

Ahmedabad

3 GUJARAT

BTP set to break up with Owaisi, but AIMIM revs up for foray into Assembly elections

VAIBHAV JHA

AHMEDABAD, APRIL 16

MONTHS BEFORE the Gujarat Assembly elections, slated for December this year, the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM)'s chief Asaduddin Owaisi landed in Ahmedabad on Thursday to reach out to his party rank and file and look for new alliance partners. Officially, Owaisi arrived in the capital to attend an Iftaar event organised by the state AIMIM unit, even as the visit also served as an opportunity for him to galvanise his activists and boost the party membership drive. The alliance issue has also assumed urgency for Owaisi since the AIMIM's existing partnership with the Bharatiya Tribal Party (BTP) seems to have virtually collapsed now.

Currently, the AIMIM, which is estimated to have around 20,000 workers in Gujarat, has support bases in some pockets in over a dozen districts across the state, where the percentage of the Muslim population is relatively higher. Owaisi's visit was however met with protests in Ahmedabad's Juhapura locality, Gujarat's largest Muslim ghetto, where he went to a mosque to offer namaz.

Making its electoral debut in Gujarat in civic polls last year, the AIMIM had carved a slice of the Opposition space for itself by winning altogether 25 seats, in-



AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi at a press conference in Ahmedabad. Nirmal Harindran

cluding 7 seats in the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. The AIMIM had won the remaining 18 seats in the municipalities of Modasa in Aravalli district, Godhra in Panchmahal, and in Bharuch. The party had then nominated its candidates in 14 districts across the state. It had also fielded non-Muslim nominees in several wards, of whom a candidate also won the election.

The AIMIM had then forged an alliance with the BTP, which has some influence in Bharuch and Narmada districts. In the run-up to the Gujarat Assembly polls, the BTP is however eyeing an alliance with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on the ground, according to an AIMIM source, that "it was local elections last year but the coming Assembly polls will be a different ball game".

Meanwhile, addressing reporters during his Ahmedabad tour, Owaisi said he will keep visiting Gujarat this year in order to "correct any mistakes, strengthen the party and give our best in the Assembly polls".

An erstwhile Congress ally, the BTP had broken its alliance with the grand old party ahead of last year's urban local body polls. Joining hands with the AIMIM, it had then accused the Congress of being "two faced". However, the BTP leaders, including Chhotubhai Vasava and Mahesh Vasava, recently met AAP supremo and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, sending out clear signals that their party is heading to tie up with the AAP for the Assembly polls.

Faced with these developments, the AIMIM seems to have initiated its bid to scout for new

allies in Gujarat, even as it has intensified its attempts to expand its base in Muslim-dominated pockets in the state.

When asked about the possibility of the BTP preferring the AAP to the AIMIM, Owaisi said, "Every party has the right to work as per their wish. We cannot stop anyone from joining someone else and neither can they. We are also looking for possible alliances and coalitions. However, it will be too early to spell out our preferences now."

As per the 2011 census, of Gujarat's total 6.04 crore population, the Muslim population is over 58 lakhs. However, in the 182-member Gujarat Assembly, there are only three Muslim MLAs — Gyasuddin Shaikh, Imran Khedawala and Mohammad Javid Pirzada — all of whom belong to the Congress.

In view of the Muslim community's gross under-representation in the Assembly and other bodies, the AIMIM has plans to make inroads in different parts of Gujarat, especially in urban belts stretching beyond major cities.

"Last time AIMIM had contested local body polls on selected seats in a handful of regions. However, this year we are planning to contest on many more seats to expand our bases to cities such as Palanpur, Siddhpur, Surat, Junagadh, among others," said Shamshad Pathan, AIMIM vice president.

"We are looking for like-minded parties with whom we can form an alliance. Additionally, we are also strengthening our own bases."

The Gujarat Assembly polls have always been a two-party affair, with the BJP ruling the state for over 25 years and the Congress continuing to play the role of the principal Opposition party. With the AAP now aggressively stepping up its Gujarat moves, planning to contest from all the Assembly seats, the evolving election scene may undergo changes.

In this backdrop, the Congress has sharpened its attack on the AIMIM, accusing it of being the BJP's "B team". "The Muslim community in Gujarat is aware. They have seen the results of UP elections and how AIMIM couldn't manage to win anything but did damage to the secular vote share, which ultimately benefited the BJP. They understand that this party (AIMIM) only approaches them during elections, and they have made up their mind to reject them and give their vote to a party that actually cares for them. This is why we saw citizens protesting against Owaisi when he arrived in Juhapura," said Congress MLA Khedawala.

Hitting back, Owaisi said, "We did not contest the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls in Gujarat. How many seats did Congress win? Zero. These allegations have now gotten old."

dozen arrests, and an ongoing investigation into irregularities with respect to two more exams.

After the GSSSB head clerk recruitment exam was cancelled following a paper leak, its chairman Asit Vora had resigned on February 8 this year. A press conference by Jadeja where he gave evidence of an alleged paper leak in the recruitment of Van Rakshak (Forest Guard) posts, led to the state government accepting irregularities at a few centres in Gujarat.

CASE OVER ASSAULTING COPS

AAP leader Jadeja granted bail, barred from entering Gandhinagar

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE

AHMEDABAD, APRIL 16

A GANDHINAGAR sessions court on Saturday granted bail to AAP leader Yuvrajsinh Jadeja and another persons arrested for allegedly assaulting police personnel and dragging one of them on a vehicle's bonnet. As part of bail conditions, the court has, however, barred Jadeja and the other accused from entering Gandhinagar district until chargesheet in the case is filed.

Jadeja and Dipakkumar Zala, who were booked under charges including attempt to murder, argued before the Gandhinagar district sessions court that there was no act committed by them to cause death and neither was there any intention of hurting the complainant police personnel or any other police officer and that there was no bodily injury caused to the said personnel.

Both the accused were booked under IPC sections 332 (voluntarily causes hurt), 307 (attempt to murder), 353 (assaults a public

servant) and 114 (abettor present).

On the other hand, public prosecutor HN Raval had argued that the two accused who are "known as students/candidates" leader, have made a provocative speech against the Government", and that the two "tried to drive over the police officer" during the protest by Vidyashayaks, with the Vidyashayaks gathering at the Vidhan Sabha without any police permission.

Additional sessions judge DK Soni deemed it fit to grant bail to

Jadeja and Zala, noting that both are residents of Gujarat and thus their availability during trial will not be hampered.

A student activist and a whistleblower, Jadeja joined AAP in 2020 and in the past three years, his complaints of irregularities in government recruitment have resulted in the cancellation of two government exams (Bin Sachivalay clerk and office assistant exam and head clerk recruitment by Gujarat Subordinate Service Selection Board (GSSSB) exam), over three

4 booked for vandalising cinema screen in Vadodara

Vadodara: Vadodara city's Wadi police station on Saturday booked four unidentified persons for allegedly vandalising a 17-foot cinema screen at Alpna talkies and assaulting the ticket checker while watching the newly released flick KGF 2, in a late-night show on Friday.

The FIR filed at Wadi police station states that the four accused had occupied seats different from their designated ones in the cinema hall and assaulted two ticket checkers when they were asked to shift to their original seats.

According to the complaint filed by the cashier of the cinema, Nimesh Kadkiya, when other patrons pointed out to the staff that the four men were occupying the seats, ticket Kadar Qureshi and Rakesh Baria asked the four accused to shift to their original seats.

The FIR states, "The four vandalised the 17 feet 3D screen of the theatre, which cost Rs 3,50,000...They also damaged the exit door of the hall which costs around Rs 50,000."

The Wadi police station has booked the accused under IPC Sections mischief causing damage amounting to fifty rupees (427), voluntarily causing hurt (323), uttering obscene words [294(a)], and offence committed in presence of abettor (114). **ENS**

CEPT alumna's thesis on conservation of Aliabet wins international award

RITUSHARMA

AHMEDABAD, APRIL 15

CEPT ALUMNA Shreeni Benjamin's thesis on coastal management titled 'Mending the gap: Landscape conservation for the island of Aliabet', is one of the three winners of the Asian Edition of the Young Talent Architecture Award 2020 (YTAA 2020).

The 30-year-old postgraduate in landscape architecture from CEPT University has been practising independently in Ahmedabad since she graduated in 2019. Part of the YTAA 2020 exhibition that showcases winners and finalists of European and Asian edition awards and supported by the European Union was inaugurated Friday at the Lilavati Lalbhai Library, CEPT University. The exhibition has previously been showcased at Venice, Prague and Shanghai, and is now being hosted by CEPT University.

Coastal management is one of the most important parameters to be considered in urban planning for a resilient future.

The research is an attempt to understand the drivers and services of the ecosystem of Aliabet in order to revive and strengthen its resources thereby regaining its position in the larger ecological chain.

"The island of Aliabet is a part



CEPT University alumna Shreeni Benjamin with her award-winning project at the exhibition. Nirmal Harindran

of river Narmada's estuary which has formed connections with the mainland due to the depositions afflicted by anthropogenic activities like the construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam. Once an ecologically rich and diverse chunk of land, it was home to wetland animals and over 350 species of wetland birds coming from Siberia where Aliabet is one of the pause points for them," says Shreeni.

"Because of the dam the island is devoid of the river water, because there isn't enough velocity of the river to flow on the island. And this area has a mix of waters that is the seawater and the river water, which generates the brack-

ish water so brackish water is like the most vital thing for this island to survive. So that really shapes the growth of grass," she added.

Her thesis postulates that the present conditions and disturbances have replaced the existing physical conditions and habitats that have affected biodiversity in many ways. The man-made conditions imposed on Aliabet have led it to become a desert and a saline wasteland and it also looks into suggestions for revival of the island like conserving rain water, strategically planning embankments in certain areas that will capture rainwater and that will stop the high high tides.

"Also, we can convert this is-

land into different habitats, different wetland habitats with different waters like salt, brackish and fresh. For which we can prepare seed bags which can grow in fresh as well as in brackish soil. Also replenishing the mangroves can help in reviving the island, building them as the first line of defence," she further said.

"The wetland habitats will start to develop and then after some point like after 10 years down the line, it will grow into grasslands and then in succession it will ultimately lead to a dense forest," she added.

The YTAA is a part of the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award. It is organised by the Fundación Mies van der Rohe with the support of the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.

The YTAA aims to support the talent of recently graduated Architects, Urban Planners and Landscape Architects, who will be responsible for transforming our environment in the future.

In 2020, for the first time, an independent Asia edition was organised with the four Strategic Partners of the European Union in Asia: China, India, Japan and South Korea aiming to promote exchange and cooperation with their YTAA counterparts in Europe.

TWO-DAY VISIT TO GUJARAT

PM to inaugurate Global Ayush summit in WHO chief's presence

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE

VADODARA, APRIL 16

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will be on a two-day visit to Gujarat from April 18 to 20, during which he will inaugurate several development projects in North Gujarat and the tribal district of Dahod. The Prime Minister will also inaugurate a Global Ayush summit at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar, in presence of Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO).

After arriving on April 18 evening, the Prime Minister will visit the Command and Control Centre (CCC) for schools in Gandhinagar, which annually collects and analyses over 500 crore data sets using big data analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning, in order to enhance overall learning outcomes for students.

On April 19, Modi will lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects at Banas Dairy Sankul in Diyodar, Banaskantha including a dairy complex and potato processing plant.

The new dairy complex and potato processing plant at Diyodar, Banaskantha district, built at a cost of over Rs 600 crore, is a greenfield project. "It will enable the processing of about 30 lakh litres of milk, produce about 80 tonnes of butter, one lakh litres of ice cream, 20 tonnes of condensed milk and six tonnes of chocolate dairy," a government release said on Saturday.

"The potato processing plant will produce different types of processed potato products like french fries and potato chips,

many of which, will be exported to other countries. These plants will empower the local farmers," the release added.

The PM will also inaugurate the Banas Community Radio Station, established to provide farmers with information related to agriculture and animal husbandry. It is expected that the radio station will connect with over 5 lakh farmers of about 1700 villages. The PM will also lay the foundation stone for four biogas plants of 100 tonnes capacity to be established at Khimana, Ratanpura – Bhildi, Radhanpur and Thawar. The PM will also address a women's convention which will be attended by woman pastoralists in big number.

Chairman of Banas Dairy Shankar Chaudhary, said in a release on Saturday, "It is happening for the first time in India that two huge and modern dairy plants have been built in one district. Work on the (latest) dairy plant began in June 2020 and was completed within 18 months amid the adverse conditions owing to Covid-19. Machinery from seven countries have been fitted in the plant. It has capacity to process 30 lakh litre milk which can be expanded to 50 lakh litre per day."

From Banaskantha, the Prime Minister will head to Jamnagar to lay the foundation stone of WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM), in the presence of the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, and Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO).

"GCTM will be the first and only global outpost centre for traditional medicine across the world. It will emerge as an international hub of global wellness,"

the release said.

On April 20, Modi will inaugurate the three-day Global AYUSH Investment and Innovation Summit at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar in presence of Jugnauth and Ghebreyesus.

The PM's last stop of the two-day tour will be Dahod, where he will attend the Adijati Maha Sammelan in Kharod village and inaugurate as well as lay the foundation stones of various development projects for Dahod and Panchmahal districts worth around Rs 22,000 crore.

The projects include the Dahod District Southern Area Regional Water Supply Scheme, constructed in the Namada River Basin, worth around Rs 840 crore, which will cater to the water supply needs of around 280 villages.

The Prime Minister will also inaugurate 66 KV Ghodia substation, Panchayat Houses, Anganwadis and an animal care centre for Dahod district, among other projects.

PM Modi will also lay the foundation stone for manufacturing of 9000 HP Electric Locomotives at the Production Unit and for a project to upgrade the Dahod workshop, established in 1926 for a periodic overhaul of steam locomotives, to an electric locomotive manufacturing unit.

"It will provide direct and indirect employment to over 10,000 people," the release said. The Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone of various projects of the state government worth around Rs 550 crore. This includes water supply related projects worth about Rs 300 crore, Dahod Smart City projects worth around Rs 175 crores, works related to Dudhmati river project, GETCO Substation at Ghodia, among others.

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2	Anil Babubhai Rabari, NAVOYA ANIL RABARI, ARJUNSINH HUKAMSINH RATHOD/WSURA000228/SURAT	Plot No 381, Maa Anandi Township Near D, Ip Darshan School Dindoli, Surat-394210, Gujarat, India	27-01-2022 & Rs.1222063/-	15-04-2022
Sd/- Authorised Officer Manappuram Home Finance Ltd				
Date : 17.04.2022 Place : Gujarat				

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1.	LXJUN00417-18067982 Ramdebhai Jikabhai Khakhas & Nathiben Jikabhai Khakhas	21-01-2022 for Rs. 566926/-	12-04-2022	Plot No.26/2,Ravi Park-2,Near Rokadiya Hanuman Temple, Porbandar,Aditya Road,Near Kashi, Vishwanath Mahadev Temple,Area Khatpat, City Porbandar-360577, R.S No.21Paikhee1,East-Adj, Land Of Plot No.21 Paikhee,West-6 Mtr.Road,North-Land Of Part No.A Of Plot No.26 Paikhee, South-Land Of Plot No.25.
2	LXMEH00416-170044155 Rameshbhai Gobarbhari Rabari & Gobarbhari Vastabhai Rabari	24-05-2019 for Rs. 393169/-	12-04-2022	Milkat No 861 Rabari Vas Opp Jogmaya, Temple At-Sundhiya, Mehsana, Gujarat - 384345
3	LXMEH00416-170049874 Nagajibhai Lalajibhai Rabari & Ramiben Lalajibhai Rabari	28-01-2021 for Rs. 420749/-	12-04-2022	Milkat No - 195/3, Rabari Vas, Near Primary School, At - Bhimpur, Sattlasana, Mehsana, Gujarat - 384340
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Place : Gujarat Dated : 17.04.2022				

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SCAN TO READ

RAHUL TO VISIT DAHOD ON MAY 1

Hardik absent from Cong meet on tribal issues, he cites ‘prior plan’

ADITIRAJA
VADODARA, APRIL 16

THE CONGRESS on Saturday held a tribal rights satyagraha meeting in Dahod, in presence of its elected tribal MLAs, which was not attended by the party's working president Hardik Patel, who had accused the Congress of "ignoring" him, in an interview with *The Indian Express*.

However, Hardik told *The Sunday Express* that he did not "skip" the Dahod meet but had other commitments.

Meanwhile party leaders said on Saturday that Congress MP Rahul Gandhi is likely to visit Dahod on Gujarat Foundation Day on May 1 to kickstart the party's Adivasi Adhikar Yatra (Tribal Rights Rally) that will pass through the tribal belt.

Declining to comment on the speculations regarding his exit from the party, Hardik told *The Sunday Express*, "I could not attend the meeting in Dahod because I had a prior plan to visit Salangpur to pay obeisance at the Hanuman temple as it is a very important day being Saturday and Hanuman Jayanti... I had already conveyed to the party that I cannot attend the Dahod event. There is nothing more to read into it."

GPCC Spokesperson Manish Doshi said that Patel's absence was not to be seen as a "major" issue as the event was focused on tribal issues. Doshi said, "The Dahod event was specifically planned to discuss issues faced by the tribal community. All our important leaders were present, including leader of the Opposition Sukhram Rathwa and also the MLAs from tribal constituencies...

Hardik's absence is not to be seen as anything more than it being a tribal rights meeting."

Meanwhile, senior GPCC leaders including state President Jagdish Thakor, Leader of Opposition Sukhram Rathwa and 13 MLAs of tribal constituencies in the state remained present at the event — MLA Bhavesh Katara also skipped the meeting, sparking off rumours in Dahod about a possible exit of Kataras.

Denying the rumours, Doshi said, "Bhavesh Katara had excused himself from the meeting and informed the party in advance."

Doshi said that the party had invited Rahul Gandhi to kickstart the Adivasi Adhikar Yatra on May 1 from Dahod as well as for the Bardoli Satyagraha on June 12.

"We are expecting that he will attend both the momentous events.. AICC incharge of Gujarat,

Raghu Sharma will also be at the event. The event will see the commencement of the Yatra, which will travel through the tribal belt of the state... The message that the party is taking across to the tribals is that Congress is with them in ensuring that their rights are not trampled upon," Doshi said.

"The tribal belt extends from Ambaji to Umergaon in Gujarat but the BJP has not allowed tribals to use the rights they have been conferred upon. Tribal education is given the least importance and their lands are taken away in the name of development... Kaprada, which has the highest rainfall in the tribal belt, is struggling with drinking water. We aim to educate and empower the community through the yatra in the belt, which is a traditional Congress stronghold," the spokesperson added.

Working to improve air connectivity between Gujarat and Mumbai, says Scindia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KESHOD, APRIL 16

UNION CIVIL Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Saturday said his ministry was working to improve air connectivity between Gujarat and the country's financial capital Mumbai.

He was in Keshod in the state's Junagadh district to inaugurate the upgraded airport and flag off an Alliance Air flight to Mumbai under the Centre's Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)-UDAN scheme. He said Keshod airport was set up by the then Nawab of Junagadh in 1930 and was lying unused before Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided to revive it.

Revived by the Airports Authority of India (AAI) at an investment of Rs 25 crore, the airport at Keshod will see its first flight connecting it to Mumbai, with Scindia adding that Keshod will soon get connected by air to Ahmedabad as well.

"In the coming days, we plan to provide maximum connectivity to Gujarat," Scindia said at the programme attended by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and State Civil Aviation Minister Purnesh Modi.

"...We have connected Porbandar and Rajkot with Mumbai. We are connecting every corner of Gujarat with the country's financial capital," he said.

He said two greenfield airports will be developed in Gujarat, with an annual capacity of 25 lakh and 30 lakh passengers respectively.

Scindia said apart from two greenfield airports, five new flights, flights from Mumbai and Ahmedabad to Keshod, his ministry was present to fulfill the demands of the CM and the state civil aviation minister related to air connectivity. From April 27, a flight connecting Porbandar with New Delhi will start operating, Scindia announced.

The Union civil aviation ministry had taken steps that were not taken in 75 years of the country and had "democratized" flights by making it affordable, Scindia said.

At weavers' body meet, its president joins BJP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SURAT, APRIL 16

THE FEDERATION of Gujarat Weavers Association (FOGWA) organised a meeting, called Maha Adhiveshan, in Surat on Saturday evening in which president of the weavers' body Ashok Jirawala and a few other textile owners joined BJP in the presence of state party chief CR Paatil.

Besides Paatil, Union Minister of State for Textiles Darshana Jardosh and BJP leaders of Surat city also attended the event, to which no Congress or Aam Aadmi Party leaders were invited.

The meeting was held to discuss major issues faced by the powerloom sector including the fly-by-night firms which purchase grey fabrics in large quantity and default payment.

The presidents and secretaries of 33 powerloom associations of Surat city and district remained present in the Maha Adhiveshan meeting.

However, sources in FOGWA said that the event was organized as a platform for Jirawala, who was with Congress, to join BJP.

FOGWA president Jirawala said, "Paatil had given justice to the issues faced by textile industry earlier and helped the industry in each stage. I was with Congress and now for the betterment of the textile industry, I thought of joining BJP, as it is worthless to swim against the flow of waves. I have no expectation of getting any position in the party, but whatever work is given to me, I will definitely take it to a successful end."



CR Paatil at the FOGWA meeting in Surat on Saturday . Express

Addressing the meeting, BJP MP of Surat and Union Minister Jardosh said, "The textile industry is presently an unorganized sector and attempts are being made to make it organized. The textile ministry is also working to start skill training centres at those places where the industries are established so that more people can get employed."

At the event, the state BJP chief said assured support to the textile industry over any issue faced by them

"The textile industry employs the most number of people in the country. For issues related to GST duty or anything else, we are there to support," Paatil said.

Jirawala had started his political career in Sewa Dal of Congress in 1982 and then joined Youth Congress. Later he was made the Surat city Congress president in 2013.

When the then CM of Gujarat Narendra Modi was projected as prime ministerial candidate of BJP in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Ashok Jirawala, had joined BJP.

However, he returned to Congress in 2016 and was part of

the Patidar Anamat Andolan Samithi protest demanding reservations across the state. In the 2017 Assembly elections, Congress gave ticket to Nilesh Kumbhani and Ashok Jirawala from Kamrej seat in Surat after the latter created pressure on the party and both of them filed nomination forms. However Nilesh Kumbhani later withdrew the form and Jirawala lost the election to VD Zalavadiya.

Meanwhile, on Saturday Paatil also attended a alumni meet of students of PP Sawani school in Varachha.

The state BJP chief also released a video on social media apologizing for mentioning Subhadra as Lord Krishna's wife during a speech at the Madhavpur fair a few days ago.

In the video, CR Paatil said, "I have corrected my mistake in the same speech. But some people had contacted me on phone and told me to apologize. I did and apologized to them on the phone. Later on some people told me to come to Dwarka and apologise, and I told them that I will definitely do it..."



TO MARK HANUMAN JAYANTI

A procession to mark Hanuman Jayanti passes through Fatepura Char Rasta towards Rokadnath temple at Nyaymadir in Vadodara on Saturday. Bhupendra Rana

AIM TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT SCHEMES, INCREASE REGISTRATION IN E-SHRAM PORTAL

Unorganised workers' meet held in six cities

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, APRIL 16

SIX CITIES in Gujarat organised 'Asangathiit Shramik Sammelan' (unorganised workers meet) on Saturday, with Minister of State of Labour and Employment Brijesh Merja joining in virtually at the Ahmedabad congregation. The 'Asangathiit Shramik

Sammelan' gatherings held at Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Rajkot, Jamnagar and Bhavnagar on Saturday, were organised with an objective to popularise various schemes available to unorganised labour workforce as well as to up the registrations of unorganised labourers under the e-Shram portal, said KG Bhavsar, deputy labour commissioner of Ahmedabad region.

Bhavsar told the Indian Express that similar gatherings have also been scheduled to be held at four cities -- Gandhinagar, Mehsana, Morbi and Junagadh -- on Sunday.

Merja, who was scheduled to attend the Ahmedabad gathering in-person, said during his virtual address at the event that he was unable to make it to the event owing to the inauguration

of 108-feet Hanuman statue at Morbi by Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier in the day. "Work for the benefit of the unorganised labour force (by the government) is going on with much enthusiasm... Gujarat is number one in registration of unorganised sector labourers on the e-Shram portal," Merja said during his address.

According to the e-Shram

portal's dashboard, between August 2021 and April 15 of this year, 83.12 lakh workers have registered, putting Gujarat in the ninth position among all states.

According to the data provided by the Gujarat Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board of Ahmedabad, till date 766 lakh building construction workers have registered.

Mythology, politics behind Gujarat's Madhavpur Mela, and why CMs from Northeast are visiting it

GOPAL KATESHIYA
RAJKOT, APRIL 16

IN HIS radio address programme Mann ki Baat last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had talked about Gujarat's Madhavpur Mela, highlighting its links to Northeast India and terming this "deep bond between India's east and west" part of our "heritage".

The Mela was inaugurated on Sunday (April 10) by President Ramnath Kovind. Since then, Chief Ministers from the Northeast regions of the country and a host of Union Ministers have been visiting the fair, with Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur saying the event has the "highest political quotient" (Not in quote. He said, "In entire country, there is no other fair which the President and host of Union Ministers and Chief Ministers of a number of states visit.")

What is the Madhavpur Mela
The Mela is a religio-cultural fair taking place every year in Madhavpur, a village on the Porbandar coast, also known as Madhavpur Ghed. The village has temples of Madhavrajji, or Lord Krishna, and his consort Rukmini, believed to have been built in the 15th century. It is also known for its sandy sea beach, the turquoise waters of the Arabian Sea, a sea turtle hatchery and the Osho Ashram.

The fair begins on Ram



At Madhavpur Mela in Porbandar. Chirag Chotaliya

Navami, Lord Rama's birth anniversary falling on the ninth day of the month of Chaitra in the Hindu calendar, and culminates on Tryodashi, the 13th day of the month.

Mythology behind the fair

The fair celebrates the marriage of Lord Krishna with Rukmini around 4,000 years ago, as per Hindu mythology.

According to mythology, Lord Krishna had established his kingdom in Dwarka near Porbandar. Rukmini, daughter of King Bhimachal of the present-day Arunachal Pradesh, wanted to marry Krishna, while her brother

wanted to marry her off to Shishupal, Krishna's cousin.

Therefore, Krishna abducted Rukmini, brought her to Gujarat and tied the knot with her at Madhavpur village.

Today, to mark the wedding, marriage rituals go on for five days.

Significance and scaling-up of the fair

The Madhavpur Mela, though, is unique as it is held in summer, was till five years ago just one of the hundreds of fairs

held in the state.

In 2018, the state government, in collaboration with the Centre, took over its organisation, with an aim to highlight the event's connection with the Northeast and to highlight cultural connections of the North-east with the western part of

the country.

The government invited Governors and Chief Ministers of Northeastern states to the fair, along with art troupes from the region. A handicraft exhibition is

also organised, and the government presents the fair as an annual effort to integrate the culture of the Northeast with that of the west.

This year, the government has taken on lease 41 bigha private land for creating parking lots, a helipad where five helicopters can land at a time, a stage for politicians to address the gathering, exhibition ground, etc. The government has also hired 100 public transport buses to ferry people of Porbandar, Devbhumi Dwarka, Gir Somnath and Junagadh districts to Madhavpur free of cost.

Fair's economy

Earlier, the Madhavpur village panchayat used to eamed around Rs10 lakh to Rs15 lakh per year by auctioning off space for stalls on the Mela nu Medan. Visitors would mostly be people from villages surrounding Madhavpur.

But since the government took over, the village panchayat's revenue has increased manifold. In 2022, the government leased land from farmers for a few days and then gave it to the village panchayat for auction. The panchayat generated Rs35 lakh by auctioning off 98 plots for various rides and stalls. Locals selling food items and soft drinks also do swift business.

However, farmers whose land is taken on lease lose their standing summer crops. When The Indian Express visited the fair ground, remains of alfalfa crops could be seen in one por-

tion of the fair ground. The state compensates farmers for this crop loss.

Role of the panchayat

Since the government took over the task of organising and managing the fair, the panchayat's role is becoming irrelevant. At the inauguration of the ongoing fair on April 10, no one from the panchayat was given a seat on the dais.

"The religio-cultural fair has been turned into a fair of politics with little regard to traditions," complains Bhanu Bhuvra, incumbent sarpanch of Madhavpur.

Arvind Raiyani, Gujarat's Minister of State for Transport and Tourism, disagrees. "This is a place of heritage value, requiring the government's intervention for its development. Of course it has to be done by taking the village panchayat along, and we are doing that. We had sent invites to everyone but people are not turning up due to differences in ideologies," Raiyani claimed.

Importance in state politics

Madhavpur is the biggest village of Porbandar district, with 13,000 voters. Till 2002, it was part of Mangrol Assembly seat, a Congress bastion. In 2007, it was made part of Kutiyana Assembly seat. The BJP, which has been in power in Gujarat for the past 27 years, had won Kutiyana seat for the first time in 1998 and held it for the next two terms. In 2012, strongman Kandhal Jadeja of NCP won it and retained it in 2017.

Rajkot court rejects bail application of advocate booked for sedition

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
RAJKOT, APRIL 16

THE DISTRICT and sessions court of Rajkot on Saturday dismissed the bail application of advocate Sohil Mor in a sedition case registered against him by the Rajkot city police.

The court of additional sessions judge KD Dave rejected Mor's bail application.

Additional public prosecutor Samir Khira contended that the accused was an advocate and hence a person who knew the law but chose to break it.

Khira further submitted that the accused has been booked for serious offence like section as provided in Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), for promoting entity between two groups as provided in IPC Section 153(A) and that the investigation by police so far has established that prima facie there's a case against the applicant.

Adding that therefore, the accused doesn't deserve to be granted bail as also for the reason that investigation is still ongoing.

Mor was booked by University Police in Rajkot city on February 20 after one Jyotiba Sodha filed a complaint alleging the 44-year-old advocate passed derogatory remarks against Maratha ruler Shivaji in a WhatsApp group of residents of Syama Prasad Mukherjee Township on February 19.

Sohil Mor was booked by police on Feb 20 after Jyotiba Sodha filed a complaint alleging the advocate passed derogatory remarks against Maratha ruler Shivaji in a WhatsApp group

According to the FIR, when Sodha, one of the residents of Syama Prasad Mukherjee Township, contacted Mor on telephone to seek clarification about his comments, Mor allegedly told her that another country had gained control and that people of certain communities should leave.

According to the FIR, Mor, who is also a resident of Syama Prasad Mukherjee Township, allegedly tore off photos of Lord Ganesha pasted on doors of certain residents of Syama Prasad Mukherjee Township and also allegedly destroyed torans, hangings considered auspicious.

"We brought it to the notice of the court that Mor was an advocate and a notary who had full knowledge of law but had willingly broken the law and prima facie, had committed serious offence like sedition and therefore doesn't deserve bail," Khira said.

Mor is presently lodged in judicial custody.

Classifieds

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I Poonam Spouse No. 14676682X Rank NK Name - Sandeep Nagar, 270, Engineer Regiment Resident, Village & Post - Ikhlama, Tehsil - Goharganj, Dist. Raisen, State - MP, Pin - 464993 I Have Changed My Name Poonam to Poonam Nagar vide Affidavit date : 29/03/2022

PROPERTY

CHANGE OF NAME

I have change My Name from **PATEL LILABAHEN VALLABHKUMAR** to **PATEL LILABEN VALLABHBHAI** Address: 67, Deepmala Bungalows, Nr. Cadila Bridge, Ghodasar, Ahmedabad -380050

CHANGE OF NAME

I have change My Name from **PATEL VALLABHKUMAR GIRDHARBHAI** to **PATEL VALLABHBHAI GIRDHARBHAI** Address: 67, Deepmala Bungalows, Nr. Cadila Bridge, Ghodasar, Ahmedabad -380050

CHANGE OF NAME

I have changed my name as **BAROT MAYUR VIKRAMBHAI** from **BAROT JAYMITABEN VIKRAMKUMAR** 2, Happy Villa Apartment, Nr. Dharmsukh Apartment, Bhaikaka Nagar, Thaltej, Ahmedabad-380059.

“ IMPORTANT ”

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State Nodal Implementing Agency (Atal Jal)/ Project Implementation Agency (PIA) & Gujarat Water Resources Development Corporation Ltd, (GWRDC) Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Notice No.: 02, 2022-23

The Executive Engineer, Sujlam Suflam Unit No-2, 2nd floor, State Water Data Centre Building, Sector-8 Gandhinagar PIN-382007, Phone No-079-232-36712 invites applications for Preparation of Selection list from eligible candidates for Agriculture Expert in District Program Management Unit (DPMU) on contract basis under Atal Bhujal Yojna (Atal Jal). Application Format, Qualification Detail and other Detail may be seen at Mahiti Niyamak Dept. Office website www.statetenders.gujarat.gov.in and GWRDC website <http://gwrdc.gujarat.gov.in>. The qualified Candidates may apply to the "Executive Engineer, Sujalam Sufalam Unit No-2, 2nd floor, State Water Data Centre Building, Sector-8 Gandhinagar PIN-382007. Ph No-079-232-36712" only by RPAD/Speed post and ensure that their application reaches by Dt. 30/04/2022 with all documents. **INF/103/22-23**

matrimonials

BRAHMIN

Wanted Brahmin Groom (Govt/PSU/Software professional) for a fair MSC, B.Ed, 25, 5'4 Girl. M-9437351347 **0050195211-1**

Suitable match for Hindu, khatri unmarried girl, 17/02/1980, M.A, B.Ed, Writer. Contact No. 8968377760 **0050195210-1**

Compatible match for Ludhiana based, July 1990, 5'4" beautiful very fare B Tech Sikh Tonk Khatri girl package 45 lac 9056101964 **0050195209-1**

Professionally qualified match for Khatri girl, 1983, 5'-6", Ph.D, Class-1 Officer (Central Govt.). Contact: 75080-40384. **0020437548-1**

IMPORTANT

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OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BERHAMPUR
(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 COMMISSIONER OF FISHERIES (Government of Gujarat)
Dr. Jivaraj Mehta Bhavan, Block No. 10, 3rd floor, Gandhinagar-382010

E-Tender are publically invited for the work as described below

Tender Notice No	Description of work	Estimatd cost in Rs	(1) Tender Fee (2) EMD (3) Time Limit
01/22-23	Maintenance dredging at Umarsadi fish Landing Centre Ta-Pardi, Dist-Valsad	10,01,56,000.00/-	(1) Rs.18000/- (Non-refundable) (2) Rs.1001600/- (3) 4 Months (Excluding monsoon)

1. Downloading start date and last date of online submission: From Dt. 19/4/2022 to Dt. 27/4/2022 up to 18.00 Hrs
2. Last date of Submission of tender fee, EMD and other documents through RPAD/Speed post only: 04/05/2022 up to 18.00 Hrs.
3. Date and Time of Bid opening: Dt. 05/05/2022 from 12.00 Hrs onwards
4. Downloading of Tender document and submission of Price Bid in the electronic format can be done only through <https://www.nprocure.com>.
5. Price bid in Physical form shall not be accepted in any case
6. Necessary correction or additions, if required will be brought to notice on <https://www.nprocure.com>.
7. Commissioner of Fisheries reserve the right to accept or reject any or all tenders to be received without assigning any reasons thereof.
INF/101/22-23 **Chief Engineer**

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER RURAL WORKS CIRCLE: SUNDARGARH AT/PO- SANKARA, SUNDARGARH-770020, E-mail address- serw_sundargarh@yahoo.com
No. Tender Online - RWCCESNG -06 of 2022-23, Letter No. 884 /Dtd. 12.04.2022
e-Procurement NOTICE

1. Type of the Work : Bridge (BSY)
2. Class of Contractor : As specified in the column-6 of the Annexure
3. Time of Completion : As specified in the column-5 of the Annexure
4. Detail Projects : As per Annexure attached
5. Estimated Cost : As specified in the column-4 of the Annexure
6. Other details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding From To	Last Date & Time of Seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh	RWCCESNG-06 of 2022-23	18.04.2022 11:00 AM	02.05.2022 5:00 PM	30.04.2022 5:00 PM	04.05.2022 11:00 AM

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer,
Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh
OIPR- 25133/11/0009/2223

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, KENDRAPARA
At : Ichhapur, Post : Shree Baladevjeve,
Email: eerwsskendrapara@gmail.com
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.

Sl. 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, Mantrapada and Nuahat 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

GOVT. OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, DRAINAGE CIRCLE, CUTTACK GANDARPUR-753 003
E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE NO.-ACEDC-CTC-01/2022-23
email Id :- sedrainagecirclectc@gmail.com

1	Name of Works	: Renovation by Dredging of Basulei Nalla from RD 6.50 KM to 11.52 KM under DIP.
2	Total number of package	: 1 no. individual package.
3	Amount put to Tender	: Rs. 6,58,24,694.00
4	Bid Identification No.	: ACEDC-CTC /DD-JSPR - 01/2022-23
5	Period of completion	: 11(Eleven) Calendar months.
6	Avadability of Tender On - Line.	: 19.04.2022, 16.30.00 Hours to 10.05.2022, 17.30 Hours.
7	Date of Opening of Technical Bid.	: 11.05.2022 at 10.00 hours in the O/o the Additional Chief Engineer Drainage Circle, Cuttack
8	Class of Contractor	: Special And Super Class.
9	Bid Security	: Bid Security Declaration
10	Cost of Tender paper	: Rs. 10,000/-
11	Procurement Officer	: Additional Chief Engineer Drainage Circle, Gandarpur Cuttack, -753003.

* Tender will be accepted if registered in the CDMS Portal.
Further details can be seen from the Govt. web site www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Addendum / Corrigendum/ Cancellation if any required will be published only in Govt. web site www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
Sd/-
Additional Chief Engineer
Drainage Circle, Cuttack.
OIPR- 32174/11/0001/2223

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

27 APR 1964 TO APR 1994

Twenty eight years ago you made the supreme sacrifice for the honour of the Regt and Country while serving in the icy glacier of Siachen. Your heroic deeds epitomize valour and sacrifice that acts as a source of inspiration & strength to us.

CO & All Ranks 17 Para Fd Regt (8 RAJPUT)

GUNNER TAMIL SELVAN

AHMEDABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
CENTRAL MEDICAL STORES
TENDER SHORT NOTICE No /04/CMS/AMC/2022-23
Name of Tender : RRC LG-02 ENCLOSED FULLY AUTOMATED COAGULATION ANALYSER 3RD GENERATION MACHINE
Last Date of Online & Physical Tender Submission Dt: 25/04/2022
Details & Tenders Available on www.nprocure.com

DISTRICT WATER & SANITATION UNIT - SABARKANTHA (Govt. of Gujarat Undertaking)
TENDER NOTICE NO: - 02 OF 2022 - 23
Unit Manager, D.W.S.U - Sabarkantha, Jal Bhavan, Nr. Circuit House Bye pass Road, Himatnagar Mob. 8141306115 Invites tender for below mentioned work by 'E-tendering System. For work Open Well Work As per Mention in. Last Date for Tender dt.20/04/2022 upto 18.00 hours and last date for physical document submission date: 21/04/2022 upto 15.00 hours by PPAD /Seed Post / Courier to reached at office. Amout of work is Rs. 39.85 lacs. The Concern villages pani samiti reserves the right to cancel on or all tenders without giving any reason. Tender documents available on website. <http://www.wasmo.nprocure.com>. for detailed information of tender & conditions. contact office mentioned above during office hours and is binding to all. Any Amendment regarding this tender will be shown / publish on Website only. Drinking Water Supply Helpline for Rural Area: 1916, 18002333944
INF/HMT/26/2022

GUJARAT STATE ELECTRICITY CORPORATION LTD.
Sikka Thermal Power Station, At PO Sikka, Dist. Jamnagar-361141.
e-mail: cegtps.gsecl@gmail.com Website: www.gsecl.in
CIN: U40100GJ1993SGC019988

E-Tender Notice No. 226

Online Tenders are invited for 1) Work of complete Boiler overhauling during AOH/COH as per IBR of 250 MW Unit No. 3 & 4 at STPS.
Tender documents available on GSECL Website www.gsecl.in (for view, download and submission in hard). Party has to submit tender in online also on web site www.nprocure.com. Vendor, Manufacturers, Contractors are requested to locate the same from above web site. Please be in touch with our above site for any future Amendment / Corrigendum
Chief Engineer (G), STPS.

GOVERNMENT OF GUJARAT
NARMADA, WATER RESOURCES, WATER SUPPLY AND KALPSAR DEPARTMENT
ON LINE TENDER NOTICE NO. 01 OF 2022-23
In the name of Governor of Gujarat State, the Executive Engineer, Himatnagar Irrigation Division, Hadilpul Chhaparia, Himatnagar - 383 001 (Phone:02772-242710) invites tenders for the (1) Extension, Renovation and Modernization work of Hahtmati Distribution Canal System of HRP "B" Zone Ta:- Prantij having the Estimated Cost of Rs. 691.03 Lac And (2) Extension, Renovation and Modernization work of Main Canal of HRP "C-1" Zone Ta:- Prantij having the Estimated Cost of Rs. 704.15 Lac from contractor registered in appropriate Class in Narmada, Water Resources, Water Supply and Kalpsar department and/or Road and Building Department of Gujarat State.
1. Tender download Dt.12/05/2022 up to 18.00 Hrs.
2. On line tender submission Dt.12/05/2022 up to 18.00 Hrs.
3. Submission of EMD, tender fee and other documents up to Dt.19/05/2022 up to 16.00 Hrs. (By Registered Post AD / Speed Post only)
4. Opening of tender on Dt.20/05/2022 at 12.00 Hrs.
For More information contact this office & see <http://www.state-tenders.gujarat.gov.in> website tender can be downloaded from website www.nwr.nprocure.com.
INF/HMT/25/2022

Preliminary Notification under sub-section (1) section 11 of the Act.
Notification
Revenue Department, Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar
(The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation & Resettlement Act, 2013) (30 of 2013)
No: AM-M-2022-143-LNV-1221-2147-GH **Date :- 23 MAR 2022**
In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 11 of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation & Resettlement Act, 2013 (No.30 of 2013) (hereinafter referred to as "the Act"), the Government of Gujarat hereby declares that the land/lands mentioned in the Schedule annexed hereto is/are required for the purpose of acquisition for the public purpose of "Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Project"
2. It is notified that, -
1) The area of land/lands required according to below mentioned Schedule for the above project is **0-09-57** hector/acre/sq.mtrs. and is at **Desad Village of Gandevi Taluka of Navsari District ;**
2) The public purposes involved in the above project is Construction of the infrastructure project "**Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Project**"
3) The reasons necessitating the displacement of the affected persons are due to acquisition of the Land, specified in the SCHEDULE for public purpose of Construction of the infrastructure project of "**Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Project**"
4) Under Section 10A of the Act vide of 12 of 2016 exemption is given under Section 10A of the Act vide Revenue Department. Government of Gujarat Notification No: AM-2021-534-M-LNV-1221-2147-GH, **Date:09/11/2021** it is not required for the summary of the Social Impact assessment report.
5) The particulars of the Administrator appointment under section 43 of the Act are as under -
Prant Officer, Navsari, Prant Office, Navsari.
3. All the persons interested in these lands are hereby notified not to obstruct and disturb any Surveyor or other staff to enter upon and survey the land. Any transactions in respect of whole or part of these lands in whatsoever manner including by sale, lease, mortgage, change of name, exchange entered into after the date of this Notification made without permission of the Collector shall not be taken into consideration by the officer assessing the compensation under section 27 of the Act for a particular portion of the land as may be finally acquired.
4. The Government of Gujarat, if satisfied about acquisition of the land for aforesaid public purpose, may publish final declaration under section 19 of the Act in this regard in the manner and timeframe so prescribed under the Act. In case the acquisition is dropped partially or entirely, such facts shall be notified in a proper manner as provided under the Act.
5. In exercise of the powers under clause(g) of section 3 of the Act the State Government is pleased to designate **Prant officer, Navsari** function and discharge the duties as Collector under the provisions of the Act in respect of these lands.
6. Objection to the acquisitions, if any, may be filed by the person interested within 60 (sixty days) from the date of the publication of the notification as provided under section-15 of the ACT before the Collector or Competent Authority.

Village: Desad	Taluka: Gandevi,	District: Navsari	
Sr. No.	Old Survey No. / Old Block No.	New Survey No. /New Block No.	Required Area of the land H.A.Sq.mt.
1	363 paiki 1	388	0-09-57
TOTAL			0-09-57

By order and in the name of Governor of Gujarat,
Sd/-
(H. J. Rathod)
Under Secretary to Government
INF/NAV/23/2022

indianexpress.com

I arrive at a conclusion not an assumption.

Inform your opinion with detailed analysis.

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JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

EXPRESS NETWORK

Maya expels Brahmin leader Nakul Dubey from BSP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, APRIL 16

BAHUJAN SAMAJ Party (BSP) president Mayawati on Saturday expelled former minister and prominent Brahmin leader Nakul Dubey from the party for “indiscipline” and indulgence in “anti-party” activities.

BSP sources said the action was taken following reports that Dubey might “switch over the party”.

A former MLA from Lucknow, Dubey is considered a trusted man of party national general secretary Satish Chandra Misra. Dubey had accompanied Misra when the latter had addressed ‘Vichar Gosthis’ across Uttar Pradesh last year to woo Brahmin voters and develop a “bahichara” between Brahmins and Dalits ahead of the 2022 Assembly elections. Dubey, too, had addressed these rallies.

Dubey was a Cabinet minister in the last Mayawati government between 2007 to 2012.

UK PM ARRIVES IN AHMEDABAD ON APRIL 21, TALKS WITH MODI APRIL 22

Johnson set to discuss ties with PM amid ‘threats from autocratic States’

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 16

BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris Johnson will visit India next week, in the backdrop of Russian invasion of Ukraine that has led to some divergences in Delhi’s and London’s positions on the crisis.

Johnson, who arrives in Ahmedabad on April 21, is expected to announce major investment in key industries in both the UK and India, boosting jobs and growth at home, as well as new collaboration on cutting-edge science, health and technology.

In New Delhi, he will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 22 for bilateral talks “in the face of global economic challenges and threats from autocratic states”, a British High Commission statement said.

The High Commission said that Johnson will visit India this



Johnson is expected to announce major investments

week to “deepen our long-term partnership for peace and prosperity with a fellow leading democracy, in the face of global economic challenges and threats from autocratic states”.

In Ahmedabad, Johnson will have a meeting with leading businesses and discuss the UK and India’s “thriving commercial, trade and people links”, the statement said. This will be the first time a UK Prime Minister

Third time materialising?

BORIS JOHNSON was supposed to come to India for the Republic Day celebrations last year, but the trip was cancelled. He was thereafter expected to come to Delhi in April last year but that visit was

EXPLAINED

also cancelled due to the Delta wave of the pandemic. His visit comes in the backdrop of Russia’s invasion on Ukraine and the two sides are expected to talk about Covid-19, Russia-Ukraine conflict and China.

The statement said he will use the visit to drive progress in the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations launched earlier this year — a deal with India is predicted to boost “our total trade by up to £28 billion annually by 2035 and increase wages across the UK by up to £3 billion”.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Johnson said: “As we face threats to our peace and prosperity from autocratic states, it is vital that

democracies and friends stick together. India, as a major economic power and the world’s largest democracy, is a highly valued strategic partner for the UK in these uncertain times.

“My visit to India will deliver on the things that really matter to the people of both our nations — from job creation and economic growth, to energy security and defence.”

Last year, Modi and Johnson had agreed on a UK-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, announcing more than £530m in investment into the UK and committing to a deeper bilateral relationship across trade, health, climate, defence and security, and connecting our people. India was identified as a priority relationship for the UK in the 2021 Integrated Review and was invited by the UK as a guest to last year’s G7 in Carbis Bay.

As Cong wins, Baghel delivers promise: 33rd district in Chhattisgarh

GARGI VERMA
RAIPUR, APRIL 16

HOURS AFTER Congress won the bypoll to Khairagarh Assembly seat in Chhattisgarh, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday delivered on his pre-poll promise and declared Khairagarh-Chuikhada-Gandai as the state’s 33rd district.

This is the sixth district declared in the state since Congress came to power in 2018.

Revenue Secretary N N Ekka confirmed that work to form the new district has begun.

Baghel had promised that the new district would be declared within 24 hours of a Congress MLA being elected. “We have managed to do it within hours,” he said.

Congratulating newly elected MLA Yashoda Verma, who defeated BJP’s Komal Janghel by more than 20,000 votes, Baghel declared the district formation. He also announced that Salhewara would be declared a tehsil, and Jalbandha would be a up-tehsil. Verma had come to Raipur to express her gratitude. Speaking at the event, Baghel recounted the speed of his government: “Rahul Gandhi-ji had promised loan waiver in 10 days; we did it in 2 hours of coming to power.”

Khairagarh is an important seat for BJP as well, with former CM Raman Singh coming from the region. Singh, along with Union minister Prahlad Patel and Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan, campaigned in the constituency regularly.

Raman Singh said after the results, “We accept the will of people, but this election was swayed by the promise of making a new district. They have no proof of work; no work has happened in the constituency...”

TMC wins in Bengal, BJP slide continues

ATRI MITRA
KOLKATA, APRIL 16

CONTINUING ITS winning streak in West Bengal, the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Saturday swept the bypolls, retaining Kolkata’s Ballygunge seat while wresting the Asansol parliamentary constituency from the BJP. The fresh election outcome again highlighted TMC supremo and Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s dominance in state politics, which has been continuing for over a decade now.

The BJP is the principal Opposition party in Bengal, but the bypoll results indicated a further erosion in its support base in the state. The saffron party not only lost its Asansol constituency to the TMC — which clinched it for the first time ever — but its candidate also came third in Ballygunge seat and lost her deposit.

The poll results also saw a sharp rise in the Left’s vote share in Ballygunge, where the CPI(M) candidate became the runner-up. In Asansol, the CPI(M) retained its vote share although its candidate came third. Congress candidates lost their deposits in



TMC supporters celebrate in Kolkata on Saturday after Babul Supriyo's victory in the Ballygunge byelection. Express

both constituencies.

While the Trinamool’s candidate in Asansol, actor-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha, bagged the seat with a margin of over 3 lakh votes, the party’s nominee in Ballygunge, former Union minister Babul Supriyo, won the seat with about 20,000 votes, which was a sharp drop from the party’s previous victory margin of about 75,000 votes.

Some in the TMC said the drop in the party’s margin of victory in Ballygunge came after there was a “negative campaign” against Supriyo because he

switched to the party from the BJP and had a “perceived communal image”.

Senior TMC leader and minister Firhad Hakim, however, said: “The results have again proved that we never do politics based on 30% or 70% people. We always reach out to 100% of the voters...”

Soon after the bypoll results came out, BJP MP Saumitra Khan targeted the state BJP leadership.

“When inexperienced politicians run a political party, then this kind of result is expected,” Khan said in a video message.

BJP president Sukanta Majumdar said the party would introspect. “There are lot of factors which played a role for this electoral result. We will definitely introspect. But it is true that a large number of people could not vote due to TMC’s terror.”

Since the Assembly elections last year, when it won 77 seats, the BJP has failed to win any elections in West Bengal, including bypolls late last year, and February’s civic elections.

With the Left getting its foot back in the door, the BJP now has the twin challenge of tackling both them and the TMC.

The Left is now looking to attract a bigger share of the minority vote, which has largely gone to the TMC since the 2011 Assembly elections.

In the Ballygunge bypolls, the CPI(M) candidate, Saira Shah Halim, did well in Muslim-majority wards. Leaders, including Halim, have pointed out that the Left’s agitations on issues such as the death in February of student leader Anis Khans and the violence in Birbhum in March had helped the CPI(M).

—WITH INPUTS FROM SANTANU CHOWDHURY



Jayshree Jadhav after winning the byelection in Kolhapur on Saturday. Express

United MVA defeats BJP in Kolhapur

MANOJ MORE
PUNE, APRIL 16

A FIRMLY united Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) proved too much for BJP to handle as Congress candidate Jayshree Jadhav emerged victorious in the Kolhapur North Assembly bypoll with a margin of over 19,000 votes, counting for which took place on Saturday.

Jadhav, wife of late Congress MLA Chandrakant Jadhav, defeated Satyajit Kadam of BJP in a contest where both sides lost no stone unturned to woo voters.

After her victory, Jadhav said the people of Kolhapur have given the BJP a befitting reply for the kind of politics it has practised. “Kolhapur is a Shahu Nagari. It belongs to Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj where there is no place for 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 won 77,726.

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. The Kothrud MLA had said he would quit politics and go to the Himalayas if the BJP candidate loses. The Sena put up boards which stated, “*Himalaya ki god mein*” (in the lap of Himalayas), taunting Patil.

Noida Police on high alert after clashes in Northwest Delhi

Noida: Noida Police remained on high alert following clashes between two communities in Northwest Delhi on Saturday evening. Shortly after the incident, Prashant Kumar, ADG Law and Order, stated that an alert has been issued to state police departments to maintain vigil against anti-social elements.

On Saturday evening, patrolling was carried out in all three zones — Noida, Central and Greater Noida. Officers also took out a flag march in crowded areas. Police are maintaining security measures in metro stations, markets and areas with mixed population. Security will also be stepped up on routes where processions will be taken out in order to prevent any clashes or law and order situation, said police. **ENS**

13 Opp leaders issue joint statement against hate speech, communal violence

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, APRIL 16

LEADERS OF 13 Opposition parties, including three Chief Ministers, on Saturday came together to speak out against recent incidents of communal violence and hate speech.

They argued that the “silence” of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government against those “who propagated bigotry and incited and provoked society through words and actions was an eloquent testimony to the fact that such private armed mobs enjoyed the luxury of official patronage”.

The joint statement was issued by Congress president Sonia Gandhi, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee, her Tamil Nadu counterpart and DMK chief MK Stalin, Jharkhand Chief Minister and JMM chief Hemant Soren, RJD chief Tejashwi Yadav and NC chief Farooq Abdullah.

The other signatories included CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury, his CPI counterpart D Raja, Forward Bloc’s Debabrata Biswas, RSP’s Manoj Bhattacharya, Muslim League’s P K Kunhalikutty and CPI(ML) Liberation’s Dipanker Bhattacharya.

The statement came on a day Gandhi, in an article in *The Indian Express*, hit out at the government against the politics of polarisation.

“There is much talk from the Prime Minister of acknowledging India’s multiple diversities. But the harsh reality is that under his ruling dispensation, the rich diversity that has defined and enriched our society for centuries is being manipulated to divide us and, worse, to harden and get more firmly entrenched,” she said in the article.

In the statement urging people to maintain peace and harmony and demanding stringent punishment for perpetrators of communal violence, the Opposition leaders said: “We are

extremely anguished at the manner in which issues related to food, dress, faith, festivals and language are being deliberately used by sections of the ruling establishment to polarise our society.”

“We are extremely concerned with the growing incidents of hate speech in the country by people who appear to have official patronage and against whom no meaningful and strong action is being taken. We strongly condemn the recent outburst of communal violence witnessed across several states. We are deeply concerned, as reports indicate that there is a sinister pattern in the areas where these incidents have occurred. Incendiary hate speeches preceded the aggressive armed religious processions unleashing communal violence,” the statement said.

The leaders pointed out that “social media and the audio-visual platforms are being misused with official patronage to spread hatred and prejudice,” and questioned the silence of the Prime Minister.

The leaders vowed to “work together to strengthen the bonds of social harmony that have defined and enriched India for centuries” and “combat and confront the poisonous ideologies which are attempting to entrench divisiveness in society”.

“We reiterate our firm conviction that our country will prosper only if it respects, accommodates and celebrates its many diversities in full measure. We appeal to all sections to maintain peace and foil the sinister objective of those who wish to sharpen communal polarisation. We call upon all our party units to independently and jointly work for peace and harmony,” the statement added.

While Mamata’s decision to be part of the joint statement is interesting, given her party’s strained ties with the Congress, the absence of leaders of four parties — SP, BSP, AAP and Shiv Sena — stood out.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

CORRUPTION CASE

Court refuses to extend CBI custody of Anil Deshmukh

SADAF MODAK
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

A SPECIAL CBI court on Saturday refused to extend CBI custody of former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh, stating that the grounds put up by the central agency were not good and satisfactory.

The CBI, which had arrested Deshmukh in connection with a 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.



Former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh

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.

GORAKHNATH TEMPLE ATTACK

ATS invokes stringent UAPA against accused

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, APRIL 16

THE UP Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) on Saturday invoked the stringent Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) against Gorakhnath Temple attack accused Ahmed Murtaza Abbasi.

“On the basis of evidence collected during the interrogation, electronic surveillance and financial transactions, the UP Police added sections 16, 18, 20 and 40 of the UAPA against Ahmed Murtaza,” said an ATS official.

On Saturday, Abbasi was produced before a Gorakhpur court, which sent him to judicial custody for 14 days.

“The prosecution informed the court about the decision of ATS to also impose sections of



A video grab of the incident in Gorakhpur. PTI File

UAPA on the accused and sought extension of his custody. Considering this, the court extended the judicial custody of Abbasi for 14 days,” said senior lawyer PK Dubey.

The official said that they would now appeal to get the

case transferred to the NIA/ATS special court in Lucknow for further hearing.

The ATS, which is investigating the case, had brought Abbasi to Lucknow and questioned him in detail about his foreign visits in 2016 and his dubious money

transactions to different accounts, said the official, adding they also found that the accused was in touch with people outside India and collected information about them.

Besides Abbasi, his father Muneer Ahmed was also questioned about his son and his activities.

According to the official, the ATS has been waiting for the forensic report of Abbasi’s cell-phone and laptop that were sent to a laboratory for examination.

“We are yet to verify a few details provided by Abbasi during the interrogation. We need to cross-verify information provided by him,” added the officer.

The UAPA allows the investigating agencies to get a longer remand of the accused and an extended duration to file a charge sheet.

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 coursework 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.”

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-



S K 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 CPI(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 CPI(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.

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 Kuldeep 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 ENDS-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: www.indianexpress.com**

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.



COACHES DERAIL, MUMBAI OFF-TRACK

Commuters were left stranded after three coaches of the Chalukya Dadar-Puducherry Express derailed after colliding with the CSMT-Gadag Express near Matunga station in Mumbai on Friday night. The Central Railway took over 15 hours to restore services. Almost 100 local trains and 13 long-distance trains were cancelled. *Ganesh Shirsekar*

Writers discuss tribals: Aloof? Perception ‘unfounded’

ABHISHEK ANGAD
DUMKA, APRIL 16

IS THE Adivasi community uncouth; does it follow any religion; does it have a global vision, and why is the Santhal rebellion, which took before the 1857 Revolt, left out of mainstream history? These were some of the questions that emerged during a discussion on ‘Tribal Literature: Present and Future’ during the inaugural State Library Literature Festival in Dumka district. The event was centred around refurbishment of ‘Rajkiya Bhramanshil Pustkalay (Library on Wheels)’ built on a truck in 1958, which had travelled thousands of kilometres in remote areas of Jharkhand. Although not mobile anymore, it was refurb-



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

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.”

‘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

work with the Department of Education on foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN).

NEP helped institutionalise FLN at a time when the pandemic was not on the horizon. But as children return to school after a long gap, what are the interventions required to help them cope?

States have a four-six month catch up. So, the idea is to keep the textbooks aside for the time being. Right now, if a child is in class III, the truth is he never attended school in class I or II. So in the first few months, teach them the most basic concepts.

Then only do we even open the class textbook and then in the next six months, the goal should be to catch up with the key concepts.

Should NIPUN be redesigned to address the specific needs arising out of the interruption caused by the pandemic?

No, I don’t think so. The NIPUN goals remain the same. Within NIPUN, each team needs to do some catching up. We will still do formative assessment, have a teacher guide with lesson plans, have a workbook, need reading material in the classroom and need a math kit to make it easier for kids to understand abstract concepts in complete form. So I don’t think NIPUN needs to be redesigned, because it is a scheme for the next five years. Within NIPUN, the Centre has told the states to

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.

FULL INTERVIEW ON: www.indianexpress.com

8 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 Gurunagar 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 Disسانayake, 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 Ahamad, 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”

D M 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 Disسانayake. 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”.

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS, APRIL 17, 2022

10 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

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
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 Kamad as non-executive director on the board for five years.

SECTOR WATCH CONSUMER INTERNET COS

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

SOUMYARENDRA 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

'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

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
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."

₹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

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
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

SIMILAR INCIDENTS AMONG OTHER EV MAKERS

■ 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, it had claimed the fire was an "evident case of short circuit due to negligence in charging the vehicle"

■ Over the past few weeks, more than a dozen electric scooters have caught fire, including those manufactured by Ola Electric, Pure EV and Jitendra EV, aside from Okinawa. The companies have launched respective probes into the incidents

CEO Amitabh Kant had, during a media interview, urged manufacturers to voluntarily recall EV

batches involved in fire incidents. Okinawa — established in 2016 out of a manufacturing facil-

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

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.

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.

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 all 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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Ahmedabad

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

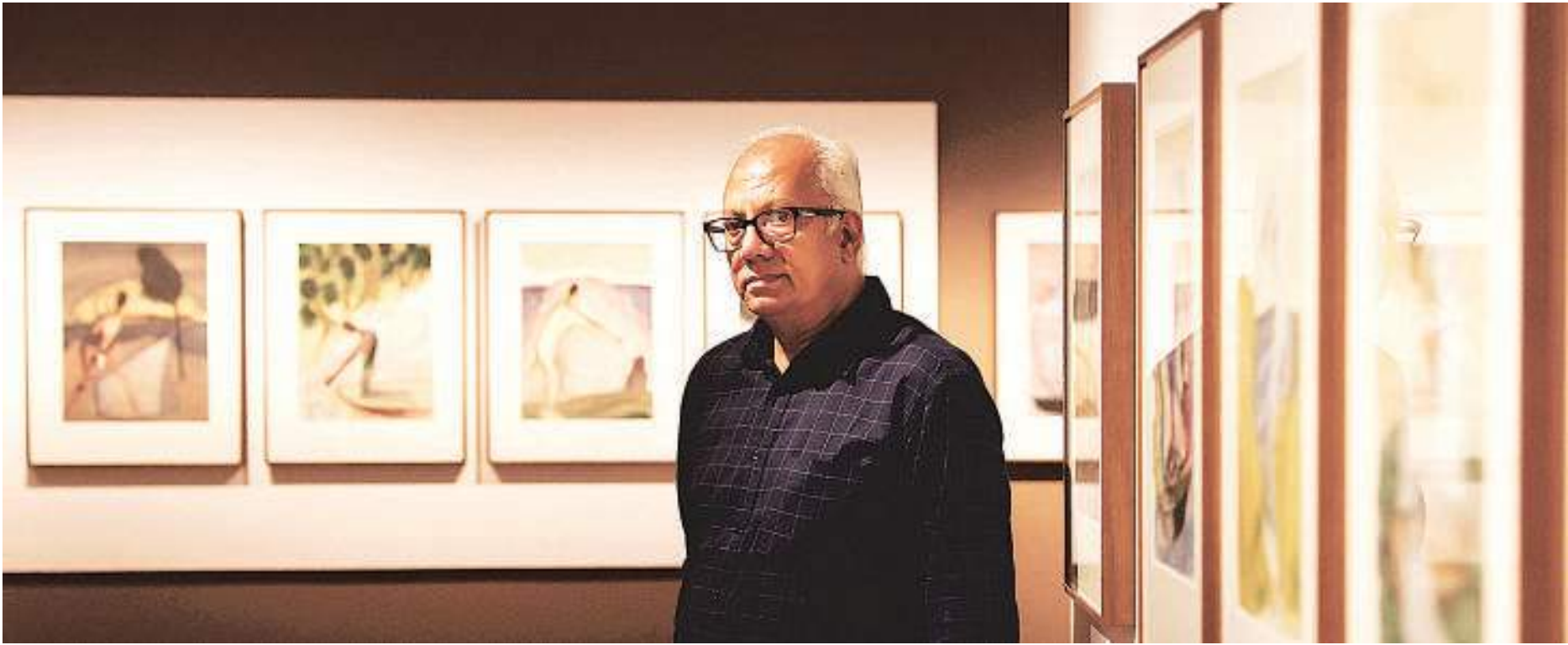
Rufous treepie

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, Aashirwad. 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.

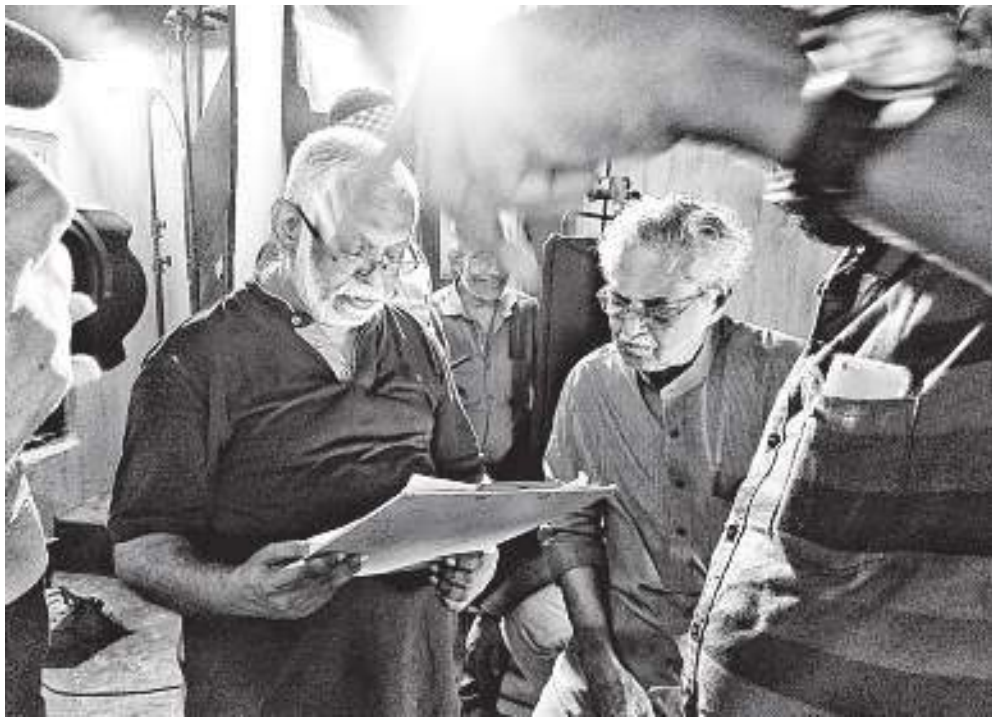
Kumaran's *Kuyil* focuses on the last seven-eight years of Asan's life — a hectic time: He was producing great poetry, had fallen in love with a much younger girl, whom he married at the age of 45, had become a father, and acquired wealth. He was now a widely respected community leader and nominated 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

Divine Tides album was entirely created online.

In fact, Kej and Copeland met in person for the first time only a week before the 64th Grammy Awards

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

calls, Zoom e-meets, remote recording sessions and Kej changing his sleep cycle to work with Copeland's Los Angeles timings. The result, after almost a year, is *Divine Tides* — the nine-song album that's an ode to the natural world, the resilience of its species. It stems from Kej's deep interest in environmental activism. Not only does he prefer public transport to cars and gets his carbon footprint audited every quarter, he's worked with the government of Andhra Pradesh to promote "zero-budget natural farming", a technique that avoids the use of chemicals and pesticides. He made a song *Jai Kisaan* (2020) with the tribal farmers of Andhra, and is a supporter and ambassador for a number of UN bodies.

Kej and Copeland have woven diverse soundscapes and elaborate ambient textures by incorporating scores of musicians into the mix. The haunting *Our Home* features Sangeeta Kaur, the Vietnamese-American vocalist who's won a Grammy of her own,

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.

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS, APRIL 17, 2022

14 THE WORLD

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
E. 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**

Pennsylvania varsity professor slammed for comments against Asian-Americans

LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, APRIL 16

LEADING INDIAN-AMERICANS, including US Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, have slammed a law professor from University of Pennsylvania for her disparaging comments about the Asian American community, with a specific disdain for Indian-Americans.

In a recent interview to Fox News, Prof Amy Wax from the University of Pennsylvania alleged that "Blacks" and "non-

Western" groups have "a tremendous amount of resentment and shame against western people for [their] outsized achievements and contributions."

"Here's the problem. They're taught that they are better than everybody else because they are Brahmin elites and yet, on some level, their country is a sh*thole," Wax, who has a long history of inflammatory remarks, said.

She also said the westerners have outgunned and outclassed the Asian-Americans in every way. "They've realised that we've

outgunned and outclassed them in every way... They feel anger. They feel envy. They feel shame. It creates ingratitude of the most monstrous kind," she said.

The comment was condemned by the Indian-Americans across the US. "After President Trump left office, I thought the days of calling others 'shithole' countries were over," Krishnamoorthi tweeted. "I'm disgusted to hear this UPenn Professor define Indian-American immigrants in such insulting terms," he said. **PTI**

Won't interfere with protests: Lanka Army

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, APRIL 16

THE SRI Lankan Army on Saturday said they would thoroughly uphold the Constitution and not resort to violence amidst the anti-government protests across the island nation against the worst economic crisis.

Referring to the social media speculation that the military may be used by the government to launch a crackdown on the



Demonstrators near the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo on Saturday. Reuters

week-long protest near the presidential secretariat, the Sri Lankan Army, in a statement, said it would not resort to violence to quell the anti-government demonstrations.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan police on Saturday removed several empty trucks parked at a protest site near the presidential secretariat, possibly averting a crackdown on the protesters agitating against the government's handling of the island nation's worst economic crisis.

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.



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 o 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 Srees Shankar 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 Pass 3H
♦ 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 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 and the 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 king 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. 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 nothing.

NORTH	EAST	WEST	NORTH EAST SOUTH
♠ J876	♠ A1095	1H	
♥ QJ6	♥ 105	Pass	1NT Pass 2H
♦ KQJ10	♦ A652	Pass	3H Pass 4H
♣ J5	♣ Q109	Pass	Pass

West leads the king of spades. You signal with the ten and West continues the suit. South ruffs the ace and king 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

1. Caustic, harsh (9)
6. Fundamental (5)
9. A sheer fabric (7)
10. Line touching curve (7)
11. A whip for chastising persons (7)
12. Canadian policeman (7)
13. The Indian flag for example (9)
15. Opera singer (5)
16. Writing tables (5)
19. Without peer (9)
22. Senior executive (7)
23. Rout (7)
25. Sudden shrill cry (7)
26. Lacking any purpose (7)
27. Pulls or tugs sharply (5)
28. Medical prediction (9)

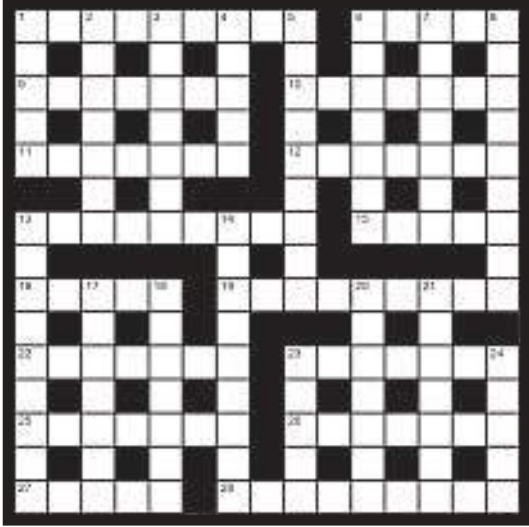
DOWN

1. Bad habits? (5)
2. City in North Africa? (7)
3. Horrific fire (7)
4. Drive a weapon violently in some direction (5)
5. Twin-hulled boat (9)
6. Repeat, feast (7)
7. Add sugar to? (7)
8. Principal church (9)
13. In a dull and boring manner (9)
14. Possession (9)
17. An orange colour; crocus with purple flowers (7)
18. Triumph (7)
20. White of egg (7)
21. Shuns (7)
23. Constellation : The dragon (5)
24. Mitigates or reduces in intensity (5)

CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

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



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

DOWN

1. What G-man isn't going hungry? (5)
2. A less serious way to start a fire (7)
3. By which one may be a little carried away? (4-3)
4. They are found growing next to a trunk (5)
5. The final record father passed around is cooked (4-5)
6. Twisted irony in ancient times, poetically cynical (7)
7. Most booted player of football team at home ? (7)
8. Oh gimlets can be so frivolous (9)
13. Smuggler participating in arms race ? (3-6)
14. Fish served with citrus fruit only (5,4)
17. Board may supply this computer (7)
18. Was furious at having been branded (7)

Solutions to 2368

QUICK CLUES Across: 1 Aspirin, 5 Fibbing, 9 Getting on, 10 Cello, 11 Lookout, 12 Sellout, 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 Buells, 7 Igloo, 8 Gloated, 14 Penitence, 16 Poisonous, 17 Deputies, 18 Grilled, 20 Edifice, 21 Glisten, 23 Artie, 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 Sienna, 14 Degusted, 16 Govevices, 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.

JUMBLE 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: EAVES, FRIAR, RIDDEN, POMPOM - 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

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

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. 19 B 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 Shrivolkar (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