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ENTERTAINMENT

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Film trade experts say 'High time that Bollywood wakes up'

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Body of student shot dead in Canada back home

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, APRIL 16

AMONG THE crowd of family and friends gathered outside Kartik Vasudev's (21) home in Ghaziabad's Rajendra Nagar on Saturday afternoon, waiting for the body to arrive from the airport, were his childhood friends.

"He wanted to come back in the summer, we had made a list of things we wanted him to get for us," said Kamal Thakur (21) an engineering student, who studied with Kartik at DAV Public School, Sahibabad. "He was gone only for a few months, but was always in touch. He would give us minute details of his life there... tell us about his assignments, the purchase of a phone and the EMI he was paying for it," said Chirayu Baliyan (21), who also studied with Kartik.

Kartik was shot dead outside a subway station in Canada's Toronto last week. His body was brought home to Ghaziabad where his funeral was held.

"He would ask us to shift there, so we could recreate a mini Rajendra Nagar... He always wanted to go abroad and was living his dream. He had the life he wanted there... a good college, good friends," said Kamal, who lives in the same neighbourhood.

"He was a good student and was always punctual. We would get scolded all the time, but not him. If we were to go somewhere, he would be waiting 15 minutes in advance," Kamal recalled.

The body arrived in an ambulance around 4pm, placed in a coffin inside a box, leaving the family inconsolable as the cover was lifted. He was cremated at Hindon Ghat. "The flight landed around noon, but it took some time to complete the process at the airport. He had gone in January..." said Preeti, Kartik's aunt.

Kartik was studying a global management course at Seneca University.

Covid cases cross 400 mark, Delhi's positivity rate past 5%

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 16

DELHI RECORDED 461 new Covid cases Saturday, up from 366 the previous day. The positivity rate shot up to 5.33% on Saturday when 8,646 tests were done, a dip from 9,275 tests on Friday when a positivity rate of 3.95% was recorded.

The number of Covid cases has been on the rise over the past few days. While 299 cases were recorded on April 13, the number increased to 325 on April 14, and further to 366 on April 15. A week ago, on April 9, the number of fresh cases stood at 160, when the positivity rate was 1.55% and 10,312 tests were done.

The number of active cases a week ago was 581, less than half the current number of active cases (1,262).

Meanwhile, Deputy CM Manish Sisodia Saturday said cases may have been rising, but there is no need to worry as hospitalisation is low. He reiterated that instructions have been issued to schools to follow the government's SoP if they detect any case. "There are only six Covid patients admitted at Lok Nayak hospital," he said.

FROM PAGE ONE

Delhi

has directed that in view of communal situation in Jahangirpuri, all officers up to the rank of Special Commissioners of Police of both zones shall be in the field and ensure that communal situation is not disturbed in any part of Delhi. Rest of the officers shall also be on alert," read a message that went out to all senior officers of the Delhi Police.

Police said that during the yatra, an argument broke out between two communities. "Things escalated, and both sides started pelting stones at each other. They damaged public property and torched vehicles," a senior police officer said. Senior officers rushed to the spot and additional forces were called in, said police. "Police tried to control the crowd during which several personnel were injured," an officer said.

On Saturday night, the area had been locked down, roads were barricaded, and police in riot gear had been deployed in large numbers. The roads were littered with glass shards, bricks, and stones. A burnt out shell of a scooter lay on the road.

Auto parts mechanic Akash Thakur (20), said he had parked his bike and was headed to join the Shobha Yatra that was passing through Block B, near Kushal Cinema, when the clashes broke out.

"I ran for my life. When I came back to where I had parked my bike, I found it was missing. We were celebrating peacefully," Thakur said.

Mastan (27), a resident of Block C, said he was out buying fruits at the time. He claimed that those in the rally raised slogans such as "Bharat mein rehna hoga toh Jai Shri Ram kehna hoga."

He also alleged that some people carrying saffron flags had tried to enter a mosque, and that the violence had escalated because the police presence in the area is usually thin.

"The stone pelting took place from both sides. We tried to stop the clashes, appealed for peace," Mastan said.

Cab driver Ajay Kumar (27) said he sustained injuries to his legs as he fled the violence. "I had come to check on my parents when I heard news of a clash. There was fierce stone-pelting, and while I managed to escape from the area, my Swift Dzire car was destroyed by the mob. How will I earn my living now?" he said.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal condemned the violence and appealed for calm. "The incident of stone pelting during a Shobha Yatra in Delhi's Jahangirpuri is condemnable. There should be strict action against those who are to blame. I appeal to everyone -- hold each other's hand and maintain peace," he tweeted.

Kejriwal said he had spoken to Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal. "He assured that all steps are being taken to ensure peace and that guilty will not be spared," the Chief Minister said.

In a press release, the L-G's office said: "L-G has condemned the incidents of violence and stone pelting in the National Capital as unfortunate and said that none behind these activities will be spared. He took stock of the situation along with CP, Delhi and has appealed to the people to maintain peace...and cooperate with the police in maintaining law and order..."

BJP leader Kapil Mishra said the incidents in Jahangirpuri should be treated as a terrorist attack. He alleged that the area was known to harbour "Bangladeshi infiltrators", and that people had been mobilised for the 2020 Delhi riots from the area. "They should be identified and their homes should be bulldozed," he said.

Manoj Tiwari, the BJP MP from North East Delhi, said, "There has been stone pelting in Delhi's Jahangirpuri on Hanuman Jayanti... This incident did not occur all of a sudden; it is a conspiracy. Police should immediately conduct a probe and take strictest action against the culprits. Though the situation is getting back to normal... there should be a thorough probe on who are the culprits, where the stones came from... Their houses should be checked for weapons, and their IDs. I can say with confidence that several incidents are taking place through a conspiracy. I would also request Chief Minister Kejriwal that this is not the time to shirk responsibility, but to work collectively and step forward to punish the culprits. Please maintain harmony."

Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta said the violence was "not a co-incidence but a huge conspiracy." "The culprits... should be punished and Delhi Police will definitely ensure that. I will speak to the Home Minister too. But the question arises that in several unauthorised colonies of Delhi -- whether it is Jahangirpuri or Jamuna Paar -- Bangladeshis and Rohingyas are staying illegally in large numbers and the Delhi government is giving them electricity and water connections. The Delhi government is answerable as to why they are providing protection to such people."

The Delhi Police Commissioner said on Twitter: "In today's incident in NW District, the situation is under control. Adequate additional force has been deployed in Jahangirpuri & other sensitive areas. Senior officers have been asked to remain in field and closely supervise the law & order situation & undertake patrolling. Strict action will be taken against rioters. Citizens are requested to not to pay heed to rumours and fake news on social media."

PM

resolve, their work that the country is moving forward," he said. "Hanumanji is that power and support who gave the right of honour and respect to all forest species and forest dwellers. He is an important formula for *Ek Bharat, Shresth Bharat*," he said.

He said Ram kathas are organised in different parts of the country. "Be it in whatever language or dialect, the spirit of Ram katha binds, unites one in the devotion to the Lord. This is the strength of the Indian faith, our spirituality, our culture, our traditions. This is what, even in the troubled period of slavery, unified different sections, different classes to come together to resolve for the freedom of the nation... strengthened efforts".

"In spite of the changing circumstances over thousands of years, India has remained unshakeable and resolute. The flow of our faith and culture is of sadbhav (harmony), of sambhav (equality), of samavesh (inclusivity). Thus, when the time came for good to conquer evil, Lord Ram, in spite of being capable and able, took everyone along, unified everyone, people of all composition, small and large beings, took their help. And after bringing together all, he finished this task -- this is Sabka Saath, Sabka Prayas. His life is the best evidence of this, of which Hanumanji is an important part... We have to come together with this spirit, to achieve our resolve for the nation and to make it shine brighter," he said.

He said a "mini-Japan" was taking shape in the Saurashtra cities of Jamnagar, Rajkot and Morbi with specialised industrial hubs creating jobs. He

praised the Kathiawad region for emerging as a power centre, with its tourism and pilgrimage centres.

Recalling his long association with Morbi, Modi said the Machchhu dam failure in August 1979 had led to flooding and deaths. "When the earthquake came in Bhuj, Kutch (2001), the lessons learnt from the Morbi incident, the experience, came to use. The way Kutch has flourished after the earthquake goes to show how Gujarat has the strength to turn disasters into opportunities, as learnt from Morbi. Today, be it ceramics manufacturing, or clocks, Morbi has become an industrial hub for these. Before the Machchhu dam, all one could see in all four directions in Morbi were brick kilns and big chimneys. Today, it is said that on one side there is Morbi, on the other side Rajkot and on the third side Jamnagar."

"Jamnagar's brass industry, Rajkot's engineering industry and Morbi's clock and ceramic industries have become like a triumvirate... seems like a new mini-Japan has been established," he said.

Sonia

the leaders asked Kishor to join the party formally -- this would prevent him from working with other parties as a poll consultant, a major concern for a section of the leadership.

Sources said Kishor was open to the idea of joining the Congress -- in the past, he consistently denied any such plan.

The meeting gave two messages: Sonia, who had taken a back seat and was planning to relinquish charge once again this August-September, wants to put in place a mechanism to patry and revive the party's fortunes; and, the Congress has finally accepted that it needs external help to find its feet again.

Some of the leaders said Kishor told the meeting he was ready to join the Congress without expectations and demands but wanted his road map implemented to help strengthen the party at the grassroots level.

Sources said he wants the Congress to concentrate on some 370 Lok Sabha constituencies, nuanice its political messaging, revamp its communication apparatus and address certain organisational weaknesses. Apart from the Gandhis, the meeting was attended by senior leaders A K Antony, Mallikarjun Kharge, Digvijaya Singh, Ajay Maken, Mukul Wasnik, Jairam Ramesh, Ambika Soni and K C Venugopal. Barring Wasnik, none of the G-23 leaders were invited to the meeting.

Some of the Congress leaders said what Kishor said in his presentation were "known facts" but agreed that the party needed a focused approach. "With graphs and all, he was telling us about where we have lost our votes... how we deteriorated over the years... region specific and state specific," one leader said.

Others were upset with the idea of bringing in Kishor. "A 137-year-old party of Gandhi, Nehru and Patel has been outsourced. This is the biggest insult that you can heap upon yourself, showing that you are incompetent and disliked by the people so you have to bring in somebody who purely works for money," one leader remarked.

The G-23 leaders were annoyed that none of them, barring Wasnik, had been called to the meeting. "So, all those gestures of reconciliation and promises of inclusive and collective thinking were a sham. It exposes the hypocrisy of the leadership. This (involvement of Kishor) may further deepen the

divide and only time will tell whether it will be helpful or totally counter-productive," a leader said.

Venugopal said a decision on Kishor's suggestions, including on whether he will join the party, will be known in a week. "Prashant Kishor has made a detailed presentation for the 2024 election strategy. It needs some detailed discussion and the Congress president will set up a small group to discuss this entire presentation. That group will submit a report within a week's time for a final decision," he said.

Asked whether Kishor will join the party or will be its strategist, he said all details will be known within a week.

Kishor suggested that the party should contest alone in a few states where it is strong and has remained either in the first or second position in previous elections.

The meeting comes against the backdrop of feverish talk in the party -- and much opposition too -- on bringing in Kishor for election strategising. He has had many meetings with Rahul and Priyanka but the decision by Sonia to invite him for a presentation before the group of senior leaders signals that the party is serious about working with him.

A section of the party wants him for the Gujarat campaign but he is said to be insisting on the induction of Naresh Patel, chairman of the Shree Khodaldham Trust which manages the temple of Goddess Khodiyar, the patron deity of the Leuva Patel community, near Rajkot. But Saturday's meeting indicates that the party wants him to play a role beyond Gujarat. Some party leaders claim Kishor wants Patel to be projected as the party face in the Gujarat Assembly elections.

Kishor has had a volatile relationship with the Congress. In the middle of last year, he met the Gandhis with a proposal for revival of the Congress but many of the senior leaders were not warm to the idea of handing him the charge of strategising.

In December, he hit out at the Congress, arguing that its leadership of the Opposition is not the "divine right of an individual, especially when the party has lost more than 90 per cent elections in the last 10 years". Let Opposition leadership, he had said, be decided "democratically."

Shehbaz

On April 11, hours after Shehbaz Sharif asked him to come forward to address the Kashmir issue so that the two countries could concentrate on tackling poverty and unemployment, Modi congratulated him on his election as Prime Minister and said India desired peace and stability in a region free of terrorism.

"Congratulations to H. E. Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. India desires peace and stability in a region free of terror, so that we can focus on our development challenges and ensure the well-being and prosperity of our people," Modi said in a Twitter post.

Responding to this, Shehbaz tweeted: "Pakistan desires peaceful & cooperative ties with India.

Peaceful settlement of outstanding disputes including Jammu & Kashmir is indispensable. Pakistan's sacrifices in fighting terrorism are well-known. Let's secure peace and focus on socio-economic development of our people."

Modi's congratulatory tweet was similar to the letter he sent to Imran Khan in August 2018 when he became Prime

Minister of Pakistan.

Congratulating Khan on his assumption of charge, Modi had expressed the hope that the smooth transition of government in Pakistan would strengthen and cement the people's belief in democracy. He recalled their telephone conversation in which they spoke of their shared vision to bring peace, security and prosperity in the subcontinent to make it "free of terror and violence", and to focus on development. They had spoken in July 2018, days after it became clear that Khan looked set to be Prime Minister.

With Shehbaz Sharif taking charge, New Delhi is watching developments in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore with "cautious optimism" for a headway in bilateral ties.

Top sources said the change in regime may offer a "diplomatic opening". According to sources in the strategic establishment, the implications may be far-reaching.

Emerging from the shadow of his elder brother Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz, the PML-N president, is known to be close to the Pakistan Army -- he was Chief Minister of Pakistan's Punjab province. The Sharif family has been an advocate of better ties with India.

Officials pointed out that the core concerns of the two countries remain the same, and Shehbaz is well placed to resume the bilateral conversation.

Better trade ties with India could provide the much-needed boost to Pakistan's economy. Known to be focused on infrastructure projects -- construction of roads, bridges and flyovers and transport projects in Pakistan Punjab -- Shehbaz is keen to deliver before the next Pakistan elections in 2023.

Deshmukh

corruption case on April 11, has sought to extend his custody by three days.

"In my view, sufficient CBI custody of accused Shri Anil Deshmukh has already been granted. Pertinently in earlier remand applications, the CBI had based their grounds for seeking custody as per the allegations about exercising influence over the transfer and posting of officials and considering the said grounds, CBI custody was granted. Therefore, in my view, since sufficient CBI custody was granted, the grounds for further custody... are not good and satisfactory," Special Judge D P Shingade said in his order.

The CBI had arrested Deshmukh, his staffers Sanjeev Palande and Kundan Shinde as well as dismissed Mumbai Police officer Sachin Waze in the case. While it had sought Deshmukh's custody, the agency had requested that remaining accused be sent to judicial custody as their custodial interrogation was not needed.

Special Public Prosecutor Ratandeep Singh told the court that Deshmukh has been accused of taking bribes for transferring and posting police officers. The CBI remand plea said that the police officers who paid bribes have to be identified and confronted with the former minister.

Deshmukh, through his lawyers Aniket Nikam, Inderpal Singh and Geeta Chataule, opposed the CBI plea stating that he has already been in custody for 11 days. Nikam said that the central agency had in its remand plea only given stereotypical reasons for seeking extended custody. He also argued that there was no progress in the probe.

"The agency is seeking further custody of a 73-year-old man on flimsy grounds. There are no details of the progress

made or confrontation done with others in custody," Nikam said.

The court directed that all accused, who were already in judicial custody in a separate money laundering case lodged by the ED, along with Waze also being in NIA custody for the Antilia terror scare case, be returned to jail.

Meanwhile, a separate plea filed by lawyer Shekhar Jagtap, representing Palande -- seeking directions to the CBI to preserve CCTV footage from the CBI office where the accused were interrogated -- was disposed by the court saying that the lawyer is at liberty to approach an appropriate forum.

Jagtap had said that there was no CCTV camera at the interrogation room of the CBI office in violation of Supreme Court guidelines.

Kolhapur bypoll

casteism... people of Kolhapur have shown BJP its place. They have given the BJP a befitting reply....," she said.

Jadhav secured 97,307 votes while Kadam bagged 77,726.

As workers of Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena started celebrating, Jadhav said, "The gulf that is being thrown in the air is about development... We will work relentlessly for the development of Kolhapur and will always support the local people."

A section of the Shiv Sena, which was initially not keen to support the Congress candidate but later relented after directives from Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, took potshots at BJP state president Chandrakant Patil.

"If any Kolhapur MLA resigns and there is a bypoll, the BJP candidate will win hands down. If he loses, I will go to the Himalayas..." Patil had said before the polls. On Saturday, the Sena put up boards which read -- "Himalaya ki god mein" (in the lap of Himalayas).

After BJP's defeat, Patil, however, said, "I was speaking about myself, about my defeat... our candidate gave a tough fight to the MVA candidate. We lost by small margin."

Patil added that BJP had highlighted the issues which affected the people of Kolhapur, including the floods. "But finally it is the voters who decide their representative..." he said.

Enthused by the victory, Congress leaders believe that the Kolhapur formula should be replicated everywhere as it will stop "BJP's attempts at polarisation". "Despite its poisonous campaign, BJP failed at its polarisation attempts in Kolhapur. The meticulously planned Kolhapur formula will stop BJP's hate campaign in its tracks," said Congress Minister Satej Patil.

Satej Patil, who was the party in-charge for the polls, said despite the BJP trying to play the Hinduvta card aggressively, the people of Kolhapur rebuffed the party. "There is a clear message from Kolhapur that any attempt by the BJP to divide people in the name of caste and religion will not succeed... BJP's attempt at polarisation failed in the land of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj."

He said MVA was fully united in Kolhapur.

"Our unity has shown that BJP is easily beatable. And if we remain united like this elsewhere in the state, there is no reason why MVA should not remain on top in every election," Patil said.

The minister also claimed that BJP tried to distribute money to voters. "But we... caught them red-handed."

Shiv Sena spokesperson Sanjay Raut said, "The victory is creditable in the face of false charges being raked up by BJP

against MVA leaders and its attempt to defame the government. The victory proves that voters have not liked the cheap and dirty politics played by BJP. This is the land of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and BJP's hate politics will not work... All the three constituents of MVA which fought unitedly set a good example... This should be replicated across Maharashtra."

Congress Minister Balasaheb Thorat added, "The BJP used every trick in the bag to woo voters -- be it in the name of religion or distributing money. It still failed as people rejected its kind of politics."

About 61 per cent voting was registered in the election held on April 12.

AAP

consumption below 600 units for every billing cycle of two months. Therefore, anyone who consumes more than 600 units will be billed for the entire consumption, not just for the excess above 600 units.

This condition will not apply to Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes, Below Poverty Line (BPL), and freedom fighters consumers, who will get 600 units free in all cases. "If they utilise more than 600 units, they will pay only for those units," Chief Minister Mann said. The free power ceiling for these categories of consumers is currently 200 units.

The Chief Minister also announced an incentive for bigger consumers to cut their consumption.

"I have a request for well-to-do families," he said. "If they can reduce consumption by up to 600 units in two months, they will get 600 units of power free."

Punjab, Mann said, will make power the cheapest in the country for consumers of all categories. "The Chief Minister of Delhi has made power cheapest in the country. That is why we have taken guidance from him; sent officials to him to take advice," he said, referring to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal.

"The money that you save on power, you can spend on your children. Your life will become easier. We will fulfill each and every election promise over the next five years. We will save the exchequer money and return it to the people," Mann said.

In June 2021, Kejriwal had first promised 300 units of free power every month to consumers in Punjab, on the lines of Delhi. Consumers in Punjab were at the time paying the most for power in the country.

There are 73.80 lakh domestic power consumers in the state. Nearly 62.25 lakh -- almost 85 per cent -- consume up to 300 units per month. The government's subsidy bill on this account is expected to cross Rs 5,500 crore annually.

The free power bill for farmers amounts to Rs 6,000 crore per annum. The subsidy bill for 21.83 lakh domestic SC/BC/BPL families comes to about Rs 4,000 crore. This group of beneficiaries pays only Rs 1.19 per unit of electricity up to a load of 7 KW.

Former Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi had cut power tariffs by Rs 3 per unit in November last year. He had said that 100 units of power would be charged at Rs 1.19 per unit for all domestic consumers. (It was Rs 4.19 per unit then.) Thereafter, consumption between 100 and 300 units was billed at Rs 4 per unit instead of Rs 7.

For more than 300 units, the charges were Rs 5.76 per unit as against the earlier rate of Rs 8.76 per unit.

In its first tariff order issued recently, the AAP government had retained these tariffs.

3 THE CITY

2 arrested with charas worth over Rs 60 lakh

Mumbai: The Anti Narcotics Cell of the Mumbai Police arrested two accused with 2.25 kg of charas worth over Rs 60 lakh. Police believe the two accused, arrested from Dharavi, supplied contraband to drug peddlers across the city. They are being interrogated to find out the source of the contraband and the recipients.

An officer said the Bandra unit of the ANC received a tip-off about two people in Dharavi passing on charas to other peddlers. Accordingly, the police team laid a trap and detained the two near the Dharavi Koliwada bus stop. The team recovered 2.25 kg of charas from them.

The arrested accused Sunil Nayak (45), a resident of Rajasthan and Nevji Miya (60), who hails from Bihar. Police suspect that Nayak procured the contraband and had planned to sell it to others. The accused were produced before a local court and remanded in police custody.

ENS

STAFF, KIN ASKED NOT TO POST ANTI-GOVT CONTENT

Such regulations already existed... earlier notice led to misinterpretation due to its wording, says TIFR

PALLAVI SMART
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

DAYS AFTER the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) instructed its staff and their family members not to post "anti-government content", photographs and videos of institute facilities on social media platforms since it "could lead to serious security consequences", in a statement on Saturday, it explained that its earlier notice has led to a "great deal of misinterpretation" due to its wording.

The notice, while insisting that such regulations already existed, also clarified that no new restriction has been imposed on family members and visitors of the staffers.

The city-based institute of repute for advanced research in sci-

ence has come under the spotlight after its April 13 notice referred to observations notified by the Department of Atomic Energy, which runs this autonomous institute. This notice received severe criticism, questioning the gag order and its purpose.

Following several news reports, the institute on Saturday issued a statement saying, "Unfortunately, the wording of the notice was such that it has become subject to a great deal of misinterpretation. As a matter of fact, photography on the TIFR premises (not in the residential part) has always been forbidden, and for government employees, making public criticism against the institution or the government has always required prior permission."

"...The purpose of the notice

was to clarify that both the above pre-existing rules also apply to social media as well as to other media, such as TV or print media. No new restriction on family members and visitors of staff members are being imposed or are intended to be imposed. This note is being issued to clarify this point," it added.

While the statement clarified that it was not forbidden to post photos and videos of the residential part of TIFR, the April 13 had categorically spoken of "residential colonies", while asking the staffers to refrain from uploading any photographs or videos.

Also, while the April 13 notice asked the staffers to apprise their family members about the rules, Saturday's clarification mentioned that no new restriction has been imposed on the family members.

COACHES DERAIL AFTER TRAINS COLLIDE



An overcrowded station on Saturday. Ganesh Shirekar

Thousands stranded, train services disrupted

VALLABH OZARKAR
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

THOUSANDS OF commuters traveling on the main line of Central Railway (CR) were stranded at various stations on Friday night due to the derailment of three coaches of Chalukya Dadar-Puducherry Express near Matunga station, disrupting local as well as long distance train services till Saturday afternoon.

The CR took over 15 hours to restore services, as the track was completely damaged after CSMT-Gadag Express and Chalukya Dadar-Puducherry Express collided, leading to the derailment.

Thousands spent the night on the platforms, as 33 long distance trains were affected. While 13 trains were cancelled, others were rescheduled or short terminated on Friday and Saturday.

Apart from long distance trains, suburban services were also badly hit with almost 100 local trains cancelled. The fast train



Central Railway took over 15 hours to restore services. Ganesh Shirekar

services from Thane and Kalyan had to be shut till 1 pm on Saturday and were diverted on the slow line.

Commuters complained that slow train services also ran late on Saturday and platforms between CSMT and Kalyan Kasara, Karjat and Khopoli stations were heavily crowded.

While restoration work was going on at the mishap site in Matunga, the CR had advised commuters traveling to CSMT from Thane to opt for road transportation on Saturday.

The two trains collided around 9.45 pm on Friday on the crossover, where trains interchange tracks.

As per information, both trains were running on the same track but Gadag express jumped the red signal and rammed into Puducherry express from behind -- a major lapse on the part of the Railways.

Blaming the loco pilot and assistant loco pilot of Gadag express, the chief crew controller has said that they failed to observe the red light signal at Dadar station, leading to the collision with Puducherry express. The chief crew controller blamed the loco pilot and the assistant loco pilot for "poor signal knowledge, poor presence of mind and improper calling" resulting in the collision.

As BMC shuts Covid centres after dip in cases, equipment, medicines to be sent to civic hospitals

LAXMANSINGH
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

WHILE THE Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to shut down some of its jumbo covid-19 centres, medical equipment and medicines from these centres will be moved to major civic hospitals and a dedicated place created to store them.

Amid a sharp dip in daily Covid-19 cases, the corporation has decided to shut down jumbo centres at Dahisar, Kanjurmarg, and NESCO in Goregaon.

Now, the challenge is to handle the medical equipment like ventilators and ICU beds and

On Friday, Mumbai recorded 44 Covid cases and one death. There are no sealed buildings or containment zones

medicines used for the treatment of Covid-19 patients. Officials from the BMC said that the equipment from the centres will be diverted to BMC-run hospitals like KEM, Nair, and Sion to replace the old ones.

"We will move the medical facilities from jumbo centres that are going to shut down based on

the requirement of hospitals. A meeting has been conducted to review the present status of jumbo centres as the numbers of patients have dipped. Also, the medicines from these centres will be provided in civic health facilities as and when required. There could be some losses in medicines if they expire," said Suresh Kakani, Additional Municipal Commissioner (Health).

NESCO, Dahisar and Kanjurmarg jumbo centres have 4,600 beds. However, these centres are hardly seeing any patients after a drop in Covid-19 cases. Officials said that these equipment will not be used at once so they will create a storage facility.

So far it has identified two locations that include Andheri Sports Complex and some portion of NESCO.

"A dedicated room for keeping sensitive equipment can be allotted in Andheri Sports Complex and when any of our hospitals request ICU or ventilator equipment then it can be supplied to them. Similarly, although the NESCO centre will be shut, a dedicated room to keep health equipment will be allowed to open," said Kakani.

On Friday, Mumbai recorded only 44 Covid-19 cases with one death. There are is no sealed building or containment zone in the city.

Ex-cop booked for rape

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

THE MUMBAI Police earlier this week registered an FIR against a retired inspector for allegedly forcing a woman to have sexual relations with him by blackmailing her.

A police station in the eastern suburbs, where retired officer Gangadhar Patil was formerly posted, registered the offence. The accused is currently on the run.

An officer said that in 2019, the complainant in the case had approached the police station in connection to a separate case. Her complaint was then handled by Patil.

According to the woman's complaint, Patil promised her

that he would help her with the complaint. He then started contacting her regularly and also sent her romantic WhatsApp messages.

Last April, Patil allegedly threatened the woman and had physical relationship with her. The woman has claimed that Patil continued to blackmail her and maintained sexual relations with her. "Eventually, when Patil retired last year, the woman approached the zonal DCP with a complaint. The DCP then asked the local police station to register an FIR," an officer said.

DCP (Zone VII) Prashant Kadam said an FIR has been registered on charges of rape by a police officer under Section 376(2) (i). Sources that a police team has been set up to trace Patil.

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SCAN TO READ



NOTICE BOARD CORPORATE ASSOCIATE DIARY | APPOINTMENTS, MOVEMENTS, CELEBRATION, HONOURS

UPDATE : (MGL)

MGL Cardiology Ward' at MCGM's Nair Hospital dedicated to the people

On the occasion of World Health Day, on 7th April 2022, 'MGL Cardiology Ward' at T.N. Medical College & B. Y. L. Nair Charitable Hospital was dedicated for the welfare of the people.

The Department of Cardiology at the hospital was upgraded through the contribution of Mahanagar Gas Limited (MGL) under its CSR initiative in the field of health 'MGL Aarogya'. The Cardiology Ward was inaugurated by Shri Suresh Kakani, Additional Municipal Commissioner (WS), MCGM and Smt. Malvika Sinha, Director and Chairperson, CSR Committee, MGL. The inauguration was in the presence of Shri Syed Shahzad Hussain, Director-MGL, Shri Sanjib Datta, Managing Director-MGL, Shri Sanjay Kurhade, Dy. Municipal Commissioner (PH)-MCGM, Shri Sanjay Shende- Deputy Managing Director- MGL and Dr. Ramesh Bharmal, Ex-Director (ME & MH)-MCGM, Dr. Smt. Neelam Andrade, Director (ME & MH)-MCGM and other senior doctors of the hospital and MGL officials. In addition to the well-equipped Cardiology ward, other equipments including 3-Channel and Advanced ECG Machines, Temporary Pacemaker Machines, Activated Clotting Time Machine, BMV balloons, Defibrillators, etc. have been provided to enhance the efficiency of Cardiology Dept. The Hospital extends free/ concessional medical treatment to economically weaker sections of the society in its effort to ensure access to qualitative and affordable medical facilities to all



UPDATE : (JNPA)

JNPA conducted a stakeholders' meeting to brief on the Sagarmala projects



Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA), India's premier container port, organized a stakeholders' meet chaired by Shri Sanjay Sethi, IAS, Chairman, JNPA, on the completion of seven years of Sagarmala - the flagship programme of the Ministry of Shipping.

Expressing gratitude to stakeholders, Shri Sanjay Sethi, IAS, Chairman, JNPA, said, "All the stakeholders play a crucial role in JNPA's landmark achievements. They are an integral part of the port. Stakeholders' views and opinions on various ongoing projects are valuable to us. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders for the proactive and constant support in maintaining the country's growth and ensuring seamless trade."

During the conference, JNPA apprised the stakeholders through a video and presentation on the numerous projects undertaken by JNPA under Sagarmala Programme. An interactive session with the Chairman followed the discussion.

JNPA has consistently played a crucial role in the Indian EXIM and maritime sector, ensuring world-class services with the help of stakeholders.

APPOINTMENT : (IOCL)

Ajit P. Dhakras takes charge as Ch General Manager I/c (Regional Services), Western Region, IndianOil.

A.P.Dhakras has taken charge as Chief General Manager I/c (Regional Services) Western Region, IndianOil, Mumbai which caters to the service needs of five states, viz. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Goa and Chhattisgarh. With more than three decades of rich and diverse experience across the key Regions of the country including Head Office, Mr. A.P.Dhakras brings with him a rich experience in Operations and HR including an overseas assignment of handling Operations of a foreign National Oil Company. An Engineer from VJTI, Mumbai, as Ch General Manager I/c (Regional Services), Mr. A.P.Dhakras would be heading various functions like Health & Safety, Supply & Distribution, Quality Control, Maintenance, HR, Aviation, Corporate Communication, Regional Contract Cell, Pricing & Planning, Systems, Finance and allied services at the Regional level.



UPDATE : (WR)

WR runs the first rail post gati shakti express parcel service between surat & varanasi

In a major boost to PM Gati Shakti programme, Western Railway in collaboration with India Post has commenced the new initiative of Rail Post Gati Shakti Express Service for providing logistics service to Parcel customers. Shri Anil Kumar Lahoti – General Manager of Western & Central Rly conducted inspection of the facilities at the newly developed Surat Parcel Office and reviewed the loading operations.

Shri Thakur stated that the Parcel Shed at Surat station has been revamped with advanced facilities such as Ball Transfer Unit Decks (castor beds), conveyor belts system on the same lines as available at airport cargo terminals. Also, the Parcel Van has been fitted with Ball Transfer Unit Decks for easy movement of consignment boxes. These will assist in easy & quick transportation of the consignments from the Parcel Van of the Postal Department to the Parcel Van of the train.



UPDATE : (WR)

WR's 67th railway week award function held

Western Railway's 67th Railway Week Award function was held on Wednesday, 13th April, 2022 at Y B Chavan Auditorium, Churchgate. This award function is held every year to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of WR's team of officers and employees who are always ready to face challenges. On this momentous occasion, General Manager Shri Anil Kumar Lahoti presented the Efficiency Medal, Certificate of Merit & Cash Awards to 161 meritorious officers and employees. GM Shri Lahoti also conferred 26 Efficiency Shields to the Divisions & the Units which have been adjudged the most efficient in various fields, including the prestigious & coveted General Manager's Overall Efficiency Shield for the year 2021-22.

On this occasion, Smt. Menu Lahoti – President of Western & Central Railway Women Welfare Organisation (WRWWO), Addl General Manager of W.Rly along with Principal Heads of Departments, other senior officers & awardees were present. A short film which focused on the accomplishments & achievements by Western Railway was screened on this occasion followed by cultural programmes. At the outset, Principal Chief Personnel Officer of WR welcomed the guests and the vote of thanks was proposed Dy. General Manager (G).



UPDATE : (WR)

WR spearheading safety & mobility parameters for an enhanced travelling experience

Western Railway is moving ahead to transform Indian Railways into a world class railway with enhanced speed, safety & service. In the financial year 2021 – 22 Western Railway has accomplished outstanding performances in various fields. Despite the toughest challenges faced amidst the COVID pandemic waves, Western Railway has commissioned several Foot Over Bridges (FOBs), ROBS/RUBS and have also undertaken repair work & regirding works of Road Over Bridges (ROBs), etc.

According to a press release issued by Shri Sumit Thakur - Chief Public Relations Officer of Western Railway, the Engineering Department of Western Railway has undertaken phenomenal infra work. Re-girdering/Rebuilding of distressed bridges has been carried out and several new Road Under Bridge (RUB) and Road Over Bridge (ROB) have been constructed for the safety of passengers. Over WR,

30 FOBs, 86 RUBs and 26 ROB's have been commissioned during FY 2021-22. Also, 65 Minor Bridge works have been completed alongwith 51 yard remodeling work.

UPDATE : (WR)

WR to run Special train between Bandra Terminus to Jammu Tawi and Mumbai Central to Kathgodam

For the convenience of passengers and with a view to meet the travel demand, Western Railway will run a Special Train on Special fare between Bandra Terminus to Jammu Tawi and Mumbai Central to Kathgodam.

According to a press release issued by Shri Sumit Thakur - Chief Public Relations Officer of Western Railway, the details of the special train are as under:

Train No. 09097 Bandra Terminus - Jammu Tawi AC Superfast Special will run from 17th April, 2022 till 12th June, 2022. Similarly, Train No. 09098 Jammu Tawi - Bandra Terminus AC Superfast Special will run from 19th April, 2022 till 14th June, 2022.

Train No. 09075 Mumbai Central - Kathgodam Superfast Special will run from 20th April, 2022 till 15th June, 2022. Similarly, Train No. 09076 Kathgodam - Mumbai Central Superfast Special will arrive Mumbai Central at 20.55 hrs, the next day. This train will run from 21st April, 2022 till 16th June, 2022.



UPDATE : (CR)

General Manager's Safety Award for Eight Staff of Central Railway

Shri Anil Kumar Lahoti, General Manager, Central Railway gave away "General Manager's Safety Award" to eight Central Railway staff i.e. two each from Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur and one each from Bhusaval and Solapur Divisions. The awards were given in appreciation of their alertness during duty, their contribution in averting untoward incidents and ensuring safety in train operations during the month of March 2022, in a function held at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus Mumbai on 11.4.2022. Shri Anil Kumar Lahoti, while addressing on the occasion said that the awardees have done a commendable job and such 24 x 7 alertness shown by the railway staff for safer working will motivate others and sincerely work towards the safety of passengers.

EVENTS, ANNOUNCEMENT, LAUNCHES, CSR INITIATIVES, APPOINTMENTS, MOVEMENTS, CELEBRATION

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OBITUARY

SAD DEMISE

SAD DEMISE



Smt. Aleyamma John (88) (Anicad, Mallapally) passed away on 15-04-22.

Funeral conducted on 16-04-22. Wife of Late Mr. C.V. John (Chackuparambil) (Sub-divisional Officer, Irrigation Dept. Maharashtra)

Children : Raju John (Panchayat President, Wadgaon, Yavatmal)

Jessy John (Retd. Teacher, MT Seminary, Kottayam)

Sanju John (ACP, Anti Corruption Bureau, Mumbai)

Dr. Jaya John (Professor, Bidkar College, Hingharghat)

Children-in-law : Mini Raju (Principal, JDEMS, Yavatmal)

P.E. Abraham (Executive Chef, Chellathu, Kumbanad)

Lajee John (Teacher, Don Bosco Highschool, Kalyan)

Dr. K.J. Sebastian (Sr. Professor, Bidkar College, Hingharghat)

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(E-Mail: serwbpr2004@yahoo.com, Tel/Fax:- 0680-2404287) No. RFP // 1414 //RWC//BAM//Dated. 13.04.2022

1st Corrigendum to Bid Identification No. Online Tender/50-2021-22/BPR The partial modification of bridge works vide above identification has been made as follows:

1. Date of availability of tender: 20.04.2022 to 04.05.2022 upto 3.00 PM instead of 06.04.2022 to 20.04.2022.
2. Date of opening of Technical Bid: 05.05.2022 at 11.00 AM instead of 21.04.2022 at 11.00 AM
3. Date of opening of Financial Bid: Will be intimated later on.

All other contents will remain unchanged.

Sd/- P.K. Jena Chief Construction Engineer R.W. Circle, Berhampur

OIPR- 25071/11/0008/2223

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, KENDRAPARA

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Identification No. RWS/104/2021-2022 Letter No. 2741 / Dated. 31.03.2022

2nd Corrigendum

This corrigendum has been made for the NIT-104 invited online vide this office letter No. 1525 / Dated. 04.03.2022 with date for selling, closing, clarification and opening which was on dt. 02.04.2022 (selling date), 21.04.2022 (closing date), 04.04.2022 (clarification date) 22.04.2022 (opening date) as per 1st corrigendum has been amended and to be read as 24.04.2022, 12.05.2022, 25.04.2022 and 13.05.2022 respectively as follows.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Approx.) Rs. in Lakhs	EMD to be deposited online	Class of Bidder	Cost of Tender Paper	Period of completion
1	Execution of New 70 LPCD RPWS Scheme to Derakeshpur, Mantripada and Nushat on clubbed up mode under Derabish Block in the District of Kendrapara (JUM Funds)	₹ 268.27	Nil	"B" & "A"	₹ 10000	330 days
2	Execution of New 40 LPCD Retrofitting RPWS Scheme to Raghudeipur of Derabish Block and Gogua of Mahakalapada on clubbed up mode in the District of Kendrapara(JUM Funds)	₹ 322.02	Nil	"A" & "Special"	₹ 10000	360 days

Sd/- (E. B.K.Nayak) Executive Engineer RWS&S Division, Kendrapara OIPR- 25004/11/0009/2223



5 MAHARASHTRA

FIRE AT DEONAR DUMPING GROUND

Court acquits 17 people for lack of evidence

SADAF MODAK
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

SIX YEARS after 17 people were booked for allegedly causing a fire at the Deonar dumping ground in Mumbai, a sessions court on Saturday acquitted all of them for lack of evidence.

In April 2016, a fire in the dumping ground had caused smog to spread in many parts of the city, leading then Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to order an inquiry.

The Shivaji Nagar police had lodged an FIR following a complaint filed by a civic body official, resulting in the arrest of 17 people under sections 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life), 285 (negligent conduct with respect to fire or combustible matter), 435 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to cause damage), 436 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house), 336 (act endangering life or personal safety of others), and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code.

The charges attracted a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. The accused included labourers and scrap collectors,

In April 2016, a fire in the dumping ground had caused smog to spread in many parts of Mumbai, leading then CM Devendra Fadnavis to order an inquiry

among others.

The accused, through their lawyers, including Amin Solkar and Wahab Khan, had denied the charges. Some had claimed that they were picked up though they had no connection with the dumping ground and were falsely implicated.

During trial, the prosecution examined 12 witnesses, including civic officials.

The complainant in the case, a BMC security official, told the court that names of scrap dealers residing near the dumping ground were given to the police but he does not remember them specifically.

Other BMC officials said in their testimony that highly inflammable methane gas would be produced due to the decomposing waste, leading to fires at regular intervals at the dumping ground, which were doused by

them. Further, the officials said that fires were caused at the dumping ground by the heat.

Five witnesses, who were scrap collectors, dealers and local residents, were also examined. They were declared hostile after they denied that their statements matched with what they had told the police. They claimed that they did not know how the fire had begun or that fires were caused in decomposing waste regularly, causing pollution.

"We had maintained that the police picked us up for no reason and implicated us in this case when even it was said in the chargesheet that the fire was caused due to methane gas. The case put a financial strain on my family. I had to shell out money for legal fees, my work suffered losses. The three months and 10 days we spent in jail before being granted bail in 2016 were the most traumatic in our lives," one of the accused told The Indian Express after the acquittal.

A separate case under Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act was filed in connection to the case, which alleged that two of the accused, brothers Atiq Khan and Rafiq Khan, were running a gang in the vicinity of the dumping ground. The trial is underway in the case.

FIR against BJP Airoli MLA for threatening woman friend

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

THE NAVI Mumbai police on Saturday registered an FIR against BJP's Airoli MLA Ganesh Naik for allegedly threatening a female friend a year ago.

According to the complaint filed at the CBD Belapur police station in Navi Mumbai, a woman claimed that she had been in a live-in relationship with Naik for 27 years. The woman alleged that in 2021, Naik had threatened her with a firearm if she disclosed their relationship to anyone.

The woman had submitted an application to the Nerul police last month following which the DCP ordered an enquiry into the incident. Based on the enquiry, the CBD Belapur police station was asked to register an FIR as the area where the alleged incident took place came under its jurisdiction.

Senior inspector of CBD Belapur police station, Anil Patil, said, "We have registered an FIR under sections 417 (cheating) and 506 (intimidation) of the IPC and sections of the Arms Act. Both are bailable sections. We will investigate the allegations following which the future course of action will be decided."

Shiv Sena organises aarti in Mumbai on Hanuman Jayanti

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

THE SHIV Sena on Saturday organised a maha aarti on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti in Mumbai's Dadar and Girgaon. This was after the MNS said that it will organise Hanuman Chalisa recital outside mosques if loudspeakers were not removed from the latter by May 3.

While MNS chief Raj Thackeray performed aarti in Pune on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti, Sena's Aaditya Thackeray performed maha aarti at Girgaon. Many Sena leaders held aarti at Dadar. Sena leaders said the programme has been organised at the Hanuman temple in Dadar, built by Prabodhankar Thackeray five decades ago. By choosing this temple for maha aarti, Sena seems to be sending out a message to MNS that it has inherited the legacy of Prabodhankar and Balasaheb Thackeray.

BJP's Amravati MP Navneet Rana and Independent MLA Ravi Rana, who supports the BJP, said they will read Hanuman Chalisa outside Matoshree – the residence of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. Later in the evening, Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray attended aarti at Girgaon. "Aaditya saheb



Hanuman Jayanthi was celebrated at SIE College compound at Nerul in Navi Mumbai. Narendra Vaskar

and Minister Uday Samant attended the aarti at a newly-constructed temple in Madhavbaug," said Diwakar Bhatkal, a Sena functionary.

Taking a dig at Raj Thackeray, Deputy CM Ajit Pawar said, "This (Hanuman Chalisa recital) was done to take political mileage. Earlier, no one spoke on these issues." Sena MP Sanjay Raut claimed that President's Rule could be imposed in the state. "After Raj Bhavan sends a report to Centre about incidents of trouble in the state, President's Rule could be imposed."



WORLD CIRCUS DAY

Performers on the first day of 40th Hunar Festival at BKC in Mumbai, which will be officially inaugurated on Sunday. Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi celebrated 'World Circus Day' along with Rambo Circus performers at the festival on Saturday. Arul Horizon

No powercuts in last 36 hours after getting additional power from NTPC: Mahadiscom

YOGESH NAIK
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

THE MAHARASHTRA State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (Mahadiscom) on Saturday said that after receiving additional power from the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), the state has not seen any powercut in the last 36 hours.

Vijay Singhal, Chairman and Managing Director of Mahadiscom, said, "The peak de-

mand of the state, including Mumbai, has gone past 29,000 MW per day. But now, we have started getting additional power of 550 MW from the Solapur unit of NTPC."

"However, we are not getting enough power from Mahagenco (Maharashtra State Power Generation Company). Instead of getting 9,500 MW, it is supplying us 7,000 MW. If it gives an additional 1,000 MW, Mahadiscom will be in a comfortable situation. Despite coal shortage, we have been able to supply electricity

without any powercuts in the last 36 hours... we have also announced that there will be no powercuts when it comes to the use of agricultural pumps," he added.

Power Minister Nitin Raut said that the supply of coal has not improved. "We have held meetings with Irrigation Minister Jayant Patil, seeking for more water so that hydro electric pumps can generate more power. The irrigation department will soon hold internal meetings and let us know how much water it can be spare," he added.

Sanjay Khandare, Chairman and Managing Director of the Mahagenco, said, "We have got an extra 10 TMC of water from Koyna dam for our hydro electric project. We are now asking the irrigation department for an extra 5 TMC."

He added that the average stock of coal will last for just five days, while on an average, each plant must have a stock for 15 days. "The government is in touch with coal companies... The demand will fall at end of May before monsoon begins."

500 students appearing for CBSE exam allotted centre 34 km away

PALLAVI SMART
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

AROUND 500 students appearing for the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) exam from Atomic Energy Central Schools (AECS) located in Anushakti Nagar in Mumbai have been allotted exam centre in Malad. Parents now are knocking on different doors to get it changed as it will be impractical for children to travel so far for their board exams.

The students and their parents expressed shock after collecting their hall tickets from schools on Saturday. "The allotted exam centre is Kendriya Vidyalaya INS Hamla in Malad, which is around 34-km away. It is not possible for students ap-

pearing for board exams to cover this distance for multiple papers," said one of the parents.

There are six AECS in Anushakti Nagar. However, the faraway centre problem is faced by students at school numbers 4 and 5. Students from the rest of the schools are divided into the remaining four schools, in Anushakti Nagar.

A parent of one of the affected students explained, "Generally that is the process for board exams, as CBSE does not allow students to appear for the exam in the same school. Students from AECS are allotted board exam centres in Anushakti Nagar at first, interchanging the schools. And if the arrangement is inadequate, the farthest exam centres expected are the Kendriya Vidyalaya schools in

Mankhurd. But this year's arrangement is shocking."

Parents said that this could be a human error due to confusion about the pin code. One of the parents shared, "The pin code for Anushakti Nagar is 400094 and for INS Hamla in Malad, it is 400095, which might have led to confusion that the areas are nearby. After all, the exam centres are allotted centrally."

Several parents gathered at the schools on Saturday with their concerns following which the school authorities have written to the CBSE. Parents also have approached the local Member of Parliament (MP) Rahul Shewale, who has written a letter to the Union Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan requesting a change in the examination centre.

Coast Guard base at Ratnagiri gets two advanced helicopters

YOGESH NAIK
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

THE COAST Guard base at Ratnagiri in Konkan on Saturday received two advanced light helicopters (ALH). Now, six to eight pilots will be stationed at the base, said officials.

"During the flood last July, the Coast Guard could not respond immediately, as it had no helicopter or plane stationed at Ratnagiri or Mumbai. Now, we can immediately respond in case of a crisis in Ratnagiri, Raigad and Sindhudurg. Earlier, planes or helicopters had to be sent from Daman or Goa in case of a crisis here," said a senior officer.

The base at Ratnagiri was



The base at Ratnagiri was planned in 2005 and things gathered momentum after the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. Yogesh Naik

planned in 2005 and things gathered momentum after the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.

While the state government handed over one airstrip to the Coast Guard in Ratnagiri, where it was planned to station Domier reconnaissance planes and Chetak helicopters, the plan never took off. The base had been lying unused.

The Coast Guard had a squadron of Chetak helicopters at INS Shikra in Colaba, but it had to be shifted to Daman.

"The Coast Guard is constructing a hangar at Juhu airport in Mumbai, where two Chetak helicopters will be kept to respond to emergencies. In the next few years, these will be replaced by ALHs," said Inspector General Bhisham Sharma, in charge of the Coast Guard aviation wing.

NO BAIL FOR LAWYER HELD IN SHARAD PAWAR HOUSE ATTACK CASE

Mumbai: A magistrate's court has rejected the bail application of lawyer Gunratna Sadavarte, arrested for allegedly orchestrating a purported attack at the residence of NCP chief Sharad Pawar in South Mumbai. Special public prosecutor Pradip Gharat had opposed bail to Sadavarte stating that the investigation in the case is still on. He had submitted that Sadavarte's wife, who is also named as an accused in the case, is yet to be interrogated and granting him bail may hamper the investigation. Sadavarte, who was representing a section of the protesting Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) employees, was sent to judicial custody last week. **ENS**

MOHAMED THAYER
MUMBAI, APRIL 8

AT THE SG Barve Marg in Chembur, there is an installation of human figures sitting atop each other rising gradually. In the backdrop are the words 'uttishthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata'.

Not many who pass the installation every day would be aware that the slogan is taken from the Katha Upanishad and later popularised by Swami Vivekananda, which in English means 'Arise, Awake and stop not till the goal is achieved'. The installation based on this saying was meant to be a way to pay homage to Swami Vivekananda on his 150th birth anniversary. Conservation architect Rahul



The slogan is taken from Katha Upanishad and later popularised by Swami Vivekananda, which in English means 'arise, awake and stop not till the goal is achieved'. Pradip Das

Chemburkar's Vaastu Vidhaan came up with the concept design while the late Vijay Khatu

was the sculptor. Chemburkar said that the installation at the Swami Vivekananda chowk

came up in 2013 the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

"There were several events being planned to celebrate his legacy on his 150th birth anniversary. Since getting permission for setting up a statue is a long-drawn process, we decided to come up with an installation to commemorate him at the Vivekananda chowk in Chembur," Chemburkar told *The Indian Express*.

Explaining the idea behind the installation, he said, "The installation shows a human figure rising eventually as it goes to the top. It signifies that you must decide to elevate yourself." Originally, Vivekananda had used this message to Indians to "get out of their hypnotised state of mind." The sloka was meant for Indians to "awaken their sleeping

soul". He was known to have widely used this quote in his saying and during his public addresses, including there one at Lahore on November 12, 1896.

Every year on the anniversary of Swami Vivekananda the place is cleaned, and they have some events at the spot. Chemburkar said that art also acts as a tool to propagate ideas and towards that end, public art is the best tool.

Chemburkar added that this installation has over the years been more connected to the public memory. "Despite me having contributed to several installations, it is this installation that people connect me with and always mention it while introducing me," he added.

Aaditya to visit Ram temple in Ayodhya in May, says Raut

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

WITH MNS chief Raj Thackeray upping the ante on the use of loudspeakers outside mosques, recitation of Hanuman Chalisa and amid talk of his visit to Ayodhya, Shiv Sena on Saturday announced that Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray will visit the Ram temple in Ayodhya in May.

Sena MP Sanjay Raut, without naming MNS, said in Nashik that his party does not need to learn Hindutva from people who have taken it on rent.

Speaking to mediapersons, Raut added that the Nashik unit of the Shiv Sena was supposed to go on a tour of Ayodhya considering the upcoming Nashik civic polls but as the elections have been deferred, the dates of the visit were being reworked.

"On Friday, we reviewed the tour... but the scale of the visit has grown so much that we decided to undertake the visit under the leadership of Aaditya Thackeray. I told him about it and he immediately agreed. Aaditya said he will visit the banks of Sarayu river," said Raut.

He added that Aaditya's visit to Ayodhya is a national event, which is likely to be held in the first or second week of May. "Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had earlier asked Sena leaders to see what accommodation arrangements can be made in Uttar Pradesh for pilgrims going to Ayodhya from Maharashtra."

On Raj Thackeray's possible visit to Ayodhya, Raut said, "...some people have reached Pune and others outside Matoshree, Thackeray's residence... We don't need to learn Hindutva from those people who have taken it on rent. Some tried dirty politics by raking up Hanuman Chalisa and loudspeaker issues ahead of Kolhapur bypolls but none of this worked in the bypoll. So, the kind of politics BJP is attempting to play through AIMIM's Owaisi-like neo-Hinduism is not going to work. This is clear from the bypoll result."

Congress' Jayshree Jadhav on Saturday emerged victorious in the Kolhapur North Assembly bypoll by defeating the BJP candidate with a margin of over 19,000 votes.

The Sena MP further said that anyone can go to Ayodhya but they must go with a clean and clear mind and heart. "We are not going to Ayodhya now only, we have been going there since the Babri mosque's dome was pulled down and the ground-breaking ceremony for the Ram temple was held. Ayodhya is not new and we are no strangers there."

Man on the run after killing daughter-in-law over breakfast surrenders

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 15

THE 76-YEAR-OLD real estate developer, who had been on the run since Thursday after he allegedly shot dead his daughter-in-law for not serving him breakfast, surrendered before police on Saturday. Police had registered a murder case against him and had been on the lookout for him since Thursday when the incident took place.

An officer said that the accused, Kashinath Patil, had a license for a firearm since 2007 since he was a builder and claimed that he needed it for possible threats he may face. Police also found that he was not on good terms with his family members and had not been talking to his wife for the past seven years.

On Thursday morning when his daughter-in-law Seema served him tea without breakfast, he got upset and argued with her. In a fit of rage, he pulled out his revolver and shot her in the abdomen after which he fled the spot. Seema was admitted to the local hospital where she died of her wounds.



EXPRESS NETWORK

After online classes for 2 yrs, students protest offline exams

Universities call it step towards restoring 'normalcy', but students across states seek 'parity'

SHEETAL BANCHARIYA, PALLAVISMART
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, APRIL 16

WHEN ALLAHABAD University announced to conduct offline exams on March 24, it sparked widespread protests.

University officials countered that the move was "in line with restoring normalcy" and was taken after a high-power committee — formed to look into students' representations against offline exams — submitted its report in favour of pen-and-paper exams.

University's public relations officer Jaya Kapoor said: "Some of the protesting students sprinkled petrol on themselves and it became a law-and-order situation. The administration requested the Vice-Chancellor to reconsider the decision. So, on March 25 it was decided that all second-year students would be promoted and third-year students' exams would be held online."

Several universities have decided to hold offline exams for the semester ending in May-June 2022. But with little clarity over hostel arrangements, exam

schedules and hybrid class timetables, the decision has been met with opposition in most states.

On April 13, Maharashtra Higher and Technical Education Minister Uday Samant announced additional 15 minutes for each hour students sit for an offline exam.

Since February 28, students and faculty at the Visva-Bharati University in West Bengal's Santiniketan have been protesting against the decision to hold offline exams without reopening hostels.

"Initially, when the hostels were not operational and senior batches began attending offline classes on December 1, 2021, students rented rooms. Since there is limited accommodation in the Santiniketan area, first-year students were unable to find housing. They continued to take online classes and are now hesitant to take offline exams," said Somnath Sow, a final-year BA economics student at Visva-Bharati University.

"The 26-day movement helped us secure our demands and online exams will begin on April 18. The demand for reopen-



Students of Rashtrasanta Tukdoji Maharaj Nagpur University stage a protest against offline exams. File

ing hostels has been officially met, but in reality, things are still not clear. So protests are on," said Chaiti, a student at the university's department of art history.

Vice-Chancellor Bidyut Chakrabarty refused to comment. Lack of accommodation is also why engineering students of Kolkata-based Jadavpur University have been protesting the decision to hold offline exams.

"Students in their final semester do not want to relocate from their hometowns for the remaining few months of their courses.

Also, no one is willing to give their property on rent for a few months," said Akash Sekh, a second-year master's student of international relations.

However, the university has already released the schedule for offline exams and for some courses, the exams will commence on April 24.

Calls to University V-C Suranjan Das went unanswered.

At Delhi University, students have been demanding that their end semester examinations be conducted online. The university

reopened in February and has also decided to hold offline exams for students in the second, fourth and sixth semesters.

Semester exams for the first, third, and fifth semesters will be held in online OBE mode.

"The majority of the course-work has been completed online and we have attended just over two months of offline classes. So, the mode of exams should be revised," said Himani Singh, a sixth-semester BSc Home Science student at DU's Lady Irwin College.

However, Pankaj Arora, DU's dean of students' welfare, said: "In order to return to normalcy, we must return to offline exams."

He said: "Due to Covid, the 'odd' semester was shorter than usual and we decided to keep their exams online. The 'even' semester offline exam duration has been increased by 30 minutes. The university is also willing to issue a directive to individual colleges to hold mock tests."

In Maharashtra, confusion over the format of the final exam has triggered a debate. The Maharashtra Student Welfare Association (MSWA) has started a social media campaign to "bring uniformity" to the assessment for-

mat after writing to the Chief Minister.

"The final-year students will be competing with each other for admission to higher education courses and in the job market. If their assessment is done in different formats, the competition will not be fair," said Vaibhav Edke, MSWA president.

While Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) and Rashtrasanta Tukdoji Maharaj Nagpur University will be holding offline exams, Mumbai University has announced a more "blended approach" — exams of traditional courses will be online, whereas for professional courses it will be offline. Also, many autonomous colleges in Mumbai have decided to hold final exams offline.

"For professional courses, students were anyway writing descriptive answers for 60 out of 100 marks for the past two exams," said Vinod Patil, Director of Board of Examinations and Evaluation, Mumbai University.

Countering the students' demand for "uniformity", he said, "Anyway there can't be parity as courses, curriculum, exam pattern and evaluation methods are different in all universities."

10% discount for Sunny Leone fans at meat shop

KIRAN PARASHAR
BENGALURU, APRIL 16

A MEAT seller in Karnataka has announced a 10 per cent discount for fans of actor Sunny Leone.

Prasad K N, 27, has been running his meat shop — DK Chicken — in Mandya district, around 100 km from Bengaluru, for nearly two years. He says reading about the philanthropic work undertaken by Leone inspired him to offer the discount.

"Due to her past work in the porn industry, she is often looked at as a sex symbol. To know her, I looked into her life, which was really interesting and inspiring. I was surprised to see that she has done so much for society. From adopting a daughter to running a school and extending help during the pandemic, she has really been an inspiration," Prasad said. To avail the discount, customers have to show that they follow Leone on Instagram and Facebook, have at least her 10 photos on their phone, and have commented on social media posts about her movies.

Maoists claim airstrike in Bastar jungles, forces deny

GARGI VERMA
RAIPUR, APRIL 16

CHHATTISGARH POLICE and the CRPF on Saturday denied conducting any airstrike in Bastar after Maoists released a press note with pictures and alleged that security forces conducted strikes in the jungles of South Bastar using drones.

The banned Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Friday alleged in a two-page press note that the security forces bombed Kottam, Rasam, Eraam, Sakiler, Madapa, Duled, Kannemarka, Potemangum and Bottam areas on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday.

Calling it a lie, Bastar Inspector General P Sundarraj said that these are part of Maoist conspiracy to distract and scare people.

When contacted, CRPF D-G Kuldip Singh denied there was any operation carried out against Maoists. "No such operation has taken place," he said. "Also, we come in aide of the state police; state police lead operations."

The Maoist release, issued by Dandakaranya Zonal Committee's spokesperson Vikalp, alleged that more than 50 bombs were dropped within an hour, targeting them. No injuries were reported, it mentioned.

In April last year, DKZC had alleged a drone strike and released the picture of a fallen drone.

Bastar I-G Sundarraj said: "In Bastar, like the rest of country, security forces are involved in protecting life and property. The Maoists are trying to malign our image out of desperation at losing ground. Their leaders, all outsiders, are misusing tribal people. It is time people see their real, violent faces."

The CRPF said in a statement, "CRPF denies all allegations leveled of any attack on Maoists using drones. Maoists are losing support of the locals due to good governance, which is why they are spreading lies."

WITH ENS-DELHI INPUTS

Now special court's relief to Aakar Patel, order asking CBI to recall notice upheld

Way lookout circular issued shows lack of understanding of relevant law: court

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, APRIL 16

A SPECIAL court on Saturday upheld a trial court's order asking CBI to withdraw a lookout circular (LOC) issued against former Amnesty International India chief Aakar Patel. The court noted that the LOC issued was based on "wrong interpretation and understanding of the law", and cautioned CBI by stating that its power to "investigate and prosecute is not an unbridled power".

In the order, Special Judge Santosh Snehi Mann also set aside the trial court's order asking the CBI director to issue Patel an apology. The CBI had issued the LOC in connection with a case registered against Amnesty International India in 2019 under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. Patel headed the organisation at the time. Patel, due to travel to the US to deliver lectures at universi-



Aakar Patel

ties, was stopped twice from leaving the country.

Judge Mann has asked Patel to appear before a trial court and furnish a bond for his appearance and asked him not to leave the country without the trial court's permission.

The judge said that the "manner in which the LOC has been issued shows lack of understanding of the relevant law, and hence need for orientation of the officers (concerned) of CBI, not only sensitization but also to bring objectivity in the actions is not out of context". The court said, "LOC issued against the respondent is bad in law, hence cannot be sustained. Order of the trial court

quashing/setting aside the LOC does not suffer from any infirmity and is a well-reasoned order based on the principles of law."

The court, however, noted that a "balance should have been struck qua the prosecuting agency that the respondent accused may flee from the country, and fundamental right of the respondent accused to travel abroad, by putting conditions taking recourse to section 88 CrPC, which empowers the court to take bond for appearance". The judge said the court's observations are "not of the nature of exercising power of superintendence, they are out of concern and the petitioner (CBI) is expected to take them in right spirit".

It said CBI's power to "investigate and prosecute is not an unbridled power". The court said, "In glaring cases of excesses committed in actions, there may arise the need for fixing accountability. In the present case, LOC was issued on wrong interpretation and un-

derstanding of law, and not out of malice or ill will. Hence it is not a fit case to call for fixing the accountability for issuance of LOC."

On trial court's directions to the CBI director to tender a written apology and its general observations on monetary compensation, Judge Mann said that "it is a settled legal proposition that trial court can step in to compensate for police excesses and illegal actions of the State when fundamental rights are violated."

The CBI had argued that LOC was issued considering that Patel was an influential person and well-connected with entities outside India, because of which he may evade the law. On this, the court held this submission has "no force in law to support and sustain." "Subjective satisfaction of the IO to assess the situation for issuance of LOC must flow from the objective criteria," the order read.

FULL REPORT ON:
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AAP slams BJP for felicitating 8 who 'attacked' CM home, calls for boycott

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 16

LEADERS OF the Aam Aadmi Party Saturday hit out at the BJP for felicitating eight men accused of attacking Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence.

Kejriwal, without naming BJP, tweeted, "If someone commits hooliganism in America, he goes to jail, in India he goes to a specific party. If someone molests a girl in Europe, he goes to jail, in India he goes to this party. They will never make good schools. They need lakhs of illiterate goons, thugs and unemployed people for their hate politics. Our country needs to boycott parties that support hooligans, criminals if it actually wants to become a world leader."

He was responding to party

MP Raghav Chadha's press conference earlier in the day on the same issue. Chadha said that in the US, if somebody indulges in hooliganism, he is put in jail: "In India, they join the BJP. In European countries, if someone harasses your mothers and sisters, they go to jail. In India, if they do this, they go to BJP."

Chadha also called the BJP a party of "goons and ruffians": "BJP has become a party of goons and ruffians... We have no qualms in saying that they have become 'Bharat ki Jaahil Party'. Their goons and ruffians attack AAP leaders. They have attacked and vandalised the home of Arvind Kejriwal, who is the elected Chief Minister of Delhi, who is world famous, a former Income Tax Commissioner and an IIT alumnus. The BJP calls them... felicitates

them, honours them with *siropa* (robe) and shawl, clicks photos of them and issues press releases," he Chadha. He also cited instances of BJP members "vandalising the home of Deputy CM Manish Sisodia" and "entering Delhi Jal Board's underground reservoir in Sonia Vihar".

Chadha also said the BJP government did not want to build schools or provide employment as they needed "illiterate goons for their army". "BJP will never build good schools and colleges for you. They won't do it because they want an army of illiterate goons. If people get access to education, how will BJP get illiterate goons? They will also not produce employment opportunities for you. If BJP does this, how will scores of unemployed ruffians and goons join their army?" he said.

Adivasis are perceived differently. The perception that the tribal community is backward, and that it does not know the ways of the world, is "unfounded", Lugun said. "Sosobonga, which are orally recited epics of Adivasis, particularly in Mundas and Asur communities, tell us about how there should be balance between nature and humans," he said.

Toppo said the lockdown culture has existed for long in the Adivasi communities. "For a few months each year, in a bid to protect baby animals, growing shrubs and plants, Adivasis don't venture into forests. When the viewpoint of Adivasis is such, how can an Adivasi person be called uncouth or ignorant? This is the real challenge in front of upcoming writers and generation to bring this view out to the mainstream."



Rajkiya Bhramanshil Pustkalay (Library on Wheels), built on a truck in 1958, at Dumka State Library Literature Festival. It has travelled thousands of kilometres in Jharkhand. Express

bished by Odisha-born poet and bookseller Akshay Bahibala, who travels with his "Walking Bookfairs" — a van full of books — in small towns to promote books. Writers from the tribal com-

munity such as writer-poet Anuj Lugun, winner of Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar in 2019, and Mahadev Toppo, a leading Adivasi litterateur from Jharkhand, discussed on how

'Pandemic may have increased learning poverty, help children adjust first'

AS OFFLINE classes resume in schools across the country, Central Square Foundation (CSF) founder **ASHISH DHAWAN**, who works closely with the Centre and many states on addressing foundational learning gaps, believes authorities should help children adjust before picking up textbooks.

Dhawan, who is also a founding member of the Ashoka University, is currently setting up Convergence Foundation, which will work across many areas in the social sector, including women empowerment and air pollution, by setting up organisations along the lines of CSF, which primarily works on school education.

He spoke to **SOURAV ROY BARMAN** on a variety of topics, including the government's NIPUN Bharat programme, which CSF helped develop and implement, foundational learning deficiencies deepened by the pandemic and higher education reforms announced by the UGC. Excerpts:

Before the pandemic, you had cited a World Bank report to say that 55% of India's 10-year-old children lack foundational learning skills, which is classified as learning poverty. What has been the impact of the pandemic?

The percentage may have risen to 65 per cent now. The question is how to bring it down to 20-30 per cent over the next decade? We know learning is breaking down early and we have to go to Class I, II, III. If you can't do basic math, addition, subtraction, then how do you do fractions in class IV or V? How do you do algebra in class V or VI? So



Ashish Dhawan

these are basic foundational skills that every child needs to master by the end of class II. The committee that drafted the National Education Policy (NEP) understood this and said in the report that this should be India's top priority in school education and should be pushed in mission mode. And then the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN) Bharat programme was launched.

How does NIPUN Bharat work?

It will prioritise foundational learning in a large public system. So for classes I, I and III, the government has created a separate project, where it will pay for all the teaching-learning material, teacher professional development assessment. The Centre also sets goals and objectives and handles the monitoring aspect. The implementation is done by the states. The CSF has MoUs with 12 states. We have project management units that work at the state level. So it's a team of people who

KERALA

Day after PFI leader's murder, RSS man killed

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 16

A DAY after a local leader of the Popular Front of India (PFI) was hacked to death, an RSS worker was killed the same way in Palakkad district of Kerala on Saturday afternoon.

Police said S K Sreenivasan (45), an RSS worker and former office-bearer, was attacked by a five-member gang who stormed into his two-wheeler shop in Melamuri, a BJP stronghold in Palakkad.

Quoting eyewitnesses, police said the attackers parked their motorcycles outside Sreenivasan's shop. Wielding swords, three of them stormed into the shop and hacked Sreenivasan several times, before escaping on their motorcycles. CCTV footage showed the suspected attackers reaching the street outside Sreenivasan's shop on three motorcycles.

BJP leaders alleged that the PFI was behind the attack. The PFI did not react to the charges.

On Friday afternoon, the PFI's Elappully area president, A Subair (44), was hacked to death outside a mosque. According to police, Subair and his father were on a motorcycle when they were hit by a vehicle. As they fell on the road, some men emerged from another vehicle and attacked Subair before fleeing the spot.

The PFI had alleged that the RSS-BJP was behind the murder; the BJP district leadership had denied the allegation.

Police confirmed that a vehicle abandoned by Subair's killers was registered in the name of RSS worker S Sanjith, who was killed last November, allegedly by members of PFI and its political outfit Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI). Subair was also a member of the SDPI.

Sanjith's family said the vehicle was parked in a workshop before his death, and they had not got it since then.

Another vehicle which is suspected to have been used by Subair's attackers was found abandoned. Police have found that it was "rented" to a person named Rameshan, who is ab-



SK Sreenivasan

sconding since the incident.

The FIR calls Subair's death a "political murder". Four RSS-BJP workers who were allegedly involved in an attack on a PFI worker last year are being questioned.

"The conspiracy behind the murder is clear. By killing a local PFI leader, RSS wants to foment communal trouble," state PFI president C P Muhammed Basheer had said on Friday.

Meanwhile, BJP's state general secretary and senior party leader in Palakkad, C Krishna Kumar, alleged that the PFI was behind the attack on Saturday. "Police could not prevent the killing of the RSS worker when armed criminal gangs were roaming in the city. Yesterday, we already denied the role of our workers or any Sangh Parivar men in the killing of the PFI worker," he said.

"Police neglected the PFI plan to trigger violence across the district. Melamuri region in Palakkad had reported communal violence in the past, but the police did not take any precautionary steps. The ruling CP(M) and its police force have surrendered before terrorists," state BJP president K Surendran said. Opposition Leader in Assembly V D Satheesan said the killings were a fallout of the state government's communal appeasement. "The CP(M) is appeasing both the SDPI and RSS, which they call social engineering," he said.

Police have sounded an alert to prevent further violence. About 300 police personnel have been deployed in Palakkad, where Additional District Magistrate K Manikandan has issued prohibitory orders till April 20 "sensing that religious hatred may emerge in the wake of the two killings." State DGP Anil Kanth warned that strict action would be taken against those who spread religious hatred through social media.

take their time to catch up.

During the pandemic, we saw schools were the first to close and last to open.

I think that mindset will change now. People have to internalise that life has to go on even if you face the next Omicron. I was in New York for Christmas, New Years and kids had to go back to school in January when Omicron was raging in the US. There is no greater risk in opening schools and our policymakers now need to internalise that because what we didn't do early on is any form of cost benefit analysis. We should have started school earlier. If you do a cost-benefit analysis, there is a risk, but the cost of keeping kids at home for two years is not being measured and it's an impact on a whole generation of kids. So, I think people will internalise now that we can't do this again.

The latest UDISE report has shown a sharp drop in private school enrolment and rise in government school enrolment. What does this indicate?

That is purely an economic thing. The temptation of English and accountability lure parents into sending their kids to private schools. And normally, you need income above a certain threshold to do it. So, if your income has been hit, that's the demand shock. Covid also had a supply shock, where schools were shut for so long and there was no revenue. They couldn't justify charging. They couldn't do zoom classes. As a result, parents were not willing to pay. So, many private schools even closed down.

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8 ECONOMY

NET PROFIT AT ₹10,055.2 CR FOR FOURTH QUARTER, ₹36,961.3 CR FOR FY22

HDFC Bank Q4 net up 22.8% on better asset quality, higher interest income

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

HDFC Bank on Saturday posted a net profit of Rs 10,055.2 crore on a standalone basis for the quarter ended March 2022 (Q4FY22), up 22.8 per cent against Rs 8,186.51 crore in the year-ago period.

Net interest income (NII), the difference between interest earned and interest expended, rose 10.2 per cent to Rs 18,872.7 crore in Q4 as against Rs 17,120.2 crore a year ago, with credit growth of nearly 21 per cent and 16.8 per cent rise in deposits on-year.

"Core net interest margin was at 4 per cent on total assets, and 4.2 per cent based on interest-earning assets," the bank said.

Advances rose 20.8 per cent to Rs 13.69 lakh crore in Q4FY22. Retail loans grew 15.2 per cent, commercial & rural banking loans by 30.4 per cent, and corporate & other wholesale loans by 17.4 per cent. Asset quality improved with non-performing assets (NPAs) at 1.17 per cent of advances as against 1.32 per cent a year ago.

"We continued to add new liability relationships at a robust pace of 2.4 million during the quarter," the lender said. It

NII RISES 10.2%

■ Net interest income (NII) rose 10.2% to ₹18,872.7 crore in Q4 as against ₹17,120.2 crore a year ago

recorded a 16.8 per cent growth in deposits at Rs 15.59 lakh crore as of March 2022, with CASA deposits rising 22 per cent and time deposits increasing 12.3 per cent.

Provisions and contingencies for the quarter ended March 31, 2022 were Rs 3,312.4 crore (con-

sisting of specific loan loss provisions of Rs 1,778.2 crore and general and other provisions of Rs 1,534.2 crore) as against total provisions of Rs 4,693.7 crore for the same quarter a year ago. Total provisions for the current quarter included contingent provisions of approximately Rs 1,000 crore.

The bank held floating provisions of Rs 1,451 crore and contingent provisions of Rs 9,685 crore as of March 2022. Total provisions (comprising specific, floating, contingent and general provisions) were 182 per cent of the gross non-performing loans. Net revenues (net interest income plus

other income) in Q4 grew 7.3 per cent to Rs 26,509.8 crore against Rs 24,714.1 crore a year ago.

For the full fiscal FY22, the bank posted a profit of Rs 36,961.3 crore, a growth of 18.8 per cent over the previous year, and net interest income at Rs 72,009.6 crore, up 11 per cent over a year ago. The bank's shares fell 1.90 per cent on the BSE to Rs 1,464.85 Thursday.

Meanwhile, as per a *PTI* report, HDFC Bank said it will raise up to Rs 50,000 crore in the next one year by issuing bonds. Further, its board has approved to re-appoint Renu Karnad as non-executive director on the board for five years.

'Debt recovery via insolvency cases at 31%; 47% cases liquidated'

Nearly half of 3,247 insolvency cases have been resolved via liquidation, and various resolution processes yielded debt recovery of 31%, an Icra report said



Report details: The data from the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) covers all cases since implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) five years ago till December 2021

Become supply hub, set ₹10L cr target: Goyal to plastics industry

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

COMMERCE MINISTER Piyush Goyal on Saturday asked the country's plastics sector to set a target to become a Rs 10 lakh-crore industry in the near future by expanding the domestic and export markets as well as by following import substitution.

Felicitating exporters at Exports Excellence Awards organised here by PLEXCONCIL, India's apex trade body of plastics exporters, Goyal said, "India's plastics industry's economic activity is worth Rs 3 lakh crore annually, out of which one-third is exported. There is a significant growth potential for the Indian

plastics industry to become the world's premium supply hub."

"It can target to take its economic activity to a Rs 10-lakh crore industry. This could be achieved through more exports and import substitution, which in turn will create immense job opportunities," he added.

Goyal praised the plastics sector for its performance on the exports front, as the industry achieved exports of \$13 billion in FY22 with a growth of 30 per cent and lauded the export target of \$25 billion it has set for 2025. "The plastics industry has done well on the exports and domestic fronts and contributed significantly during the pandemic, particularly in supporting the healthcare supplies to the country."

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 16

TWO-WHEEL EV maker Okinawa Autotech said it was recalling 3,215 units of its Praise Pro scooter to fix any issues related to batteries, in what is the first instance of a voluntary recall by an electric vehicle (EV) manufacturer in India.

"The batteries will be checked for loose connectors or any damage and be repaired free of charge at any of the Okinawa authorised dealerships pan India," Okinawa said in a statement.

"The electric 2W maker is

working closely with the dealer partners to ensure that the repair experience is as per the convenience of its customers, for which the vehicle owners will be contacted individually," it added.

The moves comes weeks after an Okinawa electric scooter burst into flames, claiming the lives of a man and his 13-year-old daughter. At the time, the company had claimed the fire in its electric two-wheeler was an "evident case of short circuit due to negligence in charging the vehicle". The company said it was waiting for the complete investigation to unfold.

Earlier this week, NITI Aayog

₹7.52 lakh cr

claims made by creditors on their borrowers; lenders could realise only Rs 2.5 lakh crore

Liquidation means lenders or financial firms face the maximum brunt of losses on their books

Various NCLTs admitted 4,946 bankruptcy cases till December 2021 — 3,247 applications so far closed, while 1,699 are still ongoing

Source: Icra Ratings/PTI

MARKET WATCH

HIGH PRICES HIT APRIL FUEL SALES

New Delhi: Fuel sales fell in the first half of April as a record rise in prices in a short 16-day period dented demand, preliminary industry data showed Saturday. Petrol sales fell almost 10% over the same period in the preceding month, while diesel demand slid 15.6%. **PTI**

INTERVIEW: VICE PRESIDENT & MANAGING DIRECTOR, INDIA, META

'Meta has not cracked all of metaverse; want to help others build compelling use-cases'



"I don't think we're a media company. I think we partner with other media companies, and hopefully they've seen value in leveraging our platforms"

AJIT MOHAN

Given that political ads comprise a small proportion of your revenue and the heat that they bring through allegations of the platform being biased, how does the cost-benefit work out?

I don't have a point of view on this, really. This is, globally, one of the calls that we took a while back. In the context of the role that we can play — just as businesses connect to consumers, we have discovered that our platforms are used to drive causes. We saw that one of the roles we played in the pandemic was to bring attention to the public health agenda. The code of the platform is that you can build communities and get a message across, and therefore I can imagine the utility from a campaign point of view as well. When you look at political ads as a percentage of total (revenues) both in India and globally, it becomes pretty apparent that the driver for us is not revenue.

Companies across the world have stepped up their metaverse investments. How does the future of advertising on internet change on Web 3.0 and the metaverse?

In a very short period of time, from when we articulated the idea of metaverse and the change of identity to Meta, there has been massive excitement from across industry and business leaders across the spectrum, and I've seen this excitement in India as well.

Leaders instinctively get the power of a more immersive internet, and what it means to move from 2D to 3D, not just from a consumer point of view — with use cases such as fitness and gaming — but also from enterprise perspective, if they can engage with these users in a more immersive manner. We have been pretty open in saying that we do not know all the answers at the moment.

Going back to the acquisition of Oculus in 2014, the company has been making hefty investments in AR (augmented reality) and VR (virtual reality) for a while now. We have no illusion that we are building the metaverse. We know that we are going to contribute to what will become metaverse and that different companies will create different spaces. It should be interoperable, a lot more than what mobile internet was. At the same time, we do not have any illusion that we have cracked all of it, either in terms of technology or how interoperability will work, or even what the different revenue streams will be. What we do know is that there is going to be a lot of work on access side on devices that enable more immersive version of the internet.

Governments and regulators are debating on formulating policies for cryptocurrencies and NFTs, and the metaverse? How important is it for these policies to be laid down as early as possible?

On the last version of the internet, a lot of these laws and policies had to be developed *post facto*. We saw this explosive growth and innovation which had a huge impact on global economy as well as the impact on the ability of people to connect in a seamless manner. But we also discovered that there were a lot of bad actors who could do great harm. Even in some of our own works — we have had a lot of fundamental product work

and policy changes over the last few years on the back of recognising that. We have the opportunity to learn from that as we think about how to design the different building blocks that will form the metaverse over the next 5-10 years. For example, we have been baking in privacy as a core design principle in to every product feature and it will translate quite well. We have to proactively work with stakeholders, including regulators around the world to make sure that we build these frameworks in a way that allows innovation but also absorbs the learnings of the last 20 years.

Would Meta be interested in buying rights to broadcast IPL?

One, I don't think we're a media company. I think we partner with other media companies, and hopefully they've seen value in leveraging our platforms. We ourselves don't see us as a media company. I don't think we will build particular use cases. We are thinking more along the lines that we can build frameworks and help with foundational tools on both the software and hardware side that will enable other developers to build compelling use cases for the metaverse.

The role that Meta has is fundamentally around building the toolkits, enabling other partners and developers, and therefore in this context, we don't have the intention to bid for IPL rights that are opening up in the next few weeks. It is the context of the role we see ourselves in, of building the metaverse, and not because we think IPL is not a fantastic property. I have seen the power of IPL in building (Disney+) Hotstar.

In terms of the Apple privacy changes, globally, there's a \$10-billion impact that Meta said it will see as a result of the new policy. For India, could you provide any qualitative or quantitative insights into what impact is being seen by Meta?

There are no numbers to share. What we've publicly announced over the last few weeks, and what's to come, we've clearly worked to make sure that some of the underreporting on web conversions that have come on the back of the Apple changes are addressed. That will continue. The only other thing to call out is that Apple or iOS is a very small share of the total devices in India.

Full interview on www.indianexpress.com

SECTOR WATCH CONSUMER INTERNET COS

Ban after complaints: Amid pushback by restaurants, Zomato defers quality policy

SOUAMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, APRIL 16

AFTER IT drew the ire of hoteliers over a proposed policy to ban restaurants based on customer complaints about food quality, Zomato is learnt to have decided to defer the plan until next month and has informed restaurants that it will seek feedback from them on how it can strengthen the policy before implementing it.

Zomato, in an email sent late Friday night to its restaurant partners, is learnt to have pushed the implementation of the policy from April 18 to May 3. Under the policy, called "Severe Food Quality" rules, Zomato proposed it would temporarily ban restaurants if consumers complained about their food quality. The platform had listed the presence of hazardous objects in food, serving non-vegetarian food instead of vegetarian, delivering the wrong type of meat, and rotten food as examples of severe food quality issues.

Zomato said it would get feedback from stakeholders on the policy. "We seek feedback from all our restaurant partners and would like to understand from you how this framework can be strengthened so it can be in the best interest of all stakeholders involved," Zomato is learnt to have said in the email.

"The disablement will be in consultation with the restaurant management and will only be applicable till necessary remedial actions are undertaken and verified through an Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)-approved hygiene and safety auditor," the email said.

On its part, the FSSAI welcomed Zomato's policy, say-



File

ing it would ensure customers receive good quality food.

FSSAI CEO Arun Singh told *The Indian Express*, "We are encouraging all stakeholders to offer quality food and Zomato's penalty against multiple offenders could make sure that customers get food of the highest quality."

The FSSAI had earlier launched a hygiene rating for restaurants, cafes, dhabas etc, to make sure customers get good quality food at such outlets. The ratings, voluntary in nature, include several parameters and an inspection by local authorities or a third-party audit of a restaurant's premises and food offerings.

The National Restaurants Association of India (NRAI), which had criticised Zomato saying that the firm was overstepping with the policy, said it was set to have a conversation with the firm to resolve its issues with the policy. "While the intent of the policy is understandable, the implementation leaves a lot of grey areas and scope for misuse. Further the action of delisting is draconian. We have initiated dialogue with the Zomato Team and conveyed our views. They will be meeting with us next week to resolve this in a better, more inclusive way, keeping all stakeholders in mind," an NRAI spokesperson said. Zomato did not reply to a request for comment. *Full report on www.indianexpress.com*

BRIEFLY

M&M stakes sale

New Delhi: Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) has agreed to sell over 34.75 lakh shares, constituting 22.81% of the paid-up capital, in Mahindra Sanyo Special Steel Pvt Ltd, to Japan's Sanyo Special Steel Co Ltd in a ₹212 crore deal.

Vedanta on PSU

New Delhi: Vedanta chairman Anil Agarwal called for further liberalisation of defence sector and corporatisation of defence PSUs. **PTI**

Activision probe

Bengaluru: Activision Blizzard is cooperating with federal investigations into trading by friends of its CEO shortly before the gaming company disclosed its sale to Microsoft Corp, it said in a filing on Friday. **REUTERS**

'Poison pill': Twitter plan to fight Musk's takeover bid

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, APRIL 16

A DAY after Tesla chief Elon Musk made a \$43-billion offer to buy Twitter, the microblogging platform's board has armed itself against a possible hostile takeover by taking recourse to what is called a "limited-duration shareholder rights plan", also referred to as a "poison pill".

Poison pill — nuclear option against a hostile takeover

This rights plan essentially allows existing shareholders to purchase freshly issued shares in a company at a discount to the trading price, effectively making any possible buyout plan extremely costly and prohibitive for the party planning a hostile takeover. In this case, the move will prevent anyone from having more than a 15 per cent stake in Twitter by allowing existing shareholders to buy additional shares at a discount.

The Twitter board detailed its defence plan to the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and put out a statement saying it was needed because of Mr Musk's "unsolicited, non-binding proposal to acquire Twitter".

In fact, Musk, who offered to buy Twitter for \$43 billion for \$54.20/share in cash for a 9.2 per cent stake in Twitter, seems to have been displaced as the largest shareholder in the platform.

US registered investment advisor Vanguard Group, on April 8, disclosed that it now owns 82.4 million shares of Twitter, which means 10.3 per cent of the company, according to the most recent publicly available filings with the US SEC. As per the filing, the asset manager increased its stake in the company at some point during the first quarter.

Another high-profile Twitter



Tesla CEO Elon Musk's \$43-bn offer for Twitter has been called "hostile". Reuters file

EXPLAINED

investor, Al Waleed bin Talal Al Saud — a Saudi royal — has said that Musk's offer to buy the microblogging platform is too low. Al Saud, in a tweet on April 15, rejected Musk's offer.

"I don't believe that the proposed offer by Elon Musk (\$54.20) comes close to the intrinsic value of Twitter given its growth prospects," the Saudi prince tweeted. "Being one of the largest

and long-term shareholders of Twitter, @Kingdom_KHC and I reject this offer."

A takeover bid is deemed as hostile when a company attempts to acquire another against the wishes of that company's management. In the Twitter case, the management is represented by the platform's executive board. The board has indicated it is viewing the Musk offer as "hostile".

Musk's plan

Musk has gone back and forth on this. His latest plan, according to him, is to buy Twitter outright and then taking it private "to restore its commitment" to what he calls "free speech." But his offer, which seemed to have gotten a clear thumbs down from investors, raises multiple questions, including whether he's serious in the first place and does he have the funds to do this.

His objective for this move to take over Twitter is also fuzzy, including his promise of ensuring

that it lives up to its potential as a "platform for free speech." Musk insisted last Thursday that his plan was triggered by the realisation that "having a public platform that is maximally trusted and broadly inclusive is extremely important to the future of civilization."

What stands in Musk's way

Since Musk does not have any presence in the social media space, his proposal to buy Twitter is unlikely to raise any antitrust flags. However, there are still question marks over how he would fund the \$43 billion purchase. *Bloomberg* columnist Matt Levine wrote in an opinion piece that funding the 9.2 per cent buy in Twitter would have been much easier given that Musk only just diluted Tesla stock worth nearly \$16 billion. However, to finance his purchase of the rest of Twitter's shares would mean tapping into his remaining \$55 billion worth of Tesla shares. *Full report on www.indianexpress.com*

Goldman, JPMorgan to be Twitter advisers

REUTERS
NEW YORK, APRIL 16

GOLDMAN SACHS Group Inc has been advising the board of Twitter Inc on its deliberations, following Tesla CEO Elon Musk's \$43-billion offer to buy the social media platform.

On Friday, *Bloomberg News* reported that the Twitter board had tapped JPMorgan Chase Co Inc as a second financial adviser.

Twitter had, meanwhile, on Friday adopted a "poison pill" to limit Musk's ability to raise his stake in the social media platform, as technology-focused private equity firm Thoma Bravo emerged to challenge his \$43 billion bid.

It is not clear how much Thoma Bravo would be prepared to offer and there is no certainty that such a bid will materialise,

Industry sources said it remains possible that a private equity firm will boost Elon Musk's bid for Twitter by partnering with him

sources said. Industry sources said it remains possible that a private equity firm will boost Musk's bid by partnering with him.

Silver Lake, a PE firm with over \$90 billion in assets under management, would be a natural partner for Musk as it offered financing for his \$72-billion bid for Tesla four years ago, which Musk subsequently abandoned. Silver Lake co-chief executive Egon Durban also sits on Twitter's board.

9 SUNDAY STORY



At the Galle Face in Colombo. Since April 9, thousands of Sri Lankans have gathered here demanding that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his family members step down. Reuters

GALLE STORM

Amid crippling shortages, collapse of the economy and a political impasse, protesters across Sri Lanka have come together under the rallying cry of “Go Gota Go”. NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN travels along the island country’s uneasy fault lines, from Colombo in the south to Jaffna in the north, to find that the protests may have served to paper over some of these cracks

GALLEFACE is Colombo’s show-piece sea front. China and India have cheek-by-jowl real estate here. The Taj Samudra is an old property, dwarfed by the towering Shangri-La of the Hong Kong chain of hotels. And next to it, India’s Larsen & Toubro is constructing an ITC hotel. Out in the water is the Chinese Port City project, coming up rapidly on reclaimed land.

Nearly seven decades ago, the Federal Party representing the country’s Tamils held a one-day *satyagraha* on the green next to the sea, opposite what was then the parliament building. It was a peaceful protest against the Sri Lankan government’s ‘Sinhala Only’ legislation that took away the official language status of Tamil. But the demonstration was broken up as mobs armed with sticks attacked the protesters, cracking skulls as the police looked away. The rest is history.

That same site is now the centre of another peaceful protest. Thousands of mostly young Sri Lankans have gathered here daily since April 9 demanding that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and other family members in office, including his brother Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, step down. The old parliament building now functions as the presidential secretariat.

On a patch of green between President Rajapaksa’s office and a soaring statue of S W R D Bandaranaike, the prime minister whose controversial language policy had brought Tamils out on the streets seven decades ago, a tent city of protesters has sprung up. Called ‘Gota Go Gama’ — named after the angry ‘Go Gota Go’ slogan resounding on the street these days — this symbolic village of resistance has come up against the Rajapaksa regime. Hundreds of people have been camping at the site, with the numbers swelling in the daytime.

The protests began in March as small candlelight vigils at traffic junctions in Colombo. The demonstrators were protesting long power cuts imposed by the government because it did not have enough dollars to buy the diesel needed to run the power plants.

Since the middle of last year, essential items have been in short supply as imports have been restricted and prices have skyrocketed. With supplies dwindling, shops have had to restrict purchases and even those with money found themselves shut out. Queues stretch outside fuel stations and government-run fair price shops, with people waiting three to four hours to fill their vehicles or plastic cans. Double lines of cars wait for petrol, with people discussing if it is better to return for a refill at quarter tank or empty.

The protests have grown, bringing out students, teachers, lawyers, doctors, nurses and other professionals and youth. The government has so far not cracked down.

Unarmed police regulate the traffic around the area which leads to Colombo’s main business district. Vehicles honk in solidarity with the protesters as they pass through.

What next? Beyond their assertion that the Rajapaksas must go, not many at the protest site know what the future holds in store for

them and their country.

“I know they are not going to resign just because we are asking them to go. But the pressure of the people is important. Our voices will be heard in Parliament and Parliament has to make its decisions based on that,” says 43-year-old Rebecca David, a rights activist who has been at the Galle Face protests from the start.

The government had declared a full-week holiday for the Sinhala and Tamil New Year on April 14, hoping people would stay indoors. But that had the opposite effect: New Year’s Day saw the maximum turnout at Galle Face, with the atmosphere festive and carnival-like.

“Now it looks like people won’t give up till they get a result. They want to see the President step down,” says David. “They want to see change.”

■ ■ ■

March 31 was a turning point for the Rajapaksas. That day, hundreds of people protesting the shortages marched to the President’s private home in the Colombo suburb of Mirihana Pangiriwatta. Many of them were middle-class residents of the area and were shouting slogans seeking the President’s resignation. “Prosperity for rulers while hardship for people” was one slogan. They attempted to break through the barricades and clashed with police, who had to use water cannons and tear gas. Police vehicles were torched.

Until then, President Rajapaksa believed that as the architect of the military victory against the LTTE, he and his brothers had earned enough goodwill from the people to see them through the crisis.

The protests had actually begun much earlier in the countryside, as farmers shouted themselves hoarse against the overnight switch to organic farming and the ban on chemical fertilisers — measures taken to save precious foreign exchange. But until the protests reached Colombo, the Rajapaksas were sanguine. But that day of violence outside his house served as a reality check for President Rajapaksa. He is now said to be sequestered in his high-security official residence in the Fort area of Colombo, while his elder brother, the Prime Minister, is in his official residence at Temple Trees.

A day after the incident, on April 1, the President imposed an emergency and the police imposed a curfew in the capital, its suburbs and several outlying areas. In defiance of the curfew, protesters marched through the streets, daring the police to arrest them. By April 5, both curfew and emergency had to be withdrawn. On the same day, the government appeared to have lost its majority. A group of 42 parliamentarians belonging to the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, an alliance partner of the Rajapaksas’ Sri Lanka Podujana Party, said they had withdrawn from the coalition.

But for those who believed this was a “regime change” moment for Sri Lanka, there was disappointment. No challengers have emerged from the Opposition to overturn Prime Minister Rajapaksa. President Rajapaksa, who got all his cabinet ministers to resign — Prime Minister Rajapaksa remained in office



— invited all Opposition parties and groups to form a national government to deal with the crisis. There were no takers for this either.

Meanwhile, the Rajapaksas are only too aware that there are few protests outside Colombo and its suburbs, and that if they wait it out, the weary protesters may head back home. The protesters know that too — that every moment of delay caused by the political impasse will only serve to strengthen the Rajapaksas’ resolve to cling on.

There is also suspicion that India’s \$2.4 bn financial assistance, while bringing much needed food and fuel to the country, is helping the Rajapaksas.

Most analysts trace the economic crisis to ill-advised tax cuts that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa ordered after his 2019 election. The cuts came into effect just before the pandemic, at a time when the 2019 Easter bombings had already gutted the tourism industry.

But some economists believe the problem began much earlier, in the years after the war ended in 2009. Armed with an IMF bailout, Mahinda Rajapaksa, then president, went on a borrowing spree for non-paying infrastructure projects.

As Sri Lanka now prepares for tough negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ahilan Kadirgamar, who teaches economics at Jaffna University, warns that those already crushed by the pandemic and the economic failures of the government would be the most affected by the conditions that the international lending agency is bound to impose.

“The people who have come out on the streets today due to economic hardships are affected by cuts to social welfare and public services. Working people are going to be most affected as IMF conditions lead to austerity measures and market pricing of goods and services,” predicts Kadirgamar.

■ ■ ■

One noticeable aspect of the street protests is the secular language of the participants. If

there is one refrain other than Go Gota Go, it is this: “The Rajapaksas divided Sri Lankans by race, language and religion. We will never allow anyone to do that again”.

Tamils and Muslims, two of Sri Lanka’s minorities that have long suffered othering by the majority Sinhala-Buddhists, are today among the protesters.

Jaffna parliamentarian M A Sumanthiran believes it is an important moment in Sri Lanka’s history of ethnic relations that the protesters are even taking up Tamil causes such as post-war justice and reconciliation, addressing war crimes, the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, among others.

However, the view from Jaffna is somewhat different. Here, there are no queues outside grocery shops or petrol pumps. However, fishermen, whose boats need diesel or kerosene, are among those hit by the shortages. At the Gurnagar jetty, fishermen have placed plastic cans in the queue, hoping supplies will arrive soon.

The times are tough, but the Tamils who have lived and survived the war years say they have known worse.

When the LTTE was in control of the peninsula, the government would send only limited quantities of petrol, diesel, kerosene and food rations by ship from Colombo, calculating that most people had fled, and the supplies would fall into the hands of the Tigers. There was no cooking gas either, as the government feared these would be used to make explosives. Ditto with batteries. Medicines were in short supply too. After the bombing of Chunnakam power station, the peninsula, which used to get a total of one hour of power supply from this thermal plant when the war began between the Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE, lost all access to electricity. A generation of Jaffna students grew up studying with the help of kerosene lamps or dynamo-powered bicycle lights. Even after all these years since the war ended, homes still has a wood stove.

“In Colombo, they feel the shortages more because of the shortage of fuel, gas and power cuts. Here, we don’t feel it that much because we are used to this kind of scarcity,” says Rakesh Kannan, a general practitioner in Sydney, Australia, who is visiting his family in Jaffna.

At the Nallur Kandasamy temple, where he was offering prayers on Tamil New Year’s day, Kannan points at the parking lot, where two-wheelers and bicycles outnumber cars to say that petrol shortages were not a Jaffna problem.

He recalls the shortages from his time as a student, including when he was an undergrad student at the Jaffna teaching hospital: “I studied with a kerosene lamp.”

While Colombo has long been accused of neglecting Jaffna’s post-war economic development, in the present crisis, the war-torn Northern Province city appears to have been protected by its food self-sufficiency — farmers grow rice and vegetables — and a stoicism developed through its own war-time experiences. “People are saying very proudly that we didn’t die of a power cut then,” says Sumanthiran. Plus, Jaffna benefits from dias-

pora remittances, though not to the same extent as during the war.

Rajan Hoole, founder of the Jaffna University Teachers’ Human Rights that stood up against the violence and repression of the Tamil Tigers, says Sri Lanka is now “paying the price for the original sin of the 1948 Citizenship Act”, which rendered stateless and disenfranchised the Malayaha Tamils or Indian Origin Tamils (ethnically different from the Tamils of northern and eastern Sri Lanka) who worked in the tea plantations and who made up around 11 per cent of the population at the time.

“Until the mid-1960s, this 11 per cent was earning 65 per cent of our foreign exchange. They were the mainstay of the free education and free health we enjoyed... It has caught up with us now,” says Hoole.

So far, there has been only one protest in Jaffna over the economic crisis. On social media, some in the Tamil community have mocked the Sinhalese outreach to minorities to join the “Sri Lankan” protests, asking why the majority community had displayed no such solidarity when the Tamils were suffering during the war years.

Despite this bitterness, says Sumanthiran, there is an acute awareness, especially among students, that this problem is as much a crisis for them as it is for the Sinhalese, that landless workers and the very poor among the Tamils would be hit the hardest.

Sumanthiran says the present crisis even offers an opportunity to address the Tamil question, through the abolition of the executive presidency, as some in the Opposition are demanding.

■ ■ ■

In many ways, it is ironic that the statue of SWRD Bandaranaike at Galle Face has become a beacon for the protesters. Google now throws up “Driving Directions” to the statue, with real-time information on how long it might take to reach the centre of the protests.

Bandaranaike, an Oxford-educated lawyer, was a founder-member of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, and among the earliest to mine Sinhala-Buddhist majoritarianism for political advancement. His advocacy of “Sinhala Only” set the country down a path that the Rajapaksas, who were members of the same party until 2015, rounded off to their advantage six decades later, by claiming to have restored Sinhala pride with the defeat of the LTTE.

In the years since, a new generation has come of age. They may not know much about Sri Lanka’s failures of the past, but they are in the midst of a massive breakdown now, and sense that majoritarianism does not have the answers.

Standing near the towering Bandaranaike statue, D M Dissanayake, a lawyer in his 40s, says, “The Rajapaksas were heroes for winning the war against LTTE. After the Easter Sunday attacks, people thought the Rajapaksas are the sole protectors of the Sinhalese... They were swayed by triumphalism. Now people’s eyes have opened.”

THE PROTESTERS

The protests have seen students, teachers, lawyers, doctors and nurses gathering at at Colombo’s Galle Front

SHEMODYA JAYASEKARA, 23
Under-graduate student at the University of Sabaragamuwa in south-central Sri Lanka; studying Food Business Management



It is her first day at the protests and she is accompanied by her parents. Her father works in the security division of Colombo Port, and her mother is a home-maker. “I came because the ruling leaders do not give us what we expect from them. The economy is in a crisis. We have money but food is not available. We have cooking gas for now, but we don’t know if we will get a refill. There are long queues,” she says, adding, “I hope to work in this country after I finish my studies, but I see so many undergrads without jobs. We have been at home for two years and our university has not resumed physical classes because there is no power.”

AQEEL AHAMAD, 22
Engineering student at Moratuwa University in suburban Colombo



“Everyone is affected by this government, by the family running this government. We want a democratic

country... a peaceful environment... not an atmosphere filled with communal and ethnic racism,” says Ahmad, who is accompanied by his father, a businessman. “One of my aunts in Kandy was affected in the riots of 2018 — her house and vehicles were torched. I face racism in public places, even in my college,” he adds.

Blaming the Rajapaksa family for “every problem in the country”, he hopes “people will vote next time for eligible candidates without being driven by ethnic, religious concerns or money”

DM DISSANAYAKE, IN HIS 40s
Lawyer



“Civil society activists and others had been warning people that if Rajapaksas come to power there will be an

economic crisis because they never had a proper economic plan. But Rajapaksas were heroes for winning the war against LTTE,” said Dissanayake. After the Easter Sunday attacks, he adds, “people thought the Rajapaksas are the sole protectors of the Sinhalese... They were swayed by triumphalism. Now people’s eyes have opened.”

M K RAGUNATHAN, 68
Retired as a consultant physician at a government hospital in Galle



“I have seen how politicians have divided this country using religion, language, caste. In the last two

years, the economy has deteriorated in a way that was not even seen during war years,” says Ragnathan, adding, “With so many protesting here, I didn’t think it was right for me to sit at home. I came here as a common man to volunteer my services as a doctor.”

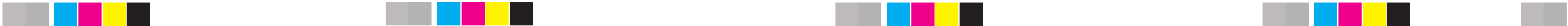
REBECCA DAVID, 43
Rights activist



“The Rajapaksas are not going to resign just because we are asking. But the pressure is important. When we demand

here, our voice will be heard in Parliament,” says David, who has been part of the protests “since the beginning”. David and her group are also starting “Teach Out” sessions for protesters to inform them “the Constitution, the powers of the president” etc.

Urging India to “help the people, not the government”, she adds, “People suspect that the BJP government is helping our government because they are quite similar in many ways”.



Across
THE AISLE



PCHIDAMBARAM

Website: pchidambaram.in
Twitter @Pchidambaram, IN

The BJP has enough evil geniuses who have the capacity to craft state-specific strategies: one such strategy is the deliberate effort to kick up controversies around food, dress and prayer in Karnataka

THE *Hijab*, *halal* and *aazaan* controversies are rocking the state of Karnataka. They have been manufactured as part of a carefully designed campaign to divide the people of Karnataka into two camps — Hindus and Muslims — ahead of the State election in 2023.

■ *Hijab* is a dress where the girl/woman covers her head when she steps out of her home. Hindu women in north India, Sikh women, Christian nuns and some others (including Sikh men) also cover their heads.

■ *Halal* is meat from slaughtering animals or poultry, according to Islamic law, through a cut to the jugular vein or windpipe and draining all the blood. Other religions have rules for preparing food: Judaism prescribes *kosher* food and many Hindu sub-divisions prepare food according to certain rules.

■ *Aazaan* is a call to prayer broadcast from mosques five times a day, often through loudspeakers. Hindu and Christian places of worship toll bells. Hindu religious festivals are usually accompanied by reciting scriptures or playing devotional music that is amplified through loudspeakers.

CENTURIES OF CO-EXISTENCE

Hijab, *halal* and *aazaan* are not new practices. They have been part of Islam ever since Islam came to India. The people of Karnataka (and the old Mysore kingdom) had accepted these practices

Hate speech thrives and divides

for centuries; no one objected to them, and no Muslim objected to Hindu religious practices. To put it shortly, Hindus, Muslims and Christians — as well as followers of other faiths — have peacefully co-existed with each other.

Until the BJP entered Karnataka. The BJP has ruled Karnataka for a few terms, in a coalition or alone. In recent years, it has ruled by enticing legislators from other parties to switch sides — the effort was labeled as Operation Lotus. The BJP faces a State election in 2023. Its governments have been non-performers and its position in Karnataka is quite shaky. Opposition parties have learnt to build protective walls to counter Operation Lotus. Hence, the need to build another narrative that can polarize the voters and attract the majority of the Hindu votes. The BJP has enough evil geniuses who have the capacity to craft state-specific strategies: one such strategy is the deliberate effort to kick up controversies around food, dress and prayer in Karnataka.

The sudden proscription of *hijab* in schools and colleges by the state government was challenged in Court. A Full Bench of the High Court of Karnataka framed the question as “whether wearing of *hijab* was an ‘essential religious practice’”, and ruled that it was not. The question was irrelevant. The only relevant question was whether the State had the power to proscribe *hijab* and thus violate the right to privacy (and agency) of the Muslim student and her right to education. An appeal has been lodged in the

Supreme Court and it is hoped that the real issues will be addressed and resolved.

HATE SPEECH THRIVES

Such controversies lay the ground for hate speech. There has been an abundance of hate speech on *both* sides, though the initial provocateur, in many recent cases, was the Hindu zealot(s). Sadly, few prominent citizens of Karnataka spoke up: among the notable exceptions were the historian Mr Ramchandra Guha and the industrialist Mrs Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw. The peddlers of hate speech turned their ire on the two!

Hate speech has crossed all bounds in some states, especially Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. A repeat offender is Yeti Narasinghanand, working as a priest in Dasna Devi temple. Last year, during a Hindu religious congregation in Haridwar, he had made derogatory remarks against Muslim women, was arrested and after some weeks released on bail. On April 3, 2022, he delivered a speech at a self-described ‘Hindu Mahapanchayat’ in Delhi when he said “to protect your sisters and daughters, take up arms.” Among the dire predictions he made was that a Muslim will be prime minister of India either in 2029 or 2034 or 2039! The police recorded an FIR but did not arrest him or move for cancellation of his bail.

Another horrifying example is the case of Mahant Bajrang Muni, a self-styled religious leader. On April 2, 2022, a video showed him addressing a gather-

ing in Hindi. He said, while the crowd cheered him, “If anyone from your community harasses any girl in the area, I will pick up your daughters from your homes and rape them.” The target was obvious. The National Commission for Women demanded his arrest. He was arrested eleven days later.

TOLERATING INTOLERANCE

Ironically, acts of violence, intolerance and hate were committed on the day celebrated as the birthday of Lord Ram, who is *Maryada Purushottam*, the epitome of righteousness. These acts and utterances cannot be dismissed as extreme rants by agent provocateurs. They have the support of the BJP and the RSS who are determined on a course to consolidate and expand the Hindu core of India which now lies in the Hindi-speaking states.

Hartosh Singh Bal, writing in the influential *Foreign Affairs*, has observed, “More than 400 million people either do not subscribe to Hinduism or do not practice the kind of Hinduism that the RSS holds supreme. They will nonetheless be subject to what is, ultimately, an imperial project that attempts to homogenize the Hindu population while ensuring that India’s Muslims and Christians are relegated to second-class citizenship.”

Amidst growing intolerance, the studied silence of the highest authorities of the country is not a mere lapse of governance.

Fifth
COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

Twitter @tavleen_singh



Bulldozing justice

LET ME start with a question. Would it be right for the homes of policemen and officials in charge of law and order in Khargone to have their houses bulldozed? I ask because when violence breaks out in a public place it is because the local administration fails, and it must be held accountable. But instead of the tortuous process of inquiry commissions that take decades to give their verdict, would it not be better to punish officials without due process? It is keeping this question in mind that we need to examine the demolition of the houses and properties of those charged with rioting in Khargone. What happened was outrageous because it was a violation of the fundamental principles that govern the rule of law, but public outrage has been subdued by the voices of those who believe that it serves Muslims right.

On social media I have heard jubilant ‘new’ Indians celebrate what happened in Khargone. I have engaged with them to point out that without the rule of law democratic countries become autocracies and what prevails is the law of the jungle. And the response has been that if the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh had waited to punish rioters through due legal process they would have remained unpunished for years. This is true. And there is a solution that is so obvious I feel foolish repeating it here, but it clearly needs repetition.

The reason why the justice system moves so slowly is because it is broken and badly needs fixing. There are some obvious reforms that can be made effortlessly. The most necessary of these, in my view, is to scrap the ludicrous procedures that exist from colonial times. An example that comes immediately to mind is that of Aryan Khan. On the day that he was given bail he would have been able in another country to walk out of court immediately. But, not in India. Here he was taken back to the cell in which he was confined for a month and made to wait another two days for the procedures of his release to be completed. Why do these procedures exist?

Why does it take the courts 20 years of deliberations before punishing those responsible for the bombings that killed nearly 300 people in Mumbai in 1993? Why do judges need to write short novels to make their judgments? Why do the police need thousands of words to make charges that could be made in a few paragraphs? Why do lawyers succeed in delaying trials? Why are there no deadlines for trials to end? These are only some of the questions that need urgent answers, but the answer cannot be to establish the law of the jungle instead of the rule of law.

What we saw in Khargone was the law of the jungle. The Home Minister of Madhya Pradesh defended what happened on the grounds that those who throw stones will have their homes reduced to stones. Well, what would he say to the old lady whose picture appeared on the front page of this newspaper last week? Hasina Fakhroo is in her sixties and clearly too old to be a rioter, but her house was reduced to rubble before she could prove that it was built under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

Long is the list of cases in which people have been punished without due process, and the list does not begin with Narendra Modi coming to power as the Congress party would have us believe. An example from supposedly benign Congress times is that of Lalit Modi. All the cases that were made against him have been thrown out of court, but he was hounded out of India as a result of a shameful media trial in which those responsible for upholding the rule of law played an ugly part. More recently this happened in the Sushant Singh Rajput case where the media was manipulated through calculated leaks to turn his suicide into a murder case. A young woman’s life was destroyed by TV anchors who declared her guilty on primetime. Should these anchors have their homes bulldozed? When should we stop using bulldozers?

Once we give officials the right to bulldoze the homes of suspected rioters and the right to seize the properties of alleged offenders, we establish the rule of the jungle. Once we allow income-tax inspectors to raid the homes of alleged tax evaders without proof that they have evaded taxes, we do the same. This is a practice that has been going on much too long.

What has changed since Narendra Modi took office is that somehow it is always Muslims that end up spending months in jail in cases that are bailable. It is shameful that this happened to a standup comedian for a joke he had not cracked. Shameful that student leaders and journalists, nearly always Muslims, spend months in jail on usually dubious charges. Let us then ask what happens to a country in which senior political leaders and high officials show total disdain for the rule of law on the fallacious grounds that the process of justice takes too long. The answer is that they are in clear violation of the Constitution of India, and the consequences are grim. When the rule of law is weakened, it weakens democracy because the rule of law has to be sacrosanct in democratic countries.

The message behind BSP’s loss in UP polls

Dalit
ality

VIVEK KUMAR



THE 2022 Uttar Pradesh election verdict is a latent function of deep communal and casteist mobilisation. However, it is being camouflaged under the garb of development and good governance. On the one hand there was ‘Kairana, Kashi, Ayodhya, Mathura, Jinnah, Assi-Bees, bulldozer (against a particular community), Teen Talaa’, and on the other side, the mobilisation of Brahmins, non-Yadavs (Kurmi, Lodh, Gujjar, Jaat, Rajbhar, Maurya, Saini, Nonia, Chauhan, Nishad, Nai), and non-Jatavs (Pasi, Dhobi, Kori, Khatik, Valmiki, Dhanuk) became the fulcrum of electioneering. Above all, the mainstream corporate media, YouTube media, pollsters, and so-called intellectuals, on the basis of flop-rallies by leaders of two political parties, described the UP elections as bipolar. Once this perception crystallised amongst masses, they forgot unemployment, price rise, Covid deaths, Hathras case, Unnao case etc.

This false consciousness created a strong perception that the contest is between the BJP and SP and that the BSP is not in the fight at all. So the Muslims, OBCs, and a few upper-caste voters who have traditionally voted for the BSP, deserted it. Had this section voted for development and good governance, for which the BSP had the best record during its 2007-12 term in UP, they would have picked the party again.

It is a fact that in this election the BSP lost approximately 74 lakh votes in comparison to 2017. The SP gained 1.26 crore and its ally, the RLD, gained 10 lakh votes. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BSP had tied up with the SP and RLD, and since the Dalit vote is often based on ideology, therefore in all probability, the BSP votes have shifted to the SP and RLD to defeat the BJP.

So did the BJP raise its tally? Of course, because of the Congress (which lost approximately 32 lakh votes) and the Shiv Sena (did not contest). The voters of these parties have no hesitation in voting for the BJP. It is in this context that the theory that the Dalit vote has shifted to the BJP is nothing but an

ignorance of history.

Historically, non-Jatavs have always voted for the BJP (or the Jana Sangh). At one point, they were also considered Congress vote bank, before shifting to the BSP. This narrative was constructed to save the so-called upper-castes from being questioned — why did they vote en-bloc for the BJP?

That the BSP is the B-team of the BJP is another narrative which speaks volumes about caste prejudice. In Goa, the Trinamool Congress contested polls for the first time and did not win any seat, and in turn helped the BJP to retain power. Yet, nobody calls the TMC a B-team of the BJP. Mamata Banerjee also travelled to UP to campaign for the SP.

The caste prejudice in Indian politics is not only towards the BSP’s Mayawati. Take Congress’s Charanjit Singh Channi. In Punjab polls, Jat Sikhs and Hindus did not vote for Channi although he is a well-educated and seasoned politician. It is established fact that in Punjab, the Akalis and the Congress come to power alternatively, and the Jat Sikhs, Hindus and Dalits have voted for the Congress for 70 years. However, this time, AAP weaned away Jats, Hindus and non-Ravidasis and Ramdasias from Congress by projecting a Jat Sikh as CM.

Then what is the way forward for BSP? The answer lies in the fact that the BSP is not only a political party, it is a social movement. Losing and winning an election is part of the movement and till the gaps in democracy are filled, BSP will remain relevant.

Nonetheless, after five elections (UP polls — 2012, 2017, 2022 — and two general elections — 2014, 2019) it has been established that the mainstream society is not ready to accept the BSP as a centrist party, even though it is hailed for its good governance, social justice (land distribution), pro-poor schemes (Ambedkar Village, Kanshiram Housing Schemes), and development (with GDP of the state on a par with the national numbers during 2007-12).

Therefore, it has to reinvent its old ideology and identify elements which exploit Bahujans in institutions of governance, education, production and social life. It has to repeat its 2007 performance to provide representation to Bahujans in institutions of governance to strengthen democracy.

Kumar is professor of sociology at Jawaharlal Nehru University
Suraj Yengde, the author of ‘Caste Matters, curates the fortnightly ‘Dalitality’ column

life &
WORK

DILEESH POTHAN



ALL THROUGH my childhood and teenage years, I noticed some inadequacies in my vision. For instance, when I picked up a dull-coloured shirt, others would call it bright. But I never knew I was colour-blind. My ‘inadequacy’, I presumed, had to do with how I saw certain colour combinations. I just told myself that my colour sensibilities were a little different from everyone else. After being associated with a few film projects as assistant director, working on some television productions, and making short films and video albums, I joined a film institute in Kochi as faculty. I was about 28 years old then.

At the institute, I was asked to help with the admission process. Some lecturers on the panel insisted that we also make arrangements for a colour-blindness test while selecting candidates. We put up some colour boards and I was given the responsibility to spot the colour-blind candidates.

That is when I realised that I was colour blind.

I realised the problem but I knew nothing about it. So, I started reading up. Since I was also an aspiring filmmaker, I was nervous about my future.

Once it became known that I had colour blindness, people around me also became curious. They would show me things and ask me about its colour. Even now, some friends ask me in jest, “What is the colour of this shirt?” For me, however, it was less about not recognising a particular colour and more about the realisation that I may be seeing a different world.

I was told my problem is with Red and Green, among the most common forms of colour blindness.

Then, I came across a report that said that even British-American film director Christopher Nolan is colour blind. It came as a huge relief. The fact that an internationally celebrated filmmaker was also colour blind gave me immense confidence.

So when the Supreme Court issued an order directing the Pune-based Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) not to exclude candidates suffering from colour

The world through my eyes is just as colourful



A still from Pothan's *Kumbalangi Nights*. Facebook/Kumbalangi Nights

blindness from its courses on filmmaking and editing, I welcomed it wholeheartedly.

The petitioner — a student who was denied admission to FTII’s Diploma in Film Editing course in 2015 after he was diagnosed as colour blind — had also cited Nolan’s example.

Looking back, I feel that if I hadn’t known about Nolan, things would have been far more challenging for me emotionally in the early part of my career. My transition, from suspecting that I had a problem with my vision to thinking that I had ‘lesser’ colour sense, to finally understanding that I had colour blindness, was slow.

The SC order said that “colour blindness is not a form of blindness but a deficiency.” So true. I would say that there might be a problem in my vision, but not in my sensibility.

Shyju Khalid, a renowned cinematographer, once told me, “While we see a largely dull world and all the dirt around, maybe you have a graded vision.” In films, colour grading refers to curating colours carefully to convey an atmosphere, emotion and style.

However, at times, the condition does

make me conscious at work. To counter it, I have developed an immersive working style, engaging deeply with cinematographers and designers to avoid any conflict.

Until the recent Supreme Court order, I didn’t even know about the FTII case. When a prestigious institute denies admission to a colour-blind aspirant, it ruins the dreams of many. More importantly, it makes someone feel inadequate or unqualified.

Now, however, we know that there are many colour-blind actors and filmmakers. I believe that the scope of our vision is significant too. The colours and patterns we see are so different and beautiful. In a way, we can see the lives around us more closely because we are denied many colours. The Supreme Court order said, “Art is non-conformist in character...” Very true. The perspective of colour-blind people should be welcomed as the influence of cinema on people is also different and relative. I would go as far as to say that being colour blind is not an inadequacy but an extra advantage for a filmmaker. That’s how I see the apex court’s order.

Pothan is an acclaimed director, producer and actor, associated with Malayalam films such as *Kumbalangi Nights* and *Joji*.

As told to Arun Janardhanan

On the
LOOSE

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AFTER DEPICTING blowzy romance via wind machines, designer wardrobes and incredulous coincidences, celebrity filmmaker Karan Johar’s latest foray into the business of love is a down-to-earth endorsement of *www.itiimshaadi.com*. The website, promoted by the very aptly named company Alma Mater Matters Pvt Ltd invites registrations only from alumni of top institutions, with the explanation that “people desire companionship of matching intellects with similar experiences”. It’s perfectly natural that like gravitates towards like, the latest examples being Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt. But Johar has been receiving a lot of flak on Twitter for promoting a “regressive and discriminatory” approach to marriage, as if India’s

unabashedly conservative wedding protocols have ever been anything else.

Internet matchmaking has become ubiquitous even in India, taking on the space once occupied by newspaper matrimonial ads. It can be overwhelming, sorting through lakhs of *jeevansathi.com* and *shaadi.com* profiles, constantly worrying about a potential prospect misrepresenting themselves. A friend of mine was alarmed to discover that someone she matched with on Tinder was a truck driver before starting a transport business. I pointed out that Russell Crowe was a waiter before making it in Hollywood to which she snapped she had nothing in common with people in the trucking industry. Right or wrong, we are all shameless traditionalists when it comes to choosing life partners, operating in our own little gilded circles, reluctant to consider an outlier. If one is venturing outside of one’s

comfort zone, a filtering is required. That’s where *itiimshaadi.com* scores; it makes no bones about sifting out the grain from the chaff, so to say.

It is worth noting that there are over 1,500 matrimonial websites in India, catering to orthodox Hindu demands, largely based on caste. Minorities (Muslims and Christians) would be wasting their time on many of them (however, they have their own specific websites full of equally tasteless idiosyncrasies). A glance through the top five matchmaking sites is a revelation; candidates who fail to identify their own caste and graciously tick “caste no bar” in their quest for a mate have a far smaller pool of responses to choose from. There are two reasons for this. One, Indians are hopelessly insular and casteist. Two, a lack of full disclosure is viewed suspiciously; perhaps a candidate is hiding an unsavoury past. Under the heading “Caste

No Bar” I repeatedly saw: “SC/ST Please Excuse”, contradictory yet noteworthy — this is a rare specimen indeed, who stops short of taking a deep plunge but is at least, willing to look beyond his own sub-caste.

It is to be wondered that after all this painstaking anthropological streamlining and pairings based on socio-economic hierarchies, if, a few years in, people do a rethink and decide these yardsticks were wholly idiotic — and that giving oneself up to mad passion might have been more conducive to happiness. But romantic inexperience leads to the fear that the lovers one chooses may be chronically wrong (and there’ll be no one to blame). Mate selection is an issue in other countries too. In the West they go about it like normal adults, picking partners with a shared vision for the future, and similar interests. Critically, mummy-papa are not involved and nobody cares

what a partner’s random ancestors did, 300 years ago. Indians approach their personal lives the way they do a 12th Board examination — industriously, the virtues of continuity of society hampered into them.

This attitude of risk averseness has led to an over-dependence on tribe and a cynical distrust of romance. After all, most of literature concerns the perils of scandal and doomed love; in *Anna Karenina*, Anna leaves her husband for Vronsky, condemning herself to a life of despair and death. Lydia, in *Pride and Prejudice*, is reduced to poverty by eloping with the county rake, Wickham. In this era, the path to true love may be paved with choices, but the safest is going en route the only destination that matters: a carefully strategized marriage.

The writer is director, Hutkay Films

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS MAGAZINE



POINT OF VIEW

The Creative Spark

Mumbai-based artist Atul Dodiya on turning to watercolours during the pandemic, the complexity of self-portraits and his new exhibition in Delhi

Rinku Ghosh

NAME: PRATHAM Sharma; Designation: Project Manager; Preferred pronoun: she/they; Preferred honorific: Ms, Mx." This is the email signature of an IBMer on the office intranet as part of a sensitivity drive that respects an employee's mind over body and validates self-worth. IBM is not the only workplace to break down male/female binaries of identity through language and perception. In the corporate sphere and outside of it, expressions of gender identities are being repurposed to become more inclusive and empathetic. The first step to this is the language one uses, for it determines the way one sees the world and oneself.

Language is key to connecting with marginalised groups such as the LGBTQIA+ as they break out of gender/sexual stereotypes and define themselves through a larger prism. Pronouns like "he" or "she" come with definitive expectations of how one should express one's identity. While this works for people who think in the way of the gender they have been assigned at birth, it is normative and limiting for people who are gender-neutral or still to figure out their identities. It has prompted them to move beyond conventional pronouns to non-binary ones such as "they".

"Our earliest form of communication was gestural, we pointed out things to each other. With the evolution of language, pronouns replaced this behaviour and became, among many things, representative of a personal point of view. Words like 'they' are deictic, which means their meaning can vary according to contexts, time and place. So, it is with pronouns that people are crafting their acceptance within the existing scheme of things and redefining a corporate culture that reflects the society of our time," says Rukmini Bhaya Nair, professor of Linguistics and English, IIT, Delhi.

Making variable pronouns a natural part of introductions in the social space takes the awkwardness away from a mixed gender group. Zainab Patel, head, Diversity and Inclusion (D&I), Pernod Ricard, India, a transgender herself, says, "Such a practice unboxes identity, encourages empathy and makes colleagues non-judgemental. Empathy is key to an organisation's cultural growth. As a man-



GETTY IMAGES

How Indian workplaces are slowly waking up to gender sensitivity

agement policy, it works because it shows that the company is willing to come down to everybody's comfort level. That's more important than hiring to ensure a diversity quota."

At the Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, executive director Keshav Suri, 37, has trained his team to approach guests neutrally. "We introduce ourselves with our preferred pronouns and also request guests to share theirs to minimise the risk of mis-gendering. A gender-neutral language, starting from inviting applications to the hiring process, allows people to choose for themselves and, at the same time, express their respect for other gender identities by not assuming. This builds confidence

in queer people as they get recognised for who they are and are able to bring their whole selves to work," he says. A compassionate language policy leads to ease of access. "Besides LGBTQIA+ communities, the group has staff from various marginal intersections of society, including people with disabilities and acid-attack survivors. "This has helped the team accept each other and grow," says Suri.

Patel, however, feels not just pronouns, but spoken language as a whole has to change to respect the sensitivities of gender, marginalised communities, races, and filter down to the shop floor. "We still use words like 'baniya' and 'bhangi' to label communities and profes-

sions; still use phrases like 'able-bodied men' for a job description instead of writing 'persons who can lift weights.' Language cannot be an extension of bias any longer, it has to value competency. Companies must learn interventions and work out anti-discriminatory policies, backed by a language policy, something like the Vishaka guidelines. Self-identification must come from within," says Patel.

The sensitivity brought on by an inclusive language policy has not only changed perspectives within corporations but built ecosystems. Prachi Rastogi, D&I leader, IBM, says "It has driven a more gender-sensitive intervention at all levels. For example, we have a pol-

icy of allowing our lactating mothers to travel with another caregiver at company expense. We have extended this facility to all genders. We extend insurance for affirmative surgeries and give our staff time to heal. We have gender-neutral bathrooms and conduct workshops on both female and male menopause. We have linked promotions and increments to behaviour that encourages diversity and have zero tolerance for violations. Culture must be an upstander, not a bystander. Only then will it enter homes, change mindsets."

Of course, modifying language to reflect a spectrum of gender identities in the corporate workspace is yet to result in a massive cultural

shift. In fact, linguists across the world are debating on "woke" culture and its appropriate representation in languages. "The notion of concealment vs revelation has come to the fore but the tension must go. Language cannot be given a cursory treatment. For example, will the English language tenets work in non-Western settings or among communities who are outside LGBTQIA+? Some of our own regional languages have genderless pronouns. Should we draw on them?" asks Nair.

Parmesh Shahani, author of *Queeristan: LGBTQ Inclusion in the Indian Workplace* (2020), is studying Indian languages to build a gender-neutral vocabulary in everyday life. "Historically, LGBTQIA+ have had a legitimate presence in our culture — the transworld has been peopled by *kinnaurs, hijras, jogappas* and they have influenced our languages. For example, the word 'aap' is respectful and totally gender-neutral. Bengali has a gender-neutral pronoun, 'shey'. The easiest way to bring regional languages to the fore is by incorporating them in the culture space," he says.

Adherence to a language policy may seem like a faddist corporate drill but the effects are showing. Suansh Khare, 30, an employee at a Delhi-based MNC, says, "I was hired for a mainstream position at 28. My ease at work convinced my folks that I could sail through the world." Mohul Sharma, food and beverage services associate at The Lalit, adds, "You exhale because you don't have to suppress who you are and get to show what you are worth beyond your gender identity."

Some languages are already creating new gender-neutral pronouns like the Swedish "hen". In Finnish, the third-person pronoun, 'hän' has become popular. The French dictionary *Le Robert* announced last year it had added the pronoun "iel" for its online edition after its researchers noticed its growing usage.

There could also be conscious tweaks within existing frameworks. In January 2019, Hanover became the first German city to use gender-neutral nouns in its official communication. United Airlines became the first airline to offer non-binary gender-booking options. Companies like Accenture are giving employees the option of listing preferred pronouns in their online directories and on conference name tags. New rules of engagement? Certainly. But, more importantly, it is also a way of building a culture of respect.

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Leh Ladakh Nubra Pangong (7D) May 1 - 52000

Kashmir (6D) May 11 - 49000

Shimla Manali (6D) May 11 - 39000

Amritsar with Attari Wagah Border (4D) May 9-28K

Nainital Mussoorie Corbett Park (9D) May 23-55K

Assam Arunachal Meghalaya(12D)May3 - 85K

Sikkim Darjeeling Gangtok Lachung (9D) May 5 - 68K

Jaipur Udaipur Pushkar (6D) May 8 - 32000

Kerala (6D) May 8 - 35000

Nepal Pokhara Chitwan (8D) May 18 - 60000

Dubai Abu Dhabi (6D) May 29 - 95000

Mauritius (7D) May 25 - 115000

Iceland (10D) June 19 - 325000

England Scotland (10D) Jun 22 - 250000

Couples Only (for middle-age couples)

Leh Kargil Nubra Pangong (9D) May 21 - 66000

Kashmir (8D) June 18 - 60000

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All of Himachal (15D) 84000 - 86000

Dalhousie D'shala Amritsar Shimla Manali (13D) 73K-75K

Dalhousie D'shala Amritsar (8D) 47K-50K

D'shala D'housie Palampur Pragpur (8D) 51K-52K

Shimla Manali (6D/8D) 37000 - 48000

Nainital Mussoorie Corbett Park (9D) 51K - 57K

Nainital Corbett Park (6D) 39000 - 42000

Varanasi Ayodhya Lucknow (8D) 46000

Sikkim Darjeeling Gangtok Lachung (9D) 68K - 70K

Sikkim Darjeeling Gangtok (7D) 59000 - 62000

Assam Arunachal Pradesh (10D) 72K - 75K

All of Meghalaya (8D) 64000 - 66000

Madhya Pradesh Magic (9D) 54K - 56K

Rajasthan (6D) 32000 - 34000

Gujarat+Statue of Unity (10D) 46000-50000

Coorg Mysore Bengaluru (7D) 44K - 46K

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DOWN IN JUNGLELAND



Ranjit Lal

Ranjit Lal is an author, environmentalist and bird watcher

Scenes from a Window

The best antidote to a hospital stay is a dose of avian tonic

MANY HOSPITALS around the world now include “pet therapy” as a part of the treatment and recovery process. Well-socialised dogs (and, maybe, cats), bunnies, guinea pigs and, perhaps, even a rude parakeet or two “visit” their patient clients regularly and raise their spirits, helping them recover more quickly.

I don't know if this line of treatment is being followed by hospitals in India but I do know that all I had to do was to stare outside the enormous plate-glass window of the hospital room I was in and the birds outside did the rest. It was a widescreen window, open to the sky (mercifully, blue) and, at the canopy level of trees growing across the road, bushes and hedges below, and bordering a little sunflower garden in the heart of south Delhi. Time at your disposal, you sit at the window and watch the goings-on. Within two days, you'd begin to notice patterns emerge: like us, the birds, too, had a routine. They were all *aam-janta* birds who, like *aam-janta* city-dwellers, went about their daily affairs — but with one big difference. None of them scowled or seemed surly; they seemed to be in the blithest of spirits, which rubbed off on you no matter how much of a hypochondriac you tried to be!

Every evening squadrons of rosy starlings would streak across the sky in tight bunches intent on destroying some distant target (a fruiting peepul, perhaps). Their cousins, the common mynas, would fly in smaller more disorganised rabbles, their squat silhouettes and propeller-like wings invariably reminding you of the wonderful Spitfire fighters of World War II. The big black kites skated past at window level, banking and swooping and occasionally engaging with each other.

A cluster of *papdi* trees attracted a clientele of green pigeons, who simply dived in and vanished in the canopy. You could hear the always grinning, somewhat foolish-looking brown-headed barbet calling even through the window glass — but they, too, simply vanished once they were permitted entry into what I had begun calling the “Papdi-Hotel”. Down below at the edge of the little sunflower garden, a pair of red-vented bulbuls was obviously bringing up a family in the middle of a bougainvillea



RANJIT LAL

HEALING TOUCH

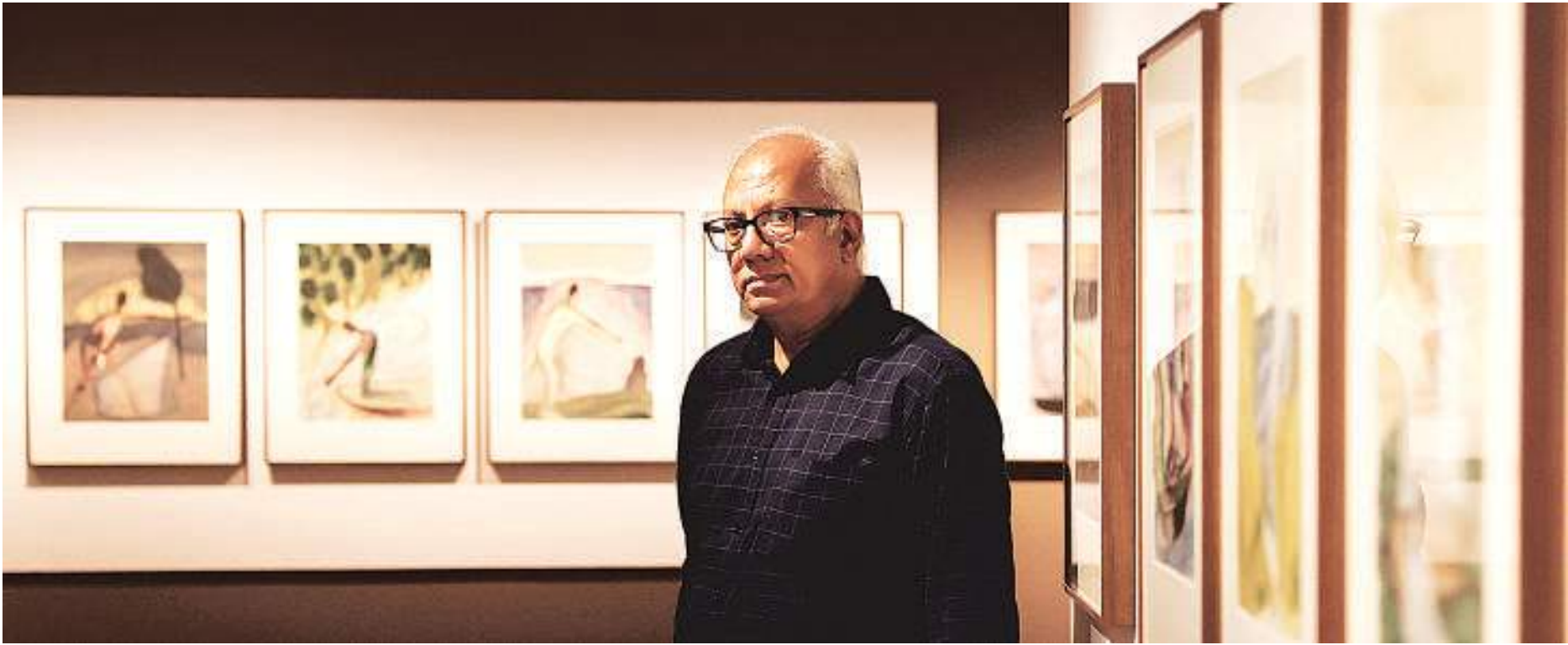
Rufous treepie

creeper nearby. Every now and then, one of the parents would alight nearby, look around hastily and dive into the creeper, only to emerge a little while later and whirr off. She (and probably her partner) was least bothered by the tremendous clanging racket emerging from her neighbours, who were constructing some monstrosity out of large flashy aluminium sheets (probably, something for the air-conditioning plant) by cutting and hammering them to shape.

The parakeets as always were the most wild and wanton: they streaked across the skies at random like bullet-headed missiles, screaming their heads off as they swerved and banked, showing off the hundreds of shades of emerald in their plumage. Watch a flock of parakeets for five minutes and you cannot help but smile. But yes, there was also the furtive and sinister. On my last morning, I noticed a pair of rufous treepies systematically clam-boring up the branches of a fish-tail palm tree growing alongside the building, searching with all the thoroughness of the Enforcement Directorate dispatched on orders of the highest dispensation. Now, treepies are known for their appetite for baby birds and eggs, so this was not promising. Much of the tree was hidden from me, so I couldn't figure out whether they had found a nest in the end — but the thoroughness of the search gave you chills.

One advantage of this kind of confined birding is that it forces you to observe. Most birders are content on ticking off species on their list and marching on: here you are stuck with one viewpoint all day. And this is when the patterns in the lives of birds begin to manifest themselves and you begin to think, hey, you know they're not living random vagabond lives. Extrapolate that to every other living creature on earth and you will realise that it's all one enormous living system working perfectly in harmony — not so much for the survival of the system itself as for that of each genetic component of it.

Then, shortly before being discharged, I watch a fluffy white, down feather float up to the window, rocking on the air currents, like a boat on a lake. It leans against the window for a long moment before drifting away into the wild blue yonder. Back home, I am awoken at 3 am by the peacocks next door — mewling and screaming — back from some karaoke orgy. As dawn filters in, the koels yodel their egg-dumping schemes to one another, and then, the bunch of babblers living across the wall break into their clamorous cacophony. Punctually, at sunrise, your personal red-whiskered bulbul alarm on the window bougainvillea begins its mellifluous wake-up call.



PRAVEEN KHANNA

‘Art doesn’t always lie in great subjects’

Mumbai-based artist Atul Dodiya, 63, on finding courage to paint self-portraits, creating a shrine for actor Rajesh Khanna and his new exhibition in Delhi

Vandana Kalra

Your exhibition at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in Delhi, ‘Walking with the Waves’, has small-scale watercolours painted during the pandemic. Did the pandemic affect the way you work?

When I first heard about COVID-19, it was still a distant virus in China. I did not really take it seriously till the lockdown was announced in India. Gradually, I realised that it would not be possible for me to regularly visit my studio, which is only 15 minutes from home. That is when I brought home some pigments and began to work on paper. It was completely free-flowing and unlike my usual practice, where I reference books, films and art I have engaged with. In this new suite of works, I tap a less busy but more innocent space inside me. One form led to another and, starting from March 22, 2020, to July, 2021, I would mostly complete one work every day. In the course of one-and-a-half years, I have made 366 paintings. The exhibition features 135 of them.

We see a lot of nature and some faceless figures in the exhibition. Tell us about them.

Perhaps, since I was not able to go to nature, I was bringing nature into my room, in my painting. We so often seek peace and comfort in nature; we travel to places to feel close to nature. For this set of works, I was not really taking direct inspiration from any source, but the application in some places did remind me of Bengal masters such as Rabindranath

Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benode Behari Mukherjee, who were close to nature and often painted their surroundings in Santiniketan. I have chosen to keep the figures largely anonymous, with little clothing and no faces. There is a simplicity in the manner in which I worked on them, which reminds me of my favourite pre-Renaissance masters — the simplification of the figure, the clarity of the drawn line that you see in (Italian artists) Fra Angelico, Piero della Francesca and Giotto, who have had a profound effect on my work. Art doesn't always lie in a great subject matter.

There is a figure of an artist with a brush in several watercolours. Is that you? You have previously painted self-portraits.

The watercolours have a figure with a brush and palette, and if you feel he is a painter, and that is me, then probably it is. A large canvas has an expectation and I did not want to impose any weight of reference, history or culture in these works. Picasso once said, each painting is a self-portrait because it depicts what one is thinking, even if it is still life. I also feel that self-portraits are difficult and require courage. There has to be a reason to do one. Some of the best self-portraits are by Rembrandt — the treatment of the skin in oil paint is remarkable and the way he depicted light on the face generates an emotion which he probably felt within. You recognise the likeness of a painter, but it is not the likeness which we are admiring in a self-portrait by Rembrandt, (Vincent) van Gogh or Paul Cézanne. The works are not illustrative or formal studies, but generate more complex



COURTESY: KIRAN NADAR MUSEUM OF ART

A NEW DIRECTION
(Top) Atul Dodiya at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art; a watercolour on display at the exhibition that is on till June 30

emotional parallels. When I saw the Hindi film *Baazigar* (1993) poster, I immediately wanted to do a self-portrait. I took pictures of myself with a toy gun, with glasses that reflected images of Bhupen Khakhar and David Hockney, my first inspirations.

I believe you also watched a lot of world cinema during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, we watched films by Federico Fellini, Ingmar Bergman, Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni, Satyajit Ray. Anju and I are big film buffs. We used to be part of several film clubs and attended film

festivals. Our daughter (Biraaj) recently introduced us to new names and new type of cinema, of filmmakers such as Wong Kar-wai, Chantal Akerman, Agnès Varda, of whom I was not aware of. While watching these, at times, I would take photographs of a paused scene and study it later to see if I could use any element in my paintings.

I have also rediscovered Radio Ceylon and listen to it from 6 to 8, every morning. If I hear a new song or something I like, I write it down. I now have a list of 200-300 in my diary.

In fact, during the pandemic I also worked on something radically different for a private commission at Rajesh Khanna's old house in Bandra, Ashirwad. I created *A Shrine for Rajesh Khanna* with shutter paintings and photographs of the actor, as a homage to the superstar. I rewatched several of his films, such as *Raaz* (1967), *Andaaz* (1971), *Anand* (1971) and *Amar Prem* (1972). At the same time, I was also working on another film project based on more serious cinema, such as Mani Kaul's *Uski Roti* (1969), *Duvidha* (1973) and MS Sathyu's *Garm Hava* (1974).

The exhibition also has mythological works. Have you referred to mythology previously in your work? Are you wary of such depictions, given how there have been controversies in the past?

I have done a Mahalakshmi shutter, but this is probably the first. The works are based on stories of Krishna that I have heard. A historian, theorist or philosopher would tackle mythology differently, but, as an artist, I haven't really delved deep into the original source. At times, you lose the creative impulse if you focus on documentation. I have also done some oil paint on laminate and watercolours on the 10 avatars of Vishnu, which I haven't shown yet. There is certainly a tension that we see around religion now, so one is cautious of what one is painting. But I choose to do what I learnt from Tyeb Mehta. He painted what he wanted. So, he had Durga and Kali, but also the demon, Mahishasura.

To Ma’am, With Love

Remembering Mrs Hashmi, teacher, mentor inspiration

SLICE OF LIFE



Suvir Saran

Suvir Saran is a chef, author, educator and world traveller

SABIHA HASHMI was born on November 8, 1949, into a family of Indian freedom fighters and literary figures. She was married at 20 and had two sons who were classmates to my brother and me at Modern School, Vasant Vihar, Delhi, where Mrs Hashmi taught art to middle- and senior-school students. She passed away at her home in Bengaluru on April 5 at the young age of 72.

I first met Mrs Hashmi when I joined Modern School in fourth grade, full of restless energy and shame brought on by the awareness of my gay identity. She found something in me curious enough to allow me entry into her classrooms, where she instructed students senior to me. It was as if Mrs Hashmi knew I was hurting inside, was lost in myself, to myself, and to the world. And so she, who was herself an “other” in so many ways (a divorced woman in a conservative nation, a single mom, and an artist), found an opportunity to

be there for another who was an oddity, one who needed an anchor and role model, needed a haven where internal fears could find artistic expression and needed to feel safe from the harsh treatment kids inflict on those who don't fit in.

When I became a teen, Mrs Hashmi told me about how her family's lot in life changed from a place of comfort to abject poverty when her grandfather's furniture business was ruined during Partition. She and her siblings saw very hard days and the separation of their parents who worked jobs in different cities. Mrs Hashmi also told me about her own marriage and how challenging life can become in a difficult relationship and more challenging still when there are children involved. She taught me about dealing with hardships and showed me through her own experiences the importance of making tough choices and persevering despite all odds. Time after time I saw her take on the courage of a lion though her physical frame seemed more akin to that of a much smaller animal, like a rabbit.

As I came to the 11th grade, I chose to study the sciences. It was at Mrs Hashmi's behest that I presented the school and my family with my desire to take graphic arts and screen printing as well as my science courses — something unheard of. Mrs Hashmi let me know that she would battle teachers who didn't appreciate my unique gifts as a student, and thus allow me significant absenteeism from their classes as I fitted arts and music into my day. There were weeks in those last two years of school when I wasn't seen in any place other than Mrs Hashmi's art room or the music room, and there were nights I got home way past dinnertime, having stayed to finish yet another project. My fellow students envied her love for me and would tease me endlessly about being an extension of her being, and her pet. This was certainly something I didn't always appreciate, as her love came with strict rules of engagement, tough expectations, and high standards.

Mrs Hashmi motivated me, a boy who



SUVIR SARAN

WOMAN OF SUBSTANCE
Mrs Hashmi touched many lives with her peerless grace, dignity, and kindhearted tutelage

wasn't athletic, to climb rocks by saying that if I tried, she would let me show off my cooking skills to the others. I ended up climbing the rocks and then making French fries, and my classmates were suitably impressed. She would tell me what books to borrow from the library — (Alexander) Pushkin and (Fyodor) Dostoevsky were two authors I couldn't have read at 15 had it not been for her. At her prodding, I learned to read and write Urdu and took lessons in Hindi. She took me with her to plays and gallery openings; she would read my writing and poetry and return my efforts with reviews that had me striving to do better. In my end-of-school diary, where other teachers wrote flattering and congratulatory notes, she wrote, “Go jump in a well.” But the next morning she came with a most glorious recommendation letter for me to send to Sir JJ School of Art, Mumbai, where I was the only student from outside of Maharashtra to get into the commercial arts program in 1991. I've always maintained that everything good I have said, thought or done, I owe to her and her alone.

I heard of Mrs Hashmi's passing last week and shared the news in a WhatsApp message

with my mother. She replied, “You have lost your guru.” How astute my mother is! I am the youngest of my siblings, born to creature comforts and a family that is whole. By opening my eyes to the world around me, Mrs Hashmi taught me to be the eyes of those without sight, the agitator for those who can't fight back, and the voice for those who have been marginalised generationally, and thus, have neither vocabulary nor expression to even verbalise or show their suffering. Although she was stoic and reticent, I would sometimes see a childlike grin surface — but only if what was being discussed came from a place of honesty, circumspection, and consideration of the other.

Mrs Hashmi awakened humanity and empathy in me and many of my classmates and teachers. She modelled caring and nurturing, both of the self and for the other. She was selfless and powerful, of meagre means and rich vision, short with lofty ideals, a single mother of two with thousands of kids who looked up to her as their guide and mentor. Mrs Hashmi lives in the stories of our lives and is immortal for having blessed so many with her peerless grace, dignity, and kindhearted tutelage.



Amrith Lal

A NOTEBOOK in which his elder brother, KP Narayanan, had copied down Kumaran Asan's poems was renowned director KP Kumaran's first introduction, at age 10 or 12, to the poet who transformed Malayalam poetry in the last century. Asan has been with Kumaran since then. At 84, Kumaran has lost count of the number of times he's read the poet. With the passage of time, Asan has only grown taller in Kumaran's eyes, a grand renaissance figure whose life as a social activist and poet has few parallels in the history of modern Kerala.

Asan is arguably the most important Malayalam poet of the last century, and one of its greatest writers. *Gramavrikshathile Kuyil* (*The Koel On the Tree in the Village*), which was released in select theatres in Kerala last week, is Kumaran's tribute to Asan. Kumaran, who has been associated with almost every progressive cultural and political movement of his time, says the biopic is his attempt to capture the soul and spirit of a great social and cultural figure who was misunderstood and misrepresented many times during his short life. During a half-century long career, Kumaran directed films such as *Athithi* (1974), a landmark film for parallel cinema in Malayalam, *Rugmini* (1988, based on a short story by Madhavikutty), *Akasha Gopuram* (2008, inspired by Henrik Ibsen's play, *The Master Builder*, 1892), and a series of short films and documentaries. Film scholar CS Venkiteswaran says that unlike his contemporaries in parallel cinema, Kumaran uses elements of mainstream cinema, like songs, to create an engaging narrative style. *Kuyil* stands apart from his earlier films for its theme, treatment, unconventional cast (Carnatic musician Sreevalsan J Menon is brilliant as Asan), and the extensive use of poetry.

Kumaran Asan died at the age of 50 in 1924. His first major work — *Veenapoovu* (*The Fallen Flower*, 1907) — was published at age 34 and to great acclaim. Asan's life in letters as a published author was short. But in those 16 years, between the publication of *Veenapoovu* and his tragic death in a boat accident, Asan published close to a dozen masterly works — *Nalini* (1911), *Leela* (1914), *Sree Buddha Charitham*, *Prarodanam*, *Chinthavishtayaya Sita* (1919), *Karuna* (1923), *Chandalabhihshuki* (1922). These poems have a transcendental quality that distinguished them from the work of his contemporaries; their inner luminosity has not faded after so many years.

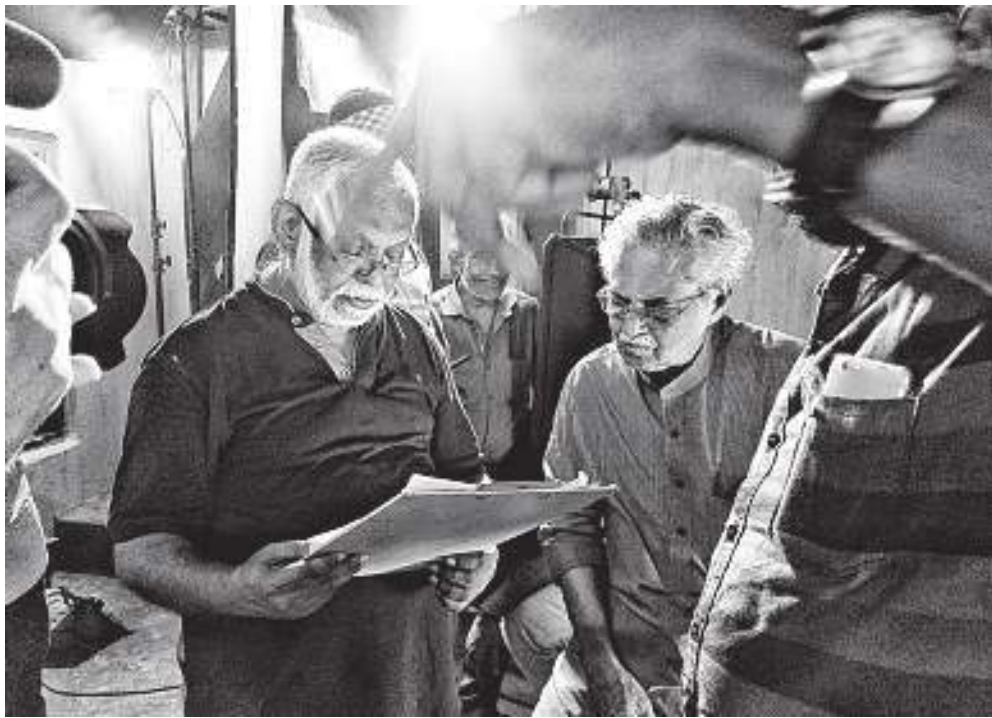
Kumaran's *Kuyil* focuses on the last seven-eight years of Asan's life — a hectic time: He was producing great poetry, had fallen in love with a much younger girl, whom he married at the age of 45, had become a father, and acquired wealth. He was now a widely respected community leader and nominated to Sri Moolam Praja Sabha, a popular assembly at the court of the Travancore king. He'd acquired a self-awareness and confidence about his poetic genius that he chose to reflect on the higher truths of life, primarily ethical questions and the tension between life and death, unlike his contemporaries who were caught in the whirlpool of here and now. Asan was deeply political, but his poetics framed politics in a broad framework of human emancipation and as an intense spiritual effort towards expanding human freedom.

Born in the Ezhava caste, deemed as backward in the erstwhile Travancore state and excluded from public office and employment, Asan knew all about social exclusion. He was the favourite disciple of Sree Narayana Guru, the poet-sage whose radical spiritual vision pro-



IN LETTER & SPIRIT

Director KP Kumaran's biopic on Kumaran Asan celebrates the life and work of an exceptional poet



THE LIVES THEY LIVE

(Clockwise from above) An artist's impression of Sreevalsan Menon as Asan; director KP Kumaran (right) with cinematographer KG Jayan on the set of *Gramavrikshathile Kuyil*; a still from the film

vided fuel for Kerala's transition from being a deeply casteist society in the 19th century to a relatively modern political community. Guru mentored Asan in his formative years and sent him out of Kerala to get educated. In *Kavyakala Kumaran Asaniloode*, a fine study of Asan and his poetics published in 1969, PK Balakrishnan writes that Narayana Guru was the land and sky where Asan's poetic genius flourished.

Not surprisingly, Asan wrote that the essence and eternal truth of this universe was love ("snehamanikhila saram oozhiyil"). In *Chandalabhihshuki*, the story of a Dalit woman's self-discovery and conversion to Buddhism, he offers a searing critique of the caste system: "Caste is the smoke of jealousy/ seething up in the dark covey of ignorant minds/ Filled up with lust for earthly pleasure/ And envy at the happiness of others/ It changes its hue with amazing rapidity/ Like the evening cloud, as anger/ Arrogance and rotten misanthropy/ It will divide its own house and estrange/ Near relatives and antagonise classes/ And finally annihilate the whole world" (translated by PC Gangadharan). However, the long narrative poems *Chintavishtayaya Sita* and *Karuna* are widely considered his finest works. *Sita* is part monologue, in which the queen of Ayodhya, in exile in Valmiki's *ashram*, reflects on her life. Deeply philosophical, it gives Sita agency, who questions the deep patriarchy that underline Raghu's lineage and Raghava's court. An exquisite piece, it reveals a poet in absolute control of his craft and content. He blends philosophy, drama, love, anger, compassion in perfect proportion to deliver a cathartic experience of the human condition.

Kuyil opens with Narayana Guru's consecration of a temple in Aruvippuram in 1888, a landmark event in Kerala history that Guru described as the consecration of Ezhava Sivan when the Brahmin orthodoxy questioned his act. The biopic is not merely an exercise in marshalling facts; it is more of another artist trying to understand the outer and inner worlds Asan journeyed through during the most creative phase of his life. So, despite Asan's persona as a social figure, he is rarely seen among the crowds in *Kuyil*. The poet is mostly seen in a contemplative mood, with his dear wife, Bhanumathi, and close friends such as Sahodaran Ayyappan.

So, why Asan now? Kumaran believes that Asan, despite the voluminous literature on the poet, has not been understood fully or holistically by Malayalis. His life and work call for a new interpretation: Ours is a time of forgetting, forgetfulness is all pervasive in culture, history, Kumaran says. Political thought and political work blend seamlessly in Asan's life. At the insistence of Guru, Asan had become the founder secretary of SNDP Yogam in 1903, a communitarian outfit of the Ezhava community, after returning from his studies in Bangalore, Madras and Calcutta. Kumaran points out that Asan's writings in *Vivekodayam*, a magazine he edited, suggest that the poet was essentially a philosopher: He has a vision of emancipation that glows despite being in the shadow of Guru. It was Asan who brought a lot of clarity to the Malayali consciousness with his reflections on love, freedom, man-woman relations, the need to reject caste and so on, Kumaran says. Also, Kumaran was drawn to the storyteller in Asan — his major poems are well-constructed narratives. The movie takes its title from a poem Asan wrote in anguish when he was targeted by his rivals in the SNDP Yogam.

Asan needs to be re-read, recognised as a seminal figure of Kerala renaissance. *Gramavrikshathile Kuyil* is a remarkable effort at situating Kumaran Asan as a renaissance figure and a deeply contemplative poet. It should help the world beyond Kerala discover Asan, whose 150th birth anniversary falls in 2023.

A Day in the Life

Bengaluru musician Ricky Kej on winning his second Grammy alongside The Police drummer Stewart Copeland and being an environmental cheerleader

Suanshu Khurana

EARLIER THIS month, when Bengaluru-based music producer Ricky Kej got on the stage at Las Vegas' MGM Grand Marquee Ballroom to accept the Grammy in the Best New Age Album category, alongside The Police drummer Stewart Copeland, it was a moment "unrecognisable and unbelievable" to Kej despite having been up there in 2015 to receive his first Grammy for *Winds of Samsara*. Kej touched Copeland's feet, as a mark of respect for the age-old *guru-shishya parampara*, and accepted the hallowed gramophone for *Divine Tides* (Lahiri Music). "To collaborate with my childhood idol, somebody I admired my whole life, then to stand on the stage and share a Grammy with him — it was special," says Kej, 40.

In March of 1980, the legendary British new-wave rock band The Police came visiting Mumbai for what would be their only performance in the country — a charity concert, put together by the Parsi women of Time and Talent club. Lead vocalist and bassist Sting, Copeland and guitarist Andy Summers took the now-defunct Rang Bhavan open theatre in south Bombay's Dhobi Talao by storm. The talk-of-the-town gig was one of the most iconic moments in the history of rock concerts in India. Kej, who was born a year later, in North Carolina, the US, would go on to hear about the concert from his father. "In the '80s, my father was fascinated by great bands and had an enviable music

collection," says Kej, who fell in love with the band's punk-rock sound the moment he heard them and found Copeland's music to be particularly striking.

At the time, Copeland was quite discernible, given his fierce intensity on the cymbals. "I found something very poetic about Stewart's drumming... It was truly the backbone of the band and gave the songs of The Police so much emotion," says Kej. And so, posters of The Police and Copeland adorned the wall in Kej's bedroom in Bengaluru, where the family moved to when he was eight.

But Kej, who for years got busy making advertisement jingles, never factored in the possibility of a collaboration with an artiste he revered, much less the thought of winning a Grammy together.

As Kej grew as a musician after his first Grammy win, he was keen on doing a follow-up to the album but concerts and travel kept him from focussing on making music. And then, the pandemic hit. "The pandemic forced us all to stay indoors and that gave me the opportunity to create a new album. The more I created, the more I kept feeling the need for a collaborator. This had to be somebody who was not just a virtuoso musician but somebody who would help in the writing process, too. The first person who came to mind was Stewart Copeland. I wanted to overreach because he's somebody who's shaped my career, by my just listening to his music," he says.

It was his British friend and mentor Ralph



COURTESY RICKY KEJ MANAGEMENT

EVERY MOVE YOU MAKE

(Above) Ricky Kej; after the win with collaborator Stewart Copeland at the 64th Grammy Awards in Las Vegas



Simon, a music-publishing veteran, who got Kej and Copeland introduced. To Kej's astonishment Copeland agreed after listening to some of the album's music. *Divine Tides* is also an album that was entirely created online. In fact, Kej and Copeland met in person for the first time only seven days ahead of the 64th Grammy Awards. Over a year, the two kept sending Web files to each other, phone

too, this year. *Himalayas* is an ode to the highest mountain range on Earth, with chants, Hindustani classical vocals, sitar interludes and myriad percussion sounds. *Gandhi*, a gentle ballad appreciating frogs, one of the oldest species on the planet, dwells on the Mahatma's quote: "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated". "The idea is that if you treat the voiceless well, that means that the moral compass of the country is in place," says Kej, who wanted to gently draw in people to the idea.

Kej grew up in a wooded area, amid creepy-crawlies. When his family would run away or step on them, it would bother Kej as a child. "I realised early on that there was a significance to each and every species in the ecosystem. Then there was music, which also came from nature — sounds of birds, wind, water, trees," he says.

Growing up in a Punjabi-Marwari family, glued to his father's diverse music collection that ranged from Michael Jackson, Bee Gees, Elvis Presley, Paul Simon, and a lot of African, European and Russian music, Kej decided early on to make music his life's path. But his doctor-father wasn't convinced. So, he joined the city's Oxford Dental College, in 1999, for a course in dental surgery. "I made a deal with my father that once I get the degree, my life would be my own," says Kej, who played with a couple of bands in college that led him to radio commercials. "In dental college, I began to take on jingle projects. I completed my degree a few years later but did not practise for even a day," says Kej, who made commercials for a number of brands, from foods and beverages companies to telecom, creating music for more than 3,500 commercials. "It was the best music education I could have got, working with diverse clients from all over the world," he says.

But he stopped making commercial music in 2013, having figured out that if these multinational brands used music as a powerful medium to sell products, it could very well convey messages that mattered to him. "Why not talk about subjects such as deforestation and gender inequality, which are close to my heart, through music?" he thought. Now plans to make music only to make a positive social impact, to make the world a better place "in my tiny capacity," says Kej.



A FIGHTER FOR DEMOCRACY

TAIWAN LEADER PENG MING-MIN DIES

Peng Ming-min, a victim of World War II who endured Japanese imperial rule, brutal Chinese martial law and decades of exile to become a leading fighter for democracy and self-determination for his native Taiwan, died here, the nation's capital, on April 8. He was 98. His death, at the Koo Foundation Sun Yat-Sen Cancer Center, was confirmed by Lee Chun-ta, director of the Peng Ming-min Foundation.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Singapore Minister Lawrence Wong.

SINGAPORE

Lee says Finance Minister will be next PM

Singapore: Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said on Saturday that Finance Minister Lawrence Wong would succeed him as the city-state's leader. Wong was chosen as leader of the ruling People's Action Party's (PAP) so-called fourth generation team, according to an announcement on Thursday, paving the way for him to become Prime Minister. "The plan is for Lawrence to succeed me as PM, either before or after (if the PAP wins) the next general election. It is due in 2025 and will surely be a tough fight," Lee said in a social media post on Saturday. Lee, whose father Lee Kwan Yew was the island nation's independence leader, has been PM since 2004. **REUTERS**

AFGHANISTAN

Taliban summon Pak envoy to protest strikes

Kabul: Taliban authorities on Saturday summoned Pakistan's ambassador in Kabul to protest against military strikes inside Afghanistan by Pakistani forces, the Afghan foreign ministry said. A local Taliban official and residents said 36 people were killed in air strikes on Friday. A statement from Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Pakistan's Ambassador in Kabul had been summoned over the recent attacks in Khost and Kunar provinces and given a diplomatic demarche to deliver to Islamabad. **REUTERS**

FRANCE

Climate change activists block Paris square

Paris: Climate change activists forced the closure of a main square in central Paris on Saturday to protest against the environmental programmes put forward by France's remaining presidential candidates. The Extinction Rebellion had said on its website that it planned to block a major Parisian location to disrupt the electoral cycle and its "business as usual" attitude. Hundreds of people gathered in Paris' 9th district brandishing banners targeting the candidates, chanting slogans. **REUTERS**

ZELENSKY: MARIUPOL'S DEFENDERS CONTROL ONLY SMALL PART

Russia renews strikes on Kyiv



Firefighters work to extinguish fire after a Russian attack in Kharkiv on Saturday. AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KYIV, APRIL 16

Russian forces resumed scattered attacks on Kyiv, western Ukraine and beyond Saturday in an explosive reminder to Ukrainians and their Western supporters that the whole country remains under threat despite Russia's pivot toward mounting a new offensive in the east.

Stung by the loss of its Black Sea flagship and indignant over what it alleged were Ukrainian strikes on Russian territory, Russia's military command had warned a day earlier of renewed attacks on Ukraine's capital and said it was targeting military sites.

Smoke rose early Saturday from eastern Kyiv as Mayor Vitali Klitschko reported a strike on the city's Darnytsky district. He said rescuers and paramedics

EXPLAINED Can Moskva warship be replaced?

NO, RUSSIA has two other ships of the same class, the Marshal Ustinov and the Varyag, which serve with Russia's Northern and Pacific fleets respectively. Turkey, which controls access to the Black Sea via the Bosphorus, will not let them enter at a time of war.

were at the scene, and information about possible deaths would be provided later. The mayor advised residents who fled the city earlier in the war not to return for their safety.

Kyiv was not the only target

Saturday. In eastern Ukraine, an explosion believed to be caused by a missile struck Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, according to firefighters and AP journalists at the scene.

The strike near an outdoor market along with residential and industrial buildings killed one person and wounded at least 18, according to rescue workers.

Meanwhile, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy acknowledged on Saturday that the Ukrainian forces still defending Mariupol control only a small part of the port city, and face a better-equipped force that is six times larger than their own. Zelenskyy described the area as "not a very large part" of the city. "Nevertheless, our guys are heroically defending," he said, speaking to Ukrainian media outlets. "We are grateful to them for that."

Boris Johnson barred from visiting Russia

RUSSIA IS barring Prime Minister Boris Johnson and other senior British officials from entering the country over their support for Ukraine, the Russian foreign ministry said on Saturday.

Britain has supplied Ukraine with new anti-ship missile systems, armoured vehicles and other military equipment. And Johnson made a surprise visit last week to Kyiv, where he promised to send more military equipment to Ukraine. "The Russophobic course of the British authorities, which aims to incite negative attitude toward our country, is detrimental to the well-being and interests of the British people," Russia's foreign ministry said. **NYT**

Putin, Saudi Prince discuss bilateral ties

Riyadh: Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on Saturday. The Saudi Press Agency said the two discussed bilateral relations and "ways of enhancing them in all fields."

The Saudi readout of the call said the crown prince affirmed support for efforts that would lead to a political solution to the crisis in Ukraine. The kingdom recently announced \$10 million in humanitarian aid for Ukrainian refugees. The Kremlin's statement added the two also discussed the ongoing conflict in Yemen and their joint work on an oil output agreement. The oil pact has kept a cautious lid on production by major producers, supporting oil prices. **AP**

Billionaire vows to rebuild Mariupol

Kyiv: Ukraine's billionaire has pledged to help rebuild Mariupol, a place close to his heart where he owns two vast steelworks that he says will again compete globally. Rinat Akhmetov has seen his business empire shattered by eight years of fighting in Ukraine's east but remains defiant, sure that what he calls "our brave soldiers" will defend the Sea of Azov city reduced to a wasteland by seven weeks of bombardment. "Mariupol is a global tragedy and a global example of heroism," Akhmetov said. "My ambition is to return to Mariupol and implement our plans so that Mariupol-produced steel can compete in global markets as before." **REUTERS**

Sweden prepares for more clashes as far-right protests continue

ASSOCIATED PRESS

STOCKHOLM, APRIL 16

POLICE IN Sweden say they are preparing for new violent clashes following riots that erupted between demonstrators and counter-protesters in the central city of Orebro on Friday ahead of an anti-Islam far-right group's plan to burn a Quran there.

Kim Hild, spokeswoman for police in southern Sweden said that the police would not revoke permission for a planned demonstration by the Danish right-wing Stram Kurs party in the southern town of Landskrona on Saturday because the threshold for doing that is very high in Sweden, which values free speech.

Police said, however, that the rally would be moved to another undisclosed location, according to TT. Stram Kurs' leader Rasmus Paludan was also planning a Quran burning in Landskrona, the agency said. Hild said police were preparing for the demonstration and possible violence with extra resources "given what has happened in recent days" in the Nordic country.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RESIGNS

Former Pak PM Ashraf appointed as House Speaker



Raja Pervaiz Ashraf (right) takes oath as the 22nd Speaker of National Assembly. Reuters

SAJJAD HUSSAIN

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 16

RAJA PERVAIZ ASHRAF, a former Pakistan premier, was on Saturday appointed the 22nd speaker of the country's National Assembly after he was elected unopposed.

Ashraf, 71, from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was administered the oath of office by PML-N's Ayaz Sadiq, who was initially chairing the session.

Meanwhile, Qasim Khan Suri resigned as deputy speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly on Saturday, less than an hour before a session of the House where voting on a no-trust motion against him was to take place for favouring Imran Khan.

Sharing a copy of his resignation on Twitter, Suri said his move signified his association with the vision of his party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and democracy.

Ashraf, meanwhile, was the lone contender for the Speaker's position as no other candidate had submitted nomination papers against him. The office of the Speaker fell vacant after Asad Qaiser resigned on April 9 after failing to implement a decision by the Supreme Court to hold a no-confidence vote against ousted prime minister Imran Khan.

After taking the oath, Ashraf thanked his party leaders for deeming him worthy of the po-

Shehbaz's son Hamza is Punjab CM amid violence in House session

Lahore: Hamza Shehbaz, the son of Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, was elected as the new chief minister of Punjab on Saturday in a ruckus-marred election that saw Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party and its ally PML-Q boycott the crucial assembly session.

Scuffles broke out between the treasury and opposition leaders during the six-hour-long session in the Punjab Assembly. PTI-PMLQ coalition candidate Parvez Elahi sustained injuries, while Deputy Speaker Dost Muhammad Mazari, who was siding with the PMLN-PPP candidate Hamza, also got thrashed. Police arrested three PTI lawmakers on the charges of torturing Mazari. **PTI**

sition. He also thanked the prime minister Shehbaz Sharif and the members of the assembly. He said a "new tradition" had been initiated in parliamentary history, adding that the speaker was the custodian of the house. **PTI**



Chinese astronaut Ye Guangfu after landing at the Dongfeng site in northern China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region on Saturday. AP

Chinese astronauts land after six months on space station

Beijing: Three Chinese astronauts returned to Earth on Saturday after six months aboard their country's newest orbital station in the longest crewed mission to date for China's ambitious space program.

The Shenzhou 13 space capsule landed in the Gobi desert in the northern region of Inner Mongolia, shown live on state TV. During the mission, astronaut Wang Yaping carried out the first spacewalk by a Chinese woman. Wang and crewmates

Zhai Zhigang and Ye Guangfu beamed back physics lessons for high school students.

On Saturday, state TV showed images from inside the capsule as it traveled at 200 meters per second over Africa before entering the atmosphere.

The trio were the second crew aboard Tiangong, or Heavenly Palace. Its core module, Tianhe, was launched in April 2021. Plans call for completing construction this year by adding two more modules. **AP**

SAMIA SULUHU HASSAN BECAME THE ONLY WOMAN HEAD OF GOVT IN AFRICA WHEN HER PREDECESSOR SUDDENLY DIED

Tanzania's first woman President wants to bring nation in from the cold

ABDILATIF DAHIR

DODOMA, APRIL 16

SHORTLY BEFORE midnight on a spring night last year, Samia Suluhu Hassan, then Tanzania's first female vice-president, appeared on television to announce to a shocked nation that the President was dead.

President John Magufuli, an autocrat known as "The Bulldozer," had denied that Covid existed in his country, rejected Covid vaccines and died after a weeklong absence from public view amid unconfirmed reports that he had contracted the virus. His death catapulted Hassan,

62, to a historic position as Tanzania's first female President. Known as "Mama Samia," she is currently the only female head of government in Africa. On Friday, she met in Washington with a fellow path-breaker, Kamala Harris.

Since taking office, Hassan has set off on a different path than her predecessor: She encouraged Covid vaccinations by publicly taking the shot herself, lifted a ban on pregnant girls in schools and began to amend some Magufuli-era economic regulations to lure back investors.

But her first challenge, Hassan said in an interview last week at the state house in the capital, Dodoma, was to over-

come the notion that a woman could not lead Tanzania.

"Most of the people couldn't believe that we can have a woman President and she can deliver," Hassan said. "The challenge was to create a trust to the people that yes, I can do it."

She said other African female leaders—including Liberia's first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Sahle-Work Zewde, the president (though not head of government) of Ethiopia—quickly came to her support, urging her in a virtual meeting to remain confident, seek counsel and listen to her inner voice.

"They all gave me courage that you can do it," said Hassan.



President Samia Suluhu Hassan at Chamwino State House in the capital, Dodoma. NYT

Since ascending to power in March last year, Hassan has positioned herself as a unifying na-

tional figure willing to challenge the establishment and bent on bringing her country in from the

cold after five years of isolationism under Magufuli, who rarely traveled abroad.

Tanzania, a nation of 60 million people that borders eight other countries in eastern, central and southern Africa, was long seen as a bulwark of stability in a region torn by ethnic strife and civil war.

But Hassan, who is expected to run Por president in 2025, takes the helm of a polarised nation with a battered economy and growing unemployment, a slow pace of vaccine deployment and a growing clamor for constitutional overhauls.

In addition to meeting US officials during her trip to the

United States, she is also set to court investors, seek assistance in improving public health partnerships and promote Tanzania as a vibrant tourist destination.

In Washington, one issue Hassan is likely to face is the war in Ukraine. Tanzania was among the African nations that abstained from the United Nations vote condemning the war—a move Hassan said was in line with Tanzania's long-standing position of nonalignment.

Pushed on this, she said that in "Tanzania, we don't know why they are fighting," adding that Russia and Ukraine should sit down to talk. "The world has to convince Putin not to fight,"

she said.

Hassan, who is soft-spoken and comes across as reserved, said that as vice-president, it was "tough" working with Magufuli at times, and that she argued with him on several issues, including his Covid denialism.

As president, she said, her main priority was to revive the economy, build thousands of schools and health clinics, extend clean water and electricity to rural areas and complete key infrastructure projects—including a railway line and a major hydropower plant. She said more than 250 new businesses had already been registered in the country last year. **NYT**

Liverpool hang on for 3-2 FA Cup semifinal win over City

REUTERS
LONDON, APRIL 16

LIVERPOOL HUNG on to beat Manchester City 3-2 at Wembley Stadium on Saturday to reach the final of the FA Cup and end Pep Guardiola's hopes of a treble. Juergen Klopp's side will meet the winners of Sunday's other semi-final between Chelsea and Crystal Palace in the May 14th final. Guardiola opted to rest several of City's starters, including goalkeeper Ederson, and the weakened side were outplayed by Juergen Klopp's team in the first half, going in 3-0 down at the interval.

Ibrahima Konate headed Liverpool ahead from an Andy Robertson corner in the ninth minute before a dreadful error from City's American back-up goalkeeper Zack Steffen gifted the Reds a second.

Steffen took too long when receiving a back pass from John Stones and Sadio Mane slid in to tackle the keeper and the ball flew into the net. Mane then added another, on the stroke of halftime, in more conventional fashion, driving a volley past Steffen after being set up by Thiago Alcantara.

Guardiola made no changes at the break, even though he had options such as Kevin De Bruyne and Riyad Mahrez to call on, but his side did spark into life. Jack Grealish pulled a goal back 70 seconds after the re-sumption after Gabriel Jesus did well to beat Fabinho and set up the England midfielder who drilled home. Liverpool keeper Alisson Becker was alert to get out quickly and foil Gabriel Jesus as the Brazilian burst goalwards but while City were improved they still were far from their usual levels of chance creation.

It was puzzling that Guardiola only made one of his possible five changes in the second half, bringing Mahrez on seven minutes from the end although the introduction of the Algerian did make a big impact.

Mahrez cut in from the right and dribbled along the byline before a low ball went through Alisson then Bernardo Silva made it 3-2 in stoppage time. That prompted a frantic final few minutes with Ferandinho and Mahrez both seeing shots deflected out for corners while Raheem Sterling's weak shot was easily saved by Alisson. At the other end Steffen did well to stop Roberto Firmino as Liverpool looked to finish off the contest but the final whistle confirmed their place in their 15th FA Cup final but their first in ten years.

For City it was the third straight season in which they have lost in the last four of the FA Cup. Liverpool remain in contention for four trophies having won the League Cup, reached the semi-finals of the Champions League and still being in the race for the Premier League title where they sit a point behind leaders City.

SPORTLINE: Long jumper Jeswin Aldrin, 20, made heads turn with a series of 8-metre-plus jumps this season and a gold medal at the Federation Cup. The Indian Express travels to Mudalur, the village of the rising star in athletics, to get a taste of the famous Muscoth halwa created by Aldrin's great grandfather and to trace the journey of the shy and reticent jumper destined to break records and bag major medals

Blood, sweet and gold



Jeswin Aldrin at the family-owned bakery, which is famous for the Muscoth halwa. (L) With his parents Esther and Johnson. After winning the Fed Cup gold.



He used to come and practice for hours at the school ground. On weekends he used to go to Anna Stadium, more than an hour away, to practice at the synthetic track. Most kids in our school don't even know what a synthetic track is yet."

BENSON, VOLLEYBALL COACH AT ALDRIN'S SCHOOL

jump," Anitta Irene, one of the physical education teachers at the Daniel Thomas Matriculation Higher Secondary School, said.

High jump's loss was long jump's gain. Johnson believes long jump was always Aldrin's true calling. He recalls Aldrin making a dash to the long jump pit to watch as soon as he had finished the high jump competition at junior meets. Aldrin didn't take much time to pick up the long jump technique and soon started accumulating gold medals in almost every meet.

Benson, a volleyball coach at Aldrin's school, feels no one but the youngster deserves credit for becoming one of the finest athletes in the country. "He used to come and practice for hours at the school ground. On weekends he used to go to Anna Stadium, more than an hour away, to practice at the synthetic track. Most kids in our school don't even know what a synthetic track is yet," Benson said.

A major turning point in Aldrin's career occurred during the 2019 junior nationals in Ranchi. French coach Antony Yaich, the former head of track-and-field at JSW's Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS), saw potential in a young Aldrin.



Aldrin's elasticity stood out for the Frenchman. Yaich made a major change though. He asked Aldrin to adopt a more efficient method of hitch-hike technique -- where the jumper completes a cyclic-kick motion while airborne -- instead of the hang technique.

"I think Antony deserves a lot of credit. Aldrin is here because of his strict training. Initially, we were hesitant about sending Aldrin to Bellary to train at IIS but Antony is good at convincing. He just asked us to visit once. When we saw the facilities we couldn't say no," Aldrin's uncle Simon Issac said. The uncle saw the potential in Aldrin years before coach Yaich did.

When Aldrin was finishing high school,

his parents wanted him to focus on academics and secure admission at a top college. "I had to do a lot of convincing. I explained to them that Aldrin would get into the best institutions and also secure a good job all because of sports," Issac said.

Aldrin is reserved and likes to keep his replies brief, mostly monosyllables. When at home, he wears his headphones and plays games on his mobile phone. He also likes to stay away from the limelight. When he was called to studios by Tamil news channels after his Federation Cup gold, he hesitantly agreed. "Do we really have to do it now? 'Can you tell them I will give interviews after winning an Olympic medal,'" Issac recalled.

Those who know Aldrin say he opens up and is a warm person once he gets to know someone well. "He gets attached. He loves his friends and was always up to some mischief with them. He loves talking with his friends," Irene said.

Aldrin has just recently started training with two-time World Championship medalist from Cuba, Yoandri Betanzos and the results are already showing. All his 8 plus jumps have been registered post the Cuban coach's arrival. Aldrin's recent spike in performance means he and national record holder Sreesankar Murali will be pushing each other to excel. Just like they did during the Federation Cup.

The two jumpers going head-to-head had made for great viewing in what was the best long jump competition ever on Indian soil. The challenge for Aldrin will be to consistently produce the big jumps at the major competitions. An 8.37m jump, without wind assistance, could land him an international medal. "Things are working well with Yoandri. There are a lot of areas that he has found that I need to work on. I will be training hard and giving it my best," Aldrin said.

As Aldrin prepares for a busy year, the family will be praying that the wind doesn't play spoilsport again. "I did a lot of research about the wind assistance and rules post the Fed Cup. I think I have become an expert myself," father Johnson, who not only follows his son's progress but keeps tabs on jumpers around the world, said.

Esther, Aldrin's mother, is also clued in about her son's career. "I stream all my son's competitions and follow his events religiously," she said. "Tell me which event you followed?" Aldrin asked in jest.

"I know your latest effort would have placed you second in last year's top-10 list," she replied. Aldrin thinks and nods. The boy from Mudalur, with his feet firmly on the ground, at times needs a reminder of the giant strides he has made. The eldest son in the family is becoming a household name, just like the halwa his great grandfather created.

BRIDGE

Dealer: East Vulnerable: East/West

NORTH	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH EAST SOUTH
♠ KJ3	♠ A82	Pass	1NT
♥ Q10987	♥ AK542	Pass	2D
♦ Q92	♦ A4	Pass	4H
♣ 83	♣ 962		

The opening lead by West is the ace of clubs, followed by the king of clubs. East plays the queen of clubs and then discards the seven of diamonds. West then plays the jack of clubs and you must take stock of a potentially dangerous situation. If you ruff West's club in dummy with the seven of hearts, East might overruff with the jack of hearts. The odds of East having the jack of hearts are 50/50. If you ruff with the queen of hearts in dummy, East won't be able to overruff but there will be three outstanding hearts to the jack. The odds of the hearts splitting 3-0 are only 22%. So, ruff with your queen since that is your best chance for success. You have lost two club tricks and can see a potential loser in each of diamonds and spades. Oh-oh, the contract appears to be in some danger. How do you proceed?

The West Hand: S-5 4 H-3 J 3 D-8 6 C-AK J 10 7 5 4

The East Hand: S-Q 10 9 7 6 H-6 D-K J 10 7 5 3 C-Q

You see no reason to delay removing trump and do so with West playing the three and the jack. So far, so good. East discards the seven of spades on the second trump play. It appears, from his discards that he has something good in diamonds and possibly spades as well. Here is one approach for continuing the play.

Play the four of diamonds from your hand with the hope that West has the king. If West has the king and plays low, your queen is good and you do not lose a diamond trick. If West plays the king of diamonds, you can use the queen of diamonds to discard your potential spade loser. If East has the king of diamonds, you can still make your contract with a successful spade finesse. What do you think of this approach? Have you counted the points that you know West has shown so far? He has shown the AKJ of clubs and the jack of hearts. If he also had the king of diamonds, he would have started with 12 HCP. Did he have a very nice club suit? He sure did. It was seven cards long and topped by the AKJ10. Many would overcall two clubs over your opening 1NT bid if they had the king of diamonds along with all the wonderful clubs found in the West hand. So, West probably doesn't have the king of diamonds. So much for the approach discussed previously. How about the missing queen of spades? If West had the queen of spades, he would have 11 HCP. It is possible that he would also overcall with that nice club lead. If he had queen of spades. And, East indicated he liked diamonds and spades when he discarded. Did you notice? Looks bad doesn't it? However, making the contract is a cinch if East has both the queen of spades and the king of diamonds as it appears he does. I'll give you a hint. Think endplay. Think endplay Play the ace and king of spades (the queen didn't drop and West followed to both your spade leads) and then exit with the jack of spades. Your line of play was based on a logical assumption that East held the missing honors. This isn't always going to work but reaching for a thread of hope is better than not always.

NORTH	EAST	WEST	NORTH EAST SOUTH
♠ J876	♠ A1095	1H	
♥ QJ6	♥ 105	Pass	1NT
♦ KQJ10	♦ A652	Pass	3H
♣ J5	♣ Q109	Pass	Pass

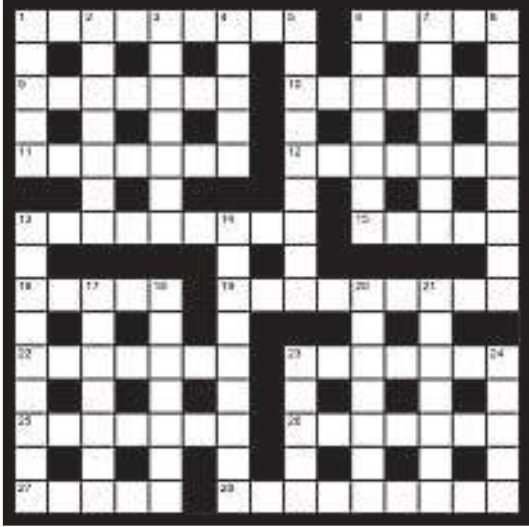
West leads the king of spades. You signal with the ten and West continues the suit. South ruffs the second round and draws two rounds of trumps with the ace from his hand and the queen from dummy. West shows up with two hearts so you know that South started with six of them, not seven. Next North leads the king of diamonds. It is dangerous to play low on this since South might have a singleton. So you take it, West signalling with the eight. This looks like a highish diamond so it is likely that West is showing a doubleton. If South has just one diamond, he is about to discard a lot of clubs on dummy's diamond winners. What card should East return?

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2369

QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- Caustic, harsh (9)
- Fundamental (5)
- A sheer fabric (7)
- Line touching curve (7)
- A whip for chastising persons (7)
- Canadian policeman (7)
- The Indian flag for example (9)
- Opera singer (5)
- Writing tables (5)
- Without peer (9)
- Senior executive (7)
- Route (7)
- Sudden shrill cry (7)
- Lacking any purpose (7)
- Pulls or tugs sharply (5)
- Medical prediction (9)



DOWN

- Bad habits? (5)
- City in North Africa? (7)
- Horrific fire (7)
- Drive a weapon violently in some direction (5)
- Twin-hulled boat (9)
- Repast, feast (7)
- Add sugar to? (7)
- Principal church (9)
- In a dull and boring manner (9)
- Possession (9)
- An orange colour; crocus with purple flowers (7)
- Triumph (7)
- White of eggs (7)
- Shuns (7)
- Constellation: The dragon (5)
- Mitigates or reduces in intensity (5)

Cryptic Clues

ACROSS

- Partnerships but not companies are boundless (9)
- Joiner's instrument gives angles that aren't right (5)
- Stubs in the ashtrey, for example (3-4)
- Reg. and Paul having become entangled with this sound stopper (3-4)
- Finds traces among a hundred tested (7)
- Having a boy in spring is sweet 1! (7)
- US infantryman swallows a licentious Italian rebel (9)
- Study an attempt in Africa (5)
- They've nothing on for the time being (5)
- Had been a forger, one didn't let oneself forget (4,1,4)

- Sunstroke was still, but remains alive (7)
- Possibly dialect for "keep" (7)
- A proton, perhaps, takes no charges? (3,1,3)
- Clare would need a little tea to be like this (3,4)
- Quick - turn a drip around 1! (5)
- Global system copes with unusual occurrence here? (3-6)

- Threw a tantrum about Ted getting an award (5,2)
- Dance music from a bygone era (3-4)
- Lewis to ring half of gambling city for Sophia's husband (5)
- Resist outside, for example, and be bound to render service (5)

Solutions to 2368

QUICK CLUES Across: 1 Aspirin, 5 Fibbing, 9 Getting on, 10 Cello, 11 Lookout, 12 Sell out, 13 Rare stamp, 15 Copied, 17 Doing, 19 Lingering, 22 Placing, 25 Tripoli, 26 Total, 27 Bandicoot, 28 Seedless, 29 Emerson. Down: 1 Angular, 2 Potpourri, 3 Ruinous, 4 Nightfall, 5 Finds, 6 Bucolic, 7 Igloo, 8 Gloated, 14 Penitence, 16 Poisonous, 17 Deputies, 18 Grilled, 20 Edifice, 21 Glisten, 23 Attic, 24 Gibes. CRYPTIC CLUES Across: 1 Rule out, 5 Poplars, 9 Bust ticket, 10 Rouse, 11 Tsarina, 12 Truckee, 13 Samarkand, 15 Began, 17 East's, 19 Dust cover, 22 Bargain, 25 Unloved, 26 Opted, 27 Detective, 28 Leg-pull, 29 Dyness.

Down: 1 Rebates, 2 Las palmas, 3 Olivier, 4 Take a hand, 5 Petit, 6 Perturb, 7 Amuck, 8 Sierran, 14 Disgusted, 16 Grovevoics, 17 Embroid, 18 Spandau, 20 Colicky, 21 Reddens, 23 Retag, 24 Nadal.

If it's your Birthday

Sunday April 17

Important improvements at work and at home are signified by serious planetary alignments. The celestial spheres are presenting you with the chance to lay yourself on the line over the next year.

Monday April 18

Say the right thing and you'll keep important people on board. Emotional pressures could cause your financial judgment to slip in the next few months.

Tuesday April 19

One last burst of enthusiasm helps you push forward with new plans. However, there's still a lot of indecision around and you might have to cope with distractions when other people change their minds.

Wednesday April 20

You should take worldly, professional and business matters seriously if you are to make the most of opportunities.

Thursday April 21

Aspirations are going to keep coming back all year. A feature of the year will be your tendency to examine relationships to get a fix on why you're attracted to certain types of people.

Friday April 22

The pace begins to pick up today, especially if you have choices to make. This may not be the best moment to make final decisions, unless you're prepared to change them next week.

Saturday April 23

Life is packed with potential. Even the tiny events today will be multiplied and magnified over the coming months.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

You may encourage those who are sincere and devoted by using unconventional methods and tactics, or by agreeing to discuss your real intentions. Such tendencies are supported by the fact that your romantic charms and social skills will be at their most effective.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Now that Mars and Venus are dominating both your emotional state and your domestic affairs, you must proceed as fast as you can to put all family and other close relationships on a proper footing. Aside from more serious issues, this is an ideal time for a spot of lavish entertaining.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Mercury, the planet responsible for your brilliant ideas, is still on your side, and you can be as certain as you ever will be that decisions and choices you make now will be the right ones. As a matter of importance, you should also pay very close attention to financial developments and expenditure.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Events in your personal life will begin to move faster and faster, although there will be periods when you come to a sudden full stop. It does not matter now whether your immediate interest is emotional, romantic, domestic, professional or financial: what is important is that you make a fresh start.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Passions will be running high and if you feel that your approaches are ignored or belittled, or that you have been slighted or taken for granted, you may blow up. The last thing you want to do now is ruin your chances of a massive boost in a major ambition.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Has somebody been going behind your back? Or have you not been entirely straight with someone? The best to be hoped for is either that you will gain recognition for your discreet and selfless activities, or that your worldly success will now shed new light on your emotional and spiritual place in the world.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

You just cannot decide whether you want everything to remain as it is, or to make a complete break. Initially, turn your attention to professional issues and make a quick decision. A personal dilemma deserves longer-term consideration, so don't rush it.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

The week's developments at work will be dominated by personal relationships and, if you fall out with colleagues, you will damage your own prospects. The answer is simple, don't try to foist your ideas on people who don't need them. Try listening instead.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

As a matter of principle, you should repay some of the generosity which has come your way. On a more mundane note, financial concerns are due to intensify. If this is the month for holidays, you have planned well. By a happy coincidence, Mars and Venus are revealing an excellent prospect for romantic adventures abroad.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Nothing takes place in isolation, and slight upsets will be opening the window on a remarkable series of emotional opportunities later in the year. It may be necessary to be firm now, and insist that you get what you need out of a relationship, or at least that the issues are aired.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Stick to your preconceived notions of what people should do and when, and you will miss out and run the risk of confrontations over minor issues. Although you may not have received all the guarantees you need over money, what takes place now is bound to fire your imagination.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Conditions at work will be dominated by your feelings towards partners and colleagues, and a romantic association may come home to roost. This is a time for you to stretch yourself. Extend your leisure activities into new and untried areas.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

In the field of observation, chance favours only the _____. - Louis Pasteur (8,4)

SVAEE	EIRDDN
AFIRR	MOOMPP

SOLUTION: FAYES, FRIAR, RIDDEN, POMPOM
Answer: In the field of observation, chance favours only the prepared mind - Louis Pasteur

SUDOKU 4807

Difficulty Level 3s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy;
3s = Medium; 4s = Hard;
5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4806



BRIEFLY

India win jr Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Final Qualifying

New Delhi :India made history by winning the Junior Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Final Qualifying event with a 2-1 victory over Japan at the RK Khanna Stadium here on Saturday. Down 0-1 after Bhushan Haobam's 3-6 6-3 2-6 loss to Naoya Honda, seventh seed India bounced back to win the remaining single and doubles rubbers and claim the event. Rushil Khosla brought India level with a 6-3 3-6 6-0 win over Yuta Tomida and in the deciding doubles rubber the Indian duo outplayed their rivals 6-3 6-4.

PTI

Tsitsipas sets up semis clash with Zverev

Monte Carlo: Defending champion Stefanos Tsitsipas came out on top from a thrilling quarter-final clash with Diego Schwartzman, prevailing 6-2 6-7(3) 6-4 on Friday to set up a meeting with Alexander Zverev at the Monte Carlo Masters. The Greek third seed was 5-2 up in the second set but inexplicably lost the plot and trailed 4-0 in the decider before rediscovering his touch.He will take on Alexander Zverev for a place in Sunday's final after the German world number three claimed an epic 5-7 6-3 7-6(5) victory against Italian Jannik Sinner. Earlier, Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina reached his first Masters semi-final by beating American Taylor Fritz 2-6 6-4 6-3 and will take on Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov.

REUTERS

BAI trials: Sai continues winning streak

New Delhi: World No. 19B Sai Praneeth continued his unbeaten run as he defeated Sourabh Verma in the stage 2 A men's singles group at BAI's selection trials for the upcoming major international team events here on Saturday. Praneeth, 2017 Singapore Open champion, saw off national champion Verma 21-14 15-21 21-13 in a thrilling match at the K. D. Jadhav Hall inside Indira Gandhi Stadium Complex. The Hyderabad shuttler will next take on Kiran George and Ansal Yadav, who also crossed the preliminary round and are clubbed in stage 2 A group, out of which the topper will play for rank 1 to 4 in a round-robin format.

PTI

IWL: Kerala bag 12-0 win vs Odisha

Bhubaneswar: Gokulam Kerala FC began their title defence in the top-tier Indian Women's League on a ruthless note, slamming a dozen goals past a hapless Odisha Police here on Saturday. Indian attacking midfielder Manisha Kalyan wreaked havoc in opposition's defence with five goals (17th, 26th, 33rd, 48th, 73rd minutes) as the Aditi Chauhan-led side struck six goals in each half.Substitute Elshaddai (61st, 86th) struck a double, while the other goalscorers for the Malabarians were Win Theingi Tun (25th), Dangmei Grace (37th), Ranjana Chanu (70th) and Karishma Shirvolkar (77th).

PTI

Giants, Rahul give Mumbai no respite

LSG captain KL Rahul's unbeaten hundred sets the tone for 18 run win over laggards MI who remain winless so far this season

SYNOPSIS: Rahul's classy ton sets up Super Giants' win, as MI go deeper in the mire

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
APRIL 16

SURYAKUMAR Yadav's dismissal off a Ravi Bishnoi long-hop typified Mumbai Indians' season so far. But as long as Kieron Pollard was there, there was life in MI. The big man tried his best, but gradually the asking rate climbed to 20-plus. Twenty-six runs were required off the final over and MI lost by 18 runs, chasing 200 for victory. Lucknow Super Giants won not only because KL Rahul led from the front and scored a mighty fine century, but collectively they played better cricket than their opponents to thoroughly deserve their victory. Super Giants went to eight points from six games, while after six straight defeats, MI's fall from the perch has been spectacular.

Rahul's classy ton

In the 16th over during Super Giants' innings, as Jasprit Bumrah came back for his final spell, the Brabourne Stadium DJ belted out: 'Boom, Boom Bumrah'. MI looked flat on the field and their fans were subdued.

In the MI dug-out, Sachin Tendulkar and Zaheer Khan were having a conversation. Of course, it's not known if the conversation between the two former India stalwarts, now part of the MI support staff, was about Rohit Sharma's use of Bumrah in this game. By then, Rahul was bossing and the MI skipper probably missed a trick by not using his best bowler against the Super Giants' skipper right at the beginning. Rahul's unbeaten century in his 100th IPL appearance was a result of keeping things simple and steadily growing into the game. In top fettle, his batting is very easy on the eye and 66 runs in boundaries and over-boundaries, out of 103 not out off 60 balls, attested a fine conversion rate in terms of putting away loose deliveries. But MI barely attacked him upfront, when like most batsmen he was vulnerable.

Twice in this tournament, Rahul has got out to golden ducks and one of those was against Rajasthan Royals in the previous game. Sunil Gavaskar on air was imploring Rohit to start the proceedings with Bumrah: "Confront the man who got out twice in the first ball in this tournament with your best bowler." The MI skipper started off with the part-time off-spin of Tilak Varma instead. Rahul was very keen to get off the mark. He got a short delivery from the offie and pummeled a pull for a four. When Bumrah was eventually brought into the attack in the fourth over, both Rahul and Quinton de Kock had played themselves in.

The hallmark of Rahul's batting was the way he converted the hittable balls to optimum effect. MI bowlers, bar Bumrah, were generous enough to bowl an overdose of loose deliveries. Tymal Mills was the culprit-in-chief; offering width, bowling in the slot and not bowling to his field. His final over, 19th of the innings, was particularly poor. He bowled length outside off, bowled an ill-disguised slower delivery to Deepak Hooda to concede a six, missed his line completely to bowl a big wide and served a half-volley outside off to Rahul to give away another four. The last four took Rahul to his century. That 22-run-over ensured that MI would have to chase 200. Mills went for 54 runs without a wicket in his three overs. Used to Trent Boult's quality, this has been a serious let-down for the five-time champions.

Rahul was always looking to bat long and once he got into the groove, there was no stopping him. He took his singles and doubles well, allowing fours and sixes to take care of them-



KL Rahul's unbeaten century in his 100th IPL appearance was a result of keeping things simple and steadily growing into the game.

Sportzpics for IPL

IPL TABLE						
TEAM	M	W	L	PT	NRR	
GT	5	4	1	8	0.450	
LSG	6	4	2	8	0.296	
RCB	6	4	2	8	0.142	
RR	5	3	2	6	0.389	
PBKS	5	3	2	6	0.239	
KKR	6	3	3	6	0.223	
SRH	5	3	2	6	-0.196	
DC	5	2	3	4	0.219	
CSK	5	1	4	2	-0.745	
MI	6	0	6	0	-1.048	

selves. He also thrived on partnership batting – 52 runs (33 balls) with de Kock to start with followed by a 72-run (47 balls) association with Manish Pandey and a 43-run (21 balls) partnership with Hooda at the death. MI's ground fielding was average. Misfields came thick and fast. Super Giants' fielding, on the contrary, was excellent.

Deeper in the mire

In the end, after another batting failure from Rohit and one more disappointing knock from Ishan Kishan, it had become Surya-or-bust for MI. Rohit showed intent, when he regally clipped Avesh Khan over mid-wicket. But he got out a couple of balls later, trying to run one down to third man and getting a thin edge to wicketkeeper. Dewald Brevis came and readily took the attack to the opposition. Dushmantha Chameera bowled a peach to beat the youngster. Brevis' response was a stunning six over long-on. Back-to-back fours ensued before Brevis turned his attention to Avesh with consecutive boundaries. It was incredible hitting, but inexperience came to the fore. Brevis made room but mis-hit an Avesh full-toss straight to Hooda at extra-cover. The teenager got ahead of himself. Kishan seems to be bogged down by his Rs 15.25 crore price tag. It has made his batting cagey. After a laborious 17-ball 13, the southpaw dragged a Marcus Stoinis off-cutter on to the stumps. At 57/3, MI looked to Surya to get out of the woods. Over-reliance on individuals cost the team dear.

Brief scores: LSG199 for 4 (Rahul 103*, Pandey 38, Unadkat 2-32) beat MI (Suryakumar 37, Brevis 31, Avesh 3-30) by 18 runs

Blazing Karthik goes boom-boom, spells doom for Delhi Capitals

SYNOPSIS: Dinesh Karthik's 66 off 34 revived RCB from 92 for 5 to 189, which was enough to quell Delhi Capitals by 16 runs

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
APRIL 16

DINESH KARTHIK produced another turnaround for Royal Challengers Bangalore, and a chase of 190 was beyond Delhi Capitals despite David Warner's fifty as Josh Hazlewood came up with a three-wicket burst.

Maxwell v Kuldeep

This was DC's first game of the season at Wankhede Stadium. On the larger square outfield at the Brabourne, DY Patil and Maharashtra Cricket Association stadiums, Kuldeep Yadav had had more leeway to toss the ball up and slow it down. He'd collected 10 wickets in four games at an average of 12.4 and an economy-rate of 7.75. But the smaller Wankhede turf was going to be a bigger challenge.

When Kuldeep was brought on in the ninth over, Maxwell had worked himself into some rhythm. And DC captain Rishabh Pant had taken the risk of giving Kuldeep the end from which Maxwell could eye the shorter boundary with the slog. And right away, Maxwell looted 23 runs off the over; two sixes and a four were swung to deep midwicket. Kuldeep tried to make Maxwell hit to the longer side, bowling full and wide, and Maxwell obliged with a driven four to deep extra cover.

Before Kuldeep came on, RCB were struggling on 47 for 3 after eight overs. Maxwell's assault seemed to have switched the momentum in his side's favour. Wiser after the storm, Kuldeep now changed ends. And the first ball, which was floated up full, Maxwell tamely chipped to long-on, instead of going full-blooded for another maximum. He had been kept to 55 off 34, and Kuldeep had had his revenge.

DK v DC

There are few sides that will be able to more



Dinesh Karthik's unbeaten 66 for RCB comprised five fours and as many sixes.

Sportzpics for IPL

than double their score after losing half the side for 92 by the 12th over. But RCB have already been rescued time and again by Dinesh Karthik this season, and the veteran keeper-batsman answered his side's call for help once more.

Khaleel Ahmed, the DC left-arm seamer, hadn't been hit for a single six going into Saturday night's game. He was hit for two, both coming off Karthik's bat. For the second one, a slower length ball, he actually bent his knee as if he was facing a spinner and slog-swept cleanly. Heading into his last over, Mustafizur Rahman had given away just 20 runs. Batsmen had been unable to get underneath his full deliveries and had to be content with singles. But Karthik launched him wherever he pleased. There was a fine reverse-hit clear of short third man, and an authoritative swat that flew in the gap between mid-off and extra cover. Mustafizur went fuller to squeeze Karthik's swinging space but that only made him hit



Kohli has a look at his own celebration

David Warner's wicket was the game-turning moment alright and just in case anyone missed the significance, Virat Kohli reminded them with his celebrations. Warner had been trapped lbw after he failed to connect with a reverse-slog and RCB had taken the decision upstairs for the review. The bowler Wanindu Hasaranga and Dinesh Karthik were so sure but on first replay the point of impact seemed a bit iffy and slowly the Bangalore players started to disperse from the huddle. They stopped again to check the mat-lines replay on the big screen and were joyous to

see the verdict fall in their offer. No one more than Kohli, of course. After an initial cry of fist pump and roar - just a warm up for him - he ran a detour, cut across the path of Warner, screaming his joy which as ever seemed tinged with anger, before he joined his team-mates. Warner, who was having a chat with the umpire about the replay, had a look at Kohli, turned to finish his conversation with the umpire and walked off. At the end of the over, as Kohli was crossing over, he had a look at himself on the big screen, roaring away.

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER

Hot heads, calm minds and everything in between at the game

Wobbling Warner

Not quite David Warner the fielder's evening thus far. Two mis-fields yielded two fours as he kept diving over the ball. The first off an off drive from Faf du Plessis was admittedly not easy with Warner running to his left at mid-off but couldn't get his lunge-stop right. Next one was pretty straightforward one. He had just talked to the bowler Khaleel Ahmed and moved to mid-off when Virat Kohli drove not too far to his right. He got there in time but tumbled over it and had a wry smile. Apart from the misfields, he has been his usual busy stuff, with frequent chats to the bowlers and pressing the captain to place him at second slip for the new batsman Glenn Maxwell. Every now and then, he keeps counting the fielders too for some reason, and has the most chats with the bowlers more than anyone else on the field. He also asks the ball to be thrown to him as early as possible so that he can shine and pass on to the bowler. Once, when Prithvi Shaw was taking his time to pass the ball on, Warner raised his arm first, then shouted out, before taking a couple of steps forward towards Shaw.

Lalit at ease



sage from a legend. "But after that, it never felt that I am talking to a legend or sharing a dressing room with him. It felt like he's a companion, a friend. At times, he has been harsh too, but he stays very cool," he told Wisden India. "I've received a lot of nice inputs from him - last year, he told me four, five different things that have been helping me." Was one of the things how to fire a direct hit? He did a Ponting to take out Virat Kohli, who hadn't gone too far down the track before changing his mind to return to the crease. But by then Yadav had rushed to his right at backward point, swooped low, and fired a sideways throw ala Ponting to leave Kohli stranded.

When Lalit Yadav joined Delhi Capitals couple of years ago, he got a text from Ricky Ponting. "Hi Lalit, Ponting this side!" Yadav couldn't believe that he was the recipient of a message from a legend.



DK does what DK does

A slog sweep on a bent knee to a pacer was just the start before Dinesh Karthik decided to turn more innovative in the 17th over. He tried a reverse lap off Khaleel Ahmed two balls later but it dribbled off the toe end of the bat. Next over, first ball off Mustafizur Rahman, he shuffled outside off and tried to lap it to fine-leg but it flew off the edge to third man boundary instead. Rahman slipped in a slower cutter next ball and winced as DK reverse-slapped it over short third man for a one-bounce four. Next ball was smashed through extra cover and chants of DK DK began to echo around the arena. He obliged by lifting two sixes, one of which landed on the first tier over long-off. And when Shardul rebounded after a pulled six with an outside-off yorker. Pant, who gathered that ball, gestured to his bowler to stay calm, stay cool (he touched his head) & even mouthed 'cool cool'. DK was the real cool one, there though.

Covid caution: No handshakes, no hugs

Mumbai: No Delhi Capitals players will shake hands with any player from Royal Challengers Bangalore after the night game at the Wankhede on April 16. Not because there is any problem between the two teams but it's a BCCI mandate to the Delhi team after their physiotherapist Patrick Farhat and another support staff tested Covid positive on Friday. It is understood that the support staff tested positive is the masseur. The paper understands that the BCCI has issued a circular to the Delhi team requesting them to not shake hands & hug players from RCB after the game. The players from teams usually congregate for a chat after games before they disperse. The Delhi players have been advised to maintain social distancing through chats & use of masks have been recommended. The non-playing team members who will watch the game from the stands too have been requested to wear their face masks throughout the game, except eating or drinking. This is the second positive case during this season of IPL which is played in two cities of Maharashtra-Mumbai & Pune. Delhi players have tested negative & have been cleared to take part in the game on Saturday evening.

DEVENDRA PANDEY