talk to in NBFCs and there are no organisations that represent them," he said.



Hazy picture: Data points are very poor today when it comes to NBFCs, the Economic Affairs Secretary said. ■ REUTERS

The IL&FS crisis triggered after the infrastructure developer and financier defaulted on loans and faced ratings downgrade. This impacted other NBFCs, which saw their cost of funds going up significantly within weeks.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in a recent report had said it intended to strengthen the asset-liability management framework for NBFCs similar to that of banks. "Data points are very poor today when it comes to

NBFCs. When the IL&FS episode happened, we wanted to look at how much change is taking place in financing side, where [and] who they are lending to, and what kind of assets they have. We don't have the data on NBFCs even on a monthly basis, forget daily, which we need," Mr. Garg said.

Sound regulation

"Sound regulation is necessary for the development of NBFCs. Any regulation that throttles growth is not a good regulation," he added.

The Centre is trying to work with the RBI to create a system for more information about the sector, he said. There are about 10,000 NBFCs registered with RBI.

'\$10-rise in crude impacts inflation by 49-58 bps'

Price rise hits CAD, higher GDP growth won't help: RBI study

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

An increase in international crude oil price by \$10 will impact headline inflation by 49-58 basis points, researchers of the Reserve Bank of India said.

"Under the most conservative estimate, we quantify that a \$10/barrel increase in crude price at the price of \$65/barrel will lead to a 49 bps increase in headline inflation," the researchers said in a paper 'The Impact of Crude Price Shock on India's Current Account Deficit, Inflation and Fiscal Deficit'.

A similar increase at \$55/barrel gives around a 58 bps increase in headline inflation.

"If the government de-



Since mid-Nov., crude prices have declined significantly.

International crude oil prices increased by around 12% between April and September 2018, mainly due to a spurt in demand, on the back of global growth revival, and partly due to geopolitical risks.

However, since mid-November 2018, crude prices have declined significantly, but remain volatile.

The paper also argues that an increase in crude price worsens the Current Account Deficit (CAD) for India and thus adverse impact cannot be significantly contained through a higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth.

"So, a crude price shock will be followed by high CAD to GDP ratio," it added.

OVL makes oil discovery in Colombia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

ONGC Videsh Ltd., the overseas arm of State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp. (ONGC), on Saturday said it has made a second oil discovery in Colombia that has increased prospects of its onland block in the South American nation.

The well Indico-1 in onshore block CPO-5 found an oil-bearing play, the company said.

OVL is the operator of the block with 70% stake while Petrodorado South America S A Sucursal (PDSA) of Colombia holds the remaining 30%.

During tests, the well flowed at a self-flow rate of about 4,000 barrels of oil per day.

RCom, Jio write to DoT to clear ₹25,000-cr. deal

Both the companies cite the ₹1,400-crore corporate guarantee furnished to DoT



Call connect: The firms said RCom's past liabilities will be borne by seller and future liabilities by buyer. ■ REUTERS

sured that past liabilities of RCom will be borne by the seller and future liabilities will be borne by the buyer. Both RCom and RJIL officials confirmed that a joint letter had been written to DoT.

"We have jointly written to DoT requesting them to

approve the deal. We have assured DoT that any liability arising out of past dues of RCom will be borne by the seller and future liabilities will be borne by RJIL from the date of sale of spectrum," said a person familiar with the development.

The letter cited corporate guarantee of ₹1,400 crore given to DoT by RCom arm Reliance Realty Limited.

"The requirement of giving the bank guarantee as per DoT's demand has been substituted by the orders of the TDSAT and the Supreme Court, with Reliance Realty Limited providing a non-disposal undertaking and corporate guarantee."

Meeting guidelines

"So, compliance with the [spectrum] trading guidelines is met," said the person, adding that being a licensee of DoT, RCom is committed to discharge any outstanding or disputed amount subject to final adjudication.

This letter comes at a time when RCom's contempt petition against DoT for not granting approval to the deal

Jet fails to pay salary to more staff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

After defaulting on payment of salary to its senior management along with pilots and engineers, loss-making carrier Jet Airways has failed to disburse the December salary to some other categories of employees as well, a source said. The airline has not paid salaries to managerial employees and those above, for December.

The firm has not been paying salaries on time to about 15% of its over 16,000 staff since August.

A Jet spokesperson said: "Jet would like to clarify that except for informed groups, all salary payments are up to date," without elaborating on who falls in the "informed groups".

Shudh Plus unveils ₹80-cr. plan to boost sanitary napkin output

U.P.-based company says it will gradually expand its footprint pan India



Hygiene quotient: Once demand goes up in the south, the firm will set up units there also. ■ BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Only 18% of the 35 crore women in India have access to sanitary napkins

AMAR TULSIYAN
director, Shudh Plus Hygiene Products Pvt. Ltd.

in India have access to sanitary napkins. My objective is that every one must have it and it is their right," he added.

In the first phase, the company had invested ₹30 crore to start production and another ₹30 crore is being invested in the second phase.

The first production line became operational in May 2018 and the second production line is expected to go online shortly. By end of

2019, the entire ₹80 crore is expected to be invested in capacity addition.

Scope for growth
"We have plenty of land available at our facility in Gorakhpur to expand and we will do that in phases. In five years, my aim is to build a billion dollar business as there is vast scope for growth," he said.

Currently, the firm's monthly turnover stands at ₹9 crore with the unit operating at full capacity. Once demand goes up in the South, the company would set up manufacturing units there also, he said.

"We are confident with our idea to create awareness through the 'Niine Movement' and we are focusing on rural and urban markets for growth," Mr. Tulsiyan said. The company has hired people from reputed companies in this business to achieve its objectives, he added.

The company is set to expand capacity to supply sanitary napkins all over India, competing with the likes of Procter & Gamble and Johnson & Johnson who are segment leaders enjoying a combined market share of 85%.

Texprocil seeks interest subvention from government for cotton yarn

'It is the only product not given benefit under foreign trade policy'

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA

COIMBATORE
The Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council (Texprocil) has appealed to the Union Government to include cotton yarn in the Interest Equalisation Scheme for pre- and post-shipment rupee export credit.

Council chairman K.V. Srinivasan has said in a statement that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) recently approved the inclusion of merchant exporters in the scheme. Interest Equalisation Scheme at 5% is available for pre and post-ship-

The CCEA had recently approved the inclusion of merchant exporters in the scheme

K.V. SRINIVASAN
chairman, Texprocil

ment credit on export of all products manufactured and exported by micro, small and medium-scale enterprises (MSMEs) and 3% on 416 specific tariff lines for non-MSMEs.

However, it had available only for manufacturer-exporters so far. In textiles, 35% to 40% of exports are through merchant ex-

porters. The MSMEs constitute a significant part of the textile sector. But, they mostly depend on merchant exporters. The government had recently approved extending the scheme to merchant exporters and this would benefit the industry.

Further, the benefits are available for all types of fabrics, apparel, and made-ups. It should be made available for cotton yarn too. "Cotton yarn is the only product which has not been given any benefit under the foreign trade policy although it is a value added product," he said.

PROCUREMENT NOTICE

GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PARDESH

HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE ROADS PROJECT (HPSRP)

Request for Bids (RFB)

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (ICB)

Reference No.: PW/SRP/RIDC/HP/SI/ICB-4

Contract Dated:- November 26, 2018

Title : Procurement of Selection of a System Integrator (SI) for Design, Supply, Install, Integration, Commissioning, Testing and Maintenance of an Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) for HPPWD and HPRIDC.

CORRIGENDUM-1

The last date for submission / opening of bid mentioned in the Procurement Notice issued reference No. PW/SRP/RIDC/HP/SI/ICB-4 dated - November 26, 2018 which was published on November 27, 2018 and on November 28, 2018 in the newspapers "The Times of India" and the "The Hindu" respectively, is hereby extended from January 07, 2019 at 1500 Hours/1530 Hours (IST) to January 21, 2019 at 1500 Hours/1530 Hours (IST).

All other details of the published Procurement Notice shall remain the same.

Sd/-

Chief Engineer-cum-Project Director,

State Roads Project, HPRIDC,

Nirman Bhawan, Nigam Vihar,

Shimla-171002, Himachal Pradesh.

e-mail:- pdsp-rhp@nic.in

Fax:- 0177-2620663,

Tel:- 0177-2620663, 2627602

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER

RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BERHAMPUR

(At:- Ambapura, Po:- Engineering School Near Income Tax Office, Berhampur-760011)

E-Mail:- serwpr2004@yahoo.com; Tel/FAX:- 0680-2404287

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement

1318-O: Bid Identification No. Online Tender/30-2018-19/BPR

Identification No. Name of work No. of Work Approx. Estimated Cost (In Lakh) Class of Contractor Period of Completion

Online Tender / 30-2018-19/ BPR Bridge Works under BSY 02 Nos From Rs.147.84 Lakhs to Rs.259.28 Lakhs "B" Class or "A" Class as applicable 09 (Nine) & 06 (Six) Calendar Month as provided

Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Availability of tender online for bidding From To

Superintending Engineer, R.W. Circle, Berhampur. Online Tender /30-2018-19/BPR 07.01.2019 at 10.00 A.M. 21.01.2019 upto 3.00 P.M.

(i) EMD / Bid Security, Cost of Bid document is to be transferred through On-line as per the procedure mentioned in the DTCN.

(ii) Non-submission of the information/documents through online by the bidder as per the items mentioned in the eligible criteria of the DTCN will also liable for rejection of his tender.

Further details & Corrigendum if any can be seen from the website:- www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd/- J.Beara

Superintending Engineer, R.W.Circle, Berhampur

V.O.CHIDAMBARANAR PORT TRUST (TENDER DEPARTMENT)	
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NTT)	
Only through E-Tendering, More info: www.vochidambaranarporttrust.com/VOCPT	
Tender No. MER/E/33/ELE/E/2/21/2019	
On line Tenders (single Bid system	

IN BRIEF



Volvo to take \$778 mn hit on emissions slip up

Sweden's Volvo is setting aside 7 billion Swedish crowns (\$778 million) to cover costs related to its admission in October that its truck and bus engines could be exceeding limits for nitrogen oxide emissions. The company, which makes trucks, construction equipment and buses, said the estimated costs were based on factors including statistical analysis. **REUTERS**



U.K. consumer lending growth nears 4-year low

LONDON Lending to British consumers grew at its slowest pace in nearly four years in November and the number of mortgage approvals fell, Bank of England data showed, adding to signs of a pre-Brexit slowdown in the economy. The annual growth rate in unsecured consumer lending slowed to 7.1% from 7.4% in October. **REUTERS**



Tesla seeks duty cut for China's car computer

WASHINGTON Tesla has asked the Trump administration to exempt the Chinese-made car computer "brain" of its new Model 3 sedan from the 25% tariff imposed in August.

"Increased tariffs on this particular part cause economic harm to Tesla, through the increase in costs and impact to profitability," the company said. **REUTERS**



'U.K. pay gap between CEOs and staff widens'

LONDON The earnings of U.K.'s top bosses will match a typical worker's entire annual salary even faster than last year, a Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development and High Pay Centre report said. Median pay for a FTSE 100 CEO in 2017 was £3.9 million, up 11% from 2016. Average worker pay in 2018 was £29,574 a year. **REUTERS**

Yen's surge, a red flag for world markets, global economy

Historically, large yen gains in short periods have preceded global market stress

REUTERS

LONDON

A gradual rise by the Japanese yen in recent weeks culminated in a dramatic overnight surge – firing a warning shot for world markets and the global economy in 2019.

Historically, outsized yen gains in short periods, such as the Russian default in 1998 and the global market meltdown in 2008, are a harbinger of stress for global markets. Market watchers say the yen's latest ascent is a sign that the global economy is set for a rocky ride ahead.

Signs are growing that the global economy is headed for a slowdown.

In an environment like that, the yen tends to thrive. Japan's large current account surplus means global markets consider it a safe haven.

Global surveys this week showed activity in European and Chinese factories are slowing. And falling demand forced Apple to issue a rare cut in its sales forecast, sending tremors through global markets.

The yen's roaring higher was a sign of just how widespread concern over the health of the global economy had become, said Ulrich Leuchtmann, head of FX research at Commerzbank.

Japanese investors tend to invest a large portion of their savings overseas, then bring the money home during extreme market stress, driving the yen higher.

That outward investment pressure has only surged in recent years. According to Morgan Stanley, foreign in-



Yen for strength: The Japanese currency has gained more than 6.5% in the last five trading sessions. **GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK**

vestments in U.S. assets has nearly doubled over the last decade to \$1.25 trillion – a sign of the magnitude of the flows that could head back into the yen.

The dollar collapsed to as little as ¥104.10, its lowest reading since March 2018 in early Asian trading, before recouping some losses to stand at ¥107.64. The yen strengthened at least 1% against all its G10 peers.

At session lows, the Japanese currency has gained more than 6.5% in the last five trading sessions and is the best performing major currency since early December.

But even as evidence mounts that the global economy is struggling, central banks, led by the United States, are signalling more interest rate increases are coming.

That is raising fears they may be tightening policy too much into an economic

slowdown.

"It tells you there is a lot of anxiety and nervousness and concern about a more material slowdown in the economy," said Bob Michele, chief investment officer and head of fixed income at JP Morgan Asset Management.

Real U.S. interest rates adjusted for inflation are at their highest in nearly three years. Nominal interest rates are greater than dividend yields in U.S., China and Japan.

"U.S. real yields are too high, productivity problems are emerging in China and the glut of global surpluses is falling, exposing structural flaws in developed markets," said Hans Redeker, global head of FX strategy at Morgan Stanley in London.

Japanese investments
Unusually though, this time around, the surge in the yen has occurred a few months after a sell-off in emerging

markets last summer. That suggests the bulk of Japanese investment is concentrated in developed markets such as the United States.

Between late March and early October, U.S. stocks rose by 13% and the dollar gained more than 9% against the yen as rate increases in the United States and trade tensions boosted the U.S. currency.

Sam Lynton-Brown, a currency strategist at BNP Paribas London, said Japanese investors typically held much of their investments in developed markets and the widening cracks in developed markets resulted in the yen's strongly exhibiting its safe-haven characteristics only in recent weeks.

Adding U.S. assets

Morgan Stanley strategists said Japanese investors have stepped up buying of riskier U.S. assets such as equities and credit in recent weeks to capture higher yields. Since 2010, they have added more than \$400 billion in U.S. assets, most of it in equities, they said.

With Japan's financial market still closed for new year's holidays, the latest moves have been credited to retail investors.

Emerging-market currencies such as Turkey's lira and South Africa's rand felt the biggest pain.

"These dislocations demonstrate the impact of unwinding QE on market structures and it means that the truly more vulnerable markets out there need to watch their back, so to speak," said Koon Chow at UBP.

Fed is flexible, aware of risks, Powell tells markets

Message heard on Wall St, indices surge 3.5% to 2-week high

REUTERS

ATLANTA/NEW YORK

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell sought to ease market concerns that the U.S. central bank was ignoring signs of an economic slowdown, saying he was aware of the risks and would be patient and flexible in policy decisions this year.

Speaking after months of volatility in world bond and stock markets, Mr. Powell avoided some of the communication missteps that have in the past roiled rather than calmed investors. He also pledged to stay in his job even if asked to quit by President Donald Trump, who has been critical of him.

Echoing a more sympathetic tone recently espoused by some of his colleagues, Mr. Powell said the Fed was "listening" to markets and would balance the steady flow of strong economic data against the array of risks – from slowing global growth to worries about the U.S.-China trade war – that have spooked investors.

The message was heard on Wall Street, where major stock indexes surged about 3.5% to a more than two-week high. The market bounce came after a volatile December sell-off in which traders grew increasingly sceptical of the Fed's upbeat forecasts and plans to keep hiking interest rates in 2019.

Shift in stance

"We are always prepared to shift the stance of policy and to shift it significantly" if needed, Mr. Powell said, speaking on a panel alongside former Fed chiefs Janet Yellen and Ben Bernanke. That flexibility, he added, applied as well to the monthly reductions to the Fed's balance sheet.

The Fed chief stressed that the economy remained on track and that the job market was quite strong. He did not address Fed forecasts from December that sketched out two more rate rises this year, but, combined with the messages of



Lending a ear: With muted inflation readings coming in, we will see how the economy evolves, says Jerome Powell. **AP**

Fed presidents who in recent days downplayed that tightening plan, he delivered the sort of temperate message investors had hoped to hear.

"We really need to be looking at the data and having the economy tell us, do we need to move more? Do we need to move more, faster? Can we wait?" Cleveland Federal Reserve Bank President Loretta Mester said in an interview with *Reuters*. "We should take our time and assess ... We may be where we need to be."

Her comments, from a sometimes hawkish Fed official, highlighted the change in tone at a central bank which, after two years of roughly quarterly rate increases, is now assessing the risks of going too far.

Following Mr. Powell's remarks, Treasury yields rose and futures traders began pricing in a small chance of a rate hike this year, versus no chance seen before Powell began speaking.

A graying Facebook will require a different leader

Surmounting the crisis will require a new business model

JENNIFER SABA
NEW YORK

Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook have been inseparable since he launched the social network 15 years ago. But his lack of perspective helped create the existential problems facing the company today. His priority is finding a new leader who can take over and meet the challenge.

The company has been reeling since the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections when Mr. Zuckerberg brushed off alarm bells that Kremlin-backed operatives manipulated the platform to sway voters.

Worries about fake news and privacy violations have prompted users to abandon the network and politicians to demand regulation. Surmounting the crisis will require a new business model, just as Facebook's valuation looks over the hill.

The company harvests data from more than two bil-

lion members and pitches it to advertisers so they can target their messages. Promoting controversial and divisive content while making it difficult for users to control their personal information is part of the money machine. Facebook either properly cleans up to avoid losing more users or it will have to hunt for different revenue streams.

COMMENT

Shortly after it went public in 2012, it lost about half of its then \$25 billion market value on fears it wouldn't be able to move advertising to mobile phones from desktop computers. Mr. Zuckerberg and chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg overcame that challenge, but they didn't change the basic model. What they did do was double costs.

(The author is a Reuters Breakingviews columnist. The opinions are her own)

Where are my toys?



Playtime over: A boy stands in front of a closed shop of "Faetter BR" (Cousin BR) at Roskilde Torv in Denmark. Toy giant Top Toy, which is behind the Cousin BR and TOYS 'R' US in the Nordics, has announced that the company had been declared bankrupt "due to highly disappointing Christmas sales." **AFP**

Dutch authorities demand clean-up costs from Swiss shipping line

More than 270 cargo containers, some holding hazardous chemicals, fell off the container ship MSC Zoe during a North Sea storm in German waters this past week



Deadly fall: MSC has deployed boats to locate and tow drifting containers, plus sonar-tracing vessels for underwater recovery, says a spokesperson. **REUTERS**

REUTERS

AMSTERDAM

Dutch authorities will hold Swiss shipping line MSC liable for the cost of cleaning up debris from more than 270 cargo containers that fell off one of its vessels and washed up on shore, officials said on Friday.

The Dutch coastguard said a criminal investigation had been launched by prosecutors into the incident, one of the largest of its kind off the coast of the Netherlands.

The containers, some holding hazardous chemicals, fell off one of the world's largest container ships, the MSC Zoe, during a North Sea storm on Wednesday in German waters near the island of Borkum.

Roughly 35 containers have been located and the re-

mainder were lost at sea, Water Management Minister Cora van Nieuwenhuizen wrote in a letter to Parliament. "Those responsible (MSC) will be held liable," she wrote.

Among the lost goods were car parts, refrigerators, toys and furniture, she wrote.

"Several containers of hazardous materials were onboard. It is unclear how many fell off," the letter said.

At least one container load of organic peroxide, a strong bleaching agent that can cause injury on contact with skin, was lost, the letter said.

Residents were told not to touch 25-kg bags found on the shore.

Germany is pushing for

shipping containers, especially for dangerous goods, Norbert Brackmann, Germany's maritime business coordinator, told the *Neue Osnabruecker Zeitung* newspaper.

But he added that it could take several years before the 170 members of the International Maritime Organisation agree on such a step.

Joint probe

Prosecutors said in a statement, sent to *Reuters*, that a joint investigation with Maritime Police would focus on "whether the damage caused is the result of criminal acts," possibly in violation of the anti-pollution laws for seagoing vessels.

"They need to remove this as quickly as possible because the longer it's here the more damage it does," she said. "We have decided to collectively pass on the costs to the shipping company."

It was not clear if there would be lasting environmental damage to the area, a vast expanse of tidal flats and wetlands known for its rich biological diversity.

"MSC is not giving a detailed account of the cargo on board to the general public at this time," it said, adding that "caution should be applied in particular for any containers or drums which are labelled as having hazardous content".

Tineke Schokker, the mayor of Vlieland, one of the Wadden Islands, said she and four other mayors sent letters to MSC demanding that costs be covered. Debris continued to wash up on Friday, she said, posing a threat to flora and fauna.

A statement from MSC on Friday said it was "directly taking over more of the clean-up" and working with salvage companies.

An MSC spokesman had no immediate comment about the letters sent by island mayors, but the statement said it had deployed boats to locate and tow drifting containers, plus sonar-tracing vessels for underwater recovery.

"MSC is not giving a detailed account of the cargo on board to the general public at this time," it said, adding that "caution should be applied in particular for any containers or drums which are labelled as having hazardous content".

Going for the guavas

SUMIT PAUL

The poet Harivansh Rai Bachchan, Amitabh Bachchan's father, wrote thus in his four-volume autobiography: *Sardiyon ki alsaa dopahar mein ilahabadi ke amrood kuchh alag hi maza dete hain. Unka swaad aur badh jaata hai jab aap chaat masale ke saath amrood ki phaanon ka aanaand utthane hain* (The famed guavas of Allahabad make the languid afternoons of winter all the more tastily memorable when you relish slices of guava with chaat masala sprinkled on them). This he wrote to his contemporary, the Hindi poet Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', who was equally fond of guavas. He wrote back: *Eh haath mein amrood aur doosre mein qalam* (Guava in one hand and a pen in the other...).

This winter fruit has many takers because of its quaint taste. Though not exactly a sub-continental fruit (it came from Mexico and Central America), the best and tastiest guavas in India and Pakistan are available in Allahabad and Kotah (NWFP, Pakistan) respectively. The Guatemala variety of Central America is good for westerners. The Allahabad variety is called *Amrood ke shaayeqeen ki pahli pasand* (the first preference of the connoisseurs of guavas). This variety is light green or faint yellow in colour, with red spots. They make a crackling sound when you bite into them, just like the apples of Himachal Pradesh when the teeth sink into the pulp. Genuine lovers of Amrood are of the view that the variety that has red spots tastes the best, and that they taste even better when you sprinkle salt (especially rock salt), pepper or chaat masala on the slices.

Second best

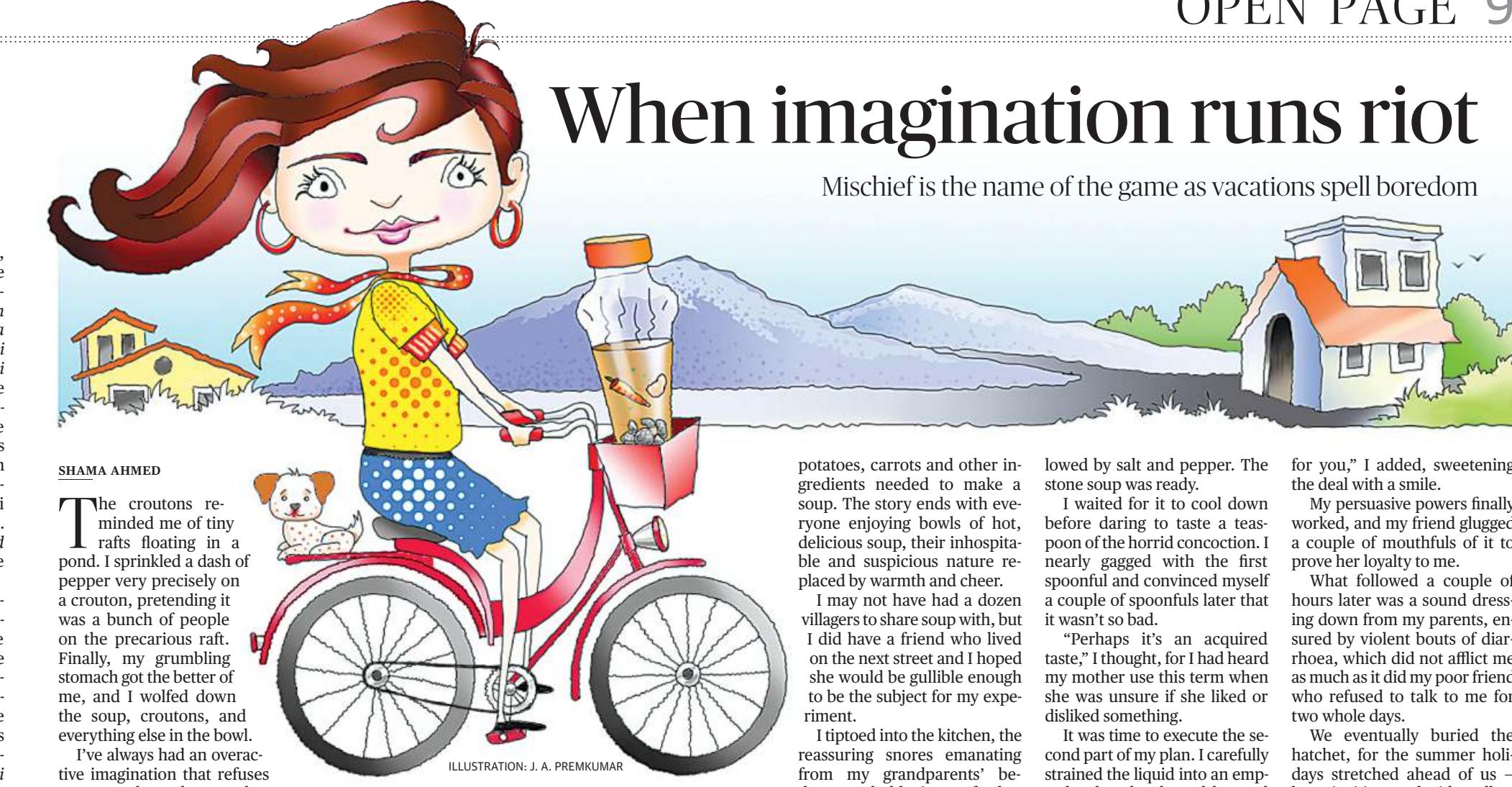
The Kotah variety is tasty but can only play second fiddle to the guavas of Allahabad. Guava is considered the winter fruit of Pakistan. Urdu poet Raghupati Sahay 'Firaq' Gorakhpuri, who hailed from Allahabad and taught English and Urdu at Allahabad varsity, penned a long poem, rather an ode to guavas: *Amrood ki tahseen mein* (In praise of guavas). In this poem, Firaq tried to prove that guava was a better and tastier fruit than mango, which he didn't like very much.

Jawaharlal Nehru loved guavas. So did his muse, Edwina Mountbatten. Nehru had a guava orchard near Naini, 6 km from Allahabad. He would send the juiciest hand-picked guavas to the Viceroy's spouse. When Nehru was incarcerated at the Naini jail during the freedom struggle, the English Superintendent of Police, Neil Asquen, would see to it that Nehru got the guavas from his own orchard. The best guavas come from December 15 to January 15.

Guavas with white pulp taste better than those with red pulp. Round-shaped ones are tastier than the elongated ones. It's one fruit that goes well with fish dishes. Yours truly came across a dish in Athens that comprised slices of guava and salmon/haddox fillets dressed in olive oil. The mildly pungent taste of guava makes fish dishes tastier. Many Portuguese preparations use guava juice: it softens shellfish, lobsters, prawns and crabs.

There's a Turkish perfume that mixes filtered guava essence, its fragrance so fruity and lingering. Lastly, people of Persia (Iran) consider it to be an aphrodisiac with no side-effects (*Ala bener mustaqeema*). So, lusty men can try this from that perspective as well!

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SHAMA AHMED

The croutons reminded me of tiny rafts floating in a pond. I sprinkled a dash of pepper very precisely on a crouton, pretending it was a bunch of people on the precarious raft. Finally, my grumbling stomach got the better of me, and I wolfed down the soup, croutons, and everything else in the bowl.

I've always had an overactive imagination that refuses to succumb to the mundane motions of life. It's this imagination that makes the croutons in the soup resemble little rafts in stormy waters, or conjure up images of antibodies in combat gear battling the evil virus in my body when I'm sick. It makes life appear a little less dull and keeps the child in me alive.

Speaking of soup and overactive imaginations, I remember the time when I tried making stone soup. That's right, it was stone soup.

With both parents away at

work and my grandparents overcome by a heavy lunch-induced slumber most afternoons, I had little to do during my summer holidays. I was done giving my doll a haircut, expecting her soft blonde tuft to grow back. Watching television was out of the question, for back in those days, post the afternoon news, the TV screen only showed static until Doordarshan aired its evening programmes later in the day.

The ten-year-old me was

bored out of my mind, and as the saying goes, an idle mind is the devil's workshop. As my palms itched to do something, I suddenly remember the story of the clever traveller who charmed the stingy village folk into sharing the ingredients from their larders for some soup. In the story, the weary traveller pretends to make soup by dropping a stone into a boiling pot of water. The inhospitable villagers, overcome by curiosity, eventually share

potatoes, carrots and other ingredients needed to make a soup. The story ends with everyone enjoying bowls of hot, delicious soup, their inhospitable and suspicious nature replaced by warmth and cheer.

I may not have had a dozen villagers to share soup with, but I did have a friend who lived on the next street and I hoped she would be gullible enough to be the subject for my experiment.

I tiptoed into the kitchen, the reassuring snores emanating from my grandparents' bedroom emboldening me further to carry on with my shenanigans. Placing a pot of water on the electric stove that had seen better days, I waited until it came to a boil before dropping a couple of unwashed stones that I'd picked up from the street.

So far so good. My grandparents were oblivious to the mischief unfolding in their kitchen. I was on a roll. In went the diced and misshapen potatoes, tomatoes, some leftover onions, a couple of carrots and peas, fol-

lowed by salt and pepper. The stone soup was ready.

I waited for it to cool down before daring to taste a teaspoon of the horrid concoction. I nearly gagged with the first spoonful and convinced myself a couple of spoonfuls later that it wasn't so bad.

"Perhaps it's an acquired taste," I thought, for I had heard my mother use this term when she was unsure if she liked or disliked something.

It was time to execute the second part of my plan. I carefully strained the liquid into an empty ketchup bottle and hopped on to my bicycle, pedalling away to my friend's house before my grandparents awoke to the storm in the kitchen.

Relieved that her grandparents were fast asleep and her parents away at work, I urged her to try some. She looked sceptical at first, sniffing it suspiciously. "What is it?" she asked me, making a face.

I looked hurt. "Soup. It's not poison," I said, conveniently leaving the 'stone' part out of it. "Try some. I made it especially

for you," I added, sweetening the deal with a smile.

My persuasive powers finally worked, and my friend glugged a couple of mouthfuls of it to prove her loyalty to me.

What followed a couple of hours later was a sound dressing down from my parents, ensured by violent bouts of diarrhoea, which did not afflict me as much as it did my poor friend who refused to talk to me for two whole days.

We eventually buried the hatchet, for the summer holidays stretched ahead of us – long, inviting, and with endless possibilities and working parents. Surely, there wasn't time to hold grudges over silly mishaps? After all, I needed someone as a lookout while I proceeded to shove a large cucumber into the exhaust pipe of my neighbour's new Fiat in order to satiate my curiosity as to whether or not it would launch itself out like a rocket, or burst into bits when the driver turned on the ignition.

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The lingering goodbye

The unending monotony of the great Indian doorstep conversation

CHANDRASEKHAR KRISHNAMURTI



the waiting becomes an agony, I am forced to resort to some of my more aggressive tactics. Getting into my car and beeping periodically, or sending missed calls to my missus sometimes succeeds. In apartments, I resort to getting the lift to the host's floor and shoving the tip of my shoe as the door slides shut. The shrill beeping or the drone of the recorded message to close the door, becomes agonising and sometimes disrupts the assembly. If that fails, I play my trump card and rouse my sleeping ward and provoke him or her into screaming for his momma until she excuses herself and scurries over.

After repeatedly enduring the torment at departure times, I have realised that it is better to settle comfortably on the host's sofa and tune into some television channel of my choice and sip a beverage until the good lady is absolutely raring to go and tugs at my arm.

Even after getting into the car, some issues will be recollected in a flash and dissected in a cryptic telegraphic exchange until I shift gear and crawl forward, almost deafened by the bye-byes and dialogues. On my wife's countenance I can discern a smug smile.

The great Indian doorstep conversation seems to be the ultimate tonic for society women. Husbands have no choice but to take it in their stride.

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and that", can be heard above the din. Addresses and contact numbers of cooks, tailors, masseuses, drycleaners and bargains shops are exchanged like there is no tomorrow.

I shuffle about and try to catch my wife's attention and point at my watch. She signals a request for an additional minute with her finger, flashes an endearing smile and nonchalantly continues with her conversation like I don't exist. Minutes drag into a quarter of an hour, sometimes a half hour.

The ladies ignore the restless menfolk, tittering and picking up new threads of gossip or topics to mull over. The worst is when all of them begin to look in my direction. I break into a sweat and nervously shuffle on my feet, not knowing what intimate aspect of mine is under discussion. Sometimes my wife will signal for me to approach and prompt her the name or names of acquaintances that

are the subject of these chats, and even drag me to narrate some long-forgotten episodes from our travels and experiences. Once done, I am shooed away unceremoniously, to ensure I do not eavesdrop!

If the mobile phone of one in the group rings, the call is taken, but not before a signal is made to the group to put the discussion on hold until she is done.

The interruption gives others a chance to discuss another matter in the interim, before returning to the topic of their earlier discussion with renewed enthusiasm.

Only when all the topics are exhausted does the group begin to show signs of really leaving. Even then, the goodbyes are drawn out, ensuring that every member of the host's family is recalled and taken leave of.

My back begins to ache, having carried my sleepy six-year-old in my arms for so long. As

years. Red still means Go for you and the zebra crossing is still the start line for your race. The traffic rules still the same, as are you and my life in constant peril. So this time round I thought, why not encourage you to make a new resolution for the new year and make life better not just for yourself but for me too because I still have the ambulance and the police on my speed dial.

Please don't misunderstand me; I am not trying to be a killjoy here, nor do I hold any past grudges. I have tried my best to tango and salsa out of your way on the designated footpaths and traffic crossings, walking only when I am supposed to and stopping whenever the lights tell me to. I know your 'beast' likes to play with the prey, but this game of hopscotch needs to stop.

Hoping you would heed my advice and take that refresher course on good-old traffic rules. Your old friend, The Innocent Pedestrian.

years. Red still means Go for you and the zebra crossing is still the start line for your race. The traffic rules still the same, as are you and my life in constant peril. So this time round I thought, why not encourage you to make a new resolution for the new year and make life better not just for yourself but for me too because I still have the ambulance and the police on my speed dial.

Even Nico Rosberg has retired and the Indian Grand Prix has long gone out of fashion but you don't look anywhere close to giving up, it seems, undeterred by the turns and blocks that the Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata or Bengaluru Metro systems may spring on you. Still treating the roads like the Buddh International Circuit track, eh? (whilst our government seems hell-bent on turning them into the ruins of Happa and Mohenjo-daro).

I am no longer a novice on the roads, having trudged along the streets that you and your beast rule. But not much else has changed in all these

From the nest to the end: struggles in the sky

A bird's desperate manoeuvres for survival and some humane questions and thoughts

AJAY PATRI

It was an eagle or a hawk, I don't know the difference. It was pirouetting mid-air, covering a small arc over and over again, its body at such an angle that its outstretched wings were almost perpendicular to the ground below. There was something comical about it at first sight, like watching a drunken person walking around in circles.

But this moment of levity passed soon for even though I couldn't see it, I knew there was a wire or a string up there, a stray utility line that refused to reflect sunlight and thus reveal itself. The bird had managed to snare itself in this invisible trap. One of its wings, the one pointed upwards, was caught, throwing the bird off-balance and

giving it no leverage to pull its weight up and disentangle itself. This trapped wing had split in two, a tiny sliver of the sky visible beyond it. The line might have remained unseen but it was there, pulling more of the wing apart as the bird struggled. And it did struggle; its erratic movement showed a desperate attempt to break free.

It was disconcerting that a struggle so furious was noiseless. A human being trapped in the bird's position would have screamed, called for help, or plain sobbed if the pain became overwhelming. But the bird made no noise, as if it didn't want to lose its dignity being seen in such a state.

It hadn't succeed in this endeavour for a small crowd, with me in its midst, gathered on the ground to watch

it struggle. Most of them were nonplussed, hands by their side, some puffing away at cigarettes, others itching to whip out a phone and record the bird.

The scene reminded me of another bird. It was of a similar species, an eagle or a hawk, and was also charting an awkward path through the sky. Except that bird was not trapped; instead, it was burdened by a length of rubber tubing clutched in its talons. It was not so much that the tubing was heavy but that the bird held it near one of its ends, the resultant weight distribution leaving the bird lopsided as it swept around in wide circles.

It wasn't difficult to imagine the kind of nest the bird was building: one made of copper wires, foil wraps, plastic bags and shards of

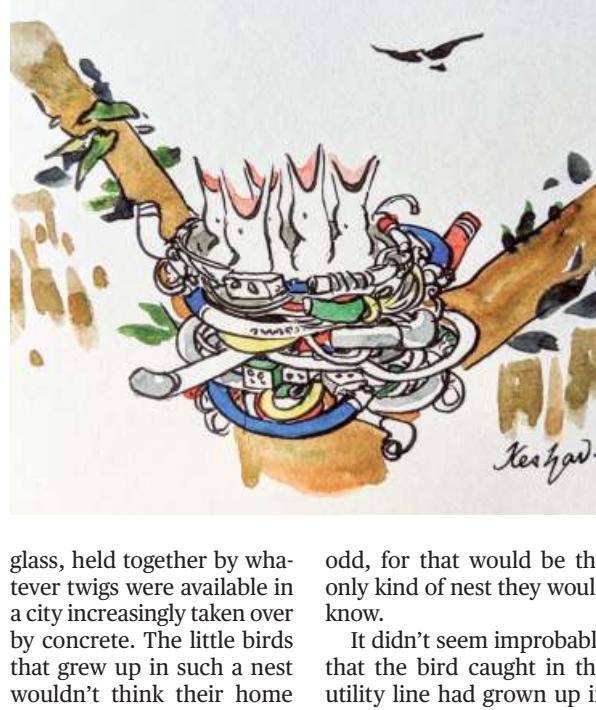
glass, held together by whatever twigs were available in a city increasingly taken over by concrete. The little birds that grew up in such a nest wouldn't think their home odd, for that would be the only kind of nest they would know.

It didn't seem improbable that the bird caught in the utility line had grown up in

such a nest. If it had, it would be comfortable with the touch of material crafted by human beings, not thinking of it as a threat, until the fatal day it discovered that what had sheltered it could also prove to be fatal. And all the while, human beings, the unwitting architects of the entire incident, watched from the sidelines. It was unclear how many in the crowd felt anything beyond mere curiosity and detached concern at what was happening, how many felt a tug of responsibility on behalf of the human race that had created the bird so.

How many of them felt too helpless to come to the bird's aid without realising they were not as helpless as the bird itself?

ajaypatri@gmail.com



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To the new house, from the old

Much is left behind besides mere sentiment, in a move to the 25th floor

VIVEK NATH MISHRA

After the walk...

In the midst of all the competition, make time for a humane face

ALEENA ALEX

To school, too early?

Children who start school early may not have more benefits than children who do so later

SRIJAYA N. CHAR

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IN BRIEF



Bluefin auctioned for \$3 mn at Tokyo market

TOKYO A 278 kg bluefin tuna was sold for a record \$3 million at the first auction of 2019, after Tokyo's famed Tsukiji market was moved to a new site on the city's waterfront. The winning bid for the prized but threatened species was more than double the 2013 annual New Year auction. Sushi chain owner Kiyoshi Kimura paid the top price. AP



Britney puts career on hold to look after father

LOS ANGELES Pop superstar Britney Spears announced on Friday she is placing her career on hold indefinitely to care for her sick father. "I will not be performing my new show Domination," she wrote in an emotional post on Twitter. Reports indicated Ms Spears' father Jamie suffered a colon rupture, but is expected to make a full recovery. AFP



'China's population set to peak at 1.44 bn in 2029'

SHANGHAI China's population is set to reach a peak of 1.442 billion in 2029 and start a long period of "unstoppable" decline in 2030, said a report by the China Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Growth in the working population had now stagnated, it said. REUTERS

Desert wonder



The Qasr al-Farid tomb (The Lonely Castle), which is carved into sandstone in Madain Saleh, a UNESCO World Heritage site, near Saudi Arabia's northwestern town of al-Ula. AFP

A Danish citizen searches for his roots

43-year-old Casper Anderson was adopted from India when he was 4 years old

WILSON THOMAS
COIMBATORE

Casper Anderson, a 43-year-old Danish citizen is a long way from home. He has travelled from Aalborg city, in Denmark, to Linganoor in Coimbatore to trace his family roots.

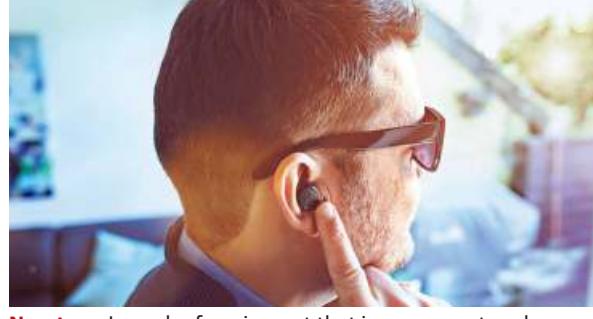
Born to T. Ayyavu and Saraswati of Linganoor in 1975, Mr. Anderson was put in a children's home when he was only 30 days old. In 1979, a Danish couple adopted him. "Ever since I came to know that I was adopted, I wanted to know about my biological parents. Before adoption, I was called Raja Kumar," Mr. Anderson told reporters in Coimbatore on Saturday.

This is the second visit of Mr. Anderson, a graphic designer, to Coimbatore in his attempt to find his biological parents. He approached the media after his efforts did not yield results. He said he spent his early years at the Blue

On display: the future of tech

Voice-controlled devices, like robot vacuums and refrigerators, set to take centre stage

BRIAN X. CHEN



New toys: Launch of equipment that improves network security is also likely at CES. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Imagine a future where you are never truly alone. Even when your spouse is on a business trip or your children are away at summer camp, you will always have someone (or something) to talk to. In the morning, you could ask the microwave to heat up a bowl of oatmeal. In your car, you could tell your stereo to put on some '90s music. And when you walk into the office, you could ask your smartphone, "What's on my calendar today?"

This is increasingly the world that the tech industry is building with a portfolio of devices that can react to voice commands – and that the companies will be pitching to you even more in 2019.

The future will be on display from January 8 to 11 at CES, a consumer electronics trade show in Las Vegas that serves as a window into the year's hottest tech trends. Artificially intelligent virtual assistants will take centre

stage as the most important tech topic, with companies big and small expected to showcase voice-controlled devices like robot vacuums, alarm clocks, refrigerators and car accessories. Most of these products will be powered by Amazon's Alexa or Google's Assistant, the two most popular artificially intelligent assistants, industry insiders said.

"AI will pervade the show," said Gary Shapiro, chief executive of the Consumer Technology Associa-

tion, which owns CES.

If this all sounds like a repeat of last year, that's because much of it is. AI was 2018's hottest tech trend, too. In other words, the tech industry is in a state of iteration rather than making leaps and bounds with something totally new.

5G technology

Other tech trends that are progressing include the debut this year of fifth-generation cellular networks, known as 5G, which will sig-

nificantly quicken mobile internet speeds. Cybersecurity products for home networks are also proliferating, an important safeguard now that consumers own so many devices that can connect to the internet.

Virtual reality and self-driving cars have been talked about a lot in recent years, and they will still be talked about this year. But these two technologies are still nascent or premature.

Google is expected to be even more aggressive this year with its Assistant. It will triple the size of its presence at CES this year.

Amazon said it would also showcase a wide range of technologies next week that work with Alexa, as part of a vision it calls Alexa Everywhere.

In an era of smart things, the Wi-Fi router is becoming a bigger target for hackers, so expect a flood of new software that improves network security.

REUTERS
PHNOM PENH/BANGKOK

Cambodia's centuries-old tradition of masked dance was nearly wiped out by the Khmer Rouge's "Killing Fields" regime, but a handful of artists managed to keep it alive and are now working to pass it along to a new generation.

Sun Rithy's father and grandfather were both performers of the Lakhon Khol masked dance, but the ultra-Maoist Khmer Rouge – who

scorned most art as decadent – banned its study when he was a child in the 1970s. Now 48, Sun Rithy leads one of the last Lakhon Khol troupes in Cambodia, made up of about 20 performers and students aged six to 15. For him, teaching a new generation is a matter of survival for the tradition.

"I don't want Lakhon

Khol ... to go extinct," Sun Rithy said.

Lakhon Khol was recently listed by UNESCO, the United Nations' cultural agency, as an intangible cultural heritage, along with neighbouring Thailand's version of the dance, known as Khon. There are different variations in southeast Asia, all featuring dancers wearing elaborate painted masks depicting the Ramayana.

But in Cambodia, the art form is still struggling to recover from the Khmer Rouge, under whose genocidal 1975-79 rule at least 1.7 million people, including artists, dancers and writers, died, mostly from starvation, overwork, disease, execution or torture.



Heritage boost: A dancer getting ready for a performance of Lakhon Khol in Kandal province, Cambodia. REUTERS

Scientists boost plant yield by 40%

They have found a way to make the process of photosynthesis inherently more efficient

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Scientists use genetic hack to create tobacco plants that are 40% bigger. REUTERS

For years, researchers at the University of Illinois have been trying to find out whether it is possible to genetically modify a crop to boost its growth.

In results published in *Science* on Thursday, they confirmed they had been successful in making tobacco plants 40% bigger thanks to a "genetic hack" or "shortcut."

The wider goal isn't to produce more tobacco but to apply the technique to wheat or soy beans, in order to meet mankind's growing appetite.

Their work is part of an international project that is being fi-

cultural methods to achieve higher productivity, but these techniques appear to have run their course and it is thought unlikely they can extract more significant gains.

The scientists say they have found a way to make the process of photosynthesis, the process by which plants use sunlight to convert carbon dioxide and water into energy, inherently more efficient.

An enzyme called Rubisco is key to the process of converting atmospheric carbon into an organic compound the plant consumes, a process known as "carbon fixation."

But the enzyme also acts to

"fix" atmospheric oxygen, converting it into toxic compounds that the plant expends considerable energy eliminating – energy that could otherwise be spent in growing. This competing process is known as photorespiration.

The Illinois team came up with the idea of implanting bits of algae DNA into the tobacco plant's cells to create a type of biological shortcut that would speed up photorespiration.

When a plant uses less energy on photorespiration, it is able to take that energy and put it into plant growth and plant productivity, rather than using it to metabolise this toxic compound.

THE HINDU

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Call me, father pleads with Meghan

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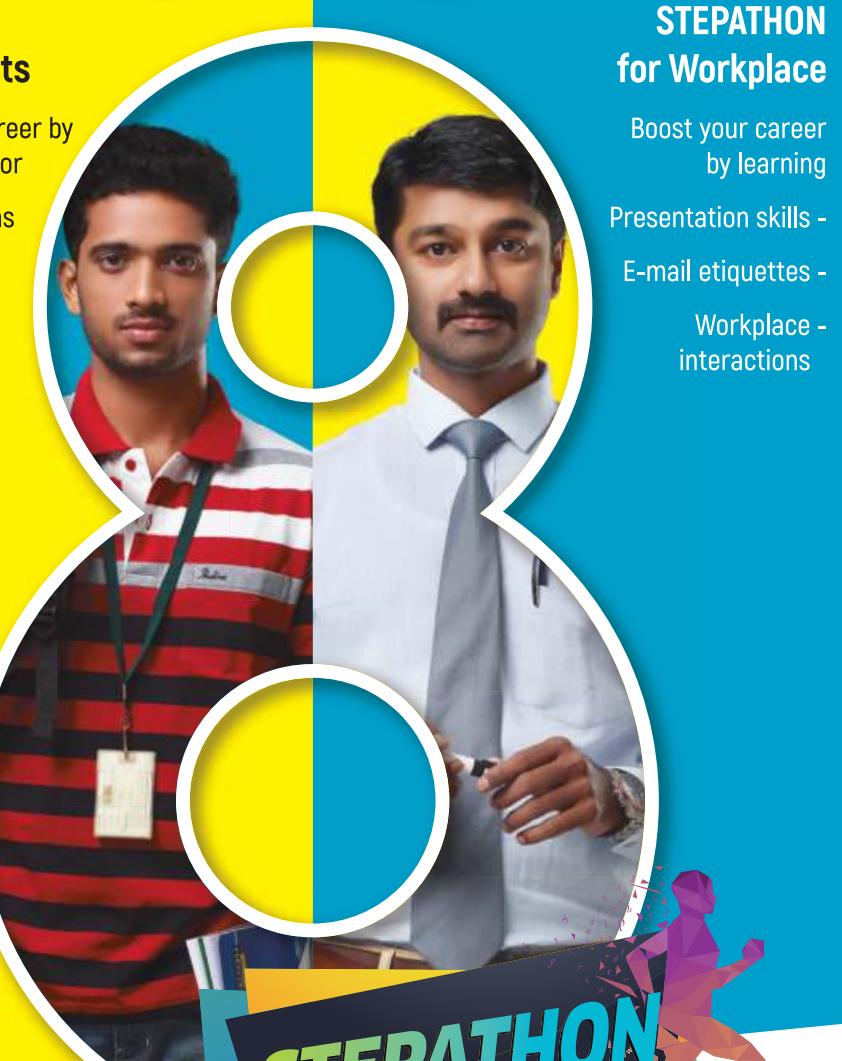
The father of Meghan Markle on Saturday made another emotional plea for the actor-turned-royal to make contact with him.

Thomas Markle, a former Hollywood lighting director, has not heard from his daughter or son-in-law, Prince Harry, since their wedding in May last year. "It's like a dream that has turned into a nightmare. The royals and Meghan can help this by simply giving me a call. To this day, I cannot think of anything I've done to deserve how I'm being treated now," the 74-year-old told *The Sun*.

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A Danish citizen searches for his roots

43-year-old Casper Anderson was adopted from India when he was 4 years old

WILSON THOMAS
COIMBATORE

Casper Anderson, a 43-year-old Danish citizen is a long way from home. He has travelled from Aalborg city, in Denmark, to Linganoor in Coimbatore to trace his family roots.

Born to T. Ayyavu and Saraswati of Linganoor in 1975, Mr. Anderson was put in a children's home when he was only 30 days old. In 1979, a Danish couple adopted him. "Ever since I came to know that I was adopted, I wanted to know about my biological parents. Before adoption, I was called Raja Kumar," Mr. Anderson told reporters in Coimbatore on Saturday.

This is the second visit of Mr. Anderson, a graphic designer, to Coimbatore in his attempt to find his biological parents. He approached the media after his efforts did not yield results. He said he spent his early years at the Blue



Looking for answers: Casper Anderson showing reporters a photo from his childhood. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mountain Children's Home, Coimbatore, which was run by Mary Catherine and Prakash.

The reason stated in the adoption order was that Mr. Ayyavu could not take care of the child after he suffered a paralytic attack and his wife left him. Based on an order from the district court, a Danish couple, Keld and Birthe Anderson, had adopted the child. A Netherlands-based

organisation named Against Child Trafficking (ACT) came forward to help Mr. Anderson.

Trip to Linganoor
In his second visit, Mr. Anderson visited Linganoor with the help of ACT's executive director Arun Dohle, ACT's consultant in India Anjali Pawar and members from the Tirupur-based Centre for Social Education and

Development. They were told that a person named Ayyavu was living with his mother Mariammal near Karupparayan temple at Linganoor. Elderly residents said that they had never seen Ayyavu after he sold his property and left the place around 1986. Though the team attempted to collect documents related to the adoption, nothing could be traced. "We are doubtful about Mr. Anderson's 'adoption' as he was not an orphan and had his father and grandmother. It could have been a case of child trafficking. Child trafficking has happened on a large scale in the name of adoption in the past when the formalities involved were not considered very seriously by the authorities. The sad fact is that such trafficking is still happening," said Ms. Pawar.

■ BY ANAND VENKATESWARAN

One ring to rule them all one ring to find them one ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them," the boy said in a single breath, his eyes incredulous blue saucers. He was no longer aware of the fierce Madurai heat that was melting his Caucasian skin; he had forgotten about the rust on the railing he was throttling. Right now, it simply did not compute that a sentient human being had failed to instantly recognise the book he was talking about. A 14-year-old with an exaggerated sense of the number of books I'd read, and I responded with a vague, 'Oh, right, that one, of course I did. It was awesome.' It restored the boy's faith in humanity. The only problem was that I'd forgotten the name of the book and author, and I couldn't ask him about it any more.

For the next five years, I searched. The points of reference I picked up from the boy in the bus, the ones that percolated through my embarrassment, were eroded every time I tried to inquire about the book. My mother, a one-woman literary locust who consumed entire libraries in months, indulged my vague references for a time, but soon distracted me with Robert Ludlum and Ken Follett.

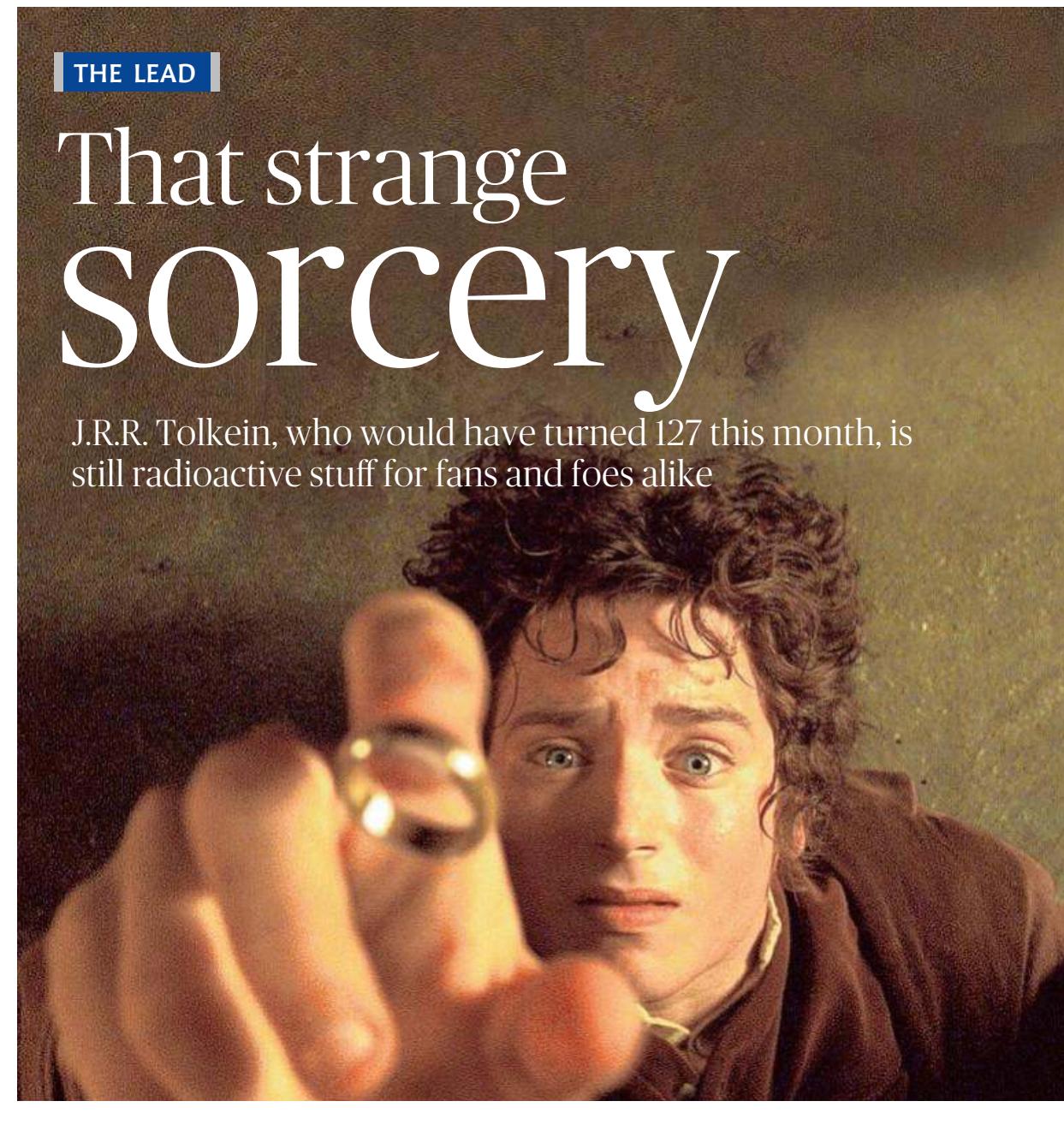
A rich new world

And then, one sleepy afternoon, the television screen came alive with something strangely familiar. A group of people in medieval clothes was trudging along atop a snowy mountain. One of them took a tumble and when he righted himself, found he was missing an ornament from around his neck. The camera zoomed into a ring of burnished gold, a silver chain through it, lying on the crisp snow. "One ring to rule them all one ring to find them one ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them!" I growled, all in one breath. I had found *The Lord of the Rings* (*LOTR*).

The impact of the original trilogy on cinema and television cannot be overstated. The first movie flooded screens in December 2001. Coming as it did barely three months after a terrorist attack that would change the world and rock the U.S. to its marrow, it was for many Americans a rich new world, beautiful and terrible, and infused with bright hope now so scarce in the realm of the real.

For the rest of the movie-going peoples, it marked the arrival of another giant of the calibre of Cameron or Spielberg: Peter Jackson. The weakness and redemptive sacrifice of Boromir, the showman bowmanship of Legolas, the understated machiness of Strider, Galadriel's test against the dark pull of the ring ('all shall love me and despair!'), Liv Tyler's lips, the terrible Urok-hei, Ian McKellen's entirely convincing wizard, Sting the blade that glows when orcs are near, Thestrals, Elrond talking about the 'Threat of Mordor' the way Gimli says 'Malt Beeerrr', the terrible Balrog, the black horses of the Nazgûl, Smeagol digging into fresh fish, the impossibly beautiful landscape of New Zealand. All that in just the first film of the trilogy.

First, *LOTR* whetted (for better or worse) a global appetite for fantasy. It would not be a stretch to say that *Game of Thrones* (*GoT*) lofted itself to where it is on the shoulders of Tolkien's trilogy. George R.R. Martin is a fanboy, and credits Tolkien's killing off of Gandalf as inspiration for his routinely wanton offing of beloved characters in *GoT*.



THE LEAD

That strange sorcery

J.R.R. Tolkien, who would have turned 127 this month, is still radioactive stuff for fans and foes alike

It also did much to raise the bar in some spectacular aspects of filmmaking; most notably, motion capture. This particular branch of technology is near-ubiquitous in big budget franchises, perhaps even overdone sometimes (Did Supreme Leader Snoke of *Star Wars VIII* really have to be 'MoCap'ed?), but there's no denying it all started with the wretched Gollum.

The economic impact of *LOTR* on New Zealand, though often exaggerated, is undeniable. A massive chunk of the over 2,500 businesses that support the NZ\$3.5 billion screen industry (including television) of New Zealand is involved in production and post-production. Endearingly, the Kiwis cheerfully embraced Tolkien's world – and Peter Jackson's imagining of it – without crassly peddling it for tourist dollars. Airline announcements, postage, passport stamps and even currency bear the brand of Tolkien characters. Yes, I had discovered *LOTR*, the originals, reruns, extended versions, spoofs, surrounding mythology, actors' careers and, with time, the more pretentious critiquing and socio-economic impacts. But through it all, I was a hypocrite.

Fanboy George Martin credits Tolkien's killing off of Gandalf as inspiration for his wanton offing of beloved characters in GoT

In the early part of this decade, I chatted with a former colleague of mine, a connoisseur of sci-fi and fantasy. A few minutes into a conversation about *LOTR*, he asked me, "Have you read the books?" I remembered the dry Madurai heat, and now my ears burned even hotter. "Not yet," I said meekly. The master nodded, and gave me his copies. "Read," he said. And I did.

Hypnotic hold
Tolkien is quicksand. I disappeared into the dense detail of his words. For the better part of a week, my communication with the outside world was all but

perfunctory. I could allow no distractions to my conversation with the author. Tolkien infuses a strange sorcery in his words. The language is clearly of another age, but every nuance of meaning, every curl of humour flows to the reader unhindered. Language is an under-appreciated aspect of Tolkien.

A linguist and enthusiastic etymologist, his contributions to the *Oxford English Dictionary* are significant. In 1919 and 1920, he worked on words near the beginning of W, from Waggle to Warlock, including walrus, walnut and wampum. He also constructed over 20 languages and nine scripts.



Fellowship
A scene from the movie adaptation of *Lord of the Rings*, and (below) Wellington International Airport in New Zealand, which has a huge sculpture of Gollum.
GETTY IMAGES / ISTOCK

ing, and asking his readers not to forget.

There was a time when a great majority of writers and intellectuals in the West, like Sartre, Shaw, de Beauvoir, were telling each other that the U.S.S.R. under socialism was paradise on earth, while, in reality, a programme of brutal killing was under way there. Lenin's revolution from 1917 to 1921 claimed 6 to 12 million in shootings and tortures; 7.5 to 13 million were killed in an orchestrated famine in the Volga region (1922-23); from 1922 to 1928, 2 to 3 million of the old social classes, clergy and so on, were butchered; from 1929 to 1933, 16 million of the kulaks, the richer peasantry, were systematically removed either by the gun or through organised famine; a further 11 million died in Stalin's camps between 1943 and 1953.

The Russian government accused Solzhenitsyn of slandering his country in books like *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962), *In the First Circle* (1968), *Cancer Ward* (1968), *The Gulag Archipelago* (three volumes, written between 1958-1968), and *The Oak and the Calf* (1975). He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970 but had to face deportation and loss of citizenship four years later.

The deportation was a result of his critique of the Russian prison camp system in the first volume of *Gulag Archipelago*. Solzhenitsyn remained unfazed and wrote two more volumes.

The massive *Gulag Archipelago*, published in English in 1974 and circulated as *samizdat* or underground literature within the U.S.S.R., turned the world's attention to the horrors of the Soviet gu-

These details might astound the stray browser, but to anyone who has read Tolkien it's not surprising in the least. His felicity with the language has a hypnotic hold over the reader, even through the seemingly meandering or indulgent stretches. It is probably blasphemy to say this, but to get through the complete works is an expedition in itself. The end is as exhilarating as it is a relief. This level of depth and detail influenced future writers like Steven Erikson (10-part *Malazan Book of the Fallen*) and Stephen King (eight-part *The Dark Tower*). King's post-apocalyptic *The Stand*, among a few other of his works, contains radioactive traces of Tolkien.

As with *LOTR*, the fantasy tomes of both Erikson and King require a certain level of commitment to plough through. This is not just a reflection of this age of low attention spans, smartphones rife with apps that promise to give you the gist of three books a day. In its early review of the *Fellowship of the Ring* in 1954, the *New Yorker* said of Tolkien: He has "a capacity for industry that will not allow him to stop inventing long after all the acts are down and the picture is clear." It was even less patient with the second volume: "His apparent conviction that what is imaginative is necessarily beguiling, blind him to the danger of becoming tedious, and so he is tedious a good deal of the time."

Into the fold

Nevertheless, as with all such influential authors, the legions of fans who devour his every word, published in his time as well as posthumously (*The Silmarillion*, *Beren and Lúthien*, among others), continue to grow. So too those who would rather consume the ripples of his influence than his core work.

If Frank Herbert's *Dune* is a definitive work of sci-fi, one can be forgiven if he's never read the entire series but is a die-hard fan of *The Matrix*, *Tremors* or *MIB*. And it certainly isn't a crime to bypass Tolkien and enjoy the thrilling world of George Lucas or Terry Pratchett's sarcasm-drenched Discworld series.

Pratchett, though he wrote in a style completely apart from Tolkien, was still in awe of him. There are others who are, to put it mildly, less impressed.

If Tolkienism were a religion, then Michael Moorcock, father of the 'new wave' of science fiction and one of the most prolific authors of the fantasy genre, would be the anti-Christ. In an acidic essay on Tolkien's work, he had called it "a pernicious confirmation of the values of morally bankrupt mid-

dle-class." He dismisses the sensibility of *LOTR* as "the British character sentimentalised, the illusion of decency."

Now, there's no denying, even by Tolkien, that his religion influenced his work. The obvious morality and puritanism in his work is no accident. It was so interwoven with his identity that his contemporary and friend, C.S. Lewis (of the *Narnia* series), was folded into Christianity for Tolkien. It is no surprise either that his life's work is such an integral part of British culture, to the point where he became the polestar against which counter-cultural work such as Moorcock's set its bearings.

One and only?

The interconnected beauty of it all, which Tolkien would have surely appreciated, is that irrespective of whether one loved his work like King, or felt ambivalent about it like J.K. Rowling, or despised it outright like Moorcock, it still 'influenced' them all.

Not just literature, like any definitive bit of writing does, but religion, science, pop culture, music and the Unicode Standard. Linguist Michael Everson, who co-authored Unicode, credits Tolkien as the inspiration for his life's work. Which is why Tengwar of Fëanor and Cirth of Daeron are coded into Unicode. Fun fact.

Writing about adored authors or their work is usually a pleasure. However, when that collective adoration borders on reverence, when the worlds the author created are so rich and intricate as to defy average human imagination, any work of appreciation becomes daunting. This particular piece did not begin without fear of chastisement from ardent fans and experts. They would allow for Tolkein's works to suffer the 'fantasy' tag, but will cringe if you take the name of any other author or work alongside his. To say that *LOTR* inspired the Eragon books or Harry Potter is acceptable, but to bundle them together would be a capital offence.

Besides, as someone who hadn't read his entire canon, I couldn't shake off a niggling feeling that I was unworthy of this attempt. For guidance, I went back to the master, the friend who lent me his copies of *LOTR*. He said, "If Tolkien only wanted to demonstrate his linguistic fluency, and not something that would be consumed by the 'masses' for decades after his time, he wouldn't have written his stories the way he did... Fantasy fiction is fractal. There's no point being intimidated by it."

It was reassuring, and also an unwarranted invitation to my inner imp. I beg the forgiveness of readers familiar with even the basics of Tolkien's world.

And of those who are by now livid and no doubt have drafted angry letters to the editor about the error-riddled fifth paragraph. That Smeagol fish scene is from *The Two Towers*, Saruman's super soldiers are Uruk-hai not Urok-hei, and by Andúril! Thestrals are from *Harry Potter*.

The former journalist now works as a content consultant in fintech and crypto-economics.

ESSAY

The man who remembered

A century after his birth, Solzhenitsyn remains one of the few authors who dared to call the Soviet Union's bluff

■ BY PRASENJIT CHOWDHURY

What inspires a writer to speak the truth, only the truth, without fear or favour? To have fought his way into Hitler's East Prussia as a proud Red Army soldier in the harshest war on record, to have been arrested and incarcerated for a chance indiscretion, to have served a full sentence of servitude and been released on the very day that Stalin died, and then to have developed cancer and known the whole rigour and misery of a Soviet-era isolation hospital – what could one fear after that?

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, whose centenary was last month, was not only the born-again conscience keeper of Russia, but also a soul who had a tryst with death so many times over that he was condemned to immortality.

Staying unfazed

The fear he faced generated a courage that could defy death or the threat of persecution. Solzhenitsyn was brave enough to tell the world the history of a Russia governed by tyrants. Brave not



Shattering illusions Solzhenitsyn in West Germany, 1974. WIKI COMMONS

just as an individual, who suffered long years in prison and was gagged and molested in the years after (besides surviving an assassination attempt in the 70s), but also brave as a writer. After a

few early years of writing a stylised prose, Solzhenitsyn, for the greater part of his career, dared to turn into a bore, leaving nothing out, tell things as they were. He was remembering, document-

ing, and asking his readers not to forget.

There was a time when a great majority of writers and intellectuals in the West, like Sartre, Shaw, de Beauvoir, were telling each other that the U.S.S.R. under socialism was paradise on earth, while, in reality, a programme of brutal killing was under way there. Lenin's revolution from 1917 to 1921 claimed 6 to 12 million in shootings and tortures; 7.5 to 13 million were killed in an orchestrated famine in the Volga region (1922-23);

from 1922 to 1928, 2 to 3 million of the old social classes, clergy and so on, were butchered; from 1929 to 1933, 16 million of the kulaks, the richer peasantry, were systematically removed either by the gun or through organised famine; a further 11 million died in Stalin's camps between 1943 and 1953.

The Russian government accused Solzhenitsyn of slandering his country in books like *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962), *In the First Circle* (1968), *Cancer Ward* (1968), *The Gulag Archipelago* (three volumes, written between 1958-1968), and *The Oak and the Calf* (1975). He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970 but had to face deportation and loss of citizenship four years later.

The deportation was a result of his critique of the Russian prison camp system in the first volume of *Gulag Archipelago*. Solzhenitsyn remained unfazed and wrote two more volumes.

The massive *Gulag Archipelago*, published in English in 1974 and circulated as *samizdat* or underground literature within the U.S.S.R., turned the world's attention to the horrors of the Soviet gu-

ernment, the penal labour camps. Solzhenitsyn was exiled but his expulsion only added to the book's impact. Although based on "reports, memoirs, and letters by 227 witnesses," *Gulag Archipelago* was not quite a straight history – obviously, Solzhenitsyn did not have access to then-secret archives – but was rather an interpretation of history.

Orthodox beliefs

Solzhenitsyn returned from exile in 1994 only to see the Western model of a market economy and democracy destroying Russia under the presidency of Boris Yeltsin. Disenchantment with Yeltsin's policies encouraged pro-Putin sympathies in him. But he steadily lost public resonance, as he urged Russia to return to its ancient Orthodox religious beliefs shaped his views in large measure.

Solzhenitsyn spent some of his final days writing wasteful diatribes against Ukrainian nationalists who were, rightly or wrongly, striving to have their own Soviet-era horrors classified as "genocide". His late work *Two Hundred Years Together* purported to be a candid examination of the fraught state of Russian-Jewish relations but could not completely get above the ancient Russian-nationalist dislike of the cosmopolitan (and sometimes Bolshevik) Jew.

Solzhenitsyn's release from exile and rise to world acclaim is inextricably linked with the name and policies of Nikita Khrushchev, who set in motion a wide-ranging policy of de-Stalinisation. Westerners like to believe that by publishing his heart-wrenching accounts of life inside the gulags, Solzhenitsyn shattered some of the persisting illusions about socialism that finally led to the fall of the Soviet Union.

If he is not read widely today, that is a comment on the nature of the present world, which is wary of speaking the unvarnished truth, the way Solzhenitsyn did.

The writer is a Kolkata-based commentator on politics, development and cultural issues.

MARKERS



The Sahitya Akademi's annual event, 'Festival of Letters', will be held in Delhi from January 28 to February 2. Around 250 literary personalities will be part of the event. It will have media interaction with Sahitya Akademi Award winners, writers' meets, Purvottari (an event dedicated to the Northeast) and a session for young writers. In addition, there will be an all-India tribal women writers' meet, featuring about 50 adivasi women writers.



The second edition of Mathrubhumi International Festival of Letters (MBIFL) will be held from January 31 at five venues in Kanakakkunnu Palace, Thiruvananthapuram. Over 200 writers, thinkers and artists from Europe, the U.S., India, Africa, Latin America and West Indies will be participating. This year's theme is 'Known Lands; Unheard Voices'. Indian writers attending include Ravi Subramanian, Manu Joseph, Annie Zaidi and Arundhati Subramaniam. There will a Malayalam story writing contest, with a prize of ₹2 lakh.



John le Carré's next novel, *Agent Running in the Field*, will be published in October 2019. Le Carré's last was the widely acclaimed *A Legacy of Spies* (2017), featuring the iconic George Smiley. But Smiley will not be appearing in *Agent Running in the Field*, which is set in present-day London, and concerns a 26-year-old character described by the publisher only as a "solitary figure." Still, le Carré fans can hope to find a lot of the political and personal twists and turns that are the spy master's hallmark.



Twinkle Khanna has become the highest-selling female author of 2018, according to the Top 10 list of Nielsen BookScan, which is compiled on the basis of sales data from all major online retailers, national/regional chain stores and independent stores in India. Khanna was also the top-selling female author for Crossword, India's largest bookshop chain. *Pyjamas Are Forgiving*, brought out by Juggernaut, has been the publisher's fastest moving title.



The BBC adaptation of Agatha Christie's *The ABC Murders* is now showing. Although David Suchet's Poirot is hard to match, Kenneth Branagh did a fair enough job in *Murder on the Orient Express*. In the BBC series, John Malkovich plays the Belgian detective with the famed moustache.

The thriller is about a serial killer who leaves only one clue at the scene of crime, a copy of 'The ABC Railway Guide'. Hercule Poirot, now older and greyer, must race against time to catch the killer. The adaptation also stars Rupert Grint of Harry Potter fame.

DARK HUMOUR

'Something light and angry'

'You never love a book the way you love a book when you are 10,' says Lemony Snicket's creator, Daniel Handler

■ BY MIHIR BALANTRAPU

Lemony Snicket, the enigmatic children's author, took the world by storm when he revealed himself to be a Californian gentleman named Daniel Handler who also writes adult fiction with equally dark themes. The 13 novels in his series, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, have been adapted by Netflix to wide acclaim, testifying to their appeal. Handler's solemn reverence for literature is poorly camouflaged by his propensity for whimsy. And don't even get him started on Nabokov.

How does your own worldview differ, if at all, from Mr. Snicket's? Did the pen name have some ulterior literary intent?

■ "Lemony Snicket" has never felt quite like a pen name to me; I simply thought it would be interesting to have the books published under the name of the narrator rather than the name of the author, so that the mystery – particularly in pre-Internet days – might remain intact. Mr. Snicket and I share many qualities, but he has the lonely luxury of living entirely in a world governed by books, whereas I occasionally have to putter about in what we call actuality.

Are you hinting at a discrepancy between 'actuality' and the alternative worlds of literature? Can learnings from fiction, however fascinating, ever be viably imported and applied to the real world?

■ I can only refer to my (unmet) mentor Nabokov, who says, "Reality is neither the subject nor the object of true art."

I'm not sure what "viably imported" quite means, but I credit most of my emotional and philosophical upbringing to literature.

You prefer to be read by

children or by adults?

■ You never love a book the way you love a book when you are 10.

What do you think of the adaptations of your work for film and television?



Puttering about 'My technique changes with every project'

■ Mr. Snicket and I share many qualities, but he has the lonely luxury of living entirely in a world governed by books

HISTORY

'India is inexhaustible'

'History should never fight shy of causing offence,' believes British historian John Keay

■ BY G. SAMPATH

British historian and journalist John Keay believes that history should be written not only for other historians but also for the general public. He has popularised the sub-genre of narrative history with more than 20 books that span a range of geographies and cultures – from South Asia to China, Mekong, Indonesia, and West Asia. In an email interview, Keay talks about, among other things, his fascination for South Asia, the East India Company, and the advantages of writing history as an 'outsider'. Edited excerpts:

You have written many books on the subcontinent. What is it that you find so attractive about this region?

■ That I still know so little. India is inexhaustible and constantly changing. After 50 years' acquaintance there is still so much to see and learn.

You say that you are not a historian but a history-writer. What do you don't do that a historian might?

■ Today's historians usually teach. I don't. They are attached to an academic institution which may also influence their research choices and narrow their field of expertise. I've never belonged to a faculty or been subject to peer review pressures. The most revered Anglophone writers of history – Gibbon, Carlyle, Macaulay – would not today qualify as historians. They were history-writers for whom the writing was as important as the history. I subscribe to that. Too much history is intended simply for other historians. I try to reach a wider audience.

In the Indian context, do you think it is now nearly impossible to write history without offending someone, especially of people like Shivaji and Aurangzeb?

■ Yes, you're probably right. But history should never fight shy of causing offence. It's good that it gets out of the classroom and matters to a wider public. The purposes to which it is put may be questionable and should of course be challenged. But the level

of engagement one finds in South Asia is surely better than the dumbing down or indifference that often prevails elsewhere.

Do you discern many differences between how an Indian writes Indian history and how an 'outsider' like yourself approaches the task?

■ Gandhi took exception to the Englishman's habit of writing other peoples' history, a habit that has since been construed as 'Orientalist' presumption. But as you suggest, in an often contested field, non-native history-writers do enjoy certain advantages – they may be more objective and dispassionate, have a wider frame of reference, and access to better archives and a wider readership. Ideally, for every Englishman writing Indian history there'd be an Indian writing English history. And perhaps this will come. I'm a Scot. Scots write English history and Englishmen write Scots history. It can engender controversy; it's also stimulating and healthy.

You hold that the East India Company (EIC) did all kinds of nasty things only for about 20-30 years of its 270-year existence, with most of its depredations in India being largely dictated by the British government. For an Indian, why should this distinction even matter?

■ I wrote a history of the EIC. It's been in print for over 30 years. It is just that – the history of a global trading company, not of India under Company rule. In fact, much of it deals with the Company's activities elsewhere and before they involved post-Mughal India. Moreover, the book's narrative ends in the late 1700s when the Company was effectively nationalised and before most of India was subject to its rule. The idea was to acquaint readers with an extraordinary



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C Ideally, for every Englishman writing Indian history there'd be an Indian writing English history. And perhaps this will come

and often bizarre enterprise that generated a global empire. It's not in any sense a history of India or of injustices inflicted on its people.

Would it be correct to say that the mapping of India was driven primarily by military necessities?

■ The infrastructural improvements that mapping made possible were certainly dictated in large part by military considerations. The obvious examples would be the proliferation of railways and telegraph links in the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising. But the mapping exercise that intrigued me was the measurement of the Great Indian Arc of the Meridian from Kanyakumari to Dehradun. This began about the year 1800 and was completed in the 1840s. It was of great scientific significance and undoubtedly prefigured the idea of pan-Indian dominion. But it was of no military value.

You have written about the history of completely different regions and cultures

– from India to China, Mekong, Indonesia, West Asia and so on. Which other region do you think makes for the most interesting comparison with Indian history?

■ Having written histories of both India and China I can't help but be amazed by the ignorance and indifference to Indian history in China and vice versa. Each has so much to learn from the other, quite a bit in common, and quite a bit in contrast. A good starting point might be the radically different attitudes towards the past, with China's history being a matter of interminable record and much revised writings and India's of unfathomable myths and magnificent monuments.

Your first trip to India was in the 1960s, for trout fishing in Kashmir. Any plans of going back?

■ No. Visiting anywhere as traumatised as Kashmir is liable to be construed as a vote of confidence in the status quo.

LITERATURE

'Shakespeare's plays weren't high art'

Indian adaptations of Shakespeare are a bulwark against militant shuddha, says Jonathan Gil Harris

■ BY ANUSUA MUKHERJEE

Jonathan Gil Harris, Professor of English at Ashoka University, has been writing and lecturing about foreigners in India from the time he settled in this country in 2013. The title of his 2015 book, *The First Firangis: Remarkable Stories of Heroes, Healers, Charlautans, Courtesans & Other Foreigners Who Became Indian*, is self-explanatory. In his new book, he talks about yet another foreigner who has become 'local' – Shakespeare. Excerpts from an email interview:

In the *The First Firangis* you talked of European settlers who came to India and made it their home. You have been living in India for some six years now. Going by your own experience, at what point does the firangi feel he has been naturalised, if at all?

■ I'm not sure he – or she – ever feels fully naturalised. One can't magically erase all the habits and conditioning of one's pre-Indian life. For example, I am doomed to always speak Hindi (or murder it) in a New Zealand accent, painfully impervious to the differences between the various kinds of "t" that North Indian palettes have been trained to produce since childhood. But there are also days when I realise I have adapted to elements of the local ecology in ways I hadn't realised.

My Indian partner likes to remind me I have become more of a Delhi driver than she is: rude, aggressive, happy to swerve suddenly across lanes for craven self-advantage. To which I reply: *hum toh aise hain, ji*. With the 't' of 'toh' mispronounced, naturally.

What sparked off your interest in Malik Ambar, the Ethiopian slave who led the resistance against the Mughals in the Deccan and founded Khadki in the 17th century?

■ Not in the way you are asking, I think – my technique changes with every project, and surely the way the world is moving must have an effect on that, in the way the torture scenes in *The Grim Grotto* would not likely have occurred to me were it not being revealed right then that the U.S. was engaging in torture. I try not to close off the world, if only because it's impossible. But I believe literature makes its own case for reading, so I try to write some, just about every day.

■ Two things interested me. First, Malik Ambar was a larger-than-life figure, a brilliant military tactician who repeatedly foiled Jahangir – to the point where the frustrated Mughal emperor commissioned a painting of him shooting arrows into Ambar's head because he dreamed so much of doing it for real. But Ambar was also a fantastic case study of a larger phenomenon: the successful integration of Ethiopian migrants into the culture and terrain of the Deccan.

His (very Indian) skill as a civil engineer – Ambar designed a water supply system in Khadki, now Aurangabad, that still functions 400 years later – struck me as deriving in part from his childhood experiences of the flow of water in the Ethiopian highlands where he was born. Somehow he built on those early experiences to create a brilliant water delivery system adapted to the specific challenges of the rugged Deccan landscape. To an Ethiopian, the dry and hilly Deccan was more familiar terrain than it was to a North Indian like Jahangir.

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You are teaching Shakespeare to Indian students. How do you make Shakespeare more relatable to them?

■ The first thing I tell them is that Shakespeare wrote his plays to be performed, not read. I know that seems obvious, but it's scandalously liberating too – especially for students who have been encouraged to regard Shakespeare's works as sacred scripture that shouldn't be questioned or treated with irreverence.

The second thing I tell them is that



Finding home 'I am doomed to always speak Hindi in a New Zealand accent'. RAJNEESH LONDE

Shakespeare's plays weren't high art – they were masala entertainments, written for mixed audiences from different classes, religious communities, and linguistic backgrounds. Just like masala Hindi films, in other words.

Which is why I say, if Shakespeare were alive today, he would be writing for cinema rather than theatre – and he would be writing for Bollywood rather than Hollywood.

In this relation, tell us something about your new book, *Masala Shakespeare*, please.

■ The book is a celebration of Shakespeare's marvellously rich afterlife in the Indian subcontinent. It is a love letter to the rich masala mixes of Shakespeare and India alike.

But it is also a tear-stained love-letter to a genre of movie that is dying with the demise of the single-screen cinema hall; for an ideal of syncretism and pluralism that is under threat in a time of militant shuddha (purity); and for an idea of India that is ebbing with the rise of majoritarianism and religious fundamentalism.

Indian adaptations of Shakespeare are a masala bulwark against these trends.

REALISM

Grime and punishment

A brooding and fierce street novel about boys with "elsewhere in their blood"

■ BY GEETA DOCTOR

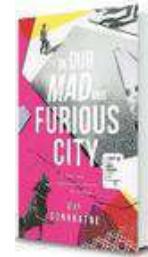
It's unlikely that Queen Elizabeth's traditional Christmas address for 2018 was influenced by the runaway success of Guy Gunaratne's fictional account of life in the four dark tower blocks of the Stones estate in North West London, Neasden. The book was long-listed for the 2018 Man Booker Prize and has made a hero of Gunaratne. He now lives in Malmö, Sweden.

Yet the queen touched upon a subject that is at the heart of Gunaratne's fierce and often incendiary attack on what passes for life in the underbelly of London. Tribalism. The opposite of multiculturalism, in times of war or economic distress, tribalism is what causes those in power to confine groups of people with different ideologies into ghettos, or in communes at the margins of their cities.

Footie and girls

It's certainly what appears to have triggered the panic that led to the now contentious issue of Brexit – keep the immigrants pouring into Europe out of the U.K. Or what an earlier fascist leader Oswald Mosley (1896-1980) – who rises from the dead in Gunaratne's book like a scene from a vampire movie – orchestrated as KBW or Keep Britain White slogans pasted on walls in the mid-20th century.

Tribalism and its many manifestations are the rivets that hold together Gunaratne's clenched fist of a novel. The four main characters represent the second generation of 'youngers', to use his patois, who live in the Stones estate and are linked by their love for 'footie' (football) and girls. There is Selvon, West Indian, who lives outside the Estate and aspires to a better life at the Uni. His father Nelson and mother Maisie came to England hoping to find the green and pleasant country of their colonial dreams, maybe even a chance to have tea with the queen. There's Ardan, whose mother Caroline fled



In Our Mad and Furious City
Guy Gunaratne
Tinder Press
₹699

the internecine savagery of her IRA family in Belfast. And Irfan and Yusuf from Pakistan, whose father, a moderate mullah at the local mosque, has just died leaving the family adrift and ripe to be nurtured by the radicals. Bonding over football could be seen as a tribal activity, just like drooling over girls or meeting at the laundromat or pub, but more pertinently for the purpose of the novel, it's the mosque and the power of hate that trigger the more extreme response to tribal bonding. Or so Gunaratne implies.

An ear for grime music

Sitting in her enchanting White study with its fireplace and Christmas tree and gilded piano glittering in the background, the British queen looked uncommonly grim as she intoned: "Even the power of faith, which frequently inspires great generosity and self-sacrifice, can fall victim to tribalism."

She may have even at this point practised what Selvon is described as doing: "I kissed my teeth," he says, patois for sucking the lips in against the teeth with a hissing sound to express disapproval. 'We are not amused,' as an earlier queen was wont to say.

The patois that Gunaratne's characters use to communicate their inner lives fills the book with its own rhythm. If in his 1962 ode to violence *The Clockwork Orange*, which prophesied an England overrun by young men intent on senseless acts of rape and assault of ran-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

C If in his 1962 ode to violence, *The Clockwork Orange*, Anthony Burgess invented a strange gutter-speech, then Gunaratne's ear here is tuned to what he hears in the streets around the Estate

domly chosen victims, Anthony Burgess invented a strange gutter-speech that in itself was disturbing because it made sense only to the anti-hero Alex and his tribe of 'droogs,' then Gunaratne's ear here is tuned to what he hears in the streets around the Estate. Burgess's Alex was tuned into Beethoven, or Lovely Ludwig Van, played at eardrum splitting levels. Here, music-man Ardan, the white Irish son of a former IRA supporter, has an ear for grime music.

City blues

Never heard of grime, sistah? It's the iconic sound of Inner City Blues and electronic rap chants made famous by the likes of Stormzy on YouTube. There's an epiphany of sorts when Ardan, always the runt,

comes into his own riding on the top of one of London's double-decker buses and giving the jeering mob a taste of his self-directed genius for spouting grime. Ardan, the white Irish boy, and Selvon, the bronzed West Indian, are breddas or brothers/ buddies..

"Wa-gwan bredda? Nuttan ennit. Them Muhamarroun con to stone Myman ennit?" Translated this could mean: "What's going on brother? Nothing. Those Mujahidin boys from the mosque want to speak with my buddy, got it?" And that's the more polite bits, none of the more colourful swear words or hot sexual innuendos can be repeated here.

They consist, we imagine, of a multicultural soup of Caribbean, Irish, Pakistani and street cred lingo.

It's a wonder the editors did not include a glossary at the end.

The fifth element, the thumbs-up that triggers the violence in the trajectory of the novel, which takes place in a 48-hour time frame set within the boundaries of the Estate, is the real-life killing that took place on May 22, 2013 of a white soldier at Woolwich by two black boys – both Nigerians.

They did it apparently to avenge the purported killing of Muslims by the British armed forces.

Gunaratne's prose is ice under fire. In the conflagration that spreads across the Square there is still hope. For that alone, thanks bredda.

The Chennai-based writer is a critic and cultural commentator.

■ BY SURESH

REALISM

Love, lust and a wounded city

Despite a few rusty spots, Amrita Mahale's writing shines

■ BY REVATHI SURESH

Before I received *Milk Teeth* for review I came across an excerpt from the novel somewhere and skimmed through it cursorily, eyes on the page, thoughts elsewhere. When the book arrived I didn't bother to read the blurb but I found a folded sheet of paper inside that helpfully listed out some salient features of the novel. Seems one can't trust a book to sell by itself these days.

Milk Teeth is set in the years just following liberalisation. Mind you, it's only 1997 but already there's rot, and it's not just the garbage that stinks as gentler times begin to recede into the past. Ira Kamat, the protagonist, belongs to the generation that straddles the two eras. She's 28 when the story begins, and you witness the change sweeping through Mumbai through her eyes.

Changing city

Ira is a beat reporter who covers the Corporation. The building where she lives with her parents, the only home she's ever known, is on shaky ground as the landlord threatens to evict the tenants and pull it down for redevelopment. Asha Nivas, in fact, is a metaphor for the crumbling city of Bombay/Mumbai. By now the metropolis has already begun to accumulate post-Babri wounds and its ragged social fabric has begun to give way; hate and prejudice simmer on the surface; there is fear in the city but there's growth too, though aspirations of prosperity come with attendant greed; and when old wealth encounters the working class the results are not always happy.

In this backdrop of a changing city that Ira's own life plays out. She has just reconnected with her neighbour and longlost childhood friend Kartik, but even before they can begin to re-establish a new tenuous bond, there's pressure from both their families to make the relationship permanent.

Ira is averse neither to marriage nor love, but like most people of her generation, just wants to be able to make life decisions on her own. Also, her emotions are still entangled in a past break-up that she hasn't quite come to terms with. Then, just when it seems as if



Crumbling A building in central Mumbai. PAUL NORONHA



Milk Teeth
Amrita Mahale
Context
₹599

some sort of compromise has been reached, the very same past returns to haunt her.

Too full

So far so good, and I mean *really* good. Amrita Mahale's writing shines. She builds the structure meticulously, and her grasp on characters, whether Mumbai's, that of her protagonists, or of minor players, is so sure-footed, nuanced and complex that you are quite simply blown away. The language is poised and effective; even the mundane acquires a polish.

But suddenly, inexplicably, just past

halfway point, the narrative dips. Ira succumbs to a kind of wimpy, acquiescent behaviour that is not in keeping with what we have known of her thus far. Maybe it's for reasons of plot, but at this point it hits you like the delayed adolescence she seems to be going through. All one can do is give her the benefit of the doubt – maybe love does that to you. Because *Milk Teeth* is also ultimately a love story, a lust story. The mooning and moaching do, though, unfortunately weigh the book down somewhat.

The sag continues well into Kartik's part of the story – big chunks of it just feel redundant. You don't really want to know about his grandfather and how he came to settle in Matunga, or of Kartik's own boyhood struggles.

By this time your plate is already piled too high, you're too full, and in any case you have a pretty good idea where this party is headed. I suspect the folded piece of paper had something to do with my foreknowledge, but even so. Even the writing in these portions feels strained as the tone, bereft of sympathy, takes on an unfamiliar hardness. Wait for that cracker of an ending, though.

Milk Teeth marks the arrival of an accomplished new writer. If Mahale's milk teeth have such bite, I can't wait to read what a permanent set will produce.

The writer is the author of *Jobless Clueless Reckless*, a novel about teenagers.

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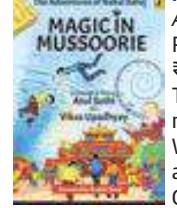
The writer is the author of *Jobless Clueless Reckless*, a novel about teenagers.

BROWSER



The Forest of Enchantments
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
HarperCollins
₹599

This is Sita's version of the *Ramayana*. Other women, often misunderstood and relegated to the margins – Kaikeyi, Surpanakha, Mandodari – also feature here. The retelling is about duty, betrayal, infidelity and honour, and also about women's struggle to retain autonomy in a world that privileges men. Sita is transformed from the weepy wife of Rama to an icon of strength.



Magic in Mussoorie
Atul Sethi
Penguin
₹250

This is a comic book about history, mystery, magic and time travel. While being an adventure story, it also features historical figures like George Everest, Maharaja Duleep Singh and Mangal Pandey. Ruskin Bond plays a small but critical role in the plot. The illustrations are by Vikas Upadhyay. Nakul Sahej and his friend Kukku are transported to the Mussoorie of over a century ago when they chance upon an antique book. This is the first of a comic-book series set in the Garhwal Himalayas.



A Yaksha in America
Thachom Poyil Rajeevan
Poetrywala
₹300

The Yaksha of the title is from the *Mahabharata* who asks Yudhishthira the trick question, "What is water?" before allowing him to drink from his lake. Yudhishthira answers, "Sky is the water": it is this in-between-ness – dividing and uniting varied elements, countries, cultures, times – that unites the poems in this collection. The persona in most of the poems is of a sojourner who has "to set off on another voyage/ To discover my own country". Thachom Poyil Rajeevan writes in Malayalam and English.



The Fork, the Witch, and the Worm: Tales from Alagaësia
Christopher Paolini
Penguin
₹599

This volume featuring three original stories set in Alagaësia, the backdrop of the *Inheritance Cycle* of books. It follows farm boy Eragon as he goes training a new generation of Dragon Riders. He struggles with his tasks: constructing a vast dragonhold, wrangling with suppliers, guarding dragon eggs, and dealing with belligerent Urgals and haughty elves. Then he has a vision which gives him a fresh perspective. Includes four new pieces of original art by Paolini.

IN SHORT

Rudrapura days

Stories suffused with nostalgia for a quieter way of life

■ BY SHEILA KUMAR

Lives intersect in manifold ways in Adithi Rao's debut book of short stories – lives lived in the fictional small town of Rudrapura in Karnataka. And a leitmotif runs all through the narrative: a sense of nostalgia for a quieter, gentler way of life, for a place where being part of a community is prized above existing in individual bubbles.

The stories move at a measured pace and are populated by an eclectic cast of deftly-drawn characters. Infused with quiet observation and wry humour, some of the tales are heart-warming.

Of course, some tropes of small-town living do come into play here but Rao sidesteps the pitfalls of clichés by investing her characters with interesting lives. A poster painter puts his talents to use elsewhere. The proprietor



Left from the Nameless Shop
Adithi Rao
HarperCollins
₹399

of the titular 'nameless shop' hits on a sound business plan, which he carries out with enterprise. A boy's uncanny ability to commune with pillars unexpectedly comes to the aid of his school principal. The reason behind a character's strict authoritarianism, bordering on cruelty, is unwittingly discovered. A grandfather gently, sweetly instils self-belief in his grandson. And in a delightful two-part story, the residents of Rudrapura discover rainwater harvesting and implement it in highly original ways.

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A grandfather gently, sweetly instils self-belief in his grandson. And in a delightful two-part story, the residents of Rudrapura discover rainwater harvesting and implement it in highly original ways.

Unsurprisingly, the stories that are the most affecting are the more personal ones. A young man's yearning for long hair mirrors his dreams for a life different from the one dictated by his father. An old Anglo-Indian woman poignantly reconnects with a lost love. Two women married to the same man at different times in their lives forge an unexpected bond. An account that remains with the reader is the one about a temple priest who finds his inner peace shattered by unrequited love.

Rao's prose is simple but effective, and her ability to cast light in unexpected places makes many of the stories richer.

If the book is reminiscent of *Malgudi Days*, it is because the television serial apparently served as inspiration for the author.

The writer is a manuscript editor and novelist based in Bengaluru.

It's a goal!

Follows the template of sports fiction but steers clear of clichés

■ BY NAVMI KRISHNA

The year was 2006. I had just begun watching professional football, and sat transfixed as Zinedine Zidane, playing the biggest and last match of his career, headbutted Italy's Marco Materazzi in the World Cup final, in one of the most memorable and heartbreaking moments of contemporary football. Rishabh Bala, the protagonist of Kautuk Srivastava's debut novel, also sits glued to the TV at exactly the same moment. Zidane's red card baffles him; little does he know that in the days to come, another red card will change his life.

Red Card is a coming-of-age story told through four football tournaments spanning a year. Set in Shri Sunderlal Sanghvi School in Thane, it tracks the life of the school's scrappy football team, with Abhay Purohit,

team captain, Abel Floyd Thottapalli, defender, Rakshit Dave, wise-cracking goalkeeper, and others. The challenges they face are many and diverse – from having to convince a player that heading the ball will not result in hair loss to finding a new coach. But driven by passion, the team perseveres – first alone, then under the guidance of the tough but fair coach Mehfouz Noorani. But when Rishabh gets a red card in a crucial match, he finds himself wondering, was it worth it?

Most sports fiction follow a template – spunky team faces an adversary, finds a coach who believes in them, fails but gets back on their feet, and finally emerges as victors. Srivastava does not veer from that, but still manages to steer clear of clichés. His years of experience as a stand-up comedian and writer shine through: for diligent fans of his stand-up shows, a few of the punchlines may even seem familiar.

Credit goes to Srivastava in how he perfectly recreates the atmosphere of an upper middle-class school, with its monotonous lessons and lackadaisical approach to sports. The characters are relatable – the irritable English teacher, Poulomi Bobde, Ghadge Sir, with his heavily-accented English – but they often leave you craving for more details. If you can overlook these flaws, then *Red Card* is a nostalgic walk in the park for anyone who has played or is interested in football.

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TRIBUTE

Master of love and darkness

Amos Oz: The writer who told stories that reached far beyond Israel

Hundreds mourned revered Israeli writer and peace advocate Amos Oz at a funeral ceremony where President Reuven Rivlin hailed him as the nation's storyteller who was not afraid to be called a "traitor."

Crowds had lined up at a small theatre in central Tel Aviv, where Oz's closed casket lay on the stage. In a sign of the widespread appreciation and respect for Oz in Israel, his funeral was broadcast live on television, unusual for a writer.

Family members, politicians and Israelis touched by Oz's works slowly filed past the black coffin ahead of the ceremony that followed the writer's death on December 28 from cancer at the age of 79.

Looking inside
A teary Rivlin recalled their childhood friendship in Jerusalem, where they were neighbours growing up.

"Because your writing was personal and universal, you managed to tell our story far beyond our small Israel," he said in his eulogy.

Rivlin said Oz had the "ability to see things deeply from the inside, but always a bit from the outside".

"You weren't afraid to be called a traitor," Rivlin said, referring to far-right Israelis who criticised his peace activism. "On the contrary, you considered that an honorary title."

Oded Kotler, an actor who starred in a cinematic adaption of one of Oz's early works, read out a letter of condolences from Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas to the author's family, drawing applause from the audience.

Oz was later buried at the Hulda kibbutz in central Israel, where he had lived for a time after his mother's suicide when he was 12. His wife Nily played a song on the recorder at his graveside, while one of his books was placed on



Well remembered Amos Oz in Arad, Israel in April 2009. NYT

Oz is known as one of the earliest and most forceful critics of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory

his grave.

Oz was a celebrated novelist whose stirring memoir *A Tale of Love and Darkness* became a worldwide bestseller that was adapted into a film by Hollywood actress Natalie Portman.

'A real Zionist'

While Oz's writing is widely acclaimed, he is perhaps equally known as one of the earliest and most forceful critics of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory captured in the Six-Day War of 1967.

In recent years, Oz spoke out against the policies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, shunning official Israeli functions abroad in protest at what he called the "growing extremism" of his government.

Netanyahu, currently visiting Brazil, paid brief tribute to Oz on

December 28, calling him "one of our literary giants". "We will always remember his contribution to Hebrew literature and the Hebrew language," he said.

Culture Minister Miri Regev, who has sparked protest from artists over her bid to have a law passed that would cut subsidies to cultural institutions deemed disloyal, attended the ceremony and received light boos when she was mentioned.

Two of Oz's grandsons spoke of their grandfather, saying he left a legacy of fighting against racism and violence.

But while he was a consistent advocate of the creation of a Palestinian state, Oz also took a hard line against those sworn to Israel's destruction and condemned every variety of religious fanaticism.

- AFP

real Zionist, I think he was one," Kranz said.

Oz received numerous awards for his work, including the Israel Prize for Literature in 1998 and Germany's Goethe Prize in 2005, but the Nobel Prize in Literature eluded him despite widespread speculation he would win it. His novel *Judas*, published in Hebrew in 2014, was shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize following its English translation.

Like many Israelis, Oz served several stints in the military, including a Sinai tank unit during the Six-Day War and during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. In 1978, Oz co-founded Peace Now, Israel's premier anti-settlement peace movement.

But while he was a consistent advocate of the creation of a Palestinian state, Oz also took a hard line against those sworn to Israel's destruction and condemned every variety of religious fanaticism.

REPRISE



Slipping away A scene from the movie adaptation

Cry, the Beloved Country by Alan Paton

■ BY SUDIPTA DATTA

In his two-volume autobiography, *Towards the Mountain* and *Journey Continued*, South African anti-apartheid writer Alan Paton talks at length of how he came to pen *Cry, the Beloved Country* in 1948.

He wrote his famous novel while on a trip to Europe to observe prison reform – Paton was head of a reformatory for black delinquents. During a visit to Norway's Trondheim Cathedral as he sat in a pew opposite the rose window, "the light was shining behind it, and I was very moved and felt very homesick."

He went back to his hotel and wrote the first lines of *Cry*, the sense of longing apparent: "There is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo to the hills. These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it." But we get a sense that all is not well, "as the earth has torn away like flesh.... The men are away, the young men and the girls are away. The soil cannot keep them anymore."

The violence, racial injustice, migrations and disruptions lurking on the horizon are told through the story of a Zulu minister in Natal, Stephen Kumalo, who searches for his sister Gertrude and son Absalom, with his deep secrets, in Johannesburg, from where nobody seems to return.

As Reverend Kumalo takes the train to the city, the "fear of the unknown" grips him – "Deep down the fear for his son. Deep down the fear of a man who lives in a world not made for him, whose own world is

slipping away, dying, being destroyed, beyond any recall." Kumalo finds his son in prison, for murdering a white man, Arthur Jarvis, who ironically felt for the natives and worked towards integration. Jarvis's father and Kumalo make an unlikely connection after the tragedy – and a child brings hope.

Beauty and terror

Paton, writing a note for the 1987 edition, said "it is a story about the beauty and terror of human life..." The title comes from lines spoken in the book, "Cry, the beloved country, for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear. Let him not love the earth too deeply.... For fear will rob him of all if he gives too much."

In life, Paton worked for reconciliation, serving as head of the multi-racial Liberal Party which was later dissolved after South Africa passed legislation against mixed parties. His liberal views – though he wasn't for sanctions – notwithstanding, he gave us a devastating portrayal of rupture between communities in the apartheid era.

A character in *Cry* echoes the white man's predicament: "We do not know, we do not know. We shall live from day to day, and put more locks on the doors...; and the beauty of the trees by night, and the raptures of lovers under the stars, these things we shall forego.... And our lives will shrink." He died in 1988, before apartheid ended in 1994.

The writer looks back at one classic each fortnight.

BOOKENDS

Hand 'em down, pass them on

Websites sell pre-owned children's books at a fraction of the original price

■ BY AZERA PARVEEN RAHMAN

Anisha M. Shah is an avid reader and wanted her two-year-old son to develop the same love for books. As the pile of books kept increasing, so did the cost of buying them: there came a stage when Anisha started to feel the pinch. But determined not to let money come in the way, she soon stumbled on pre-owned books that could be sourced online at far lower prices. Once she had hit upon this solution, she wanted to help other parents too.

In December 2017, Anisha decided to step into the business of sourcing second-hand books (or 'pre-loved' books, as she calls them) and selling them online. Love for Books, her Facebook page, was an immediate hit. "Most of the books I was looking at are imported from the U.K. As I explored, I realised that most of these books are either not available in India, or, if available, are very expensive. But I could get pre-owned books at one-third or one-fourth the original price," Anisha says.

Lipee Modgil, a dentist-turned-entrepreneur, has a similar story to tell. She used to buy books online for her son Ayaan. In January 2017, she decided to explore the online wholesale market for children's books. "There I was introduced to pre-loved books for children from the U.S. and the U.K. I was mesmerised by the collection – the books were of very good quality and were priced much lower than the originals," Lipee says. When she discussed this with other mothers, she received an overwhelming response.



New again Lipee Modgil of Bookworld.

Can you imagine buying 10 great books for approximately ₹1,000?

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"I started Bookworld with a Facebook page: in January 2017, the group had two members. Today, it has 5,500," says Lipee. Members say that a ready supply of interesting books catering to different age groups – story books, activity books, audio books, touch-and-feel ones – has not just encouraged their kids to read but also offered a healthier alternative to TV or the iPad.

Architect-turned-entrepreneur Sanyukta Bharadwaj regularly visits social media pages for pre-loved books for her five-year-old son and year-old daughter.

er, and has a book shelf overflowing with titles. "I am not much of a reader myself but I know how important reading is for children," she says, adding that she gets good books at throwaway prices from these websites. "Can you imagine buying 10 books for approximately ₹1,000?"

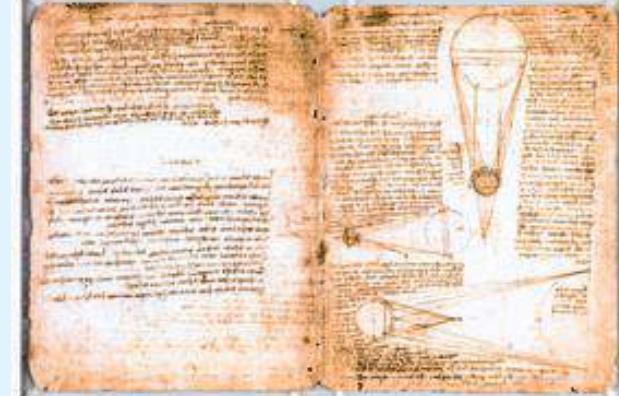
"I thought people might have reservations about buying pre-owned books, but surprisingly, mothers have no such inhibition," says Anisha.

Is there a flip side to this? Well, you don't always have the luxury of choosing titles. But Anisha, Lipee and the others still try their best to customise, sorting books age-wise and giving suggestions. Rakhi Garg, who launched Pupilo: An Online Bookshelf in June 2017, says she also creates budget-wise lists and has recently added Indian publishers to her collection.

These online booksellers usually have just one copy of every book, so it's first-come, first-serve for buyers. Lipee posts 15-20 titles every day on her Facebook and Whatsapp feeds, and whoever calls out first gets it. As one mother says: "I don't know who gets more excited when a Julia Donaldson book knocks at our door – my daughter or I!"

The author is a Gujarat-based freelance journalist.

WHAT WE LIKE



The Codex Leicester

This year marks the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death. Bill Gates is celebrating the occasion with a project called the Codexcope, which is an interactive kiosk with a touchscreen that lets one explore the Codex Leicester, da Vinci's famous notebook. The Codex Leicester was written around 1508, when da Vinci had just completed painting the 'Mona Lisa'. In the Codex he goes about recording the world around him as a scientist and

an artist, and his observations on natural phenomena such as water, light and gravity, are fascinating. Equally breathtaking are the illustrations, of course.

The Codex and Codoscope are travelling together to various museums in Europe as part of the da Vinci celebrations – they're stationed at the Uffizi in Florence till January 20. Because of the manuscript's age and fragility, it is displayed in specially designed cases that regulate its exposure to light and maintain stable

temperature, humidity, and light levels. Since the Codex cannot be touched, the Codoscope is the next best thing to flipping through the pages touched by the great artist. Developed by Corbis Corporation, the Codoscope allows visitors to study details of da Vinci's drawings, reverse his Italian mirror script, and read the manuscript in modern English or Italian. It also links each section of a page to other related information, to give an inkling of the workings of da Vinci's exceptional mind.

60 MINUTES: WITH VENKI RAMAKRISHNAN

'I don't subscribe to the heroic narrative of science'

The Nobel laureate says scientists are fortunate to be agents of important discoveries 'that would have been made anyway'

BY JACOB KOSHY

Biologist and Nobel laureate Venkatraman 'Venki' Ramakrishnan, in his new book *The Gene Machine: The Race to Decipher the Secrets of the Ribosome*, tracks his career in science from the day he left India as a 19-year-old with his "heart set on becoming a theoretical physicist," his culture shock at university life in the U.S., meeting his future wife Vera Rosenberry, and of course 'stumbling into the ribosome'. In an email interview, Ramakrishnan talks about the role of scientific collaboration, his views on 'genius', and the impact of nationalism on scientific research. Excerpts:

Is the notion of a scientific genius, like Einstein or Feynman, redundant, given that scientific breakthroughs are more likely to be collaborative?

■ As I've pointed out in the book, science never emerges from a vacuum. Rather, advances are made when the state of understanding in a field and developments in technology reach a stage when certain ideas can be pursued. When that happens, one or more people happen to see the next possible advance a little before everyone else. This is why so many discoveries are made nearly simultaneously by two or more people, like the discovery of calculus by Newton and Leibniz, the theory of evolution by Darwin and Wallace, or quantum mechanics by several people including Heisenberg and Schrödinger. Even Feynman was only one of several who formulated quantum electrodynamics. So I don't subscribe to the heroic narrative of science. Rather, some of us are fortunate enough to be the agents of important discoveries that would have been made anyway. Certain kinds of large-scale science is by nature going to be collaborative, but I don't believe the leaps made by individuals will ever go away or even diminish in importance.

Just as the U.S. has, for over a century, been able to attract some of the smartest people in the world,



Venki Ramakrishnan will be speaking at *The Hindu Lit for Life 2019*. To be held on January 12, 13 & 14, at Lady Andal School premises, Harrington Road, Chennai. Visit www.thehindulitforlife.com to register

Science in Nazi Germany and biology in Stalin's Soviet Union both suffered due to an injection of ideology and nationalism

Gene man India needs to support its homegrown scientists well, giving them a decent income and good facilities: Venki Ramakrishnan. SANDEEP SAXENA

does India need to do the same? If so how?

■ India will start attracting people when it does world-class science that is not done elsewhere. To do this routinely, it also has to provide a decent environment – this includes basic amenities like housing, safe, clean and unpolluted neighbourhoods for the scientists and their families. It also needs to provide competitive salaries. I see this as quite a long way away. As a first step, India needs to support its homegrown scientists well, giving them a decent income, good facilities to carry out their research, and independence from political pressures. Scientists need to fulfil their side of the bargain by subjecting their work periodically to rigorous assessment for continued support.

You've spoken about nationalism as the flipside of bigotry. But hasn't nationalism also fuelled competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and led to advanced rocketry, satellites? Might nationalism still have its uses for science?

■ Nationalism is only useful to spur on technical advances with specific applied goals. It is different with science, which is universal, and needs both freedom of thought and objectivity, all of which are the antitheses of nationalism. Science in Nazi Germany and biology in Stalin's Soviet Union both suffered due to an injection of ideology and nationalism. Science needs a rapid exchange of ideas and expertise to advance, which is often catalysed by movement of people between countries. Science is therefore global and thrives far more on cooperation rather than rivalry among nations. This reduction of national barriers to flow of people and knowledge across borders is different from competition between individuals or teams. That sort of competition happens all the time and helps drive science forward by weeding out bad ideas and making scientists work harder and better.

In several parts of the world, India included, there's a suspicion of GM crops. What drives it, and what are the consequences of this scepticism on global scientific research?

■ Born in Chidambaram, Cuddalore, to scientist parents

■ Graduated with a B.Sc in physics from The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1971

■ Obtained Ph.D in physics from Ohio University in 1976 under supervision of Tomoyasu Tanaka. Then studied biology at University of California, San Diego

■ Shared the chemistry Nobel with Thomas A. Steitz and Ada Yonath in 2009

as well as traits that encourage the use of herbicides, etc. But these are not intrinsic to GM, which is simply a powerful tool that could be used for good, such as to make plants that are higher yielding, more nutritious, tolerant to drought or other harsh conditions, or naturally pest-resistant. It is up to us – governments and society – to make sure that GM is used in a beneficial way.

You switched from physics to biology after a PhD. If you were a physics grad today and had to make a switch, what field of research would you opt for?

■ There are lots of opportunities for someone with a background in physics and mathematics. There is cognitive neuroscience, computational biology, computer science (especially machine learning and artificial intelligence and quantum computing). And within physics, there is a lot of excitement in many areas. But people should not be guided by what is fashionable or trendy. Fashions come and go but you have to be motivated by what actually interests you.

Future's bright Students at work and play at KGF School in the erstwhile gold mining town. SUDHAKARA JAIN



After the closure of the mines, the school was neglected, the building slowly fell to ruins, and classes began to be held under the trees

ly on the present campus. The Karnataka government was responsible for salaries, textbooks, midday meals and student scholarships, while infrastructure, uniforms, computers, excursions and other extracurricular activities were taken care of by Bharat Gold Mines Ltd. After its closure, the school was neglected and the building slowly fell to ruins, and classes began to be held under the trees. About a decade ago, it was on the verge of closure.

That's when, in 2009, Neil Joseph, an alumnus in Bengaluru who runs a travel business, received an SOS call from the then headmistress. Lacking basic toilet facilities, the school had been served a closure notice.

Joseph quickly enlisted the help of Rotary International and managed to get new toilets built. But he soon realised that there was much more to be done. The dilapidated buildings needed renovation, school supplies had to be

restocked, and teaching vacancies filled: the list of woes grew with every visit, says Joseph.

He contacted several alumni, and together they set up the KGF Foundation, which collected funds to restore their alma mater to its once glorious condition. Over the years, the foundation has reconstructed the sports field and compound wall, made a cricket pitch, retiled the floors of the main block, set up solar panels, drinking water facility, and smart class equipment; besides organising uniforms, notebooks, computers and more. The foundation even hires and pays for temporary teachers to bridge the gap in vacancies.

Alumni aid

It's break time. Some girls of Class VIII are playing tag. Their parents are coolies, a teacher tells me. The girls smile shyly and tell me their dreams: one wants to become doctor, another a dancer. There's a pleasant sound of clicking sticks, signalling a dance practice somewhere nearby. The teachers introduce me to two slightly-built boys who've made it to the trials of the national under-14 football team. One of them wants to join the Army, the other wants to become an engineer.

Headmaster Paul is passionate about sports, and has coached and helped his students reach the national and state levels. He proudly displays trophies and certificates they've won. Some work still remains: for instance, the dusty, ill-stocked library has to be tackled, but it's amazing how much a bunch of dedicated alumni have achieved.

Many of the teachers have taught here for more than 20 years. They say that with no other government school in the vicinity, it's important that this one continues, with private support but under government control so that the fees remain low.

The aroma of lunch wafts in from the two midday meal kitchens. I step in to see women busy washing rice and stirring stew in a huge cauldron. The weekly menu is written on a blackboard outside. I stand near a 100-year-old water tank and hope Sir Ismail's dream for the school will come true again. The numerous watered saplings show promise of tall leafy trees. As do the children running around.

The Bengaluru-based writer is an engineer by qualification and was a lecturer in an earlier avatar.

INSIDE INDIA

Finding gold in Kolar

A bunch of dedicated former students come together to restore their alma mater's lost glory

BY JYOTHI VINOD

It's just after 8.30 on a chilly December morning when I visit the 119-year-old KGF School in the eponymous Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) town. The 10-acre campus still has quaint buildings that date back to the town's gold-mining glory days, when it was called Little England. The mining-era Henry Shaft watches over us from across the road.

In the middle of the town's overall air of genteel decay, KGF School seems to be slowly opening new petals. Gardeners are tending to saplings on the grounds, and the headmaster of the high school section, Shaikh Obedulla, tells me the students are in class after morning assembly. The high school has

a strength of 134 students while the primary section has 195. The numbers aren't very good today, being four days after Christmas and a Saturday. Students will return in strength by the first week of January, says Regis Paul, headmaster of the primary section.

Known for its veins of gold for over a century, KGF was a thriving township that was hit hard when the mines were shut down in 2001 as ore levels fell. Many former employees were left without jobs and took up work in nearby Bengaluru for daily wages.

KGF School was founded in 1899 and catered initially only to the children of Europeans employed in the gold mines, slowly then opening up to others over the years. It soon earned a name for its educational standards.

The Visitors Book has a note from May 1928, signed by the 22nd Diwan of Mysore, Sir Mirza Ismail. "I have derived much pleasure from my visit to the school this morning – a most excellently managed institution where every pupil receives the closest attention." He goes on to say he wishes the school success. "I hope it may expand year by year extending its benefits to the boys and girls of other communities as well."

Back from the brink

By the early 70s, the student strength had become so large that the primary section operated as Parkinson Memorial, while the high school, renamed J.K Lindsay Memorial, was shifted to a nearby bungalow. It was only in the 90s that both sections resumed operations joint-



FIELD NOTES

Mysuru's clean sweep

How does Mysuru bag the cleanest-city tag year after year? The answer lies in tech, citizens and some out-of-the-box thinking

BY R. KRISHNA KUMAR

It is a chilly winter morning in Mysuru, but Bharat Kumar, 25, has been at work since 6: he is going door-to-door in T.K. Layout collecting domestic waste.

At the other end of the city, on top of Chamundi Hill, Manu is getting ready for his daily chore of ensuring that the public toilets in the tourist spot are squeaky clean. "They have to be ready at least 30 minutes before the stream of tourists begins around 6.30 am," he says. He is busy ensuring that the flush systems and the mini sewage treatment plant are in working condition.

At Kumbarkoppal, a densely populated settlement on the outskirts of Mysuru, once a village before being subsumed by the urban sprawl, 15 civic workers are busy segregating dry and wet waste at the zero waste management plant here.

Dawn in Mysuru finds an army of *poura karmikas*, as the civic workers are called, already out and on their toes, turning waste to wealth.

By 10 a.m. a steady stream of auto tipplers – with trash collected from nearly 10,000 households in three residential areas of the city – starts arriving at the Kumbarkoppal plant. The waste is segregated into 32 components, each of which is stocked separately and relayed to scrap dealers.

From beer bottles and medicine strips to discarded keyboards and leftover food, nothing is left out. "It all has a market that helps earn the revenue that maintains this facility," says K.S. Nagapati, a retired professor who teamed up with D. Made Gowda, a former member of the legislative council, to establish the zero waste management plant at Kumbarkoppal.

Among cities with a population under a million, Mysuru has consistently stayed at the top of the country's 'cleanest city' list compiled by Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan. It was No. 1 in 2015 and 2016, No. 5 in 2017, only to come back to the top spot last year.

Given the legendary squalidness of urban India, especially in its tourism hotspots, what is this city doing right?

Mysuru had something of a head start in sanitation, thanks to the initiatives of the maharajas who established an urban planning body (City Improvement Trust Board) in 1904. All houses were linked to an underground drainage system by 1910. Residential layouts were well planned, the roads were broad and tree-lined, piped drinking water was supplied, and infrastructure put in place for sewage treatment.

Setting an example

This legacy was carried forward by local authorities. Since 2007, Mysuru City Corporation (MCC) has used a public-private partnership (PPP) model to set up plants like the one at Kumbarkoppal and to adopt other innovative practices in waste management.

The city took the vital step of declaring that no new layout plan would be given clearance without an underground drainage facility. This helped Mysuru quickly become 'open-defecation free.' Today, several toilets have been constructed across the city with CSR funds. "Not surprisingly, the best practices of Mysuru are being emulated by other cities," says MCC health officer D.G. Nagaraju.

In 2013, a year before Swachh Bharat was launched, a group of citizens floated an organisation called Let's Do It Mysore to supplement the efforts of civic workers. "The group's success was due to the conviction among residents that Mysuru should not go the Bengaluru way," says Venkatesh, an entrepreneur.

C The city declared that no new layout would be given clearance without an underground drainage facility



With a population of nearly one million, and a floating population of tourists that's pegged at nearly 3.5 million each year, Mysuru generates 400-450 tonnes of solid waste a day. To collect this, a 2,400-strong army of civic workers is engaged across the 65 wards.

Helping them is a convoy of vehicles: 170 auto tipplers, 37 tractors, 5 compactors and scores of trucks.

And technology. Almost 10 years ago, MCC had already adopted GPS technology to ensure efficient trash management. "It meant vehicles were constant-

ly tracked and contractors couldn't dump garbage anywhere they wanted," says Nagaraju.

Now, a new software is being developed exclusively for MCC by an IT company, which will flash the predetermined route fixed for each vehicle and the wards it has to cover.

Today, roughly half the solid waste generated is recycled at the sewage farm in Vidyaranyapuram which has a capacity to handle 250 tonnes a day. Besides this, there are nine five-tonne decentralised units as well, but only seven of



them are working. This means that almost 150 tonnes of waste still enter the landfill. To resolve this called for an out-of-the-box solution, and that's what MCC has found. It has signed a MoU with a private company to procure all the dry, non-biodegradable waste the city generates directly from the civic workers. Each *poura karmika* will be paid ₹100 a day for every 100 kg of dry waste collected and sold.

Since the civic workers will receive the payment every day on the spot, and continue to get a monthly income, the arrangement is expected to not only keep the workers motivated but ensure that garbage collection is efficient and eases the burden on the system.

"We have put this in place in two wards on an experimental basis, and we will soon cover all 65 wards. It will make Mysuru the first city to eliminate landfills altogether," says Nagaraju.

9 out of 10
A slew of toilets were constructed across the city, many of them sponsored by local companies. The facilities at the major tourism hub in Chamundi Hills is an example of this.

The complex, an initiative of CII's Mysuru chapter with Automotive Axles as partner, has, besides the 42 closets and

4 ART & CULTURE

BY GEORGINA MADDOX

When Indian sculptor Himmat Shah created his bronze heads of the 1970s, he went to the foundry in France that was used by the great Modern Master, the Romanian, Constantin Brâncuși. He believed that the attention to detail and technical prowess that could be achieved in France at the time could not be paralleled in India.

Today, that may not be the case, but sculptors are still hard-pressed to find technically excellent foundries to create their works and are often left to their own resources.

Sculpture, unlike painting which relies on *trompe l'oeil* (French for deceive the eye) to create depth and perspective, is realised in the third-dimension. Most sculptors share a very close relationship with their materials because of the corporeality and the physicality of their works.

The recently concluded exhibition, 'iSculpt', at India International Centre in New Delhi's King-Gandhi Memorial Sculpture Park, showcased various materials, techniques and preoccupations of 11 sculptors.

According to curator Uma Nair, "iSculpt part II was about materials, about fantasy, about respecting the work of those who toil for years. I didn't just choose big names, I chose names that had something to say. I believe sculpture has to be born of the spirit."

Divided into contemporary installations and modern sculptures, the exhibition showcased names like the elusive Himmat Shah, Satish Gupta, Vipul Kumar, Latika Katt and Puneet Kaushik, alongside others like Biman Das, G. Reghu, Nimesh Pilla, Simran K.S. Lamba and Sonia Sareen.

Past and present

Nair has been an admirer of the Gujarati-born Shah's work since the time she first saw his work. "I had gone to see Jyoti Bhatt's show of intaglios in Vadodara and I saw a sculpture by Himmat Shah in his house that was riveting. I consider Himmat a true modernist. His language and sensibility are a beautiful blend of the past and present. I love his signature of unpredictable archetypes. That is why I chose him," she says.

While scouting for sentinel pieces for the exhibition, Nair saw two sculptures by Shah in gallerist R.N. Singh's collection and asked him if he would loan them for the show.

The works are two stylised heads, accentuated by the bony ribcage, shoulders, sprouting into a long neck. The oval head has a mask-like quality and is expressive only by its huge eyes that float at the top of the face. The work is a tour de force and expresses Shah's early figurative phase. The other is a more geometric work that essays form through the formalism of blocks and cubes that emerge as a visage.



C *The hand of the artist is so important. The relationship with material, the joy of discovery, it is most important: Vipul Kumar*

After many years of reticence, Shah has re-emerged into the limelight, with a retrospective at Kiran Nadar Museum of Art followed by a chapter in Jaipur at Jawahar Kala Kendra. For those who missed both shows, there is a two-volume book titled *The Euphoria of Being* with essays by Roobina Karode and Pooja Sood. Shah is preparing for another show at the State Museum of Bhopal.

Vipul Kumar is another sculptor whose work has a close relationship

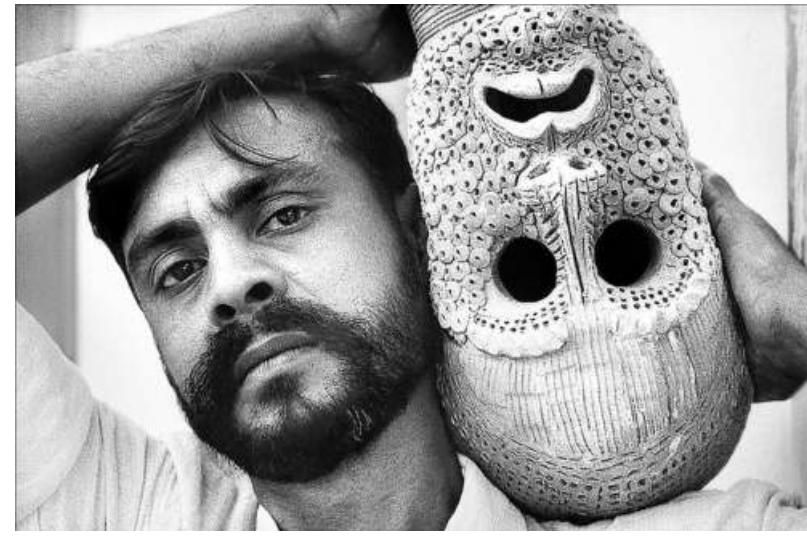
with material. He used to work in stone and recently experimented with ceramics. He too shares a special bond with Shah. Nair recalls how Bhatt created a printing press and a small place for Shah to stay when the latter was struggling as a young artist.

"He was my mentor," says Kumar, "and sometimes when we met, he would tell me that we are among the few sculptors left who still work with their hands on their pieces. For him and for

SPOTLIGHT

In the third dimension

In an age of virtual reality, a celebration of the physicality of sculpture



Born of the spirit (Clockwise from left) Sonia Sareen's tree spirit sculpture; Himmat Shah photographed in his youth by Jyoti Bhatt; a detail from the 12-ft-tall Rudra Shiva and Om made from metallic sheets, both by Satish Gupta; Jigyasu, a stone sculpture by Vipul Kumar. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



me, the hand of the artist is so important. The relationship with material, the joy of discovery, it is most important for me." Kumar recently held a well-received solo exhibition of ceramics in the capital.

Kumar's large studio and kiln in Bhainslana, on the outskirts of Jaipur, is home to many experimental works created from a plethora of mediums and materials like clay, stoneware and grog. For this exhibition, Kumar contributed a work in sandstone from his geometric series. Titled 'A Philosophical Question' it has two spheres that sit atop rectangular cuboids, where one shape appears to melt into the other. It can be seen as a metaphor for creation and mutation.

Mesmeric, minimalist
Satish Gupta straddles the sacred and the sublime and had three works in the exhibition. One was a 12-feet Rudra Shiva on a pedestal, which recalled the myth where Shiva appears to Brahma and Vishnu as a pillar of flames in the shape of a lingam. Gupta captured it through a Zen texturing of clouds replete with their own primordial rhythms.

He also evoked Shiva in the second sculpture, while the third work was a mesmeric Om created with minimalist metallic sheets. "My work is about savouring its own epoch in a world that must look at mythic stories and partake of their strength and mystique," says the sculptor.

Bengaluru artist G. Reghu brought three arresting ceramic works from his ongoing tryst with tribal signatures. Landscape architect Ankon Mitra's origami piece was a magical piece of folding from the artist whose work just showed at the Paper Biennale in Italy and at Art Stage Singapore. 'Leap of Faith' by Nimesh Pilla Amarnath was a fabulous example of the understanding of human anatomy, along with the fantastical belief that mankind aspires to fly on the wings of dreams beyond the mundane.

Among contemporary artists were Puneet Kaushik's installation, a miasma of mixed media corollaries created of thread and twigs in a creation that swept like a creeper across one of the most beautiful trees in the Gandhi-King Plaza.

Biman Das, master sculptor, mentor and now president of All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, was represented by a beauteous Krishna in bronze. Sonia Sareen's two sculptural heads embodied tree spirits, Patrini and Bhavanamayi, two beauteous women born of the soil and roots.

This January end, we can look forward to many of these sculptors showing at India Art Fair.

The writer is a critic-curator by day, and a creative writer and visual artist by night.

SCANNER

Italy wants Nazi-looted art back



An art gallery in Florence has asked Germany to return an 18th century painting stolen by Nazi soldiers during World War II. 'Vase of Flowers', a still life by Dutch master Jan van Huysum, is believed to be in the possession of a family in Germany.

"Because of this affair, the wounds of the Second World War and Nazi terror are not yet healed," said Eike Schmidt, the museum's German director. The painting was seized by German soldiers in 1944 and all trace of it was lost until 1991, the *Guardian* reported. A photo of the painting, accompanied by the word "stolen" in Italian, German and English, was put up at Pitti Palace last week.

International theatre fest, Kerala



The 11th International Theatre Festival of Kerala will be held from January 20 to 26 in Thrissur. It is an annual event organised by Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi. This year's festival will

loosely focus on Asian theatre. Experimental theatre, both in form and content, will be the highlight. Some of the plays are from conflict zones, some are re-interpretations of old classics, some performances are collaborations, developed through workshop interactions between performers and directors.

Glitter stretchmarks



Artist Sara Shakeel's image of a glittering Emirates aircraft has gone viral. Shakeel's art consists of putting glitter and diamond dust on everything – from dresses to iconic landmarks,

underground trains to stretch marks – in her Instagram images, using Photoshop. Her images are much liked: she has nearly half a million followers on Instagram. Based in Pakistan, Shakeel started by uploading collages with the hashtag #glitterstretchmarks, which celebrated body positivity by showing stretch marks, often seen as blemishes, in a positive light. Big names like Emirates and Swarovski have signed her up for their brand campaigns.

POP-A-RAZZI

The year of the puppy dog

World peace and love may be too much to ask for. Some tolerance is welcome



SANDIP ROY
is the author of *Don't Let Him Know*, and like many Bengalis likes to let everyone know about his opinions whether asked or not

One night early last year, as my mother watched her daily soap, there was a knock on the door. In the soap operas, everyone freezes when the doorknob rings and stares at each other. In real life, we too froze. Who could it be, knocking on the door at dinnertime? We opened it and discovered a squeaking black and white mongrel pup.

We didn't have a dog. But this dog, born on the street, had adopted us. It came knocking on the door at dinnertime. We called him a semi-pet. He lived in our garden, strictly forbidden from entering the house. My grandmother had dogs, "proper" dogs like cocker spaniels. We gave them fancy English names straight out of Enid Blyton – Tommy and Judy and Bonny.

None of us had any interest in a mongrel. Then the street dog next door had four pups. She made a little home for herself on the grass and the rubbish on the pavement. The puppies tumbled around, little poly-poly black and white sausages, exploring our toes, stumbling over their own oversized paws.

Strictly temporary
One day, disaster struck. A car ran over the puppies. One died instantly. The other squeaked pitifully while the mother licked it but to no avail. The survivors made another home under a tree outside our gate. A few days later, tragedy struck again. Another car. Another pup. The mean streets of Kolkata are rough on its dwellers. With that, the last of the puppy Mohicans and his mother decided they were just going to live in our garden. Let's just keep him for a few days, we said, just to keep him safe. It was to be strictly temporary.

The pup got a name – Chutney. Chut-



ney can't come in the house. That was my mother's rule. He did not know it. Ja, ja, go, go, she would shout while he wagged his over-long tail. He probably thought his name was JaJa.

The dog had no pedigree but he had persistence. First, he got a water bowl. Then there was a little bed on the verandah, only for the monsoon. Then he came into the house to escape the Diwali fireworks. But alas, his trauma was not yet over.

This puppy was living out a soap opera as eventful as anything my mother watched.

In the shows, there's always a saintly good sister and a murderous evil sister. Here, Chutney's mother was the good sister. But her neighbour mongrel Pepsi was

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

tually Chutney's grandmother, a veritable Lalita Pawar. We learned all this from our neighbour across the street. In our quiet suburban community, we didn't even know most of our neighbours' names. But now they kept leftovers for these dogs. Getting the dogs neutered became a communal project. Suddenly, we were all talking to each other, the businessman across the street, the young couple who walked their boxers every evening, the mother and daughter across the street.

Dead leaves and slippers

Odd as it seems, a little roadside mongrel has turned our suburban street into a neighbourhood. And in the process, he wormed his way firmly into the house. My niece took him to the dog spa. My nephew got him a chew bone. My sister made him apple and cinnamon flavoured infant cereal for breakfast, stew for lunch, and papaya and dahi for elevenses. He delighted in dead leaves, broken bits of plastic and rubber slippers. In a time of bling, when Beyoncé dances at weddings to prove the power of love, Chutney's disregard for designer toys left us bemused.

Now our lives revolve around his routine. The first day we left him alone, he, diligent in his anxiety, ripped a pillow to shreds and presented us with a room that looked like the aftermath of a blizzard attack. He has learned to sit and occasionally shake hands but does nothing that will go viral on YouTube.

I wonder some days if he realises he owes his good fortune to his siblings' tragic end. But the semi-pet is indisputably part of the house now. The other day, I saw that even my mother and he had come to an uneasy truce, as they both sat in the driveway next to each other, basking in the winter sun, my mother with her walking stick, the dog alertly looking out for bikriwallahs, dogs and crows.

It's not quite love yet, but in a time of vitriol, when love seems to mean lynch mobs and the moral police, even tolerance is welcome in the new year.

C *In a twist worthy of a soap opera, we found that wicked Pepsi was actually Chutney's grandmother, a veritable Lalita Pawar*

a growing terror. Her little pup wanted to play with Chutney but the wicked mother

would corner Chutney, pin him down, and bite him. He whimpered as we tended to his wounds while his mother fretted

as helpless as a soap opera mother.

Then, in a twist worthy of any soap opera, we found that wicked Pepsi was ac-

TRIBUTE

MRINAL SEN

and the chronicles of dissent

The director ushered in a style of political filmmaking that India had never seen before

BY OMAR AHMED

Director Mrinal Sen was constantly evolving, adapting and absorbing the divergent film styles he came in contact with. Yet Sen's intellectual approach to filmmaking remained resolutely left-wing, defying the establishment and using his films to chronicle political dissent. *Interview* (1970), *Calcutta '71* (1972) and *Padatik* (1973) are linked thematically by the politics of The Naxalite Movement.

There are four films in this period including *Chorus* (1974) that defiantly forge a Leftist trajectory through the tumultuous politics of this era of West Bengal and India.

Although Film Finance Corporation (FFC) had been around since 1960, the financing offered to *Bhuvan Shome* in 1969 did not necessarily mean that it was easier to get offbeat or alternative films made. In fact, it was still rather difficult for filmmakers to pursue political filmmaking. It is unsurprising, thus, that *Interview*, *Calcutta '71* and *Chorus* were financed privately. It was only *Padatik* that received partial backing from FFC. Indeed, Sen admitted that no producer wanted to go anywhere near *Chorus*, so he financed the film himself.

At its creative peak
The period between 1968 and 1975 constitutes the first phase of Indian Parallel Cinema, possibly at its most creative and polarising. But what exactly did Mrinal Sen set out to accomplish aesthetically and politically in this experimental period that lasted between 1969 and 1974?

Events in the wider historical and political context of this time mapped an uncertain terrain. It included the Cultural Revolution unfolding in West Bengal through the 60s, the anti-establishment protests by youth who felt the neo-colonial system needed dismantling, an influx of refugees from the 1971 Bangla-

desh genocide and The Naxalite Movement (1967) that took hold of the political imagination of a generation of disillusioned and unemployed students. Sen was never a card-carrying member but was still close to the Communist Party of India and took a vested interest in the ideological divisions that fragmented the party.

All this discord and unrest in Calcutta of the late 60s and early 70s was dually framed by Sen in a much broader international context, whereby Parallel Cinema became aligned both aesthetically and politically with the emergence of a radical global cinema that included the political modernism of Godard in France and the Third Cinema imperative of Latin America. In a 2001 interview with Samik Bandyopadhyay, Sen said: "I was very conscious of the realisation that we were progressing towards a hybrid culture" (2001).

The influence of international cinema on Mrinal Sen led to a style that was constantly evolving, a mixed media aesthetic that gradually rejected traditional narrative storytelling for an elliptical, agitprop style of political filmmaking that India had never seen before; arguably the first concerted attempt to forge a new type of political cinema since the short-lived cultural intervention of the Indian People's Theatre Association of the 40s.

There was a terrifying and violent anger on Calcutta's streets that Sen documented, transposing the anti-imperialist and pro-Naxal fervour into arresting images of iconoclasm. *Interview* (1971) opens with a startling montage of colo-

nial statues in Calcutta being dismantled, symbolic of decolonisation. Later, the main protagonist of *Interview*, the hapless Ranjit Mallick, smashes a shop window, unleashing an impotent rage. Sen would continually return to scenes of revolutionary iconoclasm. *Calcutta '71* and *Padatik* expressed an international solidarity for political change, which connected Parallel Cinema in a broader cine-geography of radical filmmaking often overlooked in film history.

Seeking a new syntax
Along with iconoclasm, Sen's work in this period chronicled the brutal state repression unleashed against Naxal students in Calcutta, chronicling it in the haunting image of the young nameless man shot dead at the end of *Calcutta '71*. And when he made *Padatik* in 1973, it was a chance to take stock of the demise of the Naxalite movement, questioning the political choices of the young revolutionary Marxist yet wisely choosing to frame Naxalism as a continuum of a greater, historical class struggle.

As early as 1965 (*Akash Kusum*) Sen was searching for a new syntax with which to speak to audiences. Albeit *Bhuvan Shome* is recognised as the turning point in consolidating alternative cinema, eventually leading to the emergence of Parallel Cinema, it was *Interview*

that demonstrated a new hybridised syntax. The aesthetic rupture, augmented by Sen's avant-garde approach, is perfectly encapsulated in the tram sequence from *Interview* where the main protagonist turns and begins to address the camera, a reflexive move that completely breaks down the illusion of film.

One could argue that with his Calcutta Trilogy Sen attempted to introduce a new political modernism. One cannot overestimate the significance of this; Sen was rejecting a realist tradition and style of filmmaking that had become synonymous with the work of Ray and many other Bengali filmmakers.

But importantly, Sen was also having fun; he was playing jazz with the creative possibilities of lighting, editing, sound and narrative, living up to the naïve ideals outlined in his 1968 manifesto co-written with Arun Kaul. Sen threw everything into the mix – planimetric framing, freeze frames, flashbacks, Brechtian devices, handheld camerawork, actuality and montage.

Collaborating with K.K. Mahajan, Sen took the camera out to the streets, filming protests and situating his disaffected protagonists in an urban Calcutta milieu that was restless and strange. He admitted to watching a lot of Latin American films in this period, so it's not without

reason that *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968, Argentina) by Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas, the quintessential marker of Third Cinema, finds its way into *Padatik* as an expression of political solidarity with the New Left and counter-culture movement. Sen was determined to get a response from the spectators, agitate and shake them out of their stupor and make them react.

Beyond agitprop

Predictably, a chorus of voices besieged Sen. Satyajit Ray said Sen's experiments were merely theatrics. The Communist Party of India pointed to the revisionist capitulations of *Padatik*, where Sen questions the ethics of revolt, while the right-wing accused him of hijacking cinema for communist propaganda.

His contemporaries, notably the avant-garde Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahani, felt Sen's type of didactic filmmaking was a reductive platform for polemising and had no place in Parallel Cinema. Arguably, by the time Sen finished *Chorus*, he had exhausted the creative possibilities of the hybridised agitprop style he had cultivated and, like some on the Left, had grown disillusioned with the inherent failings of the Naxalite movement.

In coming years, his style did change. But his Marxist commitments remained

CSen's was an aesthetic that gradually rejected narrative storytelling for an elliptical, agitprop style

steadfast. Sen's audacious capacity to turn the lens on himself, interrogating his own ethical position as a filmmaker, would become an abiding and militant theme in his work.

It is a militancy that seems altogether absent from today's largely acquiescent cinema, at a time when dissent has become an altogether perilous act.

Writing in 1981, film critic Derek Malcolm reasoned why Sen had remained a hero for the young: "All Sen's films, even his most lightweight, have attacked with undisguised horror and anger the poverty, exploitation and inherent hypocrisy of Indian society." If anything, Sen's career demonstrates that engaging in cultural activism and disrupting the dominant narrative is essential for political cinema to remain relevant.

The teacher and UK-based film scholar is researching Parallel Cinema at the University of Manchester.



Radical style Sen took the camera out to the streets, to film an urban milieu that was restless and strange. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

MARGAZHI NOTES

Music in the brain

As Chennai's music season reaches a crescendo, a look at the phenomenon of 'mental practice'

BY G. PRAMOD KUMAR

As Chennai's Margazhi music festival season, the unique month-long Carnatic spectacle, reaches its zenith, musicians in the city are still busy. Almost all leading singers, even upcoming ones, have a concert every second day, while some accompanists, particularly the percussionists, get on stage almost every day, sometimes even twice a day.

Carnatic music is not just melody, rhythm, notes and scales presented in a certain stereotypically stylised way, but is much more complex, sophisticated, scientific and mathematical than it appears. Barring some rare exceptions, serious Carnatic musicians practise their craft quite a bit every day, rarely missing this routine.

So when a singer hops from one Sabha to another during the season, trying to present one concert after another,

each better than the former, what happens to the demands of daily practice?

Most concerts end late at night, affecting the singers' sleep schedule and their early morning *sadhakam* (practice). Before they recover, the next concert comes around, where they have to present a new set of *ragas*, *pallavis* and other possible thrills.

This is where mental practice, as it exists in Western music, comes into play. When the musician doesn't sing or

play an instrument physically, but does it mentally with absolute attention to details such as the precision of the note and the microtones that he/she is trying to reach. Even an outlandish improvisation can be practised in the head.

The mind theory

Is the younger generation of Carnatic musicians doing this to cope with the intense demands of the season? Interestingly, yes. Of course, they have some masters to look up to.

One of the most widely quoted and earliest to write on the subject was Marie Agnew in the 1920s. Agnew studied how the mind of some of the greatest Western composers worked, called it 'auditory imagery', 'tonal imagery' and 'inner hearing'.

Edwin Gordon, who has a music learning theory named after him, called it 'audiation', the musical equivalent of thinking in writing where one hears,

Mind-blowing (Clockwise from left)
Vocalists Brinda Manickavasakan, Kunakkudi M. Balamurali Krishna and S. Saketharaman. RAJAPPAN RAJU



comprehends and practises music when there's no physical sound.

Some others called it the 'mind's ear' or 'music in the brain', and have thrown in a lot of claims of scientific evidence that cites neuroscience, brain imaging, behaviour science, experiential testimonies and so on.

Kunakkudi M. Balamurali Krishna, a leading vocalist of the younger generation and a top performer during Mar-

gazi, explains how it works for him. "Most of my practice is in my mind. The only physical practice I do is the warm-up exercises and voice training. It happens all the time, every moment I am awake." Practising in the mind has helped him raise the quality of his music, he says.

Walking music

Vocalist S. Saketharaman, another favourite, says that mental rehearsal becomes the major part of practice as you become more experienced. As a vocalist, one can practise physically only for up to three-four hours a day, but there is no limit to mental practice." He has composed most of his *Pallavis* during his travels, inviting curious glances from the people around as he shakes and nods his head vigorously.

"Mentally, I practise the *sahityam* and even some basic improvisations such as a base *koraippu* or *korvai* or the structure of a *Pallavi*. I term it 'visualisation'. How the sequencing of the raga will sound, how a particular word,

note or phrase needs to be emphasised, where thick and thin shades need to be articulated... you can do a lot of this mentally," says Saketharaman.

For singer Brinda Manickavasakan, the process is not set in any particular order. "It involves the subconscious mind," she says. "The process could begin from waking up with *Bhairavi* on my mind, moving to mentally singing a composition, simultaneously reflecting on the phrases and the *bhava*, remembering another composition somewhere, imbibing something from them."

Inner symphony

Like Balamurali, she says that that it really expands the scope of one's music, which physical practice alone may not achieve: "Mind practice helps me go to levels that my voice alone doesn't. It widens the search and is addictive. Often it brings fresh ideas and a deeper understanding of what's really happening in a particular place."

It might not be such a new trend. Famous singer Sudha Raghunathan has written of how she had never seen her guru M.L. Vasantha Kumar physically practise even the intricate aspects of music – *raga alapana* or *korvais* – except when she was learning something new, probably implying that it was all happening in the head.

Saketharaman recalls how his guru, the late violin maestro Lalgudi Jayaraman, would look at a car's number plate and compose a *korvai* in his head, and how his legs would tap a *tala* even while he was asleep.

So, the next time you see somebody in a Chennai supermarket shaking head, rolling eyes, making vigorous chin movements, or murmuring to themselves, it's highly possible they have a concert to present. They might well be visualising not just a few phrases or an upper octave, but the entire concert itself.

The journalist-turned-UN official-turned-columnist is a semi-hermit in Travancore.

CSome others called it the 'mind's ear' or 'music in the brain', with claims of scientific evidence from neuroscience, brain imaging, etc.



6 HERITAGE

RUBRIC

The fumes and the fury

Inside Bhopal's heart-wrenching community-led museum that dares us to forget



BY BASAV BIRADAR

Aside from the histories which glorify Bhopal, the city's one important memory is the gas tragedy of 1984, now 34 years old. But it's hard to find this memory in the many state museums housed in massive facilities in the city's heart. But a short drive away, in a small rented house off Berasia road, the tragedy and the subsequent struggle for justice have been evocatively memorialised.

On the afternoon I visit, there's no one in sight besides the caretaker who lets me in. The compound walls are painted black with protest slogans: 'Union Carbide/ You can't hide/ We charge you with genocide' screams the longest wall of the small portico.

I am at Remember Bhopal Museum, collectively curated by survivors and activists, to memorialise the tragedy that killed 25,000 people and left 500,000 with debilitating and lifelong injury.

I look around slowly. There are photographs of infants being buried, dead foetuses, bodies lined up on the roadside. There are oral histories of the sur-



PLACE, WORK, FOLK

Hacking the cyborg

Can collective intelligence save us from self-destruction?

BY MATIAS ECHANOVE & RAHUL SRIVASTAVA

Karl Marx thought that a 'general intellect' was embodied in machines, technical knowledge and the social relationships that sustain production. He believed this general intellect would one day replace labour as the main force of production.

The concept, which he formulated in a collection of unfinished notes published long after his death, has been resurrected by theorists of the robotic age who have elevated it to the status of prophecy. They see it as an early vision of the world to come – of automated production run by a hybrid assemblage of thinking machines, self-evolving algorithms and human intelligence.

Most of us believe that such a scenario is indeed unfolding – at an accelerated pace – and find ourselves divided in two camps: the optimists and the pessimists. The former hope that automation will free people from work, and that democracy will ensure the redistribution of wealth in the form of a universal basic income. The pessimists foresee a world where the vast majority becomes unemployed, and an ever shrinking minority of highly skilled operatives and capitalists rule the world.

Needless to say, the pessimists' camp has come to dominate the public sphere. And they seem to be proven right. People are willing to do whatever

it takes to be part of the narrowing ruling elite, which of course accelerates social polarisation.

Self-reinforcing loop

Marx argued that this giant automaton that we are collectively producing restructures our social relationships in a kind of self-reinforcing loop. We build the machine that builds us, so to say. The general intellect regulates our movement, our interactions, our function and rank in society.

The obvious question – if we accept this theory – is how much we control the machine we are creating? Is the general intellect something that necessarily surpasses our collective ability to discern and shape the things to come?

Tales of man-made doom in Western culture have prepared us for failure, from the Golem to Frankenstein, from Babylon to the Anthropocene. The creature always turns against the creator in the end, with little hope for redemption.

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Needless to say, the pessimists' camp has come to dominate the public sphere. And they seem to be proven right. People are willing to do whatever

we are creating that ultimately restrains our freedom and agency. Whatever we do seems to be geared towards the consolidation of the system that entraps us. Through our social interactions online, we feed the algorithm that shapes our digital environment; in our professional lives we spend all our creative energy designing products to be sold in the market; whichever government we elect seems to reinforce existing institutions rather than challenge them.

If we side with the optimists for a moment, can we imagine anything that could save us from our own creation?

There is no doubt that humans are becoming incredibly good at using general intellect for productive purposes.

We have never been better at working in multidisciplinary teams and using tools to produce new goods or to find technical solutions. Some day, big data and technology may even help reduce traffic jams and air pollution.

Intelligence and empathy

At some level this is tremendously empowering – the power of the internet is being used everyday by millions of micro-entrepreneurs to lift themselves out of poverty.

The challenge ahead is to reinforce our ability to use the general intellect for the common good, rather than as a polarising force. We must find ways to turn a dehumanising general intellect into a socially driven collective intelli-

gence powered by empathy as much as rationality. Not-so-long ago we recognised the power of labour itself, or of the individual vote. They were moves towards greater agency for individuals to become a collective force.

Today humanity has been carried into a global arena by technologies such as the Internet that empower us in ma-

ny ways but which need to be complemented by something at once more basic and more elevated: emotional connection and social interaction. This kind of relationship is particularly important for individuals who may inhabit a common territory and share common challenges, but whose world-views may be miles apart.

It is when common grounds and differences are acknowledged that we can uplift our intelligence. Effort and investment are urgently needed in this area, too, if we want to own our collective future.

The writers are co-founders of urbz.net, an urban network that's active in Mumbai, Goa and beyond.



Memories (clockwise from left) A survivor breaks down seeing photos of relatives; at audio booths listening to survivor stories, and personal belongings of victims.

A.M. FARUQUI

Bhopal victims was \$500. A placard asks 'Did you know that Madhya Pradesh government used gas relief money to build 13 Sulabh Shauchalayas, cremation grounds, schools, yoga centres and dustbins in non-affected areas for general public use?'

I am speechless, shocked. But most of all, I am ashamed.

No justice in sight

The human tragedy in Bhopal didn't stop with the gas leak: there were illegal drug trials and the Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster Act, a legislation that gave government the exclusive right to represent claimants. The irony is that Union Carbide was owned partially by the government. Despite a court ruling, the compensation has still not reached all victims. Every American president's visit since the tragedy has seen protests in Jantar Mantar. Rasheeda Bi, a survivor, puts it thus – 'We did not get any justice here, but Bhopal has become a lesson for everybody around the world.'

The museum alerts us to battles being fought around the country today. A 'toxic map' of India flags the top polluted sites – among them the Manali-Ennore-Kudungaiyur region in Tamil Nadu, Kasaragode in Kerala, Vapi-Ankleshwar in Gujarat – where lives are still imperilled by pollution.

As I leave the building, I cannot summon the courage to return the caretaker's smile. The small space of the museum is so packed with stories of suffering and corporate crime that it feels like I am emerging after days in a battlefield. At a time when museums are increasingly seen as businesses whose success is measured by footfalls, Remember Bhopal stands out as a poignant example of a community-led project.

American journalist David Rieff in his book *In Praise of Forgetting – Historical Memory and Its Ironies*, warns that more often than not collective memories lead to war rather than peace, and advocates forgiveness. But I cannot but wonder at the thousands still waiting for justice in Bhopal. How can we possibly ask them to move on?

The Bengaluru-based writer is a theatre artist and documentary filmmaker.

C Some day, big data and technology may even help reduce traffic jams and air pollution

Sauce for the GOOSE

Mustard, ketchup, chutney, *sonth* and all the many dips and dabs that make a meal



GETTY IMAGES/STOCK & FLICKR.COM

BY VASUNDHARA CHAUHAN

I think that QSRs (quick service restaurants) like McDonald's have now stopped adding ketchup pouches to trays, for which I'm glad.

I don't eat ketchup myself. I prefer chilli sauce – which they sometimes have – or mustard, which they don't. But it's been so long since I ate at the golden arches that I could be wrong. I like only homemade ketchup, but since I've lost the recipe, I haven't eaten it for ages. It's a more natural red, and my recipe used to have cloves of garlic and peppercorns suspended in the sauce. It was less sweet, with the slow tartness of cooked malt vinegar.

Stopping for tomatoes

One year, we were driving down from Chail and passed a village called Machine. We were slowed down by people crossing the road to deposit loads of freshly harvested tomatoes. As each *kilta* was upended and the tomatoes heaped in gleaming piles, we made a snap decision to buy some. My father was renowned for screeching to stops to buy local produce.

We bought tonnes. The following day was spent by the entire household chopping,

simmering, seasoning, straining, cooling and funnelling. Anyhow, the point of this long tale is that I don't like store ketchup. With hamburgers, hot dogs and toasted sandwiches, I prefer mustard.

At this point I have to digress again: Dilliwallas will remember that we were introduced to pizza by Nirula's, and they served mustard on the side. Years later, when Pizza Hut and Dominos appeared on the scene, we were appalled that mustard was not the default condiment but, as long as Nirula's was around, we could still buy fine prepared mustard jars from their restaurants. Now we buy *kasundi*.

Frightened of mustard
Once, at the Delhi Gym, I asked for mustard with my chicken sandwiches – it's now usually served in tiny plastic

The plastic boxes of pickle served on flights and trains are a source of wonder to me. The pickles are absolutely vile

tubs, modernity having jettisoned the little brown earthenware bowls of the 60s. But that day it wasn't there. It's extremely disappointing to not have mustard to dip sandwich corners into. Obviously my feelings showed because the waiter said he'd find out if it was ready, rushed off to the kitchen, and returned minutes later with freshly prepared mustard.

It was sharp and pungent, and I tried to replicate it at home. I failed. My mother used to soak her ground mustard in milk; some do it in water; others in vinegar. When I try, nothing works well.

Where north Indian snacks are con-

cerned, I abhor the sweet chutney masquerading as *sonth* that arrives in polythene packets rubberbanded to death. It's not just the 'hello, my name is cholera!' that daunts me; it's the rubbish taste. Green chutney, of mint, coriander, green chillies and raw mangoes, if in season, is best, and there's usually a jar in the fridge.

Fried in ghee

The Bengali sweet shop Annapurna sells samosas that are different: the potato stuffing and the pastry itself all fried in *desi ghee*, and accompanied with a dry chutney – which has to be rehydrated – of what seems to be crushed coriander seeds and *anardana*, pomegranate seeds.

My favourite chutney, though, is of coconut. With idli, vada, dosa, even sliced bread. In Kottayam once we went to a fish restaurant and my daughter, not a great fish lover, asked for a dosa. But it wasn't the dosa hour, or maybe they only did 'meals' anyway. A young man overheard us and ran out, returning a short while later with an oblong newspaper-wrapped package that he deposited on our table.

It opened to reveal a large, soft dosa with a smaller, banana-leaf-wrapped parcel of chutney. That chutney, piquant with green chillies and fragrant with crushed garlic, tempered with curry leaves and mustard seeds, has become a family favourite. I eat it with the usual suspects but also with *sabudana vada*, *poha*, *upma*, anything.

The vile stuff

The vacuum-sealed little plastic boxes of pickle served with dinner trays on flights and on trains are another source of wonder to me. The pickles are absolutely vile. They're usually a mixture of mango, lime, green chillies and some unidentifiable round green thing, in an oily yellow paste. All packed pickles are the same.

When I stop in Murtal for their once-wonderful stuffed tandoori parathas, the big downside is this very same pickle. They also have shops selling *mithai* and pickle. The pickle they sell is Panipat Pachranga, New Panipat Pachranga, and The Original Panipat Pachranga. There are 5 kg jars, so people must be buying them in bulk, and eating them. In bulk. There's no accounting for tastes.

At home, I make seasonal pickles, eat them fresh, then store them. Sometimes I have a sudden craving for traditional Punjabi mango pickle, or a hot Andhra one. In these cold days, the desired flavour is the sweet and sour *achar* of cauliflower, turnips and carrots.

All homes make their pickles differently, but some ideas are completely new. Our friend Attri's mother used to make a deep red, oily pickle of fried baby potatoes and hardboiled eggs and I long for it, but have no recipe. I could wing it, but am worried that it could spoil. This was one pickle that we all loved – it was sauce for the goose and for the gander.

From the once-forbidden joy of eating eggs to the ingratitude of guests, the writer reflects on every association with food.
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Who wants my passport?

Why anyone who wants to break the travel jinx must travel more

BY SHEILA KUMAR

Put simply, something not-so-good happens on every trip I take abroad, which quickly turns the vacation into a not-so-good trip. It took a while for me to see the pattern; now I brace myself for the jinx.

The travel agency got across my passport to me one hour before I was due to leave for the airport. I grabbed the blue-jacketed little book with much relief, did a cursory check, and found that my passport number differed from the perforated numbers on the top of each page. By one digit.

It was my first time abroad and I am not the calmest person at the best of times; moreover, the alert scrutiny of passports at Changi was already a by-word. But luck or something was on my side; the immigration officer manning the counter shot me a keen look and I was waved through.

In the U.S., I was hit by a tummy bug that nagged at my insides all through the visit, and the long, multi-flight journey back to India was done in the most miserable state ever; me doubled over, the American Airlines staff ignoring me, the Singapore Airlines staff giving me impersonal looks.

England and France came next. The English leg was smooth as Devonshire cream. In France, we took a train to Chartres to visit the famous cathedral. En route, my wallet was picked and I didn't get wind of it till we sat down for lunch at a small bistro. I was banker for the day and reached into my bag to find the wallet missing. "That's okay," my travel companions (TCs) said. "We'll get your Travellers Cheques blocked and write off the cash as a lost cause." Then they looked at my pale face. "What?" they chorused. "My passport was in the wallet," I choked.

Cleaned up wallet
Not one person spoke English at the local police station. Summoning up our schoolgirl French, we explained the situation, the cop in charge made some calls, then told us



could get a camera battery, was given directions, and set off. I got my new battery and set off back to the hotel, only to realise after a while that I'd lost my way... and that I couldn't recall the numbers of the hotel we were staying at; it had numbers but no name. It then became an interlude straight out of *Run Lola Run*, with me asking (mainly non-English speakers) if there was any hotel-with-numbers (1234? 4321? 0007? Aaaargh!) in the vicinity. Luckily, I struck luck with the zillionth person I asked.

Two names

The jinx was back in full force for the China trip. There was this long-standing dichotomy between my given name and the name I go by in life. Since the former (Shylaja, since you ask) is the one in my passport, I use it only when I travel abroad. My TC booked our tickets to Beijing, and she did it for Sheila Kumar and herself. A hurried call to Lufthansa revealed the whole alteration process was going to take more time than we had. So I decided to change my name once and for all to 'Sheila'. That took some scrambling to find an agent and quite a bit of money, but I finally went to China as Sheila Kumar.

New Zealand. That old foe of mine, the tummy bug, hit again, before the trip this time. Should I bail? Should I steer clear of all foods on the trip? "No need," my doctor assured me. "You'll be okay once you are there, the meat, the fish, the air is all fresh, pure and good."

Duly armed with the doctor's confidence, I flew off to Kiwiland and tucked merrily into some superb lamb and some even more superb salmon on the night of our welcome dinner. Then I spent the night *in extremis*. The next morning, exhausted and scared, I resolved to turn vegetarian for the duration of the trip, to stave off further trouble. My memories of NZ are mainly of watching others tuck into meat, fish and poultry at barbecues, hangis and other forms of culinary revels, while I fiddled around with pieces of squash, cucumber and peppers.

And now, as I gear up for my next trip (East Europe, since you ask), you no doubt want to know why on earth I travel at all. I travel to break my travel jinx. Because break it must. Someday or the other.

The manuscript editor and author is based in Bengaluru.

Notes from Bratislava



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

BY PRATHAP NAIR

At first look, Bratislava seems like a city of lost opportunities, near misses and unfair depictions. Standing in the Hviezdoslav Square, facing the Neo-Renaissance Slovak National theatre building, Silvia Augustinova, a history enthusiast-turned-tour guide tells me that the non-violent student protests called Velvet Revolution, originally started in Bratislava. The beginnings of the revolution is widely accredited to Prague and it effectively brought the communist government down in 1989 and split Czechoslovakia into Czech Republic and Slovakia – poetically referred to as the Velvet Divorce.

"They'll tell you in Prague that they started it. They didn't. We started it on a small scale here one day earlier in the Czech Republic," says Silvia. She is right. Bratislava's candle demonstrations started in 1988, one year earlier, and may as well have sowed seeds to the growing student demonstration movement in Prague that eventually came to be called the Velvet Revolution.

Much like any other neighbours who never had a good relationship when they were together, the Slovaks and the Czechs don't see eye to eye after the split. Evidently, there is no love lost between the neighbours. "We were treated like their poor neighbours and we felt like their poor neighbours. We realised we could live without them," says Silvia.

Coming together

This year, Bratislava came close to yet another velvet revolution-like situation, triggered by a pressing need to stand up for democratic values, where press freedom was already eroding. In February this year, a young investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée were hacked to death for investigating into the mafia links of the Prime Minister's associates. Thousands of citizens took to the streets in protest in Bratislava, said to be the largest gathering since 1989 when communism fell, and the ensuing protests forced the country's Prime Minister Robert Fico to step down.

With its pedestrian-only streets, typically European squares surrounded by cathedrals-turned-museums and shops peddling Slovak souvenirs, Bratislava is just as instagrammable and selfie-worthy as any other European city. The renovated Bratislava castle recently opened and offers views of the Danube, which is bordered by birch trees crowned with a tinge of autumn shades. Across the Danube, a quirky communist

Bratislava is just as instagrammable and selfie-worthy as any other European city

era glass viewing tower called UFO tower peeps out into the horizon.

In the early 2000s, Hollywood with its unglamorous portrayal, has left the city out in the cold, depicting it either as a laughing stock or a city where horrifying crimes take place. The backpacker romp Eurotrip referred to Bratislava as a despondent Eastern European city whose streets are strewn with litter, while uncouth residents throw trash out of their balcony, take bucket-baths in public and street-dogs snack on severed human hands.

Hellish portrayal

Another movie *Hostel* squarely portrayed the city as hellish where unsuspecting western tourists are abducted, tortured and killed by rich, psychopathic businessmen for their sadistic pleasure. Turns out, blatant as they are, these stereotypes can have a lasting impact on the city's image, affecting its tourism potential.

Additionally, "these movies were not even filmed in Bratislava," says a frustrated Silvia, who also says the movie, *Hostel*, has been particularly responsible for a drop in the number of tourists to the city. Though I couldn't verify that claim, I can see why anyone would want to stay away from Bratislava, while other Hollywood-endorsed safe cities like Vienna and Budapest are so close.

Slovaks want to be considered Central Europeans and the country is one of the largest producers of cars in the world. One report states that the "country produces more cars per capita than any other country on earth – over one million cars a year in a country of 5.4 million people."

Setting aside Hollywood's misleading broad strokes with which it portrayed the city, Bratislava still cannot convince its neighbours in the European Union of its economic potential or livability. Late last year, when the EU picked new locations for the European Medicines Agency (EMA), to be relocated from London after Brexit, Bratislava made a promising bid but lost eventually.

To convince the agency to move from London to Bratislava may have been a long shot, but there's still grounds for optimism. Even if it's not reinforced by a strong economy or firm political action, it lingers in people's hearts. "If you come back in 10 years, I'm sure you'll see change. Now I don't know for sure what will change but I'm confident certain things will," adds Silvia optimistically. Affected by her enthusiasm, I find myself nodding in agreement.

This Stuttgart-based writer is as happy on the road as he is tending to his houseplants, which often breed fruit flies.

Easy like Sunday morning

Continents get the drift!

BY BERTY ASHLEY

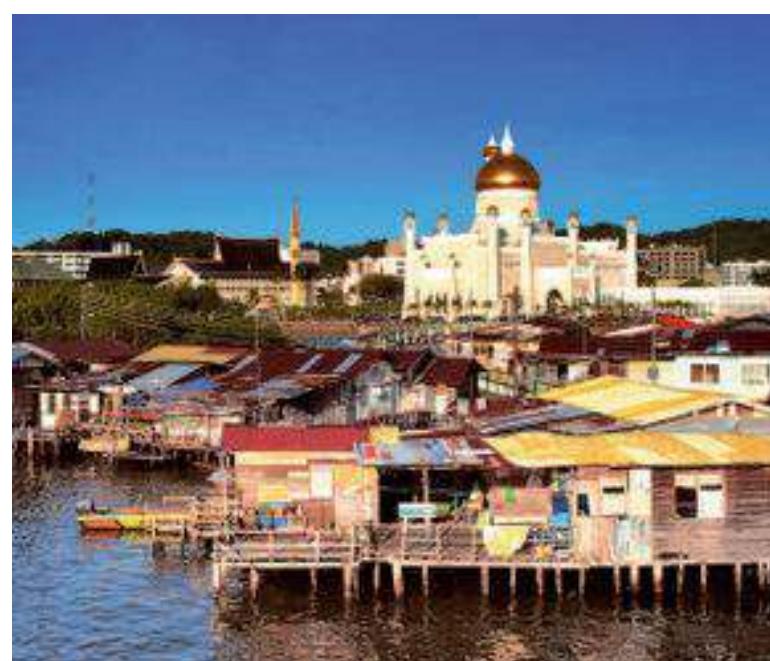
1 On January 6, 1912, German meteorologist Alfred Wegener presented a revolutionary concept in a lecture. He proposed that at several times in Earth's history all the land had been together as one mass. These were termed super-continents and the very last one existed about 335 million years ago and began to break apart about 175 million years ago. The name is derived from the ancient Greek word for 'whole' and 'Mother Earth'. What is its name?

2 Russia, the world's largest nation, stretches over two continents. The majority of its citizens live and work in the second continent. Thus, geographically, 77% of it is in one continent while its major cities are on the other continent. This leads to the Russian Federation officially classifying itself under an umbrella term which is a portmanteau of both continents. What is this term?

3 Most of the island countries and territories in the Pacific Ocean are grouped together with Australia to form a geopolitical region. This includes Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia and other island groups. Even with so many islands this is still the smallest continent on the planet. What is the name of this continent which is spread out over vast distances of water?

4 This continent has the most number of countries at 54. It is also known as 'the cradle of humankind' as evidence has been found that the earliest humans came from here. The longest river and the biggest desert are both found in this continent. Which continent is this, and what is the desert and river?

5 North America is the most recently colonised continent and has 23 countries. It is the only continent



A water village The least populated country of Asia with a high life expectancy.
GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

where there are no land-locked countries; all of them have access to at least one major water body. Which is the largest country, the largest city and the biggest island (in the world) that belongs to the continent of North America?

6 In terms of economy, Europe is considered to be the wealthiest and richest continent. It has 50 sovereign states of which a few have portions on other continents. Europe also has the world's smallest independent state which is just 110 acres in size. Another unique country is Liechtenstein which is 'double-landlocked', meaning to access a coastline one has to cross two national borders. Name the tiny state and the two countries that surround Liechtenstein.

7 South America has just 12 countries but there is no dearth of su-

perlative geographical entities. Locally known as Kerepakupai Vená (waterfall of the deepest place) the world's highest waterfall which falls over 979 metres is named after an American aviator who crashed his plane nearby. Locally known as Marañón, this is the world's largest and by some accounts the longest river. Its drainage basin covers 70,50,000 sq.km. (twice the size of India). What are the names of these natural wonders?

8 A country in South America stretches over 4,300 km from north to south but just 300 km from east to west. This long thin country allows it to have a remarkable variety of climates and landscapes. In the north there are deserts; in the east there are mountain ranges; in the south, oceanic climates; and centrally there is Mediterranean climate. You also have glaciers in the southeast and the

driest desert in the world – the Atacama. Which country is this that is supposed to have gotten its name from the Native American word for 'ends of the Earth'?

9 Seven of the 10 most populated cities in the world are located in Asia. Just China and India alone account for 2.7 billion people, which is 30% of the entire world's population. With just 4,17,200 inhabitants, the least populated country in Asia is located on the north coast of Borneo. This oil-rich country has no public debt, has a higher life expectancy, better standard of living and higher Human Development Index than almost every other Asian country. Which country is this where citizens receive free education and medical services from the government which is headed by a Sultan?

10 The continent with the smallest population is the fifth-largest and nearly twice the size of Australia. The continent is largely neglected because of its hostile environment, lack of easily accessible resources, and isolation. Though there is no permanent settlement, most of the residents are researchers or scientists. The largest land animal here is a midge, which is an insect that is 1.3cm long. What is the name of this continent?

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. Eritrea
2. Ethiopia
3. Oceania
4. Africa, Sahara, Nile
5. Canada, Mexico City and Greenland
6. Valencia City, Switzerland and Austria
7. Angel Falls and the Amazon River
8. Chile
9. Brunei
10. Antarctica

A-N-A-T-O-M-I-Z-E

Uzbek plov



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

● Medium grain rice is stewed for hours with fatty lamb and aromatics

● The addition of rapeseed oil lends a nutty, earthy flavour

● Traditionally served on a blue and white porcelain platter called a lagan

BY RAUL DIAS

I'm at the very popular Magistral Plov Center on the outskirts of the city of Bukhara in the Central Asian country of Uzbekistan. I'm here for my first taste of a version of a dish that's known multifariously all over Asia as *palov*, *polov*, *polo*, *polaf* and of course our very own *pulao*. Here in Uzbekistan, the rice and meat preparation goes by the name of *plov* and is considered the national dish...nay, obsession!

Plov itself is a very simple preparation where medium grain rice is first fried in the nutty-tasting rapeseed oil along with onions, garlic, chunks of fatty lamb, golden sultanas and a fistful of sugared yellow carrot juliennes. All this is then stewed along with a generous splash of cumin powder-enhanced lamb stock for hours in a dough-sealed, humongous cauldron called *kazan*.

A few hours later the head plov maker called an *oshpaz* breaks the seal to reveal the *kazan*'s fragrant con-

tents that he then goes on to aerate by separating the meat and rice grains with a large spatula in a cascade of moist yumminess.

Traditionally turned out on a blue and white platter called a *lagan* from the country's pottery capital of Fergana, the *plov* is then studded with boiled chickpeas, pearly white, tiny quail eggs and the reason for my earlier disappointment i.e. the *de rigueur* horsemeat sausage called *kazi* that was rather strangely missing from my heaped *lagan* of *plov*. Perhaps the servers were under the (erroneous!) assumption that I, as a foreigner, would not be able to appreciate its dense texture and gamay, but supremely divine flavour. Something that I finally got to savour after my 'nth' comical Black Beauty impression!

A close cousin of the Indian *pulao*, *plov* is Uzbekistan's go-to comfort food!

The Mumbai-based writer and restaurant reviewer is passionate about food, travel and luxury, not necessarily in that order.

GOREN BRIDGE

Fred's brilliancy

Both vulnerable, North deals

BY BOB JONES

NORTH
♦ A K Q J 5
♥ K 5 2
♦ A 9 6
♣ K 9

WEST
♠ 8 3
♥ J 6 4
♦ 10 2
♣ A 8 7 5 4 2

EAST
♦ 9 7 4 2
♥ A 10 8
♦ K 8 7 5
♣ Q 10

SOUTH
♠ 10 6
♥ Q 9 7 3
♦ Q J 4 3
♣ J 6 3

The bidding:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1NT Pass INT Pass
3NT All pass

Opening lead: Five of ♦

Esther was thrilled to be playing with Fred once again. Fred was still a fine player, but he seldom came to the club anymore. Esther invited him often, and she was always excited when he accepted. She couldn't keep up with Fred as a player, but she loved the challenge.

Esther, West in today's deal, led her fourth-best club. Declarer played low from dummy, Fred played his 10, and South won with the jack. The contract was a poor one, seeming to need a 4-4 club split, or a miracle blockage, plus a successful diamond finesse. Declarer started by running the



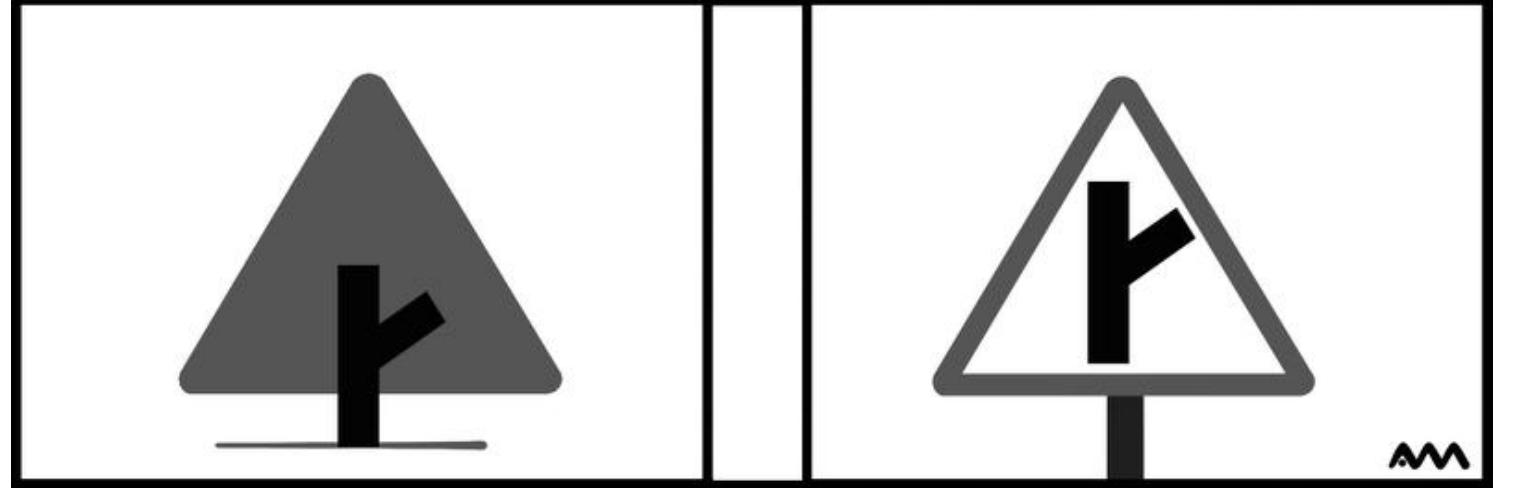
queen of diamonds. This lost to Fred's king and Fred returned the queen of clubs to Esther's ace. Esther wasn't quite sure what had happened, but it seemed possible that all of her clubs were now high. Nervously testing the waters, she led her eight of clubs. Sure enough, it held the trick and Esther gleefully ran the rest of her clubs. She then shifted to a heart and they defeated the contract by three tricks!

"You blew it at trick one," said North, in the process of losing yet another partner. "You could have played high from dummy at trick one or low from your hand. Either play would have let you make nine tricks. You got it wrong in both hands!"

No one mentioned Fred's brilliant play at trick one, and Fred was too modest to bring it up. Great play!

ECOTISM

BY ASHVINI MENON



LETTER FROM A CONCERNED READER

Where is manners and all?

Respected Madam/ Sir,

the work quickly, and charged very reasonable price for his services. Ha-hahaha. Madam/ Sir, it is two days and he has not come back yet. If you call him his mobile phone will say 'hi please leave message.' I left three messages in Tamil, and one in English. Then Mrs. Mathrubootham took my mobile phone and left one final message in both languages. I have decided to send phone to Tirupati for purification.

Instead shall I tell you what we must teach?

LKG we must only teach one thing to children: keep quiet in public place and if you are talking please talk in low volume. How many times I will sit in Hot Chips or Saravana Bhavan and suddenly one child will shout in Dolby Stereo: "Appa, I am getting urine. What should I do?"

"Pisaasu payya, you are getting urine or Ramon Magsaysay Award, why you are shouting?" Immediately, my rava idli will do u-turn and come out again.

Madam/ Sir, if you do CT scan of Indian child you will find it is 95% lungs and 5% urine.

Then in UKG we must teach one subject only whole day: when you are in restaurant or bus or cinema hall you please sit in your chair and don't run around as if Ashwini Nanchappa.

Then from Class I to Class III – non-stop three years – children will get training in only one topic: how to talk politely to other people. Hello. Good morning. Thank you. Welcome. Pardon me. Uncle it is my pleasure. Like that, like that.

Only after this any other education should be given to children. Plenty of time is there from Class IV onwards to teach social science and botany and all. First of all decency should be there, then after all other information.

One example here

Madam/ Sir, you are thinking what nonsense this old man is saying. Let me give clear example of sad state of this country.

Two days back there was one major emergency in the house. Suddenly washing machine stopped working. Immediately I called local electrician. He checked and said uncle it is electrical problem, I will get spare parts and come back immediately.

And then just one hour later he came back with the parts, finished

work in Indore branch when I went there for brief deputation. I said, "Oh my god. Mr. Shannugham what a pleasant surprise to see you."

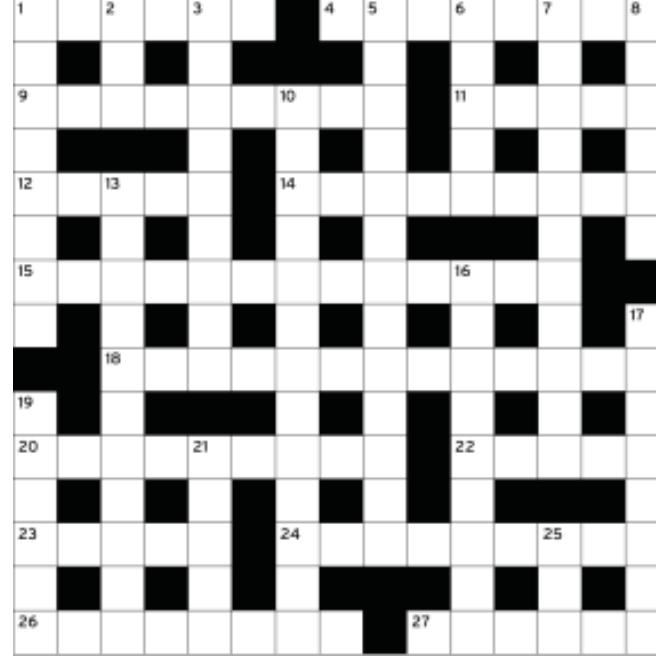
And what did that scoundrel say? "Oh Mr. Mathrubootham I did not expect to see you, you have put on weight..." Madam/ Sir, why are people in this country like this? Whether this is decency? Rascal did I ask you for full body health check-up? Bloody fool I can also say, 'oh Mr. Shannugham so nice to see you after so many years, but no difference at all, your face is still as if somebody put eyebrows on jackfruit?'

But did I say? No. I showed culture. This is why I am saying, first we teach common courtesy, and then we can teach electrolysis and animal husbandry and all.

I got very upset. I told Mrs. Mathrubootham, "Let us go home immediately." She said, "Wait for at least 30 minutes, somebody will have contact details of good electrician."

Yours in extreme irritation,
J. Mathrubootham

THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 3029



Across

- 1 Withdraw and wander across border, not hard (6)
- 4 Poor saint given the blame (8)
- 5 Flimsy place in Australia with pest outside (5)
- 9 Flimsy place in Australia with pest outside (5)
- 10 Combine in retreat, filled with love, following a principle (5)
- 12 Precious stone in course of robbery lost (5)
- 14 Plaster in unfinished project (9)
- 15 Certain tin, once damaged, fixed (13)
- 18 Act heartily, in unreal style, embracing it (13)
- 20 Drive away into plain and go too far (9)
- 22 Fool soldiers in compound (5)
- 23 Smell air for meat at regular intervals (5)
- 24 Articulate poetry about Indonesian island (9)
- 26 Group around judge filled with self-esteem (8)
- 27 Resolution keeping experts going without a break (6)
- 28 Down
- 1 Country club ripe for reform (8)
- 2 Mother quietly forming plan (3)
- 3 Government ending in ruin, engulfed by corruption and acrimony (9)
- 5 Hard thing to say to new visitor involving mixture of wit and hesitation (6)



Solution No. 3029

