



Former BJP MP Solanki sentenced to life for RTI activist's murder

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U.S. officials to meet Piyush Goyal today to end trade impasse

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Iranian boats tried to block British tanker in Persian Gulf, says U.K.

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Halep sets up showdown with Serena; Federer-Nadal semifinal today

page 18



NEARBY



Election of Vardhan, Hans challenged

The election of Union Minister Harsh Vardhan, BJP MPs Hans Raj Hans and Meenakshi Lekhi to the Lok Sabha was challenged before the Delhi High Court on Thursday on various grounds, including giving false information in their affidavits. The three separate petitions came up for hearing before three judges. While notices were issued to Dr. Vardhan and Mr. Hans, the plea against Ms. Lekhi's election has been listed for further hearing on August 18.

CITY PAGE 2

BJP MLA's daughter moves HC for protection

The daughter of a BJP legislator from U.P. on Thursday sought protection from the Allahabad High Court, alleging a threat to her life from her father after her marriage to a Dalit man. The judge posted the next hearing for July 15 since the couple was not present in court.

NORTH PAGE 5

GS Foundation-2020
Assured Prelims & Mains
15th July 3:00 pm
MALUKA IAS
011-47340741, 99101 33084
51/6, Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi-60

FRIDAY REVIEW PAGE 8
(TABLOID)

Can't be pushed into a decision: Speaker

Ramesh Kumar meets 10 Karnataka rebel MLAs following the Supreme Court's direction

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

Hours after the Supreme Court on Thursday asked Karnataka Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar to meet 10 rebel legislators from the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) and take a decision on their resignations, he held a meeting with them.

However, Mr. Ramesh Kumar insisted that he had a responsibility to understand whether the resignations were genuine and voluntary, as prescribed in the Constitution, and said the process could not be rushed. "In the current political situation, I have to enquire whether they are voluntary. If I do not do it, I would have committed a mistake," he told journalists after the nearly hour-long meeting with the rebel legislators, who flew to Bengaluru from Mumbai and rushed to his chamber just after 6 p.m., following the court order.

Article 190

Mr. Ramesh Kumar cited Article 190 of the Constitution as the basis for his decision to follow the procedure to enquire whether the resignations were genuine and voluntary.

"I am not responsible for it, nor am I connected with the political instability in Karnataka... I am not under anybody's obligation. I am obligated to the people of the State and the Constitution,"



Rush hour: Byrathi Basavaraj, one of the rebel MLAs, rushing to the Speaker's chamber in Bengaluru on Thursday to meet the 6 p.m. deadline set by the Supreme Court.

he said, adding that he could not specify a time frame for a final decision on the resignations.

Mr. Ramesh Kumar confirmed that all the 10 fresh resignation letters tendered by the rebel legislators were in accordance with Rule 202 of the Rules and Procedure of Conduct of Business in the Assembly. He, however, said he had not given dates for hearing to these legislators.

"During the session, I will ask the Deputy Speaker to sit in the chair during afternoon sessions to hear the rebel le-

gislators," he said.

Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court became the site of the latest face-off between the Speaker and the rebel legislators.

Hours after a Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, asked Mr. Ramesh Kumar to meet the 10 rebel MLAs and take a decision on their resignations "forthwith or in the course of the remaining part of the day", the Speaker urged the court to recall its order.

In an urgent application filed in the afternoon, the

Speaker said the court could not ask him to decide on the resignation of the legislators in a particular manner. Mr. Ramesh Kumar said the order hindered his probe against the MLAs under the anti-defection law.

However, the Chief Justice of India said the Speaker's application would be heard on July 12. The court had fixed the July 12 hearing to be apprised of the Speaker's decision on the resignations.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12
ASSEMBLY SESSION PAGE 8

Speculation as Minister meets BJP leader

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The ongoing political drama took a new twist with JD(S) leader and Minister Sa.Ra. Mahesh being spotted with BJP national general secretary P. Muralidhar Rao and the party's senior leader K.S. Eshwarappa at a government-run guesthouse late on Thursday.

While both parties and leaders, including Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, described it as a "chance meeting", the incident set off speculation that there could be back-room negotiations between the BJP and the JD(S), even while the latter appeared to be fighting tooth-and-nail to save the coalition government with the Congress.

Sources said the JD(S) was exploring "Plan B", given the precarious position of the coalition government.

After visuals of the meeting were aired on television channels, Mr. Muralidhar Rao told *The Hindu* that it was a "mere coincidence" and denied that any politics was discussed.

JOINT PROTEST PAGE 12

SC likely to hear Ayodhya appeals from July 25

Seeks report from mediation panel

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

A Constitution Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, on Thursday decided to commence hearing the Ayodhya title dispute appeals tentatively from July 25 on a day-to-day basis in case a conclusion is reached, on the basis of a mediation committee report, that the talks with Hindu and Muslim parties to heal minds and hearts is making no headway. The Bench asked Justice F.M.I. Kalifulla (retired), heading the court-appointed mediation committee, to submit the report on the progress made so far by July 18, the next date of hearing. The court's order in a way jump-starts the Ayodhya case. The committee had been granted time till August 15 to engage in talks.

No headway: petitioner

The immediate trigger for Thursday's hearing is an urgent plea made by a claimant to the disputed Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land that the mediation proceedings were making no headway whatsoever.

The mediation committee is in the thick of its second round of talks. It fin-

It is difficult to settle disputes like this and the Supreme Court should authoritatively decide the matter
K. PARASARAN, COUNSEL FOR THE PETITIONER

ished the initial round and filed an interim status report dated May 7 in the court, seeking more time.

On July 9, however, an application filed by Gopal Singh Visharad, an original claimant to the disputed site who filed a title suit way back in 1950 through his survivor Rajendra Singh, said the mediation was making no progress.

Visharad asked the CJI to stop the mediation and start adjudication on the appeals. The appeals have been pending in the court for the past eight years. Visharad said, "He is entitled to offer worship without any obstruction according to the rites and tenets of his religion at the birthplace of Lord Shri Ram Chandra".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

England dethrones Australia, roars into the final

Roy powers the hosts to victory after Woakes and Archer put the skids on the Aussies



One step closer: England produced a clinical display to dethrone Australia with an eight-wicket win in the second semifinal at Edgbaston, Birmingham, on Thursday. DAVID ROGERS/GETTY IMAGES

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR
BIRMINGHAM

England qualified for the World Cup final in emphatic fashion. In a lopsided semifinal here at Edgbaston on Thursday, Eoin Morgan's men defeated defending champion Australia by eight wickets with 107 deliveries to spare. Yet to win cricket's premier trophy, England last played a World Cup final in the 1992 edition at Melbourne, and will now take on New Zealand in the summit clash at Lord's on Sunday.

Trailing Australia's 223, England posted 226 for two in

32.1 overs. Openers Jason Roy (85) and Jonny Bairstow set a frenzied pace through their 124-run partnership in 17.2 overs. Be it pace or spin, Roy plundered five sixes and Australia's hopes waned. Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon and Steve Smith were caned, and the resultant momentum was enough for the host to cruise despite the dismissals of Bairstow and Roy.

Earlier, the Australian innings suffered a crisis as skipper Aaron Finch, David Warner and Peter Handscomb fell within the first 10 overs. Chris Woakes (three for 20) and Jo-

fra Archer extracted tentative shots and the visitor's decision to take first strike backfired.

Much hinged on former captain Smith who, besides the England attack, had to contend with an aggressive crowd booing him. Smith remained oblivious to the pressure and his 85, along with a 103-run fourth-wicket stand with Alex Carey, lent some respectability to the Australian total. But in the end, it wasn't adequate to prevent England's regal march.

ENGLAND RIDES ON ROY'S ASSAULT PAGE 17

Centre redefines child porn, moots stiff penalties

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Watching, possessing or circulating animations or cartoons that depict a minor engaging in a sexually explicit conduct could land you in jail.

The Cabinet has approved

a new definition for child pornography in its amendments to the POCSO Act, which is likely to be introduced in Parliament next week.

The new definition reads, "Any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involv-

ing a child which include photographs, video, digital or computer generated image indistinguishable from an actual child and an image created, adapted or modified but appear to depict a child."

DETAILS ON PAGE 9

CBI teams search premises of Lawyers Collective

FIR filed for FCRA violations



Facing the heat: Anand Grover's premises in Delhi and Mumbai were searched on Thursday. REUTERS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday conducted searches at five places in Delhi and Mumbai in connection with a case of an alleged Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) violation by the Lawyers Collective (LC), its president Anand Grover and others.

After CBI officials concluded the search at their Nizamuddin East residence in Delhi, senior advocate Indira Jaising said she and Mr. Grover were being targeted for the human rights work they had been doing for the past several years.

"The searches have been

carried out on the residential and official premises of Mr. Grover in Delhi and Mumbai," said a CBI official, clarifying that it was not against Ms. Jaising.

The CBI registered the case last month on a complaint from the Home Ministry. It invoked IPC provisions related to criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust and cheating, besides criminal misconduct under the Prevention of Corruption Act. The LC, which was earlier registered under the FCRA, had received ₹32 crore in foreign donations between 2006 and 2015.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

IN BRIEF



Plea against St. Stephen's interview panel rejected

NEW DELHI
The Delhi HC on Thursday dismissed a plea challenging the inclusion of a Supreme Council member of St. Stephen's College here in the interview panel for admission of Christian students to the institute. Justice Anu Malhotra dismissed the plea by three professors of the college. PTI

Jamia Millia introduces four new courses

NEW DELHI
The Jamia Millia Islamia on Thursday introduced four new courses under Entrepreneurship Development Programmes. The courses have been introduced in collaboration with the National Small Industries Corporation and the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. PTI

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

City	AQI	Category
Delhi	317	Moderate
Gurgaon	280	Moderate
Ghaziabad	380	Poor
Faridabad	227	Moderate
Noida	388	Poor
Greater Noida	373	Poor

Legend: Good (0-50), Satisfactory (51-100), Moderate (101-200), Poor (201-300), Very poor (301-400), Severe (>401)

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

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Book discussion on "Lakshmi the Rebel: Culture, Economy and Women's Agency", authored by Bidyut Mohanty. Discussants: Prof. Malashri Lal, former Professor, Dept. of English, University of Delhi; Prof. Raj Kumar, Head, Dept. of English, University of Delhi; and Dr. Sukrita Paul Kumar, poet, critic and academician. Chair: Prof. Patricia Uberoi, Honorary Fellow and Chairperson, Institute of Chinese Studies at Conference Room - I, India International Centre (IIC), 6.30 p.m.

Talk: Dance discussion on "Reelook at a Kathak Master: Mohanrao Kalyanpurkar" by Sunil Kothari and Subhash Chandra at Seminar Rooms II-III, Kamaladevi Complex, IIC, 6.30 p.m.

Exhibition: "Colouring the Wounds Away" a solo paintings show by Seher Hashmi Raza, Academy of Fine Arts & Literature (AFAL), 4/6, Sirofort Institutional Area, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

(Mail your listings for this column at cityeditor@thehindu.co.in)

Petitions in HC challenge LS election of BJP leaders

Harsh Vardhan and Hans Raj Hans get notices

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI**

The election of Union Minister Harsh Vardhan, BJP MPs Hans Raj Hans and Mee-nakshi Lekhi to the Lok Sabha was challenged before the Delhi High Court on Thursday on various grounds, including giving false information in their affidavits.

The three separate petitions came up for hearing before three judges. While notices were issued to Dr. Harsh Vardhan and Mr. Hans seeking their replies, the plea against Ms. Lekhi's election has been listed for further hearing on August 18.

'Corrupt practices'

Justice Navin Chawla asked Dr. Harsh Vardhan to respond to the petition which has sought that his election to the Lower House of Parliament be declared as void. The matter was listed for hearing on September 24.

The plea moved by Arun Kumar, who claims to be a voter of Chandni Chowk constituency, alleged that



Harsh Vardhan (left) and Hans Raj Hans.

the BJP leader had indulged in corrupt practices by not disclosing the real cost of a residential apartment in Dwarka that was bought by his wife.

Mr. Kumar filed his petition through advocate Sunder Singh Hooda.

In the Lok Sabha election held in April-May, Dr. Harsh Vardhan won the Chandni Chowk seat defeating the Congress' Jai Prakash Agarwal and the Aam Aadmi Party's Pankaj Gupta.

In the plea filed against Mr. Hans, Justice Jayant Nath has also asked the Election Commission (EC) to preserve the documents filed by the BJP leader at the time of

nomination and listed the matter for further hearing on September 18.

The plea was filed by Congress candidate Rajesh Lillothia, who had contested the election from the North West Delhi parliamentary constituency against Mr. Hans. The petition, filed through advocates Vikram Dua and Sunil Kumar, claimed that Mr. Hans had registered affidavit with false information with his nomination for the 2019 general election. It alleged that the singer-turned-politician had made false declarations with regard to income of his wife, having liability of ₹2.5 crore and about his education.

AAP rebel MLAs demand cross-examination of petitioner

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI**

Hearing for disqualification of rebel AAP MLAs Devender Sehrawat and Anil Bajpai, for allegedly joining the BJP, began in the Delhi Assembly on Thursday, with the duo demanding cross-examination of the petitioner.

AAP legislator and spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj had moved the petition for disqualification of Mr.

Sehrawat and Mr. Bajpai claiming that they had joined the saffron party during the Lok Sabha polls in May.

"They have said in an affidavit that they have not joined the BJP and are with AAP. They also said that all news reports on them joining the BJP are fabricated. On July 20, the next date for hearing, editors and reporters of five newspapers

would be cross-examined by the Speaker. If they [editors and reporters] stand by their news reports then Sehrawat and Bajpai would be disqualified," Mr. Bharadwaj said.

However, Mr. Bajpai, the MLA from Gandhi Nagar segment, denied having said so in his affidavit.

Mr. Bajpai said that he has demanded cross-examination of Mr. Bharadwaj on July 20.

B.Com most popular course under DU 2nd list

B.A. (Hons.) political science and B.Com (Hons.) occupy second and third spot

**SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI**

On an average, B.Com courses at Delhi University saw the most number of admissions under the second list, an analysis of the data showed. Coming in a close second is B.A. (Honours) political science.

For the 42 B.Com courses offered at various colleges of the university, 4,194 students have been admitted. But, the number of students admitted under the different combinations of B.A. Programme is far higher at 8,847.

It should be noted that 421 such combinations are offered at the university. This brings down the average

Roll call

Admissions under second list

Courses	No. of students	Average
B.A. Programme	8,847	21
B.Com	4,194	100
B.Com (Hons.)	3,789	77
B.A. (Hons.) Political Science	3,396	93
B.A. (Hons.) History	2,560	61
B.A. (Hons.) Mathematics	1,891	44
B.A. (Hons.) Hindi	1,831	41
B.A. (Hons.) Economics	1,756	47
B.A. (Hons.) English	1,677	41
B.Sc (Hons.) Physics	1,206	52

SOURCE: DELHI UNIVERSITY

number of students in B.A. Programme courses to about 21. Comparatively, there is an average of 100 students in B.Com.

At the second place is B.A. (Honours) political science which has an average of 93 students admitted in 43 courses. At several colleges

the cut-offs for the course was pegged very high. For instance, in Hindu College, the cut-off was 99%.

B.Com (Honours) at DU had the third highest average number of students at 77 for its 49 courses.

Likely to increase

Among all courses, SRCC has the most number of students admitted to B.Com (Honours) with 465 students this year.

The current analysis has been carried out on the basis of data of the number of students admitted to DU as on Monday. The number of students admitted will increase after admissions under the third list are over.

Delhi Cong. calls on Anil Bajjal over corruption in Waqf Board

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

A delegation of Delhi Congress leaders submitted a memorandum to Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal's office on Thursday alleging "irregularities and corruption" in the recruitment for various posts of the Delhi Waqf Board.

Time-bound probe

Levelling allegations of nepotism against Aam Aadmi Party MLA Amanatullah Khan, who is also the chairman of the board, the Delhi Congress leaders said that the party will soon hold a "dharna" to "expose the corruption".

The Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee said that the Lieutenant-Governor's office has assured the delegation of a "time-bound probe" into the matter.

The delegation comprised DPCC spokesperson Harnam Singh, Parvez Alam and Delhi Congress Minorities Cell chairman Ali Mehndi among others.

"The Delhi Congress will take this matter to the Muslim community across the Capital to show as to how the Waqf Board is being misused by Mr. Khan for personal gains instead of serving the cause of the community at large," said Mr. Mehndi.

Norms flouted

The DPCC in a statement said that in the memorandum submitted, party leaders have alleged that "all norms" were flouted in 33 appointments made to the Board.

The delegation has also sought removal of Mr. Khan as the chairman of the Board to "ensure transparency and a fair deal in the functioning" of the Delhi Waqf Board.

'Objection tracker' to challenge discrepancies in DUET uploaded

Master question papers put online along with answers

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

Delhi University has uploaded an 'objection tracker' for students to challenge any discrepancies in the examinations (DUET-2019) to its entrance-based courses held between July 3 and July 8.

The first lot of objection trackers were put up on the university's website on July 9, the day after the completion of the exams. The second lot of trackers for up to 63 courses were uploaded

on Thursday morning. The 'master question papers' for various examinations that have taken place have been uploaded along with the answers.

The process

To raise issues related to answers, applicants are required to submit it through an 'objection form' in which they are required to enter question IDs and an option ID. Challenges raised are placed before a subject expert

whose decision will be final. Following this, a 'final key' will be uploaded and results will be compiled based on this. The link to the tracker will remain available for 48 hours.

The objection tracker has been made available through the National Testing Agency (NTA), which is conducting the entrance tests for the first time. The agency also carries out other national-level examinations such as NEET and IIT-JEE.

BJP MP calls on L-G, submits list of mosques on government land

Reiterates demand for formation of committees for surveys

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

BJP MP Parvesh Verma on Thursday called on Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal and submitted a list of 54 mosques and graveyards which allegedly existed in an unauthorised manner on government land across his constituency of West Delhi.

Mr. Verma had, in a letter to Mr. Bajjal last month, alleged that mosques and graveyards were mushrooming on government land, roadsides and vacant spaces and demanded immediate action in this regard.

Conducted survey

"The L-G has assured me of action at the earliest and, in my presence, issued orders for the survey I have been demanding to establish the circumstances on the ground," Mr. Verma said.

In a memorandum which he submitted to the L-G, the West Delhi MP said he personally conducted a survey of such areas where graveyards and mosques had come up on government land.

The land originally be-



The L-G has assured me of action at the earliest and issued orders for the survey I have been demanding to establish the circumstances on the ground

PARVESH VERMA
BJP MP

longs to departments such as the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), the Gram Sabha, Flood Department, Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and municipal corporations, meant for community facilities such as parks and public toilets, Mr. Verma said.

Mr. Verma reiterated his demand for the formation of dedicated committees with district magistrates and officials concerned for conducting official surveys in this regard.

Taking cognisance of Mr. Verma's charge, the Delhi Minorities Commission (DMC) had on June 24 set up a five-member fact-finding committee headed by social activist Owais Sultan Khan to cross-check his claim.

Hindon sanctuary: NGT seeks report on encroachments

Raps Ghaziabad DM for non-compliance

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Ghaziabad authorities to furnish a report on the status of encroachments near Hindon Bird Sanctuary.

A Bench headed by NGT judicial member Justice Raghuvendra S. Rathore directed the District Magistrate to refer to previous judgments and file an affidavit pertaining to the status of compliance of orders.

Action plan

"It was incumbent upon [authorities] to have first gone through the [September 2016] judgment and then proceed for execution of the same...we have noted that the respondents have not even noted the area in question and the directions

given by the tribunal which are required to be complied with," the Bench observed.

The Bench, also comprising NGT expert member S.S. Garbhal, further sought a schedule or action plan for "fully executing the judgment of the tribunal".

Hearing plea

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by Ghaziabad resident Sushil Raghav who sought implementation of the 2016 judgment.

The petitioner had contended that the construction of the six-lane Hindon elevated road, which falls under the Hindon Bird Sanctuary, was started without obtaining the requisite clearance from the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority.

Madhur Verma transferred to Arunachal

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi district) and Delhi Police Public Relation Officer (PRO) Madhur Verma has been transferred to Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday with immediate effect.

The transfer order, which arrived in the afternoon from Ministry of Home Affairs, stated that Mr. Verma "stands relieved" with effect from Thursday itself to join his new posting.

In a similar Home Ministry's order, Mr. Verma's wife, Niharika Rai, a 2005-batch IAS officer, has also been transferred to Arunachal Pradesh. Her order came late in the evening.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) will look after the duties of the DCP (New Delhi) until the name of the new DCP is announced, said a senior police officer.

A 2005-batch IPS officer, Mr. Verma has served as the Deputy Commissioner of Police in various police districts and crime branch from June 2013 to July 2019.

Mr. Verma was the social media face of the State police.

Woman driving car shot at by bike-borne men, critical

Kin, cops suspect her husband's involvement in the incident

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 30-year-old woman was shot at allegedly by two unidentified bike-borne assailants on a busy road in Dwarka Sector 12 on Thursday morning, the police said.

The victim, identified as Kiren, has sustained injuries on her neck and her condition is stated to be critical, a police officer said.

The incident took place around 8 a.m. at a roundabout near Radisson Blu Hotel when Kiren was returning home after dropping her son to school. She was shot at by two bike-borne men who were chasing her car, the police said.

The victim works as a part-time property and finance dealer, they said.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the woman was involved in a family dispute, the officer said, adding that the police are scanning the footage of the CCTV cameras installed in the area where the incident took place.

A few detained
A few suspects have been detained in connection with the case, the police said.



Kiren

An autorickshaw driver, who is an eyewitness in the case, said he thought it was the sound of a bullet motorcycle.

"Later when the [woman's] car hit the divider, I realised that someone had fired from a gun. I saw two bike-borne assailants and the pillion rider was brandishing the gun while they were fleeing the spot," he said.

Bullet injury on neck
Officials at Venkateshwar Hospital said that she was brought to the hospital around 8.15 a.m. with a bullet injury on the neck.

"The bullet was removed. Her condition is, however,

critical and she is in ventilator," the official said.

The family members of the victim and the police suspect the involvement of the her husband Varun Yadav in the incident.

Troubled marriage

"Kiren and Varun got married around 10 years ago and were having matrimonial issues. Since the last one-and-a-half-year, he [Varun] did not give a single penny to my sister due to which she had to start a small finance business in Dwarka," said Pankaj Bajaj, the victim's brother.

"He [Varun] had been ill-treating my sister. He used to stay away from the house without informing anyone. We suspect his involvement in the incident," said the brother.

"My nephew, who is in Class IV, was not present in the car during the incident. Otherwise the results could have been more dangerous," Mr. Bajaj added.

"Doctors have informed us that the condition of the woman is very critical. They have removed the bullet from her neck but she is not fit to give a statement," said a senior police officer.

Fan mishap: BJP delegation inspects school

Building part of scam under which each room was built at ₹25 lakh, says party

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) delegation on Thursday carried out an inspection at Trilokpuri Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya where a ceiling fan had fallen on a student's head fracturing his skull here a day before.

After the inspection at the school, BJP leaders also went to GTB Hospital and enquired about the condition of the injured child.

"The condition of the student continues to be serious. Being a public representative, I came here to inspect the school as this is a serious case. This incident is very tragic. It is the responsibility of all of us to prevent such incidents from happening again," BJP Delhi unit chief Manoj Tiwari said.

Quality of construction

"Apart from the cost of construction of the school building, the question on the quality of construction now arises. It appears that the quality of construction from the door to the ceiling is substandard which resulted in the ceiling fan falling on a student, injuring him seriously," Mr. Tiwari said.

The BJP has been claiming that the construction of the said school building is part of a scam under which each



The BJP delegation at the school on Thursday. (Below) Part of the ceiling fan which fell on the student. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

school room was allegedly constructed at a cost of around ₹25 lakh.

Arguing that an "earthquake-proof school building" could have been constructed with the amount spent on the construction of the school where the incident occurred, Mr. Tiwari reiterated that "corruption has been committed on a large scale".

Tiwari slams Sisodia

Mr. Tiwari also took the opportunity to attack Education Minister Manish Sisodia who, he said, "talks about construction of world-class classrooms" at government-run schools.

"The children cannot be left in the schools constructed with stone slabs and T-iron as it may pose danger to



them," he added.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Vijender Gupta, who was also part of the delegation, said, "I want to ask [Chief Minister Arvind] Kejriwal if these are the world-class classrooms for which the public money has been wasted on a large scale. Kejriwal will have to reply on this as money paid by crore of tax-payers in Delhi have been looted in this scam. It is also a fraud."

Muslim Morcha demands end to mob lynching

Stages protest at Jantar Mantar

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The All India United Muslim Morcha, which works for the empowerment of the community, on Thursday, staged a day-long sit-in protest at Jantar Mantar, demanding incidents of mob lynching across the Capital be stopped.

Inclusion in SC/ST Act

The Morcha, in a statement, said it also demanded the inclusion of minorities in the SC/ST Act constituted under Article 341 of the Constitution.

"Like the Ayodhya dispute, the issue of Dalit Muslim reservation is also in the apex court, waiting for its final verdict. As

both the issues are standing since 1949 and 1950, therefore the final verdict on both should come together otherwise it will be a great injustice with the marginalised Muslim mass, that is Dalit Muslims, who are the victims of the Ayodhya case," said the Morcha's national vice-president Kamal Ashraf.

Terming mob lynchings a "new technique" of accelerating "the wave of communal politics in India", Hafiz Gulam Sarwar, the national spokesperson of the outfit, urged the inclusion of Dalit Muslims under the SC/ST Act in order to "erase the fear psychosis" among them.

Accident death: victim's family gets ₹18.97 lakh

He died after being hit by a car in 2015

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

A Motor Accident Claims Tribunal on Wednesday awarded a compensation of ₹18.97 lakh to the wife and four children of a DTC bus conductor who was killed after being hit by a car in north-west Delhi's Najafgarh in 2015.

Evidence by an eyewitness, who was returning from work at the time of the incident, proved that the man on the wheels was at fault. The victim was walking when the accident happened.

The witness stood her ground even when she was cross-examined by the counsel for the insurance company with which the offending vehicle was insured.

The driver and the owner of the car opposed the claim petition stating that the detailed accident report filed by the police was false and aimed at harassing them.

Claiming that the vehicle was not involved in the accident, they urged the court to dismiss the claim petition filed by the wife and the children of the deceased.

NHRC issues notice to govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Stating that the incident showed the "true picture" of government schools in the Capital, the National Human Rights Commission on Thursday issued a notice to the Delhi government over the incident of a ceiling fan falling on a student in a classroom a day before.

Taking suo motu cognisance of media reports about the incident, the NHRC sent notice to the Chief Secretary, seeking a report in four weeks.

"The Commission has further observed that the school authorities, being lawful custodian of the students, are liable to ensure their safety during school time. The incident is shocking, giving true picture of the State infrastructure and maintenance of the government-run schools in Delhi," an NHRC statement said.

The uncle of the 13-year-old student reportedly alleged that neither any teacher nor the school principal had accompanied the victim to the hospital on the day of incident.

DELHI Timings

FRIDAY, JULY 12
RISE 05:32 SET 19:22
RISE 15:20 SET 01:47

SATURDAY, JULY 13
RISE 05:32 SET 19:22
RISE 16:19 SET 02:27

SUNDAY, JULY 14
RISE 05:33 SET 19:22
RISE 17:17 SET 03:12

Delhi Weather

	max	min
Delhi City	39	31
Safdarjang	39	31
Palam	41	31

Delhi Palam Today
40°C A warm morning is likely. Dry and hot weather with partly cloudy sky is likely. Pollution level will increase.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
41°C Rise in pollution level and temperature is likely. Dry and hot weather with moderate breeze will prevail.

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THE HINDU
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U.P. Law Commission pushes for life term in lynching cases

Submits draft Bill to State govt.; suggests separate law to deal with mob violence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA LUCKNOW
Taking cognisance of incidents of mob lynching, including those by cow vigilantes, the Uttar Pradesh Law Commission has submitted a draft Bill recommending up to life imprisonment for the crime. Commission chairman Justice (retired) A.N. Mittal submitted a report on mob lynching, along with the draft Bill, to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday.

The 128-page report cited various cases of lynching in the State and recommended immediate enactment of a law as per recommendations made by the Supreme Court in 2018. The commission said the existing laws to combat lynchings were not sufficient.

It recommended a punishment ranging from seven years to life imprisonment for the offence.



The draft Bill was submitted to CM Yogi Adityanath.

Suggesting that such a law may be called the Uttar Pradesh Combating of Mob Lynching Act, the commission specified the responsibilities of police officers and District Magistrates and spelt out the punishment for failing in their duty.

The panel said the law should also provide for compensation to the family of the victim for grievous injury or loss of life and property.

There should also be provisions for the rehabilitation

of the victims and their families, it said.

Suo motu study

According to data available from 2012 to 2019, 50 incidents of mob violence have taken place in the State. Eleven of the 50 victims have died in the attacks. Twenty-five of these were cases of major assault, including those by cow vigilantes.

"In the backdrop of this situation, the commission took up the study suo motu and accordingly recommended the State government the need for having a comprehensive law to combat lynching," said Law Commission secretary Sapna Tripathi.

The report said only Manipur has made a special law against lynchings and, as per media reports, the Madhya Pradesh government is soon going to enact one.

It referred to various cases of lynching and mob vio-

lence in the State, including the 2015 killing of Mohammed Akhlaq in Dadri on suspicion of beef consumption.

It also mentioned the killing of Inspector Subodh Singh on December 3, 2018, in a clash between police and Hindutva groups in Bulandshahr after cattle carcasses were found in a field.

"Incidents of mob violence have taken place in Farrukhabad, Unnao, Kanpur, Hapur and Muzaffarnagar districts. Police are also becoming victims as people have started thinking of them as their enemy," Justice Mittal said in the report.

The panel studied laws of different countries and States, and decisions of the Supreme Court while preparing the draft Bill.

It suggested punishment for conspiracy, aid or abetment in such cases, as well as for obstructing the legal process.

BJP MLA's daughter moves High Court for protection

Father denies threatening to kill her for marrying a Dalit

SAURABH TRIVEDI OMAR RASHID DELHI/LUCKNOW

Sakshi Misra, the daughter of a BJP legislator who had claimed a threat from him to her life because of marrying a Dalit man, moved a petition in Allahabad High Court on Thursday seeking protection. The 23-year-old, whose father Rajesh Misra is the MLA from Bithari Chainpur in Bareilly district, had uploaded a video on social media on Wednesday declaring her marriage with Ajitesh Kumar, 29. In another video, she appealed to her father to stop opposing her love marriage and call back associates he had allegedly set upon them.

In the petition filed in court, the couple repeated the allegation and sought security. The petition claimed that Mr. Misra is unhappy as he is a Brahmin and his son-in-law a Dalit. The judge posted the next hearing for July 15 since the couple was



Sakshi Misra and husband Ajitesh Kumar.

not present in court.

Stung by the embarrassment, Mr. Misra told reporters on Thursday that the allegations against him were "false". He said his daughter was an adult and "has the right to decide for herself".

"I have not threatened to kill anybody, neither have any of my men or family. Nobody faces any threat from me," the MLA said, adding that he was busy with the membership drive of his party.

Bareilly Senior Superintendent of Police Muniraj G. said the police came to know

of the matter through social media and assured the couple of protection if they wrote seeking security. "We have put Ajitesh's house under round-the-clock security. We are trying to trace the couple and assure them regarding their safety," said the SSP.

Family leaves home

Harish Kumar, Mr. Ajitesh's father, alleged that his family is getting threats from people close to the BJP MLA. The family left their house on July 5 for an undisclosed place. "I have approached the local police, media and the BJP MLA and apprised them of the situation and also shown them the marriage certificate. The issue is between two families and we can sort it out," said Mr. Harish.

In short videos shared on social media, Ms. Sakshi said her family led by her father and his aides were after the life of her husband and her.

Sweet deal



Sugarcane farmers wait for customers at a roadside wholesale market in Jammu on Thursday. • PTI

Centre not releasing funds for rural electrification: Rajasthan

'2% reduction in power losses had been achieved'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT JAIPUR

The Congress government in Rajasthan has blamed the Centre for not releasing ₹932 crore for rural electrification works under the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana and the Saubhagya Scheme, designed to provide continuous power supply to villages and hamlets. The State has requested for release of the Central funds by this year-end.



CM Ashok Gehlot.

'Debt burden'

Energy Minister B.D. Kalla said in the State Assembly during the ongoing budget session that while the Central funds were still awaited, the State was reeling under the debt burden of ₹62,422 crore shifted from the power discoms under the Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana

its impact on the State's financial position. The State was trying its best to achieve UDAY's target of reducing aggregate technical and commercial losses in the power sector to 15%.

Self-sufficiency

Mr. Kalla said 2% reduction in losses had been achieved since December 2018, when the Congress government took over in the State. He said 76,432 agricultural power connections had been released during the last six months. The Minister said 21,770.64 MW of power was being produced in Rajasthan at present, gradually making the State self-sufficient in the sector.

The State was also promoting solar power, wind energy and renewable energy sources, he said.

Man gets death sentence for rape-murder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BHOPAL

In a speedy judgment, a Bhopal court on Thursday awarded death sentence to a 35-year-old man for raping and killing a minor girl last month.

Special Judge (for POC-SO cases) Kumudini Patel pronounced the punishment to Vishnu Bamora on two separate offences under IPC Sections 302 (murder) and 376-AB (raping a girl of 12-year-old and below).

Bamora was pronounced guilty on the basis of reports of the DNA test conducted by the Bhopal and Sagar-based forensic science laboratories and taking into account other vital aspects.

The judge examined 30 prosecution witnesses before awarding the punishment.

Sukhbir, Majithia get bail in case filed by ex-judge

Both told to attend next hearing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHANDIGARH

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Thursday granted bail to Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal and party leader Bikram Singh Majithia in a criminal case filed against them by Justice (retired) Ranjit Singh for allegedly making derogatory remarks against him.

A.P.S. Deol, the counsel for the petitioner, told reporters that the single Bench of Justice Amit Rawal ordered both Mr. Badal and Mr. Majithia to furnish a personal bond of ₹1 lakh each for the bail. The next date of hearing has been fixed on August 21 and both the leaders have been asked to be present in the court.

Justice Singh headed a one-member commission set up by the Congress government in 2017 to investigate the incidents of sacrilege of Guru Granth Sahib and other religious texts during the SAD-BJP rule in 2015. The commission's re-



SAD chief Sukhbir Badal.

port was tabled in the Punjab Assembly last year.

In his complaint, filed under Section 10-A of The Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952, Justice Singh alleged that both Mr. Badal and Mr. Majithia made derogatory statements against him to bring disrepute to him and the commission.

'Waste paper'

He referred to an incident when the two leaders, during a public protest, described his inquiry report as "waste paper, deserving to be relegated to the trash bin". In May, the HC had issued notices to the Akali leaders to appear before it. (With PTI inputs)

'Cars won't be stopped for document checking'

Haryana DGP's bid for road safety

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHANDIGARH

Haryana Director General of Police Manoj Yadava on Thursday said the police would not stop vehicles in Haryana for checking of documents if motorists abide by traffic and road safety rules on the roads.

"Instructions have been given to all Commissioners of Police, IGP Traffic and Highways and District Superintendents of Police to stop checking for documents if a vehicle has not visibly violated any rules," Mr. Yadava said here in a statement.

However, he said that documents would be checked and subsequently challan will be issued in case any driver is found to have committed a traffic violation.

"The objective of implementing this initiative is to make motorists follow traffic rules, to ensure road safety to the maximum and to curb violations on the roads," the DGP said.

"Our key purpose for rou-

The objective of implementing this initiative is to make motorists follow traffic rules and ensure road safety

MANOJ YADAVA
Haryana Director General of Police

tine traffic checking is to ensure that road and traffic rules are followed as well as to educate and make people aware about having a safe and secure journey. Henceforth, no unit of the district police, including the traffic department, would conduct checks solely for the purpose of ascertaining whether the driver has complete documents. Safe driving by following traffic rules would also help in preventing road accidents," he added.

Mr. Yadava said driver's licence and vehicle registration, however, would be checked by the police for crime prevention during area sealing after heinous crimes as well as during night domination exercises.

Nod to pursue case against Pehlu's sons

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA JAIPUR

An Alwar court has accepted the police plea to investigate further a cow smuggling case against a truck operator and the two sons of Pehlu Khan, who was lynched two years ago for allegedly transporting the animals illegally.

While the Rajasthan police had registered a case of murder soon after the Haryana resident's death in April 2017, it was also investigating the cow smuggling charge.

The Ashok Gehlot government faced criticism recently after a charge sheet was filed against Khan's sons, Irshad and Aarif, and truck operator Khan Mohammad.

Mr. Gehlot had then said the police could reinvestigate aspects of the cow smuggling case, registered when the BJP government was in power. Days later, the police filed an application in court seeking permission to conduct a further probe.

Car rams men doing yoga, six killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA JAIPUR

A speeding car rammed a group of people doing yoga by the roadside in Rajasthan's Bharatpur district on Thursday morning, killing six men, police said.

The accident occurred on Kumer-Dhanwada highway

when the car driver lost control over the vehicle.

The group of six men was taking a morning walk and had stopped on the way for a yoga session, Kumer SHO Raghbeer Singh said.

Nobody in the group survived. Four men died on the spot and two other suc-

cumbed to injuries later, the officer said.

The victims were identified as Raghubar Baghel (62), Nirotlal Saini (65), Makhani Lal Kathik (60), Harishankar Tamboli (65), Prem Singh Baghel (55) and Rameshwar Baghel (45), the SHO said.



Court summons for Mamata's nephew

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday summoned Abhishek Banerjee, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew and Trinamool Congress MP, on a complaint alleging that he had filed a false affidavit regarding his educational qualifications while submitting his nomination papers for the 2014 general election.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Samar Vishal directed Mr. Banerjee, who represents Diamond Harbour in the Lower House, to appear before it on July 25. "The respondent, Abhishek Banerjee, is summoned for commission of offence of under Section 125A of the Representation of People Act, 1951," the judge said.

Don't yield an inch to BJP, Mamata tells party legislators

'Form teams in every area to remain abreast of developments'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA
Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee on Thursday directed her party MLAs not to yield "even an inch" of political space to the BJP and take up programmes to counter its activities in their respective areas.

Addressing party MLAs at the party headquarters here, Ms. Banerjee asked district leaders not to frequent Kolkata and asked the legislators to form four-member teams in every area to remain abreast of developments. The team should comprise two booth-level workers, one social media activist and a district-level functionary.

Party sources said during



Mamata Banerjee

the closed-door meeting, Ms. Banerjee stressed the need to effectively counter the BJP in every constituency in the run-up to the 2021 Assembly polls.

"Don't yield even an inch of space to the BJP. If the BJP takes up any programme in your area, take up a programme the very next day to counter it," a source quoted

her as saying.

Ms. Banerjee said the district leaders should not come to Kolkata all the time, but instead stay rooted in their districts in order to establish good mass contacts. "Spend more time in local tea stalls to understand the people's pulse. Try to devise novel ways of mass contact," she said.

Ms. Banerjee has been devoting more time to the party organisation since the Lok Sabha election, where her party suffered serious setbacks. Its seat tally came down to 22 from 34, while the BJP came up with a stunning performance bagging 18 seats.

The BJP had won only two seats in 2014.

Undertake field tours, Naveen tells his Cabinet colleagues

'Take feedback from beneficiaries of different welfare schemes in the State'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has asked his ministerial colleagues to undertake extensive field tours to know about the work being done by their respective departments in different parts of the State.

Addressing a meeting of the Council of Ministers at the State Secretariat here on Thursday, Mr. Patnaik also asked the Ministers to make surprise visits to different offices and institutions. Such visits will add impetus to service delivery, he added.

The Chief Minister also thanked the Ministers for submitting the monthly reports on the work done by their respective depart-



Naveen Patnaik

ments.

Mr. Patnaik had on June 4 asked the Ministers to submit the reports with his office by the seventh of every month.

In his address, Mr. Patnaik also advised his Ministers to directly meet people, understand their problems and take feedback from the

beneficiaries of different welfare schemes being implemented by the government.

5T formula

The Chief Minister reminded his colleagues of his 5T (transparency, technology, teamwork, transformation and time) formula to make the government bring about changes in the lives of the people. "You have to pay personal attention to this," he told the Ministers.

Emphasising that computerisation was essential for transparency and efficiency, the CM asked the Ministers to ensure that all official work was done through the Odisha Secretariat Workflow Automation System.

The new Council of Ministers, which held its first meeting on May 29, had adopted the Biju Janata Dal's election manifesto as the State government programme for the next five years.

At that meeting, the Chief Minister had told the Ministers that the State government would have to apprise the people of the implementation of the promises made by the ruling party before the elections.

The BJD has been in power in the State since March 2000. It won 112 seats in the 147-member State Assembly in the elections held earlier this year and Mr. Patnaik became Chief Minister for a fifth consecutive term.

SC panel asks Odisha to plug road safety gaps

Says most signages, markings, signals do not conform to IRC specifications

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

A Supreme Court-appointed committee on road safety has observed that Odisha lacks road signage, markings and traffic signals conforming to the Indian Road Congress specifications.

The committee headed by Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan made the observations based on a report of Institute of Road Traffic Education, which had conducted training on road safety for traffic police personnel deployed in Bhubaneswar, and for civil engineers on standard installation of traffic-control devices, types of road traffic viola-

tions and identification of black spots.

Although the IRTE conducted the survey in Bhubaneswar, the committee wanted the Odisha government to "treat it as a sample study and implement the recommended actions throughout the State".

11% rise in fatalities

The committee's observation becomes significant as there has been a rise of 11% in road accident fatalities in Odisha. According to State Road Safety Council, which met here earlier this week, 5,315 people were killed in road accidents in Odisha in 2018, 525

more than 2017 when 4,790 people lost their lives. The average growth in road accident fatalities in the country has been below 1% in this period.

"A large percentage of road signage, road markings and traffic signals do not conform to IRC specifications," the SC committee said in a letter to the State government.

"Police personnel were not fully conversant in Motor Vehicles (Driving) Regulations, 2017. These regulations have been notified by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways on June 23, 2017, and have superseded the

rules of the Road Regulations, 1989," the letter addressed to the State Transport Secretary said.

The committee recommended that all the road signage, markings and traffic signals should conform to the IRC specifications.

"Traffic police, transport officers and road engineers should be imparted training in Motor Vehicle Acts, 1988, Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989 and all the rules and regulations made thereunder," it added. Enforcement of traffic laws by the State agencies should be as per the extant law and evidence, the committee emphasised.

Redevelopment bylaws to ease friction, streamline process

Consent reduced to 51% of society members; blueprint to be circulated among all

SHARAD VYAS
MUMBAI

The State government has issued bylaws for the smooth redevelopment of old housing societies. The new rules are likely to streamline disputes in societies and encourage redevelopment of thousands of old structures, officials said.

The changes were made following complaints of non-transparency, disputes on appointment of contractors, violation of the redevelopment rules, delays in tendering, among others.

The rules, issued by the Maharashtra Co-operation, Textiles and Marketing Department this week, have reduced the consent clause to 51% from 70% of society members. The government has already relaxed the consent clause in other redevelopment schemes such as that of a slum, but it has been done for housing societies only now.

The bylaws also list the procedures and modalities for the managing committee of a society, streamlining procedures for conducting meetings to granting sanc-



Way forward: The new rules list procedures for the managing committee of a society to conduct meetings for granting sanction to redevelopment. ■ FILE PHOTO

tion to redevelopment. The bylaws have fixed the minimum quorum required for a meeting of the managing committee at one-fifth of the membership strength. A special general body meeting must be called within two months of receipt of the application for redevelopment, and its minutes circulated among all the members within seven days.

The redevelopment blueprint needs to be uploaded by all societies and mailed to members. Similarly, once

the contractor and architect are appointed, they must be given an appointment letter in less than 30 days.

Experts and citizens are happy with the new rules. "I welcome this progressive decision of the chief minister. It will help streamline disputes in societies and encourage redevelopment of old, dilapidated buildings for safe habitation," said Manoj Kotak, Bharatiya Janata Party MP from Mumbai North East, who has been receiving lot of complaints.

However, some still feel the rebate in cess given to old structures under Rule 33 (7) of the Development Control Rules in the island city must be extended to structures in the suburbs. "The government has taken the onus of repair of cessed structures in the island city, but in suburban areas, the buildings do not pay cess and come under Rule 33 (7). The government must remove this injustice against old buildings in the suburbs," said Parag Alavani, MLA from Vile Parle.

Rahul is like captain who jumps out when the ship is sinking: BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

Senior BJP leader Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Thursday that Rahul Gandhi resigning as Congress president was akin to captain of the ship jumping out when it is sinking.

Addressing a press conference here, the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister said, "The Congress president has rendered his resignation. I had heard that when a ship sinks, its captain tries to save it till the end. But here the captain himself has jumped out."

"Mahatma Gandhi had said immediately after Independence that the Congress' objective was to gain freedom and now it should be dissolved.

"I think after Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru also said so. Now, the fake Gandhi will certainly fulfil the dream of the real Gandhi and will finish off Congress," Mr. Chouhan said.

The BJP did not waste

time in rejoicing after the Lok Sabha victory but started working on expanding the organisation with a membership drive, he said.

"This is not for electoral gains. The BJP is not an election-oriented party. The BJP is a campaign for national rejuvenation. While we are working on expansion of the organisation, parties like Congress are on ventilator," he said.

"When one should dig in and work hard, the president of that party (Congress) is missing from action," he added.

Asked if his party will have the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh dissolved, Mr. Chouhan said the BJP was not toppling governments anywhere.

"There is no one in Congress who will do crisis management. Who would Congress MLAs go to as there is no one to listen to them? If it falls under its own weight, what can we do?" the BJP vice-president said.

Universities must not fail to generate merit: Fadnavis

Says the need is to build a competent human resource force

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Calling for universities to not merely function as institutions doling out degrees, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday urged varsities to build themselves into centres of innovation.

"We see universities as hubs of innovation and not merely as institutions giving out degrees. If we fail to generate merit in our varsities, then we will not be able to build a competent human resource force. Hence, I appeal to all universities to focus more on skill development," he said, pointing out that the service sector was set to grow in the near future owing to a number of provisions in the recent Union Budget.

Mr. Fadnavis was speaking in Solapur at the ground breaking ceremony for the new administrative building and exam centre of Purnyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Solapur University.

"It is the responsibility of a university to churn out a



Universities need to be hubs of innovation, said Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in Solapur on Wednesday. ■ FILE PHOTO

skilled workforce to build the economy," said the Chief Minister, who also approved of setting up of a chair named after Ahilyadevi Holkar, the legendary 18th Century queen.

Mr. Fadnavis also performed the ground breaking ceremony for a housing scheme project for journalists in Solapur.

"Our government has already extended the coverage of Mahatma Phule JanArogya Yojana to journalists and now, a pension scheme for them will

be implemented in a month's time," he said.

He said his government was working extensively to implement housing schemes for all sections of society.

Mr. Fadnavis was in the district ahead of the annual worship of Lord Vitthal in the temple town of Pandharpur. Mr. Fadnavis will offer prayers early on Friday morning. Last year, the reservation agitation by Maratha outfits had compelled Mr. Fadnavis to cancel this annual event.

Showers bring relief from water woes

Fill up Pune's dams, prompting discharge from Khadakwasla dam

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Heavy and incessant showers in the catchment areas in Pune district over the past 72 hours have filled up the Khadakwasla dam – the city's potable water lifeline – to full capacity, prompting a massive discharge of water into the Mutha river by the irrigation department.

The other three dams supplying water to the district – Panshet, Varasgaon and Temghar – too are filling up rapidly, helping reduce the city's water woes.

Authorities said that while Khadakwasla had filled up to its capacity of 1.97 tmc (thousand million cubic feet), the four dams had recorded a collective storage of 11.5 tmc, which is 40% of the cumulative storage capacity.

"We have opened five sluice gates of the Khadakwasla dam and have discharged 3,500 cusecs of water into the Mutha river till Thursday. The continuous rainfall led us to begin the process of discharge from Wednesday itself. If the rain continues like this, all four dams will soon fill up to their cumulative capacity of 29.15 tmc," said Pandurang Shelar, Executive Engineer, Khadakwasla Irrigation Division.



Overflowing: Water being discharged from Khadakwasla dam in Pune on Thursday after heavy rainfall in the region. ■ MANDAR TANNU

Mr. Shelar further said that the present storage capacity in Khadakwasla was enough to fulfil the city's needs for the next eight months.

The irrigation department had alerted the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) before the discharge so that the civic body could take requisite safety measures for those living along the river

front and for commuters using the roads and bridges over the Mutha for travelling.

While the Khadakwasla dam is 100% full, the Panshet dam has filled up to 45% of its capacity while the Varasgaon and Temghar dams are filled to 32% and 17% of their total capacities respectively.

Soaring mercury levels in the summer months had

seen reserve water stocks plummeting in these four dams, causing it to fall below 3.25 tmc of their cumulative stock. The water crisis had led to more than 1,000 tankers servicing the Pune and Nashik divisions throughout the summer months and in June with the water crisis prolonged by the delay in monsoon.

Landslide at Vaitarna power plant's main gate hits operations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NASHIK

Operations at the Vaitarna hydro power plant in Igatpuri tehsil of Nashik district were affected following a landslide at its entrance gate, the police said.

Nobody was injured in the incident, they said.

"The Vaitarna power station is surrounded by hills. On Wednesday morning, rocks and mud came crashing down on the main gate of the power plant. Although nobody was hurt in the incident, power generation was suspended," a police official said.

The landslide wrecked two police chowkies located near the main gate. Some weapons of the police personnel posted there and some motorcycles got buried under the rubble, he said, adding that efforts are on to clear the path.

The power plant is built on Vaitarna dam, which is located around 45 km from Nashik city.

The region has been experiencing heavy rains for the last few days. According to the weather department, Igatpuri recorded 172 mm rainfall in 24 hours ending 8 a.m. on Wednesday.

Police, Naxals exchange fire in Gadchiroli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

A team of police commandos and naxals exchanged fire in Gadchiroli district on Thursday morning.

The skirmish took place in Burgi-Pipli forest near Halewada in Etapalli tehsil, a police official said.

The rebels opened fire on the police team when it was patrolling in the area, leading to a shoot-out which lasted for a few minutes, he said.

The naxals then fled into deep forest, he said. Police recovered arms and ammunition from the spot and are searching for the rebels.

When reaching school is fraught with danger

Children in this Gujarat village face a precarious journey everyday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
VADODARA

Going to school every morning has become a Herculean task for children from a tiny village in Gujarat's Chhotaudepur district as they have no option but to cross a river, which is in spate after torrential rains.

Rolling up their trousers, these children, mostly tribals, aged between five and 10 years, have to wade through the waters of the fast-flowing Orsang river passing through the Bokadiya village, where the road leading to their government-run school has got submerged.

They take at least 20 minutes to cross the river and reach the primary school, located about one km away on the other side of the river, said village sarpanch (head) Naarsing Rathwa.

"Most of the time, these children cross the river by forming a human chain which prevents them from falling into the water. Those still quite young sit on their parents' shoulders to reach the school," ac-



The government has promised a bridge for children to go to school safely. ■ PIC FOR REPRESENTATION PURPOSE

cording to Mr. Rathwa.

He said the district authorities and the State government earlier promised to construct a bridge for the safety of the children.

The primary school's principal Bhavesh Makwana said children were finding it quite difficult to wade through the water to attend classes every day.

Ghanshyam Rathwa, a Class V student said he was scared of falling while crossing the river.

Another villager said there were snakes in the

river, which was also a cause of concern.

"Crossing the river to reach the school is a big problem for the children," the sarpanch said, adding that even getting an ambulance in case of an emergency was difficult because of the flooded village road.

Rajya Sabha MP Naransinh Rathwa (Congress), who hails from Chhotaudepur, said he has appealed to the Gujarat government and the Centre to facilitate speedy construction of a bridge on the Orsang river.

Parth Pawar's driver alleges abduction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PUNE

A 26-year-old man, driver of NCP leader Parth Pawar, alleged on Thursday that he was abducted by two unidentified men from Mumbai last week.

Manoj Satpute, the complainant, claimed the culprits assaulted him inside a car before dropping him

by the roadside in Ahmednagar district, 230 km from Mumbai, according to an official of Pune Rural Police. Mr. Satpute, resident of Shirur, works as driver for Parth Pawar, son of former Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar. On July 5, two men approached him in Cola-ba, Mumbai, he said.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



R. Swaminathan AKA Shankar,
75 Years, Retd. Manager, Fertilizers Division, E.I.D. Parry Ltd, S/o Late S. Ramaswamy and R. Annapurani
Passed Away in his Sleep in the early hours of 10/7/19. Cremated the Same Evening. He will be deeply missed by his Brother R. Subrahmanian, Sisters Ammu, Savitri & Sarada and a host of Uncles, Aunts, Nephews, Nieces and Cousins
Ph: +91 90802 38205

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IN BRIEF



Uniform fees soon in A.P. engineering colleges

VIJAYAWADA
All engineering colleges in Andhra Pradesh will have a uniform fee structure soon, said HRD Minister A. Suresh, on Thursday. The new fee structure would be implemented from the current academic year. At a meeting, the Minister said the aim was to prevent commercialisation of education. Constitution of a Fee Regulation Commission was one of the promises made by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, he said.

Commissioner seeks directive to TDB

KOCHI
The Advocate Commissioner appointed by the Kerala High Court to conduct a survey of the land of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) at Sabarimala has sought a directive to the TDB to protect Sree Rama Padam at Pampa and convert it into a place of pilgrimage. In a report submitted before the High Court, Advocate Commissioner A.S.P. Kurup said Sree Rama Padam needed to be protected as per an Ashtamangala Devaprasnam held last July.

Tiger killed in territorial fight in Bandipur

MYSORU
A male tiger aged around 8 died owing to injuries sustained in a fight with another tiger in the Maddur range of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve on Thursday. T. Balachandrar, Conservator of Forests, said the tiger was sighted a few days ago during routine monitoring and it was found to be in bad shape. There was maggot infestation on its wounds, he said. "The death was due to natural causes and there was no foul play," said the official. A post-mortem was conducted.

Karnataka Legislature set to meet today amid uncertainty

Congress, JD(S) issue whips to legislators to attend proceedings of the House

NAGESH PRABHU
BENGALURU

The sessions of the Karnataka Legislature, in the recent past, have not been without drama, but the one commencing on Friday promises to have more of it.

The governing Congress and JD-S coalition is struggling to hang on despite the number of MLAs plummeting – 100 at last count – with a slew of resignations, while the opposition BJP is bent on bringing down the government, arguing that it has been reduced to a minority.

The session begins amid whips issued by the Congress and the JD(S) to its legislators to attend the proceedings of the House without fail and Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar seeking more time to scrutinise the resignation letters of the 16 MLAs (13 from the Congress and three from the JD-S).

These legislators, who were facing the threat of disqualification, appeared before the Speaker on Thursday as per the directions of the Supreme Court to resubmit their resignation letters. The Speaker said he cannot decide on them in a hurry, making their future uncertain.

Will they, won't they?

As 20 MLAs had skipped the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting on Monday, the question is whether a group among them, allegedly staying at a hotel in Mumbai at the behest of the BJP since Saturday last, would attend the session on Friday. The whip issued by Ganesh Hukkeri (Congress) is a warning to the MLAs that they would be disqualified under the Anti-defection law if they skip the legislature



Bumpy road ahead: Arrangements being made at the Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru for Friday's session. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

Why should I quit, asks CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Amid the crisis, Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy said there was "no question of him resigning".

"Did B.S. Yeddyurappa resign during a similar crisis

in 2010, when 18 MLAs, including eight Ministers, rebelled against his government? Why should I resign now? There is no question of me resigning," he told the media on Thursday when asked if he would resign.

proceedings. Though the Lower House listed its agenda for Friday as "official" business, the House is unlikely to run smoothly, given the charged political atmosphere.

Members of the governing and Opposition parties are expected to press their views and blame each other for the ongoing political stalemate, unless the House is adjourned after the obituary reference.

Meanwhile, leaders of the coalition, at both the State

and national levels, have been exploring options before them to save the 13-month-old government. The Cabinet, which met on Thursday, held discussions on the political crisis and the strategies that are possible.

Joint fight

Unlike in the previous cases, the Cabinet took note of the seriousness of the political crisis this time and all Ministers pledged to fight collectively to save the government. "This is the BJP's sixth

attempt to topple the government in the last one year and we have explored various options before us," Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Krishna Byre Gowda said.

Meanwhile, the government, whose actions are being closely monitored by Governor Vajubhai R. Vala, seems to be in no hurry to move a trust motion on the floor of the House. Instead, it has decided to face a no-confidence motion from the BJP if one comes. The BJP is clearly in a hurry to secure power, allegedly by luring coalition MLAs. "If necessary, we will move the confidence motion," Mr. Gowda said.

The government has expressed its readiness to follow all directions and advice given by the Governor in accordance with the Constitution. The BJP is expected to seek a division of votes on Bills or on the Finance Bill.

SC rejects appeal against demolition of flats in Kerala

400 families stay in blocks built in violation of CRZ norms

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has rejected a petition filed by a private builder to review its May 8 order to demolish apartment blocks at Maradu panchayat in Ernakulam district in Kerala for violating stringent coastal zone regulations.

Deciding in their chambers, a Bench of Justices Arun Mishra and Navin Sinha stood firm by its decision to raze the flats where over 400 families stay.

"Applications for oral hearing/hearing in open court are rejected. Having perused the review petitions and the connected papers with meticulous care, we do not find any justifiable reason to entertain the review petitions. The review petitions are, accordingly, dismissed," the July 10 order concluded.

Residents criticised

Recently, Justice Mishra orally launched a stinging criticism against the residents for approaching another apex court Bench to get a stay on the demolition of their apartments on the sly.

On May 8, the Bench led by Justice Mishra ordered the flats to be demolished within a month. However, on June 10, residents approached another Vacation Bench of the apex court led by Justice Indira Banerjee to get a stay. The residents had complained that they were not heard by Justice Mishra's Bench before the demolition order was passed.

A livid Justice Mishra had called the act of the residents to pit the order of one Bench against another as an "absolute fraud" committed on the court.

The judge had even threa-



Hopes shattered: Holy Faith apartments and Alfa Ventures (right) are among the five buildings at Maradu in Ernakulam that were ordered to be razed. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

tened contempt against the lawyers involved. Finally, the residents had to withdraw their plea.

On June 10, the Justice Banerjee-led Bench put on hold the demolition of the buildings for six weeks after the hapless residents pleaded that they were not even given an opportunity to be heard before the apex court passed the order to raze the five apartment blocks at Maradu in Ernakulam.

Fundamental right

One of the grounds of review filed by Alfa Ventures Pvt Ltd was that the court-appointed three-member committee had not given them a proper hearing on the show-cause notice pertaining to violations and therefore the demolition order violated their fundamental right.

The plea had alleged that the court was misled by the Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority (KCZMA) in to passing the May 8 decision. The three-member panel's report had concluded that the buildings fell within the CRZ-III limits.

The committee had stated

that as per CRZ notification of 1991 and Kerala Coastal Zone Management Plan 1996, the area in question came under CRZ III. As per the CRZ notification 1991, no construction was permitted within 200 metres from the coastal line in CRZ III.

'Unscrupulous trespass'

The review plea had submitted that the KCZMA hid a vital fact from the apex court – that is, a more recent Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) prepared pursuant to a 2011 CRZ notification was approved by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) on February 28, 2019 by which the Maradu area of Ernakulam was categorised under CRZ-II.

The May 8 judgment blamed the "devastating effects" of unbridled construction activities in eco-sensitive areas with natural water flow. It said illegal constructions on river shores and "unscrupulous trespass" into the natural path of backwaters have led to natural calamities like the recent floods in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Uttarakhand.

Common cause



Farmers performing 'Varuna Yagam' for rain at Budharam village in Nalgonda district of Telangana. ■ SINGAM VENKATARAMANA

A.P. government readies safety net for farmers

Announces ₹2,000 cr. each for calamity relief, input subsidy

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has announced a calamity relief fund with a corpus of ₹2,000 crore to provide compensation for crop loss caused by drought and cyclones.

He has also announced a provision of ₹1 crore to each MLA, irrespective of party affiliation, for addressing the drinking water problem in their respective constituencies.

The CM also announced the release of ₹2,000 crore towards agricultural input subsidy, which according to him should have been disbursed by the previous dispensation, and the establishment of laboratories in all constituencies for testing the quality of farm inputs. Be-

sides, a market stabilisation fund of ₹3,000 crore is being created, and MLAs are being appointed as honorary chairpersons of Agricultural Market Committees to enable the farmers to realise better prices for their produce.

Debt burden

These are some of the major and immediate steps being taken by the government for mitigating the impact of drought, Mr. Reddy said, while blaming the previous Telugu Desam Party government for the farm debt rising from nearly ₹87,612 crore to ₹1.49 lakh crore.

Intervening in a discussion on drought in the Assembly on Thursday, Mr. Reddy said the State received 70.1 mm rainfall against the normal 135.5 mm between June 1 and July 10,

and sowing was completed only in 3 lakh hectares, instead of 9 lakh hectares.

Help for families

During the last five years, 1,513 farmers allegedly committed suicide. But ex gratia was paid to the kin of only 391 farmers. The government decided to give compensation to the families of the 1,122 farmers, to whom the TDP government had not paid a single paisa, he said.

An ex gratia of ₹7 lakh had already been announced in respect of the farmers who met with accidental death, or had ended their lives due to financial distress, he said.

A sum of ₹300 crore was released for clearing paddy procurement dues out of the total outstanding amount of ₹900 crore, the Chief Minister said.

Inter-State River Water Hub in Kerala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has decided to establish a permanent hub in Palakkad for handling inter-State river water disputes. The Inter-State River Water Hub will become a reality in three months.

The decision was taken at the tri-monthly review meeting of the Irrigation Department convened by Water Resources Minister K. Krishnakutty here on Thursday. The facility will be constructed at a cost of ₹1.5 crore.

The meeting decided to plan new irrigation schemes for the growth of the agriculture sector. A special panel of experts will be formed for the planning process.

The Irrigation Department plans to introduce a unified software for all its offices to ensure speedy movement of files.

Pothamala menhirs stand guard on ancient necropolis

The stone structures in Udumbanchola, some up to 20 ft tall, are among the largest found in Kerala

RADHAKRISHNAN KUTTOOR
PATHANAMTHITTA

The sighting of new menhirs, perhaps the largest ever recorded in Kerala, on the Pothamala hills in the Udumbanchola taluk on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border, has thrown light on the possible existence of a major prehistoric necropolis there.

The menhirs were identified by a team of historians led by Rajeev Puliyoor, assistant professor at the Government Teachers' Training College, Elanthoor, near here, during a visit to Shanthanpara village on Tuesday.

Mr. Puliyoor told *The Hindu* that the Pothamala

hills housed hundreds of cobbled stone structures, pointing to the existence of a structured graveyard of a prehistoric civilisation.

He said the largest menhir found was 20 feet tall and 6 feet wide, with a thickness of 5 feet.

Harikrishnan M., Jomon Jose and M.S. Jayan, assistant professors at the Nedumkandam B.Ed College, were the other team members.

Special pattern

The menhirs were planted in a specific geometrical pattern on a cluster of hills, Mr. Puliyoor said. He said the exquisite natural settings of the hills and dales at



Reinforcing the past: The Pothamala hills have many stone structures, pointing to a structured graveyard.

Pothamala made the yet-to-be explored megalithic site different from similar sites spotted in other parts of the State. Most of these

structures were oriented in the east-west direction.

The megalithic stone sentinels at Pothamala might hold the key to the hitherto

unexplored facets of a civilisation that dated back around 3,000 years, said Mr. Puliyoor. He urged the Archaeological Survey of India and the Archaeology Department to conduct a full-scale excavation and detailed study of this megalithic site without delay.

70 sites spotted earlier

Seventy megalithic sites have already been identified in different parts of Idukki by researchers and historians, including 40 megalithic sites in the Udumbanchola taluk itself. But no serious attempts have been made to understand their distribution pattern.

In Telangana, shifting ancient documents poses a challenge

As govt. moves Secretariat, one department needs extra care

M. RAJEEV
HYDERABAD

The Telangana government's decision to shift the Secretariat paving the way for the construction of a new state-of-the-art complex is turning out to be a challenge for at least one department located in the existing complex – the Interim Repository of the Telangana State Archives and Research Institute.

The interim repository hosts several records of the State, including the historical records, in its possession. Spread in over 20 lakh folios, these records, already brittle and dilapidated, re-



The Interim Repository of the Telangana State Archives. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

quire adequate precautions for shifting to a new location without much damage. "Unlike the documents of other departments which can be

bundled with ease, these documents require special attention," a senior official said.

Nizams' letters in folio

In addition to the documents relating to the State Secretariat from 1969, the repository contains personal collections of several eminent people, including some communications of Nizams of the erstwhile Hyderabad State that have been classified as confidential.

It boasts of the Indian ephemeris, a collection of data giving calculated positions of celestial objects, from AD 700 to 1779.

IN BRIEF



Centre committed to privatise Air India

NEW DELHI
The government is committed to disinvestment of Air India but wants the national carrier to remain in Indian hands, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri informed the Lok Sabha on Thursday. He said the previous attempt to disinvest the carrier could not succeed, but now the government has learnt its lessons. PTI

India hands over body of PoK boy to Pakistan

SRINAGAR
Three days after the body of an eight-year-old boy from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir was fished out from the Kishenganga river in Kashmir's Gurez, it was handed over to the family as Indian and Pakistani Armies decided to set up a new exchange point, in a rare move. The body was handed to the Pakistan Army at 2 p.m. at a point on the Chorwan border.

Sikhs for Justice spreads dhare, says MEA

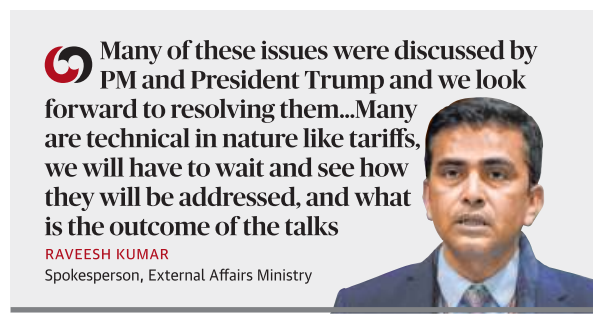
NEW DELHI
Canada-based advocacy group, Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), which is campaigning online for Khalistani cause, is a fringe group without support from the global Sikh community, said the Ministry of External Affairs on Wednesday. "We have taken up this matter very strongly with Canada. The Sikhs for Justice has supported anti-India activities and violent forms of extremism in Punjab and elsewhere," said Raveesh Kumar, MEA spokesperson.

U.S., India to begin formal talks on trade today

The two sides will discuss regulatory changes by India on data localisation, e-commerce and import curbs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI
Visiting U.S. trade officials will meet Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday, after two days of talks with a "composite delegation" from the Commerce and External Affairs Ministries, the first formal effort to resolve the recent trade impasse.

"Since India's election period has now passed, USTR officials are visiting India for relationship building with Indian government counterparts, including introductory meetings," said a spokesperson for the United States Trade Representative (USTR). The U.S. delegation



Many of these issues were discussed by PM and President Trump and we look forward to resolving them... Many are technical in nature like tariffs, we will have to wait and see how they will be addressed, and what is the outcome of the talks
RAVEESH KUMAR
Spokesperson, External Affairs Ministry

led by the Assistant USTR for South and Central Asia, Christopher Wilson, and an Additional Secretary from the Commerce Ministry is leading the Indian side.

Nagaland to frame RIIN norms after consultation

Call for restricting survey to non-locals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

The Nagaland government has said that guidelines for implementing a localised version of the National Register of Citizens – being updated in Assam – will be framed in consultation with civil society groups and traditional tribal bodies.

The decision follows remarks from organisations such as the Naga Hoho, the apex body of all Nagaland's tribes, that the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) was premature and could have serious ramifications. Other groups, including the Naga Students' Federation, said the

survey should be restricted to non-locals.

The RIIN exercise was launched on Thursday with designated teams surveying people living in every village and urban ward to prepare a list of indigenous inhabitants who would be provided a certificate.

More Foreigners' Tribunals in Assam

200 to be set up in addition to the existing 100 to handle NRC cases after July 31

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

The Assam government will establish 200 Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs) for handling cases of people to be excluded from the final National Register of Citizens (NRC). July 31 is the deadline for publishing the NRC.



Deadline pressure: Officials checking documents at an appeal hearing on the NRC, which will be out on July 31. •AFP

These FTs would be in addition to the existing 100 and are part of the 1,000 that the Centre has decided to help Assam set up in view of the pressure anticipated in disposing of cases of people to be left out of the NRC.

Officials in the State's Home and Political Department said the new FTs would be distributed among six districts. Kamrup (Metropolitan) district, which covers Guwahati and its outskirts, will get 67 of these, followed by Nagaon with 39, Jorhat with 31, Bongaigaon with 22, Sonitpur with 21, and Cachar with 20.

ing Bengali-speaking Hindus and Muslims feel more FTs will bring more misery unless the tribunals are made fully judicial bodies. More than 80% of the 41.09 lakh people put in the two exclusion lists belong to these two groups.

Those left out, however, were provided windows to get back in the NRC after re-submitting admissible citizenship papers.

According to the All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU), the FTs and the border wing of the Assam Police "are foreigner-producing factories". The border wing picks suspected foreigners and refers their cases to the FTs.



U.S. concern at treatment of Muslims

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN WASHINGTON DC
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi has said the U.S. Congress was, and continues to be, concerned about the treatment of Muslims in India.

Ms. Pelosi's comments came during a conversation with Chairman of the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) John Chambers at a Forum event in Washington DC.

"We were proud to welcome him [Prime Minister Modi] ...to a joint session of Congress [in 2016]. We had some concerns about the treatment of Muslims in India – I have to mention it – then and now," Ms. Pelosi said at the conclusion of a talk.

Ms. Pelosi, however, also praised Mr. Modi's oratorical skills, calling a speech he gave during her visit to India with former U.S. President Barack Obama, "one of the most fantastic speeches" she had ever heard.

Ms. Pelosi dwelt on the values that anchored ties between India and the U.S., speaking of Mahatma Gandhi's influence on the civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

'Facial-recognition system will not violate privacy'

Centre says it will aid law enforcement

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Automated Facial Recognition System (AFRS) will not violate privacy of citizens and is only being developed to help the law enforcement agencies identify criminals, missing children and unidentified bodies in a scientific and speedy manner, a senior government official said on Thursday.

The AFRS, being implemented by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), is a component of the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS), a national database of crimes and criminals.

An official said the database would be accessible only to law enforcement agencies.

Privacy concerns

The NCRB last week invited bids for the AFRS that would even "capture face images from CCTV feed and generate alerts if a blacklist match is found", triggering privacy concerns.



At present, there are 7.71 lakh cases of missing persons in the CCTNS database that includes 98,000 children, the official said.

"This software will be used only in respect of such persons who figure on the CCTNS data base – accused persons, prisoners, missing persons, unidentified dead persons – and is not going to be used on any other database," the official said.

The AFRS will add another information layer to investigation by allowing matching photograph of suspect or missing person with the database of CCTNS. "This is already done manually," the official said.

To help out start-ups, govt. to buy goods

VIJAITA SINGH NEW DELHI

The Centre has proposed to relax the General Financial Rules (GFR) to enable all government organisations to accept "untested innovative goods and services solutions from start-ups".

The government plans to do away with "competitive tendering" while placing orders from such start-ups as it amounts to competition between "established and new business entities".

The plan proposes that a minimum 2% of the procurement budget of a Ministry or department may be "earmarked for procurement of such goods or services which are yet to be tested or evaluated and brought to market as acceptable commercial product service or technology".

In her Budget speech on July 5, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced easing tax scrutiny for start-ups and those investing in such firms.

Maratha quota is a 'one community' law: plea

SC to hear petition challenging quota

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday will hear a group of social workers, academics and representatives of the Muslim community who have appealed against a Bombay High Court decision upholding a "one-person or one-community" Maharashtra legislation providing reservation to the Maratha community in education and public employment.

The petitioners, led by Mohammad Sayeed Noori Shafi Ahmed, say the Maharashtra legislation is against the very tenets of equality enshrined as a fundamental right in the Constitution.

A Bench led by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi will consider the case of the group, represented by senior advocate S.B. Talekar and advocates Vipin Nair and Madhavi Ayyappan, who said the High Court decision was seriously erroneous and based on incomplete data.

The Bench is also scheduled to examine a separate petition filed by NGO Youth

for Equality through its representative Sanjeet Shukla, which said the 12% and 13% quota to Maratha community had breached the 50% cap on reservation fixed by the Indra Sawhney judgment of the apex court.

52 Muslim communities

The appeal by Mr. Ahmed and others meanwhile said the high court judgment, on June 27, had led to hostile discrimination by not addressing the issues raised by 52 least-developed Muslim communities in the State in need of social and educational uplift.

The High Court judgment has worked to favour only the Maratha community for quota benefits in education and public sector jobs.

Petitioners narrated how Maharashtra had issued an ordinance for providing 5% reservation to 52 Muslim communities in 2014. However, the ordinance had lapsed and Maharashtra did not take any steps to legislate to provide reservation to the communities.

Amendments to Forest Act repressive, says Brinda Karat

'They criminalise all aspects of the tribal life'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

CPI(M) Polit Bureau member Brinda Karat has termed the amendments to the Indian Forest Act repressive, and said they will criminalise all aspects of tribal life.

In a letter to Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar, she said the 1927 Act had served as an instrument for the British colonialists to establish government ownership of forests and declare tribal communities encroachers, giving legal sanction to the historical injustices meted out to the tribal communities. "You have sought to play down the extremely repressive measures proposed in the Act and have entirely ig-



Brinda Karat

nored the bulldozing of the rights of tribal communities in particular," she said.

She said the amendments criminalised every aspect of the tribal life, giving "untrammelled powers" to the forest bureaucracy to arrest without warrant and use arms to implement the law. "The 91 clauses in the

amendments now proposed, including the entirely new sections, go beyond what the British dared to do, by militarising forest conservation."

The amendments, she said, "are a blueprint for centralization, commercialization and criminalization". "The amendments extinguish the existing rights of tribals and other traditional forest dwellers, including those recognized in the Forest Rights Act, the Wild Life Protection Act as amended in 2006, the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, the Land Acquisition and Resettlement and Rehabilitation Act, 2013, as well as the constitutional provisions in Schedule 5 and 6."

KPR Mill cancels buy-back

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Less than a week after the government proposed a 20% tax on share buy-backs, a listed company has cancelled its buy-back as the tax liability would make the offer size go beyond the limit approved by the board and the shareholders.

"We hereby inform you that we have today filed with SEBI our communication conveying that the increase in the amount of buy-back obligation due to the tax proposal in the Finance Bill 2019 was neither contemplated nor prevailing at the time of the consideration and the approvals of the board and shareholders," said KPR Mill in a statement to the stock exchange.

NCLAT order on Essar Steel: lender protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Axis Bank joined State Bank of India by going public with its displeasure on the recent NCLAT judgment putting secured creditors at par with the operational creditors.

"The NCLAT order does beg the question if this is how the proceeds will be shared, then secured creditors will ask what is the need to go to the IBC and not wait for liquidation," Axis Bank MD and CEO Amitabh Chaudhry said.

He said it was still unclear on what was the formula that was adopted by the NCLAT while approving ArcelorMittal's ₹42,000-crore bid.

'Global gold demand may fall 2.4%'

World Gold Council cites Centre's decision to raise duty on yellow metal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The government's decision to increase duties on gold could result in 2.4% decline in the global demand for the precious metal in 2019, while the long-term demand in the Indian market could fall by around 1% every year if the duty becomes permanent, according to the World Gold Council (WGC).

"... we estimate that the recent announcement of a 2.5% increase to gold's import duty by the Indian Ministry of Finance may result in a reduction in 2019 demand of approximately 2.4%. And that, if the higher levy were to become permanent, it could reduce long-term Indian consumer demand by slightly less than 1% per year," stated a report by



Reforms being implemented in India and China are likely to support long-term gold demand, says WGC. ■ REUTERS

the global organisation.

While presenting the Budget on July 5, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed increasing the customs duty on gold and other precious metals from 10% to 12.5%.

Incidentally, the All-India

Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council had sought a reduction in import duty on gold, in its pre-budget recommendations submitted to the Finance Ministry.

Meanwhile, WGC is of the view that broad structural economic reforms that are

being implemented in both India and China are likely to support long-term demand for gold. The global body also expects central bank gold demand, led by emerging markets, to remain positive in the near future.

Overall demand 'robust'

"For the rest of the year, we believe that consumer demand may be soft and speculative activity could amplify price movements but, overall, it is likely that investment demand will remain robust and central banks will continue their net purchasing trend," added the report.

According to WGC, over the next 6-12 months, financial market uncertainty and accommodative monetary policy are likely to support gold investment demand.

'Exempt tea sector from TDS on cash'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The Indian Tea Association (ITA) has sought exemption from the Centre's budgetary proposal of 2% tax deducted at source for cash withdrawals of more than ₹1 crore annually.

The association said that banking infrastructure in areas around tea estates and villages where workers lived, was not adequate.

The total annual wage payout for the 9 lakh industry workers is about ₹8,000 crore in Assam and North Bengal. During demonetisation, servicing them proved to be a problem as neither the banks were adequately staffed to handle payment volumes, nor were proper ATM services available, it said.



Rafael's Pini Yungman (left) and chairman of Kalyani Group Baba N. Kalyani in Hyderabad on Thursday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

Kalyani JV gets missile kits order for \$100 mn

Delivery may begin from Q4 this fiscal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

A joint venture of a Kalyani group firm and Israel's Rafael Advanced Systems has secured a \$100 million contract for manufacturing 1,000 Barak-8 MRSAM missile kits.

Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems (KRAS), the joint venture, in which the Indian partner's holding is 51% and the rest is with Rafael, will manufacture the kits at its production facility near Hyderabad and supply them to Bharat Dynamics for further integration. Eventually, the product will be used by the Indian Army and the Air Force.

A crucial component, the kits in the mid-section of the missiles will contain all control and automation, a senior executive of KRAS told the media here on Thursday. The first set of the kits, under the nearly four-year delivery schedule, is expected to begin from the fourth quarter this fiscal.

Receiving the contract, Kalyani Group chairman Baba Kalyani said the order was a testimony to the capabilities existing in the Indian private sector and how they could be utilised to achieve

the Make in India dream. "We are confident of executing many more such orders."

He said Rafael was sharing all the technology to make this product at the plant in Hyderabad that was inaugurated in August 2017. "Going forward [we] will be actively engaged in manufacturing and supply of some of the advanced systems of Rafael portfolio to friendly nations from Hyderabad. Also plan to leverage the engineering expertise of existing KRAS team towards integration of weapon platform," he said.

Second facility

As the production expands, the capabilities would also expand, Mr. Kalyani said, adding there were plans for putting up a second facility.

The joint venture manufactured several products and its exports were worth \$15 million. KRAS is expected to ramp up the headcount to 300 technical experts by 2023.

Rafael executive VP and general manager of Air and Missile Defense Systems Division Pini Yungman emphasised KRAS's commitment to the operational readiness of the Indian Army and IAF.

De Beers to invest \$10 bn for global expansion

To expand in China, India markets

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

London-based De Beers Group, that specialises in diamond exploration, mining, retail, trading and industrial diamond manufacturing, has embarked on a \$10 billion five-year global market and mine expansion drive.

Stephen Lussier, executive vice-president – marketing, De Beers Group and also chairman of Forevermark, the group's diamond brand, told *The Hindu* that the group had chalked out a major global expansion plan that would include a combination of inorganic and organic activities, technology upgradation, adding more mining ships to its existing

five such vessels plus expanding existing key markets, including China, India, the U.S. and Japan.

"We are investing \$10 billion towards various global expansion activities planned for the next five years.

'Add more ships

"Our mandate is to expand the life of existing mines and make them technologically advanced. We will also be adding more mining ships, each at a cost of \$500 million. We are focussing on future smart mining to improve overall safety in diamond mining. With this, locating pure and natural diamonds will also come easy for us," he said.

Bids invited for Pawan Hans

Centre aims to sell 51% in chopper firm in third attempt

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday invited bids for selling its entire stake of 51% in Pawan Hans Limited in its third attempt at divesting its stake in the chopper firm. Pawan Hans is a 51:49 venture between the Ministry of Civil Aviation and ONGC, and has a fleet of 43 helicopters.

The successful bidder will have the option to buy ONGC's stake of 49% in Pawan Hans. The government has sweetened the deal by reducing the net worth criteria for bidders to apply, from ₹500 crore to ₹350 crore.

It has also offered to indemnify the successful bidder of 51% of the liabilities related to tax and statutory dues of ₹576.99 crore, which was among the reasons why



the last two attempts at disinvestment failed, according to sources.

August 22 deadline

The company's capital stands at ₹560 crore as on March 31, 2019. Interested entities are required to submit bids by August 22, and the Centre will announce the shortlisted bidders by September 12.

Shortlisted bidders will be

required to submit a financial bid in the form of price per share for acquiring 51% Government of India stake.

The successful bidder will be required to lock-in its shareholding in Pawan Hans for three years. It can't sell, transfer or mortgage the company's assets for two years or terminate any of the permanent employees for one year from the completion of the transaction.

The heliport owned by the firm in New Delhi is not part of the stake sale, though the selected bidder will have the right to use it for the first two years. Employees and management of Pawan Hans can also bid either independently or in consortium or as a joint venture along with a bank, venture capitalist or a financial institution.

A documentary on Vivian Fernandes becoming a pioneer of desi hip-hop chronicles his rap to riches story

SUCHETA CHAKRABORTY

There is a moment in Zoya Akhtar's *Gully Boy* when Murad (Ranveer Singh) asks Sky (Kalki Koechlin) why she is interested in him. He has just realised that her lavish apartment's bathroom alone is larger than his whole house. Their social, economic and cultural backgrounds are widely dissimilar. And the confident, Western-educated Sky's romantic advances both flatter and surprise Murad. Her answer, that he is above all, an artist and that his circumstances make no difference, is a belief that lies at the very heart of this underdog story and is undoubtedly its most rousing theme. This idea is reinforced in a new documentary titled *Gully Life: The Story of Divine* that premiered on Discovery Channel (media partner) on July 1. Zoya Akhtar appears in person, no longer having to speak through fictional characters. "Suddenly, it doesn't matter where you come from and who you were," she says, "you immediately transcend all barriers that society puts in front. Only art does that."

Then and now

Akhtar is talking about rapper Vivian Fernandes aka Divine whose heartening story partially influenced *Gully*



Hip-hop homeland An animated still from the documentary; and Divine during his performances
•SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



sional life is the sense of community - the presence of a brotherhood that is supportive, reliable and expanding. Right at the start of the film he speaks of the ties that bind the people of a 'gully' together and then proceeds to introduce to the viewer old and new friends, acknowledging their contributions to his life and music. At the same time, through initiatives like the setting up of Gully Gang Entertainment, a record label, and Gully Fest, a hip-hop festival, Divine voices his hopes of seeking out and bringing into the fold young rappers who have hitherto had little opportunity to showcase their talent.

There is much talk of *Gully Boy* throughout the documentary with Divine, Zoya Akhtar and Ranveer Singh excitedly recounting how the collaboration took place and how much the film's music benefited from it. From his early personal experiences to his meteoric rise in the burgeoning world of Indian hip-hop, Murad's arc in the film does to some extent reflect Divine's own. The film has undoubtedly helped to draw attention to this artistic movement thriving on the margins although many may question if it and the mainstream industry will help to nurture it in the long run. Divine for one seems hopeful, asserting, "after *Gully Boy*, hip-hop is going to be everywhere".

Gully Life: The Story of Divine will premiere on redbull.com on July 15 at 9 p.m., followed by a release on Divine's YouTube channel on July 17.

Growing up gully

Boy. His humble beginnings, musical artistry, rapid success and vigorous espousal of Indian hip-hop known as 'gully rap' - which he along with a few others were instrumental in giving birth to - is the subject of the new documentary. Produced by Red Bull Media House in association with Supari Studios and directed by Akshat Gupta, the 50-minute film charts Divine's story by employing a variety of methods.

The musician's earliest memories are conveyed through short bits of somewhat overdone animation as Divine recalls suffering abuse

at the hands of an alcoholic father, his constant yearning for a mother (who worked abroad and was away for months at a time) and the affection he received from his grandmother. A host of figures, fellow rappers, collaborators, friends and family, appear throughout to comment on Divine's musical prowess and career, highlighting significant turning points such as the making of the 'Mere Gully Mein' video or his high-octane performances at music producer Nucleya's crowd-pulling shows.

While the film's pacing

and structure are inconsistent with some inputs seeming repetitive, hidden among the general plaudits are a few seemingly unassuming and yet moving declarations. For instance, at one point, Nathaline Fernandes shyly declares that during one of his performances she saw a girl shouting out Divine's name and quietly informed her that he was her son. The moment reminded me of the scene in *Gully Boy* when Murad's teary-eyed parents look on as their son takes the stage, their pride, appreciation and understanding hard-won. In another, fellow

rapper MC Altaz thoughtfully admits that Divine's pioneering of the genre gave it, and those who practised it, a certain respectability that was lacking previously.

The most prominent voice however is Divine's own as he takes us through the gullies that he grew up in and whose experiences shaped his identity and his art. What emerges is a narrative of disenfranchisement and eventual empowerment through the creative iteration of those experiences. Starkly different from Punjabi rap and its culture of materialism and privilege, the music rising

out of the streets of Mumbai speak of everyday oppression, poverty, police brutality and corruption in a language that is local and accessible. Authenticity is key and commentators repeatedly emphasise the importance of capturing what is real, applauding Divine's ability to consistently do so.

Building communities

What also appears central to Divine's personal and profes-



FOOD SPOT

The chholey-kulchey man

If you relish spicy chickpeas and refined-flour bread, head to Ashwini Kumar Sharma's, in Connaught Place



RAHUL VERMA

I often think I know Delhi inside out, but once in a while, I must admit, I get stumped by a question. Just where is the malaria office in Connaught Place, I asked myself when I heard about a chholey-kulchey seller who sat right there. I had no clue, but kept it in mind and thought that, one day, I would go looking for the malaria office, and the chholey-kulchey man.

As luck would have it, I stumbled upon him a few days ago. I had to visit my travel agent, and was walking out of the office when I saw a man sitting at the corner. And right above him was a board that said: Anti-Malaria Office.

There are kulchey-chholey wallahs across Delhi, but I wanted to try out his food

because he had been recommended by my foodie-friend, Anubhav Sapra. Anubhav is a young man who really nurtures his passion for food - he organizes food walks, uploads videos on little known eateries and follows every lead that connects him to an interesting dish.

So, for quite a while now, I had been in search of this elusive peepay-wallah. A peepa is the canister in which the chholey is stored. I am a great fan of kulchey-chholey. I think the one who gave us the greatest pleasure was Kasturi in Bhogal. His food was so popular that you had to line up there for his delicious fare in the early hours. There was always such a crowd there that you were likely to see an empty vessel if you dawdled. Then, of course, my all-time favourite was - and is - Mukesh on Asaf Ali Road. His chholey, on a bed of mashed, fried potatoes, is flavoured with green chutneys, garnished with ginger slivers and kachaloo pieces and topped with some sweet pomegra-



nate chutney.

Peepay wallah Ashwini Kumar Sharma, who is from Chintpurni in Himachal Pradesh, serves a simpler fare -

but it is indeed very tasty. He serves a plate of two kulchas, or two bhaturas, with a generous helping of chholey for ₹20. His father started selling



A bagful of delights Ashwini Kumar Sharma
•SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

kulchey-chholey 32 years ago, and the equally able son has been carrying on with the family tradition. He cooks the chholey at home, and then brings it to this little corner, every day of the week, barring Sundays, in his peepa. He is there at 12 noon, and leaves by 4 p.m.

Before I tell you about the chholey, let me explain where he sits. If you hit Connaught Place from Regal Cinema or Rivoli, you will find him in the first block (opposite Palika), just a few metres from the travel agency Stic. He takes very little space so it

is very easy to miss him. The board above says: Anti-Malaria Operation, MCD, G-74, Connaught Place. If you walk ahead, leaving Stic to your left, you will see a big Benetton showroom, and Wenger's at the very end of the corridor.

I had the chholey, and thought it reminded me of Kasturi's fare. It was mildly spiced, and not very hot, though it did have green chillies in it. I liked the way it was being served to office-goers who were clearly regulars there. He would top the chholey with some tart chutney and then add sliced onions to it. It looked most appetizing! Later in the day, I went back to that corner of CP for some unfinished work. I found him listening to a world cup cricket match on the radio, his peepa happily empty.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

POP-UP

Zen upcycling



Today, recycling of old fabrics is haute. In line with this, Delhi-based fashion journalist and designer Sathya Bhavana, creates new forms from old clothes that her clients give her - old handwoven saris find new life as scarves, stoles, kaftans, and capes.

Through her over-a-year-old label ReVastra, she also makes new saris using the borders of an old one, accentuating it with textile-art and appliqué.

A lot of her designs are made in collaboration with the girls at Kamalini, an NGO in Sohna. Here, Bhavana also offers training in the nuances of textile art. For appliqué, she collaborates with craftsmen in Pipli.

Zero wastage, the principle that's at the core of the slow-fashion movement, stands out in ReVastra's upcycling process. Bhavana ensures any 'waste', is used to make flowers or origami accents.

Bhavana looks East for her influences, drawing from Zen mindfulness, and the style of Japanese designer Issey Miyake, who is known for his micro-pleats and origami fashion. She is also influenced by Vedic fashion, where the upper and lower garments are tied, and not buttoned. ReVastra's clothes have no hooks.

In April, Bhavana participated in Safed, a textile installation at the IGCA, making art out of a recycled sari, which will travel to New York and London later this year.

Attend their workshop 1 Sari + 2 Souls = 3 Styles Stories; 11am - 5pm, We Work, 32nd Milestone, Gurugram; +91 99101-02316.

For a listing or to be featured here, email us at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



EXHIBITION

Mixed-media

Artist and curator, Amrita Prakash has organised a group painting, art and sculpture exhibition by 21 artists called, *Beyond Colours-3*. In this show, artists from different parts of the country share a platform to display their various styles of creativity, ideas, philosophies, thoughts, perspectives and their different perceptions.

VENUE: Open Palm Court Gallery, IHC
TIME: 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.



CONCERT

Classical

Kala Mandir Performing Arts is presenting Antarnaad Within, an Indian classical concert this evening. The event will start with a light classical vocal recital by Somnath Natrajan, followed by a Bharatanatyam ballet by Binal Wala and troupe. Odissi exponent Padmashree Ranjana Gauhar will participate as the chief guest of this concert.

VENUE: Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre
TIME: 7 p.m.



MUSIC

Jazz quartet

Piano Man Jazz Club is hosting a soulful Latin jazz experience with Elena Friedrich quartet live tonight. The band will perform swing jazz, bebop jazz, post bop jazz, ballads, Latin jazz and modern jazz. Led by jazz singer Elena, the band features Paddy on the piano, Bihu on the drums and Aditya on the bass.

VENUE: B 6/7-22, Safdarjung Enclave
TIME: 9 p.m. - 11:55 p.m.



PERFORMANCE

Storytelling

Dastangoi Collective in association with Akshara Theatre has organised a three-day Dastangoi Summer Festival, in Urdu and Hindustani. Today's event will feature *Dastan Amir Hamza aur Amar Ayyaar ke Bachpan Ki* by Usman and Amina, followed by *Dastan Little Prince Ki* by Poonam Girdhani and Rajesh Kumar.

VENUE: Akshara Theatre, Baba Kharak Singh Marg
TIME: 7 p.m.



THEATRE

Opera screening

The Embassy of Spain and Instituto Cervantes in New Delhi is organising the screening of the Opera II Trovatore, this evening. The Opera is by Giuseppe Verdi and produced by the Teatro Real of Madrid. Directed by Maurizio Benini, II Trovatore is based on Antonio Garcia Gutierrez's 'El Trovador'.

VENUE: Instituto Cervantes, Hanuman Road
TIME: 6:30 p.m.



ALL EYES ON THE SPICE

Cardamom is on a bull run, but are all the stakeholders happy?

"Whoever has stock is happy, but farmers are not able to cash in on the bullish market," says Arun, explaining that most planters sold stock as prices rose, never imagining that it would touch such heights.

Tony Thomas, of PJ Thomas & Co, dealers of cardamom, based in Kumily, in the heart of the cardamom-producing region, says, "The ₹5,000 mark was artificially created and is not a reflection of the actual market. It can be managed. Re-pooling of stock will keep the bubble from bursting."

The rise in demand over the years, due to several factors, has added to the recent buoyancy. The Spices Board has been promoting the spice outside the traditional North India and West Asian markets. From 2015 to 2017, the department ran films and videos through PVR and multiplexes, "to encourage the use of the spice". Besides road shows, it launched a set of 40 short films, "video spots" on spices including cardamom, endorsed by celebrities.

Ironically, the spice is used sparingly in cuisine where it is grown, and generously in North Indian and West Asian cuisine.

From curry to tea
Its most common and popular use is in cardamom-flavoured tea, or as part of *garam masala*, a bouquet of spices. "*Garam masala*, the traditional *masala* mix, has a lot of cardamom and its use to flavour most curries should be encouraged, irrespective of where it originates from, because of its wellness properties," says Jose Varkey, corporate chef, CGH Earth.

With intermittent rains and pickings underway, the crop is due in a few weeks.

Hopefully, the prices will go hand-in-hand with a volume that will bring cheer to planters, traders and pickers alike.

the first flush of crops are to arrive and prices are at an all-time high, all eyes are on the spice.

The picturesque Cardamom Hills in Idukki district are home to the small cardamom, (the big black cardamom grows in North India) and supplies 80% of the country's out-

put. With a delayed monsoon this year and a setback due to last year's floods, the crop is still to recover to capacity. "The shortage has led to a spike in prices," says Arun Kottoor of Mali Estate in Vandanmettu.

"The crop is 30-40% less than normal, and of late, the demand has grown by 3% annually because of increased consumption in the aromatic spices, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and food industry," says GK Nair, a former beat journalist.

KJ Varkey's family owns one of the largest cardamom plantations in Kerala, Downton Estate, Pachakanam, near Periyar Tiger Reserve. He says, "Crops fell by 50% last year. There was severe wind damage." This year, his fingers are crossed, as the first flush of pickings are on.

Ironically, the dream prices are not making everybody happy. "The trader is definitely happy, but how long is the honeymoon going to last is the question," says Nair.



FACT FILE

According to Spices Board statistics, the total area under small cardamom cultivation in the country in 2017-18 is estimated at 69,330 ha, with a total production of 20,650 tonnes.

Kerala topped in both area and production with 39,080 ha with a total output of 18,350 tonnes, followed by Karnataka with 25,135 ha (1,450 tonnes) and Tamil Nadu with 5,115 ha (850 tonnes).

The major consumer of Indian cardamom, which is considered superior to its lone competitor Guatemala, in the world, in the West Asian region, is Saudi Arabia. But, for a year now, exports remain suspended, following a ban alleging pesticide residues in the Indian produce.

PRIYADERSHINI S

On June 20, the cardamom market went into a tizzy, thanks to a sale at the e-auction centre at Bodinayakanur (nicknamed the cardamom capital of India) at the foothills of the Western Ghats in Theni district, Tamil Nadu. Eight kilos of the evenly-green, aromatic 8.5-mm capsule fetched a record ₹5,000 for a kilo, spreading equal amounts of joy and consternation in an otherwise conservative commodities market.

Though the quantity sold was small, "for effect only", as many declare, it was a benchmark – the first time ever. Last week,

both the price and quantity rose substantially to trade 1,300 kilos, at ₹6,000 a kilo, continuing the bull run.

In an attempt to explain the swift rise in prices, insiders narrate a story that involves failed crops, delayed monsoon, poor stock, and an artificially created dealer's market, in addition to the growing use of the spice in contemporary cooking.

The prices have risen over a two-year period from ₹900 in 2017 to a current average of ₹3,000.

Cardamom's annual crop cycle is from August to July, with eight pickings. At a time when

FIRST TRADERS

People from the Neolithic period traded in spices, obsidian, sea shells, precious stones and other high-value materials as early as the 10th millennium BC.



POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



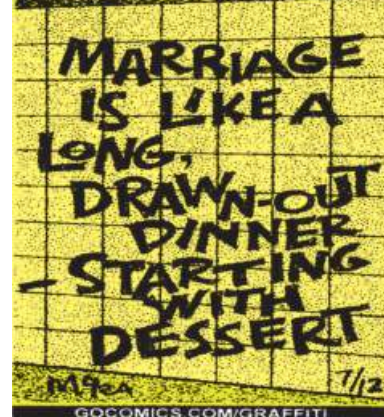
CALVIN AND HOBBS



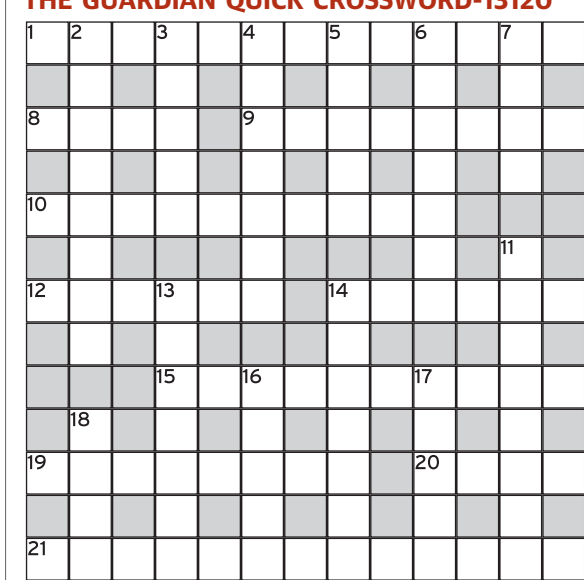
TIGER



GRAFFITI



THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13120



- 4 Projectile (sometimes guided) (7)
- 5 Palpitate (5)
- 6 Adage (7)
- 7 Roman poet, d. about AD17 (4)
- 11 Lunar occurrence (which almost never happens) (4,4)
- 13 First – beginning (7)
- 14 Kind of long-grained rice (7)
- 16 Canonised person (5)
- 17 Fasten – engrass (5)
- 18 Open jar for holding flowers (4)

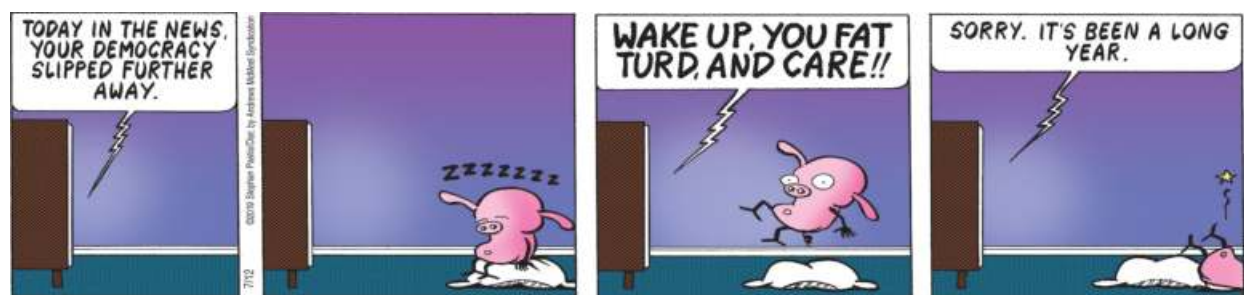
WUMO



HEALTH CAPSULES

SHOULD MUSCLE MASS BE CONSIDERED A VITAL SIGN?
MANY RESEARCHERS NOW SAY THAT MUSCLE MASS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED A VITAL SIGN. AMONG RECENT FINDINGS: LOW MUSCLE MASS IS LINKED TO GREATER RISK OF COMPLICATIONS AFTER SURGERY. PATIENTS IN INTENSIVE CARE WITH HIGHER MUSCLE MASS HAVE HIGHER SURVIVAL RATES.

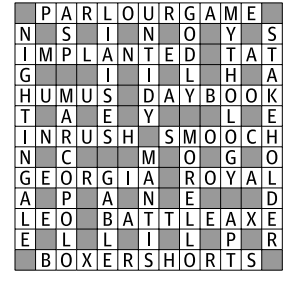
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



- 1 Ridiculous combination of two figures of speech (5,8)
- 8 Gob (4)
- 9 Scornfully mocking (8)
- 10 Unquenchable (10)
- 12 Yes-man (6)
- 14 Champagne (informal) (6)
- 15 Financial security – teeters, say (anag) (4,6)
- 19 Large church building (8)
- 20 Early stringed instrument (4)
- 21 Clean-and-jerk sport (13)
- 2 Exemption from punishment (8)
- 3 Additional (5)

Solution will appear in The Hindu dated July 13, 2019.

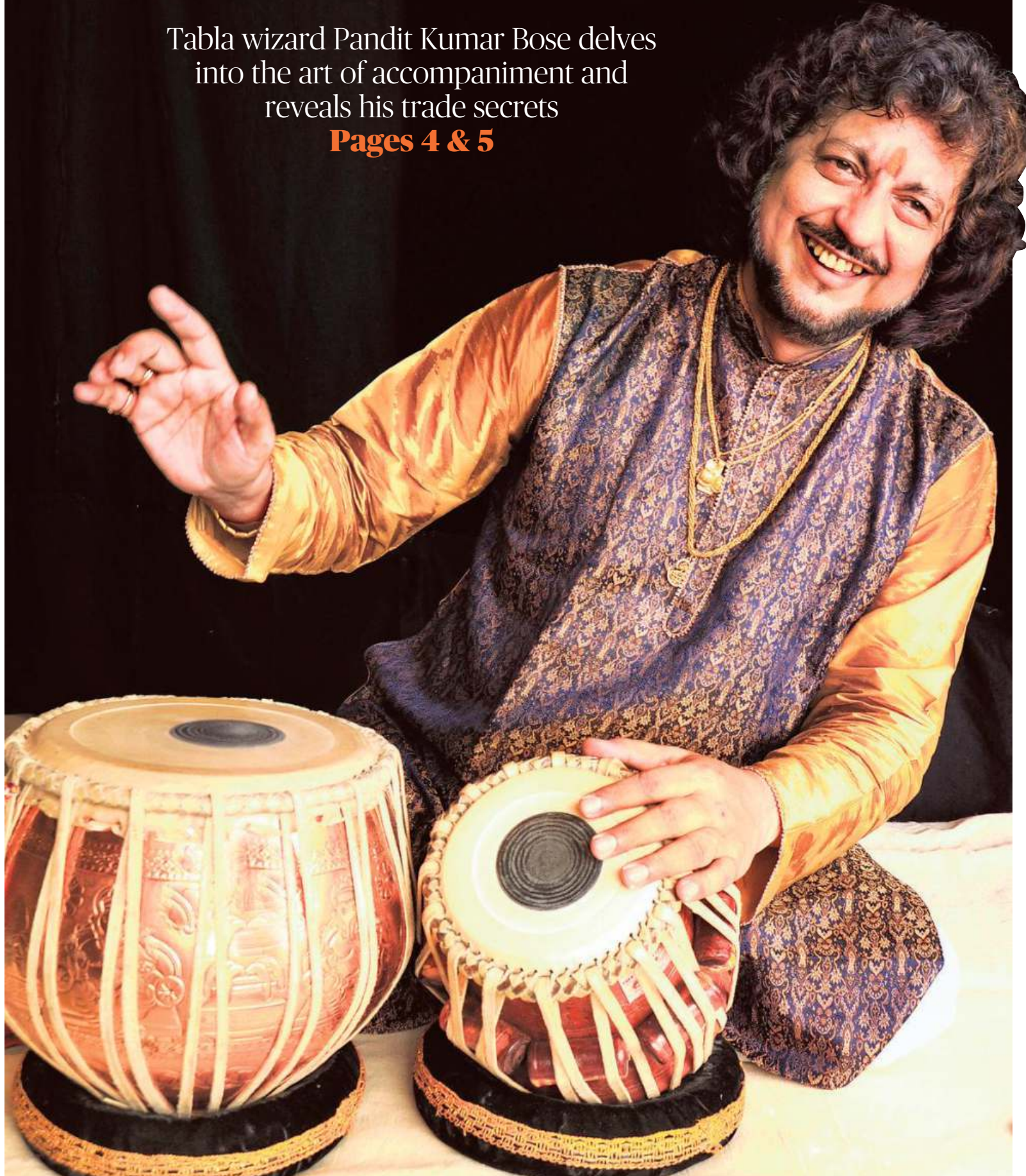
Solution No. 13119



BOSE Effect

Tabla wizard Pandit Kumar Bose delves into the art of accompaniment and reveals his trade secrets

Pages 4 & 5



INSIDE

Comedy uncut



In "Cut...Cut...Cut", director Dr. M. Sayeed Alam showcases his comic craftsmanship

P2

The tradition lives on



Ahead of Guru Purnima, Pandit Arvind Parikh talks about spreading the scent of Ustad Vilayat Khan

The abode by the coast



Taking a look at the Jagannath temple, which is more than just a landmark monument, as the Rath Yatra begins in Puri

"It is a critique of casteism"



Screenwriter Gaurav Solanki on the text and subtext of 'Article 15'

P8

Serene style, sonorous surprise

Devoid of artifice, vocalist Wasim Ahmed Khan's recital and sitarist Saumitra Chatterjee's performance kept the audience riveted

MANJARI SINHA
.....

Family tradition or gharana parampara has played a significant role in Hindustani classical music. When a characteristic mode of music is preserved and groomed in a particular family for a few generations, it becomes a tradition called gharana. Agra Gharana is one of the most reputed gharanas of Hindustani music, known for its vigorous swarochchar, the utterance of swaras, raga-vistar especially the Dhrupad-ang alaap of nom-tom, a rich repertoire of compositions, rhythmic virtuosity, and variety of taans.

Illustrious gharana

The Sangeet Natak Akademi featured Wasim Ahmed Khan, a brilliant exponent of this esteemed gharana representing the present generation in their Raga Dopahari (afternoon ragas) Series concert at the Meghdoot Sabhagar recently. Coming from the lineage of traditional musicians from Agra Gharana like Ustad Faiyaz Khan, Ata Hussain Khan, Sharafat Hussain Khan, Vilayat Hussain Khan, and Khadim Hussain Khan to name just a few; Waseem no wonder brought the authentic flavour of this nostalgic gayaki in his riveting rendering of the afternoon raga Shuddha Sarang. Right from the opening 'nom tom alaap', this gayaki is known for, he delineated the raga with meticulous care, in a bright, matter of fact voice. The bada khayal, "Mai ri main kase kahoon...", set to vilambit Ektala and the famous Teenta-

la composition of Ud. Faiyaz Khan "Ab mori baat..." would be remembered for his clear tone and technical flair that was striking in its training and understanding of rhythm and phrasing. Dr. Vinay Mishra mirrored his nuances in harmonium sangat while Pt. Ashish Sengupta ably accompanied him on tabla.

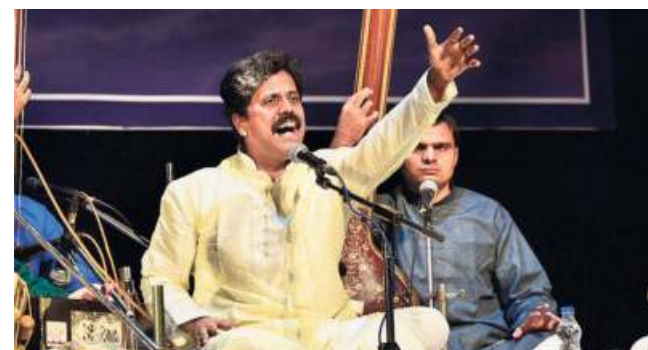
Pracheen Kala Kendra, showcased another noteworthy talent featuring Saumitra Thakur, the promising sitarist of Maihar Senia Gharana, in their 12th quarterly Baithak under the 'Legends of Tomorrow' series at the Triveni Kala Sangam. The young sitarist came as a sonorous surprise to many present in the jam-packed hall.

Initiated into music by his uncle Prashant Thakur, himself a senior disciple of Pt. Satya Kinkar Bandopadhyay of Bishnupur Gharana, Saumitra had acquired the principal characteristics of this serene style before joining his present mentor Pt. Kushal Das, the sedate sitarist of Senia Maihar Gharana.

Rich grooming

Saumitra is trained in vocal music also under Pt. Amiya Ranjan Bannerjee, the Dhrupad vocalist of Bishnupur Gharana and later Ud. Rashid Khan also taught him a few compositions, but noticing his inking towards the sitar of Pt. Nikhil Bannerjee, Rashid only suggested him to learn Sitar under Pt. Kushal Das. Saumitra feels fortunate to be groomed under Pt. Kushal Das, presently.

Continued on Page 8



Authentic flavour Wasim Ahmed Khan at the event

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Comedy uncut

In "Cut...Cut...Cut", director Dr. M. Sayeed Alam showcases his comic craftsmanship

DIWAN SINGH BAJELI
.....

To pursue his passion for theatre Dr. M. Sayeed Alam decided to leave his secure job and to do full-time theatre practice. Today, after nearly more than two decades, his contribution to enrich Delhi theatre with fine productions belonging to a variety of presentational styles and themes is acknowledged by connoisseurs of theatre. Some of his productions linger in the memory of the members of the audience for their charm of chaste Urdu accent.

He is also known for re-creation of his old scripts, redefining themes. This aspect of his creativity was very much in evidence in his "Cut...Cut...Cut". The first version, which was premiered two decades ago, was focused on the process of film shooting and the latest version of the play is a drama-within-a-drama, which was staged by Pierrot's Troupe at Shri Ram Centre this past week. Both the versions sparkle with his comic craftsmanship.

Evoking laughter

"Cut...Cut...Cut" revolves round a theatre director, his script writer and cast. The interactions between the desperate and anxiety-prone director, raw performers and cynical script writer obsessed with flawless accent create awkward situations evoking laughter.

The chaotic conditions that prevail while the play is rehearsed reveal the problems faced by amateur theatre groups through comedy and satire as the vehicle of communication. Everyday occurrences in rehearsals are treated in a light manner. Displaying remarkable tenacity, the group manages to secure official permission for staging the play. The director becomes almost mad when



Raising the bar A scene from the play ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

one of the actors tells him that he has an offer to work in a film and he is not able to perform in the play. But the director is not ready to accept defeat and the show is held up despite terrible blunders made on stage by the performers.

Towards the end, the cynical director is happy and the performers believe that they have done great acting. The message is clear - theatre has inherent power to survive and amuse and educate the audience. Writer-director Dr. Alam shows an artistry to harmonise seemingly chaotic situations, transforming them into vital source of comedy.

In fact, Dr. Alam has created two comic elements in a highly effective manner. He has used language and the style of delivery to amuse the audience. Director J. K. is a South Indian and the kind of Hindi he speaks makes him a butt of laughter. To create the situation of incongruous, the script writer takes lot of time to correct the pronunciation of amateur actors. His emphasis on prolonged process of tongue-twisting exercise irritates actors and director but it amuses the audience. The script writer's attraction for a young actress and spending more time to improve her accent further leads to funny situations.

Another important comic character is Chowkidar. He interrupts rehearsal with his entry marked by a loud thud produced with his wooden rod. He commands director J. K. to pack-up his rehearsal as he is getting late to reach his home where his wife is waiting for him to offer him fresh food. His posture is a blend of authority and compassion - he shows sympathy for his wife who has to wait for him for a long time in the night and expresses his anguish for long working hours and for his low wages. Facing angry Chowkidar, director handles him with a great deal of discretion. He sees in him a would be great actor and persuades him to act in the play. The interaction between the Chowkidar and the director is lively. Hard-pressed to find an actor to play the role of Ojha, the director finds in Chowkidar an apt actor to perform the character of Ojha. Initially, he

"Pollution Hazir Ho"

Presenting a serious issue in a satirical tone, M. Sayeed Alam will present "Pollution Hazir Ho", this Saturday at 7 pm. at India Habitat Centre. Produced by the Centre of New Perspectives, here the guile of the baharupiya, the charm of the sapera, the magic of the jadugar and the craft of the puppeteer will take Pollution to task in a courtroom drama.

refuses to accept the offer but finally he agrees.

With the rehearsals over, comes the day for the premier show. The action takes place on two spaces-on stage and offstage. Director Dr. Alam has divided the acting space in two parts. On the right side the play is being unfolded and on the left space the nervous director and his assistants desperately try to prompt the raw actors who are creating a mess. This device of design effectively projects the offstage and on stage action, making viewing effective.

The more the onstage actors are prompted from offstage the more the blunder they commit, evoking laughter, loud and long.

The form of presentation demands that the performers should frequently step out of one character to act another. This process is carried out in a clumsy manner which entertains.

The ensemble playing is impressive which imparts the production vital comic rhythm. Some of the performers deserve special mention like Manish Singh as Director J. K., Aryan Pratap Singh as script writer, Arifa Noori as an actress obsessed with Urdu accent and Gyanesh Sharma as Chowkidar for displaying their histrionic talent as comic actors.

The tradition lives on

MEENA BANERJEE
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There is an old Urdu proverb, 'Khushbu ko phailne ke liye chahiye hawa se dosti' (to reach out, perfume needs to befriend the breeze). This is applicable in every walk of life; more so in the world of classical music which demands both 'chilla'-like relentless riyaz and publicity; albeit sadhana and publicity are strange bedfellows. But it is also true that the melodic essence of practice largely depends on the winds of admiration fanned by followers. Going by this one can state that if Ustad Vilayat Khan was melodic fragrance personified, the gentle breeze that carried this scent everywhere, during and beyond the legendary sitar maestro's life, is Pandit Arvind Parikh.

"I met my ustad, Vilayat Khansaheb, when I was 17; and was intrigued to find that though he was a centenarian music-wise, age-wise he was only two months my senior," Parikh reminisced fondly, "We, the Guru and the Shishya, grew up together. He treated me like his friend, secretary, confidante and disciple - all rolled in one. I used to help him organise his commitments and his finances, etc. Soon I realised that Khansaheb is a colossus. It is not easy to understand him as a human being and even more difficult to apprehend his musical mind. While grooming several brilliant disciples, I am still trying my best to unravel the mystery of his amazing musicianship."

Parikh says many people have written many things about Khansaheb. Some are relevant, some not. "It pains me when fabricated topics are aired out of context despite the fact that I am ready to share first hand and truthful information regarding Khansaheb."

To allay many such doubts, he wishes to let more and more people know about his unparalleled musical philosophy. "Fortunately, NCPA (Mumbai) had recorded his exhaustive, almost 30-hours long interview-based lecture-demonstration, between 1976 and 1979, when Khansaheb was scaling peaks of music. Shujaat (Khan), then in his teens, and I had actively participated in this archival work which has autobiographical contents. While defining Khansaheb's place in the history of Hindustani classical music, it actually addresses posterity".

Ahead of Guru Purnima, Pandit Arvind Parikh talks about spreading the scent of his guru



Master and the messenger Ustad Vilayat Khan; (below) Pandit Arvind Parikh; Suvarnlata Rao

He is happy that, for the benefit of music lovers, NCPA has come forward to screen the entire recording spread over ten sessions. The first part of this treasure will be unveiled by Ustad Zakir Hussain and Ustad Shujaat Khan on 28th July. "We are planning to screen this, one of the greatest riches of the Golden Era, in Kolkata and Delhi as well. My disciple Suvarna (lata Rao) is one of the main architects of this all," informs Parikh with well-placed pride.

Third generation

For Suvarnlata Rao, Research Scientist and Programming Head (Indian music) with NCPA, "This is another lesson of Guru-Bhakti from Guruji who owns up a person intensely. It is natural for a devout disciple like Guruji to resent frivolous comments about his Ustad; but he also does not like any adverse comment against his disciples either. Irrespective of the social status of anyone of us, he is extremely protective; like a parent."

Rao hails from a conservative family where learning violin continued with academics as a part of good grooming. "After handling an early marriage, motherhood, scientist husband's foreign postings



and my graduation in science and music, I was doing Masters (sitar) in SNDT University where Guruji was invited to give a lec-dem. This session was a revelation. His approach to every question was arranged step by step, logically. I went to learn from him but he would teach only in the late evenings due to his demanding commitments, frequent travels, his own taalim sessions with Khansaheb and music engagements. When satisfied that my husband would escort me back home, Guruji relented. Patient and organised to the fault, he liked and encouraged my ability to write notations and cataloguing."

When Rao won the UGC fellowship and joined NCPA as research scholar, to help accommodate her work with music, Guruma (vocalist Kishori Parikh) started teaching her in the morning. Rao found Kishoriben's music forthright, intuitive and emotional; her style of upaj more out of box unlike Arvindbhai's mathematical and analytical approach which was comparatively easy to notate. She imbibed both the traits rationally, to suit her music and research work.

According to Rao, "Despite his analytical mind, Guruji has

a mental block against everything that is 'abstract'. Unfortunately, Indian classical music, due to lack of research, has ambiguous, grey areas. I strongly believe that fundamental research, like voice mapping etc., leads to applied music and helps bust myths. Guruji gives me a long rope to stay committed to research. In fact, he encourages women to enter the male bastion of instrumental music and related tasks."

Fourth generation

Amruta Kulkarni is one such young sitar exponent. She hails from Sangli. When her teacher Ramesh Bhosale, a disciple of Arvindbhai, met an untimely death, Arvindbhai offered to support and teach all the students. Young teen Amruta became his gandabdh shagird in 1992 and started commuting to Mumbai for lessons. It was at his place, where she met Vilayat Khansaheb.

"That was like a dream come true and a lesson too!" exclaimed Amruta, "Guruji understood that priorities change after marriage and children. Many times, when I was not in regular riyaz, he would start the taalim session with just the paltta-playing. Knowing what's going wrong and why, he encourages developing strong traits of one's personality while working on weaker points. The taalim sessions are always extremely enjoyable with anecdotes, special masala tea and music of course!"

Parikh supports several students and needy musicians emotionally and financially. "He almost spoon-feeds us. For example, he composes paltas for every raga. Once he woke up in the middle of night thinking how to make us remember all the prakars of ragas effortlessly. He composed poems defining the features of each Prakar of Malhar, Sarang, Todi, etc. in the next few days and circulated amongst us. At 91, he is amazingly active on Youtube, Skype and Whatsapp only to be in touch with his disciples."

Amruta, who assists Parkih in his organisational work, adds that the students come from different states, culture, backgrounds, speak different languages, have different personalities, but are bonded by the "strong force of their Guru's magnanimity". Their annual Guru Purnima congregation speaks volumes of this family feeling. The two-day event to be held in Mumbai this year on July 12-13 is eagerly awaited.

Meet me among trees

At "Vriksha", trees embrace us with their all-encompassing loving arms

NAVINA JAJA
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The wide-range environmental concern by citizen groups on trees reflects in a timely exhibition "Vriksha", curated by Uma Nair at the India International Centre. The exhibit displays a wide range of visual art genres - installations, ceramics, photographs, and a variety of categories of paintings. The exhibit can be perceived in three parts - A sense of hope and grandeur expressed through the mythical aspect of trees. A sense of hopelessness generated from the present environmental crises of disappearing trees; and finally amidst these two is the subliminal level of a dream world. However, one needs to navigate to re-configure these themes in the display.

The tree as a symbol has since ancient times engaged the Indian mind. It appears as a socio-economic arena of forests in myths and as part of medicinal and sacred geographies. It is a motif of compassion, a selfless giver, a provider, and a nurturer. The display opens with the invitation having the painting of the Kaplvriksha (mythical wish-fulfilling tree) by Arpitha Reddy. Portrayed as a tree of life, with aerial roots hanging and other roots encircling a water pool with lotus flowers is inspired by a tale of loss and gain. "There is a Banyan tree in my ancestral village. When selling the land, our family did not realise the tree which was part of our collective memory and identity, went to the buyer. We bought back the tree and the land under," says Reddy. The veins of roots and branches of the golden tree recreate the evocative all-encompassing loving arms.

The theme of nurturing life gets elaborated in a work by Padma Shri awardee and Gond painter Bhajju Shyam. Adwaita Shyam's tree incorporates the life of the forest and beyond. His tree comes out of the frame like the "Virat Roop" (The divine form of Vishnu representing the macrocosm of the living universe). The sophisticated Gond painting is projected technically as outer and inner line work conveying a sense of rhythmic movement which is enhanced by the rekhaj (small lines) and dots (bindu).

Continued on page 7



A work by Bhajju Shyam

'An accompanist is like a soldier,'

In a free-wheeling conversation, tabla maestro Pandit Kumar Bose talks about his craft and concerts

MEENA BANERJEE

ayadaari (command over tempo) and taalidaari (expertise in handling different talas) are no less important than raagdaari (art of raga delineation). This is an oft-repeated statement of Pandit Kumar Bose. The real import of this statement stands out on its own whenever he plays - whether in accompaniment to dance, instruments, vocals or as a soloist.

Prior to his longish concert tour to the US, Canada and West Indies, he was in Varanasi's famed Sankat Mochan Music Festival 2019 to strike an inspired tripartite (trio) with his disciple Kunal Patil (pakhawaj) and Heral Mehta (daughter-disciple of Nandan

Mehta). This pulsated with the khuli chant and pakhawaj-memories based dialogue following the characteristics of their Banaras Charana. Similarly, two back-to-back tabla duets with Pandit Anindo Charterjee in Kolkata and Kanaghat stood out for their sheer aesthetic appeal immersed in the sensibilities of two differently different Schools (Banaras and Farrukhabad).

Casting a spell

As a dance accompanist, Bose's inspiring tabla cast its spell on Kathak maestro Rajendra Gangani during Swami Vivekananda's birthday celebration at Kolkata as both got engaged in its sparkling on-stage dangal (literally: duad). This, a rare phenomenon now due to predetermined safe-play, was electric because such improvisu upaj (innovations)-based designs emerge out only when both

the artistes are of the same calibre.

During the Sankata Sanget Sammelan, samroor maestro while Bhajan Sopori's striking qalam and fingers were bent upon exploring all possible techniques of the instrument through melody and rhythm, Bose stylishly worked on the dynamics of tabla's tonality which looked beyond the forceful Banarasi gharana-lingo where both his tabla and bayan (the base drum) explored soft melody as well. Albert a wizard of rhythmic designs, the magic of his art is its sheer musicality.

But, as in the case of these events, in the absence of a well-balanced sound, the commisiseurs have to



Gurujii would always insist, 'Dha ko dekho, pechhaano.' I was not able to gauge the depth of that statement initially. The realisation dawned with experience



Popular appeal (Clockwise from above): Pandit Kumar Bose in performance; with Pandit Rajan and Sajin Mishra; with Pandit Ravi Shankar; with Guru Kishan Maharaj ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

strain their ears to savour these fine-tuned and aesthetically designed aural delights. This raised a pertinent question: how important is the role of the microphone in helping instrumental music emerge out from behind the vocalists' shadows and arrive in the arena of solo renderings?

The master caught the question by the ear: "Very important, obviously," he quipped, "and why only instruments? Microphones have changed the entire panorama of vocal music as well. Indian string-instruments, generally categorised as veena, are almost 'handible.' These got a new lease of life when they became audible without the extra

panist. They advised me: 'forget your ego completely'.

"An accompanist is like a soldier; allows no chinks in his armour; needs to be all ears during music-making and rises to the need of the hour and inspires the artiste in the middle through perceptive accompaniment. Gurujii would always insist, 'Dha ko dekho, pechhaano.' I was not able to gauge the depth of that statement initially. The realisation dawned with experience. Just as the application of Shadaj establishes a raga, Dha actually represents the language and the entire gamut of tabla-playing wherein changed dimensions of the same mnemonics churn out different colours of emotions."

Bose says his gharana's baaj is as "robust" as that of pakhawaj. But there are certain things that are not possible on the pakhawaj because of its 'horizontal placement', whereas tabla gives a wider horizon by allowing a "relaxed placement" of the hands. "The same power-packed bols can be toned down to loving whispers. I love these dynamics and work on them constantly. When you can win a point with a soft touch, why slap? And, that is when, microphones help to give my best. Despite my personality's unintended authoritative exterior, ei mnhure artiste ki chaay (what do the artiste wants now) remains my first priority and I change the texture of Dha accordingly to his mood, style and personality."

The paradox
This was sheer paradox coming from a strikingly handsome, well-built, six-footer who, at 67, continues to look like a Greek God and is known for his 'fiery temper', 'authoritative nature' and 'showmanship'. On the question of showmanship, he was visibly uncomfortable. One noticed that he has a habit of rubbing his right ear absent-mindedly while facing prickly questions.

"As I said, this is unintended; beyond me!" He said thoughtfully while scratching his ear. "I started my journey as a teenager and went out on my first foreign tour when 17, exactly fifty years back! Success brings its share of burdens too, I suppose. I love to be with my family and friends even when I go out on concert tours. (I, therefore, try to avoid foreign tours.) But, while shadowing Gurujii I had noticed that a particular image gets associated with certain standards. So, now I too need to wear stylish gowns and slippers meant for the carpeted floors of the five-star hotels while welcoming visitors. These fans are familiar with the artiste's attitude which, very naturally gets associated with showmanship."

He goes on to add what you see as showmanship is actually an innate, natural reaction of his "inner soul" to the music and the "percep-

Robust baaj
Regarding his own taalim he admits, "I am fortunate that both my gurus, father Pandit Biswanath Bose and Gurujii, Pandit Kishan Maharaj chided me essentially as an accom-



the sound" produced by my tabla. "I enjoy the vibrant colours and moods of the bols which inject confidence; springing out of love for the subject. Gradually with experience, the depth of this love alters the personality and brings it to shape. Then it becomes an attitude, automatically and naturally. Due to this inner love, it reaches out to touch hearts of the musicians and audiences alike. Not even a fresher can blame that I over-shadowed him during the recital."

'Bosensation!'
His two younger brothers admit that they always enjoyed the tabla accompaniment offered by their star-sibling that helped them create several shows titled 'Bosensation' to the delight of commisiseurs. Of course, all the three brothers are well-trained harmonium and tabla players and prolific composers as well. But accompaniment is a subject Kumar Bose loves.

"How can I forget that due to this film' (knowledge) I shared the stage and played with such great instrumentalists like Pandit Ravi Shankar, Usad Vilayat Khan, Pandit Nikhil Banerjee, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and several others," he mused fondly. "Among the vocalists, I enjoy the company of Pandits Rajanand Sajin Mishra; maybe because of our time-tested friendship spanning decades



His performances no longer remain in the domain of only tabla; they go beyond to become complete music Pandit Suresh Talwalkar (tabla maestro)



left, as I play the tabla with my left hand) has a few syllables; the base drum or banva produces two syllables, Ga (slightly suppressed tone) and Gha (a little open than Ga), after combining some of the syllables, the pair of tabla produces mnemonics like Tere-ke, Dhanam, Dhin. All inclusive, there are 15-16 syllables only; but able musicians created innumerable talas and compositions with these - complementing all forms, genres and styles of music-making that are diversely different from one another."

As explained by Bose, there are four popularly known talas having 14-beat cycles Dhanam, Jhumra, Adachantal and Dipchandi. Played on the pakhawaj, Dhanam, a tala belonging to dhrupad, produces power-infused exuberance, predominantly associated with many expressions.

Jhumra, as employed by Ustad Amir Khan for Vilambit badhai, helps create an introspective mood. Deepchandi's swaying gait is best exploited in humruti's femininity while Adachantal blooms at a faster tempo and goes well with medium-fast paced Khyal renditions. Medium tempo suits Jhapal (10 beats) and Rupak (7 beats) while Tilwada (16 beats) and Jhumra lose their character at medium-fast pace. The list is endless and with amazing variety, based on each beat's placement within a cycle, its accent and the pauses in between!

Midas touch

Bose infuses melodic appeal in simple thekas. Albert reluctant to divulge details, it is apparent that his Midas touch makes the tabla sing like a tampara - perfectly tuned to the tonic of the musician; and depending on the raga chosen, his bayan changes its melodic hues. He insists that he does not tune up the base drum to any particular note; instead quietly shadows the innate persona of the instrument and its exponent unless and until invited to join in the rhythmic-play or reply to a specially crafted laya-chhanda (rhythmic variations). "Heart to heart" is the core of his art.

Sometimes, to offer unimpeded peace to the vocalist, he plays the theka of the tala only, unobtrusively; while in instrumental music he quietly shadows the innate persona of the instrument and its exponent unless and until invited to join in the rhythmic-play or reply to a specially crafted laya-chhanda (rhythmic variations). "Heart to heart" is the core of his art.

The guru
The music fraternity is well aware of the fact that Kumar Bose is a very emotional person, whose heart rules his head. He likes to be at peace without the hassles of mundane chores. Under stress he blurs out things which he should not. Since his younger days, physical exercises, pooja, riyaz, sports/games and teaching keep him happily occupied on a normal day. That is why, far from the maddening crowd and his three-storied independent house in North Kolkata, he has chosen a place for his Gurukul in Madhyamgram, where the groomers a few deserving disciples at peace; following the norms of the traditional Guru Shishya Parampara.

"At times the language of tabla becomes our mode of communication," he chirps like a young boy. "I remember I have discussed this subject: syllables of tabla at length in a TV series on classical music. However, the right drum (in my case the

punch of powerful strums, plucks or strokes; ditto with vocalists who ventured out to delve deep in the lower octave. Musicians could work on the finer nuances. Tabla solo-playing is an extra-product. I have no problem in accepting the fact that tabla and pakhawaj were and still are basically accompanying instruments. As an accompanist, I get to see ethereal music being made by legends from close quarters. I get carried away by soulful music even during live concerts. This art of supporting musicians of different personalities and temperaments is extremely challenging."

Going by his track record, he loves to rise against challenges. Born to

The abode by the coast

Taking a look at the Jagannath temple, which is more than just a landmark monument, as the Rath Yatra begins in Puri

CHITRA SWAMINATHAN

Budhua, the cab driver, is oblivious to the fact that I cannot speak Odia. He points at the plastic bottles and paper plates strewn by picnickers along the picturesque Marine Drive Road and says something in an angry tone. I too express my disgust in Hindi, with a smattering of Bengali. We manage to communicate during the one-hour drive from Konark to Puri on a bright, warm morning. The scene keeps changing through the smooth, blissful stretch... rolling waves, sandy beaches, casuarina groves, Olive Ridley turtle nests, cashew plantations and tiled houses. I wind down the window to catch some cool breeze and sleep.

And then I'm awakened by the sounds of a buzzing street and realise that we have reached the famous temple town of Puri. The sight of the Jagannatha temple's shikara with the chakra and flag atop is nothing short of bliss. While the Nila Chakra is said to face you from wherever you view it in Puri, the flag is changed every evening, a ritual that has been followed for the past 800 years. People gather to watch Dhawaja Parivartan, a fascinating feat, when the member of a family that has been performing it hereditarily scales the shikara of the 214-ft high temple.

These amazing facts are shared by rickshaw puller Bishnu, Budhua's friend, who plies me to the temple. On the way, he shares more such nuggets. No other vehicle, except cycle rickshaws, are allowed near the temple complex. You can take one from the car park or walk the distance.

The Grand Road or Bada Danda leading to the temple is broad; big enough to especially accommodate lakhs of devotees attending

the annual rath yatra.

This year, the yatra began on July 4. It commemorates Lord Jagannath's annual visit along with his brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra to the Gundicha Temple, about three km from the Jagannath temple and named after the queen of king Indradyumna. The deities travel in three separate richly decorated chariots. After staying in Gundicha for seven days, they return to their abode on July 15.

Puri is among the Char Dhams. Lord Vishnu is said to bathe at Rameswaram, get dressed at Dwarka, meditate at Badrinath and dine in Puri (a reason why the temple is known for its lavish Mahaprasad).

"Be careful of the pandas," warns Bishnu as I alight from the rickshaw.

There are four gates to the temple – Eastern 'Singhadwara', which is the main gate with two crouching lions, Southern 'Ashwadwara', Western 'Vyagh-

radwara', and Northern 'Hastidwara'. There is a carving of each form at each gate.

In front of the entrance stands the Aruna stambha or sun pillar, which was originally at the Sun Temple in Konark. There are 22 steps (*baisi pahacha*) that take you into the temple. As I ascend the last step and enter the inner enclosure, I get pushed into a crowd of devotees. It is impossible to even walk without stepping on someone's toes. After almost 45 minutes of jostling, I find myself in

front of the sanctum sanctorum, lit by oil lamps.

I stand awe-struck by the brightly-painted wooden idols with large powerful eyes. Lord Jagannath is black, sister Subhadra in the middle is yellow and brother Balabhadra is white. Unlike in other Vishnu or Krishna temples, the Lord is here on a pedestal with his siblings and is formless, without hands and legs. I get not more than a minute or two, before I am shouted at by one of the priests to move. The woman standing next to tells me not to pay heed to those yelling and I manage to catch another glimpse of the Lord.

As we step out, she is delighted to know that I am from Chennai



Celebrating tradition Dancers during Rath Yatra, Sudarshan Patnaik's sand art creation of the yatra, Jagannath Temple and the beach

where her son works in an IT firm. A resident of Puri, she visits the temple once a week. During our conversation, she explains to me the reason behind the Lord's truncated form. "*Yeh duniya mein, sab perfect nahin hai. Yeh sachhi baat bhagwan idhar batate hain*" (nobody is perfect in this world and this reality the God tells you here). I am amazed by the reasoning and the faith. But, the form, according to lore, is also attributed to the tribal origin of the temple.

Sumptuous spread

We walk through the huge Ananda Bazaar, referred to as the biggest open-air eatery in the world, where the Mahaprasad is sold.

"I don't cook when I plan to visit the temple because who wants to miss these delicious preparations, especially the khaja (made of maida, sugar and ghee). You can buy the nirmalya (dried rice), it has a lot of significance in our homes," she says. I see pots all over overflowing with cooked rice, dal and vegetable curry. The temple kitchen is said to have the capacity to cook for around a lakh of devotees every day. Mahaprasad is cooked in earthen pots on wood fire. The food is first offered to Lord Jagannath and then to goddess Bimala and comprises 56 dishes (*chappan bhog*).

If not the nirmalya or khaja, I buy idols of the deities from the shops outside. As I walk to the car park, I see Budhua waiting impatiently to drive me around town. The Sun, appearing like a huge ball of fire, begins to set and I stop at the beach to see the mammoth sand sculptures of the much-acclaimed Sudarshan Patnaik.

Sparkling waves lap on the shore, as if to remind you that everything is created to be washed away.



Going Native

View from the other side

In one of her multi-layered poems, Arifa Shahzad describes selfie as a living and succinct testament to her existence

SHAPEY KIDWAI

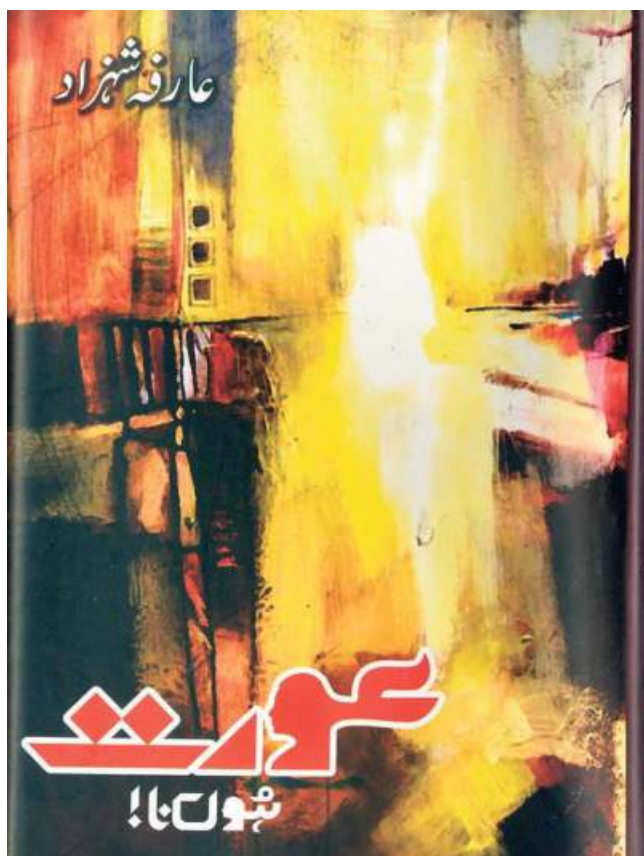
At a time when a marked sense of mesmerising longing for being a celebrity has converted many into fans of themselves as they unflinchingly make their presence felt everywhere simultaneously what suffice them the most? What is the wonder drug of our times, not prescribed by any physician? The answer is quite palpable: it is “selfie”.

According to recent survey, the android phones produce nearly 100 million selfies per day and it manifests an unprecedented and relentless march towards self-sovereignty and self-admiration.

Now human face closely resembles with billboard that induces selling. The buzzword of the post-truth or fact free world, ‘selfie’ has been described by Sherry Turkle and Williams as the ‘folk art’ of the digital era that has come in for widespread use. Its enormous popularity can be gauged from the fact that famous reality show star Kim Kardashian found it tempting to get her around 1200 selfies published in a book titled “Selfish”.

Can the folk art of our age and the pinnacle of narcissism, selfie be a tool for exploring new dimensions of self discovery that enables one to reach out to others? Is it invested with tremendous potentiality of strengthening the withering bond of togetherness and identifying new dimensions of intimacy?

The alternative narrative of selfie that asserts that it is certainly more than a portrait dotted with heart-shaped emoti-



cons is produced by a promising Urdu poet Arifa Shahzad and for her it is a mediated persona that conjures up diverse human feelings and it is a kind of visual gesture that betrays an abiding concern for virtual togetherness as the possibility of real interaction simply does not exist.

A deeply sensitive, creatively imagined, astutely rendered and multi-layered exploration of the widely used means shapes her poem “Selfie” that is included in her latest collection of poems, “Aurat Hoon Na” (Yes I am a woman) which appeared recently.

Spelling out the creative contours of an art which has innumerable experts, Arifa describes it as a living and succinct testament to her existence. It empowers her at various levels: “Mere hone ka asbat hai/sab mere Haath hai/ Ab main, jaise bhi chahon/ khud ko Dikhaon/ kyun dekhte ho jo selfie banayoo/ Agar mein/ Na aiyasa karon/Mujhe is tarah hi se .../kaya.dekhte tum ...” (It is one of the positive sign of my existence/ all in my control? Now I can show myself the way I wish/if I do not do that/ will you look at me in the same manner?)

The poem makes it clear that selfie is not an act of self-glorification but it regulates the reaction of the beloved on the expected lines her the question ending stirs up unanswered possibilities and one finds a map how two individuals ought to be in a relationship.

The title of the collection that carries more than one hundred succinct, perceptive, provocative and nuanced poems does indicate emotional sloppiness but the multi-layered tale of female protagonist is not always filled with bathos alone.

Absolute love

Possessiveness cannot be taken as act of envying and for the poet, woman seeks undivided and absolute love but she wants to love him unreservedly. It does not indicate any sort of insecurity: Aur Mujhe Chaiye/Tumhari sari mohabbat/ tum se mohabbat karne key liye/(I need/ all your love/ to enable me to love you unconditionally).

Arifa admired many contemporary poets and authors and her poems on Abdullah Hus-sain, Samina Raja and Nasreen Anjum Bhatti are not elegies or emotional tributes but they consciously acknowledge their creative legacy. Many poems included in the collection such as one on male escort, “Ajnabi” evoke fear, uncertainty, respect, awe and upend most of our ‘common sense’ views about the world.

Showcasing suffering, human predicament and grit with searing honesty, Arifa's poems span a wide arc of life of desire and beyond, and deserve plaudits

Telling Voices

Exploring silence!

Harriet Shawcross, author of “Unspeakable”, reveals how her ability to observe silence has helped her evolve as a writer and a journalist

SUDHAMAHI REGUNATHAN

Silence is not always golden, says Harriet Shawcross, journalist and author of “Unspeakable: The Things We Cannot Say”. She explores the nature of silence in her book, not inspired by her time spent with earthquake survivors or a silent order of Buddhist nuns in Paris, but her own silence.



Shawcross talks of her days at school, “There would be days when you'd be standing near people in a conversation, and you'd think, I haven't said anything for a really long time. And you'd wonder if people that you were talking to were going to notice or say anything. And most of the time they didn't, to be honest.... It was a very kind of lonely time, and I think I was very ashamed of the fact that I wasn't talking normally. As a child, I'd never had any problems like this before. Looking back, I guess - my father was fired and my mom was very much, like, don't tell people about what's happening here. This is a kind of shameful thing that's happened. And I think - in the book, I talk about kind of taking a step back from the world. It was kind of very much like a retreat. Like, if you don't offer anything of yourself, you can't get hurt...”

Shawcross speaks of “selective mutism” as, “... quite common in younger children, but it's more unusual for it to persist into the teenage years. It is a phobia, but it's a phobia with incredibly brutal consequences. I mean, you talk about this one girl who has scarring on her bladder because she's so afraid even to ask to go to the bathroom. And in the past, it's kind of been misunderstood, and people think that either they're being difficult or that it's shyness. Selective mutism is very different to shyness because whereas a shy child might warm up the more they get to know people, with a child with selective mutism, often, the more they get to know people, the less likely they are to be able to... when I first started looking into this, I don't think I'd understood how deeply ingrained silence can get.”

Even though her ability to observe silence was born out of an unhappy experience, Shawcross talks of how it helped her as a journalist, “Many times I've said just pretend I'm not here; you know, talk to the camera; don't look at me. And you'll know yourself. The art of an interview is in disappearing a little bit and knowing when not to speak and knowing how to use silence and that it's often in silence that people reveal themselves... But personally, I very much held onto that as a kind of survival strategy for a long time and, in terms of particularly, romantic relationships with someone, found it really hard to say what I felt or what I wanted. And in a way, that's one of the things that prompted me to write the book - I was getting married.”

...Meet me among trees

Continued from page 3

The mythical world expands with the imaginative work titled “Parijat” by Vishal Joshi “I am working with the form of spirals, and am employed in creating a new language. My tree Parijat, like a golden, tree with copper leaves and fragrant beautiful flowers is a symbol of hope and beauty. In the trunk of the tree, the spiral forms are emerging as textures of a new language of expression and hope.”

From some of the artworks communicating the traditional wisdom and recurring theme of Man in Nature rather than Man in the domination of Nature; there are works in the exhibit that speak of desolation, and the theme of the sixth extinction. This is illustrated in hues of dust-storm colours striking out in Arpana Caur's poignant depiction of a human figure emerging from a group of modern high rising buildings. The floating figure is a dominant entity and crushing natural resources and fuelled by pollution. The existential theme of the disturbed environment emerges from the brilliant photograph by Dhiraj Paul. The image is of the blurred Taj Mahal juxtaposed by a shrinking dying naked tree in the waters of the polluted Jamuna.

Between the two extremes, the surrealist painting by Aji V.N of tempered forests provides a breath of relief. The unconscious mind creates a space to integrate a rational of existence presented in dreams and imagined the reality of hope. An image which is captured in the surrealist poem “Dark Poet” by Antonin Artaud - “Embittered poet, life seethes, and life burns. The Sky re-absorbs itself in the rains... The pen begins to scratch at the heart of life.”



A work by Arpana Caur

...Serene style

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Born in Ranchi, Jharkhand, Saumitra completed his schooling along with learning music at home. He shifted to Delhi for further education but kept listening to sitar of Pt. Nikhil Bannerjee. After his graduation in Economics from Hindu College, he realised that music and Economics can't go together, hence he did his post graduation in Music from Delhi University and completed M.Phil too, but finally decided to dedicate himself to sitar under the tutelage of Guru Kushal Das.

Saumitra has tried his hands on fusion music too in group ensembles, but by nature he seems to be a sincere and serious practitioner of classical music.

Understandably, Saumitra belied his age during his performance this evening, with his mature restraint and no nonsense approach, devoid of any artifice. Accompanied by Romaan Khan on tabla, he opened with raga Desh and presented a couple of compositions in madhya vilambit Jhaptala and drut Ektala. His complete control on meend of three/four swaras, during the leisurely but systematic alapa, his aesthetic sensibility and most of all his perfect tunefulness was remarkable. The drut gat sounded inspired by the famous bandish, "Biti jaat barkha ritu...", set to Drut Ektala.

Saumitra concluded his melodious recital with a brief alapa followed by a Teental composition in raga Miyan Malhar culminating into fast Jhala. He played both the ragas with insight and strategy but one wished he reversed the sequence, playing Miyan Malhar in detail, which he was quite capable of, and concluded with the sweetness of raga Desh as the awaited desert.

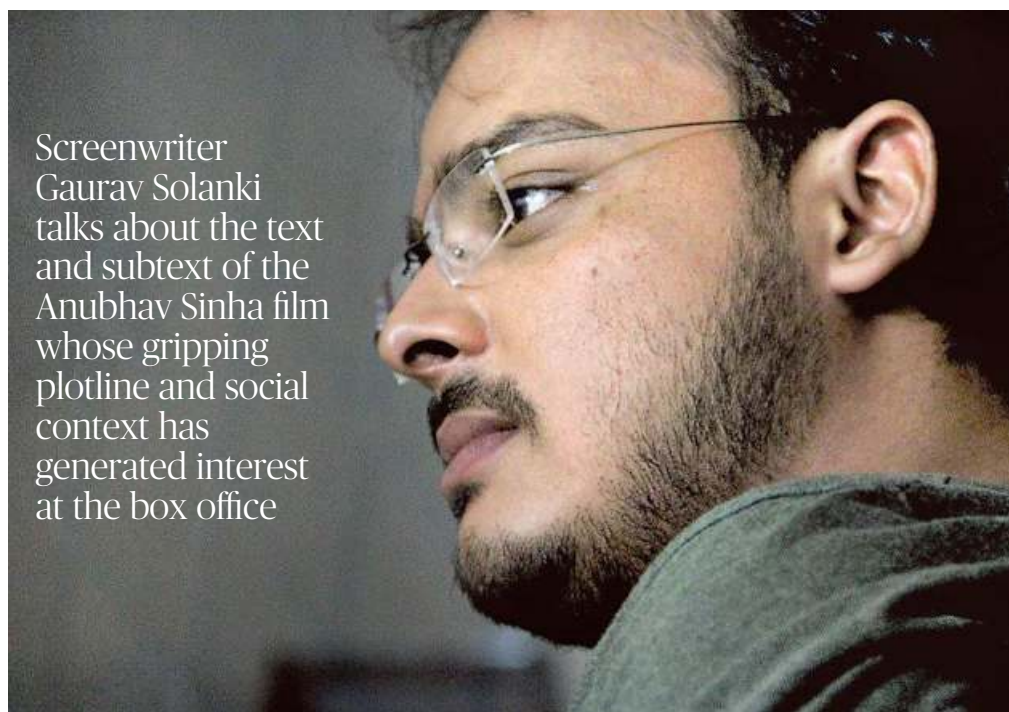
Debut



A colourful visual treat

This past Sunday, Delhites were in for a visual treat as Shivananjani, disciple of Guru Vijayalakshmi Ramanan appeared on the stage of Delhi Tamil Sangam to present her *Arangetram*, debut Bharatanatyam performance. She began her recital with a Ganesha Kavutuvam in raga Hamsadwani set to Adi talam followed by Thishra Alaripu. The transition from the Kautuvam to Tisra Alarippu was smooth. The ease with which Shivananjani chose to do an elaborate raga-malalikai varnam, *Samiyai azaithodi va* set to Adi talam did spoke of the intensive training she had undergone in the expert hands of her Guru. It was preceded by Jatiswaram in Tilang Ragam an exclusive composition of Veena Vidwan Shyamala Bhaskar. Shivananjani danced to the Padam '*Padarivarugudu*' in Kambhodi wherein the nayika yearning for her Nayaka was well depicted by an in-depth abhinaya. Shivananjani concluded the evening dance recital with a Mangalam in Surutti ragam specially composed in the for Thiruvalluvar Arangam of Delhi Tamil Sangam by the Guru's mother Saroja Kannan.

“‘Article 15’ is a critique of casteism”



Screenwriter Gaurav Solanki talks about the text and subtext of the Anubhav Sinha film whose gripping plotline and social context has generated interest at the box office

SHRINKHLA SAHAI
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Teaming up with director and co-writer Anubhav Sinha on "Article 15", Gaurav Solanki has crafted a screenplay that hit home with huge box office draws and a compelling narrative on contemporary issues. The journey from IIT-Roorkee to Hindi films has taken the writer through numerous twists and turns, bringing together his passion for literature and cinema.

Plotting the story

For Solanki, tying up an array of socio-political issues into a seamless screenplay was an exciting challenge when he started working on "Article 15". "Triggered by the Badaun rape case, Anubhav (Sinha) had already started writing a script. There were other aspects like the Bhim Army and the situation of the sewer workers that we wanted to highlight. When I began working on the draft, this seemed almost impossible, but this is what I love to do as a writer – bring a lot of different things, different characters together, and merge seemingly unrelated things."

For the writer-duo it was important to match the film's hard-hitting take on caste politics with a gripping plotline that would balance critical acclaim with commercial success. "We didn't want to make an art film, we wanted it to be within the mainstream cinema and that was another challenge as a scriptwriter." The process involved multiple drafts, intense work on the characters and careful layering. Solanki reflects, "There are two layers within the script that were really important to maintain through-

out – one is the socio-political aspect which is the theme that we delve into, and the other is the thriller, that makes the story engaging. Each scene has been written and re-written keeping this at the forefront – what do we want to say here, and how is the story moving forward?"

On casteism

The film has been criticised for reinforcing the Brahmin saviour complex with an upper-caste protagonist (played by Ayushmann Khurrana) who emerges heroic towards the end. Solanki quietly disagrees with this perspective and clarifies, "The IPS officer, Ayan, is a privileged North Indian, upper caste, entitled male who actually doesn't realise his privileges. His intentions are not bad, but he is naive, and though he loves his country, coming from a privileged urban, male position, he does not clearly understand the ground reality. It is the story of his evolution, his vulnerability and the transformation in his perspective." Solanki reveals that at one point, the writers also toyed with the idea of a woman protagonist, yet after much discussion dropped this because, "even if a woman was upper caste and urban, she would still not be as absolutely entitled and privileged as her male counterpart, and that is the population we wanted to hold up a mirror to."

Emphasising the point that it was critical to tap into the minds of the westernised city dweller who may be oblivious to caste politics and other socio-political realities, Solanki says it was important to address how this segment of audience thinks, and to create a protagonist who is disturbingly relatable for them.

"Having studied at IIT, and having lived in Delhi, I have come across many people, in fact colleagues and peers from privileged backgrounds, who often raise questions like – 'if there is equality, why is reservation required?' Now I have often debated about this in the past but I wanted to anchor the film on this as a sub-text, to respond to this through what we show on screen. The character of Ayan is a representation of those people in many ways, who are well-intentioned but do not understand the centuries of Dalit struggle, or the stark socio-political realities. We wanted that middle class to leave the hall with a question in their head."

Solanki opines that there is a distinction between the 'hero' and 'protagonist' that often gets conflated. "First and foremost, the character is not a hero, and he is not shown as one. It is unfortunate if people felt that he emerges as a saviour, but he is actually quite clueless about the system and constantly relies on his partner (Aditi, played by Isha Talwar) for insights. He is not shown as a champion for the Dalit cause, but as a Brahmin ally. Since the character is played by a star like Ayushmann Khurrana, there is a general tendency to assume he is the hero in this story, but he is only the entry point."

On the other hand, there is the character of Nishad (played by Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub) – the young Dalit activist. "His voice in the film is of critical significance," reflects Solanki. "He is not purely dependent on any one figure, but ideologically he represents aspects of Chandrashekhar Azad Ravan, and draws from the stories of Rohith

Vemula, even Bhagat Singh." Placing the characters of Ayan and Nishad as the pivots of the script was an important strategy for Solanki. "Both the characters are essentially alone in their struggles against the system and need each other." Returning to the criticism about the Dalit rebel being subsumed by the heroism of the Brahmin saviour, Solanki says, "It is actually Nishad who has the traditional heroic qualities, not Ayan. But the system won't change overnight and there are many compromises for both characters on the path of justice and righteousness. Clearly, the film does not criticise any one caste, it is a critique of casteism."

Creating characters

Solanki's writing process begins with images of the characters, moving on to a definition of their traits. "I want my characters to be layered, not just good or bad. Brahmatt (Manoj Pahwa) and Jaatav (Kumud Mishra), show the different social and ideological positions within casteism and their dynamic changes as the story progresses."

Poetry plays an important part in Solanki's aesthetics. The Punjabi rebel-poet Pash, inspired the commentary and certain scenes featuring Nishad, converging anger and romance. Solanki himself has been writing poetry for many years now. He has written the lyrics for films beginning with "Ugly" (2014), and "Article" 15 is his maiden screenplay.

Life journey

His foray into the world of words began early in life, as an avid reader and movie buff. "Middle class expectations and small-town anxieties drove me to IIT to get a stable career. I even worked for a while as an engineer in Gurgaon, after my studies. But my heart wasn't in it. I kept writing, blogging, hunting for publishers and receiving piles of rejections."

He received Bharatiya Jnanpeeth's Navlekhan Award in 2017 for his first poetry collection "Sau Saal Fida" and returned it, when his stories were charged with being 'vulgar'. "What is the point of awarding me when it is accompanied by moral policing?"

Expanding on his upcoming projects and his work vision he says, "I don't want to churn out stories, I want to say something meaningful through my work. I want to start a conversation in your head. I constantly ask myself whether I have something important to say, and the answer should emotionally and ideologically satisfy me, only then would I write."