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WEB EXCLUSIVE



WHY CHINA IS LOOKING AT A THREE-CHILD POLICY

China has relaxed its two-child norm and endorsed a three-child policy. What are the reasons for its policy shift, and why are some people skeptical?

TECH



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EDUCATION



JEE MAIN TOPPERS REAPPEARING FOR EXAM

It seems even scoring above 95 percentile is not enough for some

EXPRESS



AUDIO

Bridging the language barrier for Indian smartphone users

In this episode, Anand Singh, Head of Developer Relations and Localisation at Indus OS discusses the evolution of smart phone users and how to bridge the language chasm in India

FROM PAGE ONE

Bengal BJP chief joins statehood chorus, says ‘it’s Mamata’s fault’

Lending his support to the Union minister, Ghosh said, “It is duty and responsibility of John Barla to listen to the demand of the people who have elected him. He has done that. The party has a stand of its own (on the separate statehood demand). However, we will discuss it later.”

“The demand for Gorkhaland has been there for a very long time. Mamata Banerjee had entered into an understanding with them (Gorkha Janmukti Morcha) and ran a government here after signing the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) agreement in which the demand was mentioned. Then questions were not raised against her. Now, when we are raising people’s demand, we are being branded as separatists,” Ghosh added.

Reacting strongly to the BJP chief’s remarks, senior TMC leader and state minister Firhad Hakim said the BJP believes in the “divide-and-rule” policy. “The BJP cannot accept its defeat in state Assembly polls. Now, they are trying to put pressure on the government by making such demands. They are talking about separate states in places where they have won some seats. But the people of Bengal will never support a division of the state. It was the British who had divided Bengal. Now, the BJP is acting like them,” said Hakim.

first doses likely by September, says Zydrus

On results of their Phase 3 trials, Patel said they were still a few months away from completion, and the publication of the results would take another “four to six months”.

He said that the interim analysis of the three-dose vaccine that pegs its efficacy at around 66% was a “true reflection of efficacy against the Delta variant”, since breakthrough infections seen during the trial were among those infected with Delta.

The Group has the raw material needed for the next six to eight months and has also completed the logistics planning and integration with the CoWIN application. For one crore vaccine doses, the company plans to procure two crore applicators, to be used for administering the shots.

Given that it had dedicated all its resources to the Covid vaccine, Zydrus Cadila had put its programme for the measles vector vaccine ZyCoV-MV on hold, Patel said.

Forced to flee villages for revolt against caste custom, Dalit families

CORRECTION

ON 21.08.21

THE ARTICLE ‘Lest we remember only hate’ by Harsh Mander states that Mahatma Gandhi fasted for 40 days in Calcutta, some weeks after Independence. The fast lasted for four days from September 1 to September 4, 1947. It was not 40 days.

The error is regretted.

head back

out of their villages and trying to bring them back.

“A lot of people fear that if they return to the village, they will again be subjected to violence, threats and social boycott. We wish to create a safe place for them within their village, which is rightfully theirs. A lot of families are more than willing to return to their village and lead a life of dignity. It will only be possible if we as a community stand together,” said Dibakar Barik, 35, another youth activist. Dibakar and his family were themselves driven out of their village two decades ago after his father refused to follow norms established by the upper castes.

“I am a graduate, my brother is also studying well, and my sister is a journalism graduate. My father knew that if he wanted his children to pursue and become what they wanted to, he had to give up obeying orders and leading the kind of life he led. Because we had to leave behind our village, a bag full of memories from the place we were born in, I understand the pain that these families go through, when driven out of their own villages for trying to lead a life of dignity,” Dibakar said.

Amongst the families which Dibakar is helping to return to their village, is Maheshwar Barik’s family who were driven out of their house in March 2019, their houses vandalised. Members of the barber (barik) and the washerman community (dhoba), who fall under the Other Backward Castes (OBCs), continue to face social ostracism for refusing to abide by the age-old bartan system or jajmani system, wherein the members of these communities were expected to be of service to the upper caste, either free of cost or in return of 12-15 kgs of rice a year.

After the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, enquiries were initiated after 2010 into these cases and after thorough enquiry nearly 2,200 people from Puri were awarded a release certificate from the bonded system. Over 2,500 others are still waiting for their release orders.

“In 2013, we received a release letter from the administration, we were no longer bound to work in return for paddy. But all these years, there was no peace. We had nowhere to go; so we stayed in the village, but time and again we faced social boycott. In March, our house was vandalised as we continued to refuse to work so we left our village,” Maheswar said. Maheshwar’s family was one amongst three driven out of Manapur village. The family’s bondage to the upper caste families involved washing their feet, cutting their nails, picking up leftovers, cleaning a place before and after an event, among other trivial tasks. Maheshwar along with nearly 20 other such families were staging a dharna outside the collector’s office last Friday.

“There are over 100 such families who wish to return to their respective villages. They can claim what is rightfully theirs only when they are well aware of their rights. Many of them out of fear do not even approach the officials. But we have been trying to apprise them about their rights, about the laws which can protect them, so they can fight for themselves. Education will always play an important role in uplifting them,” Dibakar said. For most Dalit and OBC families, such forced migration over decades has rendered them landless, eliminating any prospects for entitlement under housing schemes or even cyclone relief assistance.

Responding to such in-

Two Indian flights with 350 exit Kabul

now will be to ensure the safe return of all Indian nationals from Kabul.

The MEA said the immediate priority for the government is to obtain accurate information about all Indian nationals currently in Afghanistan. It has also requested Indians and their employers to urgently share details with the special Afghanistan cell.

According to a rough estimate, the number of Indians stranded in Afghanistan may be around 400 and India is looking at ways to evacuate them by coordinating with the US and other friendly countries.

Amid the scramble to leave the city, Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who negotiated the deal with the US in Doha, reached Kabul Saturday for talks with other leaders to hammer out the contours of a ruling council or government.

Afghan officials familiar with the talks held so far in Kabul say the Taliban have said they will not make any announcement on their government until the August 31 deadline for the US troop withdrawal runs out.

Abdullah Abdullah, a senior official in the ousted government, tweeted that he and former President Hamid Karzai have met Taliban’s acting governor for Kabul who “assured us that he would do everything possible for the security of the people” of the city.

In a new security warning Saturday, the US embassy advised citizens not to travel to the Kabul airport without “individual instructions from a US government representative,” citing potential security threats outside its gates.

Evacuation flights have continued although some outgoing flights have been far from full because of the airport chaos, Taliban checkpoints and bureaucratic challenges.

So far, 13 countries have agreed to host at-risk Afghans at least temporarily, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. Another 12 have agreed to serve as transit points for evacuees.

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year later, despite the glow of victory in Kargil, the party barely hung on to that figure.

The reason: the BJP’s tally in UP, where the party had shrunk to 29 seats amid Kalyan’s public bickering with Vajpayee during the 1999 Lok Sabha elections. The buzz was that Kalyan told his aides that Vajpayee needed to become an MP first before he could become PM.

These words reached powerful ears in Delhi and sealed his fate. After the elections, then BJP general secretary KN Govindacharya was sent to Lucknow to deliver suspension notice to Kalyan. Marching orders came after he refused the leadership’s offer to vacate the Lucknow chair and join the Centre as Agriculture Minister.

When he returned to BJP just ahead of the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, gone was his magic – the BJP could barely manage 10 seats in Uttar Pradesh staying only seven behind the Congress at the national level losing power in Delhi.

Though Kalyan Singh won his own Lok Sabha seat – with tacit help from Mulayam Singh Yadav – he could never recover his lost political ground. Again, he parted ways with the BJP ahead of 2009 Lok Sabha elections to get elected to the Lok Sabha as an independent candidate supported by Mulayam.

Ironically, it was the bitter Kalyan-Mulayam faceoff that propelled him to a national icon among BJP workers. While Mulayam let the police fire on kar-sevaks in October 1990 to save the Babri Masjid, it was under Kalyan Singh’s watch on December 6, 1992, that the police were told not to do so, tying their hands and, effectively, letting kar-sevaks raze the Babri Masjid that afternoon.

Kalyan Singh remained unrepentant calling the act a spontaneous outburst. This became his calling card and captured the imagination of BJP workers and supporters across the country. So much so that although the BJP had adopted a resolution for the Ram Temple in 1989, LK Advani had galvanised popular opinion by his Rath Yatra in 1990, it was Kalyan who established himself as the architect of the demolition.

Kalyan Singh, who had promised the Supreme Court that the Babri would be safe was held guilty of contempt of court and was sentenced to jail for a day in 1994 for the demolition. It was his moment in the political sun and he basked in it.

Trained as a school teacher, Kalyan Singh worked as an RSS functionary in his home district of Aligarh before he was picked up by Nanaji Deshmukh for electoral politics.

Singh was elected to the UP Assembly as a Jan Sangh member for the first time in 1967, the same year Mulayam entered the Assembly for the first time as a Socialist Party member. Ten years later, Singh was one of Jan Sangh nominees in the Janata Party government that came to power in Lucknow after the Emergency – and Mulayam his Cabinet colleague.

With the split from Janata Party over the dual membership issue (being a member of Janata Party as well as of the RSS), Kalyan Singh moved with his other Jan Sangh colleagues into the BJP and began as state general secretary in 1980.

He was made BJP state president in 1984 and was elected leader of BJP legislature party after the 1989 Assembly elections during the first stint of Mulayam as CM.

This put Kalyan Singh in the BJP front seat in state politics – and plunged him right into the turbulent churn of national politics over the next two years: Prime Minister V P Singh unveiling the Mandal Commission re-

port; Advani’s Rath Yatra; the fall of the VP Singh government after Advani was arrested by the Lalu Prasad government in Bihar; the split in the Janata Dal and the Congress withdrawing support to the Chandrashekhar government.

Mulayam Singh, who had aligned with Chandrashekhar after the split in Janata Dal, lost power and UP went to polls in 1991. Mandal had boosted backward caste identity politics and Mulayam’s directions to the police to fire on kar-sevaks had polarized the state.

This was fertile ground for Kalyan, an RSS-trained OBC leader of the BJP, to tap into the Mandal-Kamandal churn and come to power in 1991 winning 221 of 425 Assembly segments in the state – the first BJP state CM.

The polarization in the wake of the Babri demolition led to a political realignment with Mulayam tying up with Kanshi Ram’s BSP for the 1993 Assembly elections to deny Kalyan Singh power despite BJP emerging as the single-largest party but short of a majority.

The BJP again fell short of majority in the 1996 elections that followed after the fall of SP-BSP alliance government when BSP pulled the rug from under Mulayam Singh’s feet.

With no possibility of a fresh SP-BSP post-poll alliance – given the infamous guest house vandalism by SP leaders against Mayawati in May 1995 – Kalyan Singh, nudged by the party leadership, agreed to a six-month rotational CM arrangement with Mayawati’s BSP.

Mayawati, however, pulled out within a month of Kalyan Singh taking over following her six months in power. The BJP engineered defections in BSP ranks to ensure that Kalyan retained a majority.

Soon, his rivals in state politics used the pretext of local councillor Kusum Rai’s growing influence on him as an excuse to drag him down in the eyes of the central leadership. It was only after Vajpayee came to centre stage as Prime Minister, that the power tussle intensified and, eventually, Kalyan fell out.

He could never recover and his subsequent politics became one of survival – getting back into the BJP ahead of 2004 Lok Sabha elections, quitting BJP ahead of the 2009 Lok Sabha elections and contesting as an Independent to become an MP with help from Mulayam Singh Yadav, returning to BJP ahead of 2014 elections to ensure his son Rajiv Singh became an MP.

His last hurrah, in a way, was his advice on UP’s caste politics to BJP General Secretary Amit Shah that got BJP 71 seats and helped seal Modi’s historic election victory.

Kalyan Singh, who enjoyed immunity by virtue of being Governor of Rajasthan, deposed before the CBI court after demitting office of Governor in 2019. Tried for conspiracy along with other BJP leaders including Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti and other VHP leaders, Kalyan Singh was eventually exonerated by the CBI trial court in September 2020.

In a way, those were the bookends of his politics. The 2019 Supreme Court ruling in the title suit cleared the way for the the construction of the Ram temple at the site where the Babri once stood before it was demolished under his watch.

“I bow down to such a great and ideal life dedicated to the nation, religion and people,” said Home Minister Shah Saturday. “The country and the entire BJP family is mourning his death...the country has lost a true patriot...Babuji was such a huge tree under whose shadow the organisation of BJP flourished and expanded.”

Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DS-GMC), has been coordinating with the Government of India for evacuation of Afghan Sikhs and Hindus who are Afghan nationals and carry their country’s passports.

“Taliban fighters stopped them from boarding the IAF plane and said since they are Afghans, they must go back. Now the group has safely returned to Gurdwara Dashmesh Pita Guru Gobind Singhji Kartar Parwan in Kabul,” Sahney said.

Two minority MPs, Narinder Singh Khalsa and Anarkali Kaur Honaryar, were

part of the group that was made to return from the airport by the Taliban. “Both our MPs have threats to their lives since they are pro-government. They have been taken to a safe place,” a Sikh community member from Kabul said.

“Now the only way that seems possible to evacuate the Afghan Sikhs and Hindus is to negotiate with the Taliban, and tell them that Sikhs need to visit India for the ongoing 400th birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Tegh Bahadurji,” Sahney said.

A leader of the Sikh community, speaking from Kabul, too said: “We don’t know

what lies ahead. Maybe, we will now negotiate with the Taliban to let us go to India for the 400th birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Tegh Bahadur.”

A senior official of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee said that a lot happened all of Friday night before the Taliban turned away the group from the airport.

“We tried our best, coordinated with the government, and the group sat outside the airport the entire night but they were sent back to the gurdwara,” he said.

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process of registering the case. The Baksa arrest was of 26-year-old Rafiqul Islam, from Sunbari village. Singh confirmed the arrest, saying Islam was apprehended Friday night for “social media interaction in support of Taliban”. Islam works as a temporary teacher at a high school and is a reporter for two local news outlets.

On the use of the UAPA, Singh said, “Tehreek-e-Taliban finds an entry in the ISIS and Al Qaida sanctions list... established and maintained by United Nations... Entry 33 of MHA list provides for organisations listed in UN Lists. Sufficient for us to take action at this stage.”

Deputy Inspector General Baruah asked the public to inform police if any such posts come to their notice. “#assam-police are taking stern legal action against pro #Taliban comments in the social media platform that are harmful to the National Security. We’re registering criminal cases against such persons. Please inform the police if any such thing comes to your notice,” she tweeted.

Addressing the press, Singh said: “I humbly appeal that people should not make such posts on social media that are anti-Assam and anti-India... or supportive of a terrorist organisation... People should think before posting on social media... and consider the fallout of the law.”

If Pak uses gun

A journalist told me at the end of the day that I have used the baton to ensure there was no bandh. I argued that all traffic was running and people, in large numbers were shopping... *Ye sab dande ke jor se nahin ho sakta hai. Lekin agar aap maante hain, to main ise sweetkar karta hun. Bandh bhi to Pakistan aur atankwaaad ki bandook se hota hai. Agar maine dande ka prayog kiya to kuch bura nahin* (All this was not possible through baton. But if you think it was, then I accept it. After all, the bandh is enforced by Pakistan and the gun of a terrorist. So if I have used the baton, I did no wrong.)”

Sinha was speaking at an event here to launch a book ‘Kashmir: The War of Narratives’

by journalist Bashir Assad.

Elaborating on his statement, Sinha added: “I believe this should be very clear that this is the fine line and no one is allowed to cross it... And until the time I am there, this is going to be the stand. There will be no compromise.”

Alleging that some “self-appointed experts on Kashmir,” were trying to create a narrative at the international level. Sinha said: “It is important to move away from these misconceptions. It is important to look at what the people want and how their lives can be made better.”

Comparing J&K with other states, Sinha suggested that dearth of finances wasn’t the issue.

“Whenever J&K is spoken about, it is said it is backward and underdeveloped. It’s important to understand J&K in the right context. J&K has a population of 1.25-1.30 crore. Last year the budget for Jammu and Kashmir was Rs 1.10 lakh crore. Now let’s take Bihar and UP, also considered backward. Against a population of around 12 crore, Bihar has a budget of Rs 2.18 lakh crore. UP has a population of 23 crore and a budget of Rs 5.5 lakh crore. So per capita allocation in Jammu and Kashmir is nine to ten times of these states. And this has been the case since Independence,” Sinha said.

“Young students come and tell me they have done M.Tech and are waiting for a government job. Students need to come out of this mentality,” Sinha said.

He said the government had started a programme where two young applicants were identified in each panchayat for self-employment. “There are 4,295 panchayats. We estimated there would be 10,000 candidates. But it has gone up to 20,000. Everyone got a loan of Rs 10 lakh. Now we have a target of 50,000 for this year,” he said.

Blending Mandal and Kamandal: Kalyan Singh

which included 58 from UP then being ruled by Kalyan Singh. A

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3 WEST BENGAL



HOPE & PRAYERS

Priests perform a yajna at a Salt Lake temple on Saturday for the safe return of stranded Indians in Afghanistan. Partha Paul

3 months on, BJP yet to send report on election results

Kolkata: The BJP is yet to submit its report to the central party leadership on reasons why it failed to win the West Bengal Assembly polls even three months after results were declared.

Sources in the party said state BJP leaders are yet to arrive at a conclusion on why it performed below expectations despite exuding confidence that it would win more than 200 seats in Bengal.

While the Trinamool Congress came to power for a third straight term, winning 213 seats, the BJP managed to bag only 77 seats.

The party had called for an introspection and was asked by its central leadership to submit a report on its Bengal performance. However, the party is far from completing the task.

"We cannot say when we will submit the final report. We will definitely do it in the coming days. Discussions on this were held at the district level. Now they will be carried forward at the state level before a conclusion is arrived at," state BJP general secretary Sayantan Basu said.

ENS

State HS council to follow govt advice on semesters

Kolkata: The West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education (WBCHSE) on Saturday said it will go by the advice of the higher education department while deciding on introducing a semester-based curriculum for classes 11 and 12 in the state board in future.

Whether next year's Higher Secondary examination will be held offline or not will also depend on the instruction of the government and the Covid-19 situation at that time, the newly-appointed WBCHSE president Dr Chiranjib Bhattacharya said.

A section of the media recently reported that the WBCHSE might think about effecting a semester-based curriculum modelled on the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in the two-year higher secondary courses from next year or later. "The Council will go by what the higher education department recommends, what the minister advises. Things cannot be solely devised by us as there are many factors at stake," Bhattacharya told PTI, indicating that the WBCHSE will not undertake any reform on its own either in 2022 or 2023.

To a question on the mode of the higher secondary examination next year, he said, "Things will be clearer later, depending on the (Covid-19) situation."

PTI

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NOTICE OF MERGER OF BRANCH

It is hereby notified to all constituents of the Branches mentioned below to transact their banking operation from our Branch Office as given in Table, tentatively from 27.09.2021 for OBC and for PNB date is 01.11.2021. All locker holders are also requested to operate their existing lockers facility from e-UNI, New Manikatala Branch (D No. - 008220) after merger of the branch, address P-41, Nazrul Islam Avenue, CIT Scheme-7M, Kolkata-700054. In case any customer wants to surrender their lockers, he / she should do so before 24.09.2021 for OBC and for PNB date is 30.10.2021.

Branch to be shifted	Banking Operation to be done from / Business to be Merged with	Locker Operation to be Merged With	Address of Transferee Branch	CONTACT NO OF TRANSFEROR AND TRANSFEREE BRANCH.
B/O-Oriental Bank of Commerce, Kankurgachi Branch (D No.-090510), 190 A, Manikatala Main Road, Kolkata-700054	B/O-Erstwhile United Bank of India, New Manikatala Branch (D No.-008220)	B/O-Erstwhile United Bank of India, New Manikatala Branch (D No.008220)	P-41, Nazrul Islam Avenue, CIT Scheme-7M, Kolkata-700054 (For business as well as lockers)	e-OBC , BM Mob No 6001063595 e-UNI , BM Mob No 9670233000
B/O-Punjab National Bank, Manikatala Branch (D No.-095600), P-43 Nazrul Islam Avenue, CIT Scheme-7M, Kolkata, Pin-700054	B/O-Erstwhile United Bank of India, New Manikatala Branch (D No.-008220)	B/O-Erstwhile United Bank of India, New Manikatala Branch (D No.008220)	P-41, Nazrul Islam Avenue, CIT Scheme-7M, Kolkata-700054 (For business as well as lockers)	PNB , BM Mob No 9425532944 e-UNI , BM Mob No 9670233000

Date: 22.08.2021
Place: Kolkata

By order
Dy. Circle Head

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY
KANKE, RANCHI-834006, JHARKHAND

Online applications are invited from eligible candidates for the following posts at Central Institute of Psychiatry. The last date of receipt of application is 21.09.2021.

Sl. No.	Name of post	Pay Scale	Age Limit	No. of post
1.	Clinical Psychologist	Level 7 of the Pay Matrix (Rs.44900-142400)	Not exceeding 30 Years	1 (One) UR
2.	Nursing Officer	Level 7 of the Pay Matrix (Rs.44900-142400)	30 years for General/EWS 35 years for SC/ST 33 years for OBC 40 years for PH (General/EWS) 45 years for PH (SC/ST) 43 years for PH (OBC)	45 (Forty-five) UR-20, SC-7, ST-3, OBC-11, EWS-4 and PwD-1 (Only for persons having disability in one leg (OL).
3.	Assistant Psychologist	Level 6 of the Pay Matrix (Rs.35400-112400)	Not exceeding 30 Years	1 (One) UR
4.	Pharmacist	Level 5 of the Pay Matrix (Rs.29200-92300)	Between 18 and 25 years	1 (One) UR
5.	Needle Women	Level 2 of the Pay Matrix (Rs.19900-63200)	30 years for SC only	1 (One) SC
6.	Tailor	Level 2 of the Pay Matrix (Rs.19900-63200)	Between 18 and 25 years	1 (One) UR
7.	Cook	Level 2 of the Pay Matrix (Rs.19900-63200)	Between 18 and 25 years	1 (One) UR

(The other details of the above mentioned posts are published in the Employment News dated 21.08.2021 as well as available on the CIP website, i.e. www.cipranchi.nic.in)

Sd/-Director

Get papers ready for audit, CAG writes to health dept

Audit will look into complaints received during pandemic

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, AUGUST 21

THE COMPTROLLER and Auditor General of India (CAG) has written to the state health department asking it to get documents ready for a performance audit. The letter is in line with the Centre's move to get a performance audit in the healthcare sector.

According to CAG sources, there were complaints manifold from across states during the Covid-19 pandemic on the rickety healthcare structure, infrastructure, services at hospitals and health centres. All these complaints on the general state of healthcare and to what extent it benefits the public would be scrutinised and assessed by the CAG.

The audit will have three components — compliance audit, financial audit and the third and most elaborate performance audit. During the third audit process, the CAG would exam-

The letter is in line with the Centre's move to undertake a performance audit in the healthcare sector

ine if public money allocated for healthcare schemes and projects were utilised properly and if people drew the desired benefits.

In the letter sent to state Health Secretary Narayan Swarup Nigam on August 16, Principal Accountant General of West Bengal, Sarat Chaturvedi wrote, "Every year, detailed audit on various topics is taken up by my office for featuring in the audit report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the State of West Bengal. This year, a comprehensive study on the subject 'Public health infrastructure

and management of health services' has been planned by CAG's office for the aforementioned audit report for the year ended March 22. This topic will be simultaneously taken up across all the states."

He further wrote, "The scope of the proposed performance audit is broad as it covers both health infrastructure and management of health services covering primary, secondary as well as tertiary health care systems. Service provided by AYUSH will also be covered in this audit."

The audit will start from the first week of the next month. Initially, the CAG will look into the status of health infrastructure and services. In the second phase, CAG officers will look into the health infrastructure at various institutes, research organisations, pharmaceutical companies, etc., the type of services they provide, and how much the general public benefits from them.

Toll increases to 10, but Covid cases plummet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, AUGUST 21

THE DAILY Covid toll on Saturday slightly increased to 10 from nine on the previous day while the daily caseload dropped to 678 from 758. So far, the state has recorded 15,42,425 Covid cases and 18,356 deaths attributed to the virus, according to the state health bulletin.

Of the fresh deaths, Paschim Medinipur, North 24 Parganas and Kolkata recorded two each, and Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Nadia and Paschim Bardhaman one each.

With 709 Covid patients declared recovered in the last 24 hours, the discharge rate has improved to 98.19 per cent. With this, the state has 9,594 active cases, of which 8,388 are in home isolation and 239 in safe homes. As many as 39,117 samples were tested in the last 24 hours.

At least 2,02,730 people were vaccinated on Saturday with the total number of doses standing at 3,57,00,105. So far, 97,47,694 people have fully vaccinated.

Two held in Kolkata for murder of builder

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, AUGUST 21

THE DETECTIVE Department of Kolkata Police arrested two men in connection with the murder of a builder from the New Market area of Kolkata.

The accused, who were picked up from the Beniapukur area of central Kolkata, have confessed to killing Saif Khan (38), a promoter, police said. They were identified as Md. Aftab Alam (45) of Beniapukur and Nazre Alam (26) of Narkeldanga in north Kolkata. They were charged with

IPC sections 302 (murder), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) and 34 (acts done by several person in furtherance of common intention).

Khan, who was home till Tuesday night in the bustling New Market area, was found dead in the forests of neighbouring Jharkhand next afternoon, police added.

"On the request of Mihijam police station (in Jharkhand), the Detective Department, acting on a tip-off, arrested the two persons. Both confessed to have murdered the businessman from New Market. They have been handed

over to Mihijam police on transit remand," a senior police officer said.

The Mihijam police, till Friday night, hadn't been able to make any arrest in connection with the killing of Khan, a resident of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road in Kolkata. His body was recovered from a forest near the Jamtara-Mihijam National Highway on Wednesday afternoon.

New Market police reached out to the builder's family members on Thursday night. Speaking to reporters on Saturday, Kayesh Khan, the victim's brother, said, "The police gathered a lot of in-

formation from us. However, in the interest of the investigation, we have been advised not to reveal anything to anyone. Police suspect that contract killers were hired to murder him."

While the case is being investigated by the Mihijam police, the Detective Department of Kolkata Police is also looking into it. Police suspect it to be a case of contract killing. "We want strictest punishment for my brother's murder," Kayesh told media persons. According to local police, Saif went missing after leaving his scooter in Wellesley Park Second Lane on Tuesday night.

EXPRESS explained.Live

Taliban 2.0

In conversation with

Gautam Mukhopadhyaya
Former ambassador of India to Afghanistan

Nirupama Subramanian
National Editor
The Indian Express

Twenty years after the United States ousted Afghanistan's Taliban regime in response to the 9/11 terrorist attack, the wheel has turned full circle.

The Taliban have stormed back to Kabul after taking over rest of the country as US troops began pulling out following President Joe Biden's announcement that they would leave the country by August 31.

President Ashraf Ghani has left the country "to avoid bloodshed" and the Taliban have de facto replaced the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan with the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan".

Thousands of civilians are trying to leave the country fearing that Taliban will take the country back to its brutal 1996-2001 regime.

The swiftness of the take over has shocked both Afghans and the world.

What are the implications of the Taliban takeover for Afghanistan, the world and the region?

What are India's foreign policy options now? Should it engage with a Taliban-ruled Afghanistan?

What is Taliban's relationship with Pakistan and how might this affect India's relationship with both countries?

Will there be a fallout of the Taliban takeover on the situation in Kashmir?

23 AUG 2021 06:00 PM

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Kolkata

No curbs on Delhi bar timings from Tuesday



Timing restrictions on markets will be removed from Monday. *Amit Mehra*

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, AUGUST 21

THE TIMING restrictions on markets will be removed from Monday, tweeted Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday afternoon. Later in the day, a fresh DDMA order was issued — it does not mention a deadline for restaurants, bars, and markets. However, restaurants and bars will continue to function at 50% capacity.

The order comes into effect from Tuesday and will be in effect till August 31 or till further orders, whichever is earlier.

The previous guidelines stated that markets could be open till 8 pm and restaurants and bars till 10 pm. Both restaurant and market owners said they were facing losses due to this.

Kejriwal's tweet read, "Till now, due to corona, the markets in Delhi were allowed to open till 8 pm. Due to the decreasing number of cases, the deadline is being removed from Monday. Now markets will be open as per their normal timings." Liquor shops will be open till 10 pm, as usual.

Markets were shut entirely when Delhi was under a lockdown between April 19 and May 30. Once the city started unlocking in phases from May 31, factories within industrial areas and construction activities were allowed to resume. It was only on June 7 that markets, malls, and Delhi Metro services were allowed to open at 50%. From June 14, the 50% cap was removed in case of markets and malls.

Market associations and restaurant owners hailed the move. Ashok Randhawa, president of the Sarojini Nagar Mini Market Traders' Association, said, "We have been writing to government authorities to remove staggered timings for a while, and would like to thank them for this. Our footfall has been around 50% of what it was pre-Covid. Hopefully, footfall and sales will increase as many shoppers step out after office hours. We hope this will help traders and workers get back on their feet. Not all owners have been in a position to pay full salaries so hopefully, this will mean more financial stability for them."

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

MARTYRDOM On 22 AUGUST
Nb Sub Dhura Ram Verma, SM
(23 Jul 1952-22 Aug 1995)

On this day we salute and pay homage to a gallant soldier who laid down his life for the Nation while protecting the Territorial Integrity of India, along the Line of Control in Jammu & Kashmir in the finest traditions of the Indian Army.
May your Soul attain Moksha.
Commanding Officer and All Ranks 3 GRENADIERS

मुख्य कार्यालय, विरार

विरार (पूर्व),

ता. वसई, जि. घाळघर-४०१ ३०५.

दुरध्वनी : ०२५०-२५२५१०१/०२/०३/०४/०५/०६
फक्स : ०२५०-२५२५१०७
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जावक क्र. : व.वि.श.म./आरोप्य/४०३/२१
दिनांक : २०.०८.२०२१

वसई विरार शहर महानगरपालिका

मुख्यालय, विरार (पूर्व)
(घनकचरा व्यवस्थापन विभाग)
जाहीर ई-निविदा सूचना क्र. १
शुद्धिपत्रक

वसई विरार शहर महानगरपालिकेच्या प्रभाग समिती "A ते I" करिता घनकचरा व्यवस्थापनांतर्गत दैनंदिन रस्ते सफाई, गटार सफाई, कचरा संकलन करून श्रेण भरूीवर वाहतूक करणे या कामासाठी बाह्य वंत्रणेमार्फत पाच वर्षांच्या कालावधीकरिता येणाऱ्या सार्वजनिक स्वच्छतेअंतर्गत दैनंदिन साफसफाई करण्याकरिता मनुष्यबळ (Manpower) पुरवठा करण्याबाबत. जा.क्र. वविशम/आरोप्य/३१०/२०२१-२२ दि. १८.०७.२०२१ अन्वये दिनांक २०.०७.२०२१ रोजी जाहीर ई-निविदा मागविण्यात आल्या होत्या. सदरील ई-निविदेच्या दिनांक ११.०८.२०२१ रोजीच्या निविदापूर्व बैठकीमधील हरकती/ सूचनांच्या अनुषंगाने अंदाजित रकम, कामाचा अनुभव, निविदाकाराची सरासरी वित्तीय उलढाल इत्यादींबाबत निविदापूर्व बैठकीच्या अनुषंगाने बदल करण्यात आलेले आहेत. त्यामुळे सदर निविदा भरण्याची अंतिम दिनांक १५.०९.२०२१ रोजी दुपारी ०३.०० वाजेपर्यंत मुदतवाढ देण्यात आलेली आहे. सदर निविदा दिनांक १६.०९.२०२१ रोजी दुपारी ०३.०० वाजता उघडण्यात येईल.

सदर बदलांची शासनाच्या <http://mahatenders.gov.in> या संकेतिक स्थळावर स्वित्स्वरपणे माहिती उपलब्ध करून दिलेली आहे. तरी याबाबत सर्व इच्छुकांनी याची नोंद घ्यावी.

(अजिंक्य बगडे)
उपायुक्त
घनकचरा व्यवस्थापन
वसई विरार शहर महानगरपालिका

Covid group ups projection, readies for 23% hospitalisation

HARIKISHANSHARMA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

IN RECOMMENDATIONS shared with the government last month, the group tasked with the Covid emergency strategy has suggested preparing for 23 hospitalisations every 100 positive cases in a future surge.

This estimation, by the Empowered Group 1 headed by NITI Aayog member V K Paul, is higher than the projection it had made in September 2020 ahead of the second wave, when it calculated that about 20% patients with "severe/moderately severe" symptoms would require hospitalisation.

As per a source, the recommendation to set aside a larger number of hospital beds is based on the pattern seen during the second wave. During its peak, on June 1 for example, when the active caseload across the country was 18 lakh, 21.74% cases required hospitalisation in the 10 states with the maximum cases. Of them, 2.2% were in ICU.

In its latest projection, the group is taking into account a peak of four-five lakh cases per day, and has recommended that two lakh ICU beds be readied by next



People wait to get vaccinated at a Navi Mumbai school on Saturday. *Amit Chakravarty*

month — including 1.2 lakh ICU beds with ventilators, 7 lakh non-ICU hospital beds (of them 5 lakh oxygen-enabled), and 10 lakh Covid isolation care beds.

The projections, the source said, are based on the calculation that for every 100 positive cases of Covid, 23 would need hospital care (2.5 ICU care and 20.5 non-ICU), while 77 would require isolation (30 in institutionalised settings, and 47 at home).

In its September 2020 report, months ahead of the second wave, the group had estimated that of 100 positive cases, 20 would need hospitalisation, with 3 requiring ICU care. Of the remaining 80 asymptomatic cases,

it estimated that 50 would need isolation at Corona Care Centres for seven days while the rest could stay at home.

The source said the group's calculations then were based on the utilisation of hospital beds in Covid hospitals and health centres observed till the end of August 2020, during the first wave.

In the first wave, out of every 100 positive cases, 20 required hospitalisation, 2.43 of them needed ICU care; while 80 needed isolation care, 55 of them at Covid care centres.

However, given the increased utilisation of beds during the second wave, the group has revised its assumptions upward now.

Year later, many participants of vaccine trials await certification

ICMR says data submitted to Health Ministry, issue being finalised soon

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
PUNE, AUGUST 21

A K KHANNA, 65, a former top official at a pharmaceutical firm and presently chairman of a healthcare company, was among the first five participants in the clinical trials of Covishield vaccine conducted by the Serum Institute of India and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) a year ago. Along with his wife and daughter, Khanna received his vaccine doses in August last year.

A year later, he has to furnish RT-PCR test results every time he has to board a flight, because, unlike other vaccinated people, he still doesn't have a government software-generated certificate. The one that the trial site had provided has often been dubbed "fake".

"How long do I wait for the government to certify that my family and I have got both doses? At Jammu airport recently, the authorities rejected the certificate issued by the trial site (in his case Bharati Hospital in Pune), as it was not original," Khanna said. "I knew this problem would arise. So I had got an RT-PCR test (done) a day earlier. But this is so unfair. At a time when not many were willing to get injected with a vaccine, we had volunteered and even convinced several others to get the shot.

"For the last three months I have been constantly asking authorities but (I am) told that the matter is being looked into," Khanna is not alone. There



Trial participants are unable to generate a certificate from the CoWin app, which is being accepted as proof of vaccination. *File*

are 1,600 volunteers who participated in the Covishield trials, and 25,800 who were part of Covaxin trials conducted by Bharat Biotech. Of the 25,800 participants in the Covaxin trials, a Bharat Biotech official said, 50% were vaccine recipients, and the other half were placebo recipients. "The placebo recipients were contacted after trial completion and were administered vaccines," the official said.

All these people received a certificate from the trial sites, stating that they had received vaccines during trials. But none of them could generate a certificate from the CoWin app, which is being accepted as proof of vaccination.

Pune-based industrialist Hemant Katakhar, 64, is in a similar predicament. Katakhar had, in fact, motivated 20 other volunteers to participate in the phase-2/3 trials of Covishield. "The trial was a double-

TRACKING THE **SECOND SURGE**

538
DAYS SINCE
PANDEMIC
BEGAN

NEW CASES: 29,965
ACTIVE CASES: 3,53,539
VACCINATIONS: 57,22,81,488

DAILY DEATHS
404

TOTAL DEATHS
4,34,368

WEEKLY CFR
1.13%

OVERALL CFR
1.36%

TESTS TODAY: 16,89,854 | TOTAL TESTS: 50,62,66,012
WEEKLY POSITIVITY: 1.82% | OVERALL POSITIVITY: 6.40%

STATE	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	WEEKLY POSITIVITY	TOTAL VACCINATION
■ Kerala	17,106	1,78,916	15.85%	2,55,35,751
■ Maharashtra	4,575	53,967	2.39%	5,14,91,159
■ Tamil Nadu	1,652	19,391	1.12%	2,78,88,766
■ Karnataka	1,350	20,871	0.87%	3,60,79,359
■ Andhra Pradesh	1,217	15,141	2.07%	2,60,46,280

STATE	TODAY'S DEATHS	TOTAL DEATHS	WEEKLY CFR	OVERALL CFR
■ Maharashtra	148	1,39,324	2.14%	2.19%
■ Kerala	83	19,507	0.65%	0.55%
■ Odisha	66	7,342	5.44%	0.74%
■ Tamil Nadu	23	34,686	1.38%	1.35%
■ Karnataka	18	37,123	1.40%	1.27%

Note: Data as on Aug 21; vaccination numbers as of Aug 20. Deaths include those from previous days.

blinded one and hence some got the vaccine and others got placebo," he said. "When the trial was unblinded, we were told that along with my daughter and driver, I had also not received the vaccine shot. We got the placebo. However, at that point we were immediately administered the vaccine shot."

This was in March this year. "Since we were part of the trial, we were not included in the CoWin software that was issuing provisional and final certificates," Katakhar said.

"I even wrote to the Prime Minister's Office. It responded saying the issue had been resolved. We are still waiting for our certificates," he said.

Katakhar said one of his friends was unable to get a business visa for Dubai since the certificate issued by the trial site was not accepted.

A freelance writer in Pune, who also participated in the trials, said she was stopped at a shopping mall recently since she could not present CoWin app-generated certificate. "I had participated in the trials at Jehangir Hospital. We have been assured that official certification for us is being organised. However, we haven't got any time-line for this," she said.

The trials for Covishield were conducted at 15 sites in different cities and were completed by October last year. The Covaxin trials were completed a couple of weeks later.

Dr Sanjay Lalwani, medical director at Bharati Hospital, one of the trial sites, said the issue of providing official certificates to

the participants had recently been discussed with ICMR. "We have been informed that the Centre is looking into the issue and will issue certificates soon," he said.

Dr Ashish Bavdekar, principal investigator of the Covishield trial at KEM Hospital Research Centre's Vadu Rural Health Programme site, said he has also been informed that official certificates were being provided to all participants. "Trial sites were asked to submit details of the first and second dose administered to participants and the data was submitted to ICMR. The Centre wants the details in a specific format and the hope is now that certificates will be issued shortly," Dr Bavdekar said.

Bharat Biotech officials said they are working with the Union Health Ministry on this.

Samiran Panda, chief of epidemiology and communicable diseases division of ICMR, said the matter is being processed. "We are trying to see how the CoWin software can allot this certificate and the entire process has been expedited," Dr Panda said.

"I have raised this issue as a rights-based one, and ICMR has proactively interacted with the vaccine manufacturing companies and Health Ministry so that the trial participants get their certificates through the CoWin software. We are aware of this issue and it concerns trial participants of both Covishield and Covaxin," he said.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said changes are being made in the CoWin app so that certificates can be issued.

MAHARASHTRA State-run transporter to test its anti-microbial coated buses for viruses

VALLABH OZARKAR
MUMBAI, AUGUST 21

AFTER DECIDING to coat over 10,000 buses with anti-microbial chemical to prevent the spread of bacterial infections among passengers, the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) has now decided to perform swab tests on these coated buses.

The MSRTC on Friday floated a tender for selection of a laboratory to test the coated buses for H1N1, SARS or influenza viruses from the coronavirus family and check the efficacy of the anti-microbial chemical coating. The last date for submission of the tender is September 6.

Anti-microbial coating is a process of applying a chemical agent on different surfaces that can prevent growth of disease-causing microbes.

Earlier, considering the Covid-19 situation, the MSRTC had decided to apply an anti-microbial chemical coating on its

buses. Believing that the coating will help reduce the transmission of viruses and also maintain hygiene, a tender was floated, following which two agencies were given a contract to coat the buses.

Coating each bus will cost Rs 9,500. Of the two contractors, while one will coat buses once in six months, the second will coat buses after every two months. All seats, hand rests, guard rails, windows, railings, driver cabin, flooring, rubber glazing, passenger and emergency doors as well as the luggage compartment among others will be treated with anti-microbial chemical coating. Swabs would also be collected from spots like these, said officials.

The MSRTC, which has 17,500 buses in its fleet, is the first transport corporation to carry out such a drive in the country. According to the tender, MSRTC intends to appoint a laboratory, which will take swabs from buses and test them to verify if traces of H1N1, SARS or influenza are present.

Three JeM militants killed in gunfight in South Kashmir

Militant commander among them had killed BJP leader Rakesh Pandita: cops

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, AUGUST 21

THREE JAISH-E-MOHAMMAD (JeM) militants, including a top militant commander, were killed in a gunfight in south Kashmir's Tral on Saturday. The militant commander killed has been identified as Wakeel Ahmad Shah, who figured in the most wanted list of militants released recently by the police.

Police said Shah was involved in killing BJP leader and councillor Rakesh Pandita at Tral Payeen. Pandita was killed on June 2, when he was visiting his friend at Tral.

On Saturday, a joint team of police and the Army cordoned off Nagaberan, a high-altitude village in the woods of Tral in south Kashmir, after receiving inputs about the presence of militants. As the team of forces were zeroing in on the target, the militants opened fire, trying to break the security cordon and the security team retaliated, leading to a gunfight, the police said.

"In the ensuing encounter three terrorists of proscribed terrorist outfit JeM were killed and their bodies were retrieved from

the site of encounter," police said in a release. "One of the killed terrorists has been identified as Wakeel Ahmad Shah. Identification of the two others...is being ascertained."

The operation was launched in the same forest areas where JeM's Pakistani commander Saifullah, alias Lamboo, was killed last month.

Police said Shah was a categorised militant, who was "instrumental in planning and executing terror attacks on security establishments and civilian killings". His name figured in the list of 10 most wanted militant commanders issued by Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kashmir, Vijay Kumar on August 3. The list contained names of seven old militants and three new militant commanders.

"He (Shah) was also involved in a series of firing/grenade lobbing attacks on Police/security forces," the police statement said. "Incriminating materials including arms and ammunition were also recovered from the site of the encounter".

Police said IGP Kumar, GoC 15 Corps Lt Gen D P Pandey, and GoC Victor Force Maj Gen Rashim Bali visited the encounter site.

Soldier dead, 4 others in hospital after heat stroke during endurance run

MAN AMAN SINGH CHHINA
CHANDIGARH, AUGUST 21

A SOLDIER died and four others had to be hospitalised after nearly three dozen soldiers collapsed due to heat and exhaustion during an endurance run conducted at Mamun military station near Pathankot on Saturday.

The condition of the four is stated to be critical.

According to Army sources, a 9 Corps recce troop competition was organised on Saturday morning. During the event, 34 soldiers collapsed due to hot and humid weather conditions and were rushed to Pathankot Military Hospital.

MANIPUR OUTFIT CALLS SHUTDOWN IN HILL DISTRICTS

Imphal: The All Tribal Students' Union Manipur (ATSUM) has called for a 24-hour total shutdown in hill districts of Manipur to protest the state's failure to table the Manipur (Hill Areas) Autonomous District Councils Bill, 2021, in the ongoing monsoon session of the Assembly.

The training activity was being undertaken by 11 officers, 11 JCOs and 120 Other Ranks, the Army said.

It was learnt that the endurance competition was already going on for 72 hours and a 10-km leg with full load and weapon was undertaken at a relatively late hour — around 9 am — when the weather was not conducive.

When contacted, a senior Army officer said, "In an organised, supervised and monitored training activity near Pathankot, due to severe weather conditions, there has been one fatal casualty and few individuals admitted in Military Hospital Pathankot. The affected persons are being provided with requisite medical care."

The shutdown will come into effect from Sunday midnight.

The Manipur (Hill Areas) Autonomous District Councils Bill, 2021, drafted by the Hill Areas Committee was reportedly submitted to the Assembly for passing before the monsoon session began on August 20.

Noida man who lost job 'kills 2 sons, self'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NOIDA, AUGUST 21

A 32-YEAR-OLD man was found hanging in an abandoned house in Noida, days after his two sons were murdered. Noida Police found the body in a house in Basai village on Friday. In a purported suicide note, the man, Mahesh, wrote he was responsible for the death of his two sons, Monu (6) and Tinka (3), said police.

Police said Mahesh had lost his job recently, though they added that a probe will establish if this was why he took the extreme step.

"We had received information on Wednesday that two children had been found murdered in Sector 34. Two days later, we found the body of their father. In our investigation, we have not found any conclusive evidence behind the extreme steps," said Ranvijay Singh, ADCP Noida.

Mahesh worked at an embroidery store before he lost his job a few months ago. This led to tension at home, said his family.

"He would do stitching and design work at a clothing store.

The family lived in Hoshiyarpur. *Gajendra Yadav*

The owner unfortunately died due to a brain hemorrhage and the shop shut down. There was nothing in Mahesh's behaviour that suggested something was amiss... This has come as a shock. He never misbehaved with anyone," said his relative Arun.

The family lived in Hoshiyarpur, and on Tuesday evening, Mahesh told his wife he was going for a walk with his sons. When the three did not return for hours, his family approached police and filed a missing person's complaint at Sector 49 police station. The following day, the bodies of his sons were found in an abandoned area in Sector 34.

Kolkata


Preliminary investigation, police said, had revealed that the

The accused — Faiyaz, Arman, Vikash and Raja — have been remanded in police custody for five

According to his family, Reisajam had left home on Friday evening and when he did not return, they searched for him. Later, police were informed, and his body was found at Bipradas

"His body has been sent for autopsy, and the actual cause of death can only be ascertained afterwards," said a police officer.

Applicants can find details of eligibility criteria, programme-wise intake, last date of online application etc. and apply online by visiting the University Website www.cuo.ac.in
Applicants are advised to visit University Website regularly for updates for admission to programmes as notified time to time. E-mail based admission helpline service: admission2021@cuo.ac.in
davp 21317/11/0002/2122 **Dr. Ram Shankar**, Controller of Examinations



बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा
Bank of Baroda

REGIONAL OFFICE: BURDWAN REGION
2nd Floor, 54, G. T. Road
Bhangakuthi, Burdwan- 713101

E-AUCTION
SALE NOTICE

ANNEXURE-E
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES "APPENDIX- IV-A [See proviso to Rule 6 (2) & 8 (6)]

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with proviso to Rule 6 (2) & 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" for recovery of below mentioned account/s. The details of Borrower/s/Guarantor/s/Secured Asset/s/Dues/Reserve Price/E-Auction date & Time, EMD and Bid Increase Amount are mentioned below –

Sl/ Lot No.	Name & address of Borrower/s/Guarantor/ s/ Mortgagor (s)	Detailed description of the immovable / movable property with known encumbrances, if any	Total Dues.	Date & Time of E-auction	Reserve Price	Status of Possession (Constructive / Physical)	Property Inspection Date & Time
					EMD amount Bid Increase Amount		
1	Manoj Kumar Roy Branch: Bhadrabar Contact person of Branch: Mob: 8335070085	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Flat at, Ashish Apartment Flat No 401 A, 4th Floor having 272 sq.ft. at Mouza Bally, J L No 14 Dag No 16285, Kh No 3660 within HMC holding no 166, adjacent to G T Road, near Lal Baba College, Ward No 55, District Howrah, Pin No : 711201	Rs.14,06,720/- plus unapplied interest and other charges thereon	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs.9,47,700/- Rs.94,770/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 at 4.30 p.m
2	M/s Industrial Metal & Ferro Alloys Branch: Ansantol Contact person of Branch: Mob- 8373060006	Equitable Mortgage of Factory Land & Shed at Jambadh Mouza Shankheri near Jamuria JL No 42, R.S. Khatian No. 220, 277 & 231, Dag No. 82, 74, 75 & 76 comprising land of 2 Acres and 75 Shatak as per original title deed no.1-3050 in favour of Smt. Krishna Chatterjee, one of the partners of M/s Industrial Metal & Ferro Alloys	Rs.97,36,732.53 plus unapplied interest and other charges thereon	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs.44,68,770/- Rs.4,46,877/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 at 4.30 p.m
3	Sri Akash Prasad Branch: eVB Burdwan Parcus Road Contact Person of Branch: Mob: 8420803315	Equitable mortgage of all that piece and parcel of Land & Building measuring an area about 1263 sq. feet under that 810 sq ft construction building R S Plot No 3442, R S Khatian No 580 L R Khatian No 7781, J L No 75, Mouza - Ichhlabad Ray Nagar, Malir Bagan P.O & P.S -Burdwan Pin-713101 Near Malir Math in the name of Mr. Akash Prasad. Property is butted and bounded follows: On the North By : Vacant Land On the South By : By 5 Ft wide passage then House. On the East By: 6 ft. Wide Common Passage. On the West By : House of others.	Rs.17,73,970/- as on 30.09.2019 together with further interest thereon at the contractual rate plus costs, charges and expenses.	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs.17,82,000/- Rs.1,78,200/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 at 4.30 p.m
4	Srikesh Sasmal Branch: Contai Contact person of Branch: Mob - 8373060028	Land and building situated at mouja - Bankaberia, Contai, Purb Medinipur, Pin - 721401. L.R. Plot no - 233, J.L no - 315, KH No - 385, bounded by North - building of Kartick Ch Jana, Plot no - 233, South - vacant land of Sankar Maity Plot no - 232, East - vacant land of Baneswar Maity Plot no - 273, West - building of Sunil Ch Maity Plot no - 228	Rs.29,17,344/- plus unapplied interest and other cost, charges and expenses thereon	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs.20,70,000/- Rs.2,07,000/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 at 4.30 p.m

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.bankofbaroda.in/e-auction.htm> and <https://ibapi.in>. Also prospective bidders may contact the authorized officer on Mobile No. 7903152481

Date: 22.08.2021

Place - Burdwan

Name: Mr. Sanjay Kumar Singh
Authorised Officer
Bank of Baroda

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES “APPENDIX- IV-A [See proviso to Rule 6 (2) & 8 (6)]								
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 6 (2) & 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.								
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda, Secured Creditor, will be sold on “As is where is”, “As is what is”, and “Whatever there is” for recovery of below mentioned account/s. The details of Borrower/s/Guarantor/s/Secured Asset/s/Dues/Reserve Price/e-Auction date & Time, EMD and Bid Increase Amount are mentioned below -								
Sr/ Lot No.	Name & address of Borrower/s/Guarantor/ s/ Mortgagor (s)	Detailed description of the immovable property with known encumbrances, if any	Total Dues.	Date & Time of E-auction	Reserve Price EMD amount Bid Increase Amount	Status of Possession (Constructive /Physical)	Property Inspection date & Time	
1	Mr. Joy Adhikary & Mrs. Samarпита Adhikary, VIII Kismet Apurbapur, P.O.+P.S.: Singur, Dist: Hoogly, Pin-712409	Residential flat measuring super built up area of 3828 sq.ft. more or less at 1st Floor, named as " Sayantan Apartment", in the name of Mr Joy Adhikary & Mrs. Samamita Adhikary situated at Mouza Kismet Apurbapur J.L.No.51, RS Khatian No.427, R.S.& L.R. Dag No.361, L.R. Khatian No.1671, P.S. within the area of Singur-I Gram Panchayet , Dist: Hoogly, Police Station - Singur, Pin-712409, WestBengal	Rs. 4437483.00 as on 01.04.2015 (inclusive of interest upto 31.03.2015) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs. 43,74,000/- Rs.4,37,400/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM	
2	Borrower: Ms. Sonali Som & Mr. Utpal Som residence of 46 Sat Chasi Para Lane (Lankar Bagan), Serampore, Hooghly, West Bengal, 712204. Guarantor: Mr. Sajal Kanti Som residence of 46 Sat Chasi Para Lane (Lankar Bagan), Serampore, Hooghly, West Bengal, 712204	Equitable mortgage of land property situated at Barakamalapur, P.O. : Bara, P.S. : Singur, L.R. Dag no. 7216, 7217, 7218 and 7218/8221, L.R. Khatian no. 7647 and 7648 . J.L. No. 100, District: Hooghly, in the name of Mr. Utpal Som & Mr. Sajal Kanti Som.The land is buttet & bounded by: On the North by: Dag no. 8220 & Passage, On the South by: Dag no. 7215 & 7213, On the East by: Dag No. 7216 & 7190, On the West by: Dag No. 7217 & 7218.	Rs. 6,59,481/- (Rupees six lakhs fifty nine thousand four hundred eighty one only) as on 15.10.2020 plus interest thereon till date together with incidental expenses, cost, charges etc.	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs. 6,50,000/- Rs.65,000/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM	
3	M/s. Meta Varieties Wholesale Seller Prop. Sanjay Kumar Ghosh Bhabanipur, Lebugagan, Palpara Chakdah Dist Nadia, Kolkata 741222	All that piece and parcel of Land and building measuring area total 4.63 decimal at Uttar Bhabanipur, J.L no. 34, L R Khatian No 468, L R Dag no. 122, Holding No 579, Ward No 1, Under Chakdah Municipality, PO & PS Chakdah, Dist Nadia 741222 Being Deed no. I-5124 for the year 1991.	Rs.1605000.00 as on 16.03.2017 (inclusive of interest upto 16.03.2017) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs. 7,05,600/- Rs.70,560/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM	
4	M/s. Bose Enterprise Prop. Mr. Sumit Bose s/o Late Anup Bose, Labony Complex, 4/1 Chatterjeepara Road, Barrackpore, Kolkata 700122 Guarantors Mr. Harekrishna Mandal & Mr. Mohit Kumar Mandal s/o Mr. Kartik Mandal, Vill Bhuluka, Po Majhipara, PS Amdanga Dist North 24 Parganas 743145	All that the piece and parcel of land measuring about 67 decimal lying and situated at Dag no 80 & 81, Khatian no. 357, LR Khatian no. 567 & 386, J.L.No. 1, Touzi 2049, at Mouja Bhuluka, Maricha Gram Panchayat, PS Amdanga Dist. North 24 Parganas as mentioned in original Title Deed No. I-3953 dated 07-04-1975 ADSRO Amdanga. Property stands in the name of Sri Harekrishna Mondal s/o-Mr. Kartik Mondal and Sri Mohit Mondal s/o- Mr. Kartik Mondal. The property is buttled and bounded by:-North by: Common Passage, South by: Property of Shyamdev Mondal, East by: Property of Nepal Tapasi, Lily Ghosh and West by:Property of Shyamdev Mondal, Tulsi Mondal.	Rs. 2554049.00 as on 12.02.014 (inclusive of interest upto 12.02.2014) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs.54,00,000/- Rs.5,40,000/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM	
5	M/S Paduka Bhavan Proprietor: Mrs. Pampa Mallick:-Vill:- Mansatala More, Kotal Ghata, Kushberia, Uluberia, Howrah-711316	All the piece and parcel of vacant land situated measuring 5.40 decimal more or less lying & situated at Mouza : Kotalghata, P.O. : Bara, P.S. : Uluberia, L.R. Dag no.748, L.R. Khatian no. 1623, J.L. No. 107, District: Howrah, 711316 in the name of Mrs. Pampa Mallick.	Rs.1552793.00 as on 30.11.2019 (inclusive of interest upto 30.11.2019) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs.12,70,000/- Rs.1,27,000/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM	
6	M/s. Maruti Care, Proprietor. Mr. Sujit Biswas at 21, Chanditala, Ghola Bazar, Sodepur, Kolkata- 700110; Guarantor: Mr. Sankar Das of Clindi Para, Berachampa-I, Deganga, Dist. 24 Parganas (North), Pin-743423	All the piece and parcel of landed property measuring area total 9 decimal with super structure under Mouza-Changdanagram, J.L. no. -31, Touzi no. - 146, Hal Touzi -11, R.S. Khatian no. -19, Dag no. - 3386, L.R. Khatian no. - 1229, Barachampa 1 Gram Panchayat, P.S.-Deganga, North 24 Parganas. The mortgaged property stands in the name of Shri Sankar Kumar Das.	Rs.3035992.00 as on 31.01.2016 (inclusive of interest upto 31.01.2016) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs.7,70,000/- Rs.77,000/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM	
7	M/s Bharat Plastic Industries, Proprietor: Sri Swarup Guchait, Guarantor : Sri Nirmal Guchait, (both at Vill:-Barharasankar,PO Ramtarakhut, PS Tamluk, Dist: Midnapore, PIN-721142) Guarantor: Narayan Ch. Maity (at Mecheda, Santipur New Market, East Midnapore, PIN-721137).	All that piece and parcel of land & double storied building measuring an area of 14 Decimal at Mouza - Barharasankar ,Dag No. 736 , Touzi No. 1008, RS No 904 ,J.N.no.48, PS- Tamluk ,PO- Buranhat , District: East Midnapur property standing in the name of Sri Swarup Guchait , Sri Nimal Guchait.	Rs.2920366.00 as on 12.09.2012 (inclusive of interest upto 12.09.2012) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs. 12,50,000/- Rs.1,25,000/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM	
8	Mr. Subrat Kumar Rout Address : s/o Sri Bishnu Charan Rout, Gitanjali Apartment, FLAT No. F, Gr. Floor, Thana Road, P.O.: Khardah, P.S.-Khardah, DIST:- North 24 PGS, PIN- 700116.	Residential flat no. F, on the ground floor measuring an super built up area 585 sq. ft., more or less the G+11 storied building of "Gitanjali Apartment" at Holding no. 163/78/2, Thana Road, Mouza & P.S. Khardaha, constructed all piece & parcel of land measuring more or less 7 cottahs & chittaks 3 sq. ft. together with undivided proportionate share in the common area being part of holding no. 163/78/2, Thana Road, Mouza & P.S. Khardaha, J.L. no. 2, Touzi no. 2998, R.S. Dag no. 4150, R.S. Khatian no. 1504, L.R. Dag no. 5916, L.R. Khatian no. 6967, within Ward no. 14, of Khardaha Municipality, P.S. Khardaha, Dist. North 24 Parganas, Kolkata- 700 116. Property In the name of Sri Subrat Kumar Rout, S/o Sri Bishnu Charan Rout. Buttet & Bounded by: On the North by: Stair of the building, On the South by :Flat no. E, On the East by: Inside Corridor and On the West by : Building side space then Municipal Road.	Rs.1159358.00 as on 20.11.2018 (inclusive of interest upto 20.11.2018) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	08.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs. 10,55,000/- Rs.1,05,500/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	02.09.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM	
For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to the link provided in https://www.bankofbaroda.in/e-auction.htm and https://ibapi.in . Also, prospective bidders may contact the authorized officer on Mobile No. : 8335073866								
Date: 22.08.2021								
Place :- Kolkata								
Nimmana Sudhakar Authorised Officer Bank of Baroda, ROSAR, Saltlake, Kolkata								

6 EXPRESS NETWORK

LAST RITES IN BULANDSHAHR TOMORROW

Kalyan dies, UP announces 3-day mourning

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, AUGUST 21

FORMER UTTAR Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh, popularly known as "Babuji" in UP politics, died on Saturday night at the ICU of the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences in Lucknow, after battling age-related ailments at the facility for nearly one-and-a-half months.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath rushed to SGPGI as soon as he heard the news of Singh's deteriorating health condition. BJP state president Swatantra Dev Singh accompanied him to the hospital. The CM announced three days of state mourning, adding that August 23 will be a public holiday every year. Condoling the demise of the former CM who had been associated with the Ram Mandir movement and was a strong 'Lodhi' face of the BJP, Adityanath labelled Singh's death as "apurniya kshhhati" (an irreparable loss) and recalled his "leading role" in the campaign.

"He led from the front in the Ram temple movement. When it came to ensuring progress in raising the Ram temple, he did not even hesitate to step down as CM," Adityanath said, referring to Singh's resignation from the post of chief minister, taking "moral responsibility" for the demolition of the Babri Masjid



Kalyan Singh with Atal Behari Vajpayee, L K Advani, Kanshi Ram and Mayawati; coming out of Tihar jail (left) after a one-day token imprisonment by the Supreme Court for contempt, in Delhi in October 1994. Express archive

on December 6, 1992.

The chief minister further informed that a cabinet meeting was convened on Saturday night to mourn the death. Adityanath said the body would be placed at the BJP headquarters on Sunday and will later be taken to Aligarh, Singh's hometown.

Arrangements have been made at the stadium in Aligarh for people to pay final tributes,

the CM said, adding that on Monday, his body would be taken to his 'janmabhumi' and 'karmabhumi', Atrauli, a seat he has also represented in the Assembly. The chief minister said that Singh's body would be laid to rest with full state honours at Narora in Bulandshahr district on Monday afternoon.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

TRIBUTES, FROM ACROSS THE SPECTRUM



"I bow down to such a great and ideal life dedicated to the nation, religion and people..."

AMIT SHAH,
HOME MINISTER

"Kalyan Singh's death is a great loss for Indian politics and a very sad moment for me..."

RAJNATH SINGH,
DEFENCE MINISTER

"Death of former UP CM and former Rajasthan Governor... is heartbreaking..."

AKHILESH YADAV,
SP CHIEF

"Deeply saddened by the passing away of former Governor of Rajasthan and former CM of UP..."

ASHOK GEHLOT,
RAJASTHAN CM AND CONGRESS LEADER

"He was a nationalist and an exemplary leader who was deeply committed to serving people..."

M VENKAI AH NAIDU,
VICE PRESIDENT

"News of the death of BJP's strong leader, former UP CM... highly sad..."

MAYAWATI, BSP CHIEF

Kids in hospital made to sit in heat for govt event, NCPDR seeks action

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, AUGUST 21

TAKING NOTE of videos that showed children undergoing treatment at Vidisha district hospital were huddled together and made to wait at a government function of inauguration of an oxygen plant, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) on Saturday issued notice to Madhya Pradesh Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains. The apex child rights panel and asked Bains to conduct an inquiry in seven days and take action against those responsible.

The oxygen plant was inaugurated virtually by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

The notice from NCPDR chairman Priyank Kanoongo stated, "The children were made to sit for over two hours under the scorching sun, which prima-facie appears to be in violation of Section 75 of Juvenile Justice (Care and Child Protection) Act 2015."

Chief Medical and Health Officer of Vidisha, Akhand Pratap Singh, said, "We will conduct an inquiry to ascertain who exactly did it. But it could not be that the children were there for two hours, as the programme lasted for about 45 minutes."

Kanoongo told *The Sunday Express*, "I received videos of the event from people who attended it, in which the children were seen sitting in the functions. The video was disheartening, so we have ordered an inquiry and asked for the person responsible to be punished."

Stating that he was present throughout, district CMHO Singh said, "Just when the programme was to start, respected MLA Umakant Sharma pointed out that no girl was present for 'kanya pooja'. We (then) tried to get a girl child, and in that confusion someone might have called the children from the ward." He also said it is possible that a handful of children came to observe the programme with their parents.

'Ayodhya ki Ramlila', starring BJP MPs, to be streamed from Oct 6

DIPANITA NATH
PUNE, AUGUST 21

AYODHYA KI Ramlila, a production starring several BJP MPs and film stars, will be staged and telecast from Lakshman Quila, less than two km from where the Ram temple is being constructed.

BJP MP from North East Delhi Manoj Tiwari will essay multiple roles while BJP's Gorakhpur MP and Bhojpur actor Ravi Kishan will play Parashuram. Bollywood actor Asrani will be Narad, and Shakti Kapoor will play the part of Ahiravan.

Vindu Dara Singh will return to his familiar character from TV and stage, Hanuman, while Raza Murad will essay the role of Kumbhakarn. The identity of the actor playing Ram is under wraps. Shweta Gupta will be Sita except for the Swayamvar scene, when the role will be taken up by Bhagyasree. Ayodhya ki Ramlila can be viewed on several satellite channels and social media platforms between October 6 and 15.

Ayodhya ki Ramlila was held for the first time in 2020, under



Manoj Tiwari, Ravi Kishan

strict Covid guidelines as the pandemic had put a stop to all public performances. "No audience will be present this time either. More than 16 crore people watched the live streaming from the safety of their homes," says Subhash Malik, founder of Meri Maa Foundation and the creative director of Ayodhya ki Ramlila. Both BJP MPs have played epic characters before — Tiwari was Angad last year while Kishan was Bharat. The two are familiar faces on the Delhi Ramlila scene, with the former enacting the role of Parashuram in 2019 and Angad in 2018 at a Delhi Ramlila. Kishan has performed as Parashurama, Bhishma, Karna, Dronacharya and Angad on the Ramlila stage.

Amid Afghan crisis, Nadda hails citizenship law changes

LALMANI VERMA
LUCKNOW, AUGUST 21

AMID THE Taliban crisis in Afghanistan, BJP national president JP Nadda Saturday said the Union government had brought in the Citizenship Amendment Act to provide constitutional rights to Sikh and Hindu refugees from neighbouring countries.

Nadda, who is in Uttarakhand, said everyone was watching how people in Afghanistan were seeking evacuation. "But we had raised the same issue. Our Sikh and Hindu brothers from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who had taken refuge in India but had not got constitutional protection and were deprived of facilities for several years. They were being exploited. The Narendra Modi government brought them to the mainstream through CAA," he said.

He also said the Union government was making efforts to ensure the safe return of Indian citizens from Afghanistan.

Nadda is on a two-day visit to Uttarakhand to oversee the BJP's preparations for next year's



J P Nadda at a meeting of party leaders, in Haridwar. PTI

Assembly elections.

On Saturday, the last day of his visit, he interacted with ex-servicemen and later spoke at a ceremony to honour sadhus in Haridwar.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhumi was present during the second event where Nadda also sought blessings from sadhus.

During the interaction with ex-servicemen, Nadda said Prime Minister Modi's leadership has raised the morale of security personnel and they do not need to wait for permission from

the central headquarters to retaliate against firing from across the border.

Nadda claimed that around 8-10 years back, when firing would occur in Kathua or Poonch, information had to be reported to different offices and ultimately security personnel would be asked to "wait" for a message, which was not the case any more.

Nadda also said that modernization of armed forces had been stopped for a long time in the past but the Modi government sped up the exercise.

Tripura Cong chief quits, then changes decision

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, AUGUST 21

TRIPURA CONGRESS chief Pijush Kanti Biswas Saturday announced that he was quitting politics while blaming a lack of support from state unit leaders, only to walk back his decision within hours after Congress state

in-charge Ajoy Kumar stepped in.

A statement issued by Kumar in New Delhi on Saturday evening said he would meet Biswas, the acting president, on August 29 and address his concerns.

The resignation came after the recent defections of several Tripura Congress leaders to the

Trinamool Congress. Biswas had said earlier in the day that the party's top leadership had not supported him completely.

Later in the day, Biswas told *The Sunday Express*: "The in-charge for Tripura spoke with me and assured he would meet me and sort out all the issues I am facing here. If he solves these issues, I don't have any problem."



Census was carried out under Siddaramaiah govt

(KSBC).

"H Kantharaj was earlier the head of the KSBC and was replaced by Jayaprakash Hegde. When I asked him (Hegde) about the report, he said that it is in the evaluation stage. Once the report is ready, it will be taken to the cabinet and a call will be taken (on releasing the report)," Poojary told The Sunday Express.

In wake of the passage of the 127th Constitution Amendment Bill to restore the power of states to select groups for the OBC quota, there has been a demand from several regional parties to carry out a socio-economic caste census in the country to understand the status of various castes.

Siddaramaiah, who provided impetus for the 2015 caste census in Karnataka but did not release its findings, has also sought release of the report of the census carried out during his tenure. "Why is the government not willing to accept the backward classes commission report? The resources of our nation should be distributed equally and social justice should be achieved. Data is necessary to do this so we had ordered for the

BJP's tallest OBC leader who knew UP through and across

LALMANI VERMA
LUCKNOW, AUGUST 21

KALYAN SINGH was the most prominent pro-Hindutva OBC face in BJP, with acceptance across the state. He belonged to Lodhi community, which is spread out across UP constituencies, with considerable strength in Assembly seats of western UP and Bundelkhand regions.

With BJP's two tallest OBC leaders in UP — Keshav Prasad Maurya, also Deputy CM, and Swatantra Dev Singh, the party's state unit president — seen as struggling at present to gain acceptance across non-Yadav OBC communities, the party is set to miss Singh's touch.

Before 2014 Lok Sabha elections, BJP tried to woo Singh by offering a safe seat to his son, Rajveer. At the time, Singh was one of the leaders best informed about social equations and local issues of every constituency in UP. Sources said Narendra Modi and Amit Shah interacted a lot with Singh during their tours and rallies in the state.

In 3 days, 40 FIRs against Rane's yatra

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, AUGUST 21

IN THREE days since Thursday, the police have lodged 40 FIRs in connection with Union Minister for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Narayan Rane's Jan Aashirwad Yatra — for holding public gatherings amid the pandemic and allegedly breaking Covid-19 rules.

Rane is now touring Konkan, as part of the BJP yatra which commenced from Mumbai.

With over a dozen municipal corporations, including the civic bodies of Mumbai, Thane and Navi Mumbai, set to go to polls early next year, the yatra is being deemed as an early canvassing campaign launched by the BJP.

Most of the FIRs have been registered under sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code, 51 (refuses to comply with government rules) of the National Disaster Management Act and 135 (penalty for contravention of rule) of the Bombay Police Act. The FIRs have been registered against organisers and BJP workers and Rane has not been named.

Rane is among the four leaders from Maharashtra who were last month inducted in the Narendra Modi Cabinet.

So far, 39 FIRs had been lodged in connection with the yatra by the Mumbai Police.

On Saturday, the Kashmiria police station under Mira-Bhayandar Vasai Virar Police Commissionerate lodged the 40th FIR.

survey to be conducted," he said earlier this week.

"The report is yet to reach the government. I had earlier directed the backward classes minister in the coalition government to approve the report. The then CM Kumaraswamy opposed it," Siddaramaiah claimed.

Congress leaders and ministers are reported to have convinced Siddaramaiah in 2017 not to release the report fearing an adverse effect in the 2018 Assembly polls. The Congress eventually lost power and had to forge an alliance with the JD(S) to form a government headed by H D Kumaraswamy.

During the tenure of the Congress and the JDS-Congress coalition, the BJP had sought the release of the report.

'LESSONS FROM U.S. WITHDRAWAL'

Mufti warns Centre: If J&K loses patience, you'll disappear

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, AUGUST 21

ASKING THE Centre to learn a lesson from the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti on Saturday sounded a warning to New Delhi and said that if the people of J&K "lose patience, you will not remain — you will (also) disappear".

Mufti also had a word of caution for the Afghan Taliban, saying that the "role of guns is over".

Mufti was addressing a public rally in south Kashmir's Kulgam during a rare public outreach by mainstream political leaders in the Valley since the abrogation of J&K's special status and downgrading of the state into two Union Territories in August 2019.

"Patience needs courage. What people of Jammu and Kashmir are enduring... the day they lose patience, you also will not remain — you will disappear," Mufti said. "I am telling you again and again: don't test our patience; understand and correct (yourself)."

Mufti urged the Centre to take lessons from the Taliban capture of Afghanistan and resolve the Kashmir issue through dialogue.

"Understand what is happening in the neighbourhood... Such a big power — America — had to fold their beds and return," she said. "You (the Centre) still have an opportunity. The way (former PM Atal Bihari) Vajpayee—ji started a dialogue — with outside (Pakistan) and here (in J&K) — you also (should) start a dialogue."

Referring to the abrogation of special status and bifurcation of the erstwhile state into UTs, Mufti said, "What you have robbed us of illegally and unconstitutionally — the identity of J&K — that you have distorted, and the pieces that you did to J&K... correct this mistake, or else it would be too late," she said.

The PDP chief accused the BJP-led Centre of misusing central agencies such as the NIA, CBI and the Enforcement Directorate to crush dissent and political opponents. Warning of communal polarisation, she said that if the BJP doesn't mend its ways, India would break into many parts on communal and religious lines.

On the Afghanistan situation, Mufti said, "They (Taliban) made the US flee from Afghanistan but now the world is watching their (Taliban) behaviour. I urge the Taliban not to commit any act that forces the world to go against them. The role of guns is over."



PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti in Kulgam. Shuaib Masoodi

BJP, Opp stand on Art 370 indistinguishable: Lone slams NC, PDP

NAVEED IQBAL
SRINAGAR, AUGUST 21

A DAY after the National Conference and PDP participated in a meeting of opposition parties in New Delhi, Sajad Lone, a former member of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), questioned their silence on Article 370.

"The revocation of J&K's special status as defined under Article 370, can only be reversed in the Parliament. The way Indian polity is scripted at the moment is that on one hand, there is the BJP, which has abrogated Article 370 and is vociferous that they won't give it back. The only hope that we possibly had was that at a future date, the opposition would come to power and correct this in Parliament," Lone told *The Sunday Express*.

Stating that if the opposition while being in opposition is so "shy and reticent" of discussing 370, recusing itself from the discourse around special status, Lone said, "This basically means



'Opp endorsing what govt has done in House'

that the opposition is endorsing what the current government has done in the Parliament."

Attacking the leadership of both parties, the People's Conference chief said, "When NC and PDP, my former allies in the PAGD, sit with them and selectively accept the draft of a resolution where they are talking only about statehood, this by default means they are against changing the new normal. The BJP and the opposition stand on Article 370 is indistinguishable."

Meanwhile, the NC in a statement denounced Lone's comment on the opposition meeting as "unfounded and out of sync with reality".

No conspiracy can affect Tejashwi bond: Tej Pratap

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, AUGUST 21

FORMER HEALTH minister and Lalu Prasad's elder son Tej Pratap Yadav on Saturday suggested that all was well between him and his brother Tejashwi Yadav, a day after he took a swipe at his brother and expressed acrimony about not having been consulted over the election of the RJD's youth wing president.

On Friday, Tej Pratap said Tejashwi was leaving for Delhi when Bihar was facing floods. Tejashwi, who left for Delhi to attend an all-party meeting with the Prime Minister on August 23 on the caste census demand,

said, "Being the elder brother is alright. But everyone has to follow the party's discipline."

However, on Saturday, Tej Pratap tweeted a picture of him with his brother and posted in Hindi, "Chaahe kitna shadyantra rachho. Krishn-Arjun ki ye jodi ko tod nahin paoge (No matter how much you conspire, you will not be able to cause a rift between Krishn and Arjun)."

Tej Pratap, who had been sulking after RJD replaced the party's youth wing president Akash Yadav with Gagan Kumar, had also targeted RJD state president Jagdanand Singh.

RJD spokesperson Mrityunjay Tewari, however, said, "All is okay with the party."

7 EXPRESS ADDA

The Indian EXPRESS
e.AQDA

MEGHA TATA
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
DISCOVERY COMMUNICATIONS
INDIA

We saw you in a new avatar as a host in *Secrets of Sinauli*. You were outstanding. Will we see more of you in that avatar? How do you choose your projects?

I did two shows during the pandemic. One was on Covid and the other is *Secrets of Sinauli*. I did *Secrets*... for two reasons. One, it is made by one of my favourite directors and friend Neeraj Pandey. He does not leave any stone unturned. I still remember reading that the villagers ran away with so many artefacts. They saw that these were very valuable but did not know that this was a civilisation which was 4,000 years old. And this is a remarkable discovery and it's going to help people who are going to work on it. Many of the artefacts have still not been recovered. I wanted to know more. This was the second reason. I have done this show as a very curious student of history. I graduated in history, so there is that side of me which is curious about what happened, how it must have happened.

There are two kinds of content I associate myself with. One side of me is from theatre. It is influenced by Shyam Benegal, Govind Nihalani, Ritwik Ghatak, Satyajit Ray. It educated me about cinema and this one side is really strong. At the same time, there is another side of Manoj Bajpayee, who comes from a village, who wanted to become an actor by watching the commercial cinema of Mr Amitabh Bachchan, Vinod Khanna and Shatrughan Sinha. These are the two sides that I try to balance. I want to expand my audience base and that will give me the strength to do the kind of cinema that I want to do, like *Bhonsle* and *Aligarh*. When I am reading scripts, they have to engage me, I look at the dynamics of the character and how is it placed, who's the director, producer and the entire project.



GAJRAJ RAO
ACTOR

Some years ago, even if there was an argument on the road, your eyes would turn red. Things have changed now. How did you control your temper?

Gajraj, Piyush Mishra and Ashish Vidyarthi, all of us were in the same theatre group. I was a very angry person. I did not come from a very comfortable background and was on a journey where the anger was mostly with my own self, as I was always falling short whenever I looked at Piyush, Ashish or Gajraj. They were privileged in my eyes because they came from a certain background. I wanted to learn as much as possible. The barometer in my eyes for an actor was very high and there was this desperation to reach there. The anger came from not achieving enough. There was so much to learn — you have to learn Hindi, English, read books, watch films, listen to music, gain as much as possible to call yourself an actor. The entire day used to be filled with activities. I was never free. The passion to learn the craft and skill was too much and that took the shape of anger. Now I feel that was a different person.

I have been blessed with some spiritual guidance and that's how it started changing. I am not indulgent now. I am more open to people, to experience. I collaborate with people.



Manoj Bajpayee was in conversation with Anant Goenka, Executive Director, The Indian Express Group, and film critic Shubhra Gupta



JITENDER DABAS
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,
MCCANN WORLDGROUP INDIA

Earlier the audience looked up to the big 70 mm screen. The hero was bigger than them. Now the screen is 5 1/2 inches and in their palms. The power relationship is changing. Does that change the idea of screen presence? When we were growing up, we used to go to cinema theatres and find our heroes. Society needs relatable heroes but society also needs inspirational heroes. Big cinema used to give us that. Going forward, as the screen becomes smaller, do you think it would be difficult to create those larger than life heroes who we used to be a fan of?

Screen presence is very important. The camera has to like you, but you can't plan that. For example, Zanjeer onwards the camera started liking Mr Amitabh Bachchan. He understood the camera, the space in front of the camera. When you understand that, the camera also starts respecting you. If you are into the character, the camera would love your truthfulness and that is screen presence.

For stars to happen, people will always be attached to who they like in that particular work. I went to Delhi and saw people standing in huge numbers outside the place I was staying, not to look at me but because they felt I was one of them. That will be the nature of stardom now. There will be relatability. They will not be in awe of actors like they used to be after watching a film. You are already looking up when you are watching it; it was always somebody I wish I could be like. On OTT, you are watching it very closely, so they treat you as if you are one of them, with that kind of love.



KAUSHIK ROY
PRESIDENT, BRAND STRATEGY
AND MARKETING
COMMUNICATION, RELIANCE

You play every character with sincerity, but I am curious to understand what is it that you do in terms of preparation when you do a *Aligarh* or *Bhonsle*?

I have been in theatre for long and have my own experiences as an actor. There is a method that I keep tweaking, looking at the genre, character that I am playing. Sometimes I don't prepare at all. When I am doing *Satyameva Jayate*, which is a commercial potboiler, I don't prepare. I am open to what my director asks me to do, but for films like *Bhonsle*, *Aligarh*, *Gali Guleyan*, the preparation depends on the back story that I create, the mental or physical notes that I work on.

For *Aligarh*, there was a chief assistant director who was well-versed in Marathi literature. I asked him to introduce me to Marathi poetry, recitation. If I achieved the atmosphere around Siras, I will be Siras. The atmosphere that he lived in, his love for Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle's music, his love for whiskey. There are so many aspects of the character you work on but all fails when you go and act in the space set by the production designer. You have to be innovative. When ten days are gone into shooting, I start relaxing. Till then, I am wired up.

‘In the time of the pandemic, it's become a level playing field’

At the e.Adda last week, actor Manoj Bajpayee spoke on how OTT has revolutionised the way we watch films, on writers being the new superstars and why actors need to be connected with the world outside

On whether the industry is finally acknowledging talent

I have been in this industry for 26-27 years and have always felt that the talent of so many people has been wasted because we focus so much on box office collections. But now, in the time of the pandemic, Zoom calls and OTT, it has become a level playing field. This is a democratic time for cinema and I just hope it lasts.

On the king of Mumbai

Mumbai ka king kaun... main nahin hoon. The king of Mumbai in entertainment is OTT. It has completely changed the game. It is becoming difficult for people to attempt anything which is being made just in the name of entertainment. People want good performances, great writers, great directors, and writers who have great writing skills. These are the real kings of OTT.

On whether viewers will return to the old normal

I don't know how long the pandemic will go on for but when we come back, there will be bruises and there will be after effects. Will cinema or community viewing be the same? No, it will not. What it will be is yet to be seen. The truth of the moment is that I'm talking to you on Zoom. Will we be doing the same thing after the pandemic is over? Yes, we will be doing it, but it will be divided — some interviews will be conducted physically and some digitally.

On who has lost out in this disruption

The whole system that prevailed earlier, which based the quality of cinema on a Friday release, has lost out. But they're also trying to adjust and accommodate. They're having to tweak themselves in order to be part of this level playing field. For us this was always the situation but they were doing well, they were the real kings of the box office, but at the end of the day they will also take time to come to terms with this situa-

tion and start reinventing themselves.

On how important is it for an actor to have a sense of the outside

If you are not trying to achieve the realism of life, you are going to fall flat. You have to try to get the real person in your performance, those nuances, those subtleties, those layers which people can relate to. If I am watching alone, how long can I sit there and just see a performance in the name of entertainment? Those are the things that did well because it was community viewing and you cheered, you laughed and you

QUICK QUESTIONS

What are you reading?

Vivekananda Handbook for Everyday Living by Anshul Chaturvedi. Girish Karnad's memoir will be my next.

What are you watching?

I just finished *Malik*, a Malayalam film. I am definitely going to watch one more South Indian film.

Destiny or free will, where on the scale do you find yourself?

I am a huge believer in destiny.

Do you believe in life or a physical presence outside earth?

There is a life that we are not capable of seeing and that is why we think that this is the only thing that exists on this earth. We are not trained enough, not powerful enough to see that life.

Your favourite few lines from your favourite poem?

Ramdhari Singh Dinkar's *Yachna* has really strong lines. Whenever I was depressed or frustrated, I used to tell myself, '*Yachna nahi ab ran hoga, jeevan jay ya maran hoga*'. The poet is saying, 'I am not going to request now, there will be a battle. Either I will be victorious or I will die'.

Your first love.

Acting, nothing else.

The last piece of content that you consumed that made you cry.

I cry very easily. Most of the time I try to skip that portion. Most recently, I cried when I saw a young boy singing in a clip that was viral on Instagram. He was helpless and was being made to sing for the camera.

whistled. It was an experience that they went for and they got that experience. But when you are sitting alone in a room and watching content, my response to the story will not be the same as it was in the theatre.

On whether the days of the superstar are over

We have created a habit of calling someone a superstar, that's why we give this tag. I am not a superstar, no one is. In a month we have two-three actors really hitting it out of the park. So how will you gauge? OTT has proved that writers are the superstars. It is a writer's medium.

On whether self-censorship has become more of a concern

Freedom of expression comes with great responsibility. When we were shooting Season 1 of *Family Man*, we debated each cuss word, whether it should be there or should it go. If the cuss word is there for the heck of it, I don't agree. If the cuss word is there to sum up the whole expression of mine — the intent of the character — then I am with it. Self regulation is fine. But when you are told that you can't do it, then a problem arises. You have people on social media saying that *Family Man* has cuss words and they cannot show it to their children. Fantastic. I don't show it to my daughter. Parents are the biggest censors.

On being an outsider

I don't think Bihar will ever leave this boy. I went there a month back and there is a side of me that always tells me not to return to Bombay. If you come from that kind of a culture, those kinds of places, you are never comfortable in big towns. You always feel like an outsider. I feel like an outsider all the time.

On spotting his father on the sets

Once I had requested my father not to come for a shooting. Suddenly someone told me, '*chachaji aaye huye hain*'. I said '*kaun chachaji*' and this person says, '*tumhare pitaji*' and he is standing amongst the crowd'. He had told this person, 'don't tell Manoj, I have come here to see Raveena Tandon'. The big heroes and heroines have a big following in Bihar. In my childhood, I saw the frenzy whenever Mr Bachchan would appear on screen or even Mr Shatrughan Sinha. I remember watching *Dostana*, in which they play enemies. So when Amitji would say a dialogue, one part of the theatre would do some *hungama* and when Shatruji would speak, the other section would shout. When I see the journey of cinema from that time to OTT, it's amazing.

For longer version, go to www.indianexpress.com

Eminent guests who participated in the e.Adda include **Atul Choksey**, Chairman, Apcotex Industries Limited;

Manas Mohanty, Managing Director, Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Private Limited; **Dr Suman Bhandari**, Director — Cardiology, Fortis Escorts Heart Institute;

OP Mishra, Joint Commissioner, Delhi Police; **Sivakumar Sundaram**, Chairman — Executive Committee, Bennett Coleman & Company; **Paroma Chowdhury**, Chief Communications Officer, Dream Sports; **Kirit Shantilal Parikh**, Chairman, Integrated Research and Action for Development; **Deven Bharti**, Additional DG, Maharashtra Police;

Anu Aga, Former Chairperson, Thermax; **Raj Dutta**, Executive Director, Quattro; **Paresh Parasnis**, CEO, Piramal Foundation; **Anil Saberwal**, Executive Director, Powergrid Corporation of India; **Nandini Chatterjee**, Chief Communications Officer, PricewaterhouseCoopers; **Vidya Basarkod**, Country Director - India, Ramboll; **Abha Dalmia**, Director,

Dalmia Holdings; **Veena Patil**, Founder and Managing Director, Veena World; **Dharmakirti Joshi**, Chief Economist, CRISIL; **Vishal Kapoor**, CEO, IDFC Asset Management Company; **Ankit Saxena**, Media Director, Dentsu; **Lt Gen Arun Sahni**, Former Army Commander; **Pradyumna Dalmia**, Partner, Triton Investment Advisors LLP; **Malini Shankar**,

Vice Chancellor, Indian Maritime University; **Janak Mehta**, Chairman, FRR Shares & Immigration; **Ayaz Memon**, Columnist; **Chandrakant Salunkhe**, Founder and President, SME Chamber of India; **Meenakshi Gopinath**, Chairperson, Centre for Policy Research; **Nalini Singh**, Managing Director, TV Live India

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PANKAJ CHADHA
CEO, JYOTI STEEL INDUSTRIES

At the end of the pandemic, many would go back to the big screen, so would you be doing less OTT? Did not working during the lockdowns impact your mental health?

For me, mental health was at stake when I was doing theatre and did not get into NSD. I was in a very vulnerable state. What saved me

was my friends, talking to them about what I was feeling, and remembering that I left my village for a purpose and was not willing to go back. One thing that I always do is exercise, take a shower and wear trousers and a shirt as if I am going out, even if I am home. I have done that during the pandemic too. I read poetry, new books, watched films in Malayalam, Tamil and Assamese, did things required from actors.



RASHMI MALIK
CHAIRPERSON, SPIC MACAY FOUNDATION

We want to take Indian classical traditions to every child. Is there scope for promotion of classical music through OTT platforms?

I was in Delhi University and educated myself about classical music through SPIC MACAY concerts. I feel children resist listening to classical music but if every

morning Kumar Gandharva and Bhimsen Joshi is playing in their house, they might crib that time but when they grow up they go back to it. Me and my wife listen to Abida Khanam in the evening and in the morning we play all kinds of ragas. My daughter hates it, but I know that it will be a major part of her life. It should be part of schools and colleges, let them play in the background.



AUGUST 13
TALIBAN ARE HEADING TO KABUL,
HAVING SWEEPED SOUTH, WEST

From Delhi to Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport, it's a two-hour flight. Less than fifth of the seats are occupied this Friday the 13th, most of them businessmen or students, braving four government advisories against travel to Afghanistan. The afternoon is warm when we land in Kabul, but it quickly turns crisp as cool winds blow in from the surrounding hillocks.

A mask-less Kamran, in his 30s, is there to receive me. He has been recommended by a Kabul-based friend as a reliable driver.

Outside, despite the news that the Taliban are now just 100-odd km from the capital, the streets are not as empty as one would expect, filled with men and women, some with children as well, and security check-points. The hillocks provide a deceptively peaceful backdrop. Most of the vehicles on the road, like ours are worn-out Toyotas. The brand and Afghanistan have a long association, well documented at least since the 1996, when the Taliban first came riding into Kabul on them.

We cross the downtown Shahr-e-nau area, with its famous Slice bakery, glitzy shops, a shopping mall advertising Hush Puppies, and takeaway joints like Chief Burger. The customers are mostly men, but there are also women. Kamran advises that I pick up some dry fruits before I leave.

As we cross a park, the conflict hits one in the face. Almost all such expanses across Kabul are now overtaken by families who have surged into the capital from the countryside, fleeing the Taliban. Those unable to find space in the grounds have set up home on the footpaths, with local mosques pitching in with aid.

Mohammad Wasim, 47, a father with three teenage daughters and two sons, says, "Taliban ke aane se hum zinda laash ban jayenge... Sirf pathar ki tarah reh jayenge (We will be like the walking dead once the Taliban come, little better than a rock)."

As I settle down at a guesthouse, I realise the Internet is patchy. It will have to do for the night.

AUGUST 14
TALIBAN SEIZE PUL-E-ALAM,
70 KM SOUTH OF KABUL

The first thing next morning, I move into Serena Hotel in Shahr-e-nau. My room, No. 347, comes cheap, and I soon realise why. It's street-facing — in a war-habituated country, this means it runs a greater risk in case of an attack.

Almost all the other guests are journalists or diplomats. The hotel knows its clientele well; power is uninterrupted and a complaint regarding Internet is answered promptly by staff that includes one wearing a badge saying he is fully vaccinated against Covid. The virus has been surging in its second coming, with more than 1.5 lakh cases and 7,000-plus deaths as of August 13, according to the Johns Hopkins University database. But, amidst the war, vaccinations (both with India- and China-made shots) are trailing and masks are a rarity.

Serena is considered one of the most protected hotels in Kabul, having survived two attacks, in 2008 and 2014, leaving six and nine dead respectively, including foreigners.

It will be soon after that strongman Abdul Rashid Dostum's Mazar-e-Sharif will fall to the Taliban — in another decisive point in the war. In Karte Seh, a dusty, middle-class Kabul neighbourhood that in the mid-1990s had been the site of pitched battles between the mujahideen

and Soviet-backed troops, a queue is already building outside the passport office.

Amidst the hundreds in the line, is Babar. Holding a sheaf of papers, the 40-year-old says, "I will go to whichever place gives me a visa."

A 31-year-old, employed with a German agency carrying out reconstruction projects, says he has been coming for a week now. He is married, with a daughter who is 2, and hopes they can all get out.

A passport official says that from 2,000-3,000 applications a day, the number has gone up to 10,000-12,000.

There are not many choices, says an employee at the Yangi Qarizada Brothers Travel and Tours. No country except Pakistan is granting visas, he repeats to everyone who comes enquiring.

AUGUST 15
TALIBAN ENTER KABUL

The Taliban are now at Kabul's doorstep, and from the morning, people are queued up outside a bank to withdraw money.

I want to meet some Afghan women, em-

ployed with schools, beauty salons, refugee shelters, and have a translator for the day, Rabia. In her early 30s, she works in the entertainment industry.

The government school we head to first is shut. Our next stop is a private school that is the institution of choice for the well-heeled in Kabul. The students, 300 in all, 140 of them girls, are not here today.

The principal welcomes us into the office, but soon news reaches that the Taliban have entered the city. The principal quickly summons all the teachers — 16 of the 20 are women, in their 20s and 30s — and asks them to immediately go home. "I can't risk their lives, they are like my children," the 62-year-old, who has been running the school since 2005, says. He lived through the first Taliban reign.

At the beauty parlour, the owner is in similar hurry to down the shutters and rush home.

Back in the car, our guide-cum-driver, Rahab, 35, and Rabia, both get calls from their families to come home too. It is about 12.20 pm, and the roads are suddenly full of people in panic. We find ourselves in a traffic jam.

Rahab, a father of four, one of them born

days earlier, tells Rabia and me to head to the hotel on foot. He hands me an Afghani *patka* (scarf) to wear to blend in.

I ask Rabia if it is okay for her to be found on the streets with a man not related to her. "Allah madlik hai... aapko aise beech sadak mein kaise chhorh sakte hain (It's up to God... How can I leave you stranded like this)?"

On the streets, the chaos is growing. In one of the areas that Rabia tells me is a hub of jewellery, the women have already disappeared.

In that walk of about 30 minutes, which feels much longer (also due to the heat), Rabia talks about the Taliban not respecting women, about what it will mean for her. She spent six years in Noida, near Delhi, studying, she says. Soon, her younger sister, a small-time TV actress, calls to say she is rushing home.

Finally back at the hotel, I bid Rabia goodbye, and know I must plan my own exit from Kabul. Slogans welcoming the Taliban into the capital can already be heard on the streets.

I call up Kamran, but he says he can't come right away as the roads are blocked. Around evening, he arrives and we make our way to the Indian Embassy, in the so-called 'Green

Zone', for the layers of security guarding it.

Today, there is no one around.

The Embassy is working on evacuating Indians, but it won't happen any time soon. I return to Room No. 347.

Later that evening, the Taliban take over the Presidential palace, formalising their capture of Afghanistan. A war of 20 years has come to an end with lightning speed.

Coincidentally, at the hotel, the Internet has slowed down, while phone signals too seem to be failing.

AUGUST 16
FIRST DAY OF TALIBAN

The roads are full of Taliban fighters racing each other in their SUVs, waving their flag.

My plan is to leave the hotel in the wee hours for Kabul airport. As I wait for Kamran, about 50 armed Taliban men enter the lobby and proceed to survey the facilities. They notice a journalist colleague and me, but ignore us.

On way to the airport, we are stopped several times by Taliban fighters, but then waved clear. As it gets lighter, we spot a sea of people headed the same way, crammed into vehicles or walking, with whatever they can carry.

An Afghan man, with his wife and three daughters, says he has to get to Sudan, where he works. "But how can I go in this chaos?"

Six armoured personnel carriers block access to the airport. As the crowd try to get past, the Taliban fire into the air, every few minutes, to push them back. The men, women and children duck behind trees and a barrier, but emerge minutes later to try again. Finally, it is the Taliban who relent, move the carriers away, and people rush into the terminal building.

There is more firing, and rumours of a shootout between the Americans and the Taliban. However, few are deterred.

As the fellow journalist and I make our way into the terminal, there are shards of glass everywhere, along with bullet shells, abandoned footwear, and blood on the floor. A body is being hauled away on a baggage trolley.

There is no one manning the baggage scanners at the entrance; in fact, no one around. We take the empty chairs. Soon though, the firing seems to be getting closer and more frequent, making us conscious of the emptiness around. We move inside, near the check-in counters.

We wait, and wait, constantly checking with the Embassy and Ministry of External Affairs officials, as well as fielding anxious calls from back home. People come and go, walking calmly or breaking into a run when there are gunshots. A group of young men spot us, and walk over to say, "Why are you leaving? The Taliban won't do anything... You don't worry, go back to your hotel."

But we stay put. It's almost noon when a Taliban fighter appears. An AK-47 on his shoulder, he waves a pistol at us and asks us to leave.

Unsure, we head out to a hallway. As we are deciding what to do, a Taliban fighter drags a man to behind a wall, and we hear gunshots. People around us run, no one knows where.

A man offers to take us to the US-controlled airport area from where flights are taking off, but which is also besieged by people desperate to leave. We decide our best bet is going back to the hotel.

Outside, the control is now visibly under the Taliban. At the popular selfie point with the sign of 'I Love Kabul', its fighters are checking papers of people emerging from the airport. A commander waves us through when we say we are Indian.

But, minutes later, we find ourselves in a crossfire between a new crowd trying to make its way into the airport and the Taliban pushing them back. As bullets fly, I duck behind a suitcase containing clothes for the 7-10 days trip I had hoped for.

We decide to crouch and make our way away from what is developing into a stampede. Several people are on the ground, either having fallen or been shot. A woman bleeds, a blue-eyed girl standing next to her weeps. Out of nowhere, a stranger gets hold of my colleague's suitcase to escort her out, and I follow.

The new victors of Kabul are celebrating at road junctions, with some people clicking photos of themselves with their pick-up trucks. In my nervousness, I brush past a fighter with my suitcase. He glowers, but lets us pass.

We finally convince a taxi to take us to our hotel. There are checks now almost every 10 metres, but one look inside and the Taliban tell us to carry on. The driver keeps urging us to not take our phones out. We decide then to head to the Indian Embassy, instead of the hotel.

At the Green Zone, where there was no security the day before, there are now Taliban fighters swarming, their guns cocked. The other thing noticeable are their sneakers — a white high-top Pakistani brand that has lately caught Taliban fancy.

I request one of the younger ones, in his early 20s, to let us head on to the Embassy. He hails over someone to help translate, but says no one is permitted. As we are told to move to a corner, a group of people approach us to ask the Indian Embassy to let them in as well.

Another request, to an older Talib, who looks like he is in-charge and carries a rocket-launcher, is as futile. He smiles and tells us to go to the hotel, that nothing would happen to us. After we have stood there for another hour or so, my colleague approaches them, saying how could they let an Indian woman stand on the road. They finally let us in.

But, at the Embassy, we realise there is still some wait ahead. With the airport tarmac taken over by crowds, flights are suspended. Through the day, Indian officials work the phones, with the Taliban and the Americans.

Finally, around 10 pm, we leave the Embassy; around 150 of us in 19 Toyota Land Cruisers and three trucks. We are allowed to carry only handbags. I take my laptop, leaving behind my suitcase. With us is one of the three sniffer dogs being evacuated, the Labrador Maya. The Taliban — the word is, they might actually be armed militia — escort us.

Even at this late hour, there is traffic on the road, but no one stops us. Near the airport though, the crowd of families hoping to get in hasn't thinned. We are advised to head to another gate, which is secured, with no people.

AUGUST 17
GETTING OUT

At about 2.30 am, we make it to the US-military held airport compound. The wait, however, continues. Busy processing papers of Afghans employed with them as translators, the US military gives us water and a place to sit at 5 am.

Around 6.30 am, the Indian Air Force's C-17 Globemaster aircraft finally takes off for Delhi, with about 130 people from the Embassy and two dozen civilians on board.

From the relief of the plane's interiors, Kabul again seems incongruously pretty, the sun bathing the hillocks. As a precaution, the IAF avoids the Afghan airspace, flying over Iran to first, Jamnagar, and then Hindon near Delhi.

I have just walked into my home at 7 pm, when my phone rings. It is Kamran. "Sir, have you reached?" he asks. When I say I just did, he rebukes me, "Kya saab, aapne phone bhi nahin kiya (What Sir, you didn't even let me know)?"

Two days later, I call up Rahab to check on him. While the Taliban control is total, there have been some protests and a backlash.

Rahab tells me for the first time about an incident that happened on August 16, after he had left Rabia and me to make our way to the hotel on foot. Around 15-20 Afghan policemen in his neighbourhood had refused to surrender their weapons to the Taliban. "They killed all of them... There was not a word of it in the news."

It's good that we left in time, he says. "Mahaul bahaat kharab hai (Things are very bad)... No one can go outside, except those who are with the Taliban." Earlier that day, he had somehow taken his newborn, just nine-days-old, to the doctor.

"We work with foreigners — Indians, Americans, British — they all left, nobody took us," he says. I promise to stay in touch.

On Friday afternoon, I call up Rabia. She tells me how, after dropping me to the hotel, she had to walk for more than an hour, often run, as people hid away before the Taliban came.

When I tell her I am back in Delhi, she is relieved. "I was worried about you," Rabia says, talking about the Taliban fighters now stationed near her house. "My father who is in his 70s is the only one stepping out to get essentials."

She wonders when the passport office will reopen so that she can try getting out of the country. "Bas insaan ki izzat pe haath nahin daalen. Marne se dar nahin lagta hai. Par zillat ki zindagi nahin jeeni... Baaki Allah ke haath mein hai (I just wish they don't harass us. I am not afraid of death. But I don't want to lead a life of dishonour... Rest is up to God)."

As I hang up, with another promise of staying in touch, I notice her WhatsApp profile photo. It is Shah Rukh Khan.

(All names have been changed to protect their identity)

Hundreds gathered near a US Air Force C-17 transport plane at Kabul airport on August 16. Hours later, people would climb on to the plane as it took off, with some falling to death. AP



Across
THE AISLE



PCHIDAMBARAM

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The Independence Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort has acquired a special significance since the days of Jawaharlal Nehru. I call it the State of the Nation speech. That is one tradition of Nehru that Mr Narendra Modi has not debunked or discarded. In the case of Mr Modi, however, his speeches on August 15 are unremarkable because they are not very different from his speeches at election rallies — minus his trademark jibes at the Opposition (e.g. *Didi-oh-Didi*)

Could BAMCEF be the needed answer to RSS?

Dalitality

SURAJ YENGDE

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PEOPLE ACROSS the political spectrum and ideology have started to wonder about the future of post-Modi India. The inept rule of the current government has dismayed opponents and some supporters as well. Partymen as well as allies of the BJP have voiced their dramatically changed opinion on the shortcomings of the government. However, almost everyone has kept their criticism to only two people — Narendra Modi and Amit Shah — while largely accepting with frustration the RSS and its growing appeal.

"There is no getting around the RSS," is the common consensus.

What is the RSS and how much influence does it hold? A personal secretary of a senior BJP minister who is a Dalit tells me the government is unable to bring desired changes in policies, with every part of its apparatus manned by an RSS handler.

This was further proved by several encounters I had with the BJP government in Maharashtra. A senior strategist who had helped the BJP come to power and now finds it incompatible with his liberal Gandhian standards told me the RSS has long-term plans.

So how does one take on an organisation that boosts the abusive traditional norms of Varnashrama Dharma? Is it possible to invent a new model that can challenge a behemoth like it? Or is the RSS dilutable, even open to reform?

Rights-based organisations and liberal Left viewpoints have just scratched the surface in taking on the RSS — a style that perfectly suits the Sangh. The usual clamour against the RSS is on its stand against Muslims and for a Hindu nation. This political minoritisation has granted fresh life to the values of the RSS. That is why, whenever anyone critiques it with elite textbook definitions, they add to the support base of the RSS.

To counter the RSS, we need an organisation that is as sophisticated, much sharper in vision, astute in political manoeuvring, and grassroots-based. It needs octopus-like organs that are extendable and malleable, with a firm head.

The idea of Hindu, Hindustan and Vedic Brahmanism does not need to be de-

ONE OF the most anticipated speeches of world leaders is the annual State of the Union address by the US President to the US Congress because the policies of the US impact other countries. Not so keenly watched, yet of considerable interest, is the annual address of the Prime Minister of India on August 15, India's Independence Day. Independence Day celebration is not a colourful spectacle like the Republic Day parade, but the speech makes up for the floats, the march-past and the fly-past.

The Independence Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort has acquired a special significance since the days of Jawaharlal Nehru. I call it the State of the Nation speech. That is one tradition of Nehru that Mr Narendra Modi has not debunked or discarded. In the case of Mr Modi, however, his speeches on August 15 are unremarkable because they are not very different from his speeches at election rallies — minus his trademark jibes at the Opposition (e.g. *Didi-oh-Didi*).

Now, to the substance of the eighth speech of Mr Modi. It was mainly a recount of his government's 'achievements'. Sadly, few in the media were willing to fact-check the claims and announcements (as they do in the US). A young team, guided by Professor Rajeev Gowda, has done that exercise and I wish to share a few of the results with you.

PANDEMIC INSPIRED

■ *Indians have fought the coronavirus pandemic. We had several challenges in front of us to combat the pandemic, we have made progress on every front. Throughout this, we have become self-reliant... The world's biggest vaccination drive is happening in India.*

Going by the official death toll (4,33,622), it is the third highest in the world, but the official number has been exposed by many independent studies. The number of deaths is, by consensus among experts, at least 10 times more, and that means India has the highest death toll among all countries. During the second wave, we desperately sought, and accepted, help from over 40 countries for oxygen concentrators, ventilators, testing kits, etc. On vaccines, the government quietly buried the vaccine *maitri* boast, stopped exports (leaving many small countries high and dry), and begged Russia and the US for vaccines. In the first place, there was no merit in claiming self-reliance in vaccines. Thankfully, the government accepted the *Sputnik* vaccine, and began negotiations with other global manufacturers for supply of their vaccines. Insufficient supply continues to hamper the vaccination programme. As I write, India has administered one dose to 44,01,02,169 persons and two doses to 12,63,86,264 persons. The goal of fully vaccinating the

entire adult population by end-December 2021 (95-100 crore) has been abandoned.

■ *India has given grain to 80 crore plus, the world is discussing this.*

There are about 27 crore families in India (on average 5 members per family). If 80 crore persons have received grain at the rate of 5 kg per person, it should be reflected in the offtake of grain from the FCI's stock. The annual offtake (of rice and wheat) has actually dropped from 66 million tonnes in 2012-13 to 62 million tonnes in 2018-19 and 54 million tonnes in 2019-20. In the pandemic year of 2020-21, it increased to 87 million tonnes. This means that not all intended beneficiaries got free grain. A survey by Azim Premji University found that only 27 per cent of households reported receiving full benefits under the 5 kg scheme (*Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana*). In the Global Hunger Index, India was placed 94 out of 107 countries.

■ *Like the target for 'toilets for everyone' was achieved, we need 100 per cent coverage for all other schemes.*

Toilets for everyone' is a hollow claim. Thousands of toilets that were 'constructed' do not exist or are used for storage. According to the National Health Survey-5, over one-third of the rural population in five states did not have toilets in their houses. A survey conducted by the

National Statistical Organization in 2018 found that 28.7 per cent of people in rural households lacked access to toilets and 32 per cent practised open defecation.

■ *We will have several oxygen plants in the country in the coming years.*

In October 2020, eight months after the decision was taken, bids were invited to install PSA oxygen plants in government hospitals. On April 18, 2021, the Ministry of Health tweeted that out of 163 oxygen plants that were proposed (more were added later), only 33 plants had been installed. *Scroll*, a media organization, found that only five oxygen plants were operational.

■ *We have decided to invest Rs 100 lakh crore for modern infrastructure.*

The PM may have thought that none would remember that he had made the same announcement at the same place on August 15, 2019, **and** on August 15, 2020. He may do it again on August 15, 2022. We must be happy that the infrastructure investment plan is growing, invisibly, at the rate of Rs 100 lakh crore every year!

There is more, but it is a tiresome exercise. I shall stop.

Facts are mundane and boring. Fake is exciting. Checking facts is dangerous, peddling fake is thrilling. You can choose what will make your country great and what will make your day bright.

Fifth
COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

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The Taliban are terrorists

LIKE A horror movie that we have seen before, the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan last week. And, for those of us who remember the last time that there was a Taliban government in Kabul, horrible memories returned. Memories of beheadings. Memories of women in blue *burqas* being tortured and beaten to death in football stadiums. Memories of magnificent statues of the Buddha being blown to bits in Bamiyan. Memories of a Pakistani diplomat in Delhi justifying this vandalism as the Taliban's attempt to seek recognition. Memories of IC 814 on the tarmac of that desolate airport in Kandahar.

At the surreal press conference that Taliban spokesmen addressed in Kabul last week, we were told that women would not be treated with brutality this time. They would be allowed to study and work, the spokesmen said, they would be given all the rights accorded to them by the Shariat. Small comfort if you remember that this system of Islamic justice believes in stoning women to death for adultery and chopping off the hands of thieves.

The horrible truth is that the Islamic State that was destroyed in Iraq has been reincarnated in Afghanistan. And, just as India did not have diplomatic relations with that Caliphate, we must not have diplomatic relations with the Taliban. Too many retired diplomats and foreign policy 'experts' have expressed the opposite view. They are wrong. A Taliban government that our two worst enemies, China and Pakistan, are showing signs of recognising can never be our friend. Besides, the kind of Islam that the Taliban believes in is the very antithesis of everything that India and India's religions stand for. Never has it been more important for us to stand up for our values, because with radical Islam spreading like a virus in our immediate neighbourhood, it is important for India to become a beacon of democracy, modernity, justice and human rights.

There are idiots in the Sangh Parivar who believe that there is a need to Islamize the Sanatan Dharma so that it can more effectively fight the sort of religious ideas that the Taliban espouses. The opposite needs to happen. All Indic religions believe in the right to question and in the right to reform religious ideas that have become defunct or debased. It is this very modern idea of faith that we need to cherish and preserve if we are to win the fight against jihadi Islamism. Radical Islam has been in India for a while now, spreading slowly and poisonously from Kashmir to Kerala.

In the past seven years, jihadist Islam has found more adherents because too many senior BJP leaders have turned a blind eye to hate crimes against Muslims. When I asked an RSS leader, highly positioned in the Sangh Parivar, why he thought it was a sign of valour for mobs of fanatics to attack and kill unarmed Muslims, he said with a smile, 'At least the Hindus have learned how to fight back.' This is not just stupid but insane. There is neither valour nor courage in a mob attacking defenceless Muslim men. There is only cowardice.

The Prime Minister has long sought to be seen as a statesman in the eyes of the world. If he has failed to achieve this exalted goal, it is almost entirely because of his silence when hate crimes and hate speeches occur, giving them quiet sanction. In his first term it was beef and the cattle trade that were used as an excuse to lynch Muslims. In his second term, new 'crimes' have been added to the list, like love jihad and conversion. But as we saw in the most recent of these hate crimes, when a gang of Bajrang Dal activists beat up a Muslim man even as his little daughter clung to him begging for him to be spared, there now can be attacks without excuses needed.

If India is to be a beacon of enlightenment and reason in an increasingly ugly neighbourhood, the Prime Minister needs to make absolutely clear that he does not approve of hate crimes or hate speech. India's core values are what will give us strength in this very uncertain time. It pleases me that India has so far not recognised the Taliban government in Kabul despite a small army of former diplomats offering gratuitous reasons why we should. They should remember what happened in Kandahar in those awful last days of 1999 when the Taliban went out of its way to help Pakistan and not us.

India was brought to her knees by the hijacking of IC 814. We were forced to release some of the vilest Pakistani terrorists in exchange for the lives of the passengers of that hijacked Indian Airlines flight. The Taliban showed us then that they would rather help the Pakistani hijackers than the desperate passengers of IC 814. They showed that their sympathies lay with Pakistan and not with India. This remains true today. No proof is needed of this, but it has been provided by Imran Khan who has openly celebrated the return of the Taliban as a moment in which Afghanistan has 'shaken off the shackles of slavery'. We cannot and should not do business with the Taliban. This gang of primitive maniacs is no different to the Pakistani jihadist groups responsible for some of the worst acts of terrorism committed on Indian soil.

life &
WORK

SANDIPG

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THREE DAYS before a blast at a cricket match killed eight people in Jalalabad in May of 2018, Afghanistan cricketer Mohammad Nabi, sitting in a cosy cafe in South Delhi, revealed the two biggest dreams of his cricketer life. First, he said, was to play Test cricket. The second, and a more emotional one, he revealed, was to play an international game in front of his home crowd. "We get a lot of support wherever we play, but to play at home would be something special. I always envy the Indians, so much love, so much support." Stopping abruptly, he lowered his voice and added, almost as a lament, "I don't know when we can feel that support and love... You know the uncertainty of our lives."

The repetitiveness of the turmoil back home sickened him. "We don't talk about it, it has been like that for 40 years," he said. As a writer, I wanted to hear stories that would well the eyes of the world. But I sensed that such questions might be inappropriate.

Still, Nabi loved to talk about home, even if most of his memories were acquired, his nostalgia second-hand. Born in Logar, an eastern province on the banks of river Logar, known once as the Gate of Jihad and the theatre of the war between US-trained mujahideen groups and the Soviet-backed Afghan government troops, Nabi had crossed over to a refugee camp in Peshawar when just two. He talked about "the bright green fields of wheat and multi-coloured glass windows of minarets" of his town, but added, "I have no memories of childhood. In fact, I had no childhood."

It was in those cramped refugee camps across the Durand Line, which slices the Pashtun heartland into two, was Afghanistan cricket born. Almost every cricketer representing the rife-torn country learned his game in the camps, first from Pakistani soldiers, and later, as they integrated with the local population, the Pakistani kids on the streets.

Like Nabi, Rashid Khan, the country's first cricketing superstar and arguably the finest T20 spinner of his generation, too grew up in a Peshawar camp, with seven brothers, after the family fled their hometown Bati Kot, over which loom the Hindu-Kush mountains, in Nangarhar Province. So did Afghanistan's fastest bowler Hamid Hassan, bowling with a headband like his idol Waqar Younis, and sporting a long mane like his favourite cricketer, Shoaib Akhtar.

Born in refugee camps, the Afghan cricket story



Rashid Khan, Afghanistan's first cricketing superstar, tweeted this photo on July 29, with the message "National Flag Day". *Twitter/@rashidkhan_19*

While the country is yet to produce a tearaway quick, mostly reliant on spinners to win games, the fascination remains. Nabi's first hero was Wasim Akram, Rashid's was Akhtar. About their years of refugee life, Nabi said it instilled in them raw desperation to coerce attention, be different. Nabi called it "smart thinking", not the cliched "warrior spirit". "You try to figure a way out of the mess, even before you're in a mess. You want to be noticed, you want to be different. So when all of them were pacers, I chose to be a spinner," he recounted. But, in the depth of his heart, he added, he remained a fast bowler.

Even Rashid Khan has fast-bowler-like aggression. The latest evidence is the Afghanistan cricket board appointing former Australian quick Shaun Tait as their fast bowling coach.

Given their genetics and obsession, it may not be long before Afghanistan produces a top-notch pacer of own. While a wave of pessimism is understandable, now that the country has hurled into fresh abyss, the silver lining is that the Taliban, in their first incarnation, were relatively tolerant of cricket, unlike football, which had to be played clandestinely.

Among Indians, for the Afghans the hero was MS Dhoni — in his long-haired, insouciant avatar. Khan called him the first non-Pakistani cricketer who wowed them. This fascination manifests in their own carefree cricket; in Test cricket too, their batsmen look to blast and bash their way out of trouble. Nabi had a rationale: "We have enjoyed little intervals

of peace. There is always uncertainty. So we look to enjoy the moments as much as we can."

This fearlessness is the reason Afghan cricketers took to the shortest format of the game like a duck to water, endearing them to fans at large. They soon developed an identity of their own, in a validation also of the ICC's success in spreading the gospel of the game.

Unlike several other associate nations of the ICC, they are not an ensemble of failed/ semi-retired/ amateur cricketers from the subcontinent, but genuine homegrown players. Their progress has been rapid — Pakistan Grade II cricket to making Test debut in 2019, from unknowns to party-spoilers (they have beaten Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and West Indies, besides close shaves against India and Pakistan), from holding their first trials in 2003 to producing world-class cricketers.

The team has players from everywhere, Kabul and Jalalabad, Khost and Kandahar. If not an apostle for peace, cricket has been a messiah of joy. A powerful narrative of hope, a fleeting escape from frightful realities. At least for the endearing identity, charm and innocence, Afghanistan cricket should be preserved and protected.

The next step in the evolutionary chain was to be an international home game. The dream of a generation of Afghani cricketers, on the cusp of realisation, with Pakistan scheduled to visit Afghanistan this September. Now that looks as unlikely as ever.

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On the
LOOSE

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IN THE little gem of a movie *Yesterday* that dropped on Netflix recently, a struggling musician wakes up after an accident to make the startling discovery that The Beatles have been erased from the world's collective cultural memory, and he is the only person left on earth who remembers their music. He sings *Yesterday* for his friends and suddenly, he is no longer a *Nowhere Man* but an artistic sensation. We are never told how or why this happens, this quirky premise directing the focus of the film to bigger existential questions of chance and ethics. Is it plagiarism if nobody knew the band existed? Or merely *carpe diem*, a down-on-his-luck singer seizing an oppor-

Life, and the roll of the dice

tunity that randomly came his way. In real life of course, randomness rarely proves so fortuitous. Luck, rather the lack of it, is a controlling force in all our lives. Ask the imperiled Afghans. There are an awful lot of good people suffering disproportionately only because they happen to be the hapless citizens of a failed State. It turns out, the single greatest stroke of luck is where you are born. Our personal narratives emerge from this narrow and specific point, nudging us ahead or holding us back. Yet, the conventional wisdom we imbibe growing up is to be single-minded and determined in our pursuits, to take responsibility for our choices, without making allowances for the whims of fate. It is, perhaps, too scary to envision that sincerity and hard work aside, success depends as much on dodging the catastrophes this wildly un-

predictable world may throw up. The birth lottery is one thing, other vagaries of chance play out in subtler ways throughout our lives. For example, the principal of Delhi University's Hindu College announced recently that the cut-offs this year will begin at (an utterly absurd) 100%. The fact is, there aren't enough seats at Hindu for everybody who's good. There aren't enough seats at Lady Shri Ram College or Mumbai's St Xavier's either. So, colleges ruthlessly keep ratcheting up the cut-offs until they are (conveniently) left with the numbers they can accommodate. This is an accepted practice that should violate our sense of justice because we know the student who got rejected at 99.5 % is equally qualified for that seat. But happenstance rears its whimsical head; some people get what they deserve, some don't and that's

just how it is. A more honest way to decide college admissions would be the old-fashioned chit system. Put all the 95%-plus candidates' names in a hat, shake it around and declare a lucky draw. While far from ideal, it spares students a blow to their self-esteem that they weren't good enough, even with a near perfect score. Surely, they deserve to be validated for stupendous effort while adjusting to the complexity that rewards don't necessarily accrue, even after exceptional performance. That is not to say humanity should let go of ambition or we must give ourselves up to relentless fatalism; perseverance and intellectual curiosity are necessary to make it in every career. The work of life is to prepare ourselves through education, experiences and habits — for the unexpected. But, with the under-

standing that sometimes there are forces beyond our control that make us vulnerable to both fortune and misfortune.

It is a sobering thought that while I, as a female journalist, type from the comfort of my air-conditioned room, TV news focuses on my (veiled) contemporaries three hours away in Kabul, marching down a destroyed landscape, demanding they be allowed to work. Imagine the risks of putting up a fiery show of bravery in a country sliding towards a medieval dystopia. This countermovement, women pushing back against a loss of autonomy, speaks a gutting truth to us watching from our private lockdowns: there are millions of people deserving of a great life everywhere. They're just not as lucky.

10 ECONOMY

‘UBHARTE SITAARE’ ALTERNATE INVESTMENT FUND WITH ₹250-CR CORPUS

MSMEs now getting recognition: FM at launch of fund for export-oriented units

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 21

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday that micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are now getting the recognition that they have not received for decades.

She was speaking at the launch of the 'Ubharte Sitaare' alternative investment fund, aimed at providing debt and equity funding to export-oriented MSMEs as well as providing them with the required technological support to make their businesses more competitive.

"MSMEs are now getting the recognition that MSMEs did not get for years and decades," she said at the launch of the SIDBI and India EXIM bank-sponsored fund in Lucknow.

ADDITIONAL BENEFIT TO MSMEs

FINANCE MINISTER

Nirmala Sitharaman said the launch of the fund had been delayed by Covid but that firms receiving support from it would now also benefit from 'One District One Product' scheme in Uttar Pradesh, which has the largest number of MSMEs in any state



The fund, which has a corpus of Rs 250 crore, is aimed at identifying export-oriented units with technological, product or process advantages in their sectors and supporting them with funding and advisory services to accelerate their growth.

Sitharaman said that the

launch of the fund had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic but that firms receiving support from it would now also benefit from the 'One District One Product' scheme in Uttar Pradesh, which has the largest number of MSMEs in any state in the country.

She added that the government had launched "with a great sense of urgency" the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) and extended it post the second wave of Covid-19 infections as many MSMEs had benefitted from it.

The Finance Minister's office tweeted that MSMEs had availed credit of Rs 13,555 crore under the ECLGS. The government had, in June, extended the Rs 3-lakh crore scheme till September 30 or till guarantees for credit of Rs 3 lakh crore had been issued.

Sitharaman also highlighted the passage of the Factoring Regulation (Amendment) Bill which drastically increases the number of firms that can provide MSMEs with funds against trade receivables. "Till now there were only seven factors. However, now 9,000 companies

have been given the right to provide funds to MSMEs against their bills," she added.

She highlighted that MSMEs were benefitting from regulations which required that central ministries, departments and public sector undertakings complete at least 20 per cent of their procurement from MSMEs.

Sitharaman said the Centre would continue to give importance to MSMEs and that it had shown that it trusts MSMEs by permitting them to self certify their accounts instead of requiring that they be certified by auditors. Earlier this month, the Central Board of Indirect taxes and Customs (CBIC) notified that MSMEs with a turnover of up to Rs 5 crore would be permitted to self certify their annual GST returns instead of needing certification by a chartered accountant.

P-note investment rises to 40-month high in July

Investments in capital markets via participatory notes (P-notes) rose to Rs 1.02 lakh crore as of July-end, according to Sebi data, making it the highest level in last 40 months



₹1,01,798 cr

Total value of P-note investments in Indian markets — equity, debt, and hybrid securities — at end of July

₹48.36 lakh cr

Assets under custody of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) as of July-end, rising from Rs 48 lakh crore at the end of June

Fourth straight month of growth: July was the fourth consecutive month that recorded growth in investment through P-notes

Segment-wise investment in July:

■ Equities: ₹93,150 crore
■ Debt: ₹8,290 crore
■ Hybrid securities: ₹358 crore

P-note investment level in preceding four months:

■ June: ₹92,261 crore
■ May: ₹89,743 crore
■ April: ₹88,447 crore
■ March: ₹89,100 crore

What are P-notes: Issued by registered FPIs to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly

Source: Sebi/PTI

‘Post LIC IPO, 60% of insurance biz to be with listed entities’

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 21

AFTER THE initial public offering (IPO) of LIC, about 60 per cent of the insurance business will be with listed companies, Additional Secretary in the Finance Ministry Amit Agrawal said on Saturday.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) had in July given its in-principle approval for the listing of insurance behemoth Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). The IPO of the state-owned life insurer is part of the government's efforts to raise Rs 1.75 lakh crore through disinvestment in the current financial year.

Speaking at an event to mark Actuaries Day, Agrawal said amid global challenges, India has continued to develop as an emerging economy with a financial system that has matured, deepened and achieved scale.

The needs of this emerging India are in many ways different, he said, adding the insurance sector, over the two decades since the introduction of competition and regulation, has matured with 69 insurers today as against only

Additional Secretary in the Finance Ministry Amit Agrawal said a majority of the 69 insurers in the country have crossed their initial breakeven phase

eight in 2000.

"A majority of these have crossed their initial breakeven phase. Once the proposed listing of LIC happens, about 60 per cent of the insurance industry business would be with listed entities. The sector as a whole has been growing at a pace significantly higher than that of the overall economy," he said.

Currently, there are four listed life insurers, and two in the non-life segment. State-owned re-insurer General Insurance Corporation of India is also listed on bourses. Agrawal further said in the development of new solutions needed by this emerging India and its maturing insurance sector, the actuarial profession have a key role to play.

In nod to Delta variant, US Fed moves Jackson Hole meet online

Washington: The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City said on Friday its annual economic symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, will take place on Aug. 27 virtually and not in person as planned, the clearest sign yet of the impact of the Covid-19 Delta variant on the Fed's plans.

"While we are disappointed that health conditions will prevent us from being able to gather in person at the Jackson Lake Lodge this year as we had planned, the safety of our guests and the Teton County community is our priority," said Kansas City Fed President Esther George in a statement, citing the elevated health risk level in Teton County.

Under the county's guidelines, people should not gather with non-family members or host in-person social activities. The reversal raises questions about the Fed's broader assessment of the Delta variant's economic impact, which Chair Jerome Powell and other policymakers have mostly played down, saying that businesses and households have learned to live with the virus. **REUTERS**



An Instacart worker in California. A judge has struck down California's ballot measure that exempted companies from a state law requiring their drivers to be classified as employees eligible for benefits and job protections. *AP file*

CRUDE WATCH

OIL POSTS WEEKLY FALL OF OVER 8%

New York: Oil prices closed out their biggest week of losses in over nine months, amid worries over weakened global demand. Brent fell 1.9 per cent on Friday, and 8 per cent on the week to \$65.18 a barrel. US WTI fell 2.2 per cent to \$62.32, down over 9 per cent weekly. **REUTERS**

NEW PEER-TO-PEER LENDING LAUNCHED BY FINTECH

CRED Mint launch: How P2P lending platforms work within RBI ambit

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 21

FINTECH PLATFORM CRED on Friday announced the launch of a peer-to-peer (P2P) lending feature CRED Mint — a service that will allow the company's users to lend money to other users and making a 9 per cent interest per annum on the amounts they give out as loan.

What is P2P lending?

P2P lending is not a new feature. In 2017, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) brought this service under its regulatory purview.

Even at that time, there were more than 20 P2P lending players in the market, but RBI regulations ensured only the serious ones with watertight business models remained in the sector.

In P2P lending, users sitting on idle money provide loans to potential borrowers identified by the service provider. These lenders then receive payments from the borrowers on a set basis — either one time, or in equated monthly instalments.

Which are the players in the P2P lending segment?

After RBI issued its regulations in 2017, the space saw a

In 2017, the Reserve Bank brought P2P lending service under its purview. Even at that time, there were over 20 P2P lending players in the market, but RBI regulations ensured only the serious ones with watertight business models remained

spree of fundraising involving some of the existing players in the segment. Some of the major companies operating in this space are RupeeCircle, Finzy, IndiaMoneyMart, etc.

For its P2P lending feature, CRED has tied up with RBI-approved non-banking financial company (NBFC) Liloquans.

What are the risks associated with P2P lending?

One of the biggest risks associated with this kind of lending is the non-repayment of loans. Given that P2P lending is a form of unsecured loan, there is no guarantee put up by the borrower for the lender to redeem in case of a default. However, the unsecured nature of the loan is also the reason behind the high return on investment compared

to other debt instruments.

EXPLAINED

What role will CRED play?

Like most technology companies in the lending space, whether P2P or otherwise, the main role it will play is to analyse data of potential borrowers to decide their creditworthiness. This is the model also followed in the buy-now-pay-later system where technology companies tie up with banks or NBFCs to provide them with a database of credit-worthy people that can be targeted for a loan.

Fintech companies typically stand to make a commission for this. CRED founder Kunal Shah said in a tweet Friday that CRED cash — the company's lending product for 'high-trust CRED members' — had a loan book of Rs 2,415 crore as of date with less than 1 per cent default rate.

Govt to industry body: Reconsider strike against gold hallmarking

New Delhi: Asserting that mandatory hallmarking of gold jewellery in 50 days of its first phase of implementation has been a "grand success", the government on Saturday urged jewellery body GJC to reconsider its decision to go on strike on August 23.

The All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) has called a nationwide 'token

strike' on August 23, against the government's arbitrary implementation of mandatory hallmarking of gold jewellery with HUID (hallmark unique identification number).

Mandatory gold hallmarking has come into force from June 16 in a phased manner. The government has identified 256 districts for the phase-1 implementation.

Gold hallmarking, a purity certification of the metal, was voluntary in nature prior to June 16.

"I heard that some associations have given a call for strike. Strike for what? ... The government is listening to every issue raised by stakeholders. The idea of strike is uncalled for," the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) Director General Pramod Kumar Tiwari said. **ENS**

‘Yellen backs renaming Powell as US Fed chair’

REUTERS
BENGALURU, AUGUST 21

US TREASURY Secretary Janet Yellen has told senior White House advisers she backs reappointing Jerome Powell as US Federal Reserve Chair, whose term expires in February, a Bloomberg News reporter wrote on Twitter.

US President Joe Biden has not made a decision and will likely weigh in around Labor Day in early September, the reporter added in the tweet. A spokesperson for the US Treasury Department refused to comment.

No comment was immediately available from the White House. Powell was elevated to Fed chair by then President Donald Trump in 2018, replacing then Fed chair Yellen.

Republican Senator Steve Daines, a member of the Senate Banking Committee, urged Biden in a letter last week to keep Powell at the helm of the Federal Reserve for another four years to build confidence in an improving economy.

Renominating Powell "would send a strong signal to households, businesses, and consumers that the head of the Federal Reserve continues to enjoy broad bipartisan support, and will act as necessary to achieve its dual man-



US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell *Reuters file*

date of price stability and maximum employment," he wrote.

After the coronavirus pandemic prompted widespread shutdowns last year, the Powell-led Fed slashed its benchmark overnight interest rate to near zero and began a massive bond-buying effort. That support is credited with heading off a financial crisis and paving the way for a rapid economic rebound.

Powell has his share of critics, including members of the climate activist group 350.org, who are calling on Biden to nominate a "climate leader" to replace Powell and who plan to protest against Powell's leadership during the Fed's annual central banking conference next week in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

GM expands Chevy Bolt EV recall for fire risk, will take \$1-bn hit



A 2020 Chevrolet Bolt EV at an auto show in Pittsburgh. GM is recalling all Chevrolet Bolt electric vehicles sold worldwide. *AP file*

DAVID SHEPARDSON
WASHINGTON, AUGUST 21

GENERAL MOTORS Co said Friday it would take a hit of \$1 billion to expand the recall of its Chevrolet Bolt electric vehicles due to the risk of fires from the high-voltage battery pack — a blow for the largest US automaker as it seeks to ramp up electric vehicle sales.

The Detroit company also said it would indefinitely halt sales of the EVs due to the issue and will seek reimbursement from battery supplier LG. The latest recall covers 73,000 vehicles from model years 2019 through 2022.

"The reserves and ratio of cost to the recall will be decided depending on the result of the joint investigation looking into the root cause, currently being held by GM, LG Electronics and LG Energy Solution," LG said in a statement.

LG added that it is actively working with its client and partners to ensure that the recall measures are carried out smoothly. GM shares were down 2.2 per cent in after-hours trade after dipping 0.6 per cent during Friday's regular session.

Earlier this month, South Korea's LG Electronics Inc cut its second-quarter operating profit by more than a fifth to reflect costs for the GM recalls. **REUTERS**

BRIEFLY

NTPC project

New Delhi: NTPC announced commercial commissioning of a 15MW capacity at the floating solar PV project in Simhadri, Andhra Pradesh.

Adani purchase

New Delhi: Adani Total Gas Ltd has bought 50 per cent in Smartmeters Technologies Pvt Ltd, a company that manufactures gas meters.

Arvind Fashions

New Delhi: Arvind Fashions has raised Rs 439 crore from marquee investors. **PTI**

COMPANIES LIKE UBER, LYFT, DOORDASH HAD PUSHED FOR IT

US court calls California gig worker plan ‘unconstitutional’

KANISHKA SINGH
BENGALURU, AUGUST 21

A 2020 ballot measure that exempted ride-share and food delivery drivers from a state labor law is unconstitutional, a California judge ruled on Friday, as it infringes on the legislature's power to set workplace standards.

The ballot measure aimed to cement app-based food delivery and ride-hail drivers' status as independent contractors, not employees. Gig economy companies including Uber, Lyft, Doordash

and Instacart were pushing to keep drivers' independent contractor status, albeit with additional benefits.

However, in a ruling, Alameda County Superior Court Judge Frank Roesch wrote that the measure, known as Proposition 22, was unconstitutional.

"It limits the power of a future legislature to define app-based drivers as workers subject to workers' compensation law", making the entire measure unenforceable, the judge wrote.

The measure was the culmination of years of legal and legisla-

tive wrangling over a business model that has given millions of people the convenience of ordering food or a ride with the push of a button.

"We will file an immediate appeal and are confident the Appellate Court will uphold Prop 22," a group supporting the measure, the Protect App-Based Drivers and Services Coalition, said in a statement.

Gig economy companies scored a decisive win in California in November, when voters of the Democratic-leaning state supported the company-sponsored

Prop 22, overwriting a state law that would have made them employees.

The companies, whose business model relies on low-cost flexible labor, say that surveys show the majority of their workers do not want to be employees.

"Prop 22 has always been an illegal corporate power grab that not only stole the wages, benefits and rights owed to gig workers but also ended the regulating power of our elected officials," Gig Workers Rising, which advocates for more benefits, said after the ruling. **REUTERS**

THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



Nicholas Burns

USA

Biden nominates career diplomat as China envoy

PRESIDENT JOE Biden plans to nominate veteran US diplomat Nicholas Burns to serve as US ambassador to China, the White House said on Friday, signaling the administration may be looking for the envoy to play a more central role in the increasingly fractious relations between the two global rivals. The choice of Burns, a retired career foreign service officer who served as under secretary of state between 2005 and 2008, marks a shift for the role of the ambassador to Beijing, the ranks of which over the past decade have been filled by former politicians, not seasoned diplomats. If confirmed by the Senate, Burns would head to China as the two countries' ties are at their lowest point in decades, and fill a post left vacant since October.

REUTERS

NIGER

Gunmen kill at least 16 in latest village attack

AT LEAST 16 people have been killed in an attack on a village in southwestern Niger where Islamist militants have repeatedly massacred civilians this year, a local official and a security source said on Saturday. The unidentified gunmen opened fire during Friday prayers in the village of Theim in Tillabery region and killed 16 people, local mayor Halido Zibo said by phone. A security source confirmed the attack and put the death toll at 17.

REUTERS

CHINA

China's Mars rovers soldiers on after completing programme

CHINA'S ZHURONG Mars rover is soldiering on after completing its initial program to explore the red planet and search for frozen water that could provide clues as to whether it once supported life. China's National Space Administration said Friday that Zhurong completed its 90-day programme on Aug 15 and was in excellent technical condition. It said it would continue to explore the area known as Utopia Planitia where it landed on May 14. Zhurong is consistently sending back data via the Tianwen-1 orbiter that crosses over it once a day.

AP

WEST TRIES TO RAMP UP SPEED OF EVACUATIONS

Taliban co-founder Baradar arrives in Kabul to hammer out new govt



US soldiers arrive to boost security at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. Reuters

US urges Americans to keep clear of Kabul airport amid potential IS threat

REUTERS & AP
KABUL, AUGUST 21

THE UNITED States advised Americans in Afghanistan to avoid travelling to Kabul airport on Saturday as thousands gathered trying to flee the country almost a week after the Islamist militants took control.

The advisory came after Taliban co-founder Mullah Baradar arrived in Kabul for talks with other leaders to hammer out a new Afghan government after the Taliban's lightning advance across the country.

Images circulated on social media this week of Afghans rushing towards a US C-17 transport plane and clinging to its side.

Since then, crowds have grown at the airport where armed Taliban have urged those without travel documents to go home. At least 12 people have been killed in and around the single runway airfield since Sunday,



Abdul Ghani Baradar

NATO and Taliban officials said.

A senior US official said that potential threats by the Islamic State group against Americans in Afghanistan are forcing the US military to find new ways for evacuees to reach Kabul airport. Officials declined to provide more specifics about the IS threat.

"Because of potential security threats outside the gates at the Kabul airport, we are advising US citizens to avoid travelling to the airport and to avoid airport gates at this time unless you receive individual instructions from a US government representative to do

EXPLAINED Leader with large, loyal following

ABDUL GHANI Baradar was a longtime deputy of Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban's founding leader. Baradar is reported to have a large and loyal following among the Taliban's rank and file, and is seen by experts as the likely leader of what the group calls the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. He had also headed the Taliban's negotiating team during the recent peace talks in Doha.

so," a US embassy advisory said.

The chaos was not the responsibility of the Taliban, an official of the group told Reuters. "The West could have had a better plan to evacuate."

The Taliban official said the

group planned to ready a new model for governing Afghanistan within the next few weeks, with separate teams to tackle internal security and financial issues.

"Experts from the former government will be brought in for crisis management," he said. The new government structure would not be a democracy by Western definitions, but "it will protect everyone's rights", the official added.

Baradar will meet militant commanders, former government leaders and religious scholars among others, the official said without elaborating.

About 12,000 foreigners and Afghans working for embassies and international aid groups have been evacuated from Kabul airport since Taliban insurgents entered the capital, a NATO official said. "The evacuation process is slow, as it is risky, for we don't want any form of clashes with Taliban members or civilians outside the airport," the NATO official said.

Anti-Taliban forces claim to have taken 3 districts

REUTERS
AUGUST 21

FORCES HOLDING out against the Taliban in northern Afghanistan say they have taken three districts close to the Panjshir valley where remnants of government forces and other militia groups have gathered.

Defence Minister General

Bismillah Mohammadi, who has vowed to resist the Taliban, said in a tweet that the districts of Deh Saleh, Bano and Pul-Hesar in the neighbouring province of Baghlan to the north of Panjshir had been taken.

It was not immediately clear what forces were involved but the incident adds to scattered indications of opposition to the Taliban who swept to power in a

lightning campaign that saw them take all of Afghanistan's main cities in a week.

Local TV station Tolo News quoted a local police commander who said Bano district in Baghlan was under the control of local militia forces. The Taliban have not commented on the incident.

Former Vice President Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud, son of former anti-

MEANWHILE

US BRACES FOR HURRICANE HENRI

The Northeast was bracing on Saturday for the arrival of Hurricane Henri, which had gained strength in the Atlantic Ocean with winds of up to 120 kilometres per hour, according to the National Hurricane Center. Hurricane Henri is expected to make landfall on Long Island or in southern New England on Sunday afternoon.



HUNDREDS HELD DURING AUSTRALIA PROTEST: Hundreds of protesters march in Melbourne on Saturday. More than 250 people who were protesting coronavirus lockdowns in Australia were arrested and many faced fines for defying health orders, authorities said. Sydney has been in lockdown for two months, while Melbourne and the capital, Canberra, went into lockdown earlier this month. AP

Panic buying in Vietnam before tighter lockdown

REUTERS
HANOI, AUGUST 21

VIETNAM'S PLAN to prohibit residents of Ho Chi Minh City from leaving their homes from Monday has triggered panic buying in the epicentre of its worst coronavirus outbreak.

The scramble for purchases is hurting efforts in the nation's largest city to contain the spiralling Covid-19 outbreak, said the official Vietnam News Agency.

Long queues of people were seen outside markets and shelves at supermarkets in Ho Chi Minh City were emptying on Saturday, witnesses and state media said.

"It's looking chaotic," said a person who gave her name only as Nguyen in the city's District 2.

"Too many people are rushing out to buy food and essential stuff for their hard days ahead," she told Reuters. "I have managed to by some food, as I don't want to die from hunger before dying from coronavirus."

Vietnam said on Friday it would also deploy troops in the city to enforce the lockdown and deliver food supplies to citizens, as the city turns to drastic measures to slow a spiralling rate of coronavirus deaths.

Vietnam has recorded 323,000 coronavirus infections

FDA SET TO GIVE FULL APPROVAL TO PFIZER VACCINE MONDAY

THE US Food and Drug Administration is pushing to approve Pfizer-BioNTech's two-dose Covid-19 vaccine on Monday, further expediting an earlier timeline for licensing the shot, according to people familiar with the agency's planning. Regulators were working to finish the process by Friday but were still working through a substantial amount of paperwork and negotiation with the company. The people familiar with the planning, who were not authorised to speak publicly about it, cautioned that the approval might slide beyond Monday if some components of the review need more time.

NYT

and 7,540 deaths, with Ho Chi Minh City accounting for more than half of the cases and 80% of the fatalities, according to the health ministry.

"The city is ready with measures to supply food and essential goods for the residents," Phan Van Mai, deputy head of the city's coronavirus task force was quoted as saying.

US SC halts reinstating 'Remain in Mexico' policy

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, AUGUST 21

THE SUPREME Court is temporarily halting a judge's order that would have forced the government to reinstate a Trump administration policy forcing thousands to wait in Mexico while seeking asylum in the US.

Justice Samuel Alito issued the temporary stay late Friday night. It will remain in effect until Tuesday night so the high court can consider filings in the case.

A federal judge in Texas had previously ordered that the program, informally known as "Remain in Mexico," be reinstated Saturday. The Biden administration appealed to the 5th US Circuit Appeal in New Orleans and asked for a delay in re-implementing the program, pending appeal, but that was denied Thursday.

Formally known as the



Migrants wait to cross into the US in Tijuana, Mexico. File

Migration Protection Protocols, the policy required tens of thousands of migrants seeking asylum in the US to turn back to Mexico. It was meant to discourage asylum seekers but critics said it denied people the legal right to seek protection in the US and forced them to wait in dangerous Mexican border cities.

The Texas judge, US District Judge Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, had ordered the programme reinstated in response to a lawsuit filed by Texas and Missouri, whose governors are seeking to reinstate some of the anti-immigration policies of Trump.

China condemns suicide attack on its citizens in Pak's Gwadar

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, AUGUST 21

CHINA ON Saturday asked Pakistan to take effective measures and overhaul the security mechanism to forestall attacks on its nationals working on various infrastructure projects after a suicide bomber attacked a convoy of Chinese nationals in the restive Balochistan province, in the second such attack in over a month.

The Chinese embassy here in a statement strongly condemned Friday's suicide attack on the convoy of Chinese nationals comprising four vehicles in Gwadar, the port city of strategic importance due to the presence of Chinese workers and investment.

In the attack, two children who were playing nearby were killed while one Chinese national was among several others who sustained injuries.

The embassy said that it launched the emergency plan immediately, "demanding Pakistan to properly treat the wounded, conduct a thorough investigation on the attack, and severely punish the perpetrators".

"At the same time, relevant departments at all levels in Pakistan must take practical and effective measures to accelerate to implement strengthened whole-process security measures and upgraded security co-operation mechanisms to ensure that similar incidents will not happen again," it said.

The embassy further said that recently, the security situation in Pakistan has been severe and there have been several terrorist attacks in succession, resulting in the casualties of several Chinese citizens.

The Chinese embassy in Pakistan asked its citizens in Pakistan to be vigilant, strengthen safety precautions, reduce unnecessary outings, and take effective security protection.

The Pakistani authorities in a statement said that the bomber targeted the convoy of Chinese nationals comprising four Chinese vehicles with integral security details of Pakistan Army and police contingent on the East Bay Expressway near Fishermen Colony in Gwadar.

PTI

LAURA GOTTESDIENER & RICARDO ARDUENGO
MARCELINE (HAITI), AUGUST 21

TENSIONS IN Haiti were rising on Saturday over a lack of aid to remote areas of the impoverished country hardest hit by last week's devastating earthquake that killed over 2,000 people.

Many Haitians whose homes and livelihoods were destroyed by the magnitude 7.2 quake that struck on Aug 14 said they were unsure how to start rebuilding.

Exasperation over the time it was taking for aid to come through began to boil over on Friday, with residents attacking aid trucks in several towns across the south of the Caribbean nation.

A confrontation also erupted after former President Michel Martelly visited a local hospital



People fight over an envelope with a cash donation in Les Cayes, Haiti, on Friday. Reuters

in the city of Les Cayes, where one of his staff left behind an envelope of money that set of a violent scramble.

"We are concerned about the deteriorating security situation that may disrupt our assistance to vulnerable Haitians. We are

talking to the authorities and all actors to try and prevent this," said Pierre Honnorat, head of the United Nations' World Food Programme in Haiti.

The official death toll from the earthquake stands at 2,189 people, with an estimated 332

people still missing. But residents in towns across the southern rural countryside are still digging for bodies believed to lie underneath the rubble.

Tens of thousands of homes are in ruins, leaving many families with no option but to sleep outside despite torrential downpours at night. The hurricane season in the Caribbean runs until the end of November and Prime Minister Ariel Henry has warned residents to brace for more storms.

"After the emergency phase, which we hope will only last a few weeks, we will need to start thinking about reconstruction," Henry told a meeting with the Organisation of American States on Friday, appealing to neighbouring countries for support and aid.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Twitter that the USS Arlington naval vessel was

heading to Haiti carrying helicopters, a surgical team and a landing craft to assist in the relief effort. Several countries, including the United States, have already dispatched aid and rescue teams.

Reaching the areas most in need of help has been hindered by landslides and damage to the main highway, as well as gang fighting that has complicated travel between the capital Port-au-Prince and southern parts of the country where crops and access to drinking water have been destroyed. Some animals kept for food were also killed.

Officials and residents in small towns and rural areas continued to tally the dead and disappeared. For countless others, the earthquake has upended their lives in quieter but enduring ways.

REUTERS



POINT OF VIEW

Common Thread

The guest wing of the Rashtrapati Bhavan is a reminder of how the British yearned for a home away from home

ARTS etc

Memory Shrines

Sri Lankan Tamil writer Anuk Arudpragasam on his new Booker longlisted novel and writing as a form of introspection



PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

A BUG'S LIFE

If not for insects, we wouldn't get a lot of our plant-based food. Insects are the original recyclers

ON A WING & A PRAYER

Over the decades, there has been a steady decline in the number of insects — those diverse, seemingly pesky critters that hold the world together. What could their loss mean for the ecosystems that sustain us?

Kaushik Dasgupta

AFEW DAYS ago, I opened a jar of honey that I hadn't touched for months. The thick golden treacle was dotted with black spots — ants who had dropped dead after gorging on the nectar. That was something I hadn't seen for years. It now seems long ago when a forgotten candy bar, a piece of fruit, a cube of cheese left uncovered or even a crumb of cake would draw a troop of foraging insects from nowhere. Their pheromone trails alerting more colony members who would join in the effort to break down the food item into tiny particles, which they carried back home.

These seemingly pesky critters are a diverse lot — there are more than 13,000 known varieties of ants, and at least 10,000 species that are yet to be discovered. They outnumber humans by about a million to one. Highly organised ant societies are almost everywhere — cities, villages, forests, farms. EO Wilson, arguably the world's greatest living — and at times controversial — naturalist, writes in *Tales from the Ant World* (Liveright, 2020), "Ants penetrate every available nest site, take control of most available food sources, and in so doing create an arthropod hegemony that controls every level of the land from the highest canopy to the lowest root mass."

Yet, there might be fewer ants than about

three decades ago. Last year, a study in the journal *Science* reported a nine per cent loss in the population of insects like ants, grasshoppers and butterflies, every decade, since the past 30 years.

Good riddance? Ant armies are, after all, known to defend their homelands violently. In *Social Conquest of Earth* (Liveright, 2012), Wilson writes that during World War II in the Solomon Islands, snipers "were known to fear weaver ants as much as they did the Japanese".

The reality is, however, more sobering. The decline of ants, butterflies, bees, wasps, grasshoppers, fireflies and dragonflies could have outcomes far beyond their own demise. If not for insects, we wouldn't get a lot of our plant-based food and without bugs the world would be overrun with rotting material. Insects are the original recyclers: They digest decomposed bodies and dead wood, check the spread of weeds, agricultural pests, disease vectors and other organisms that make lives of humans difficult. They are resources for medicines and indicators of habitat quality. Much like earthworms, ants are ecosystem engineers, who, in tunnelling through earth to make their complex mounds, redistribute nutrients in the soil and improve air and water circulation.

Wilson calls insects "the little creatures that run the world". But other than some charismatic varieties — monarch butterflies for instance — most species of the insect class are rarely monitored or enumerated. Beyond



There are more than 13,000 known varieties of ants, and at least 10,000 species that are yet to be discovered. They outnumber humans by about a million to one

the pioneering studies of Wilson and University of Pennsylvania entomologists Daniel Janzen and Winifred Hallwachs, our knowledge of the fate of most ant species is drawn from anecdotal accounts. In a landmark address 34 years ago, at the opening of the National Zoological Park in Washington DC, that urged the world to pay more attention to the fate of invertebrates, Wilson said, "If invertebrates were to disappear, I doubt that the human species could last more than a few months. Most of the fishes, amphibians, birds, and mammals would crash to extinction about the same time. Next would go the bulk of the flowering plants and, with them, the physical structure of the majority of the forests and other terrestrial habitats of the world. The earth would rot. As dead vegetation piled up and dried out, narrowing and closing the channels of nutrient cycles, other complex forms of vegetation would die off, and, with them, the last remnants of the vertebrates. The remaining fungi, after enjoying a population explosion of stupendous proportions, would also perish. Within a few decades, the world would return to a state of a billion years ago, composed primarily of bacteria, algae, and a few other very simple multicellular plants."

Wilson is among the scientists who believe that the insect decline is among the most cataclysmic aspects of the "Sixth

Extinction". This is something that Janzen and Hallwachs have been warning for at least four decades. "I have been watching the gradual and very visible decline of Mexican and Central American insect density and species richness since 1953 and Winnie since 1978. The loss is very real... and the reasons are very evident: Intense forest and agricultural simplification of very large areas, massive use of pesticides, habitat fragmentation, and, at least since the 1980s, ever-increasing climate change in temperature... if our terrestrial world remains constructed through constant war with the arthropod world, along with the plants, fungi and nematodes, human society will lose very big time. The house is burning. We do not need a thermometer. We need a fire hose," Janzen writes in a 2019 article in the international journal on conservation science, *Biological Conservation*.

» CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

The Passing of the Endlings

If we can find it in us to offer remembrance for what we have lost in nature, we can learn to cherish what we have

TR Shankar Raman

TWO BULLETS passed through three brothers and killed them as they sat side by side. The secretary wrote, "The first bullet killed one and... the second bullet after having gone through one struck the other, which was behind it, and killed it also."

Maharaja Ramanuj Pratap Singh Deo pulled the trigger in 1947. In Surguja District in central India, he shot them by night from a vehicle. It was his private secretary who later chronicled the passing of the last cheetahs shot in India.

When the three men arrived by boat at the island of Eldey in Iceland on June 3, 1844, they found the Great Auk pair standing side by side tending to the last egg.

Jón Brandsson "crept up with his arms open" to the female who moved to a corner. Sigurður Ísleifsson followed the other, who walked to the edge of a cliff. He said, "I took him by the neck and he flapped his wings. He made no cry. I strangled him."

Ketilil Ketilsson found the egg on a lava slab. He picked up the egg, saw it was broken, and put it back. Some say he crushed the egg under his boot. It would have made a

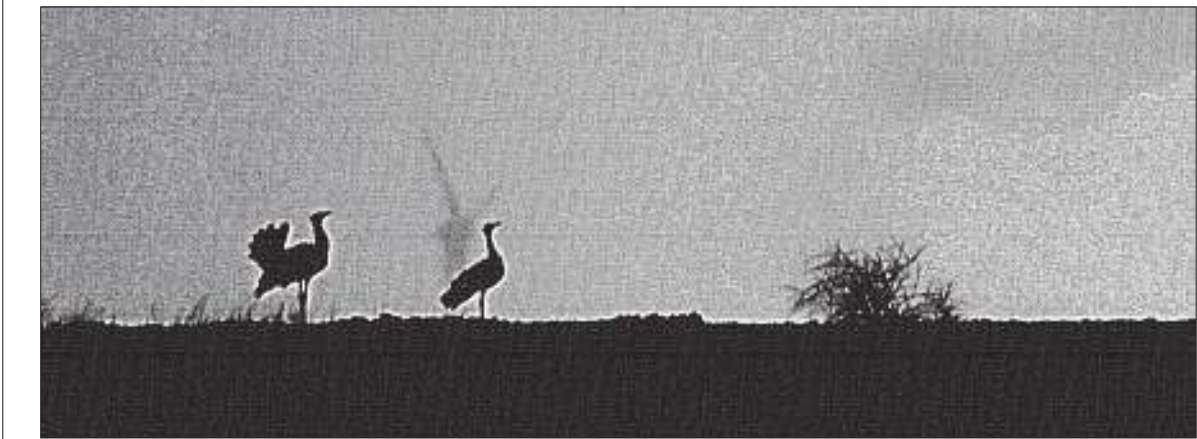
squelching sound. The sound would have been drowned by the waves battering the cliffs, as the ocean currents passed the desolate cliffs of Eldey.

The epitaph for the last male reads: "Male near Baghownie... 21st June 1935". Charles McFarlane Inglis, the Englishman who had shot the bird in Darbhanga, Bihar, in India, does not say more in his journal article. He does not say whether the last bird was rushing overhead, wings gusting the air, or pedalling glassy waters among reeds and swamp, swimming quietly and alone, when the bullet struck. The article was published five years later. Scientists now know this was the last confirmed record from the wild of the Pink-headed Duck.

The Englishman himself died on February 13, 1954, aged 84. Months later, someone wrote in the pages of another journal, like an epitaph at the end of his obituary: *Molliter ossa cubent*. May his bones rest softly.

People still look for the duck. Their bones and feathers rest softly in museums around the world.

The last Carolina parakeet, Incas, died on



TR SHANKAR RAMAN

THE THING WITH FEATHERS

The tall stately Great Indian Bustards are in great peril

February 21, 1918, a year after his mate Lady Jane's passing. They both died in the same cage in Cincinnati Zoo. The writer J Drew Lanham imagined an epitaph for Incas. He thought it would serve as the "final rites for the passage of one of the most unique birds ever to sweep across the skies of the American psyche."

Martha, the last passenger pigeon, too, had died in the same cage on September 1, 1914. A century had passed since 1810, when Alexander Wilson had observed during his own passage between Frankfort and the Indiana Territory, a single flight of migrating pigeons that he estimated to number two billion two hundred and thirty million two

hundred and seventy two thousand birds. In 1947, the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology erected a bronze monument to the passenger pigeon in Wyalusing State Park. Aldo Leopold said, "But no pigeons will pass, for there are no pigeons, save only this flightless one, graven in bronze on this rock. Tourists will read this inscription, but their thoughts, like the bronze pigeon, will have no wings."

But another stone is inscribed and mounted in the Bronx Zoo, New York, on a memorial wall to many species that have passed for ever. I recall the words carved in stone,

which said that the Jerdon's Courser, a "quiet bird" that "stretched up on tiptoes to look for predators", went extinct after 1900. Nearly a century had passed when the bird was found in Andhra Pradesh in 1986, with the help of bird trappers. The Sri Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary was established as a refuge and a canal partly rerouted to save their habitat. The biologist, P Jeganathan, saw the bird in 2008 and caught images in a field camera. He once heard three birds calling by night. A two note call, neither cackle nor lament, just one urgent note following another, ringing through the long night.

The Isha Upanishad proclaims, *Those who see all creatures in themselves/ And themselves*

in all creatures know no fear/ Those who see all creatures in themselves/ And themselves in all creatures know no grief/ How can the multiplicity of life/ Delude the one who sees its unity? [from *The Upanishads*, by Eknath Easwaran (2nd edition, 2007)]

I think of all the species in all their unique perfection and voices irredeemably gone and lost to the screaming bullets and machines and pillage but thrill to know that the night can yet carry the clear, poignant, plaintive, astonishing, exhilarating voice of one quiet bird.

Now India aims to bring back the cheetah. A rewilding project plans to bring new life to the grasslands and savannas where the cheetah once roamed and coursed behind antelope. And yet, in the grasslands and savannas lives another tall, stately bird, the Great Indian Bustard, in great peril. Down to the last hundred or so, the birds continue to lose their habitat to solar and wind farms, concrete and road, their lives colliding with the power lines humming with the currents now passing through their landscape. One great effort trying to bring back a species driven extinct. And one great power driving another to the edge of extinction.

If we can find it in us to offer remembrance, epitaph, memorial, and long for what we have lost, we can find it in us to cherish what we have and keep it from passing from this earth. And we can stand for it side by side and our thoughts can once again have wings.

TR Shankar Raman is the author of *The Wild Heart of India* (Oxford University Press, 2019). This essay was inspired by Brian Doyle's essay "Leap" (2001)

On a Wing...

» CONTINUED FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

BUTTERFLIES, MOTHS and bees are amongst the worst hit. The US has lost nearly half of its bee colonies in the past 70 years. The demise of the creatures started immediately after the introduction of DDT in the 1940s and has continued even after America discontinued the insecticide in 1972.

David Wagner and his co-editors of the multidisciplinary American scientific journal *PNAS*'s seminal issue on insect decline in January this year believe that "many of the butterfly declines in Europe are result of changes in agricultural practices after World War II... when modern tractors and mechanised equipment were employed to accelerate industrialisation of agriculture, insecticides became widely available, and synthetic fertilisers could be manufactured and applied in prodigious volume". Deforestation, principally for agricultural expansion, is progressing at a rate that has an alarming impact on insects and other arthropods. We do not even know the real scale of this crisis, Wagner and his colleagues fear.

In their contribution to this collection, Janzen and Hallwachs write about the "heterogenous blanket" of climate-change effects. Human beings have all through their history impacted insects and biodiversity webs. But at most times in the past, the effects of the assault could be reversed. Due to climate change, write Janzen and Hallwachs, much of that reversal does not happen: "A 200-year-old tree with all its attendant portions of thousands of ecosystem webs now and during its lifetime, now subject to climate change, no longer has the climate or interactors with which to reproduce itself the way its



POINT OF NO RETURN

Human beings through history have impacted insects and biodiversity webs

parents did. The herbivores, pollinators, seed dispersers, mycorrhizae, decomposers, diseases, competitors, commensals, mutualists, parents, parasites, and predators are all different from when it was a seed, seedling, and sapling". Only minimal recovery is likely, fear the original Cassandras of insect decline.

In 2009, French entomologist Nicola Gallai estimated that India has lost close to 40 per cent of its honey bees since the 1980s. "While there is no dearth of information on honey-producing bees in India, right from the very beginning of written history, information on other native bee species is scant and ambiguous," write Manjishtha Bhattacharya, Sankar Acharya and Susanta Chakraborty in a 2017 article in an open-access journal, *Tropical Conservation Science*.

Last year, a study in an Andhra village — reported in the *International Journal of Tropical Insect Science* — compared a firefly enumeration in the same area in 1996 and found that the population of these beetles has come down by 80-90 per cent. The scientists ascribe the decline to unscientific use of pesticides in paddy fields. Research in other parts of the world has ascribed the decrease in these creatures to light pollution — the energy-efficient LEDs, ironically inspired by these luminous insects, are especially known to interfere with the fireflies' courtship rituals, in which males and females use the play of light and colour to grab each other's attention. Lights from homes, buildings and cars mess up these signals, and fewer larvae are born every year. The firefly specialist group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature believes that such studies, though invaluable, need to be backed up by long-term data. Last year, more than 20 scientists from different parts of the world came together to issue a "Warning to Humanity on Insect Extinctions". In the *Biological Conservation*, they said, "when we lose insects, we lose more than species. Such losses lead to decline in key ecosystem services on which humanity depends".



COURTESY: RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN PHOTO ARCHIVES

Praveen Siddharth

THE FIRST resident of the Rashtrapati Bhavan had an inauspicious beginning to his stay at the Viceroy House. On December 23, 1929, Lord Irwin was travelling by train to Delhi, when a bomb was thrown at his viceregal train. The nonchalant Irwin is said to have remarked, "I heard the noise and said to myself 'that must be a bomb'. But as nothing happened, I went on reading Chaloner (poet and statesman Sir Thomas Chaloner)."

Though only five viceroys had the luxury of calling the Rashtrapati Bhavan their home, 14 Indian presidents thus far, have resided in this magnificent palace. However, our presidents never really stayed in the same rooms that were once occupied by the Viceroys.

When the Rashtrapati Bhavan was built in 1929, the plan was clear. The south wing was supposed to be the living quarters of the viceroy and at the opposite end, the north wing was to be the guest wing. Accordingly, the rooms in the south wing were larger, imposing and befitting royalty.

Edwin Lutyens took great pains in designing the interiors and the furniture himself. When C Rajagopalachari became governor-general, he found the living quarters too grand and decided to move to the smaller guest wing in the northern part of the building.

This practice has been followed by all the presidents since then and the north wing became the family wing and the south wing the guest wing of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. In retrospect, all the viceroys unwittingly remained guests at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Though it resulted in, quite unfairly, the most resplendent wing of the palace being least known and seldom visited.

The guest wing consists of three floors, with lavish suites named after British viceroys and governors — Dufferin, Minto, Clive and Curzon. The Irwin and Reading suites, which were renamed Dwarka and Nalanda, are currently used exclusively for hosting heads of states. These suites are distinct from the rest of the building. These are much larger and exquisitely furnished with Burma teak panels, they have imported chandeliers from Europe and lavish

Away from Home

The guest wing is a unique thread that connects our democratic present to our colonial past



carpets from Kashmir. But they are not really designed like the rooms of a palace. There is a certain homely feel to it. Perhaps, it is because Lutyens never really was a palace architect in the first place. What he did best was design country homes in England and this love comes to the fore in the detailing of the guest wing.

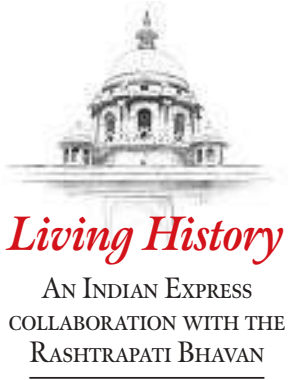
The furniture was designed by Lutyens himself and include pieces such as an enormous almirah with a drawer that drops down to become a step ladder; a wardrobe big enough for the guests to comfortably get inside and be clothed; nurseries for children on the third floor that had painted wooden chandeliers —

STAYING POWER

(Clockwise from above) Queen Elizabeth II at the entrance of the Dwarka suite, with Prince Philip, and the first president of India, Rajendra Prasad; the Nalanda suite; a wooden chandelier in the nursery; a wardrobe designed by Edwin Lutyens

"four praying angels for the night nursery, four galloping horses in the anteroom, and in the day nursery, four hens and their chicks with broken eggs spilling their yolks as the light bulbs!". There was also a nursery loggia, fenced for the safety of the children, in which were hung wooden cages complete with wooden birds inside them.

The Royal Institute of British Architects note that "in their drawings collection is a design for a nursery wall clock in the form of a bewigged footman, his face being the dial and his eyes the holes for winding him up. Another example is the mantel clock that Lutyens designed for Lady Willingdon... the clock takes the form of an urn surmounted by a vase finial supporting a flower. This is actually a brass key cast as a pansy, by family tradition a pun on the French word *penser*, a reminder to wind it up. Lutyens was famous for his bad puns."



For all its wit and humour, the guest wing is also a reminder of how desperate the British were to create a home away from home. In the opulence of the guest wing, there is also an angst, a desperate anxiety to make things last forever, though all around them nothing remained the same.

Perhaps, befittingly, on the walls of one of the rooms in the guest wing, still hang old, faded lithograph plates from the British soldier-painter George Franklin Atkinson's *Curry & Rice* that was released in 1860. These plates depict scenes from a fictional Indian village "kebab" with the colonial officials caricatured to highlight the absurdity of their conduct in a land indifferent to them. Atkinson's satirical work became hugely popular as it underlined the fact that the British would always remain as guests in this strange land.

Once the viceroys left, other guests have stayed in the guest wing intermittently. Records indicate that between 1947-67, there were about 32 heads of state who stayed here. The first visit of Queen Elizabeth II in 1961 (she would stay twice more in 1983 and 1997) was particularly memorable, since she was there as a guest in a palace that had been built for her. One of the requests received from her was for "three 6-foot high wardrobes to be transported in standing position and its contents kept top secret". Since the contents could not be emptied and the wardrobes were to be kept standing at all times, lorries were specially designed by the Indian army to safeguard and transport these wardrobes.

The guest wing has also hosted former Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev in 1984 and South African President and statesman Nelson Mandela in 1995. There were also visits by the heads of states from China and Pakistan. Former prime minister of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Bogra, stayed twice, in August 1953 and May 1955, with two different wives.

By the 1980s though, the guest wing had deteriorated due to disuse. After a renovation in 2013, Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko stayed here. The last head of state to stay in the guest wing, in April 2015, was the currently on-the-run Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

The guest wing of the Rashtrapati Bhavan will always remain as the one thread that connects the building to its colonial past. A reminder to a time when those who came as guests, overstayed for more than two centuries.

Praveen Siddharth is private secretary to the President of India



History's Forgotten People

For a deepening of democracy in the country, we need to embrace subaltern narratives of participation in India's freedom struggle as part of the mainstream

Badri Narayan

CHAHE JITNI tarah se kahi jaye, aur jitni bar, Azadi ki kahani se kuchh chhut hi jata hai (No matter how many ways and how many times it is said, something always remain unsaid when it comes to stories of the freedom struggle), I heard this statement from a balladeer in eastern Uttar Pradesh who used to compose songs on the heroes of freedom movement. It is true that history is the "narrative of what happened", but it is not fixed, it continuously evolves.

When communities become aware and assertive, they explore their unsung histories and stake claim on mainstream narratives. Thus, the history of Dalits, tribals and marginal communities emerge in two ways — as academic history and as public history. Both interact, influence, overlap, contradict and debate with each other to tell the story of the subaltern.

In the '90s, when I was doing fieldwork in the villages of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, I would come across various *thans* (space of worship) under peepal trees near Dalit

bastis, like Shahid Baba, Ladaka Baba, etc. When I enquired further, I found that some of them were remembered by the Dalit people as freedom fighters killed by the British. I also heard and collected many folk songs and folk narratives in praise of these heroes. These living memories — in the



Songs and shrines keep alive the histories of men and women whom history overlooks



form of shrines, songs, folklore — keep in circulation the memories of the men and women whom mainstream history has overlooked.

Most of these heroes that we documented were related to the 1857 uprising,

now known as the First War of Independence. The memories of Gangu Baba of Bithoor who belonged to the Balmiki community, Banke Beer (Jatav), Beera Pasee, Matadin Bhangi are commemorated by marginal communities in various parts of Uttar Pradesh. The four bodyguards of revolutionary leader Amar Singh, younger brother of Babu Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur (1777-1858), Bihar, were his war strategists. They, too, came from marginal communities of the region.

It is interesting to note that most of these Dalit icons were also women. These include Jhalkari Bai, Uda Devi, and Mahaviri Devi. Jhalkari Bai, a brave woman born in the Korean community, was a member of the women's army organised by Rani Lakshmi Bai and the queen's close ally, chief strategist and advisor. When the queen of Jhansi escaped with her son, Jhalkari Bai foxed the British by pretending to be the queen, whom she closely resembled, and put up a valiant fight against the invaders.

Uda Devi, another *virangana* of the 1857 gadar, was a member of the women's battalion of Begum Hazrat Mahal, the queen of



WIKI COMMONS

TOTAL RECALL
Jhalkari Bai's statue in Gwalior (Right) BR Ambedkar at his residence in Mumbai



what was then Awadh, who led a spirited fight against the British, killing more than half-a-dozen soldiers in the battle of Sikandar Bagh. These heroes are revered not just within their caste communities but among a larger Dalit community as well.

It is interesting to note that till the '60s, there was not much assertion of the marginals in claiming their role in the freedom movement. But there existed a trend of writing popular chapbooks among the Dalits of north India.

Through these chapbooks, sold in *melas* and rallies, on *thelas* and pavements, they started narrating and circulating their own roles in the freedom movement. The history of Jhalkari Bai was one such example from this time.

During the various phases of Gandhian movements such as the Khilafat Movement (1919), Non-Cooperation Movement (1920), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930), we find the emergence of many Dalit leaders and icons who were part of the mainstream narrative. These include stalwarts such as Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Palwankar Baloo of Maharashtra, Babu Masuria Deen of Uttar Pradesh, Karu Paswan, Babu Jagjivan Ram, Sukhari Paswan, Ram Basawan, Nandan Paswan and Yashoda Devi.

The subaltern heroes of the national movement need to be remembered and embraced by every citizen and these narratives of Dalit participation in India's freedom struggle need to move from the periphery to the centre. That is when we will become more inclusive of our grassroots and our democracy will deepen.

The writer is director, Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad

Sri Lankan Tamil writer Anuk Arudpragasam on how the civil war in his country shaped his consciousness, writing as a form of introspection and his new Booker longlisted novel

Paromita Chakrabarti

AS IN his life, the impact of Sri Lanka's nearly three-decade-long civil war ricochets through the writings of Anuk Arudpragasam. "I wanted to write a novel about the relationship between a young man and his grandmother, but over the course of writing it, the war began entering the narrative in various ways. After a while, it became clear that this too would be a novel about the war, though one that dealt with the psychic repercussions of war rather than its immediate violence," he says of his Booker Prize longlisted second novel, *A Passage North* (Penguin Hamish Hamilton, Rs 599), a meditation on absence, sorrow and the legacy of the civil war, that follows his debut work, *The Story of a Brief Marriage* (2016). Five years ago, the publication of his 2017 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature-winning debut work had announced the arrival of an extraordinary new voice in South Asian literature. Does publishing, and that, too, to critical acclaim, make the task of writing the second novel more difficult? "I don't know if second novels are harder in general, but, for me, my second novel was much harder. It didn't really have to do with acclaim or expectations — it came rather from choosing to write a novel that was formally challenging: a novel without drama, one that pays sustained attention to the consciousness of a single individual," says the 32-year-old Sri Lankan Tamil writer. The individual Arudpragasam is referring to is Krishan, the Tamil protagonist of his new work of luminous philosophical heft. The intimation of the accidental death of his grandmother's caretaker Rani takes Krishan on a journey, both intellectual, emotional and physical, to the country's Northern Province, to participate in Rani's funeral. There is little action in the novel, focused as it is tightly on Krishan's negotiations with a post-war Sri Lanka, but like his previous novel, this, too, is a requiem for those lost to the strife and those left behind. Arudpragasam's first novel, set over the course of a single day, was located in the heart of the ethnic war in Sri Lanka, the violence leaping off its pages in staccato bursts of dissonance and disruption. It followed Dinesh, a 16-year-old Tamil boy in a refugee camp in Sri Lanka's north as the protracted war neared its end, who is forced to acknowledge the ruptures in his short, traumatic life, when he receives a proposal of marriage to a young woman, a fellow inmate at the camp. *A Passage North* is removed from the immediacy of that chaos, focusing instead on an inwardness born of reflection, a distance, both spatial and temporal, from the physicality of violence. From the safety of faraway Delhi, where he was an undergraduate student, Krishan first trawls news websites, blogs and civilian archives, feverishly scanning reports and photographic evidence of the ceaseless violence in a war that, much like Arudpragasam himself, his protagonist has been fortunate enough to observe from a distance. When Krishan finally returns to Sri Lanka after the war's gory end in 2009, it is only

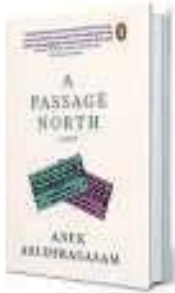
A Hurt the Colour of Blood



RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP
Anuk Arudpragasam

COURTESY: PENGUIN BOOKS

through anecdotal accounts of survivors, through foreign documentaries indicting the Sri Lankan government of war crimes that he comes to realise the enormity of the suffering of his people. "There was an element of self-hatred in these labours, he knew, a desire to punish himself for what he'd escaped by exposing himself to it as violently as he could, but it struck him now that perhaps there was also something religious in his devotion to understanding the circumstances under which so many people had been erased from the world, as though he was try-



ing to construct, through this act of imagination, a kind of private shrine to the memory of those anonymous lives," writes Arudpragasam in the book. There's a rare incandescence to Arudpragasam's writing, a contemplative tenor that cuts through the demand for speed that modern living urges upon one. It allows the reader to slow down, and to linger — over the craft of each exquisite sentence, over the litness of his thoughts, that span literary and philosophical traditions. "Writing for me is the most valuable form of introspection. And

because for most people everyday life is the major component of life, rather than moments of action or drama, I am most interested in the forms of introspection that occur during daily, habitual life," says Arudpragasam. These meditations — on one's place in time — replace conventional narrative elements such as plot, relying, instead, on a cerebral awareness of ruptures that mark transitions. "With my first novel, there was an emphasis on depicting sound over sight, and I think that has to do with the way what we hear can be much more disorienting than what we see... To focus on sound was a way of capturing the extreme disorientation of being in a civilian camp while bombs are raining down on you for hours at a time. With the second novel, there was a converse focus on sight over sound, and that had to do with the fact that the protagonist experiences violence only second-hand, through silent images viewed on the computer," he says. Arudpragasam himself had grown up in the country's capital, shielded from the trauma of the raging war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government to the north by his family's relative affluence. "Growing up in a Tamil family in Colombo during the war, we made sure never to speak Tamil out loud in public, never to discuss politics in non-family circles, to always carry our identity cards with us, to never leave the house alone after dark, and always to speak in certain ways to policemen and soldiers. My class privilege insulated me in the sense that my family would use a private vehicle or a private hospital rather than public transport or a government hospital; in that sense, we had to face less daily discrimination than most Tamil families in Colombo," he says. By the time the war ended, he had moved to the US, to study philosophy at Stanford University, and then for a doctorate in the subject from Columbia University — early stops in his itinerant life. But even on those cocooned from its brutalities, war leaves its imprint — remembrances of collective indignity heaped on a people, simmering embers of anger, shame or grief. "Childhood experiences are always experiences without context; they appear normal to us because we have no other point of reference. My childhood experiences influenced my political outlook, but the event that most influenced my politics was, of course, the government massacres of Tamil civilians during the end of the war," he says. His relationship with languages has been shaped in part by this politics. His pursuit of the Tamil language — once to be spoken only in the safety of home or among trusted ones — has gained urgency over the years. "I only began to read and write in Tamil in my early twenties. Since that time working in Tamil has become very important to me. I'm doing some translation now, but it will be a long time before I would feel capable of publishing in Tamil," he says. Arudpragasam is in Paris at the time of the interview, a fellow at the Institute for Ideas and Imagination, Columbia Global Centers. It's a place that is yet to feel like home. "Home is where I keep my books. I've left all my books in Colombo, so in that sense I don't quite feel at home these days," he says.

DOWN IN JUNGLELAND



Ranjit Lal
Ranjit Lal is an author, environmentalist and bird watcher

The Parent Trap

How does the cuteness quotient play out in the animal community?

IT'S A weapon that has been used since time immemorial by nearly every animal species including us, with devastating effect. Animals have used it on their own kind — and even on us, and we fall victim to it nearly every single time. And there's a very simple reason why — it has survival value. It's the terrible "cuteness" bomb, which can reduce leathery boors to warm globs of sweet goo. The moment they confront a toothless, gurgling baby, extending its chubby arms towards them, its eyes enormous, its smile innocent, the deed is done! It needn't be a human baby — a puppy or a kitten or an orangutan, bunny or tiger cub will do just as well, though maybe the line could be drawn at naked mole rat babies! If this is the effect that the C-bomb can have on iron men, you can imagine what it does to inherently tender-hearted women? Sure there are people who cringe at the mention of the "C" word and researchers working in animal labs who try to blank out its effects by giving their subjects hard cold numbers instead of names, as they conduct some of their experiments. Some say that we, human beings, recognise cuteness from around the age of three. Through our social interactions with parents and society around us, we learn to recognise what is thought to be cute and what is not. That's why your one-year-old toddler will happily put a slug into her mouth — not knowing that it is let us say "un-cute" (and probably tastes horrible), while your nine-year old will scream at the sight of one! So, it seems to be, at least among the baby fraternity, survival of the cutest. But I'm still not too sure if the cuteness bomb works as well in the animal community. Does a tigress favour the cutest in her litter, or simply the fittest? Usually, the runt in the litter is, if anything, cuter than its big bully siblings and evokes the most empathy because it is more helpless. But a tiger mom might just ignore her wobbly little weakling, sensing its chances of survival are minimal. Yet, watch a tiger mom lovingly lick her tiny cubs and you'll begin to wonder again. Like a nuclear device there are two distinct hard-wired effects the cuteness bomb has when it detonates. The first



LOVE ME DO

Round eyes, chubby limbs, cuddly body — what's not to love?

is instant — the need to protect the helpless squalling baby (animal or human) which is making those huge bug eyes at you, to take it into your arms and swear to protect it with your life. The second is the fallout — you begin to think about caring for the squalling, peeing, pooping, drooling, sleeping, gurgling tiny tot on a long-term basis. All of which spells parenting. Way back in the 1940s, Konrad Lorenz described the features of what makes up for cuteness, calling it "*kindenschema*", which evilly, sounds like scheming infants! So to be cute, you need to have a very large head, big forward facing bug eyes and tiny ears, set low in the face, chubby limbs and round face (dimples everywhere!), a soft cuddly body, and, of course, be gorgeously clumsy. We are such suckers for these attributes that it seems when we first domesticated wolves, we unconsciously favoured pups which had more "baby-looking" eyes — not a normal feature of wolf pups. These were selectively bred, and now we have snub-nosed pugs and prima donna Pekinese, lounging in the arms of maternal galleons! If anyone has been scheming about cuteness, it is us! Cuteness sells and don't Walt Disney and company know that! Even the prestigious *National Geographic* magazine has exploited this. Cute creatures such as pandas and tiger cubs and baby gorillas featured in the stories get most of the donations for protection, leaving less cute creatures (like naked mole rats again!) to fend for themselves. Stuffed animal toys make beloved gifts for children and adults everywhere. And sometimes, "old-ugly-cuteness" sells even better: look at ET and Shrek! Some advertisers dress up child models as adults, and pet owners dress up pets as humans, thinking that is cute and not perverted! Alas, we don't seem to know when to stop! How many *bindaas* teenagers have had their dignity shredded by a loving grandparent who pinches their cheeks and squeals, "So cute, no?" And how many fully grown ferocious German shepherds have been praised by their "parents" in silly falsettos, "Good boy! Good girl!" The desire to infantilise goes far beyond its "use-by" date and frankly disrespects the recipient, whether human, canine or feline. We have extended our cuteness mania to inanimate objects too: the VW Beetle was given circular headlights and a rounded shape to resemble a German soldier's helmet. Millions of buyers worldwide instead thought "how cute is that!" Otherwise, the car probably would have tanked! Volkswagen quickly realised this and subsequent models became cuter and rounder! In this case, cuteness certainly promoted love over war!

More Than Words

How a translator's collective makes room for richer conversations and an inclusive way of life

Surbhi Gupta

TWO YEARS ago, when the 90-year-old Wisconsin-based Hindi writer and academic Usha Priyamvada was approached with the idea of getting her debut novel *Pachpan Khambe Laal Deewarein* translated into English, she got anxious. She wondered if anyone would be even interested in reading the 60-year-old novel. Published in 1961, the celebrated novel is located within the boundaries of an all-women's college in Delhi, where we meet Sushma Sharma — lecturer, warden, single, and sole provider for her large family — who's resigned to the regimented loneliness of her life. It is one of the two translations that the Mumbai non-profit Indian Novels Collective recently released. Set up in 2017, the collective aims to bridge the gap between the English reader and classics of Indian literature, with translations and events around them. It is in the process of drawing up a list of 100 novels in Indian languages to be translated. Priyamvada's *Fifty-five Pillars, Red Walls*, translated by American writer-artist-translator Daisy Rockwell, skillfully explores the physical, mental and social paradigms that lock women into narrow ideals. Vermont-based Rockwell, 52, who's previously translated Krishna Sobti's *A Gujarat Here, a Gujarat There* (2019), Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* (2016), Upendranath Ashk's *Falling Walls* (2015), and Khadija Mastur's *The Women's Courtyard* (2018), says, in an email interview, "I had read some of Ushaji's work years ago, when I was a student of Hindi at The University of Chicago in the late '80s, but a few years ago, when Urdu translator and scholar Rakhshanda Jalil was putting together an anthology of writings about Delhi, she asked me to translate a



passage from *Pachpan Khambe*. It's not a long book, and I ended up falling in love with the elegant prose style and beautiful imagery. So, I decided to contact Ushaji to request for permission to translate it." Addressing Priyamvada's concerns about whether the work is too "dated", Rockwell says, just because the particular challenges faced by the protagonist (Sushma) may not reflect the current reality of women's lives in India, it doesn't make the book irrelevant. "Literature is not sociology, and women's struggles ought to be just as interesting as anyone else's, regardless of whether they have evolved or changed. That France no longer has penal colonies does not render *Les Misérables* (1862) 'dated' or irrelevant to modern readers," she says. Rockwell, who's translated popular writers such as Ashk, Sahni and Shrilal Shukla, says she was fed up with the male gaze. So, she started looking for and discovering, and, eventually, translating women writers now. "Women writers are the world over have not been given their due. They are published, re-viewed and translated — in smaller numbers. In order to correct the inequality of publishing, and this goes for other underrepresented groups too, we need to make a conscious effort to curate and re-balance our literary activities. By 'we', I'm being inclusive: translators, readers, reviewers, and editors. If you don't make a conscious decision to read more women, you're likely to end up reading mostly men. If you don't consciously choose to read more authors from underrepresented groups, you simply won't. It is deeply important to challenge oneself in this way," says the PhD holder in South Asian literature. Reading translations can be "quite different from reading something written in the original language," says Rockwell, "It can be challenging, the prose style doesn't follow the



PHOTOS COURTESY: INDIAN NOVELS COLLECTIVE

TONGUE TWISTER
(Above; left to right)
Indian Novels Collective co-founder Ashwani Kumar with writer Annie Zaidi, writer-translator Anjali Purohit, and the collective's co-founder Anuradha Parikh at an event of the collective; translator Daisy Rockwell

same formulas — each language has its own culture and set of conventions and we need to train ourselves to open our hearts and minds to different modes of expression. I like to think the readership is growing. I hope it is." "The pandemic has made people engage with literature again, go back to literature in their mother tongue, and in a whole new way through social media. People started talking about literature on WhatsApp groups. The general anxiety, coupled with the extra time, encouraged people to return to familiar childhood classics. Digital connectivity also made it easier for people to share and talk about these novels," says Ashwani Kumar, poet and professor at Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, one of the five core members of the collective. Apart from Kumar, the core group includes Amrita Somaia, one of the co-founders, and the owner of Kitab Khana, a book shop in Mumbai, Sangita Jindal, chairperson of the JSW Foundation and Anuradha Parikh, an architect and filmmaker. Jindal has funded the first two translations: Priyamvada's book and Jerry Pinto's translation, *Battlefield*, of Vishram Bedekar's Marathi novel *Ranangan* (1939). While the collective was launched with a view to introduce young readers to classics, readers of all ages have been turning to the lists/recommendations on Indian Novels

Collective's website to discover novels, short stories, essays in various languages. "We receive a lot of comments and queries; many treat us as a research archive, too. It has certainly started a conversation," he says. Acknowledging apprehensions among some over whether the originality of a text is lost in translation, Kumar says, "An original can never be translated as an original. English makes it possible for people in different parts of India to access literature from the other parts. On our portal, we speak about mental health, queer issues, environment, Northeast writings, feminist and women writers. Translation allows us richer conversations and an inclusive way to look at life." While Speaking Tiger is their current publishing partner, other publications too have shown interest in coming aboard, says Kumar. "There's a lot of interest in translations these days. The British Council has launched a research project on it and are looking into how (Vivek Shanbhag's Kannada novella) *Ghachar Ghochar* (2015; translated by Srinath Perur) became an international success. There is an Anglophone privilege, that once you're translated into English, your work gets a bigger stage. But, at the same time, if Konkani, Manipuri, Bhojpuri novels, etc., are translated into English, that will be a big boost to Indian literature," says Kumar.

Liverpool win to a full house as Citizens coast past Norwich

ASSOCIATED PRESS
AUGUST 21

LIVERPOOL MARKED its first game in front of a capacity crowd at Anfield in nearly 18 months by beating Burnley 2-0 on Saturday, with goals by Diogo Jota and Sadio Mane earning their team a second straight win to open the season.

Jota, who scored the first goal in Liverpool's 3-0 victory at Norwich last weekend, glanced in a header off a cross by left back Konstantinos Tsimikas in the 18th minute in front of The Kop.

Mane struck home a powerful, low shot from a central position from Trent Alexander-Arnold's deft pass in the 69th.

Since the last time there was a full house at Anfield, in March 2020, Liverpool has won the league title for the first time in 30 years and relinquished it to Manchester City.

So there was something of a party atmosphere for what ended up being a routine win against Burnley, which had claimed a shock victory in the same fixture last season to end Liverpool's 68-game unbeaten run at Anfield in the league.

Meanwhile, Jack Grealish scored his first goal since a British-record \$139 million move to Manchester City in a 5-0 win over Norwich, helping the champions earn the first points of their Premier League title defense.

The ball deflected in off the inside of the England midfielder's left leg from close range after a driven cross by Gabriel Jesus flew across the face of the six-yard box.

That 22nd-minute goal made it 2-0 for City, which went ahead via an own-goal by Tim Krul when an attempted clearance by Norwich defender Grant Hanley smashed unwittingly into the goalkeeper following a cross by Jesus.

Amyeric Laporte and substitutes Raheem Sterling and Riyad Mahrez added further goals after halftime, continuing Norwich's tough start to its return to the top flight after a 3-0 loss to Liverpool last weekend.

City bounced back from a 1-0 loss at Tottenham in the opening round of the league season.

EPL RESULTS			
Liverpool	2-0	Burnley	
Aston Villa	2-0	Newcastle	
Crystal Palace	0-0	Brentford	
Leeds Utd	2-2	Everton	
Man City	5-0	Norwich	
Brighton	2-0	Watford	

BRIDGE

Dealer: South Vulnerable: North/South

NORTH		WEST		NORTH		EAST		SOUTH	
♠ Q53				1H		2♣		Pass	
♥ KJ84				2H		3C		Pass	
♦ K753				3H		Pass		Pass	
♣ 93				Pass					
SOUTH		WEST		NORTH		EAST		SOUTH	
♠ AJ106				1H		2H		Pass	
♥ AQ753				2H		3H		Pass	
♦ A52				3H		Pass		Pass	
♣ 104				Pass					

West started with the ace of clubs (ace from AK), East signaling with the queen. West knew the queen implied the jack and he led a small club to East's jack. East judged to return the ten of diamonds, won by South's ace. After drawing trump in three rounds, West having one heart and East three, South played two more rounds of diamonds, hoping that they divided 3-3. They did not. West had four of them and after winning the third round, continued with a fourth round. South ruffing. South has lost three tricks and has two potential losers in spades. Given that West made a takeout double, how do you play the hand from this point?

The West hand: S-9842H-10D-QJ84 C-AK72
The East hand: S-KJ7 H-109D-109C-QJ865
My mentioning that takeout double was a snare. I was a takeout double but it was not a full strength takeout double. West passed over 1H and doubled later. West rates to have less than an opening bid. What has West shown up with so far?

He has shown up with the ace and king of clubs and he has shown up with the queen and jack of diamonds. This is ten high card points. Considering that West seems to have takeout double shape, you might wonder why he did not double 1H earlier. Do you think West has the king of spades?

Not likely. This means that playing the ace of spades and leading to dummy is not a favorite to work. Instead, you should avoid yourself of the two chances that the spade suit offers. Lead a low spade to the queen. It loses to the king, as you expected, but you still have a second chance. East, after winning the king of spades, is obliged to lead a spade back. Take your second finesse in the spade suit. Play the ten. This finesse wins and you have your nine tricks. When you raise your partner's opening bid and your RHO later makes a balancing bid, you can redouble to let your partner know you have a maximum raise. It may help him decide whether to go on to the three level and it may also give him enough news to double the opponents if they are in trouble.

Dealer: West Vulnerable: North/South

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ Q82		♠ KJ93	
♥ 762		♥ J5	
♦ 9543		♦ J10	
♣ A108		♣ Q962	

SOUTH		WEST		NORTH		EAST	
1H		1H		1NT		4H	
Pass		Pass		Pass			

East bid 1H and South overcalled with 1NT. West chose to pass but this is a good enough hand that it might have considered a penalty double. One reason for not doubling is that East opened in third seat. He could have a light opening bid. Your jack of hearts leads wins and your continuation goes to East's queen and South's ace. Do you wish you had doubled 1NT?

JUMBLED WORDS

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

Light in Nature creates the movement of ____ - Robert Delaunay (7)

FLUOR	ELPRLU
ITUOS	DIINTC

SOLUTION: FLUOR, JOUR, PULLER, INDICT

10k steps to silver

Once refusing to wake up to train, Amit Khatri racewalks his way to India's first U20 World medal in the event



Amit Khatri trailed the eventual winner Kenya's Heristone Wanyonyi by just over seven seconds. (Right) Khatri's family in Rohtak.



ANDREW AMSAN
AUGUST 21

VACATIONS FOR Border Security Force (BSF) constable Satish Khatri meant a trip to the peace of his home in Ismaila village, in the Rohtak district of Haryana. Soon those relaxed mornings would be broken by the commotion of Satish forcing his young son to exercise with him.

Though on holiday, Satish would diligently follow a strict exercise routine to keep fit, while he watched his son, Amit, laze around at home.

"I follow the camp's routine when I am home, so I used to wake (Amit) up early for our morning runs," he says. "I took him for runs because I wanted him to lead an active lifestyle and then eventually get a job in the armed forces.

"Now he's excelled beyond anything I'd ever expected."

On Saturday, Satish - again at home after taking special permission - watched his 18-year-old son clock 42:17.94 minutes to win silver in the 10km racewalk event at the U20 World Athletics Championships in Nairobi. He trailed the eventual winner, Kenya's Heristone Wanyonyi by just over seven seconds.

But earning a spot on the podium in racewalk at a world event was a barrier no Indian had breached before. And each of those measured 10,000 steps at the Moi International Sports Centre was watched by his family glued

Priya narrowly misses out on podium

Nairobi: Priya Mohan came up with a personal best time of 52.77 seconds in the women's 400m final but was beaten to the podium by Kenya's Sylvia Chelangat by 0.54 seconds in the World U-20 Athletics Championship on Saturday. Priya improved upon her previous best of 53.29 she had clocked while winning the National Inter-State Athletics Championships on June 28.

to the computer screen, none dared moving from the spots assigned to them.

Meanwhile in Pune, naik subedar Chandan Singh too watched the race with keen interest. He's been training Amit since 2018. Chandan's contribution to Amit's sporting career has been so immense that Satish asserts "Chandan ji knows everything about Amit."

While Satish once foresaw a future in the army for his young son, Chandan envisioned Amit would fulfil a dream Chandan could not achieve.

For the coach, still an active racewalker, who has taken part in two senior World Championships, Amit's medal is a shot of inspiration to train harder for his own ath-

letic endeavours.

"I haven't won an international medal yet, but this feels better (than if I had won)," says Chandan, who is training at the Army Sports Institute in Pune for the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games next year.

"I not only feel extremely happy but I am inspired by a student. If this young boy can do it, so can I."

If Amit's journey of 10,000 steps started when his father yanked him out of bed to exercise in the morning, Chandan has helped the youngster complete the goal.

Big-hearted coach

The Khatri household also welcomed Gajendra Negi, Amit's training partner, to their home to watch the race on Saturday. He explains the impact the coach has had on their budding careers.

"I asked him if I could train with him," Negi recalls of his first interaction with Chandan, which happened to be through social media.

"He reluctantly agreed. He's very focused and lives in his own world where there's nothing but sports."

But Chandan found it in him to guide Negi and Amit under his tutelage. The pandemic stalled their interactions, yet they continued to receive training instructions through WhatsApp.

The coach even invited them to his home in Mukteshwar, in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand. Sitting at an altitude of nearly

If it's your Birthday

Sunday August 22

A shift in solar patterns alerts you to fresh possibilities and new people. You'll open your heart to a broader vision, but only after you have faced the truth.

Monday August 23

It's time for contemplation about the universe and your place in it. If you think that such behaviour is irrelevant, consider, that down-to-earth projects won't work unless you understand the broader pattern.

Tuesday August 24

Be positive. At the heart of financial issues, is the extent to which you can pay for your dreams. Be proud of your own achievements.

Wednesday August 25

Every relationship comes with a price tag. One word of advice is to continue to take extreme care in all monetary matters, at least until next week.

Thursday August 26

A shift from adventurous 'have-a-go' patterns to cautious 'careful-as-you-go' ones, is colouring the background. This can work to your advantage and lay firm foundations for the future.

Friday August 27

Intensity and common sense are balanced in equal measure. Put your heart and soul into achieving your practical goals. The main pitfall to avoid is jealousy

Saturday August 28

You're ready to take a leap into the future, professionally, or in any ambition designed to secure praise and recognition. It all depends on what you know.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

You must now pay greater attention to work, even if it against the grain. It is not your responsibilities which come under scrutiny but those of someone with whom you are intimately involved. Venus is now urging you to put more effort into a close relationship and your emotional fortunes are looking up at last.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

The big change is triggered by Mercury's alignment with a sector of your chart which is profoundly creative. This gives you the chance to rethink your plans and proposals in the broadest sense, no matter whether they are strictly personal or purely professional. Mars maintains your steady, worthwhile progress at work.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

In many respects life has been a bit gruelling over recent weeks, mainly because the planets have been in unhelpful positions. Now that Mercury, your planetary ruler, is changing signs, your fortunes will improve. Plus, your stars are about to assume a more prosperous dimension, if you can wait until next month.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

It's energetic Mars and mystical Neptune which get you going this week and next. One moment you'll be floating on cloud nine, the next you'll be down in the dumps after your hopes are deflated. Try and find a middle way. The only problem may be friends who seem determined to misunderstand and misconstrue your every word.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

You have much to boast about, but you must remember the virtues of humility! The effects of recent lunar alignments are still too strong for you to abandon important commitments or break arrangements. Remember that as a Leo, you have a duty to protect friends and relatives who are less well-off than you.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept 23)

Very gradually the stars are moving from a creative and personally fulfilling position, to one that is going to bring more in the way of hard work. In the meantime, make the most of children's company. Moneywise, you're approaching a period of rewards and windfalls but not just yet. First of all you have to sow the seeds.

LIBRA (Sept 24 - Oct 23)

Travel still seems to be very strongly indicated in your stars. However, journeys undertaken for purely personal reasons will be much more significant than those connected to work and other responsibilities. Your romantic stars are excellent and will remain so for at least another six months.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

Mercury, the planet of communication, takes up a more encouraging aspect to your sign, an indication that your mood is about to improve. Put forward your own unique ideas with the confidence they deserve. If you're frustrated at work, you must be prepared to wait another month or so for difficulties to shift.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

With Jupiter, your ruling planet, so strongly placed, what can go wrong? 'Not much' is the answer, so you can afford to be confident. That doesn't mean that you must start throwing your money around, though. There is every opportunity for getting out and meeting new people. Take advantage of bright and bubbly invitations.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Energetic Mars forms its next alignment with nebulous Neptune very soon, causing much confusion. This is, to put it mildly, not the best time to deal with any complicated practical issues unless you first check out the legal background. You must, repeat must, do your best to put colleagues, associates and friends at their ease.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Mercury, that most witty and versatile of planets, has entered your sign, bringing a much-needed shot of energy. Use this time wisely by arranging meetings, interviews and discussions at which you can put over your point of view. And, intriguingly, vivacious Venus lends an air of mystery to romantic encounters.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Enthusiastic stars are shining, and inspired contacts with new friends and even with complete strangers should now start to bear fruit. Somehow you will begin to feel much more optimistic about your future. One thing is certain, and that is that you have commenced a new enterprise with your best foot forward.

BRIEFLY

AICF, Chess Association of India announce merger

Lucknow: Putting an end to internal fighting, the All-India Chess Federation and the breakaway Chess Association of India on Saturday announced that they have merged into one single entity to administer the sport in the country. AICF president of Sanjay Kapoor said that the warring factions, not only at the national level but also in various states, have now come together under the umbrella of the federation. "I have personally had several rounds of talks with all the stakeholders and have brought everybody on the same platform for the development of chess and all the chess players in the country," Kapoor said.

Hasaranga joins RCB, Katich steps down

New Delhi: Sri Lanka leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga, who played a pivotal role in his team's T20 series win against a depleted Indian side, has been picked by Royal Challengers Bengaluru, which maintained its trend of picking players who do well against 'Men In Blue'. Along with the world number two T20 bowler Hasaranga, who replaced Adam Zampa, RCB also picked Sri Lankan pacer Dushmantha Chameera who replaced Daniel Sams. Big Bash Sensation Tim David will come in as replacement of New Zealand's Finn Allen. The franchise also informed that their head coach Simon Katich has stepped down from his post due to "personal reasons" and Director of Cricket Mike Hesson will now double up as team's coach as well.

Three medals assured at Asian Youth boxing

New Delhi: Rohit Chamoli (48kg), Ankush (66kg) and Gaurav Saini (70kg) advanced to the semifinals of the ASBC Youth and Junior Boxing Championships in Dubai, assuring themselves of at least bronze medals. Three other Indian pugilists also registered victories on the opening day of the tournament. Providing India momentum in the junior boys' event, Chandigarh's Chamoli outclassed Alhassan Qadous Sriya 5-0 while Ankush blanked Bader Shehab from Kuwait 5-0.

Young Simranjeet Singh, who has skills reminiscent of Dhanraj Pillay and riffs off footballing maestro Lionel Messi, sizzled with his striking stick-work in Tokyo to emerge as a shining star on hockey's highest stage — the Olympics. SANDEEP DWIVEDI meets the hare-footed dribbler with a habit of making the defenders look bad.

DRIBBLER ON THE ROOF



Simranjeet Singh's dribbling skills are the product of painstaking background checks of opponents and the monotony of repetitions during training. *Hockey India*

WITHIN MINUTES of the interview where he rather reluctantly talks about scoring a Lionel Messi kind of goal as a junior, Simranjeet Singh, the scorer of two of India's five goals in the bronze-medal match against Germany, sends across a video. The 24-second clip is a validation of the 24-year-old's claim.

The action is from an India-Holland away game from 2016. It's probably shot by the team's computer analyst from the stands. Receiving the ball on the right, Simranjeet is close to the sideline and just inside the opposition's 25-yards. It's a position from where the less-ambitious forwards run down the flank, slap in a centre and pray that the ball finds a teammate's stick in the crowded D. The handful who trust their quick hands, lightning-fast feet, look up to Dhanraj Pillay and are in a habit of watching Messi on loop go straight into the heart of the opposition. Simranjeet is one of them.

The shortest route to the goal is expectedly crowded. At one point he has two defenders in front and two biting at his heel. His speed and stickwork make him unstoppable. He has passing options, a couple of forwards can be seen running, breaking free from their markers but Simranjeet, as his idol would have done, decides to go solo.

On entering the D, two more Dutch players zero in to poke at the ball, stifle the run. Not going to work today. The ball, like a pet on a stretchable leash, doesn't run astray. The blur with a white patka keeps storming ahead. So far six rivals have been left in his wake, now there's just the goalkeeper to beat. Simranjeet just about manages — stumbling, falling but still connecting the ball with a reverse swing.

Change the sport, replace the astro-turf with natural grass and it could well be Messi cutting in with his trademark hustle from the right, conning the defenders on the way and beating the goalkeeper with that magical left, barely able to stay on his feet after the frenzied run. Simranjeet says he had once seen Messi go past four players and score from a similar movement from the right and it stayed with him. "That day I thought what Messi does, it can also happen to me in real life," he says.

In the dug-out that day was Harendra Singh, who was India's junior coach then. It's

Simranjeet says he had once seen Messi go past four players and score from a similar movement from the right... "That day I thought what Messi does, it can also happen to me."

been close to five years, Harendra has moved on. He is in charge of the US junior national side, presently in Santiago, Chile for the PanAm Cup. He still recalls Simranjeet's Messi goal. "I stood up and gave him a standing ovation with my hands folded. The entire stadium was on their feet, the opposition players were laughing, there was a sense of disbelief on their faces."

A hockipedia and a life-long student of the game, Harendra is known to have the knack to spot talent. His judgment carries weight. He calls Simranjeet's skills unique. "Such skills I have only seen in Baljeet Singh Dhillon and Dhanraj Pillay. Out of 100 players, maybe there will be just 1 such player. He is a solo player with great dodge and ball awareness. You need three skills to be such a good player — Simran has all three. He has skills to go right, left and also the 3D skill — the ability to dodge, pass and score with the lifted ball," he says.

It's been a long day for Harendra, most of it is eaten by his 14-hour long flight. But a text seeking his reaction for a story on Simranjeet, the player he rates as the finest goal-scorer and feeder in the 2016 Junior World Cup-winning team he coached, gets a quick reply. He says he is glad that the young boy is getting media attention. "No one is writing about them, they are the unsung heroes."

He has a point. The nervousness of the bronze medal play-off, the draining relief of Sreejesh's penalty corner stop and the teary sight of Manpreet Singh leading the team on the podium after 41 years, made an overwhelmed India miss the trees for the wood.

The dazzle of Neeraj Chopra's final day gold was so blinding that there was no time to put the hockey bronze under the microscope. The individual efforts however grand — including Simranjeet scoring two heart-warming field-goals — hung innocuously in the brief scores section below lofty reports about big hockey revival.

The subtle but significant changes to Indian hockey got overshadowed by the nation's biggest-ever Olympic haul. Now that the celebratory dhols at the airport have died down, it's time to gloat over the 20-something forwards Gurjant Singh, Hardik Singh and Simranjeet, who, unlike past Olympians, didn't freeze at the finish line. They weren't anything like the other nervous Olympic newbies. They tried and pulled off audacious goals. They nutmegged reputed goalkeepers

in do-or-die games. They even made the Germans wilt under pressure. All that bunched together, they did their bit in re-branding Indian hockey. Simranjeet, the poster boy of this change, embodies the subtle but significant change. The one who follows Dhanraj's hockey ethos but has Messi on his mind.

For the untrained eye, Simranjeet comes across as a classic Indian player, a flamboyant dribbler from the land of Dhyani Chand and Mohammed Shahid. But there is more to the story. He is way too respectful to distance himself from this flattering comparison but very politely he begs to differ.

"People tell me I have a typical Indian game, I love to listen to such praise and I am proud of it but I am not a typical Indian hockey player. I have to adapt to the modern game," he says. A mix of Messi and a typical Indian hockey player? "Yes," he replies with a broad smile.

Hockey for Simranjeet is a 24x7 obsession. So even while watching football on television, he visualises Messi with a hockey stick or him in a Barcelona T-shirt at Nou Camp. "International football is covered by cameras from all angles, there are even shots from the top. This gives you an idea about the position and the structure a team adopts. Hockey has been adopting the football structure for a while now. As the ball moves from one player to another, I put myself in that situation and I keep asking questions — what I would do if I was in that position, it helps me to take the right call in a real match situation," he says.

A compulsive dribbler while growing up in Punjab's Gurdaspur, coaches have repeatedly instructed Simranjeet to be selective about his solo run. With time, he would earmark areas on the field where he allows his inner Dhanraj/Messi to emerge. "If I lose the ball because of my dodge it can go against the team. So I avoid them when I am in my half. But in case I am inside the rival 25 yards and in the D, I am free to do whatever." The mere thought of flying on the turf, weaving between defenders brings a smile to his face.

"Were you a natural dribbler, someone born with the skill?" Simranjeet smirks, it's a question that undermines the countless hours he spent running around with the ball on his stick. Both he and coach Harendra reject the romantic notions that dribblers are Special Ones handpicked by the sporting Gods. They talk about the boring practice routines that shape an entertaining player. The painstaking background checks of opponents and the monotony of repetitions

during training. There is also talk about the science of hoodwinking a defender and the lifelong pursuit of remaining unpredictable, the key for a successful dribble.

"On the morning of the match, I visualise the defender I will be up against. We look for their weak points, I take each defender and see "woh kaidhar dodge kha sakta hai" — right or left. We observe them very closely, we really go into the details of how they react," says the forward.

Stage two is about weaponising the data. "Suppose you have the ball and there's another forward joining you in the attack. In that case, the defenders have two things in mind — I have to stop the pass or I have to avoid the dodge. So my job is to guess what he is thinking," he says. At this point, with the defender's weakness stored at the back of the mind, the player looks for on-field clues. "If his position and angle of the stick is suggesting that he is going to stop the pass in that case I try to dodge him. And if he has the intention to stop me individually, in that case I will look to pass the ball."

Mention his breath-taking dribble during the quarter-final against Great Britain at the Olympics that had the commentators jump out of their chair and call it "the dodge of the tournament" so that Simranjeet breaks it down. He, almost apologetically, goes blank. He mumbles a soft 'is it', a softer 'maybe', before giving up. What follows is a scientific explanation and it isn't about him being forgetful.

"You train so much, you pore over the data for so long that it stays in your subconscious mind. And during the game when you have to fashion the dodge in that fraction of a second, the subconscious mind tells you which way you need to go," he says. So that special dodge against Great Britain was the mind reacting quickly and asking the limbs to make those game-changing split-second binary 'dribble or pass' decisions.

The teacher in Harendra throws in an analogy. "These boys train to increase awareness and deal with all kinds of tackles. They master the skill needed for every situation. I keep telling my boys, the head is the CPU of the computer and when you are training all information is in there. Once you are in the game, that same CPU, loaded with information, will transmit the instruction to the hands and legs."

The uploading of information has been on since the time Simranjeet left home in UP's Pilibhit when he was in Class V. His uncle in Gurdaspur had seen a spark in him, he didn't want it to go waste. Young Simranjeet found himself in a village where every kid played hockey and elders discussed the nuance of the game at street corners. It is a place where passer-bys stop in their tracks to change the grip of budding players or stuff notes in their pockets for a delectable nutmeg. Hockey expertise isn't confined to academics around here.

Simranjeet would follow his elder cousins — one of them Gurjant, the one who found him in the crowd of German defenders with a delectable minus pass for India's game-winning final goal in the bronze medal game — to the ground. After the day's training, Simranjeet says he wouldn't be bothered about the lack of company and work on his ball skills, try new things, polish old tricks.

Is Simran a loner? Harendra kills the enticing storyline of a boy away from his parents from an early age making the hockey stick and the ball his best friends. "No, no... no way. Just ask anyone, he was the darling of the team. He was the most intelligent player in my team. His company was sought by everyone, especially when they were going out shopping. His friends he is well-versed in English. He knows how to talk, carry himself, how to discuss and how to bargain for others with shopkeepers," he says.

The fact that Simranjeet was the last-minute inclusion to the Olympic squad, wasn't played in the first two games at Tokyo and even missed the semi-final against Belgium seems to rankle his one-time coach. "He has untapped talent, people have a tendency to take him lightly," says Harendra. And in the tone that indulgent teachers save for their favourites, he refers to his not quite chiseled face. "Yeh golu-molu (chubby face) lagta hai so people think he is unfit, but I will tell you he is the fittest guy and he has a great temperament. It was him and Gurjant who scored in the junior World Cup final in 2016." Incidentally, Simranjeet's Junior World Cup goal was similar to his first strike against Germany — a tomahawk cracker from the top of the D. The boy with a beep test reading of 24 has fast legs and faster hands.

The golu-molu is also a hare-footed forward — that's a deception made in heaven for this compulsive dribbler.



SIMRANJEET SINGH ON HIS BRONZE-MEDAL GAME GOALS

FIRST GOAL

(17th minute, India draw level at 1-1)

■ He receives the ball inside the D with his back towards the goal. A quick turn to the right, he connects with a powerful backhand shot that grazes past the right post.

SIMRANJEET: That's my favourite goal, one I will never ever forget. I had just entered the game and before that I had received a nice slap-ball from Harmanpreet that I had failed to stop and it had hit my foot. So I needed to make amends. That was when I also realised that the Germans were doing zonal marking and were focused on Mandeep, they didn't want him to receive the ball. I told Mandeep that they are focusing on you and they wouldn't allow you to take an open try so you have to make space for me. This is exactly what he did. I had shrugged off my marker when Nilakanta (Sharma) slapped the ball to me in the gap. And all I did was stop the ball and flick it. I didn't know where the ball was going. The point is if you take a hit within seconds of receiving the goalkeeper has no chance to stop the ball. The goalkeeper is standing in the centre position because he was in my line. If you are at the centre that's where the goalkeeper is going to place himself. By my quick turn and flick, I hit the ball at the angle of the goalkeeper. He was beaten by my turn.



Simranjit's equaliser laid the foundation for the historic win.

SECOND GOAL

(34th minute, India extends lead to 5-3)

■ Gurjant runs to the baseline from the right, moves towards the goal and passes the ball to Simranjeet in front of the goal, who taps it in.

SIMRANJEET: Before the Germany game, we had missed four to five goals by making the mistake of waiting on the second post. Our opponents — Germany, Argentina, Great Britain — they are all very physically fit. They don't let you come in front of them. Germany is a very physical team and they use their body a lot. We noticed that the Germans have a kind of thumb rule — they don't look at the ball, they mark the player who is in their goal-scoring zone. Inside the D, the forward does the action and the defender reacts. The defender has no idea where I am going to receive the ball. So we had trained to be deceptive — we planned to show them that we are at a certain place but quickly change position. Gurjant and I had trained for this. Whenever a player is coming from the baseline, he has two options. Either he gives a minus pass or he tries to score from a zero angle, but it isn't easy to score from there. So we train that whenever someone is getting in with the ball from the baseline, he needs to look up once and weigh the options. So when Gurjant moved in, he looked up once and that was my moment of moving to the first post. He got the clue and passed the ball to first post. I got in front of one defender, dived between the other two and deflected his pass into the goal.