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THE HINDU on Sunday

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Hamilton takes the pole at the German Grand Prix
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NEARBY

Pakistan using deceit over Kashmir: Modi

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed the victory in the Kargil war a "symbol of India's might, determination and capability". Speaking at the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the war in New Delhi , Mr. Modi said that "wars are fought not by governments but by the whole country".

NEWS ▸ PAGE 10

Nagaland forms panel to frame RIIN modalities

KOHIMA

The Nagaland government on Saturday set up a commission to frame the modalities of creating the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland, officials said. The RIIN, a register of all the indigenous inhabitants of the State, is required to prevent issuance of indigenous inhabitant certificates to ineligible persons, they added.

NORTH & EAST ▸ PAGE 7

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MAGAZINE ▸ 32 PAGES (TABLOID)
CLASSIFIEDS ▸ PAGES 4 & 6

1,050 passengers rescued from stranded train near Mumbai

NDRF, Army, Navy engage in 10-hour rescue after flood waters inundate tracks

A train marooned: This screen grab from a video footage taken by the IAF shows the Mahalaxmi Express stranded between Badlapur and Vangani on Saturday. ▪ AFP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A coordinated operation of the NDRF, the Army and the Navy on Saturday rescued over a thousand passengers stranded on the Mumbai-Kolhapur Mahalaxmi Express near Badlapur, following heavy overnight rains that inundated large swathes of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR).

The train that left Mumbai on Friday night could not proceed beyond Vangani in Thane district, around 65 km from Mumbai, as the Ulhas river near Badlapur burst its banks, leading to water-logging on the tracks.

SOS sent

The first SOS on the train was sent out at 5.25 a.m. A coordinated response was initiated by the Maharashtra government.

In the 10-hour rescue operation, seven Navy units, two helicopters of the Indian Air Force, and four Army columns retrieved 1,050 passengers, including nine pregnant women, from the 20 marooned coaches. The operation was monitored by the Western Naval Command, the Army, the Air Force, Maharashtra's Chief Secretary and Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai.

NDRF teams were the first to reach the site with six inflatable boats at 9.43 a.m. They were joined by the Western Naval Command with three diving units, a Sea King helicopter with divers on board and several auto-inflatable crafts. The first seven passengers were evacuated at 10.05 a.m. By 2.00 p.m., all the passengers were evacuated and brought to the Sahyadri Mangal Karayalay in Badlapur.

Special train

A special train from Kalyan departed at 6.10 p.m. carrying the evacuated passengers through the Manmad line to Kolhapur, railway officials said. "We received unprecedented rainfall in a short period. Our first objective was to reach the train and ensure that passengers do not de-board in panic. This was a first-of-its-kind evacuation undertaken on this scale in Maharashtra," said Sunil Udasi, Chief Public Relation officer, Central Railway.

LACK OF INFO LEFT PASSENGERS ON THE EDGE ▸ PAGE 9

FinMin, NITI Aayog guidelines ignored in airport privatisation

Adani gained as curb on numbers, experience norm set aside

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

A Finance Ministry recommendation not to award the same player more than two airports, out of a total of six to be privatised by the Centre, was among some of the key suggestions brushed aside by the government panel for public private partnerships – the PPP Appraisal Committee (PPPAC) – effectively leading to Adani Enterprises Limited emerging as the winning bidder for all airports.

Following the Union Cabinet's in-principle approval in November last to privatise six airports owned by the Airports Authority of India (AAI), the PPPAC met on December 11 to recommend the proposal for final approval.

Key suggestions

The panel dismissed key suggestions made by the Finance Ministry's Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) and the NITI Aayog to improve criteria for selecting bidders. These included the requirement of prior experience in operation and management as well as providing the total project cost upfront for each of the airports, to better determine the financial capability of interested players.

SPECIAL

Three days later, on December 14, the AAI floated a tender for operation, management and development in the PPP mode for the Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram and Mangaluru airports. In February, the AAI declared Adani Enterprises Limited the highest bidder for all six airports. On July 3, the Union Cabinet gave its nod for leasing three of these airports, while a decision on the remaining three is awaited.

An email each to Subhash Chandra Garg – who was then Secretary, Economic Affairs, and also headed the PPPAC – as well as Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation P.S. Kharola, with specific questions on the final decision, remained unanswered till the time of going to print.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 10

FIR against VHP leader for hate speech

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

Taking suo motu cognisance of a video where Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Prachi Arya was heard appealing to Hindus to boycott articles made by Muslims for Hindu festivals, Baghpat police on Saturday registered an FIR against her for hate speech.

The VHP leader's speech was in response to Samajwadi Party legislator Nahid Hasan's appeal to Muslims to "boycott shopkeepers who sympathise with the BJP". Ms. Prachi went on to add that in trying to win everybody's "*vishwas*" (confidence), Hindus were suffering. She also described madrasas as "terror factories". SP Shailesh Pandey confirmed that a case has been registered under Sections 153, 153A, 505(2) and 188 of the IPC.

Deve Gowda says JD(S) will sit in Opposition

'May back govt. on pro-people issues'

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

A day after a section of Janata Dal (Secular) leaders asked former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy to extend support to the BJP government, party national president H.D. Deve Gowda said it would only play "a constructive role as a regional party, sitting in the Opposition."

Late on Friday night, former Minister and senior party leader G.T. Deve Gowda said a section of the MLAs, at a meeting of the legislature party, favoured supporting the BJP government, stirring up a hornet's nest. The party president, however, said the JD(S) might support the government only on "pro-people issues" like the passage of the Finance Bill.

H.D. Deve Gowda

In a tweet, Mr. Kumaraswamy called these reports "speculations."

Mr. Deve Gowda sought to downplay the former Minister's statements. "It is his personal opinion which he is free to express," he said.

He said that while a decision on the alliance with the Congress would be taken later, the need of the hour was to strengthen the party at the grassroots.

BJP LIKELY TO SPURN OVERTURES ▸ PAGE 8

GST on EVs, chargers cut to 5%

TCA SHARAD RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI

To encourage adoption of electric vehicles, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council on Saturday decided to reduce the tax rate on electrical vehicles (EV) from 12% to 5% and on chargers from 18% to 5% from August 1, 2019.

It also exempted the hiring of electric buses by local authorities from the GST. "The 36th GST Council Meeting was held here today via videoconference under the chairmanship of Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman," an official release said. Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur and Revenue Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey attended the meeting.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 10
DECISION HAILED ▸ PAGE 13

No pass

Stuck in the valley: Trucks stranded near Sonmarg in J&K after the Srinagar-Leh highway was closed on Saturday following landslips on the Zojila Pass. ▪ NISSAR AHMAD

Surge in troops sparks panic in Kashmir

10,000 more personnel to be deployed; move attributed to Amarnath Yatra

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

As panic gripped Jammu and Kashmir over the additional deployment of 10,000 troops, a senior official said the movement was necessary as the security forces deployed in the Kashmir Valley were "stretched" in securing the Amarnath Yatra route.

K. Vijay Kumar, adviser to the Governor, told *The Hindu*, "Infusion of reinforcements is a calibrated response after a joint assessment of security forces, especially as a substantial number had been deployed on Yatra-related security."

'For effective planning'

"There is no need to panic; extra personnel are being deployed so we could plan security operations effectively. Our hands were full as the Amarnath Yatra is going on," another official said.

Securing pilgrims: Around 32,000 security men have been deployed for securing the Amarnath Yatra.

Around 32,000 personnel of the Central Armed Police Forces are deployed for securing the Yatra that concludes on August 15. The security detail also involves escorting the pilgrims from their base camps to the Amarnath shrine and on their way back.

The official said that though there was a high threat perception around the Yatra, especially after the car-borne attack on a CRPF bus in Pulwama earlier this year, the deployment was more or less similar to that of last year. The State is now under President's Rule. Besides the police and the Army, 50,000 personnel of the Central forces have been deployed in the Valley to assist in security operations and other law and order duties.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 10

JeM commander killed in Shopian

Two militants, including Jaish-e-Mohammad's top commander Munna Lahori, were killed in a joint operation of the Army, the police and the CRPF in Shopian on Saturday. The other militant is Hizbul Mujahideen's Mir Zeenat Ul Islam. A soldier died while foiling an infiltration bid in north Kashmir. ▸ PAGE 10

U.P. judge transferred for ordering constable to disrobe in court

Drew judge's ire for not letting his car pass on court premises

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court on Saturday transferred a judge in Agra in western Uttar Pradesh to Mahoba in Bundelkhand after he allegedly ordered a police constable to disrobe his khaki uniform in court as punishment for not giving passage to his car.

Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Agra, Santosh Kumar Yadav was transferred as full-time secretary of the district legal services authority in Mahoba, HC registrar general Mayank Kumar Jain said in an order.

The constable driver of Agra police, identified as Ghurelal, was allegedly forced by the judge to take off his shirt, belt and cap and made to stand in court for almost an hour on Friday. The policeman was reportedly being punished for not letting the judge's vehicle pass on the court premises earlier in the day despite the latter honking repeatedly. The constable was driving a police van carrying accused to be presented before court.

> **Ghurelal was allegedly forced by the judge to take off his shirt, belt and cap and made to stand in court for almost an hour**

Humiliated by the incident which took place in a juvenile court in Malpura, Agra, the constable then wrote to the district police chief and applied for voluntary retirement. He also reportedly broke down.

Police action

Director General of Police O.P. Singh took the issue "very seriously" and raised it at the appropriate level, U.P. Police said in a tweet.

"We stand by the dignity of each and every policeman and appeal to all the sections of society to respect the honour of uniformed forces," the police said.

Later, after the judge was transferred, U.P. Police thanked the DGP in another tweet for "standing by the honour of the lowest rung of the police force and for keeping the morale of the force intact".

No statement was issued by the judge in question.

Governor makes parting shot at Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

Outgoing West Bengal Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi on Saturday said Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's "appeasement policy" is adversely affecting the social harmony of the State.

"Her policy of appeasement has the effect of adversely affecting societal harmony... I think she should look at every citizen equally," said Mr. Tripathi, who has had several run-ins with the CM during his five-year tenure. "Discrimination is apparent. Her statements show the discrimination," added the 84-year-old.

The ruling Trinamool Congress hit back, saying it was an "attempt to score brownie points".

Mr. Tripathi's successor Jagdeep Dhankar will take oath as Governor on July 30.

DELHI Timings

SUNDAY, JULY 28				
	RISE	05:40	SET	19:15
	RISE	01:45	SET	15:41
MONDAY, JULY 29				
	RISE	05:41	SET	19:15
	RISE	02:33	SET	16:43
TUESDAY, JULY 30				
	RISE	05:42	SET	19:14
	RISE	03:28	SET	17:45

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	32	25
Safdarjang	32	25
Palam	31	25

Delhi Palam Today
32°C Comfortable weather lies ahead. Few spells of rain or thundershower are likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
35°C Rise in day temperatures is likely. Mainly dry and warm weather would prevail.

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Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	61	Gurugram	-
Ghaziabad	52	Faridabad	52
Noida	53	Greater Noida	39

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

IN BRIEF

Minister inaugurates Digi Seva Kendra

NEW DELHI

Power Minister Satyendar Jain on Saturday inaugurated the Digi Seva Kendra (DSK) at Paschim Vihar here which seeks to provide seamless 'single window digital services' to lakhs of the Capital's residents. Modelled on the lines of Passport Seva Kendras, the Kendra provides digital experience even at physical locations and is also replete with Door Step Service (DSS) for senior citizens, differently abled and the medically ill. Four more DSKs are in the pipeline that will take its count to 11.

Govt. draws flak after NGT bans stone crushers in Mahendragarh

Swaraj India hits out at authorities, alleges 'nexus between officials and owners'

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

Hitting out at the BJP government over illegally operating stone crushers in Mahendragarh district of Haryana, the Swaraj India party on Saturday said it has exposed the "nexus between government officials and those involved in running illegal crushers in the State".

The National Green Tribunal had on July 24 ordered immediate closure of all illegal, pollution-causing stone crushers in the district.

"The NGT order exposes the collusion of owners of illegal crushers and the government machinery. We hope that now the State government and the local administration will respect the order and spirit of the NGT and take strict action against erring officials and others," said Swaraj India president Yogendra Yadav.

The NGT ordered immediate closure of all illegal, pollution-causing stone crushers in the Haryana district. ▪ FILE PHOTO

Prosecution, penalty

The NGT also directed the Deputy Commissioner of Mahendragarh to ensure immediate initiation of action by way of prosecution and recovery of compensation which must be "deterrent and relatable to the cost of restoration" so that the illegal activity is not profitable.

The order came on a petition by Mahender Singh and Tejpal Yadav, who complained that the location of the illegal stone crushers was close to plantation, reserved forest and educational institution. Besides, the area is overexploited in terms of groundwater, resulting in scarcity of water even for drinking purpose, the petition stated.

The NGT, which had sought factual and action-taken report from a joint committee, comprising representatives of the Deputy Commissioner, Mahendragarh; District Town and Country Planning, Haryana State Pollution Control Board; and the Divisional Forest Officer, pointed out in its order that two reports submitted earlier were filed without "application of mind and were rejected". The third report, too, was found "inadequate to deal with the matter", said the NGT.

Blatant violation

"The report shows the State administration in poor light. There is no explanation as to how potable water has continued to be drawn without any restriction by the State administration even though the area is critical in terms of groundwater... It is also not clear as to how blatant violation of air quality norms is being allowed for permitting operation of stone crusher units... The report does not clarify as to how many stone crushers, if any, are legitimate and do not conflict with the environment. It appears that the State administration has not cared to fully verify the compliance of environment norms while permitting continuation of the stone crushers, even after proceedings before this tribunal," the NGT observed.

The order added that the Haryana Chief Secretary may look into the conduct of the officers who gave the earlier reports for "withholding the information" which has now been revealed.

> **We hope that now the State government and the local administration will respect the order and spirit of the NGT and take strict action against erring officials and others**
>
> YOGENDRA YADAV
> Swaraj India president

Draw up action plan for revamping existing mechanisms: NGT to MoEF

To ensure effective monitoring of environmental clearances

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following a plea that questioned the effectiveness of current monitoring mechanisms for compliance of environmental clearances granted to various projects, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Union Environment Ministry to draw up an action plan for "revamping the existing mechanisms".

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said, "...with regard to category "A" projects, the data validation has to be the primary concern of the MoEF&CC [Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change] and ought not be outsourced."

"For category "B" projects, such data validation may be done through SEIAA [State Environment Impact Assessment Authority]. It is necessary to have an action plan providing for revamping the existing mechanism by providing 100% monitoring of category "A" projects through the mechanism of regional offices of the MoEF&CC and the CPCB [Central Pollution Control Board]," the Bench observed.

Serious challenges

Directing authorities to furnish the action plan within one month, the Bench observed, "The need for 100% monitoring of category "A" projects is necessary in view of serious challenges of environment faced by the country in the form of there being 100 polluted industrial clusters, 351 polluted river stretches and 102 non-attainment cities, apart from other serious issues."

The directions came after submissions made by the Environment Ministry pertaining to third-party monitoring mechanisms.

Earlier, the green panel had directed the Ministry to "evolve an appropriate" mechanism to ensure effective monitoring of the environmental clearances granted.

Following allegations that there was "flagrant violation of conditions of environmental clearance and adequate monitoring was not taking place," the tribunal in October last year had observed that "compliance of conditions of EC must be monitored on a periodical basis, at least once a quarter".

Water wastage: Centre, DJB told to submit report

Authorities failed to take steps: petition

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought a report from the Centre and the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) over a petition seeking directions for remedial measures to prevent wastage of water from overflowing overhead tanks in residential and commercial areas.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel directed the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the DJB to furnish a factual and action-taken report to the the tribunal within one month.

Remedial measures

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by Ghaziabad councillor Rajendra Tyagi and others, who alleged that remedial measures were not being taken by authorities to prevent wastage of water from the overhead tanks.

Facing crisis

Noting the allegations made in the plea, the Bench observed, "Around 600 million people are facing acute water crisis in the country. Millions of litres of fresh potable water are being wasted in the absence of appropriate regulations or action plans."

Stating that wastage of water has "assumed alarming proportions," the petition stated, "The demand from water is expected to grow from 40 billion cubic metres currently to around 220 billion cubic metres in 2025...[the situation] is worsening by the day and needs to be arrested for the future generations."

> **Around 600 million people are facing acute water crisis in the country. Millions of litres of fresh potable water are being wasted in the absence of appropriate regulations or action plans**
>
> NGT BENCH

Punishable offence

The Bench observed, "The applicant accordingly seeks directions to the Ministry of Jal Shakti and Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change to take measures under [relevant sections] and to all States and Union Territories to make wastage or misuse of water through overflowing tanks or otherwise, a punishable offence."

The green tribunal posted the matter for August 28.

NGT seeks report from SDMC over desilting

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following a plea seeking execution of a 2016 order passed by the National Green Tribunal that had directed authorities to desilt a drain on the Mehrauli-Badarpur Road, the green panel has sought a status report from the South Delhi Municipal Corporation.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel directed the civic body to furnish the action-taken report within one month after the petitioner association alleged that authorities had failed to execute the 2016 order that was passed by the tribunal to prevent waterlogging. "According to the applicant, desilting is not being done nor the drain is being cleared. Before proceeding further in the matter, we require a factual and status report to be furnished by the SDMC," the Bench observed.

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by the Shri Shri Thakur Ram Chandra Dev Association that had sought directions to the government and civic bodies to "undertake regular cleaning and desilting of the drains abutting the temple complex to avoid waterlogging in future".

Walk in the rain

A man caught in the rain on Saturday. Showers across the Capital brought respite from both heat and humidity. The maximum and minimum temperatures were recorded at 32.5°C and 25.4°C respectively, both two notches below normal. Cloudy skies with light to moderate rain and thundershowers have been forecast for Sunday. ▪ R.V. MOORTHY

'Pass percentage in govt. schools has gone up'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The pass percentage of government school students studying in Class 12 has reached 96.5% while that of Class 10 students has crossed 80%, the Delhi government said here on Saturday. It credited special classes at such schools for "saving" as many as 20,000 students from repeating an academic year.

The pass percentage of Delhi government schools had now gone up by 9.7% points in Class 10 and 2.3% points in Class 12 after factoring the compartment results as well.

"For us, every child matters. I am proud of our teachers who conducted special classes for students during summer vacation and ensured that students placed in compartment not only take the exam but also pass it," Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, who also holds the education portfolio, said.

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Rosalind Wilson Memorial Lecture 2019: "Judging the Judges: Need for Transparency and Accountability" by Justice Ajit P. Shah. Chair: Soli J. Sorabjee, Life Trustee, IIC, at C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre (IIC), 6:30 p.m.

Talk: Ambarish Dave will recite verses from the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, selected by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi at Ramana Kendra, Lodhi Road, 5 p.m.

Dance: A solo Kathak recital by Dhriti Swaroop, a disciple of Padmashri Dr. Shovana Narayan at Triveni Auditorium, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205 Tansen Marg, 6:30 p.m.

Exhibition: "+ - Iconic Forces", a solo painting show by Suman Sen Gupta. The exhibition portrays the co-existence of duality throughout human history at Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m.. - 7 p.m.

Theatre: "Gudamba", a monologue Urdu presentation will be delivered as part of the ongoing Urdu Drama festival organised by the Ghalib Institute, at Ghalib Auditorium, Aiwan-e-Ghalib Marg, 6:30 p.m.

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

'Waive registration fee for women property owners'

BJP for swift regularisation of colonies

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

BJP State chief Manoj Tiwari, in a letter to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal here on Saturday, demanded the waiver of 4% registration fee for women seeking to own homes at unauthorised colonies in the Capital.

Arguing that the move would "empower" them in addition to ensuring their social security, the MP cited the example of Jharkhand government which is charging a nominal fee of ₹1 for the purpose. "...the Jharkhand government is charging only ₹1 as registration fee from women since June 2017, and properties have been registered in the name of about 1.25 lakh women," Mr. Tiwari said.

'Overcome hindrances'

Demanding that the process of regularisation of such colonies be expedited, Mr. Tiwari said that the Delhi government needed to overcome "hindrances being put by the bureaucrats" in this regard and also demanded that civic bodies be "given funds" for preparing the layout plans of unauthorised colonies.

He accused the Delhi government of "putting hindrance" in the regularisation of unauthorised colonies adding that the Narendra Modi-led government had, in 2014, started the process of regularisation of 1,797 illegal colonies of Delhi.

Mr. Tiwari claimed that the UD Ministry had written letters "again and again" in this regard, but when the AAP government "did not show its interest" in the regularisation of colonies, the Ministry formed a panel under the chairmanship of the L-G for recommending measures to be taken in this regard. "This committee submitted its report within three months and as a result, the process of regularisation has started...it is unfortunate that the Delhi government in place of cooperating in this process, tried to put hindrance. Now, when these colonies are being regularised, the AAP government is trying to take the credit which is completely wrong," he alleged.

In Gurugram's underbelly, addiction is just a shop away

Migrant workers' children take to inhaling correction pen diluters, available despite ban on sale to minors

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Shiv was barely nine when he took to substance abuse. His father, a rickshaw-puller, would return home drunk almost on a daily basis and beat up his mother. Too young to protest, he ran away from home a couple of times to escape the trauma. "But every time I ran away, my mother would stop eating. I promised her that I would never run away again but started inhaling a diluter for correction pen to numb my senses so that I could forget the pain and suffering," says Shiv, going to turn 16 this year.

Rakesh, the youngest of four siblings, was 10 years old when his friends introduced him to chemical abuse. Five years later, he has turned into a complete addict. His father, an autorickshaw driver, came here from Bihar in search of a job a decade ago.

"He left my mother for another woman. Earlier, he would visit us every few weeks. But now it has been more than a year since he came," says Rakesh. It was only three days ago when he had last inhaled the diluter.

Such stories of children of migrant workers, settled in and around Jharsa village, indulging in substance abuse abound. Abusive parents, penury, broken families and a neglected childhood have pushed them into addiction at a tender age. The easy availability of the diluter – openly sold by a couple of shopkeepers in Patel Nagar – has made matters worse.

A common sight

Amit Garg, who runs a school for underprivileged children at Prempuri near Jharsa village, says that children inhaling the diluter and lazing around in nearby parks is a common sight.

There are around a hundred such children aged between 8-16 who are given to substance abuse within a radius of a few kilometres at Jharsa, Prempuri and Patel Nagar, says Mr. Garg, an IIM alumnus.

"The number could even run into thousands across the Millennium City with the ever-growing population of migrant workers. The substance is easily available and costs less, which makes it popular among these children," says Mr. Garg.

Despite a clear warning on the product that "misuse by drinking and inhalation can be harmful and dangerous to health" and direction on "not to be sold to those below 18 years", it is sold openly at two shops in Patel Nagar. Though having an MRP of ₹25, it is sold at ₹90 apiece. "Earlier, it was sold at ₹35 per piece. But after three shops in Sadar Bazar were raided and the demand soared, it is being sold at a higher price," says Rakesh.

Mr. Garg says he complained to the local police about this on a couple of occasions, but no action has been initiated.

"If the supply of the substance is curtailed, it can help prevent many more children from falling prey to it. It can also help addicts quit. Also, its overdose has grave consequences – a minor boy lost both his eyes because of it. The children completely lose their senses after inhaling it and behave like zombies," says Mr. Garg, who has been working with Shiv and Rakesh to help them quit.

> **The number could even run into thousands across the Millennium City with the ever-growing population of migrant workers. The substance is easily available and costs less, which makes it popular among these children**
>
> AMIT GARG
> IIM alumnus

Arranging money

These addicts mostly scavenge junk from the garbage and sell it to the scrap dealers in Jharsa to arrange money for their daily dose. Sometimes, they also do odd jobs or even commit thefts.

Shiv recalls how he was once caught on the closed-circuit television camera stealing iron rods at an under-construction site in Sector 31 and detained by the police.

The scrap dealer was also arrested for buying the stolen iron rods. On another occasion, he damaged the window air conditioner in a house as he was frustrated over his inability to arrange money for the dose. He was again detained and let off with a warning.

Sometimes, Rakesh even steals money from his own house or a neighbour's if there isn't enough work at a vegetable market nearby for money for his dose. He has also been caught harassing girls and being reprimanded for it.

Mr. Garg says addiction is pushing these children into crime and antisocial activity. Many of these children have now grown up and taken to alcohol and drug abuse. He believes even a little effort on the part of the administration in taking action against the diluter suppliers can make a huge difference.

Gurugram Drugs Control Officer Amandeep Chauhan said that the diluter was not a banned item, but the police could book the shopkeepers for selling it to those below 18 years of age. "It is beyond the purview of the Drugs Control department to act in this case, but the police can certainly intervene," he said.

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Kin question intention of accused who killed boy over theft suspicion

Family members say victim was just 'roaming around' in neighbourhood with brother

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A day after a 16-year-old boy was beaten to death on the suspicion of being involved in a theft, his family members on Saturday claimed that he did not enter the house for burglary but was "roaming around".

Found on rail track

"He was roaming in the area when the accused caught and thrashed him brutally. Later, they threw him on a railway track," said a relative of the victim.

The police said the incident happened in Adarsh Nagar's Lal Bagh when the boy sneaked out of his house with his brother while his family members were sleeping.

He had entered the house to allegedly commit burglary but was caught red-handed by the owner.

"We were sleeping together and don't know where and when they went at night. On Friday morning, there was a huge crowd near the railway track when someone informed us that our boy was lying there," said the teenager's family.

He was the eldest of six siblings and his mother died three years ago. His father, who was a plumber, had stopped working for due to his health issues. His grandmother, who has a shop in the area, bears the expenses.

'Why did they kill him?'

"Had he been a thief, they would have recovered some stolen items from him. If he had stolen anything, they should have informed us. Why did they kill him?" the victim's grandmother said.

However, the accused said the boy was previously involved in other robbery cases. "He had snatched the mobile phone of my son earlier. On Friday, when he entered our house, my son saw him and tried to catch him. The boy went up to the terrace and jumped off. My son chased and nabbed him. Meanwhile, the neighbours gathered and started beating him," said Anita, the wife of the houseowner.

A first information report under Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the Indian Penal Code has been registered and the houseowner and five others, including a minor, have been nabbed.

AAP demands strong law against mob lynching

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Saturday urged the Central government to come up with a strong law against mob lynching.

Referring to a case in Adarsh Nagar here, where a 16-year-old boy was allegedly lynched after being caught for stealing on Friday, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh demanded a strict inquiry into the case. "It's a very unfortunate incident. Will mob decide justice in this country?" he said.

He said the Supreme Court had also told the Centre in 2018 that there should be a law on mob lynching. "Not just Muslims or Dalits, but now... anyone is being killed," Mr. Singh said. "Many bills are passed in the Parliament without any discussion or without any scrutiny and without being sending it to any committees. When will a law be made on mob lynching, which is becoming a blot on our society? I want to ask this to the Centre," he added.

Woman stabbed to death in Jangpura: brother wants accused hanged

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

"I don't care about his [accused] religion...I want him to be hanged," said Nirdosh, brother of the woman who was stabbed to death in Jangpura on Friday evening.

Preeti Mathur, 21, was stabbed six times with a knife by Mohammad Munsair in Bhogal, the police said.

Fifty-three-year-old Giri Lal, who got injured while trying to rescue the woman, said the attacker was brandishing the knife to keep the locals away. "I hit him with a plastic rod but he kept stabbing the woman. Then he attacked me but by that time, she had collapsed. I then caught him after which the other shopkeepers started beating him," said Mr. Lal.

Arvind Tiwari, a salesman, said he saw a man talking to the victim when suddenly he attacked her with a knife. She started running but he held her and attacked her again. "She kept asking for help but the accused was so brutal that no one stepped forward," said Mr. Tiwari. Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-East) Chinmoy Biswal said the accused and the victim used to stay in the same locality in Sarai Kale Khan and had known each other. But due to some reason, the woman had stopped talking to Munsair, he added. "We did not get any complaint regarding stalking or misbehavior against the accused. He is undergoing treatment after being beaten by the locals," said Mr. Biswal.

Preeti's brother said Munsair had misbehaved with her after which he was asked by the landlord to vacate the house. Munsair had then shifted to a new house in the same locality. "My sister was pursuing BA. I never thought that I will not have her around in rakhi," said Nirdosh. Munsair, an unemployed man, earlier worked at Safdarjung Hospital as a sweeper. A video of the incident is doing the rounds.

'Couple found dead inside IIT-D campus fought often'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following the case where three of a family were found dead inside their flat in IIT-Delhi campus on Friday, the police on Saturday said they did not recover any note from the spot.

DCP (South-West) Devendra Arya said a PCR call was received at 11 p.m. on Friday stating that a woman was unable to reach her daughter, who lives with her in-laws in IIT-Delhi campus, over the phone. A team reached the spot and found the flat to be locked from inside. "They broke open the main door and found a man, his wife, and his mother hanging in separate rooms," said Mr. Arya. The man worked at the institution.

During investigation, it was found that the couple used to fight often. The woman's mother had registered a complaint of domestic violence against her son-in-law on July 7.

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, Telephone: 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. -7.30 p.m.

AIIMS doctors wear badges to protest against NMC Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Resident doctors and students at AIIMS here wore black badges to work on Saturday in a symbolic protest against the National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill which, they alleged, was "anti-poor".

Doctors and medical students across the country have been opposing the Bill, which was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 22 by Health and Family Welfare Minister Harsh Vardhan.

The resident doctors of AIIMS were seen wearing black badges in ICUs, emergency block, wards and operation theatres on Saturday.

Protests were being organised in various parts of the country against the Bill on the call of the Indian Medical Association.

Minister opens OPD, labs at Safdarjung Hospital

Geriatric OPD for elderly to be open every Sunday starting today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

"Health has been positioned as one of the top agenda of the government and today's development reflects that the Prime Minister is committed to fundamentally transform the country and give quality health services to the people," said Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Harsh Vardhan on Saturday.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

Facilities include

He was speaking at the inauguration of a host of facilities at Safdarjung Hospital, including a geriatric Sunday OPD, 3T MRI facility, biplane cardiac catheterization laboratory and ESWL-Lab.

While interacting with the staff, paramedics, and doctors at the emergency block, Dr. Vardhan said everyone's aim should be to see that no patient is turned back or referred to any other emergency facility. "Let us aspire to build our capacities and strengths such that we are able to attend to each emergency patient", he said.

The geriatric OPD for the elderly will be open every Sunday starting from today [July 28] in the main OPD complex and specialties including, medicine, general surgery, ENT, ophthalmology, and orthopedics will be provided.

The OPD timings will be from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and registration timings will be 9 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. Patients would be asked to come on the day of the OPD of the respective unit for follow-up visits.

The dispensary will issue medicines from 9.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. The required laboratory and radiological investigations will be done through emergency services of New Emergency Block (NEB) as already being done for emergency patients, said a release issued by the Health Ministry.

Patparganj gets fourth mohalla clinic

Four more to come up in the area by November, says Deputy Chief Minister

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday inaugurated a mohalla clinic in Patparganj, the Assembly constituency from which he has been elected as an MLA.

This is the fourth mohalla clinic in the constituency and four more are expected to come up by November. "One clinic had to be demolished because of the petty politics of the BJP, which we have now built here. We have plans for more. Soon, Patparganj will have eight mohalla clinics," Mr. Sisodia said.

'Doctor within 1 km'

"The government is working on the health and education of its citizens in a manner never done before in India. We have a dream for Delhi – if you fall ill anywhere in the city, an MBBS doctor should be available within 1 km to treat you. Whichever area you live in, whether you have money in your pocket or not, you will have a doctor to treat you," said Mr. Sisodia.

He added, "Sometimes one thinks that instead of working very hard for the past 4.5 years, what did we get in return? What we get in return is the smile on the faces of satisfied patients."

The Deputy Chief Minister told the officials, who would be running the clinic, that doctors are known for their "pleasant behaviour" with patients and requested them to carry on the tradition.

Mohalla clinic is a flagship project of the government.

Two kanwariyas die in separate incidents

Six persons are undergoing treatment

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two men, who were going for dak kanwar, died on Saturday in two separate incidents, the police said.

In the first incident, a 24-year-old man died while three others were injured after a truck rammed another in west Delhi, they said. The police said they received information about the accident near Sagarpur bus stand at 2.41 a.m.

"Investigation stated that a few persons were going for dak kanwar in a truck from Bindapur. They had stopped to cover the vehicle with canvas when it started to pour. The truck was parked on the roadside near Sagarpur bus stand when another truck rammed it. One died while three others were injured," an officer said.

The injured – Vijay Thakur, truck driver, Ankit (27) and Abhishek (27) both from Sagarpur are undergoing treatment, they said. Mohit from Delhi Cantt died during treatment in Safdarjung Hospital, the police said. "We have arrested the offending driver, Ajay Shankar [41], under relevant sections of the IPC," an officer said.

In the other incident, a 36-year-old man was electrocuted in south-east Delhi's Jaitpur, the police said. Vijender Karana from Saurabh Vihar died while three persons were injured – Shushil Chaudhary (24), Rajan (22) and Jitender (27).

An officer said they received information at 2.35 a.m. on Saturday. After reaching the spot, it was found that Karana along with 20-25 others, was going to Haridwar for dak kanwar, they said.

They were going there in a tempo having column speakers. When they reached Jaitput, the speakers came in contact with high tension wire, following which the four persons were injured. Karana was declared brought dead, the police said, adding he is survived by wife and two children.

Man acquitted in robbery case as complainant turns hostile

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has acquitted an accused in a robbery case as the complainant refused to identify him in the trial.

He told in his deposition that he had identified the accused in the Test Identification Parade(TIP) as the person who had robbed his scooty and ₹1.5 lakh cash at the instance of the investigating officer. The accused had chased him before robbing him, the complainant said. "He had identified the accused at the behest of the probe officer who had shown the photograph of the accused before the TIP proceedings,'' the complainant said in his evidence.

CISF launches encyclopaedia to strengthen security services

Portal includes videos, case studies

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The Central Industrial Security Force launched an online encyclopaedia – Securitypedia – which incorporates a wide gamut of security-related practices across the globe, said a CISF spokesperson on Saturday.

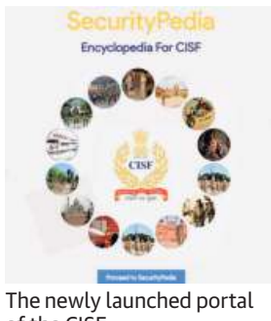
The CISF has established a technical lab at National Industrial Security Academy (NISA) in Hyderabad to maintain and update technical knowledge about the latest innovations in the field safety and security that can be used in places like airports and government offices, he added.

The technical lab has a dedicated research and development wing manned by a team of officers with a technical background, who maintain a constant interface with various academic and research institutions and other professional agencies, said a CISF official.

"Depending upon the outreach and feedback, the Securitypedia will be made accessible to other paramilitary forces," he said, adding that moving ahead with digital India, there was a need to empower the personnel by making technical knowledge available to them at the click of a button.

Officials can blog

"It is not just a static website containing data archives but a platform where CISF officials can contribute by writing blogs on professional issues. It has been developed as a repository of knowledge and contains extensive information on technical learning, CISF manuals, case studies, technical compendium, etc," said the official. There is also a feature in Securitypedia – CISF Tube – where officials can find all videos relevant to CISF. To streamline the monitoring of field units on a day-to-day basis, they have developed an innovative dashboard that provides real-time data collection.



The newly launched portal of the CISF.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The technical research and development lab of CISF has been actively engaged with national-level research institutions such as the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) to leverage the technological solutions they can offer.

To achieve the objective, CISF has been assisting the National Center of Excellence in Technology for Internal Security (NCETIS) at IIT-Mumbai in the evaluation of products, said the spokesperson.

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THE HINDU

Man sends 'talaqnama' to wife on stamp paper

INDORE

A 34-year-old woman approached police after her husband sent a "talaqnama" on a ₹100 stamp paper in Indore in Madhya Pradesh, an official said on Saturday. The woman resides in Chandan Nagar. "My husband sent me a ₹100 stamp paper containing 'talaq-e-bain', which according to him frees me from the marriage. I refuse to accept this one-sided divorce," said Reshma Sheikh.

85% of food adulteration cases in Bhind pending since 2011

An inter-State racket involving spurious milk was recently busted in the M.P. district

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Almost 85% of food adulteration cases, primarily relating to milk and dairy products, registered in Bhind district of Madhya Pradesh are pending in courts since 2011. An inter-State racket involving adulteration of milk and dairy products was recently busted in the district, as per an RTI reply.

There have been convictions in only eight of the 55 cases registered between January 22, 2011, and September 4, 2017, in the district. The last conviction was in 2016, according to an RTI reply to a query raised by activist Ajay Dubey.

On July 19, authorities seized over 700 kg of milk products during raids in Bhind and Morena districts. • FILE PHOTO

Raid on units

On July 19, the State Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Department and a Special Task Force raided units manufacturing synthetic milk and dairy products in Bhind and Morena districts. Around 10,000 litres of synthetic milk, 500 kg of *mawa* and 200 kg of paneer were seized. Around 60 persons, including food inspectors, were arrested.

Following this, the government cracked down on units manufacturing spurious milk and the State Public Health and Family Welfare Minister Tulsiram Silawat said that the National Security (NSA) Act, 1980, would be invoked against those involved in the illegal activity.

"It was unreasonable to invoke the NSA Act against adulterators when there were so many cases pending," said Mr. Dubey, adding: "Those who are stalling litigation and thereby not bringing the accused to book must be held accountable for the proliferation of such rackets in the State. What is the point of the NSA Act when the pendency rate is so high?"

Forty-two cases in Bhind district relate to adulteration of milk and dairy products. Thirty-seven cases of adulteration are being investigated, including one in which the Madhya Pradesh government is the accused party. The RTI reply stated that there were no registered cases of spurious drugs in the district.

State Controller of the FDA department Ravindra Singh admitted the high pendency rate was a concern. "We have apprised the Chief Secretary of the rate and plan to fast track the process. We have also directed District Collectors to dispose of cases on a priority basis," he said.

Meanwhile, the FDA department recently seized 5,200 litres of adulterated milk being transported by a tanker to Kanpur from Porsa, Morena district. Chemicals and skimmed milk powder worth ₹30 lakh were also seized in a raid at a milk godown in the district. A show-cause notice was issued to the Food Safety Officer of the district for negligence.

From Pipalyamira, four samples were taken from a paneer factory and 255 kg of condensed milk and 250 kg of ghee were seized from Unhel, Ujjain district. In the past few days, 233 samples of milk and dairy products from across the State have been sent to the State Food Laboratory for testing.

'Self-help groups to be linked to nutrition plans'

Says Rajasthan Minister Mamta Bhupesh

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

Self-help groups (SHGs) will be connected to supplementary nutrition programmes at Anganwadi centres in Rajasthan this year.

The State government intends to dispel apprehension among SHGs after the Anti-Corruption Bureau's recent investigation into alleged irregularities in the distribution of food at some Anganwadi centres in Nagaur district.

Minister of State for Women and Child Development Mamta Bhupesh recently told the Assembly that SHGs would be encouraged to join nutrition programmes and basic healthcare schemes in rural areas.

Ms. Bhupesh said the ACB will file a charge-sheet against guilty officials and that disciplinary action has already been taken against them. She added that the SHGs will be fully protected and had no reason to worry about their functioning.

"New SHGs will be formed in Makrana in Nagaur district to streamline distribution of food," said the Minister.

Political vendetta in ED questioning, says Hooda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

Former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Saturday alleged "political vendetta" in his questioning by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with a money laundering case related to the allotment of a plot in Panchkula to the Associated Journals Limited in an "illegal" manner.

The senior Congress leader was questioned for the second consecutive day by the ED on Friday. He was grilled under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, official sources said.

"It is political vendetta," said Mr. Hooda. The plot in Panchkula, registered at no C-17 in Sector-6, was attached by the ED in December last year.

Nagaland forms panel to frame RIIN modalities

Commission to submit its report within three months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOHIMA

The Nagaland government on Saturday constituted a commission to frame the modalities of creating the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland, officials said.

The RIIN, a register of all the indigenous inhabitants of the State, is required to prevent issuance of indigenous inhabitant certificates to ineligible persons, they added.

A notification on setting up of the panel to develop the modalities was issued on Saturday, after the administration held meetings with tribal bodies, civil societies and non-Naga communities of the State.

It was decided that the policies and modalities of preparing the RIIN would be framed and made public before the actual enumeration begins.

The notification said the commission would recommend the eligibility criteria to be an indigenous inhabitant, the documents to be acceptable as proof for being an indigenous inhabitant, the manner in which the exercise is to be carried out and any other issue relating to implementation of the RIIN.

Neiphiu Rio ▪FILE PHOTO

The panel would submit its report within three months.

The Commission would be headed by retired Chief Secretary Banuo Z. Jamir as chairman and T. Kiheto Sema and S. Chingwang Konyak as members. Justice (Retd.) Zelre Angami will function as the advisor to the Commission. The Home Commissioner and the Commissioner Nagaland will be ex-officio members of the panel.

The Nagaland government began the process of preparing the RIIN on July 10.

Genuine citizens

The RIIN would provide protection to genuine citizens who are permanent settlers of Nagaland and non-Nagas will not be harassed during preparation of the list of indigenous citizens, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio had said.

According to a June 29 government notification, the RIIN will help identify the citizens who settled in Nagaland prior to December 1, 1963, the day it became a full-fledged State.

Voters displaying their identity cards during panchayat election in West Tripura on Saturday ▪PTI

67% votes cast in Tripura rural election

BJP has won 85% seats unopposed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AGARTALA

An estimated 67.16% votes were cast till 3 p.m. on Saturday in the three-tier panchayat election in Tripura, which passed off peacefully, an election department official said.

Polls were held in only 15% of the total seats as 85% seats have already been won unopposed by the ruling BJP.

The Opposition – the Congress and the CPI(M) – accused the BJP workers of intimidating their voters since Friday night and not allowing them to exercise their franchise, a charge denied by the ruling party.

Ballot papers used

"Since ballot papers were used, it would take some more time to get the final percentage," State Election Commissioner G.K. Rao said. He said the BJP has won 5,652 seats of the total 6,646 seats unopposed.

Additional Inspector General of Police (Law and order) Subrata Chakraborty said no major incident of violence was reported from any part of the State.

Landslides sever Imphal-Assam link

IBOYAIMA LAITHANGBAM
IMPHAL

Incessant rain over the past few days in Manipur has triggered multiple landslides in the State and on the national highways that snake through the hills.

Government officials on Saturday said that three landslides on NH-37, which connects Imphal to Assam, buried or stranded several vehicles and have rendered large portions of the highway non-motorable. The police said that debris was being cleared and the highway may be reopened soon.

The officials said that landslides were reported at Lukhambi, Kotland and Nung. The Border Roads Organisation and the State PWD officials are supervising the clearing of the mud, loose earth and debris.

THE HINDU
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Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer (Project), West Central Railway, Near Railway Microwave Tower, Kota Jn. Rajasthan-324002 for and on behalf of President of India invites E-tender in the prescribed form for the following work. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. **Tender No. : KTT/S&T/Project/2019/01-R. Name of work :** Hiring of Four wheeler (Non-AC) Vehicle (02 Nos) TATA SUMO Gold/ Mahindra Bolero/ Chevrolet Tavera/ Mahindra Scorpio or similar price segment for field inspection and executing of ongoing S&T targeted works for a period of 36 Months for use of ADSTEs of Kota Division of West Central Railway. **Cost of Work : Rs. 25,33,371.84, Earnest Money : Rs. 50,700/-, Cost of tender form : Rs. 3,000/-, Completion period : 36 Months** (Thirty Six Months) (Including Monsoon). **Last date & Time of submission of tender : 26.08.2019 at 15.00 hrs.** Website address www.ireps.gov.in.
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Amarinder scraps Fazilka DC's order on dress code

The officer had issued order on 'request' by employees' union

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Saturday scrapped the orders of the Fazilka Deputy Commissioner imposing a dress code on employees.

'Casual dress unkempt'

DC Manpreet Singh Chhatwal had reportedly issued the orders on a written request by the employees' union which had sought a formal dress code as they found the casual dress 'unkempt'.

An official spokesperson said the Chief Minister has directed the DC to forward the union request to the State government for further action, as deemed necessary.

"Any decision on the matter would be taken after due consideration of all relevant aspects of the issue," said the spokesperson.

'Not feasible'

The Chief Minister said imposition of a dress code in a government office did not, on the face of it, appear to be a feasible option. Other ways could be explored to ensure office decorum, he said, adding that the State government did not have any dress code in place for its employees and hence, it was not reasonable to expect employees in one district office to follow any such code.

As per the DC's orders, male employees would have been required, with effect from July 29, 2019, to abstain from wearing T-shirts and female employees would have been required to mandatorily wear *dupattas*.

Any violation of the dress code would have invited action, according to the orders.

Bangladeshi couple held for living in India on fake papers

Man arrested for 'helping' them get forged documents

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

The Bulandshahr police on Saturday arrested three people, including an alleged Bangladeshi couple, from Khurja town of the district. According to the police, the couple has been living in India for a long time on forged documents. They have a five-month-old daughter as well.

Khurja CO Raghvendra Mishra said that the case came to light as part of the drive initiated by the administration to check unverified workers in the pottery industry. "On the information given by local intelligence, we conducted a raid in Mohalla Baradari where we found that Akash alias Nishi and his wife Mishti were living after assuming fake identities through forged documents. This included birth certificates, Aadhaar cards, PAN card and bank passbooks of two nationalised banks and passport of the wife. A photocopy of Nishi's passport was also recovered. Nishi told us that his original passport was submitted at the Kolkata airport. We are checking it with the Kolkata police," Mr. Mishra said.

Documents include birth certificates, Aadhaar cards, PAN card, bank passbooks and passport of the wife

RAGHVENDRA MISHRA
Khurja CO

He added that Tej Krishna Pratap Singh alias Robin, who helped them in getting fake documents, has also been arrested. "They have been arrested under sections 420, 467, 468, 471, 120B and Section 14 of The Foreigners Act and 12(1)B of The Passports Act, 1967."

Describing them as "poor illegal economic migrants", Mr. Mishra said that during interrogation Nishi revealed that they came from Bangladesh in search of a job. "Nishi is from Krishnapur village of district Naogaon in Bangladesh while Mishti is from Jhinadoh village of the same district. We have recovered Nishi's Bangladeshi birth certificate as well. They approached Robin for forging basic documents like birth certificate and rent agreement. On the basis of these papers, they got the passports and opened bank accounts."

Interestingly, for their marriage, the couple visited Bangladesh in December 2017 and returned in January 2018 using forged documents, said Mr. Mishra.

IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka PM, wife offer prayers at Kasaragod

KASARAGOD

Sri Lanka Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and wife Maitree Wickremesinghe reached Kasaragod on a private visit and offered prayers at the Kumaramangalam temple at Bela, near Kumbla, here on Saturday. Reports quoting temple priest said Mr. Wickremesinghe and wife prayed for the prosperity of their nation and welfare of their family.

Orthodox faction enters church following SC order

ALAPPUZHA

Members of the Orthodox faction of the Malankara Church on Saturday entered St. Mary's Church at Kattachira, near Kayamkulam, based on a Supreme Court order. It had remained closed for the past several months following clashes between the Orthodox and Jacobite factions over the ownership of the church. Officials said they executed the Supreme Court order allowing the Orthodox faction the legal mandate to administer the church. It was opened amid tight security.

Man held on charge of killing girlfriend

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A man who allegedly killed his 30-year-old girlfriend and buried her body in the backyard of his under-construction house has been arrested. Acting on a tip-off, the police arrested Akhil from the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport. According to the police, Akhil and Rakhi were in a relationship for over six years. Trouble started when she came to know that he was getting married to another woman. Akhil and his brother Rahul allegedly strangulated her. Rahul was arrested earlier on Saturday. PTI

BJP likely to spurn overtures from section of JD(S) leaders

Karnataka Chief Minister has ruled out making any deal with the party

K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ
BENGALURU

A section of Janata Dal (S) legislators have expressed their inclination to support the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Karnataka from outside, but this has only ruffled feathers in the saffron party, particularly Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa.

Party sources said the Chief Minister has ruled out making any deal with the JD (S) and has communicated this to the party's Central leadership. Mr. Yediyurappa and former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy share an uncomfortable history. The two fell out when the latter did not hand over power to the BJP in the earlier coalition government of 2007. "The differences are irreconcilable," said a close associate of Mr. Yediyurappa.

Sets off speculation

On Friday, a section of JD(S) leaders wanted to join hands with the BJP, and this was confirmed by former Minister G.T. Deve Gowda. This is not the first time some JD(S) leaders have tried to work out an agreement with the BJP. Days before the trust vote in the Assembly, the then Tourism Minister, S.R. Mahesh, a former BJP leader now with the JD(S), met BJP State in-charge P. Muralidhar Rao and K.S. Eshwarappa at the Kumara Krupa Guest House, setting off speculation.

"Yediyurappa lodged a strong protest with the party high command after the meeting," a source said. But what has also upset the State BJP leaders is that JD(S) negotiators are reaching out to the Central leadership directly, bypassing the State unit. A senior BJP leader said that having a truck with the JD(S) makes no sense at present. "We have fought the party tooth and nail over the past one year and have just toppled their government. Three of their MLAs have resigned and are all set to join us. The party cannot let go of rebels. It is also a question of our credibility," he said.

Action against Speaker?

Meanwhile, the BJP strategists are considering moving a no-confidence motion against Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar on Monday. The party fears he might disqualify the remaining 13 rebel MLAs till the end of the tenure of this Assembly.

"It will not be appropriate for the Speaker to take a call on the fate of the 13 rebel MLAs after the winning side moves a no-confidence motion against him," a BJP strategist said.

Accolades again: Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa gets a rousing reception from supporters on a visit to his native village Bookanakere, in Mandya district on Saturday. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Siddaramaiah says rebel MLAs called him after 3 disqualifications

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU/VIJAYAPURA

Ahead of Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa's floor test, two senior Congress leaders on Saturday claimed that some MLAs from the rebel camp had tried contacting Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Siddaramaiah.

"Two MLAs from the rebel camp called up Siddaramaiah recently. But he ignored their calls and did not answer," former Home Minister M.B. Patil told the media in Vijayapura. However, he refused to identify the MLAs. Confirming the claim, Mr. Siddaramaiah said in Bengaluru, "It is true, some of them called me. They called me after the Speaker announced the disqualification of three MLAs. They are worried about disqualification now."

These claims, made by Congress leaders ahead of Mr. Yediyurappa's floor test, have created a flutter in the rebel group. Some of the members immediately clarified that they were not worried about any action against them, including disqualification.

Janata Dal (S) rebel legislator H. Vishwanath rubbished the claim. "It is false. They are trying to create confusion, that something will happen on Monday. But we are intelligent enough to know better," he said.

Revive passion for reading among youth, say readers

Suggestions aplenty at *The Hindu*'s Open House in Kochi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

It was an evening well spent for about 40 readers of *The Hindu*, with some coming in from as far away as Kannur, to participate in the first Kerala Open House with the Readers' Editor A.S. Panneerselvan, on Saturday.

The Open House, in the presence of the editor Suresh Nambath, saw readers demand that *The Hindu* take the initiative to re-ignite the passion for reading, especially among the millennials who depend mostly on online portals for news and other reading.

The readers also offered suggestions to improve the readability of the paper and to keep up with the times when news is available at one's fingertips. Foremost among them were Anna Kattampally and Chithra S. Nair, students from St. Teresa's College here. "There are options aplenty to get live and quick news. *The Hindu*'s online edition offers news in depth. It must become more lively and friendlier to the youth," they said.

Nirmala Venketeshwaran, a retired school principal, spoke of how the academic standard and communication skills of students had improved tremendously after they began reading *The Hindu*. "Sadly, most among today's young generation do not have the passion to read."

Davis Vithayathil sought more representation from Kerala in the Letters to the Editor column. "Everything about the daily, from the quality of newsprint to content, is outstanding," said Santhosh Krishnan. Mini Priya, assistant professor from SH College, Thevara, highlighted how many like her relied considerably on the daily to garner data for research.

In response

Mr. Panneerselvan spoke of the efforts that *The Hindu* takes to understand and correct the errors that creep into the daily. "Errors can happen, since newspapers are produced by humans and driven by deadlines. The Open House was organised to recognise the viewpoints of readers."

Responding to demands that the e-paper and a few other offerings from *The Hindu* stable be made available free of cost, he delved into the expenses involved in garnering credible news. "Newsprint too is expensive," he said.

Mr. Nambath said the Readers' Mail column would be shortly restored, with responses from government officials concerned.

"We try to be representative of all regions in Letters to the Editor column. Readers can write about areas of their interest in Open Page and get paid as well," he said.

Face-to-face: One of the participants posing a question at the Open House conducted by *The Hindu* in Kochi on Saturday. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'No room for intolerance in Kerala'

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Coming down hard on "forces of intolerance" for their attacks on filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan and other independent-minded artists, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the State will provide all security and the right atmosphere for them to continue to pursue their art independently and fearlessly.

"For the past few years, fascist forces have been trying to spread the poison of communalism and intolerance even in the field of cinema. Let these forces keep in mind that such threats will not work in Kerala," the Chief Minister said.

Earlier, Mr. Vijayan visited Mr. Gopalakrishnan at his home to express solidarity with the filmmaker.

Errant police officers to be booked for electoral fraud

G. ANAND
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Gazetted officers who facilitated the surrogate filing of postal ballots issued to police officers posted outside their constituencies on Lok Sabha poll duty by falsely attesting the requisite application (Form 13A) are likely to be charged with committing electoral fraud, according to senior law enforcement officers.

The Crime Branch is probing the postal voter fraud that had ensnared the Kerala Police Association and the Police Department in a raging political controversy on the eve of elections. The agency has requested District Collectors to turn in the Form 13A declaration submitted by the elector to the attesting officer. The signed declaration testifies to the identity of the voter and details the serial number of the postal ballot paper issued to him.

The attesting officer has to authenticate the voters' identity. He has to certify that the elector signed the declaration and marked the ballot paper in his presence.

Officers said returning officers in Kerala had issued 39,338 postal ballots. The Crime Branch has to peruse the returned ballots to detect foul play. Investigators would verify whether the elector and the attesting officer were present together at the time of casting the postal ballot.

The Crime Branch would question officers who had attested a "suspiciously high" number of Form 13 A. It would also track the bulk movement of postal ballots to expose organised electoral fraud, if any. A preliminary probe had found compelling evidence that at least three members of the police constabulary had attempted to amass postal ballots from "like-minded" colleagues.

Junior college students 'rag' seniors in A.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR

Junior students of the Government Polytechnic College at Hindupur allegedly resorted to ragging senior students leading to a standoff on Saturday, and police officers had to intervene and bring the situation under control.

Principal G. Sayanarayana told *The Hindu* that five senior students had allegedly resorted to ragging last week and were given warning and a written assurance of good conduct was taken jointly from the parents and senior students. They were told in front of junior students not to rag them and the penalties that they could attract. "This seems to have emboldened the juniors and they began behaving in a harsh manner with the seniors, which led to the dispute," Mr. Satyanarayana added.

Back to its glory

Tourist attraction: With heavy rainfall in the Sharavati Catchment area, Jog falls in Shivamogga, Karnataka, has attracted large number of visitors this month. ▪VAIDYA

Reforms help more devotees to have darshan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TIRUMALA

The menace of lobbying and black marketing of VIP darshan tickets at the hill temple of Lord Venkateswara has been checked to a large extent at least for the time being, thanks to the reforms introduced by the temple administration.

The major fallout of the reforms is that the 'element' of discrimination, which caused heartburn between the VIPs before the abolition of L1, L2 and L3 system, is absent. Another visible vantage is that about one hour of darshan time is saved enabling the TTD clear more than 5,000 devotees additionally every day.

The protocol privileges are now strictly confined to those VIPs arriving in person, and rest are treated as one category without any discrimination.

KIA may help fix BBMP's plastic problem

City's airport needs 50 tonnes of the material for laying roads to second terminal

CHITRA V. RAMANI
BENGALURU

The Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) may hold the key to the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) problem of plenty. The civic body is sitting on 11,753.50 kg of banned plastic items that it had seized during raids on shops, street vendors, traders and even citizens, but lacks the storage space. In what could be a fortuitous turn of events, however, the mountain of confiscated plastic may be just what KIA's operator, the Bengaluru International Airport Ltd. (BIAL), needs.

With the construction of the second terminal under way at the airport, BIAL has been looking at using alternate materials that meet its sustainability mission. It has proposed to use plastic to lay the roads leading to and related to the second terminal.

BBMP officials, on condition of anonymity, told *The Hindu* that they had received a proposal from BIAL. "We were told that they require 50 tonnes of plastic. We plan to send the low grade plastic that is in the various processing plants, dry waste collection centres (DWCCs) and the banned plastic items that have been seized," the officials stated.

According to the BBMP officials, BIAL is also mulling the feasibility of opening kiosks across the city where citizens could drop off plastic items. "BIAL is yet to finalise the locations of these kiosks. Once finalised, we will look into the feasibility and provide the statutory approvals needed," they said.

'Nascent stage'

However, a BIAL spokesperson said the proposal was still in the nascent stage. "Research and development is underway. We are keen on using plastic. The back-end work is likely to be completed in six to eight weeks," said the spokesperson.

For now, the plastic that has been seized is being stored either in the ward offices or range offices of the Medical Officers of Health. In some wards, they have been sent to the DWCCs.

A view of the Kempegowda International Airport ▪FILE PHOTO

A.P. waits in hope as Almatti brims

Irrigation engineers hope for a calibrated release to avoid a flood downstream

G. VENKATARAMANA RAO
VIJAYAWADA

With the monsoon finally turning active, particularly on the west coast, the reservoirs on the Krishna, which have been empty for a while, are slowly getting filled.

Almatti, the first sizeable reservoir on the Krishna, located in north Karnataka's Vijaypur district, has almost reached full capacity of 129.72 tmc ft, according to the Irrigation Department data.

Inflows into the reservoir steadily increased from 17,000 cusecs on July 3 to a peak of 1.14 lakh cusecs on July 14. Thereafter, the inflow fell to 7,662 cusecs on July 24 only to rise again to 22,593 cusecs on Saturday.

According to State irrigation engineers, dam authorities are likely to release water given the healthy storage situation.

Currently, there is a flood cushion of just 6 tmcft in the dam with water level at 125.5 tmc ft. If there is a sudden flood from the upper reaches, the dam authorities will be forced to release a huge amount of water downstream, leading to a spate, the engineers warn.

During the corresponding period the previous year, there was only 114.56 tmcft water.

The relatively smaller Narayanapur reservoir, which is immediately downstream Almatti, is also nearly full. While its full capacity is 37.64 tmcft, there is already 30.69 tmcft water in it.

Dismal scenario in A.P.

However, the water position in the two reservoirs on the Krishna downstream in Andhra Pradesh continues to be dismal.

While 184.56 tmcft is required to fill the Srisailam reservoir, another 185.42 tmcft is needed to fill Nagarjunasagar.

While the capacity of all the reservoirs in the State is 982.35 tmcft, there is only 208.35 tmcft water (21.21%) in them as on date. There was 365.96 tmcft (37.25%) in the reservoirs on the corresponding date last year.

Almatti, the first sizeable reservoir on the Krishna, has almost reached full capacity of 129.72 tmc ft. ▪FILE PHOTO

IN BRIEF

Assam flood toll hits 81, water re-enters Sonitpur

GUWAHATI

The toll in Assam floods touched 81 on Saturday with the death of one more person in Barpeta district, as water re-entered Sonitpur district, bordering Arunachal Pradesh, an official report said. The situation in the other 17 flood-affected districts remained unchanged. A total of 1,716 villages in 56 revenue circles of the state are inundated. PTI

Gujarat Assembly clocks longest day

AHMEDABAD

The 14th Gujarat Legislative Assembly has broken its 1993 record of the longest sitting on a single day — 12 hours and nine minutes. Assembly speaker Rajendra Trivedi termed it historic and there was celebration in the House. According to the press release issued by the speaker's office, Friday's proceedings commenced at 10 am and concluded at around 12:09 am on Saturday.

Lt. Gen. Paramjit Singh to be new DGMO of Army

NEW DELHI

Lt Gen Paramjit Singh will be the next Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) of the Indian Army, official sources said on Saturday. Lt Gen Singh, currently serving as General Officer Commanding of the Army's Nagrota-based XVI Corps, will take over as the new DGMO on October 15, succeeding Lt Gen Anil Chauhan. PTI

5 arrested, red sanders logs seized in A.P.

NELLORE

The Somasila police on Saturday seized red sanders logs weighing 127.7 kg and worth ₹4.02 lakh, and vehicles used to smuggle them with the arrest of five persons at Gudigunta village. The A.P. police said legal proceedings would be launched to seize the assets of the accused.

The big rescue: 1) NDRF personnel carrying inflatable boots to rescue stranded passengers of the Mahalaxmi Express, 70 km from Mumbai on Saturday; 2) Rescuers on their way to the train; 3) Passengers being brought back; 4) A group of passengers walking to safety after reaching a higher ground. ▪ AFP, AP & SANDEEP RASAL

As train stopped, lack of info kept passengers on the edge

People feared that the water would enter the coaches before help came in

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

As the skies opened up in Vangani in Thane on Friday, little did over a thousand passengers on the Mumbai-Kolhapur Mahalaxmi Express expect that the next 12 hours would be the stuff of a cinematic thriller.

The train that left Mumbai late in the evening, became marooned near Vangani early on Saturday. As the train lost power and lights went out in the coaches, helplessness among the stranded passengers was underlined by lack of communication from all quarters, as cell phones also went dead due to drained batteries or lack of signal connectivity.

"When the train got marooned, all we could see was water all around. But our fear kept rising because we had no clue what was going around. That helplessness was the most agonising part of this ordeal. When you know you are in life-threatening trouble but you do not know if help is on its way, the despair just increases manifold," recalled a passenger.

The train was marooned for almost 17 hours, with the passengers, including nine pregnant women, fearing that the water would enter the coaches before help came in.

Coach B-1 had its own share of drama where Reshma Kamble was in an advanced stage of pregnancy. Her co-passengers soothed her nerves and kept her spirits up. Ms Kamble was rescued by a team of the local police and nurses from a nearby government hospital.

Stranded holidaymakers rescued from resort in Shahad

A CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The concerted efforts of teams from the NDRF, Air Force, Army, and police helped rescue holidaymakers stranded at a resort in Shahad village in Thane district on Saturday. Heavy rainfall marooned the tourists who had come to spend the weekend at River Winds resort. Officials said overnight rain led to waterlogging in the village and the water level rose up to seven feet at the resort.

Centre to launch Deep Ocean Mission in October

Polymetallic nodules will help meet energy requirement

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

A five-year, ₹8,000-crore plan to explore the deepest recesses of the ocean has finally got the green signal from the government.

The 'Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)' to be led by the Union Earth Sciences Ministry will commence from October 31, Madhavan Rajeevan, Secretary, said at a public function.

"We finally have the in-principle approval to go ahead with the mission. Now expenditure plans will be drawn and circulated for executing programmes and we hope to launch by October 31," he said.

Among the key deliverables are an offshore desalination plant that will work with tidal energy and developing a submersible vehicle that can go to a depth of at least 6,000 metres with three people on board.

"The mission proposes to explore the deep ocean similar to the space exploration started by ISRO about 35 years ago," a report explaining the objectives of the programme notes.

A major thrust of the mission will be looking for metals and minerals.

India has been allotted a site of 75,000 sq. km. in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) by the UN International Sea Bed Authority for exploitation of polymetallic nodules (PMN).

These are rocks scattered on the seabed containing iron, manganese, nickel and cobalt. Being able to lay hands on even 10% of that reserve can meet the energy requirement for the next 100 years.

India has been allotted a site of 75,000 sq. km.for exploitation of polymetallic nodules. ▪ FILE PHOTO

Tigress found dead near Bandipur

Suspected to be run over by a vehicle

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MYSURU

A tigress was found dead close to the highway leading to Bandipur tiger reserve near Maguvinahalli in the early hours of Saturday, in what is suspected to be a case of hit-and-run accident.

Though there is a ban on night traffic through Bandipur from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m, there are no restrictions on vehicle movement outside the national park. It is suspected that the tigress, aged around 4 to 5 years, died around 1 a.m. after it was run over by a vehicle while crossing the road outside the park boundary.

Director of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve and Conservator of Forests T. Balachandra, said nearly 250 vehicles line up after 9 p.m. at the checkpost and wait for the gate to be reopened at 6 a.m.

As per the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) , this is the fourth tiger death in Bandipur this year. Karnataka has lost 11 tigers so far this year, of which four are from Nagarahole, and one each from Bhadra, Virajpet and HD Kote forest divisions.

Students stage sit-in protests in Manipur

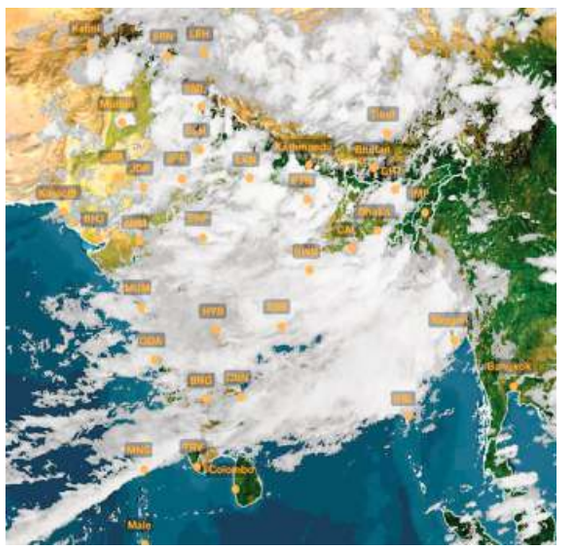
A CORRESPONDENT
IMPHAL

As a part of the continuing agitation in the wake of the death of a female student who was found "hanging" in a hostel in Imphal on July 18, men and women staged sit-in at several places. Police say that there was no untoward incident.

Students' organisations are demanding arrest of the principal Mrs Landhoni and other senior officials of Standard Robarth School, Imphal for police interrogation. The student Babysana Ningthoujam was a resident of the girl hostel of this private school.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely over Goa, Gujarat, central Maharashtra east Rajasthan,west Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, coastal Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Marathawada, Saurashtra, Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	3.8	33.5	26.0	Kozhikode	1.2	31.6	24.2
Ahmedabad	0.2	34.5	27.7	Kurnool	17.6	28.9	23.6
Aizawl	2.0	28.7	22.2	Lucknow	36.0	33.3	25.8
Allahabad	16.2	32.7	25.9	Madurai	2.9	38.6	–
Bengaluru	–	26.6	20.4	Mangaluru	15.5	26.0	22.5
Bhopal	18.8	27.1	23.8	Mumbai	219.2	30.9	24.0
Bhubaneswar	13.6	27.6	24.0	Mysuru	–	23.9	19.9
Chandigarh	27.3	31.8	25.6	New Delhi	11.2	32.5	25.4
Chennai	26.4	33.6	24.3	Patna	6.4	33.6	26.6
Coimbatore	–	32.0	23.4	Port Blair	4.4	30.7	23.1
Dehradun	31.9	30.6	23.3	Puducherry	2.6	35.4	23.1
Gangtok	56.0	21.2	17.5	Pune	78.0	24.1	21.0
Goa	46.0	30.5	25.5	Raipur	6.4	27.2	24.4
Guwahati	1.0	34.2	26.4	Ranchi	5.6	31.5	23.2
Hubballi	–	24.0	21.0	Shillong	8.3	24.4	17.3
Hyderabad	4.3	29.0	22.4	Shimla	60.6	20.8	17.0
Imphal	56.8	27.9	21.1	Srinagar	–	24.7	17.7
Jaipur	84.0	27.4	25.1	Thiruvananthapuram	–	30.2	23.7
Kochi	–	29.6	24.4	Tiruchi	9.3	39.0	24.4
Kohima	17.4	26.4	16.8	Vijayawada	42.8	30.1	24.2
Kolkata	1.5	32.4	26.4	Visakhapatnam	6.8	33.0	25.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing — **Yesterday**

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	106	.50	...–	...64	.....–	....
Bengaluru	...6	.32	.46	...93	.....–	....
Chennai	.11	.24	.39	...82	.....–	....
Delhi	...8	.21	101	...32	...50	....
Hyderabad	...–	..–	.51	...19	...33	....
Kolkata	...4	.42	...7	...59	...56	....
Lucknow	...4	.25	.49	...60	.....–	....
Mumbai	.12	.22	103	.....–	...54	....
Pune	.68	...8	.67	...16	...16	....
Visakhapatnam	.17	.47	.41	...28	...48	....

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Jodhpur, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 272 indicating a hazardous level of pollution. In contrast, Guwahati, Assam recorded a healthy AQI score of 22

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Five arrested for assault in Madhya Pradesh

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

The police have arrested five persons on the charge of thrashing three persons, including two local Congress leaders, near Betul in Madhya Pradesh on Thursday night on suspicion of being child-lifters.

Armed with lathis, 20 villagers of Nawal Singhana attacked the trio after stopping their vehicle, said Betul SP Karthikeyan K. "The villagers mistook them for child-lifters and started attacking them. But, when they realised they were local leaders, they ran away," he said.

The police suspect a viral video of a female child-lifter at the Itarsi railway station, 90 km from Betul, to be the trigger.

Betul Congress general secretary Dharmendra Shukla, party leader Dharmu Singh Lanjiwar and tribal leader Lalit Baraskar suffered minor injuries. The police registered a case under Sections 147 [Punishment for rioting] and 323 [Punishment for voluntarily causing hurt] of the Indian Penal Code. Five persons are yet to be arrested.

Awareness sessions

To arrest the growing trend of attacks on suspicion of being child-lifters, the Betul police have begun organising Jansamvad programmes with residents of five villages at a time. "We tell them to use the dial-100 facility in case they are suspicious of anyone and not take the law into their own hands. Now, we have started getting more calls," said Mr. Karthikeyan.

Responding to a call, a dial-100 vehicle visits the spot to ascertain whether the person in question is a child-lifter or not. The Shahpur police station received 10-15 calls relating to child-lifters everyday, the highest in Betul district, he added.

Cooperatives for sustainable mining: NGT

Body asks small mine owners to unite

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The chairman of the committee of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) for rat-hole mining in Meghalaya has advised small coal mine owners in the State to form cooperatives to shift to scientific and sustainable mining.

But B.P. Katakey, a retired judge heading the committee, pointed out that he made the suggestion in his individual capacity. "A proper mining plan is needed for scientific coal extraction. The mines in Meghalaya are privately or community-owned, and it may not be possible for small mine owners to have specific mining plans. Forming a cooperative can help them go for an alternative method of mining that is likely to be more expensive than rat-hole mining," Justice Katakey told *The Hindu*.

The NGT had also advised the state to explore alternative way of mining that factors in safety measures, environmental clearance and restoring the areas mined.

Rat-hole mining is fast, involves minimum machinery, but is hazardous for miners.

There have been many fatal accidents across the State's coal belt.

One such was the death of 17 miners in a flooded mine at Khloo Ryngksan in East Jaintia Hills district in December 2018.

Fourth body found in Odisha mine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHUBANESHWAR

The death toll in the coal mine accident in Odisha's Angul district rose to four on Saturday with the recovery of one more body, officials said.

The Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) suspended a senior manager for his alleged negligence that led to the accident.

The mine workers were killed in a dump slide at the Bharatpur opencast mine in the Talcher coalfields on Tuesday.

The victim was identified as Ramesh Das, a security guard, Nine injured workers were rescued immediately after the accident had occurred and are undergoing treatment.

Seven naxals killed in encounter in Bastar

3 persons among the dead are women

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAIPUR

Seven naxals, including three women, were killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district on Saturday, police have said.

The gunbattle took place around 4 p.m. in the forest near Tiriya village under Nagarnar police station area bordering Odisha, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Anti-Naxal Operations) Sundarraj P. told PTI. A joint squad of the District Reserve Guard and Special Task Force (STF) of Chhattisgarh police was carrying out an anti-naxal operation in the forests along the inter-State border, he said.

The team was advancing through the forest of Tiriya, around 400 km from the capital Raipur, when the gunbattle broke out, he said.

Bodies of the seven ultras were later recovered from the spot, he said.

Further details were awaited as the patrolling team was yet to return to its camp, the DIG said.

ALL INDIA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION
(A STATUTORY BODY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA)
Nelson Mandela Marg, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi - 110070
Ph. No.: 011-29581000 Website: www.aicte-india.org

Inviting Proposals under MODROB Scheme for Institutions approved by AICTE in Rural Areas

A special drive is undertaken by AICTE under MODROB Scheme for modernising laboratories in technical institutions operating in rural areas and approved by AICTE by providing grant for procuring modern equipments.

The details of the scheme are available on the following **link http:/www.aicte-india.org / scheme / institution_development_scheme**. The scheme is open from 31.07.2019 for submitting applications online and will be closed on 28.08.2019.

Advt. No.RIFD/07(05)/2019 **Member Secretary**

SAINIK SCHOOL KALIKIRI
CHITTOOR DISTRICT (AP)
ADMISSIONS OPEN
FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR – 2020-21
Date of Exam : 05 Jan 2020 (OMR based)
Application forms can be filled only online from 05 Aug to 23 Sep 2019
Last Date for online registration & Submission of online forms - 23 Sep 2019
(Offline filling up of applications is not available)
For complete details please visit www.kalikirisainikschool.com
Sd/-
Principal

ALL INDIA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION
(A STATUTORY BODY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA)
Nelson Mandela Marg, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi – 110070
Ph. No.: 011-29581000 Website: www.aicte-india.org

ONLINE APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FOR THE FOLLOWING POSTS

ON TENURE BASIS FOR MHRD INNOVATION CELL

Sr. No.	Name of the Post	Remuneration	No.of the Posts
1.	Assistant Innovation Director	Consolidated Monthly Remuneration of ₹ 1 lakh + Transport Allowance of ₹ 7000/- and HRA of ₹ 8000.	01
2.	Innovation Officer	Consolidated Monthly Remuneration of ₹ 85000/ - + Transport Allowance of ₹ 7000/- and HRA of ₹ 7500.	01

All other details such as Eligibility Criteria, Qualifications, Experience, Procedure for online submission and General Terms and Conditions of appointments will be available at the AICTE's website (https://www.aicte-india.org/bulletins/advertisements) from 01.08.2019. Interested candidates may apply online for the above posts on or before 31.08.2019 by uploading the requisite supporting documents. The Council reserves the right to increase or decrease the number of vacancies or to cancel the advertisement for any or all the above mentioned post(s), without assigning any reason thereto.

Advt. No. Admn./Estt/07(04)/2019 **Member Secretary**

FROM PAGE ONE

FinMin, NITI Aayog guidelines ignored

The DEA and NITI Aayog's detailed notes of the proposal on the six airports were circulated among the participating ministries ahead of the PPPAC meeting.

In its note, the DEA noted unequivocally, "the six airport projects are highly capital intensive projects, hence it is suggested to incorporate the clause that no more than two Airports will be awarded to the same bidder duly factoring the high financial risk and performance issues. Awarding them to different companies would also facilitate yardstick competition."

To buttress its point, the DEA cited that though GMR was the only qualified bidder for Delhi and Mumbai, both the airports were not given to the same company.

However, the PPPAC referred to a decision taken by the Empowered Group of Secretaries (EGoS) that "no restriction needs to be placed on the number of airports to be bid for or to be awarded to a single entity," according to the Record of Discussion of 85th PPPAC, a copy of which is with *The Hindu*.

In a separate note, the NITI Aayog highlighted the need to have players with prior Operation and Management (O&M) experience. It referred to the Model Request for Qualification (RfQ) that requires an applicant without O&M experience to either tie-up with an entity or engage qualified personnel with the requisite experience.

On this issue, too, the PPPAC quoted the EGoS decision – "prior airport experience may neither be made a pre-requisite for bidding nor a post-bid requirement. This will enlarge the competition for brownfield airports which are already functional."

This decision, again, was a departure from the earlier norm. During the first phase of privatisation, Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad airports each had to find a foreign player with O&M experience to comply with RfP norms.

Dropping O&M experience as a pre-requisite raises questions about the jurisdiction of EGoS. Headed by the CEO of NITI Aayog, it was constituted by the Union Cabinet to take decisions "on any issue falling beyond the scope of PPPAC". However, according to PPP guidelines, O&M standards fall under the purview of PPPAC.

Question of cost

The DEA was also scathing in its criticism over a "critical" detail such as the "total project cost" missing from the RfP document.

"It is not advisable to keep the project cost open ended and it is essentially required to frame the eligibility criteria in terms of technical capacity, financial capacity and O&M experience and other financial covenants such as bid security, performance security etc, which are always in percentage terms of the estimate Total Project Cost."

The DEA rejected the Ministry of Civil Aviation's (MoCA)explanation that it was not possible to calculate the total project cost for the entire period of 50 years of lease, on the ground that these were brownfield airports and all the required data should be available. Nevertheless the PPPAC went along with MoCA.

The DEA had also raised concerns over the criteria of per passenger fee (PPF) for determining the winning bid and said the current PPF should be set as a reserve price.

However, according to AAI's reply dated April 8 to an RTI plea filed by Sobhan P.V. of the Airports Authority Employees' Union, "No study was conducted to ascertain the existing Per Passenger Fee." The plea was filed after the completion of the bidding process and AAI's response shows that it had no parameter to judge whether the PPF quoted by the winning bidder was better than what it was drawing at the existing airports.

Activists plan people's struggle against RTI Bill

Apart from seeking help from political leaders, they propose to meet the President and urge him not to sign it

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

In the wake of the Congress-led Opposition's failure to prevent the amendments to the Right to Information Bill in Parliament, RTI activists have charted a plan of action looking to the Supreme Court, the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the public arena.

They hope to launch a mass RTI campaign targeting the government's vulnerabilities, from corruption in defence spending to the Prime Minister's educational qualifications and the state of the economy.

The amendments passed by Parliament will give the Centre the power to set the salaries and tenures of members of the State and Central Information Commissions, the final appellate bodies under the RTI Act. Critics fear the move will compromise the autonomy of the Commissions and weaken the transparency law.

RTI activists are in touch with political leaders, including Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, to rally support, sources told *The Hindu*.

'Helping the corrupt'

In a tweet on Saturday evening, outgoing Congress president Rahul Gandhi accused the Centre of assisting in corruption by amending the Act. "Government is diluting RTI in order to help the corrupt steal from India. Strange that the normally vociferous anti-corruption crowd has suddenly disappeared. #GovtMurdersRTI," he tweeted.

Activists want to take the battle against the amendments back to the RTI movement's original roots as a mass people's struggle. "Ultimately, the way to keep the issue in the spotlight is to have more people file more RTI petitions. We must exercise the right repeatedly in order to safeguard it," said Anjali Bhardwaj, co-convener of the National Campaign for the Right to Information (NCPRI). "In the first stage, we plan to organise mass RTI filings on high-profile issues that the government cannot ignore. So there will be five questions on 10 different topics," said Nikhil Dey, also a founder at NCPRI.

Many fears: Youth Congress activists protest near Parliament on Saturday against the new RTI Bill. ▪ SANDEEP SAXENA

Some of the issues that could be pursued include defence expenditure, the Rafale case, the Prime Minister's degree, the RBI's list of large defaulters, non-performing assets of banks, industrial corruption, demonetisation impact, and the truth of employment and economic data.

"We also plan to launch a new mass campaign to have RTI acknowledged as a Constitutional right, and the Information Commissions recognised as Constitutional bodies. So far, the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan and the Suchna Evum Rozgar Adhikar Abhiyan are mobilising people for a new grassroots campaign. The NCPRI will take a decision after a meeting in August," said Mr. Dey, associated with the leadership of all the organisations.

The government has justified the amendments on the grounds that the Information Commissions are statutory bodies, which cannot be given the same status as the Election Commission, a Constitutional body.

Some RTI activists hope to meet President Ram Nath Kovind in a last-ditch bid to persuade him against signing the Bill into law by reminding him of his own role in the original passage of the RTI Act in 2004. Mr. Kovind had then been a Rajya Sabha MP and a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee which finalised the Bill.

A legal challenge is also being considered. The Supreme Court has previously held that the Right to Information was a fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. "A statutory amendment that makes the right illusory is subject to judicial review," tweeted constitutional lawyer Gautam Bhatia.

Jaish bomb expert killed in Shopian

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two militants, including Jaish-e-Mohammad's (JeM) top commander and bomb expert, were killed in a joint operation of the Army, the police and the CRPF, in south Kashmir's Shopian early on Saturday.

Meanwhile, a solider died as the Army foiled an infiltration bid in north Kashmir.

The slain militants were identified as JeM's Munna Lahori, a Pakistani, and Hizbul Mujahideen's Mir Zeenat Ul Islam, from Shopian's Turkawanghon area. Lahori is believed to be the group's top commander and bomb expert. "He was involved in planning and executing series of terror attacks, especially the IED blast at Arihal area of Pulwama," said the police.

Pakistan using deceit over Kashmir: Modi

On Kargil war anniversary, he says those defeated are using pseudo-war and encouraging terror

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed the victory in the Kargil war a "symbol of India's might, determination and capability".

At the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the war in New Delhi, Mr. Modi said the soldiers fought for the whole country and that "wars are fought not by governments but by the whole country. Kargil victory still inspires the whole country".

"When India got independence in 1947, it wasn't just for one community, caste or people speaking one language; it was for the whole country. Similarly, the soldiers who fought in Kargil fought for the whole country," he said. "When Param Vir Chakra awardee, son of Himachal Pradesh, J&K Rifles Captain Vikram Batra had said, "*yeh dil maange more*", his heart wasn't asking for himself, not for a religion, a language or a caste but for the whole Bharat, for Maa Bharati," he added.

Memorial day: Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a programme to mark Kargil Vijay Divas in New Delhi on Saturday. Ministers Rajnath Singh and Shripad Naik are seen. ▪ PTI/PIB

He launched a frontal attack on Pakistan saying it had always used deceit over the issue of Kashmir in 1948, 1965 and 1971, and in 1999 that deceit was yet again defeated. "The nature of war has changed. Today, humanity and the world are victims of pseudo-war. Terrorism is challenging the whole of mankind. Those defeated in war are using pseudo-war to fulfil their political objectives and encourage terrorism," he said, again referring to Pakistan.

Mr. Modi made a strong case for the modernisation of the defence forces.

"Today, the wars have reached space. Wars are fought even in cyberworld today. So, modernisation of defence forces is not only a necessity but also our priority. Modernisation should be the identity of our defence forces," he said.

He said his government had taken many steps for the welfare of the armed forces including the implementation of the One rank, one pension scheme, a long-standing demand, and to raise the amount given as scholarships to the children of those killed in operations.

"The question of national security will not be addressed either under fear or influence of anyone, nor shortages. It will be addressed keeping our priorities in mind," he said.

10,000 more troops to be deployed in J&K

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), from the years 2016 to 18, 1,278 operations were conducted by security forces, in which 599 terrorists were killed.

From the beginning of this year till July 16, 126 terrorists were killed in various operations in the Kashmir Valley. During these operations, 75 security personnel were also killed, and they included the 40 CRPF personnel killed in the February 14 Pulwama terror attack.

In an unprecedented move, on July 25, the MHA ordered deployment of additional 100 companies of the CAPFs "in order to strengthen the counter-insurgency grid and for maintaining the law and order situation in J&K".

A senior government official said troops were being airlifted to the Valley. "Forces are being moved through commercial aircraft and we are also taking the help of the Indian Air Force," said an official.

After the ongoing deployment, the Valley will see a deployment of nearly 1.2 lakh personnel of Central forces. The MHA order comes after National Security Advisor Ajit Doval returned from the State this week.

> The Centre's decision has created a fear psychosis among people. There is no dearth of security forces in Kashmir
>
> MEHBOOBA MUFTI
> Peoples Democratic Party president

The last time such deployment was made on February 23, three days before the Balakot air strike in Pakistan.

The official refused to comment if the deployment was related to fovernment's move to remove Article 35A from the State. The provision lets the J&K legislature decide the "permanent residents" of the State, prohibits a non-J&K resident from buying property in the State and ensures job reservation for its residents.

Qureshi case: ED gets custody of businessman

Babu held for links with accused

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday got five days' custody of Hyderabad-based businessman Sana Satish Babu from a special court in connection with the Moin Qureshi case.

The case pertains to charges that Mr. Qureshi, a meat exporter, received money from several people in exchange of favours from influential public servants. The agency had summoned Mr. Babu for questioning on Friday, after which he was arrested.

The ED is probing the purchase of shares worth ₹50 lakh of a company, allegedly linked to Mr. Qureshi, by Mr. Babu. It is suspected that the amount was paid as bribe to settle a case.

The Central Bureau of Investigation's special probe team, under the then Special Director Rakesh Asthana, had earlier recommended his arrest in its own case against Mr. Qureshi and others.

CBI tussle

However, in October last year, the CBI, led by Alok Verma then, registered a case of alleged corruption and extortion against Mr. Asthana and his subordinates based on Mr. Babu's complaint.

Mr. Babu alleged that he had paid more than ₹3 crore to get relief in the case. On the other hand, Mr. Asthana accused Mr. Verma of corrupt practices. The matter reached the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) which initiated an inquiry into the charges and counter-charges. Later on October 23, the CVC divested Alok Verma and Rakesh Asthana of their powers and the issue went to the Supreme Court, which reinstated Mr. Verma. A day later, Mr. Verma was stripped off his responsibilities as the CBI chief on CVC's recommendation.

Debate and not disrupt, Naidu tells House of Elders

Says Rajya Sabha members have a special responsibility

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after 17 political parties jointly wrote to Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu complaining about "hurried legislation" that were being rushed through without due parliamentary procedures, Mr. Naidu said on Saturday that the ruling and Opposition parties needed to function as "joint stakeholders" and not look at each other as "enemies or adversaries".

"Members of Rajya Sabha have a special responsibility cast on them of leading by example being the members of the House of Elders," Mr. Naidu said on Saturday.

"During this session, some members in their wisdom have preferred to tear official papers and throw them at the Chair on some occasions. Such conduct does not speak well of the functioning of our parliamentary democracy," the Vice-President said in a speech at a "Democracy Awards" function of the Maharashtra State Election Commission in Mumbai.

> Some members tear official papers and throw them at the Chair. This does not speak well of the functioning of our democracy
>
> VENKAIAH NAIDU
> Rajya Sabha chairman

Democracy was all about debate, discussion and decision and should not be replaced by disorder, disruption and delay in legislation, he said.

People's mandate

In a word of caution for the Opposition, Mr. Naidu said the mandate of the people should be respected. At the same time, the Opposition parties did have the right and responsibility of getting governments to deliver on the promises made by them during the polls, he said.

Though Mr. Naidu is yet to reply to the Opposition's letter, his office, according to officials, is collecting data to negate the Opposition's claim of "little parliamentary scrutiny" of Bills. "During the last two years of Mr. Naidu's chairmanship, 10 Bills were first introduced in the Rajya Sabha (till the last session) and of them, eight were referred to the standing committee concerned," a senior official in the Rajya Sabha secretariat said.

Acquitted J&K man gets a warm welcome

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Abdul Gani Goni, 50, one of the four acquitted in the Samleti bomb blast case, was received by hundreds of locals at his native place Bhaderwah in J&K's Chenab Valley on Saturday.

Mr. Goni, arrested in 1994 and proved innocent after serving 23 years in jail, walked into a swarm of locals despite the wet weather. Mr. Goni, a resident of Mohalla Passri, was taken in a procession to the graveyard where his father is buried. The father died while Goni was lodged in Jodhpur jail. "I feel sorry for providing no help in your old age. They did not even let me see your body," he said at the graveyard.

Mr. Goni said he was picked up from the Samta Express while on the way home from Visakhapatnam after attending a session of preaching.

Earlier, three others from the Kashmir Valley were acquitted in the case.

GST on EVs, chargers reduced to 5%

The meeting was originally scheduled for Thursday but was postponed as Ms. Sitharaman was busy with her Parliament duties. The Council has also extended the deadline for the filing of the intimation for availing of the Composition Scheme, in Form CMP-02 to September 30 from the earlier July 31.

The last date for furnishing the statement containing the details of the self-assessed tax in Form CMP-08 for the quarter April 2019 to June, 2019 by taxpayers under the Composition Scheme has been extended to August 31 from July 31.

IAF gets first set of Apache helicopters

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The first four Apache AH-64E attack helicopters for the Indian Air Force (IAF) arrived at Hindan Air Force Station on Saturday, ahead of schedule.

"An additional four Apaches will arrive in the coming week, and the eight will then move to the Pathankot Air Force Station for their formal induction by the IAF in September," aircraft manufacturer Boeing said in a statement.

Pentagon nod for military sales to India, Pak.

For Indian C-17 spares, monitoring F-16s in Pakistan

ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL
WASHINGTON

The U.S. State Department on Friday decided to approve a possible Foreign Military Sale (FMS) to India of the C-17 aircraft's follow-on support at an estimated cost of $670 million, according to the Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA).

The agency delivered the required certification notifying the U.S. Congress of this possible sale on July 26.

However, the notification of the potential sale means the sale has been concluded. "Implementation of this proposed sale will require the assignment of one U.S. Government representative and 23 contractor representatives to India," the agency said. Boeing's C-17 is a massive, long-haul military transport aircraft.

The DSCA also notified Congress of its decision to approve military sales worth $125 million that would result in the monitoring of the F-16 fighter jets of Pakistan.

The FMS sale means Pakistan will be paying for it.

The C-17 aircraft has been of immense help during rescue and relief operations across the country. ▪ PRASHANT NAKWE

The money will be used to pay 60 U.S. contractors, a diplomatic source said.

"India needs follow-on support to maintain its operational readiness and ability to provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) assistance in the region. India will have no difficulty absorbing this support into its armed forces," an official statement from the DSCA said.

The possible sale will strengthen the U.S.-India strategic relationship. "(It will also) improve the mobility capabilities of a major defensive partner, which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region," the DSCA added.

(With Press Trust of India inputs)

Houston calling with big diaspora event for PM

Modi's U.S. visit in September follows impasse in trade talks and rocky bilateral ties over Trump's Kashmir statements

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Improving India-U.S. trade ties, combating climate change and addressing his biggest Indian-American diaspora event will be on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diary during his U.S. visit in September.

According to officials involved in planning the visit, Mr. Modi, who last visited the U.S. in June 2017, will travel to New York and Houston, Texas, during the trip from September 22 to 26.

Meet with Trump?

A trip to Washington is not on the cards at present, the sources said, indicating that Mr. Modi could meet President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

After their meeting in Osaka, bilateral ties have been rocked by Mr. Trump's comments that Mr. Modi sought his mediation on Kashmir.

They are expected to meet at the G7 summit in France on August 24 to smooth out matters. The Houston visit on September 22 is billed as the biggest diaspora event to be addressed by Mr. Modi in the U.S. thus far, with organisers expecting a crowd of 50,000 at the NRG Stadium, a statement issued by the Texas-India Forum said on Saturday.

Confirming the Houston event, which will be called "Howdy, Modi", the BJP's foreign affairs department head, Vijay Chauthaiwale, told *The Hindu* that Texas had one of the biggest diaspora populations and therefore merited Mr. Modi's visit. In 2015 and 2016, Mr. Modi addressed similar events in New York and San Jose, with crowds between 16,000 and 18,000 at each.

In New York, the Prime Minister is planning to address the UN General Assembly beginning on September 24. A day before that, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will host the Climate Action summit. Earlier this week, Luis Alfonso de Alba, United Nations Special Envoy on Climate Change, met Environment and Forests Minister Prakash Javadekar in New Delhi to discuss India's role in battling climate change.

According to the sources, Mr. Alba invited Mr. Modi to address the summit, which he has not accepted as yet. However, he will attend a special event to commemorate the closing of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, officials said.

Investment pitch

Mr. Modi will address the annual Bloomberg Global Business Forum in New York on September 25. He is expected to make a pitch for investment in India, even as he will face questions on India-U.S. trade negotiations which have hit an impasse. In particular, U.S. IT companies have been upset by new Indian regulations on data localisation and e-commerce rules.

A diluted version of the data protection Bill, which is due to be presented in Parliament next week, may assuage some of those concerns.

However, issues on tariffs and U.S. counter-measures and complaints at the WTO are still to be ironed out, with a meeting of U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal expected ahead of Mr. Modi's visit.

In Houston, the business community, led by the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston, hopes the event will pave the way for more business with India.

"The entire community has rallied behind this historic event and are enthused to make it unparalleled," said Swapan Dhairyawan, chamber president, who had facilitated a visit to Delhi for the Houston Mayor and a trade delegation, and invited U.S. Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster to deliver an address in Houston last year.

"We hope [Mr. Modi's] visit will lead to a direct flight to Delhi," said Houston-based Jagdip Ahluwalia, pointing to the potential for Texas-India ties in energy, petrochemicals, chemicals, medical technology, aerospace and the space industries.

Modi in the U.S.

Pit stops:
New York, Houston

Sept.22: 'Howdy, Modi' in Houston is billed as the biggest diaspora event to be addressed by the Prime Minister in the U.S. thus far

Expected crowd: 50,000

Sept. 24: PM planning to address the UN General Assembly; Special event to commemorate the closing of the 150th anniversary celebrations for Mahatma Gandhi

Sept. 25: Mr. Modi will address the annual Bloomberg Global Business Forum in New York, expected to make a pitch for investment in India and field questions on the India-U.S. trade negotiations which have hit an impasse

> The entire community has rallied behind this historic event [in Houston] and is enthused to make it unparalleled
>
> SWAPAN DHAIRYAWAN
> President, Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston

The venue of a community reception given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in San Jose, California, on September 27, 2015. ▪ REUTERS

3 military logistics pacts on the anvil

Talks on with Australia, Japan, Russia

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

India is looking to conclude three Military Logistics Support Agreements (MLSA) by the year-end, which will further enhance the operational reach of the military in the region. India has already signed such agreements with a few countries beginning with the U.S. The Navy has been the biggest beneficiary of them.

"Agreements with Australia, Japan and Russia are in advanced stages and are likely to be concluded by the year-end," a senior defence official told *The Hindu*. The MLSA with Japan is called the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and with Russia, the Agreement on Reciprocal Logistics Support (ARLS).

The agreements with Australia and Russia will be broadly on the lines of the U.S. one, while the one with Japan is a broader defence cooperation agreement including logistics, a second official said.

Port access

India signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Understanding (LEMOA) with the U.S. in August 2016 after decade-long negotiations. Since then, it has concluded several such agreements with France, Oman, the Philippines and Singapore and gained access to the Sabang port in Indonesia.

Logistics agreements are administrative arrangements facilitating access to military facilities for exchange of fuel and provisions on mutual agreement, simplifying logistical support and increasing operational turnaround of the military away from India.

The ARLS with Russia is expected to be signed during the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin in September on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in Russia. Last month, a delegation led by Additional Secretary Jiwesh Nandan visited Russia for finalising the agreement, the Defence Ministry said in its monthly report. Moscow had sent a draft agreement early last year and the MoD sent it to the Integrated Defence Staff and the three services for their comments in July.

> Agreements with Australia, Japan and Russia are in advanced stages and are likely to be concluded by the year-end.
>
> SENIOR DEFENCE OFFICIAL

Australia had submitted a draft MLSA soon after India signed the LEMOA, but New Delhi said at that time it would take up more logistics pacts after the first one was operationalised. In March, before the bilateral naval exercise AUSINDEX, Australian diplomatic sources made a strong pitch for a pact saying the argument for one is "compelling". AUSINDEX saw participation of the largest Australian naval contingent to India with 1,000 personnel and assets.

India and Japan are moving fast on finalising the ACSA. A statement during the visit of Mr. Modi to Japan in October said the two leaders welcomed the joint exercise between each of the three services and "the commencement of negotiations on the ACSA, which will enhance the strategic depth of bilateral security and defence cooperation".

IN BRIEF

CRPF marks 81st Raising day, Shah extends wishes

NEW DELHI
Home Minister Amit Shah extended his wishes to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on the occasion of its 81st Raising day on Saturday, and said the country was extremely proud of their valour and courage. India's largest paramilitary force's commitment and dedication in serving different terrains is exceptional, he added. PTI

LJP seeks strict action against Azam Khan

NEW DELHI
The Lok Janshakti Party said on Saturday that the Lok Sabha should have acted against Samajwadi Party MP Azam Khan by now for his sexist remarks against Deputy Speaker Rama Devi. The BJP ally demanded that the Speaker take strict action against him if he did not apologise. His remarks "cannot be condoned and are extremely condemnable", LJP MP Veena Devi said in a party statement. PTI

Priyanka slams U.P. govt. over farmer suicides

NEW DELHI
Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday hit out at the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh over issues being faced by farmers and questioned the efficacy of farm and loan waiver schemes. She cited a media report which said that five farmers have committed suicide in as many days in Bundelkhand's Banda. "Farmers grow crop, don't get the price for it. Famine occurs, compensation is not given," Priyanka Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi. PTI

Colours of freedom

Students painting on the Tilak Marg foot overbridge in New Delhi on Saturday as part of a beautification drive of railway walls in the run-up to Independence Day. ▪ R.V. MOORTHY

JD(U) to oppose triple talaq Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

In a setback to the government's efforts to pass the triple talaq Bill in the Rajya Sabha, the Janata Dal(U), a National Democratic Alliance partner, on Saturday said it would oppose the draft legislation in the Upper House.

Party spokesperson K.C. Tyagi slammed the Bill, which criminalises instant divorce by Muslim men with a jail term of up to three years, and said it was of an "imposing nature" and would "definitely create a lack of trust in society".

"We believe that ours is a nation based on a delicate balance in respect of laws and governing principles for different religious and ethnic groups. We must not impose any view without obtaining substantive consultations," Mr. Tyagi said.

The JD(U) does believe in reforms, but these should be brought after in-depth consultations with various religious and ethnic groups, he said.

The Bill may be tabled in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, sources said. The Lok Sabha passed it on July 25 and if the Rajya Sabha passes it, it will become law, replacing an ordinance which had enacted a similar provision through an executive decree.

The JD(U), led by Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, did not vote in the Bill's support in the Lok Sabha and staged a walkout. It made little difference though, as the BJP enjoys a strong majority in the House on its own.

Agusta accused gets protection from arrest

Judge asks Ratul Puri to join the investigation and cooperate in it

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Saturday granted interim protection from arrest to Ratul Puri, nephew of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath, in a money-laundering case connected with the ₹3,600-crore AgustaWestland VVIP helicopter deal.

Granting the protection till July 29 when his anticipatory bail application would be taken up for hearing, Special Judge Inder Jeet Singh said: "In order to reconcile the circumstances, but without any observation on the merits of the case, it is appropriate to list this application (anticipatory bail application) on 29.07.2019 when the complete record will be presented, and till then the applicant will not be arrested in this case by the Enforcement Directorate."

However, the accused would join the investigation and cooperate in it, the judge said. Later, Mr. Puri joined the investigation at 5 p.m. at the Directorate's office.

Earlier in the day, the accused, through his counsel Vijay Aggarwal, filed an application for anticipatory bail, submitting that he apprehended arrest.

Opposing the application, Special Public Prosecutor of the Directorate N.K. Matta asked the reasons that had created the sudden apprehension in the mind of the accused as he had been joining the probe since February.

When Mr. Matta sought time to file a reply to the application, counsel for the accused sought interim protection till his plea for bail was taken up for hearing by Special Judge Arvind Kumar who is seized of the case. The judge allowed his plea and granted protection.

In the bail application, the accused said he came to know that he would be arrested by the probe agency when he came out of the directorate's office for lunch after being interrogated by them on July 26.

Mr. Puri was informed by someone that the directorate officials had visited his house and office and told persons available there that they were going to arrest him, the application alleged, adding that the apprehension was also triggered by recent political developments in Madhya Pradesh where two BJP MLAs voted in favour of the Congress government on a Bill.

But Mr. Matta dismissed the allegations as false.

Not intimidated by CBI summons: Derek O'Brien

Summoned in connection with the Saradha scam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Derek O'Brien, Trinamool leader and Rajya Sabha member, said here on Saturday that he was not intimidated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) summons to him and will meet the officers of the agency after the Parliament session ends on August 7.

"In February too, I had agreed to appear before the CBI after the session of Parliament, but the CBI chose not to call me. This time too, I am ready to meet them," he said in a statement.

Mr. O'Brien said that after February, he had not received any intimation from the CBI. "Now, during this Parliament session, I was served a notice asking to appear before the CBI on August 1. I have sent a letter stating that I would meet [them] after this Parliament session is over on August 7," he said.

Derek O'Brien

The CBI summoned him in connection with the multi-crore Saradha scam.

The matter relates to proceeds from the sale of paintings of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, which were allegedly pumped into *Jaago Bangla*, which is the mouthpiece of the Trinamool.

Mr. O'Brien is the publisher of the Bengali publication.

KASE
KERALA ACADEMY FOR SKILLS EXCELLENCE
Skill Development Mission of Government of Kerala
Department of Labour and Skills
Registered Office: 3rd Floor, Carmel Tower, Vazhuthacaud, Thiruvananthapuram- 695 014.Website: www.kase.in

E–TENDER NOTICE

No. KASE/1334/2019 **Dated: 27/07/2019**

KASE invites tenders from companies/firms who meet the prescribed eligibility criteria for operating Kaushal Kendras in Kollam, Kozhikode and Palakkad.

Interested may please submit e-tender (Tender ID: 2019_KASE_289358_1) through www.etenders.kerala.gov.in

Sd/- Managing Director

Government of Rajasthan
Social Justice and Empowerment Department
Head Office: Directorate, Social Justice and Empowerment Department, Rajasthan
Ambedkar Bhavan, G 3/1, Rajmahal Residency Area, Civil Lines, Jaipur
Phone - 0141 2220258 **Email: raj.sje@rajasthan.gov.in**
0141-2220217

Ref. : F 7(2)( )G.H./Cycle supp./SJED/2019/43773 **Date: 24/07/19**

NOTICE INVITING e-BID (NIB No. 02/2019-20)
For Hostels under SIED All over Rajasthan

Sealed Single Stage, Two-envelopes unconditional online Bid for One Year Rate contract are invited on behalf of the Govenor of Rajasthan for the procurement and supply of Complete MTB Frame Bicycle for Boys and Girls from the Producers/OEM(Original Equipment Manufacturers) Suppliers registered under relevant authority for providing such items.

The Bid documents containing the terms and conditions can be download from the website of State Public Procurement Portal, **http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in** or e-Procurement Portal **http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in** from **http://sje.rajasthan.gov.in.** The last date of online submission of Bid is 28-08-2019 upto 15-00 hours.

UB No. SOC1920GLOB00089

Director
Social Justice and Empowerment Department
Rajasthan, Jaipur

DIPR/C/6113

e mail–serw_kpd@yahoo.com
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KENDRAPARA-JAJPUR

No:- Tender Online RCK - 17/19 **Letter No.- 1534** **Date:- 25.07.2019**

e - Procurement NOTICE

1. **Name of the Work** : Construction of Roads & CD works including maintenance for 5 years under **PMGSY-II Batch-I (2018-19)** packages in the District of Kendrapara and Jajpur.
2. **Class of Contractor** : as specified in the Column-10 of the Annexure.
3. **Time for Completion** : as specified in the Column - 08 of the Annexure
4. **Estimated Cost** : **As per Annexure Column-7 attached**
5. **Detail Projects** : **As per annexure attached**
6. **Other Details** :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	1	2
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara - Jajpur	Tender Online RCK- 17/19	30.07.2019 at 11.00 A.M.	13.08.2019 up to 5.00 P.M.	09.08.2019 up to 2.00 P.M.	19.08.2019 At 11.00 A.M.	Will be intimated later

The Original EMD & DD towards paper cost and affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with Bid documents shall be physically furnished by the bidder in original before the concerned Division / Circle offices within the specified period as mentioned in the NIT, otherwise his bid will be treated as invalid and rejected.

Further details can be seen from the website **www.pmgsytenders.gov.in**

219-O:
25129/11/0004/1920

Superintending Engineer,
Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE MISSION DIRECTOR : AMRUT, ASSAM
DISPUR, GUWAHATI-6

NO.TP/AMRUT/18/2018/2881 **E-mail : amrutassam2016@gmail.com**
Dispur, Dated the 26th July, 2019

SHORT e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE/ REQUEST FOR BIDS (RFB) No AMRUT/011/2019-20

The undersigned invites bid online through e-Procurement system i.e. through website **www.assamtenders.gov.in** from eligible bidders in 2(two) bid system for the following package of work under AMRUT.

Sl. No	Name of Work	Approx. value of Works	Bid Security	Cost of Bid document and Bid processing fee	Period of completion
1	"Designing, supply,construction, installation, testing, commissioning of Intake System, Raw & Clear Water Transmission Main, Raw Water Treatment Plant (WTP), Service Reservoirs, Distribution System, House Connections and **SCADA** for Dibrugarh Town (24 x7) Water supply Project, all complete, including 5 years Operation and Maintenance" on **EPC** Mode.	Rs. 186.36 Crore	@1% of value of work	Rs. 20,000.00	30 months

All other relevant information and the detailed Bid Documents shall be available on website **www.assamtenders.gov.in** and can be viewed from 29th July,2019 up to 15.00 hr of 08th September,2019. Bid is to be submitted through online and in no case manual submission of bid shall be entertained.

Janasanyog/CF/1004/19

Mission Director
AMRUT , Assam

ELSEWHERE

Zarif hosts Oman Minister amid Gulf tensions

TEHRAN

Iran's top diplomat Mohammad Javad Zarif hosted his Omani counterpart Yusuf bin Alawi in Tehran on Saturday, his office said, amid mounting tensions in the region between Tehran and Washington. The talks centred on the "latest regional and international issues", the Foreign Ministry said in a brief statement. AFP

France to proceed with tax on U.S. tech firms

PARIS

Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said on Saturday that France would proceed with taxing revenues of big technology firms and urged the U.S. not to bring trade tariffs into the debate on how to fairly raise levies on digital services. He was responding to U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to tax French wines. REUTERS

Bahrain executes 2 Shia citizens on terror charges

DUBAI

Bahrain executed two Shia citizens by firing squad on Saturday on terror charges, officials said, despite appeals for clemency from international human rights groups. The convicts were put to death along with a third death row prisoner found guilty of murder. AFP

3 police officials killed in Taliban attack

GHAZNI

At least three police officers were killed and a dozen more wounded on Saturday when a Taliban suicide bomber drove a U.S.-made armoured vehicle into a compound in eastern Afghanistan, officials said. The attack targeted the police headquarters in Ghazni's Ab Band district, said a spokesman. AFP

Ditch backstop or face no-deal exit, Johnson tells EU

British PM urges Europe to renegotiate the withdrawal agreement

REUTERS
MANCHESTER

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson cautioned the EU on Saturday that the "anti-democratic" Irish backstop must be ditched if they were to strike a Brexit divorce deal.

Mr. Johnson, since taking office on Wednesday, has repeatedly said that if the EU continues to refuse to renegotiate the Withdrawal Agreement agreed by his predecessor Theresa May, then he will take Britain out on October 31 without a deal.

Biggest demand

His biggest demand is that the most hotly-contested element of the Brexit divorce agreement, the Irish border backstop, be struck out of the Withdrawal Agreement, a demand that has angered Ireland and perturbed other EU capitals.

"If we get rid of the backstop, whole and entire, then we are making a lot of progress," Mr. Johnson said, when asked if it was only the Irish border backstop that he wanted changed.

Speaking before a Stephenson's Rocket, a 19th century steam locomotive, in the northern England city of Manchester, Mr. Johnson dedicated most of his speech to improving public services, transport and the Internet and driving up economic growth.

"Our post-industrial towns have a proud, great heritage but an even greater future. Their best years lie ahead of them," he said, announcing new long-term rail links and promising immediate improvements to bus services.

That message, aimed at what Mr. Johnson called "left behind" towns, is seen as the early stages of an election campaign, even though Britain is not due a parliamentary election until 2022 and Mr. Johnson is adamant he will not hold one before Brexit.

His Conservative Party does not have a majority in Parliament, is divided over how to deliver Brexit and under threat of a no-confidence vote when Parliament returns in September.

European leaders are prepared to talk with Britain's new leader over Brexit but have so far insisted they will not reopen the Withdrawal Agreement. Many EU diplomats think the U.K. will hold a snap election soon.

Face the fact

Mr. Johnson, who discussed Brexit with U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday, brushed aside those concerns.

"My friends, I do not want a no-deal Brexit, that is not where we're aiming, but we have to face the fact that at the moment we're being told, as we have been told for the last three year 'rien ne va plus' – 'the deal is fixed' – and can't be changed. I doubt that," he said.

Nevertheless, investors fear a no-deal exit would send shock waves through global markets and hurt the world's economy.

Ireland is crucial to any Brexit solution. The backstop is an insurance policy designed to prevent the return of border controls along the 500-km land border between Ireland and Britain's province of Northern Ireland that were ended by the 1998 Good Friday peace agreement.

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said the question of the unification of Ireland and Northern Ireland would inevitably arise if Britain leaves the EU without a divorce deal on October 31.

"The approach of the U.K. government is not going to be disengaged or aloof or waiting for them to come to us: we are going to try to solve this problem and we are going to do it in a spirit of friendship and cooperation," Mr. Johnson said.

'Anti-democratic'

"But we can't do it as long as that anti-democratic backstop, that backstop that seeks to divide our country, divide the U.K., remains in place," he said.

"We need to get it out and then we can make progress, I think."

The Withdrawal Agreement that Ms. May struck in November with the EU says the U.K. will remain in a customs union "unless and until" alternative arrangements are found to avoid a hard border.

Many British lawmakers oppose the prospect of being bound to EU rules and customs duties that would prevent Britain doing its own trade deals and leave it overseen by EU judges.

Boris' Brexit bets

These are the possible Brexit scenarios for the U.K. under its new Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson as the country races to meet an October 31 deadline

1 Brexit with a deal
Johnson has vowed to renegotiate the deal that predecessor Theresa May struck with the EU. He says he will withhold Britain's divorce payments as a bargaining chip to try to get rid of the agreement's so-called 'backstop clause'. However, EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier has called the demand "unacceptable"

2 No-deal Brexit
Johnson has promised that he will take the country out of the EU, with or without a deal, on October 31. However, most MPs, including from his own party, are opposed to such an arrangement. This could result in a no-confidence motion against Johnson when Parliament meets in September

3 Snap election
A snap poll could be called by Parliament but the minimum duration between a successful vote of no-confidence and an election is 51 days. This means MPs would have to act in the first week back from recess if they want to bring in a new government

4 Proroguing Parliament
Johnson has not ruled out the controversial option of 'proroguing' Parliament to pre-empt a no-confidence vote by MPs who may want to avert a no-deal Brexit

a) What happens when Parliament is prorogued?

- All legislative activity stops and no debates or votes are held in the House

b) Can a Prime Minister prorogue the House?

- The power is with the Queen, who acts on the advice of the Prime Minister. So, Johnson can ask the Queen to temporarily shut Parliament

5 Second referendum
Johnson could also call another referendum to establish a mandate for leaving without a deal, but he has said he is opposed to such a vote

What is the Irish backstop?

- The plan aims to ensure that there is no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The backstop, opposed by hard-Brexiteers, will keep the U.K. territory of Northern Ireland in the EU customs union and much of the single market

Prime Minister Boris Johnson

SOURCE: AFP

How Parliament voted

The Withdrawal Agreement has been voted down thrice in Parliament so far. However, a majority of British MPs have also voted twice against leaving the EU without a deal

1 First parliamentary vote: January 15
For the deal: **202/635**
Against the deal: **432/635**
Abstention: **1**
Margin of defeat: 230 votes

2 Second parliamentary vote: March 12
For the deal: **242/634**
Against the deal: **391/634**
Abstention: **1**
Margin of defeat: 149 votes

3 Third parliamentary vote: March 29
For the deal: **286/634**
Against the deal: **344/634**
Abstentions: **4**
Margin of defeat: 58 votes

a) Votes on no-deal Brexit

Most MPs are opposed to a no-deal Brexit scenario as two parliamentary votes indicate

March 13: For a no-deal Brexit: **308**
Against a no-deal Brexit: **312**
Margin: **4 votes**

b) Indicative vote

March 27: A no-deal scenario was again rejected by Parliament in one of the eight indicative votes that took place

For a no-deal Brexit: **160**
Against a no-deal Brexit: **400**
Abstentions: **74**
Margin: **240 votes**

Trump hits out at black lawmaker from Baltimore

Cummings had criticised border officials

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump hit out at a prominent African-American critic on Saturday, calling him a "brutal bully" who should concentrate on cleaning up his "disgusting, rat and rodent infested" Baltimore district rather than criticising the work of immigration officers on the Mexican border.

Mr. Trump's target in a series of early morning tweets was Representative Elijah Cummings, the Democratic Chairman of the House of Representatives Oversight Committee, who has called Mr. Trump a racist and sharply criticised his immigration policies.

Mr. Cummings responded to Trump on Twitter.

Elijah Cummings. ▪ AFP

"Mr. President, I go home to my district daily. Each morning, I wake up, and I go and fight for my neighbors. It is my constitutional duty to conduct oversight of the Executive Branch. But, it is my moral duty to fight for my constituents," he said.

Baltimore Mayor Bernard Young called Mr. Trump's rhetoric "hurtful and dangerous."

Hong Kong activists clash with police

Rocks, bottles thrown as the Chinese territory sees protests against gang attack

REUTERS
HONG KONG

Police fired volleys of tear gas and protesters hurled bricks during clashes in a rural Hong Kong town on Saturday as several thousand activists gathered to protest an attack by suspected triad gang members at a train station last weekend.

Activists pushed ahead with the march in Yuen Long, scene of the attack by club-wielding men, in spite of a refusal by police to allow the protest on safety grounds.

Rocks and bottles were thrown by protesters, who built barricades out of street furniture and umbrellas, creating multiple stand-offs.

Police, widely criticised for failing to better protect the public from last weekend's attack, responded with tear gas as they pushed activists into retreat as it grew dark.

"Many people want to go but some will stay. There is still a lot of anger. I'm not sure which way it will go. Nam Pin Wai (village) could be a target," said Kenneth, 27, retreating from one of the front lines.

Amid the retreat, which saw several hundred protesters leave the area, Reuters witnesses saw a hardcore group of activists with small metal bats, metal and wooden poles and slingshots moving against the tide.

Last Sunday, about 100 white-shirted men stormed the Yuen Long mass-transit station, hours after protesters marched through central Hong Kong and defaced China's Liaison Office – the main symbol of Beijing's authority over the former British colony.

The men attacked black-clad protesters returning from Hong Kong island, passers-by, journalists and lawmakers with pipes and clubs, leaving 45 people injured. Some of the men later fled to Nam Pin Wai, a traditional walled village.

On Sunday, a car was dented and its windows smashed near the village.

Rallying against police: A demonstration in the district of Yuen Long in Hong Kong on Saturday. ▪ AFP

Govt. can use Pentagon funds to build wall: Court

Ruling gives President's plan a boost

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The U.S. Supreme Court on Friday ruled in favour of President Donald Trump, allowing him to proceed with plans to divert billions of dollars in Pentagon funds towards construction of his border wall with Mexico.

"Wow! Big VICTORY on the Wall," Mr. Trump tweeted in reaction to the ruling. "Big WIN for Border Security and the Rule of Law!"

Mr. Trump declared a national emergency earlier this year in a bid to bypass Congress and obtain funding for his signature project, after the stand-off led to the longest government shutdown in U.S. history. But about 20 U.S. States along with rights and environmental groups and border communities are backing lawsuits that claim the emergency declaration violates the Constitution.

A federal judge on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals had issued a temporary injunction against using Defense Department funds for wall construction.

On Friday, the Supreme Court overturned the lower court decision with a 5-4 ruling, writing that the government had "made a sufficient showing at this stage" that the groups did not have the standing to challenge the allocation of funds, freeing up the money for the President's use while litigation proceeds.

SUDOKU

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		3						
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		1					6	
		2	6	8	9	3		
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No.SS4428 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Afghan govt. to hold talks with Taliban in August

Oslo likely to be the venue, say officials

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

Direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban could begin in Norway within the next two weeks, officials and sources said on Saturday, marking a potentially crucial step in efforts to end the war.

The Taliban has so far refused to speak to the government of President Ashraf Ghani, which it sees as illegitimate, except for at a recent summit where Ghani officials attended in a "personal capacity".

"We are preparing for direct talks," said Abdul Salam Rahimi, the State Minister for Peace Affairs, noting that the government would be represented by a 15-member delegation. "We are working with all sides and hope that in the next two weeks the first meeting will take place in a European country."

He did not specify where the summit might take place, but diplomatic sources said the talks were scheduled to begin in Oslo on August 7. The sources said the international community and the Afghan government were still awaiting word from the Taliban.

The apparent development comes after Taliban negotiators sat with Afghan representatives at a so-called intra-Afghan dialogue brokered by Germany in Doha this month.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said any new talks would only begin after a deal has been forged with the U.S., and he reiterated the insurgents' long-held position that they would "not talk to the Kabul administration as a government".

Mr. Rahimi said the next delegation would include some of those who went to Doha, as well as religious scholars, women and other members of civil society.

U.S., Guatemala sign asylum deal

Central American migrants could be sent back to Guatemala

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump announced on Friday that a "landmark" asylum agreement has been reached with Guatemala, as the United States ratchets up pressure on its southern neighbours to stem the flow of migrants towards its border.

The White House said Guatemala would now be considered a "safe third country," meaning that U.S.-bound migrants who enter Guatemala would be required to seek asylum there instead. Mr. Trump said the deal will "provide safety to legitimate asylum seekers and stop asylum fraud" in the region.

The asylum agreement with Guatemala comes days after Mr. Trump threatened tough retaliation against the small Central American country if it did not sign on to an asylum deal.

Friday's agreement, signed in the Oval Office by Guatemala's Interior Minister, Enrique Degenhart, and U.S. Acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan, would apply to Salvadoran or Honduran migrants passing through Guatemala towards the United States.

Their asylum claims should now be filed in Guatemala, Mr. McAleenan said.

If Central American migrants instead "make a journey all the way to the U.S. border, they would be removable back to Guatemala if they want to seek asylum," he noted. The deal is expected to be up and running in August, Mr. McAleenan said.

It was not immediately clear how the agreement signed on Friday would jibe with a provision of Guatemala's Constitutional Court, which recently blocked the idea of a deal making Guatemala a "safe third country" for asylum requests.

President Donald Trump, acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan, seated right, and Guatemalan Interior Minister Enrique Degenhart in Washington on Friday. ▪ AP

Russia: 800 detained over poll protest

REUTERS
MOSCOW

Russian police arrested more than 800 people in Moscow on Saturday in one of the biggest crackdowns of recent times against an increasingly defiant Opposition decrying President Vladimir Putin's tight grip on power.

The detentions came before and after a protest to demand that Opposition members be allowed to run in a local election. Authorities had declared it illegal and sought to block participation, but several thousand people turned up.

Chants of "Russia without Putin" and "Putin resign" echoed through central Moscow as guardsmen beat back protesters with batons and detained people. Jailed Opposition leader Alexei Navalny had called for Saturday's protest to persuade officials to allow candidates to run in a September 8 vote.

EV industry upbeat, ICE players seek Govt.'s help

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) has said the government's vision of increasing electric mobility in the country has been acknowledged by the GST Council through its decision to slash tax on EVs (electric vehicles).

"Over [time], this will help popularise EVs," Rajan Wadhera, president, SIAM said.

He said since the automotive industry is currently going through a difficult time, the government must intervene to stimulate demand so that the industry can turn around.

Rahil Ansari, head, Audi India, said, "Measures supporting the overall industryare required. All players are struggling with declining sales, leading to production cuts and may lead to job losses, too. The draft notification on hiking registration for ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles is detrimental to the overall development. We need support, not penalties."

Tarun Mehta, co-founder & CEO, Ather Energy, said, "The reduction of GST rates from 12% to 5% reduces the upfront cost of buying a vehicle by ₹8000-₹10,000. Compounded by the tax rebates offered in the Union Budget, today electric vehicles are an affordable upgrade from existing ICE options."

Sohinder Gill, director general, Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV) said the move would "reduce the gap between EVs and IC Engine vehicles. The EV industry now awaits corresponding reduction of 18% GST on spare batteries," he said

ICICI Bank clocks profit as provisions dip

Net NPA ratio lowest in 14 quarters; from a economic point of view, there is clearly a slowdown: Batra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

ICICI Bank reported a ₹1,908.03-crore net profit for the April-June quarter compared with a ₹119.55-crore loss during the same period of the previous year as additions to bad loans fell, lowering provision requirement.

Net interest income (NII) increased 27% year-on-year to ₹7,737 crore while net interest margin rose 3.61% compared with 3.19% in the same period of the previous year. Net interest margin was 3.72% during the fourth quarter of 2018-19.

Interest on I-T refund

"The impact of interest on income tax refund and interest collection from non-performing loans on net interest margin was about 17 basis points in Q1-2020 compared with about 25 basis points in Q4-2019," the bank said.

Non-interest income, excluding treasury income, stood at ₹3,247 crore compared with ₹3,085 crore while fee income grew 10% to ₹3,039 crore.

"The growth in core operating profit and reduction in credit cost resulted in a net profit of ₹1,908.03 crore," said Sandeep Batra, executive director (designate), ICICI Bank.

Core operating profit (profit before provisions and tax, excluding treasury income) grew 21% year-on-year to ₹6,110 crore.

Asset quality improved with gross non-performing assets falling by almost ₹8,000 crore in a year to ₹45,763 crore as at June end and the ratio came down to 6.49% from 8.81%.

Net NPA ratio decreased from 4.19% on June 30, 2018 to 1.77% at June 30 this year – the lowest in the last 14 quarters. Net NPAs decreased 51% to ₹11,857 crore.

As a result, provisions fell to ₹3,496 crore in Q1-2020 compared with ₹5,971 crore a year earlier. The bank had a provision coverage ratio of 74%.

"We continue to focus on reaching a consolidated return on asset of 15% by quarter ended June 2020," he added.

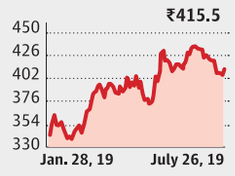
The total domestic advances grew 18%, driven by a 22% growth in retail loans. The corporate loan book grew 13%.

Mr. Batra declined to give any guidance on loan growth and said there was a slowdown in economic activity.

"From an economic point of view, there is clearly a slowdown. We have seen slowdown in transactions and auto sales. However, the services sector continues to do well and we are seeing some improvement in capacity utilisation in the public sector," he added.

Deposit growth was 21% year-on-year, driven by a 34% growth in term deposits. The share of CASA deposits to total deposits fell to 45.2% as on June 30, 2019 compared with 49.6% as on March 31, 2019 and 50.5% on June 30 last year.

Turning around



We continue to focus on reaching a consolidated return on assets of 15% by quarter ending June 2020

SANDEEP BATRA,
ED (designate),
ICICI Bank

Metrics	Q1 FY20	Q1 FY19	Growth (%)
Total income (₹cr)	21,405.50	18,574.17	15.24
Net profit/loss (₹cr)	1,908.03	(119.55)	-
Earnings per share (₹)	2.96	-	-
Net NPAs (%)	1.77	4.19	-

'Model Tenancy Act will rebuild trust between owners and tenants'

'Fair in terms of deposits, agreements'

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

The Model Tenancy Act, 2019 drafted by the Union Ministry for Housing and Urban Development, is expected to benefit both owners and tenants, thus releasing lot of housing stock for rental purpose.

"There is a huge trust deficit prevalent between homeowners and tenants, creating a huge demand and supply gap when it comes to the home rental market," said Amarendra Sahu, co-founder & CEO, Nestaway Technologies Pvt. Ltd., a service provider in the space. "The Model Tenancy Act, 2019, offers a balance between the rights and benefits, for both owners and tenants; and identifies the role of property managers," he added.

He said when the company started in 2015, about 20% of its owner base was reluctant to give their house on rent fearing eviction risks.

For the past four years, he said, Nestaway had been working to reduce the trust deficit.

"We support the Model Tenancy Act 2019 and believe it will help both homeowners and tenants with the right pricing of rental homes, appropriate security deposits, and the nature and tenure of rental agreements, in a positive way," he added.

Commenting on the Act, Anuj Puri, chairman, Anarock Property Consultants, said, "At first look, the draft policies seem to favour both tenants and landlords. In all fairness, it aims to regulate the rental housing market by a more market-oriented approach by carefully balancing the interests of both land owners and tenants."

However, he said there could be some challenges in implementation.

"The cap on the security deposit can become a pain-point for many landlords – in cities like Bengaluru, a 10-month security deposit (with some scope for negotiation) was the accepted norm.

"Also, if a tenant defaults or causes significant damage to a property, a two-month security deposit may not cover the expenses the property owner incurs in repairs," he said.

Mr. Puri said while the government lays down the basic policies, the exact rules will likely change within each State since land is a State subject.

States' call

"Like we saw in the highly lopsided roll-out of RERA, the Model Tenancy Act, 2019 may lose its real purpose if States do not follow the basic guidelines and dilute them," he added.

According to Mr. Puri, while the capping of the security deposit amount to a maximum of two months may benefit tenants, the heavy penalty that will now be imposed for non-vacancy of the residential unit would act as a deterrent and protect the interest of owners.

'Review legal set-up to tackle corporate failures'

Worst-case scenario ends up driving the law for entire society, says Sundaresan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The legal framework needs a relook when it comes to tackling corporate governance and failure issues, senior lawyers Somasekhar Sundaresan and Arvind Datar said.

"If there is a governance failure which has led to a business failure, do we have a legal framework that actually deals with it? Sadly, the answer is no," Mr. Sundaresan said, speaking on the topic "Corporate failures – where does the buck stop?" organised by the Palkhivala Foundation.

Mr. Sundaresan also said that the system is still grappling with how to deal with real examples when they come up. "And, when an example comes up, we get into case-specific solutions and the worst case ends up driving the law for the entire society, including the largely compliant segments of society," he said.

Mr. Sundaresan pointed out how the Companies Act 2013 was framed entirely out of the issues that arose from the fallout of the Satyam scam.

He said that the approach seemed to be 'show me a problem, I will write a law.'

"Before writing the laws, should we not ask the question as to what the problems we are trying to solve are and the solutions for them, and invite public comments and then come up with a law based on the feedback?" Mr. Sundaresan asked.

Differentiation needed

Also speaking at the event, Mr. Datar said there should be differentiation between corporate failures due to frauds and those that were genuine failures.

He pointed out that sometimes regulation becomes the reason for business failure, giving the instance of sugar and real estate sectors that have been stuck with different regulations like State government rules, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and Real Estate Regulation and Development Act (RERA).

Arvind Datar, left, with Somasekhar Sundaresan at a discussion on corporate failures. • K.V. SRINIVASAN

OYO Hotels to expand T.N. footprint

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Budget hospitality firm OYO Hotels & Homes will be offering its services in six tier-II cities of Tamil Nadu to strengthen its foothold.

OYO, which gets maximum bookings from Chennai and Coimbatore, is poised to enter Tirunelveli, Salem, Velankanni, Kancheepuram, Yelagiri and Tiruchendur.

"Supported by OYO's operational and technological capabilities followed by great customer and asset-owner feedback, we are expanding our presence across the State," said Aditya Ghosh, CEO, OYO India and south Asia, in a statement.

INTERVIEW | AASHISH SOMAIYAA

'Worst is behind us, it's fine to invest in debt funds now'

'Problem isolated to 1-2 issuers, industry has handled it'

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR

There is a lot of uncertainty among investors in terms of market outlook and earnings, which is affecting the fund flows that may remain subdued for few months, says **Aashish Somaiyaa**, *MD and CEO, Motilal Oswal Asset Management Company. Also, the recent happenings in the debt fund segment carry important learnings for the mutual fund industry. Excerpts:*

Debt funds have been in the news for quite some time, mostly for the wrong reasons. Do you think investors should look at investing in debt funds? Is the worst over?

■ I personally feel there are two aspects to it. First is whether you should invest in a debt fund now. I think the problem has been isolated to one or two issuers, and at the same time the industry has handled it. So, by all means, one should consider investing in debt funds. Let us not paint the entire thing in a particular fashion.

Also, some issuers are working towards resolving the situation. There may be panic now, but I think in the next 3-6 months, we will find ourselves in a better place because some of these things are getting resolved and maybe, the worst is behind us.

As to retail investments, I think the issue is not about whether to invest, but more about where to invest. People think these funds should give us better returns than all the small savings products and the banks but the perception about risk is completely different. No one should think that this product is totally risk-free.

At least one quarter looks uncertain in terms of flows but after that, things will pick up in a big way

What are the learnings for the mutual fund industry from these instances?

■ First is the customer profile and the product structure. If you have to take risk, then maybe put it in an AIF (Alternative Investment Funds) structure and go to the right client. Second, we should not try to maximise yield in a low-yield environment. Thirdly, communication and expectation setting.

What is your take on the equity market?

■ The Nifty may be around 11,300 but it feels like 10,000. There is a conundrum. If you ask investors if they want to invest in equities they will say 'no', because they feel that while Nifty may be trading near all-time highs, there is uncertainty around EPS (earnings per share) growth.

Then, if you ask about their portfolios, they will say it has underperformed Nifty. Small- and mid-cap investors have all lost money. Investors should not act on their portfolio looking at Nifty because you may not be owning Nifty. Everyone has been preoccupied with the elections. In the background, the U.S. policy has changed, the RBI policy has changed, corporate results are at least better than what they were in the last couple of years, oil prices are not at $90. Change in U.S. policy gives a lot of legroom to our policymakers. Plus, there is a decisive mandate.

In that case, do you think this is a good time to look at passive investments?

■ Why is it getting attention now? It is because of the last one year return of the markets when the Nifty has been positive but most funds are struggling.

Passive funds will take off due to the youngsters today who are going digital and DIY (do-it-yourself). It will also take off due to the returns-versus-cost debate at a time when the awareness of cost is going up. Also, when fee-based advisory services are going up, the adviser would look for an underlying product that is cheaper.

Another factor is that when you are looking to invest for 20 or 30 years, which fund manager would you trust?

Flows into equity funds are at a multi-month low. In this context, how do you see SIP flows going ahead?

■ There will be uncertainty for the next two-three months. People would like to see some improvement, some positive news flow, some traction. So, at least one quarter looks uncertain in terms of flows but post that, things will pick up in a big way.

Task force to study coffee sector issues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE

The Union Government is expected to soon set up a task force that will engage with various stakeholders in the coffee sector, examine the issues faced by it and make suitable recommendations to the Union Commerce Minister.

According to Jeffry Rebello, chairman of the coffee committee of the United Planters' Association of Southern India, the industry representatives held detailed discussions with Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal recently on the issues faced by the sector.

This included the need for better research, permitting growers to add value, bringing down the percentage of chicory permitted to be mixed with coffee and schemes of the Coffee Board.

Indigo Paints to ramp up capacity

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

Indigo Paints Pvt. Ltd., India's fifth-largest decorative paints company, is planning to ramp up capacity by investing ₹40-₹50 crore every year for five years as demand for its range of paints is picking up across the country, according to a top company executive.

"We have been growing at a rate of 45% year-on-year as against industry growth of 12-13%," said Hemant Jalan, managing director, Indigo Paints Pvt. Ltd.

"We are confident of maintaining our 45% to 50% growth for the next five years. For that, we need to invest ₹40-₹50 crore every year at all our three plants," he added.

The giant scale of the shift needed to BS-VI can be gauged from the production base. ▪ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Cleaner air, higher costs?

What will the move to Bharat Stage VI mass emission standards for various classes of motor vehicles by April 2020 entail?

G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN

The story so far: The Union Government, through an order dated September 16, 2016, mandated Bharat Stage VI (BS-VI) mass emission standards for various classes of motor vehicles throughout the country from April 1, 2020, leapfrogging BS-V. While this will lead to better air quality in the short term, it also means higher vehicle prices and costs. For the automobile industry, this has meant accelerated development of all related technologies and components and big investments.

What makes BS-VI fuels cleaner?

As per Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) norms for upgraded fuels, (IS: 2796 - petrol and IS: 1460 - diesel), sulphur content is reduced to 10 mg/kg max in BS-VI from 50 mg/kg under BS-IV. This key reduction in sulphur makes it possible to equip vehicles with better catalytic converters that capture pollutants.

BS-VI confers several benefits, the most important of which is limits set on Particle Number (PN) for engines, a reference to direct injection engines that emit more particulates but are more efficient and release less carbon dioxide. Also, there are lower limits for hydrocarbons (HC) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) in diesel engines and lower Particulate Matter limits for both petrol and diesel engines.

What impact will it have on consumers?

Prices are the biggest impact factor both for commercial and passenger vehicles under the BS-VI regime, with one industry research estimate putting the increase at up to ₹20,000 for petrol cars, ₹65,000 to ₹90,000 for diesel cars, going up to ₹2.25 lakh for heavy commercial vehicles. Even two wheelers, requiring fuel injection technology, will witness a price spike of ₹3,000 to ₹6,000. However, these estimates are made a year ahead of the actual roll-out of BS-VI fuel nationwide, and the auto industry may opt to absorb some costs and pass on the rest to the consumer. In terms of fuel, the oil marketing sector has said the retail price increase for BS-VI fuel could be anything from a few paise per litre to ₹2.

> In the run-up to BS-VI, sales growth of vehicles has witnessed a slump due to several factors, including economic conditions, weak rural demand and the impending shift to higher standards

The giant scale of the shift needed to BS-VI can be gauged from the production base: the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) says the industry produced 30,915,420 vehicles ranging from two-wheelers to commercial vehicles in the year ended April 2019, with an annual growth of 6.26%.

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, for example, had to transition 16 models and 50 applications with tests across 60 lakh km. It decided to remove diesel models under the BS-VI category. Mahindra & Mahindra invested about ₹1,000 crore and several-fold investments were made by its suppliers.

But Mahindra, Tata and several other companies said they would go ahead with diesel line-ups. Hyundai India which exports almost all its models does not face issues with migration and the company is said to be fully ready for BS-VI. Some new manufacturers such as Kia are entering the market with BS-VI vehicles.

In the run-up to BS-VI, however, sales growth of vehicles has witnessed a slump due to a combination of factors, including economic conditions, weak rural demand and the impending shift to higher standards.

As per June 2019 sales data released by SIAM, automobile companies sold 16.28% fewer passenger vehicles compared to June 2018. There was a 23.39% drop in the sale of commercial vehicles in the same period. Two-wheeler sales dipped by 11.70%.

What about the BS-IV vehicles already manufactured?

Since there is no bar on the operation of existing vehicles beyond the cut-off date for BS-VI, that is, April 1, 2020, the inventory of personal and commercial vehicles will continue to be sold. This is significant for the commercial sector, which involves higher investments. After the deadline, however, all new vehicles sold must comply with BS-VI.

A spike in sales of BS-IV vehicles is expected closer to the festival season, when buyer sentiment turns positive, and the industry prepares to liquidate its stock of soon-to-be obsolete vehicles. The outlook is unclear for heavy commercial vehicles due to recent changes that enable higher freight loading, and depressed demand for expansion.

The availability of higher financing through banks after the move to recapitalise them, and higher liquidity in non-banking financial companies could also influence sales.

What will the shift mean?

As of January 1 this year, there were 57,468 retail fuel outlets of the oil marketing companies across the country. Although BS-VI fuel was introduced in the national capital last year, and extended to some contiguous districts in neighbouring States, the release of the higher grade fuel in all the pumps in the country has to be simultaneous. The auto industry wants it done by February. The cost of upgrading refineries to produce the higher-quality fuel is estimated at between ₹25,000 crore and ₹30,000 crore.

Why does India say no to Kashmir mediation?

What are the historical reasons why third party mediation is avoided by the government? Will the status quo on India's Kashmir policy remain?

SUHASINI HAIDAR

The story so far: On Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had sought mediation in Kashmir when they met during the G-20 summit in Osaka. In Parliament, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar categorically said that Mr. Modi did not request Mr. Trump to "mediate or arbitrate" on the Kashmir issue. He said India remains committed to discussing all issues with Pakistan bilaterally.

What is the backstory on the U.S. offer of mediation?

In 1993, the new administration of U.S. President Bill Clinton decided to wade into the Kashmir issue, indicating repeatedly that it wished to mediate between India and Pakistan. At the UN General Assembly in September, Mr. Clinton referred to resolving "civil wars from Angola to the Caucasus to Kashmir," and a month later, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel questioned the validity of Kashmir's 'Instrument of Accession' during a press briefing. At a recent event, the Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Civil Aviation (and Minister of State, Commerce and Industry), Hardeep Puri, recounted how India issued a strong protest. Mr. Puri was then the Joint Secretary (Americas), and made the call to an official in Washington with a carefully but strongly worded message cleared by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. Mr. Puri said, "We read the riot act to the U.S. administration that time, and succeeded remarkably in drawing a red line on the issue [of mediation]."

In fact, until Mr. Trump dropped a bombshell during his joint press appearance with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday, where he claimed that Mr. Modi had asked him to "mediate or arbitrate" on Kashmir, no U.S. leader has publicly crossed that line in 25 years. Responding to a swift and angry denial from the Ministry of External Affairs, the U.S. State Department seemed to backtrack from the allegation by saying that Kashmir remains a "bilateral issue", but maintained that the U.S. "stands ready to assist" any India-Pakistan talks.

Why does India refrain from taking help?

India's firm position against mediation on Kashmir or any other issue stems from several reasons, most notably a historical suspicion, since the 1950s and 1960s, as mediated talks by the United Nations and World Bank, the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia have been unsuccessful in resolving the issues between India and Pakistan. At best, the attempts have worked for diffusing tensions, or calling off hostilities at the Line of Control and the International Border, but not in terms of their rival claims over Jammu and Kashmir. Another reason is that India sees itself as a regional leader, and does not require any assistance in sorting out its issues with other regional countries. In addition, the widespread belief is that mediation favours the weaker party by levelling the playing field, and with its stronger

Milestone: Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistan President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in Shimla in 1972. ▪ THE HINDU PHOTO ARCHIVES

conventional and non-conventional military prowess, India has seen no significant gain from bringing a third-party into its 70-year-old conflict with Pakistan.

When did the UN try to mediate?

The early attempts at mediation by the UN were made after India took its complaint against Pakistan's forced occupation of parts of Kashmir (PoK) to the UN Security Council on January 1, 1948. The UN then set up the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) which proposed mediating a resolution along a three-point action plan: Pakistani demilitarisation of the Kashmir region, followed by Indian reduction in military presence, and a proposed final resolution by an impartial U.N. administered plebiscite to "determine the wishes of the Kashmiri people". The deal never got off the ground as Pakistan never agreed to demilitarise, and India under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made it clear that a plebiscite would never be accepted. Where the UNCIP was successful was in mediating a ceasefire in 1949, and negotiating the geographical location of the cease-fire line which would be monitored by the United Nations Military Observer Group In India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). Individual U.N. representatives continued to visit both sides from 1949 to 1953 but failed to improve the atmosphere for a resolution, or to convince either side to demilitarise the two sides of the LoC. The first United Nations Representative for India and Pakistan (UNRIP) appointed to mediate the dispute was Sir Owen Dixon, an Australian jurist, who was followed by Frank Graham, an American diplomat, who gave up after his proposal was rejected by New Delhi and Karachi (then the capital of Pakistan) in April, 1953. The only exceptions to this dismal record were the 1960 World Bank guaranteed Indus Water Treaty, and a territorial agreement on the Rann of Kutch, mediated successfully by the British government in 1965. Soviet Premier Kosygin also moderated between Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and Pakistani President Ayub Khan to broker the 1965 Tashkent peace agreement, but the treaty has always been marked by suspicion and doubts, tainted by Shastri's sudden death at Tashkent.

> The U.S. State department seemed to backtrack from Mr. Trump's allegation by saying that Kashmir remains a "bilateral issue", but maintained that the United States "stands ready to assist" any India-Pakistan talks

What about the U.S.?

A particularly bitter episode for India came from mediation attempts by the U.S. and the U.K. after the 1962 Sino-Indian war. The U.S. had provided India with planes and military hardware worth about $60 million during the war, and the price, said American officials, was that India should agree to mediated talks with Pakistan on Kashmir.

Says Ashoka University Professor Rudra Chaudhuri (author of *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States since 1947*, and also the director of Carnegie India), "The mediation was accepted because Nehru was in shock after the defeat to China, and the U.S. made it clear that any further military assistance was contingent on India's cooperation on Kashmir talks."

On November 21, 1962, the day the war ended, a team of 24 American negotiators headed to India, led by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Averell Harriman. They worked, along with U.S. Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith and British High Commissioner Paul Gore-Booth to bring India to the table for six rounds of talks between Foreign Minister Swaran Singh and Pakistan Foreign Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Eventually, however as India regained its confidence, the talks floundered, and ended in 1963 after Nehru made it clear that India would never give up the Kashmir Valley.

Will India remain opposed to mediation?

After winning the war with Pakistan that saw the creation of Bangladesh, India, in 1972, negotiated the Simla Agreement, which did away with any idea of future mediation between the two countries. According to the Agreement signed on July 2, 1972 by Indira Gandhi and by then President Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the two countries "resolved to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them".

In February 1999, the Lahore declaration signed by Nawaz Sharif and Atal Behari Vajpayee also affirmed the bilateral nature of issues and their resolution. Thus, even when Mr. Trump spoke this week, India's response, in Parliament, was to invoke the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration saying that they "provide the basis to resolve all issues between India and Pakistan bilaterally". These bilateral efforts are at an end at present, and little has moved since the last negotiations on Kashmir in 2003-2008, when Indian and Pakistani negotiators discussed the four-step formula.

India has maintained its opposition to third-party mediation, however, and despite offers from several leaders including South African President Nelson Mandela, UN Chief António Guterres, and more recently, the Norwegian Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, has said, "thanks, but no thanks".

What is zero budget natural farming?

Will this form of chemical-free agriculture increase farmers' incomes? Where are the pitfalls?

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

The story so far: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman thrust zero budget farming into the spotlight in the first Budget speech of the 17th Lok Sabha earlier this month, calling for a "back to the basics" approach. She said, "We need to replicate this innovative model through which in a few States, farmers are already being trained in this practice. Steps such as this can help in doubling our farmers' income in time for our 75th year of Independence." Several States, including Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, have been aggressively driving a shift towards this model.

What is it and how did it come about?

Zero budget natural farming (ZBNF) is a method of chemical-free agriculture drawing from traditional Indian practices.

It was originally promoted by Maharashtrian agriculturist and Padma Shri recipient Subhash Palekar, who developed it in the mid-1990s as an alternative to the Green Revolution's methods driven by chemical fertilizers and pesticides and intensive irrigation. He argued that the rising cost of these external inputs was a leading cause of indebtedness and suicide among farmers, while the impact of chemicals on the environment and on long-term fertility was devastating. Without the need to spend money on these inputs – or take loans to buy them – the cost of production could be reduced and farming made into a "zero budget" exercise, breaking the debt cycle for many small farmers.

Instead of commercially produced chemical inputs, the ZBNF promotes the application of *jeevamrutha* – a mixture of fresh desi cow dung and aged desi cow urine, jaggery, pulse flour, water and soil – on farmland. This is a fermented microbial culture that adds nutrients to the soil, and acts as a catalytic agent to promote the activity of microorganisms and earthworms in the soil. About 200 litres of *jeevamrutha* should be sprayed twice a month per acre of land; after three years, the system is supposed to become self-sustaining. Only one cow is needed for 30 acres of land, according to Mr. Palekar, with the caveat that it must be a local Indian breed – not an imported Jersey or Holstein.

A similar mixture, called *bijamrita*, is used to treat seeds, while concoctions using neem leaves and pulp, tobacco and green chillis are prepared for insect and pest management.

The ZBNF method also promotes soil aeration, minimal watering, intercropping, bunds and topsoil mulching and discourages intensive irrigation and deep ploughing. Mr. Palekar is against vermicomposting, which is the mainstay of typical organic farming, as it introduces the the most common composting worm, the European red wiggler (*Eisenia fetida*) to Indian soils. He claims these worms absorb toxic metals and poison groundwater and soil.

Why does it matter?

According to National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data, almost 70% of agricultural households spend more than they earn and more than half of all farmers are in debt. In States such as Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, levels of indebtedness are around 90%, where each household

A cotton field in Andhra Pradesh. (Below) Subhash Palekar ▪ AP AND S. MAHINSHA

> Sikkim, which has seen some decline in yields following a conversion to organic farming, is used as a cautionary tale on totally abandoning chemical fertilizers

bears an average debt of ₹1 lakh. In order to achieve the Central government's promise to double farmers income by 2022, one aspect being considered is natural farming methods such as the ZBNF which reduce farmers' dependence on loans to purchase inputs they cannot afford. Meanwhile, inter-cropping allows for increased returns.

The Economic Survey has also highlighted the ecological advantages.

Is it effective?

A limited 2017 study in Andhra Pradesh claimed a sharp decline in input costs and improvement in yields. However, reports also suggest that many farmers, including in Mr. Palekar's native Maharashtra, have reverted to conventional farming after seeing their ZBNF returns drop after a few years, in turn raising doubts about the method's efficacy in increasing farmers' incomes.

ZBNF critics, including some experts within the Central policy and planning think tank NITI Aayog, note that India needed the Green Revolution in order to become self-sufficient and ensure food security. They warn against a wholesale move away from that model without sufficient proof that yields will not be affected. Sikkim, which has seen some decline in yields following a conversion to organic farming, is used as a cautionary tale regarding the pitfalls of abandoning chemical fertilizers.

Which are the States with big plans?

According to the Economic Survey, more than 1.6 lakh farmers are practising the ZBNF in almost 1,000 villages using some form of state support, although the method's advocates claim more than 30 lakh practitioners overall. The original pioneer was Karnataka, where the ZBNF was adopted as a movement by a State farmers' association, the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha. Large-scale training camps were organised to educate farmers in the method. According to a survey carried out in those early years, ZBNF farmers all owned small plots of land, had some access to irrigation and owned at least one cow of their own.

In June 2018, Andhra Pradesh rolled out an ambitious plan to become India's first State to practise 100% natural farming by 2024. It aims to phase out chemical farming over 80 lakh hectares of land, converting the State's 60 lakh farmers to ZBNF methods.

Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Karnataka and Uttarakhand have also invited Mr. Palekar to train their farmers.

Is the budgetary support enough?

Despite the ZBNF buzz caused by the Budget speech, the Finance Minister did not actually announce any new funding to promote it. Last year, the Centre revised the norms for the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana-Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied sector Rejuvenation (RKVY-RAFTAAR), a flagship Green Revolution scheme with an allocation of ₹3,745 crore this year, and the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, which has an allocation of ₹325 crore and is meant to promote organic farming and soil health. Under the revised guidelines, both Centrally-sponsored schemes now allow States to use their funds to promote the ZBNF, vedic farming, natural farming, cow farming and a host of other traditional methods.

Andhra Pradesh says it has utilised ₹249 crore from these schemes to promote the ZBNF over a two-and-a-half year period. The State estimates it will need ₹17,000 crore to convert all of its 60 lakh farmers to the ZBNF over the next 10 years.

However, this is only a fraction of the spending on Central government subsidies for fertilizers, pesticides and mass irrigation that has driven the Green Revolution model.

What lies ahead?

NITI Aayog has been among the foremost promoters of Mr. Palekar and the ZBNF method. However, its experts have also warned that multi-location studies are needed to scientifically validate the long-term impact and viability of the model before it can be scaled up and promoted country-wide.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research is studying the ZBNF methods practised by basmati and wheat farmers in Modipuram (Uttar Pradesh), Ludhiana (Punjab), Pantnagar (Uttarakhand) and Kurukshetra (Haryana), evaluating the impact on productivity, economics and soil health including soil organic carbon and soil fertility.

If found to be successful, an enabling institutional mechanism could be set up to promote the technology, NITI Aayog vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar has said. The Andhra Pradesh experience is also being monitored closely to judge the need for further public funding support.

CAPSULE

Origin of photosynthesis
Imperial College London researchers, studying *Heliobacterium modesticaldum* – an ancient bacterium – have found structures in it that suggest photosynthesis may have evolved a billion years earlier than is presently believed, and oxygenic photosynthesis need not have evolved from anoxygenic photosynthesis.

Love hormone
Oxytocin is believed to regulate maternal behaviour. Now, a study in *PLOS ONE* finds a group of cells activated by oxytocin present in one area in female mice but not in the same area in males. Activation of the receptors correlates with estrogen presence, implying the cells can induce maternal behaviour. The finding has potential for treating postpartum depression.

Fountain of youth
Senescent cells are the opposite of stem cells: they can never divide again. New research finds that ageing, senescent cells stop producing nucleotides, the building block of DNA. When young cells were prevented from producing nucleotides, the cells became senescent. The findings have potential to help with ageing and related diseases.

IIT Madras: Breath humidity sensors for wearable electronics

It detects ethanol, acetone in oral breath of alcoholics, diabetics, respectively

R. PRASAD

A nanofibre sensor capable of sensing minute variations in relative humidity levels in the exhaled breath has been fabricated by a team led by T. Pradeep from the Department of Chemistry at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras. The highly sensitive sensors can be integrated into wearable electronics and might have applications in assessing human metabolism and calorie burn rates.

The sensor can also detect traces of ethanol and acetone, two major components present in the oral breath of alcoholics and diabetics, respectively.

Portable: The nanofibre sensor can be easily integrated to the base of wearables such as common place masks, say (from right) Pradeep, Pillalamarri Srikrishnarka and Sathvik Ajay. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Quick response time

The sensors have very quick response time of about one second and can detect a range of relative humidity from 0-95%. The sensor was found to have high stability. "Even after exposing the sensor to ambient conditions for a week, we still found the response time to be about one second and could match the breathing rates quite effectively," says Sathvik Ajay Iyengar who was a short-term student with Prof. Pradeep's team and is one of the first authors of a paper published in the journal *ACS Applied Electronic Materials*.

The breath rate was measured for one-two hours prior to and after exercise. The heart rate is higher soon after exercise and this is reflected in higher breath rate. "We intend collecting breath rate over a period of few days to establish the relationship between heart and breath rate and metabolism," says Pillalamarri Srikrishnarka from IIT Madras, the other first author of the paper.

The nanofibre mat is fabricated by electrospinning poly(vinylidene fluoride) and reduced graphene oxide. Coating the mat with polyaniline turns the mat into a sensor.

The moisture in the breath reduces the resistance of the sensing material thereby allowing more current to flow. So when a fixed voltage (1-2 volts) is applied to the sensor, there is more current that is detected when the sensor comes in contact with moisture in the breath.

"In the presence of humidity, 100-1000 times more current can be detected using our sensor compared with other sensors," says Iyengar. "So when the current measured is in nanoampere range when other sensors are used, we were able to measure it at microampere range using our sensor."

When there are traces of ethanol and acetone in the breath, the resistance of the sensor increases and conductivity reduces. Hence, there is a dip in the current measured from the baseline. "The reduction in conductivity is because of the absence of moisture – the hydrogen bond between the sensor and analyte [ethanol and acetone] is less likely to form," says Srikrishnarka.

"Polyaniline is the major contributor of current conduction, and reduced graphene oxide complements it. The combination of polyaniline coating and reduced graphene oxide allows higher current conduction," says Srikrishnarka. "In the absence of reduced graphene oxide, polyaniline can still conduct current but at a significantly lower level. The reduced graphene oxide alone does not help conduct current."

"The coating of the mat with polyaniline occurs in water and so can be scaled-up to get large-scale coatings. This process also makes it easier, quicker and relatively more eco-friendly than other commercial processes," says Prof. Pradeep. The nanofibre mat obtained is very thin and offers breathability. In order to integrate sensors like this into wearable electronics to monitor breath, resistance-free air flow is the key.

Portable sensor

To make the sensor truly portable, the researchers are using the popular Arduino prototyping platform coupled with Bluetooth module for collecting data wirelessly.

"We initially tested the sensor performance using an Arduino Uno and we observed a good response. We intend to team up with other departments to recognise patterns by using machine learning and to develop mobile-friendly apps to monitor health," says Prof. Pradeep. The team plans to take the work forward via startup initiatives.

Predicting pollution levels using oceans' memory

Patterns like El Nino can help predict weather conditions and pollution, nearly a season in advance

ASWATHI PACHA

Researchers from China and the U.S. have been successful in predicting air pollution levels in northern Indian States. The model they have developed shows 75% accuracy in predicting pollution levels, and the prediction can be done even a season in advance. The model takes into account certain climatic patterns related to the ocean which have a regulatory effect on the wintertime air pollution over northern India. Studying these patterns can help predict pollution levels.

India has been emerging as one of the world's most polluted countries, with particulate matter PM 2.5 levels spiking more than 999 microgram per cubic metre in parts of Delhi last year.

Studying a combination of El Nino, Antarctic Oscillation and the anomalies in sea surface temperature during autumn (September-November), can help forecast the pollution conditions in winter (December-February).

The statistical model developed by the team can also help the government in adjusting policies and strategies for pollution control before winter comes, the paper published in *Science Advances* adds.

It is known that the aerosol over an area is modulated by meteorological conditions and circulation patterns. Stagnant weather conditions such as low wind speeds and descending air can favour rapid aerosol formation and accumulation. Understanding these climatic factors which influence the wintertime haze pollution can help foresee the future ventilation conditions too.

Also, the ocean data serves as a memory and large-scale climate patterns like El Nino can tell what the weather conditions and pollution will be, nearly a season in advance

The team constructed a computer model which incorporates the El Nino and Antarctic Oscillation data for autumn. Climatic data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S for the period 2003-2018 and the aerosol optical depth observed by various satellites were also used.

Winter haze: The ocean data serves as a memory to foretell how the weather conditions and pollution will play out. ▪FILE PHOTO

"It will help identify if the weather conditions will be favourable or unfavourable for pollution, helping the government frame a more stringent pollution control plan if needed," explains Dr. Meng Gao, assistant professor at the Hong Kong Baptist University, China. He is the first author of the study.

The Antarctic Oscillation does not act directly to influence Indian climate but affects the Indian Ocean Meridional Dipole which in turn plays a role in our climatic conditions.

He added that there have been several studies in China connecting extreme pollution with East Asia winter monsoon, Arctic sea ice loss, the El Nino–Southern Oscillation, and Pacific sea surface temperature anomalies. The predictions from these studies have helped the government makethe needed reforms, especially in its industrial sector, helping bring down pollution levels in the country.

Bees use complex memory for communication

Waggle run correlates with distance from food site to hive

I.T. ILAVENIL

Bees use waggle dance to communicate with their nest mates the flight distance and direction to foraging sites. Now, a research team led by Axel Brockmann at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bengaluru, has studied how bees use complex memory to generate dance duration to communicate a change in foraging distance.

Bees are known to waggle dance near the entrance of the hives. The duration of the waggle run of a dancing bee correlates with the distance between the food site and the hive. For instance, as the distance to the foraging site increases, the duration of waggle increases too.

The team used the honey bee species *Apis mellifera* for the study. "Most of the research on the brain and behaviour of bees around the world is done with the help of *A. mellifera* and therefore we could put our results into the context of all the research done previously," says Dr. Brockmann.

Memory formation

To understand in detail memory formation in bees for waggle dance, the researchers trained a group of honey bees to forage food kept 300 metres away from the hive. When the food source was shifted to 400 metres, most of the bees took multiple trips to the new foraging site to update their dance. Till such time the bees formed the new memory, they displayed an intermediate dance duration indicating distances in between the new and old foraging locations.

"One must assume that the bees, when arriving at the new feeder site, know the distance between the feeder and the hive. If not, they will not be able to find the way back. The occurrence of intermediate dance durations indicates that the bees use memory of both distances when they update the dance information," says Dr. Brockmann.

It was also noticed that the memory processes of bees responded differently depending on whether the foraging distance was extended or shortened from the original distance of 300 metres. When the feeder was shifted from the original distance of 300 metres to 200 metres and back to 300 metres, the bees were able to update the feeder distance following each shift and communicate the distance correctly through waggle dance.

In contrast, when the feeder was shifted from the original distance (300 metres) to 400 metres the bees were able to communicate the longer foraging distance. But when brought back to the original distance of 300 metres, it continued to exhibit the waggle duration for 400m.

"The foraging site at 400 metres was new to the bees unlike the one at 200 metres which the bees visited earlier during the training process. Therefore, when the feeder was first shifted to a novel site [400 metres] and then back to the original site [300 metres], honey bees did not update the waggle duration after the second shift. This is likely due to new memory interfering with the recall of an older one," says Arumoy Chatterjee, a PhD student at the institute. He is the first author of the paper published in *Journal of Experimental Biology*.

"Previously, there was no easy way to dissociate the waggle dance activity of honey bee foragers from their foraging activity. Our experiments now provide us with the means to dissociate them, an essential first step towards understanding the mechanisms underlying the conversion of flight information to waggle dance information", adds co-author Ebi George, another PhD student at the institute.

Reversible superglue inspired by snail epiphragm

Snails secrete a mucous film which dries to forms a glassy structure that fixes them to the substrate

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

A hydrogel-based adhesive that combines strength and reversibility has been developed by a collaboration of researchers based in the U.S. and Korea. This combination is not easily found in adhesives. The group has drawn inspiration from snails in developing this adhesive.

Snail mucous

When snails are startled or encounter discomfort, they shrink into their shells. They secrete a mucous film around the opening of their shell, which on drying forms a glassy structure that both seals them in and fixes them strongly to the object they are sitting on. This structure formed by the dry mucous is called an epiphragm.

The strength of this epiphragm stems from the fact that before it dries it penetrates into the microscopic crevices on the surface the snail is resting on. When it dries to a glassy state, it acquires a stiffness that is many orders of magnitude higher than its wet state.

Firm grip: To demonstrate this, we used two 2-square-centimetre pieces of the adhesive to suspend me (85 kg) in the air, says Jolly. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Similarly, the hydrogel developed by the group hardens from its wet state with a modulus of 100 pascals to a dry state value of 2.3 gigapascals.

"The ability to go from being as soft as Jello to being 1,000 times stiffer when dried, that is, hard as a bottle cap, and to do so without shrinking significantly in the process, is what makes our adhesive special and strong," says Jason Christopher Jolly, a PhD student in the School of Engineering and Applied Science, University of Pennsylvania, and an author of the paper published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Soft hydrogel

Unlike commercially available wood glues (such as Fevicol) or superglues that are liquids when applied and solidify to perform the adhesive role, the PHEMA adhesive developed by the group is like a solid that in its hydrated state is soft, wet and squishy. "In this state it is able to flow into and fill micro- and nanoscale surface grooves aand pores, following which it can be dried to lock itself in place," explains Jolly in an email to *The Hindu*.

Strong adhesive

PHEMA, which stands for poly(2-hydroxyethyl methacrylate), has a remarkable adhesive strength. According to the researchers, a 1 x 1 cm square sample of the adhesive can hold an object weighing 91 kg. To compare this to a commonly used reversible adhesive, a strong 1 cm square of Velcro can support a weight of 12.2 kg.

"To demonstrate this, we used two 2 square centimetre pieces of the adhesive to suspend myself (85 kg) in the air," says Jolly.

The group ran into PHEMA rather serendipitously when Gaoxiang Wu, co-first author of the paper, was cleaning out some old samples from his desk that were thin films of patterned PHEMA on slides he had prepared for another project. The idea was born when he found that the slides were stuck together and he could not separate them even with great effort.

The group has filed for patents for the technology. Further, while the adhesive shows strength and reversibility, it is still limited to use in relatively dry environments, as its switching mechanism relies on water. "It is limited to applications that don't require very fast switching," says Jolly.

"Our plan is to tweak the chemistry so as to not be water-based but to use organic solvents. We are also working on engineering more adhesives of this class that can be switched on with different stimuli such as light, heat or electrical pulses," he adds.

IISER Mohali finds that zebrafish use landmarks for navigation

The presence of colourful landmarks, visible even in turbid conditions, plays an important role in improving foraging success

R. PRASAD

Low to extremely turbid water conditions are quite common in areas that humans inhabit. Under such conditions, it is a challenge for fish to forage food as they rely on vision to navigate and find food. Now, in a study carried out using zebrafish, researchers at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Mohali have found hard evidence to support how turbidity negatively affects foraging efficiency and how they learn to cope with it. The study was done in collaboration with IISER Kolkata.

The team led by Dr. Manjari Jain from the Department of Biological Sciences at IISER Mohali found that with acclimatisation to turbidity conditions zebrafish did overcome the challenges posed by reduced visibility. The study found that acclimatisation to the immediate visual environment does play an important role in determining success in foraging food. The results of the study were published in the journal *Biology Letters*.

Smart fish: The zebrafish used visual cues and landmarks to navigate to foraging sites. ▪NAKUL RAJ

Colourful landmarks

In addition to acclimatisation, the presence of colourful landmarks that are visible even in extremely turbid conditions plays an important role in improving foraging success. The study could conclusively show that zebrafish use visual cues to navigate to foraging sites especially when turbidity is high and visibility is low.

"The cornerstone of the study is the visual learning capability of zebrafish. We found the wild freshwater zebrafish *(Danio rerio)* are capable of using familiar visual landmarks to find food locations even when vision is compromised," says Dr. Jai

"This is the first study to show the ability of zebrafish to use any landmark for navigation," she says. The study highlights the important role of behavioural plasticity and spatial learning to cope with altered sensory environments, which in this case is increased turbidity of the water they live in.

Effect of turbidity

"Here we demonstrate the detrimental effect of turbidity on zebrafish with respect to foraging. Turbidity is likely to increase the metabolic cost associated with foraging behaviour," Dr. Jain stresses. "But what is unique is that within one month of acclimatisation they seem to deal with it. The foraging ability improves drastically. It highlights the importance of acclimatisation."

If zebrafish do indeed learn to cope with turbidity and find food in a matter of one month, should the effect of turbidity on zebrafish matter at all? "Just because they are able to cope with turbidity in a month does not mean that chronic exposure to turbid water is not going to affect them. The resilience to survive in turbid water has not been studied," she warns.

"If one of the sensory modalities is compromised in some species they are capable of switching over to another. But in the case of zebrafish we found they continue to use visual sensory to locate food," Dr. Jain says.

For the study, the researchers collected 160 zebrafish from a clear stream near Kolkata. The fishes kept in tanks were fed fish pellets and *Artemia* (genus of aquatic crustaceans). They were trained for two weeks to navigate and locate food. After training fish to find food, 75 fishes were split into three groups and the different groups were acclimatised for a month in clear, low turbid and high turbid conditions. The low turbid condition mimicked coastal water and high turbidity mimicked an estuary mouth.

Acclimatisation

The researchers found that one month of acclimatisation was sufficient for fishes to forage food even when the turbidity was high.

Even during training, the researchers did find that zebrafish in turbid water did learn to use colourful stones as proxy for food locations. During the tests, even in highly turbid conditions, the ability to locate food was superior when there landmarks. Their ability to locate food was compromised when the landmarks were not present.

Life as one big BREADBOARD

Outcomes hardly matter; just do it as diligently as possible

SHANKAR GOPALKRISHNAN

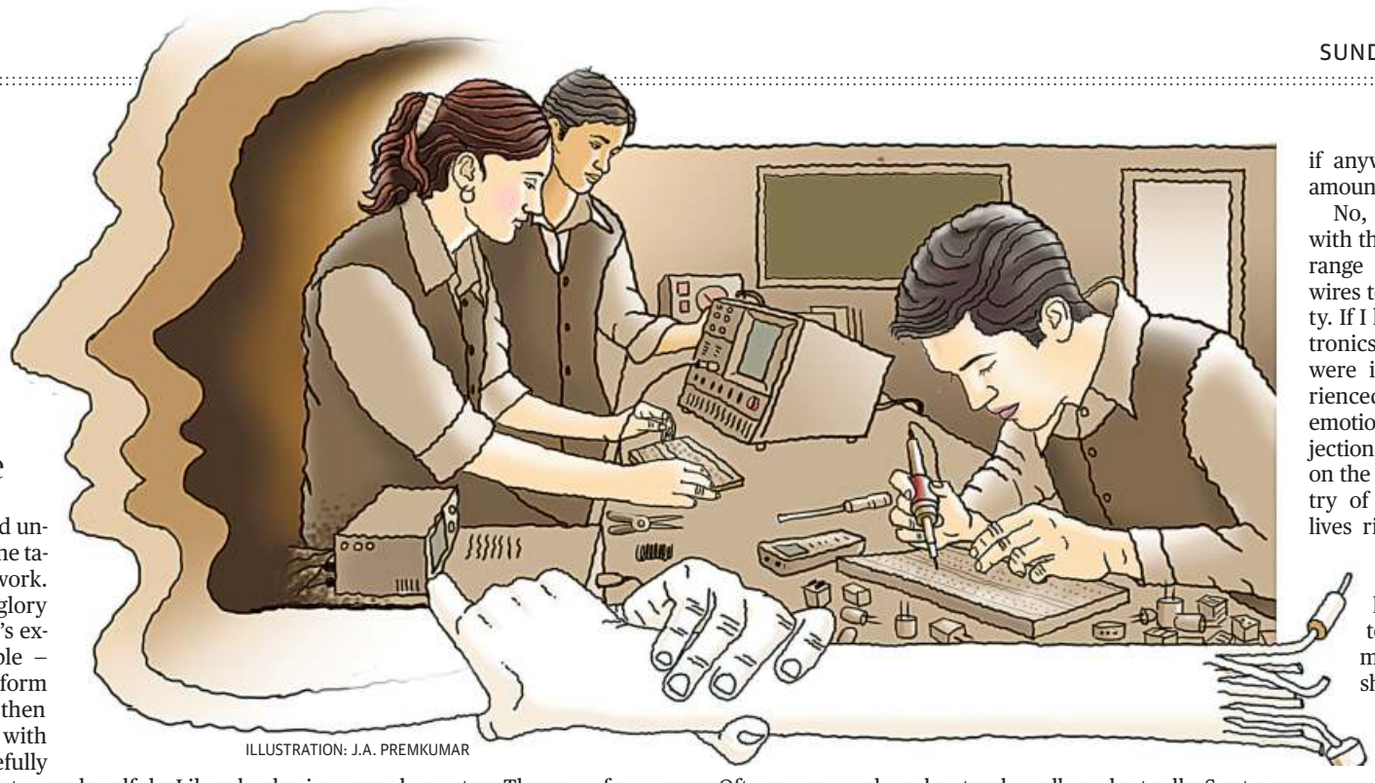


ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

The electronics laboratory sessions at the engineering college were eventful. A motley set of equipment lay scattered on the table – a breadboard, a display screen, a clump of wires and colourful beads comprising resistors, transistors and capacitors. The objective was simple: to follow a set of instructions, create an electronic circuit on the breadboard and read the resultant output waveform on the display screen. The breadboard had tiny holes into which you inserted the resistors and capacitors and connected them up with wires.

It would be unnerving especially if you were doing it for the first time. You had to contend with multiple challenges – instructions that were unclear, the pressure of time and the overbearing presence of the professor who looked out for the slightest error to give you an earful! It was often an exercise in futility, and there were days when the experiments completely failed despite your best efforts. Still, you soldiered on.

If you managed to get the desired output waveform and successfully completed the lab work, it was deemed a miracle.

The miracle

One afternoon, a miracle did happen. The display screen suddenly sprang to life, and registered this most beautiful waveform. It was a sight to behold – a rainbow of sorts for our thirsty eyes!

We were a team of three and had struggled through the entire afternoon putting the pieces of the circuit together until the breadboard resembled a wild jungle... with wires hanging all over!

We impatiently waited until the professor was at the table to evaluate our artwork. It was our crowning glory moment. The professor's expression was inscrutable – he looked at the waveform with interest and then looked at each of us with equal interest. He carefully removed one of the resistors from the breadboard, reaching out for it between the wild undergrowth of wires. "Watch, my dears; the waveform output is still intact!" Our response was muted. "Yes, sir," we mumbled. In such a complicated circuitry, there could be some scope for redundancy, where the loss of a body part need not affect the overall health, or so we thought.

What happened from this point on was nothing short of dramatic. The professor did quick work: he removed a capacitor here, a resistor there and uprooted wires by the handful. Like dead pieces outside a chessboard, there was a now a growing heap of deadwood piling up outside the breadboard. "My dears, your waveform is still intact!"

We knew something was wrong. Soon, the professor plunged his entire fist into the breadboard and exhumed whatever came in his grasp and exclaimed, "My dears, your waveform has still not changed!" Eventually, in a manic rage, he had emptied the entire breadboard of all its components. The waveform still smiled back at us, unaffected. The rest of the afternoon was not pleasant. The professor asked for the lab recordbooks and scrawled, "repeat the experiment" in red across the entire page. He was evidently angry.

The above incident is actually several decades old. To this day, I am baffled how the waveform output could be so precise especially when the breadboard was emptied out. There are plausible explanations, no doubt, of the circuit being 'shorted' or the display wires possibly connected back-to-back. I do not know. However, I do know this incident has taught some valuable lessons for life.

Often we wonder about our contribution to this world, our role in the scheme of things and how it will shape the future. As the years roll by, these larger-than-life questions nag us. We worry that if by a quirk of fate, we move on today, would we have done enough for the future, for the family, for society so that they are better off, just that little bit, because we lived. But there are no easy answers.

It is here that the breadboard and the waveform come to our rescue. The waveform did not require the elaborate circuitry on the breadboard at all. So too with life. The cosmic laws will take care of the future on their own. In front of these mighty laws of time, space and causation, my puny existence and contribution amounts to nothing. Hence, I need not worry about the future. The future will unfold on its own, regardless of me. This attitude frees me from unnecessarily carrying a load that I need not!

If that is the case, do I need to struggle with the breadboard at all? Do I need to wire those elaborate connections? Can I simply eject out of the whole framework if anyway my contribution amounts to nothing?

No, I do need to wrestle with the breadboard and arrange those resistors and wires to the best of my ability. If I look back, those electronics laboratory sessions were important. We experienced the whole gamut of emotions – of elation and dejection, ear and futility (often on the same day). The tapestry of emotions made our lives richer. Without them, our lives would have been boring and hollow. The diligence, the teamwork, the common goal and the shared emotion... everything was essential and helped us emerge stronger and wiser. In the process, we had a lot of fun. So too with life. I am placed today in a particular role, to wire up some circuit on some breadboard.

The outcome just does not matter. I only have to be busy in the process of wiring the breadboard as diligently as I can. That alone is my lot. Ours is not to question why. Ours is but to do and die! Therefore, we keep doing, like the busybee... with a heart for any fate. Still achieving, still pursuing, we learn to labour and to wait!

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The striking tales the rain tells

The universal truths and some age-old lessons of water management

C.N. PILLAI

ILLUSTRATION: SATWIK GADE

Rain, or the lack of it, is very much on our minds today. Though about 70% of the surface of the earth is covered with water in the form of oceans, life on the land depends on precipitation as rain and snow.

The occurrence of precipitation is subject to the vagaries of nature, leading to unexpected droughts and floods. Man, over the ages, has adopted various strategies to propitiate nature and the gods to ensure adequate rainfall. The ancients were aware of the importance of trees and mountains in ensuring rainfall and conserving water. I recount two stories from Indian mythology to illustrate the point.

Bhagavatha Puranam contains chapters on Govardhan puja practised in Gokulam during Krishna's childhood.

This was an agrarian community whose livelihood was farming and cattle-rearing, and timely rain was important. Every year, they would conduct a puja or *yagam* to propitiate Lord Indra who was believed to be the one who controlled rain.

Once when Krishna was about seven years old, preparations were afoot for the annual Indra puja. Krishna questioned the elders of the community on the puja. When told about its purpose, he could not accept it. He argued that rain was a natural phenomenon and Indra, if at all involved in it, could act only according to the rules of nature. Scanty rainfall, if it happened, was the result of our own acts of commission and omission. (I am using modern terminology here for what I think Krishna meant by ascribing it to *karma*.)

He further said they were living in the foothills of the Govardhan mountain and the mountain and the trees were responsible for bringing forth rain. We neglect the mountain and the trees at our own risk and Indra had no role to play in this.

So he suggested they perform a puja for the mountain. An environmental activist today could not have expressed it better. He was so persuasive that the people of Gokulam followed his advice. The subsequent events are well-known. Krishna's suggestion should be interpreted as a call to protect and conserve nature.

Bhagiratha's task

Let me now go fast backward to another era and another scenario. King Bhagiratha ruled his country in the foothills of the Himalayas. He was a troubled person. The souls of his forefathers were doomed to perdition without salvation due to their own *karma*. Rituals had to be performed with holy waters from heaven to put their souls to rest.

Bhagiratha was determined to cajole Ganga Devi herself from the heavens to come down to earth, and to this end, he performed rigorous *tapasya*. His arduous efforts finally bore fruit and Ganga Devi agreed to come down to the earth.

> **The ancients were aware of the importance of trees and mountains in ensuring rainfall**

But the fall of the waters would result in a deluge and the entire earth could be washed away unless means were in place to contain the floods. Lord Siva agreed to receive and hold the waters when they descend, in his tresses. Here Siva symbolically stands for the Himalayan mountains and his tresses for the trees, vegetation, hills, valleys and lakes. Ganga Devi did descend in the form of heavy rains or cloudbursts and the waters were contained by the mountain.

But even that did not solve the king's problem. Water in the mountain is not water in the plains where the ancient ashes were waiting to be quenched, and that location was far away. Poor Bhagiratha went back to his *tapasya* and persuaded Siva to release the waters in measured quantities via rivulets and finally into the mighty Ganga, which flowed down the plains till it reached the grounds where the rituals were performed.

The purpose of reciting this well-known story is only to emphasise the importance of mountains and trees to regulate floods and in water management, to use a modern term. Disturbing the ecosystem of the catchment areas, be they the hills or the plains, can have disastrous consequences all around the region. The devastating flood that inundated Uttarakhand and the neighbouring Himalayan States in 2013 was attributed to the wanton destruction of the mountains in various ways by people for short-term gains.

In the present-day context, experts in this field are aware of these matters. While a spate of quick-fix measures are being undertaken, it is good to remember that such measures can only be of limited use, and long-term measures should be implemented on an ongoing basis.

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All in a day's work for this doctor

Two patients, the same kind of effort put in; one survives, the other dies

PINGALI GOPAL

ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

The one-hour-old blue baby was brought in at 5 a.m. with rapid breathing. A quick examination and an X-ray established a diaphragmatic hernia – a defect in the muscle separating the abdomen from the chest. This allowed loops of bowel and other abdominal organs to enter the chest, compressing the lungs and the heart. The only course open was surgery.

As the paediatric and neonatal surgeon in the hospital, I gave the attendants a rough estimate of the cost, including the possible variances in the event of complications arising. I added that in case they are not happy to stay in that hospital, we would transfer the child to the government facility – and told the father to communicate his decision to the nurse.

The consent came after a few hours. The child was born after years of marriage. The father asked me to do my best; and sought a discount on the bill as he had limited means. I promised to do my best with the medical efforts and the bill too if everything went well. The child had a smooth surgery and went on elective ventilation.

I saw another patient just as I was coming out of the theatre, and as it happened, it was an exactly similar case. I groaned. The same bit of counselling went into the discussions with the family attendants. The father was absent in the proceedings. The attendants said he was working in Mumbai and was on his way. The treatment started and the child underwent surgery the next day. The surgical findings were very similar, and the child went on ventilatory support.

On the third day, the condition of both babies started deteriorating, the cause being sepsis. For the next few days, it was a see-saw between life and death for them, amid our efforts. The babies would improve, raise hopes, and then sink a bit. I spent two consecutive nights in the neo-natal intensive care unit (NICU) over endless cups of tea. On the seventh day, the first baby started to improve; unfortunately, the condition of the second progressively deteriorated. The attendants of the second baby stopped buying medicines, and we had to supply them from our stock. The number of attendants started dwindling at a slow rate.

> **Thank you so much for saving the child. You are but God to us**

Five days later, the first baby recovered and was ready for discharge. The father came to my room and spoke, with tears in his eyes, "Thank you so much for saving the child. You are but God to us." Suddenly, he bent down along with his aged mother to touch my feet. I recoiled in shock. The father pleaded: he was extremely poor and had taken money from a loan shark. He built up his case slowly and finally managed to take a whopping quarter off the bill, and I approved it.

That evening, the second child died. The only person outside the NICU was an old lady to whom we declared the death. She said the attendants would come the next day. That day, two tractors filled with people landed at the hospital gate demanding to see me. My chamber was flooded with at least 20 people, smelling strongly of country liquor. And then came abuse, allegations of negligence, exploitation, and demands for compensation. A figure of one lakh rupees started floating around, an impossible amount those days. Members of the local doctors' body and the police later added to the already cramped room.

Shouting matches between some of our more vocal doctors and angry members of the crowd ensued. The original attendants of the patient were completely missing from the scene of action now. After four hours, a deal was finalised on the intervention of some local politicians and the police. The hospital and the pharmacy are to waive the dues and pay some extra money for funeral expenses on 'humanitarian' grounds. There was a threat to me and the hospital from a mob. Amid slogans on loudspeakers, journalists taking photographs, and curious onlookers, the body of the child left the hospital.

I sat helplessly and burnt with impotent anger. The family had lost the child, but a doctor had just lost some faith. When a doctor hardens a little bit, what are the consequences for the medical profession and society? Two patients, the same kind of effort put in; one survives and makes me god and the other dies making me a devil.

Triumph and disaster stalks everyone, and it is well worth remembering the words of Lord Krishna: I am indifferent to triumph today, but still to handle disaster similarly. In their own ways, both the families managed a huge discount! I, god and devil rolled into one, went home, had dinner, and slept fitfully to see another day.

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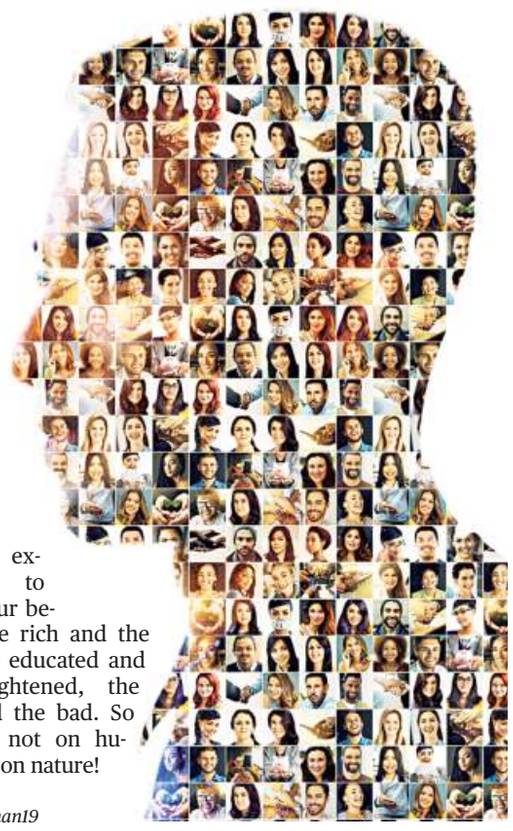
How nature sorts us

No two lives are comparable, and no two achievements can be similar

G. SWAMINATHAN



I recently watched a movie on social discrimination and its perils. The Indian Constitution does not permit such acts, but unfortunately we live in a country soaked in discrimination from time immemorial.

Can we find any society where there is no discrimination? Probably not; only in terms of the degree there might be differences.

Let us look at this objectively. Nature, or the Almighty, or the Creator of this world – depending on your point of view – discriminates among everything. Is he or it not discriminating between an animal and a human from birth? Do we have the same geography and climate in every part of this universe? Does every human being or animal look the same though there are similarities?

Can we confidently say life is fair to everyone? When I mentioned this once to my friend, she asked: "Why do you expect life to be fair to everyone?" She was right. Life cannot be fair to everyone. So there is definitely a bias.

If we look at a human being's life from his or her birth, at every stage he/she has to face or find inequity. First, the looks and colour, then IQ, then education, then academic achievements, job or marriage, children, health, and finally, death.

Factually speaking, the whole world survives only because of discrimination. If everyone is equal and same, life will just not move. An engineer cannot do the job of a doctor and a factory worker cannot execute the position of a CEO. One can argue that some start their career on the shopfloor and one day become CEOs. But such instances are far and few between.

Can we vouch that all the intelligent students reach high positions in their professions, or *vice versa*? I have seen many intelligent students who turned out to be mediocre in their careers while many of the mediocre and dull ones achieved great heights in the later part of their lives.

If everyone is intelligent there is no need for education; if everyone is beautiful, the word may not exist in the lexicon at all. If everyone is rich, there will not be anyone to do the work. If everyone is healthy, there is no need for doctors. When equality is attained, one cannot talk about bigotry.

Life and humans are in black, white or grey. No two things are equal. No two lives are comparable. No two achievements can be similar. Life runs because the roads of life are made by destiny with several ups and downs. Everyone, except the blessed few, had no option but to pass through them.

A world without discrimination or distinction is an utopian concept. Contrasts only propel life.

So basically, nature itself differentiates everyone and every life and every act; we humans exploit it to further our benefits, the rich and the poor, the educated and the enlightened, the good and the bad. So blame it not on humans but on nature!

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A son flies free
Seeming freedom and novelty for him, misery and apprehension for mother
RAMAN NAIR

My sin, the sin of sloth
Being lazy could be a state of mind that could well liberate you
ACHYUTH NAMBIAR

Mock-meat and all that
Coping with a certain kind of ambiguity in vegetarianism
VIMAL KUMAR

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Archer — the new weapon in England's armoury

Stokes re-appointed vice-captain; Anderson returns from injury

THE ASHES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Uncapped fast bowler Jofra Archer has been included in England's 14-man squad announced on Saturday for next week's Ashes opener against Australia, with all-rounder Ben Stokes re-appointed vice-captain.

The pair enjoyed starring roles in England's World Cup final win over New Zealand at Lord's on July 14, with all-rounder Stokes ensuring England drew level with the Black Caps total in regulation play before Archer bowled the decisive Super Over that sealed victory.

Where he belongs: Jofra Archer's exploits in the World Cup and his First Class returns have earned him an Ashes call-up. ▪REUTERS

Quick strides

Archer, 24, who qualified to play for England only earlier this year, could now make his Test debut when the first of a five-match series starts at Edgbaston on August 1.

He carried a side strain through the World Cup but reported fit after a brief holiday in his native Barbados, returning to action for Sussex on Friday, where he took two for 21 in a tied Twenty20 Blast match against Surrey.

Since making his senior debut in 2016, Archer has taken 131 wickets in 28 First Class matches at an average of 23.44.

Stokes was restored to his position as Joe Root's deputy after being stripped of the vice-captaincy following a late night brawl in September 2017. He was subsequently cleared of a charge of affray last year, with Jos Buttler acting as vice-captain.

Buttler and Stokes were rested from a see-saw Test against Ireland that England eventually won by 143 runs at Lord's on Friday. Veteran spearhead James Anderson also returned to the squad after missing the match with a side injury.

But, while 10 of the 11 players who defeated Ireland were included, there was no place for left-arm spinner Jack Leach following his Man-of-the-Match heroics that saw the nightwatchman make a career-best 92 in England's second innings.

Moeen Ali was retained as the lone specialist spinner.

England's top-order frailties, however, were exposed during a first innings where it only managed 85.

Opening batsman Rory Burns, despite twice being dismissed in the match for six, remained in the squad even though he now averages just 22.28 from seven Tests.

England selector Ed Smith said: "Though it is unusual to select a squad of 14 for a home Test, there are compelling reasons to do so here. Several bowlers are recovering from injuries or niggles. In addition, some bowlers who played in the World Cup are being closely monitored to assess their preparation for Test-match cricket.

"The wider circumstances – a successful home World Cup campaign followed so quickly by a home Ashes series – are unprecedented. It feels sensible to select an expanded squad and leave a number of bowling options open for the final team selection," the former England batsman added.

It's official

Meanwhile, an England and Wales Cricket Board statement said Stokes' return to a leadership position has been cleared by several senior officials.

"Colin Graves, chairman of the ECB, has approved the reappointment of Ben Stokes as Test vice-captain following the recommendation from managing director of England men's cricket Ashley Giles and ECB chief executive Tom Harrison."

Australia holds the Ashes, but England has not lost a Test series at home since 2001.

The squad for the first Test: Joe Root (Capt.), Moeen Ali, James Anderson, Jofra Archer, Jonny Bairstow, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler (wk), Sam Curran, Joe Denly, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, Olly Stone and Chris Woakes.

Aussie greats baffled by Carey's omission

Burns and Patterson missing out also raises eyebrows

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Alex Carey's omission from the Ashes sqaud was met with disbelief on Saturday by former Australian greats Mark Waugh and Shane Warne, while Mark Taylor said he was surprised Joe Burns and Kurtis Patterson had missed out.

Australia named a 17-man squad for the five-Test series against England on Friday, with opener Cameron Bancroft recalled alongside Steve Smith and David Warner following their bans for a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa last year.

Matthew Wade also made the grade, having not played a Test for nearly two years, following recent outstanding form with the bat.

He can act as back-up wicketkeeper to captain Tim Paine, as could Bancroft, which meant the fast-improving Carey, who starred for Australia at the recent World Cup, was controversially overlooked.

"Got to be kidding re Alex Carey," 128-Test veteran Waugh tweeted. "For me Alex missing the squad is the biggest shock particularly after his batting during the World Cup and being the second best gloveman."

Spin king Warne was also stunned at Carey's omission.

"Very surprised/disappointed that Carey didn't make the Aussie squad," he said on Instagram in posting what he believes will be Australia's team for the opening Test at Edgbaston.

Warne has Bancroft opening with Warner and Wade coming in at number six, while opting for fast bowler James Pattinson instead of Mitchell Starc alongside Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon.

Former Australia captain Taylor said opener Burns and middle-order batsman Patterson missing out was tough to take given both made centuries in Australia's last Test, against Sri Lanka.

"I was disappointed Kurtis Patterson didn't make the squad. You can't help but feel a little bit sorry for both him and (Joe) Burns," Taylor said.

Tough luck! Alex Carey missing in the Australian squad for the Ashes series is the biggest shock, according to Mark Waugh. ▪RYAN PIERSE/GETTY IMAGES

Lord's pitch substandard: Root

Joe... going to the root of the problem. ▪JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES

ANI
LONDON

After winning the one-off Test against Ireland, skipper Joe Root labelled the Lord's wicket "substandard", saying the match did not offer a fair contest between bat and ball.

"I don't like saying this but the wicket was substandard for a Test match. I thought it wasn't... not even close to a fair contest between bat and ball throughout the whole game," *ESPNcricinfo* quoted Root as saying.

"We weren't at our best by any stretch. We managed certain periods very well. We were put under pressure by Ireland," Root said.

"But we found a way to win a game. First innings, last innings, when you are getting scores like that, that tells a story in itself when the scores are as low as that," he added.

Nadeem spins India-A to victory

The left-arm spinner returns a five-for; Siraj picks up three

On the ball: Shahbaz Nadeem's 10-wicket match haul has put India-A in a winning position. ▪FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem took a five-wicket haul for the second time in the match to set up a six-wicket win for India-A over West Indies-A in the first 'Test' on Saturday.

Nadeem's five for 47 in 21 overs helped India-A bowl out the hosts for 180 in their second innings after they were comfortably placed at 159 for three on day three of the four-day game on Friday. Pacer Mohammad Siraj ran through the lower-order with a three-wicket burst.

Chasing 97 for victory, India-A was 29 for one at close before sealing the contest on the final morning despite some hiccups along the way. Abhimanyu Easwaran (27) and Hanuma Vihari (28) chipped in for the visitors during the chase.

Saha shines

India-A, which resumed the day at 299 for eight in the first innings, went on to make 312 in 104.3 overs with wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha (66) the last man to get out, marking a successful return with both bat and gloves following a long injury lay-off.

West Indies-A, which conceded an 84-run first-innings lead, was steady in the second essay after the loss of openers Montcin Hodge (36) and Jeremy Solozano (11) at 51 for two.

Beginning of collapse

Captain Shamarh Brooks (53) and Roston Chase (32) shared a 79-run stand for the third wicket, but the collapse began with the fall of the skipper at 159 for four.

The batsmen struggled to cope up with the guile and accuracy of Nadeem, who has been knocking on the doors of the Indian Test team with consistent performances in domestic cricket over the years.

The Jharkhand spinner had also taken five wickets in the first innings, taking his match tally to 10 for 109.

The scores: West Indies-A 228 & 180 in 77 overs (Brooks 53; Nadeem five for 47, Siraj three for 38) lost to India-A 312 (Dube 71, Saha 66; Cummins four for 40) & 97 for four in 30 overs.

■ **Second 'Test:** July 31 to Aug. 3, Port of Spain

U Mumba begins home leg with easy win

Two all-outs seal Puneri Paltan's fate; Abhishek top scores for the winner

PKL

NANDAKUMAR MARAR
MUMBAI

Two all-outs inflicted by U Mumba sealed Puneri Paltan's fate in the opening game of the Mumbai leg of ProKabaddi League Season-7.

U Mumba walked away a comfortable winner at 33-23 in front of roaring fans at the NSCI indoor stadium.

Catchers called the shots in the first half, raiders came into their own after the break. Abhishek Singh (five raid points) top-scored for the winner. Surjeet Singh (six points) played his heart out for the losing side.

Fazel Atrachali and Surjeet, defensive specialists in U Mumba and Paltan respectively, were named captains and it reflected in the catching department.

Atrachali ended with four raid points, while Surjeet pulled off two Super Tackles.

Manjeet and Sanket Sawant displayed craft for Paltan, while Sandeep Narwal and Surinder were decisive in the back for the hosts.

Catchers on the mat: U Mumba defence wall of Fazel Atrachali and Surinder Singh prepare to trap Puneri Paltan's Sushant Sail. ▪COURTESY PKL

Fazel produced a Super Tackle to push U Mumba into the lead at 5-4, at the other end Surjeet failed to keep Abhishek in check at 9-9. Abhishek was the first frontline raider to scamper back with a raid point.

The home team kept its nose ahead (11-9) at the break.

Surjeet produced a Super Tackle to keep Paltan in the fray.

Rival raiders Arjun Deswal and Abhishek gave the home fans plenty to cheer about. Two all-outs were the highpoints.

U Mumba started the home leg with a dominant win over their State rivals, the second in three appearances so far in the league after a win and a loss in the first leg.

Earlier, the Mumbai leg kicked off with India cricket captain Virat Kohli rendering the Natonal Anthem.

The result:

U Mumba 33 bt Puneri Paltan 23.

Challengers cruise against Mavericks

Archana and Amalraj provide the dramatics for the Goan side

UTT

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Young Archana Kamath produced a scintillating exhibition of speed and power to annihilate Manika Batra and set the pace for Goa Challengers' emphatic 11-4 triumph over RP-SG Mavericks, Kolkata, in the Ultimate Table Tennis League here on Saturday.

Domination

Goa dominated every individual encounter. A. Amalraj won both his matches, with the conquest of World No. 53 Benedikt Duda being the icing on the cake.

The finishing touches were provided by World No. 8 Cheng I-Ching who stopped World No. 25 Matilda Ekholm in three games.

If Mavericks were straightaway put on the defensive, Archana's unrelenting attacks on Manika had everything to do with it. This clash between the country's top-ranked player and the National champion lived up to the billing.

Momentous: Archana Kamath was too good for Manika Batra. Right: A. Amalraj pulled off a big upset over World No. 53 Benedikt Duda. ▪COURTESY UTT

Fast exchanges, interspersed with long rallies brought out the best in Archana and she stayed in control.

Archana enjoyed leads of 7-4, 10-4 in the first two games before racing away with the final seven points in the third to leave Manika stranded.

After Spaniard Alvaro Robles, ranked 56th, overcame a slow start to tame Sanil Shetty 2-1, Amalraj and Ching got the measure of Duda and Manika. Again, it was the inconsistency of Manika's returns that made the decisive difference.

Upset

Amalraj went on to cause the other big upset. Ranked a distant 122, Amalraj was quick to respond to any challenge thrown at him by Duda and captured the first game.

In the second, Duda was lucky to win the 'golden point' when Amalraj's forehand drive went out.

This miss resulted in Amalraj producing his best in dominating the decider.

The results: Goa Challengers bt RP-SG Mavericks, Kolkata 11-4 (Archana Kamath bt Manika Batra 11-9, 11-7, 11-3; Alvaro Robles bt Sanil Shetty 10-11, 11-4, 11-5; A. Amalraj & Cheng I-Ching bt Benedikt Duda & Manika 8-11, 11-4, 11-9; Amalraj bt Duda 11-7, 10-11, 11-4; Cheng I-Ching bt Matilda Ekholm 11-8, 9-11, 11-5).

Sunday's fixture: Chennai Lions v Puneri Paltan (7 p.m.).

The Ferrari rides again: Mick Schumacher wore a helmet that paid tribute to his father's career as he drove the car which carried Michael to 13 victories and the drivers' title in 2004. ▪AFP

Hamilton takes his 87th pole

Double disaster for Ferrari — Leclerc begins 10th; Vettel forced to sit out

GERMAN GP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HOCKENHEIM

Lewis Hamilton secured a gift-wrapped record-extending 87th pole position of his career on Saturday when he made the most of a double disaster for Ferrari in qualifying at the German Grand Prix.

The defending five-time world champion, who had struggled for pace and consistency in his Mercedes in practice, improved to clock a best lap in one minute and 11.767 and outpace Max Verstappen of Red Bull by 0.346 seconds.

Hamilton's Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas was third ahead of Pierre Gasly in the second Red Bull while Charles Leclerc, who had been fastest for Ferrari in final practice, failed to run in the Q3 top-10 shootout due to a fuel systems problem with his car.

The Monegasque will start 10th, 10 places ahead of his luckless Ferrari team-mate Sebastian Vettel who was unable to take part in qualifying due to a turbo problem and will start at the back of the grid for his home race.

Kimi Raikkonen was fifth for Alfa Romeo ahead of Romain Grosjean of Haas, Carlos Sainz of McLaren, Sergio Perez of Racing Point and Nico Hulkenberg of Renault.

"Congratulations Lewis – you never stop amazing us," said Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff as the Briton drove his slow-down lap. "Thanks, Toto," he replied. "A great job guys – I don't know how we did that."

Cause for celebration

Hamilton's lap was the only one in the 1:11's all weekend at the Hockenheimring, where he last took pole in 2008, and gave his team a perfect cause for celebration on the anniversary of 125 years of motorsport and their 200th Formula One race start.

Verstappen said: "We could have been closer, but went a bit wide and bottomed out and I lost the rear end, but this is a good result."

Bottas said: "I think the weather is going to play a big part tomorrow. I'm a bit disappointed, especially with the pace in Q3. Ferrari had been very quick here... so we're in a good place."

On an overcast and much cooler day after heavy overnight rain, the Williams team were first on track for Q1, in front of an enthusiastic crowd boosted by Verstappen's 'orange army' and many local supporters for Vettel in Ferrari red.

Luckless Vettel

Leclerc was soon on top for the 'scarlet scuderia' ahead of Verstappen, but it was bad news again for the luckless Vettel. After sitting in his car, stranded under repair in the Ferrari garage, he climbed out, condemned to start from the back of the grid.

Mick takes father's car out for a spin

Mick Schumacher completed an emotional three-lap demonstration run in his father Michael's championship-winning Ferrari F2004 car on Saturday before qualifying.

The 20-year-old son of the seven-time world champion said it felt like "torture" as he waited to emerge from the pit-lane in front of a big crowd at the Hockenheim circuit. Now a Formula Two driver, Schumacher wore a helmet that paid tribute to his father's career as he drove the car that carried his father to 13 victories and the drivers' title in 2004.

"I just wanted to go out and I just wanted to drive," he said. "Obviously, having to wait, even in front of the pit exit, was more like torture. I never lost a smile. It was always on my face. Even when I was locking up, I was smiling! It was really cool."

Starting grid (provisional):

Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Max Verstappen (Red Bull). Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes), Pierre Gasly (Red Bull). Kimi Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo), Romain Grosjean (Haas). Carlos Sainz Jr. (McLaren), Sergio Perez (Racing Point). Nico Hulkenberg (Renault), Charles Leclerc (Ferrari).

Antonio Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo), Kevin Magnussen (Haas). Daniel Ricciardo (Renault), Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso); Lance Stroll (Racing Point), Lando Norris (McLaren). Alexander Albon (Toro Rosso), George Russell (Williams). Robert Kubica (Williams), Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari).

Hat-trick of golds for Dressel

Retains 50m freestyle, 100m butterfly titles

WORLD SWIMMING

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GWANGJU (SOUTH KOREA)

American superstar Caeleb Dressel produced more fireworks on Saturday as he romped to a hat-trick of golds, taking his tally to six on a dark day when a fatal nightclub accident shook the swimming World championships.

Day seven also threw up further doping controversy with Australian officials announcing freestyle relay world-record holder Shayna Jack had tested positive for a banned substance, explaining her mysterious no-show in South Korea.

But Dressel helped refocus attention on the pool as he retained his 50m freestyle and 100m butterfly world titles in style, before leading the American mixed 4x100m freestyle team to a new world record.

Bouncing on his toes like a prizefighter before the 50m free, Dressel exploded from the blocks and never looked back, clocking a championship best 21.04s, clear of Brazilian Bruno Fratus and Greek Kristian Gkolomeev, who tied for silver in 21.45.

Dressel, who scooped seven gold medals at the 2017 Worlds in Budapest, let out a roar of delight but had very little time to savour the moment. The 22-year-old was back for the 100m butterfly final and after a long, hard stare down lane four, he got it done again.

The American touched in 49.66 – the second-quickest swim ever, a night after shattering Michael Phelps's 10-year-old world record. Dressel gave the USA relay quartet the lead it would keep, Simon Manuel bringing the Americans home in a world record of 3:19.40.

True grit: Katie Ledecky displayed a champion's heart to win her fourth successive 800m freestyle gold. ▪AFP

Shock news

Dressel's heroics came after the shock news that two locals died and eight athletes were injured after an indoor balcony at a Gwangju nightclub collapsed in the early hours on Saturday, sending party-goers plummeting over 5m onto people below.

A doping controversy followed when it was revealed Jack had failed a drug test.

American great Katie Ledecky won her fourth successive 800m freestyle gold after being pushed to the limit by European champion Simona Quadarella.

The results: Men: 50m freestyle: 1. Caeleb Dressel (USA) 21.04s, 2. Bruno Fratus (Bra) 21.45, 3. Kristian Gkolomeev (Gre) 21.45. **100m butterfly:** 1. Caeleb Dressel (USA) 49.66, 2. Andrei Minakov (Rus) 50.83, 3. Chad le Clos (RSA) 51.16.

Women: 50m butterfly: 1. Sarah Sjostrom (Swe) 25.02, 2. Ranomi Kromowidjojo (Ned) 25.35, 3. Farida Osman (EGY) 25.47. **200m backstroke:** 1. Regan Smith (USA) 2:03.69, 2. Kaylee McKeown (Aus) 2:06.26, 3. Kylie Masse (Can) 2:06.62. **800m freestyle:** 1. Katie Ledecky (USA) 8:13.58, 2. Simona Quadarella (Ita) 8:14.99, 3. Ariarne Titmus (Aus) 8:15.70

Mixed 4x100m freestyle: 1. USA 3:19.40, 2. Australia 3:19.97, 3. France 3:22.11.

Bernal poised to clinch title

Will become the youngest winner since Faber in 1909

Nearly there: Wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, Bernal climbs toward Val Thorens during the 20th stage. ▪AP

TOUR DE FRANCE

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
VAL THORENS (FRANCE)

Egan Bernal all but clinched victory in the Tour de France, defending his overnight lead in the penultimate stage which left him only needing to cross the finish line on Sunday's twilight parade into Paris to become the first Colombian winner and the youngest.

The champion-in-waiting said he was so nervous on the climb to Val Thorens in the Alps that he counted down the kilometres on the way up as holder and teammate Geraint Thomas ended the day in second overall. "I still have to get to Paris but it's incredible," said 22-year-old Bernal who will become the Tour's youngest winner since Francois Faber in 1909. "I'm a little calmer now. I kept thinking one less, one less to go each time as we came up the mountain. When we got to the finish and Geraint held out his hand I realised I was going to win the Tour de France."

The stage was won by 2014 champion Vincenzo Nibali.

Desert God well tuned

BENGALURU: Desert God, who has been well tuned, is expected to score in the Tetrasoft Inc. Bangalore St. Leger (2,800m), the chief event of the races to be held here on Sunday (July 28).

False rails (width about 7m from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position.

1 **MANITOU PLATE** (1,400m), maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms), 2-30 p.m.: 1. Cavaliere (3) Antony 56, 2. Jai Vikram (6) A. Ramu 56, 3. My Vision (4) Arshad 56, 4. Silver Eclipse (2) Md. Asif Khan 56, 5. Tenno Sho (1) Trevor 56, 6. Adela (7) R. Shelar 54.5, 7. Aqaba (5) Indrajeet Singh 54.5 and 8. Legendary Princess (8) Sandesh 54.5.
1. TENNO SHO, 2. LEGENDARY PRINCESS, 3. CAVALIERE

2 **LIVELY EMPREY PLATE** (1,200m), rated 00 to 20, 3-00: 1. Darahasini (1) John 60, 2. Zafrina (2) S. Shareef 60, 3. Debonair (9) A. Imran 59.5, 4. Bellerophon (4) A. Ramu 58.5, 5. Show Girl (10) Vinod Shinde 58, 6. Smile Of Courage (3) M. Naveen 58, 7. Have A Nice Day (12) Noornabi 57.5, 8. Majestic Rajkumari (7) Md. Asif Khan 57, 9. Arrogance (11) Yash 56.5, 10. Gin Daisy (5) Dhebe 55.5, 11. Country's Pearl (6) R. Shelar 52 and 12. High Tide (13) A. Merchant 52, 13. Astron (-) (-) 51 and 14. Scorching (8) Arshad 50.5.
1. DARAHASINI, 2. DEBONAIR, 3. HIGH TIDE

3 **MARILLINGAIAH MEMORIAL TROPHY** (1,200m), rated 45 to 65, 3-30: 1. Noahs Ark (11) Zervan 60, 2. War Hero (7) R. Manish 59.5, 3. Life Awaits (10) Rayan 59, 4. Side Winder (14) Chetan G 59, 5. Miniver Rose (2) Vaibhav 58.5, 6. China One (6) Irvan 57.5, 7. Allsettogo (5) A. Merchant 57, 8. Fair Warning (1) Antony 57, 9. Super Success (13) T.S. Jodha 56, 10. Treasure Delight (3) Suraj 55.5, 11. Constantinople (4) Trevor 54.5, 12. Teodoro (12) S. Shareef 54.5, 13. Harley Quinn (9) Md. Asif Khan 53.5 and 14. Siyouni (8) M. Prabhakaran 53.
1. TREASURE DELIGHT, 2. WAR HERO, 3. MINIVER ROSE

4 **TETRASOFT INC. BANGALORE ST. LEGER** (2,800m), 4-y-o & over, (Terms), 4-00: 1. Desert God (4) Sandesh 58.5, 2. Reunion (3) Yash 58.5, 3. Salazaar (2) Suraj 58.5, 4. My Opinion (1) A. Imran 57, 5. Point To Prove (6) Zervan 57 and 6. Roberta (5) Trevor 55.5.
1. DESERT GOD, 2. SALAZAAR

5 **SMART CHIEFTAN CUP** (Div. I), (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 4-y-o & over, 4-30: 1. Call Me Maybe (8) Sai Kiran 60, 2. Tarini (3) Yash 60, 3. Wings Of Desire (10) Zervan 60, 4. Secretsuperstar (4) R. Manish 58.5, 5. Kvasir (2) Srinath 58, 6. Alberetta (1) S. Shareef 57.5, 7. Another Rainbow (9) Md. Asif Khan 57.5, 8. Varcasva (6) Trevor 57.5, 9. Angels Kiss (7) Antony 57, 10. Emidio (5) Vaibhav 57 and 11. Romantic Helen (11) A. Merchant 54.5.
1. KVASIR, 2. ANGELS KISS, 3. WINGS OF DESIRE

6 **ALLIED FORCES PLATE** (1,100m), rated 15 to 35, 4-y-o & over, 5-00: 1. Florencia (7) A. Merchant 60, 2. Princeazeem (1) T.S. Jodha 58.5, 3. Princess Holly (4) K. Raghu 56.5, 4. Nawabzaadi (3) Sai Kiran 56, 5. Hafnium (6) Arshad 55.5, 6. She's Superb (11) S. Shareef 55.5, 7. Fantastic App (9) Zervan 55, 8. Santorini Secret (12) Khurshad Alam 55, 9. Queen Isabella (10) Nazerul 54.5, 10. Happy Dancing (8) M. Kumar 53.5, 11. Simone (5) Rayan 51.5 and 12. So Quick (2) Darshan 51.
1. FANTASTIC APP, 2. NAWABZAADI, 3. HAFNIUM

7 **SMART CHIEFTAN CUP** (Div. II), (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 4-y-o & over, 5-30: 1. Interesting (9) Chetan G 60, 2. Beond Reach (2) M. Naveen 59.5, 3. Panama (1) Arshad 59.5, 4. Amazonite (4) S. Shareef 58.5, 5. Decisive (11) A. Imran 58.5, 6. Pink Smile (7) Irvan 58.5, 7. Armin (6) Antony 58, 8. Depth Charge (3) R. Pradeep 57.5, 9. Helenka (10) Zervan 57, 10. Halfsies (5) A. Merchant 56.5, and 11. Red Galileo (8) Sai Kiran 55.5.
1. ARMIN, 2. HELENKA, 3. AMAZONITE

Day's best: **TENNO SHO**
Double: **TREASURE DELIGHT-DESERT GOD**
Jkt: 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7; Tr (i): 2, 3 and 4; (ii): 5, 6 and 7.

Bhakti crowned champion

Vantika finishes second after splitting the point with Mrudul

NATL. CHESS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KARAIKUDI

Defending champion Bhakti Kulkarni of Air India played out a draw against Pratyusha Bodda of Andhra Pradesh in the 11th and final round to emerge champion of the 46th National women's chess championship at Chettinad Public School on Saturday.

The final round was just a formality as she was already assured of the title after having beaten K. Priyanka the other day. But Bhakti was eager to sign off with a win. Both had their chances of winning, but were content with a draw after 62 moves. With a final tally of 10 points, Bhakti not only went home having lifted the title, but also became richer by ₹4 lakh.

Vantika Agrawal of Delhi, with 8.5 points, finished second after splitting the point with Mrudul Dehankar of Maharashtra.

The top three: Divya, Bhakti and Vantika. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Divya Deshmukh was equal on points as she drubbed P.V. Nandhidhaa of Tamil Nadu. But Vantika, with a better tie-break score, pocketed ₹3 lakh and Divya ₹2 lakh. The District Collector of Sivaganga J. Jayakanthan gave away the trophies and cash prizes.

Important results (11th and final round, TN unless specified): Bhakti Kulkarni (AI) 10 drew with Pratyusha Bodda (AP) 8; Mrudul Dehankar (Mah) 8 drew with Vantika Agrawal (Del) 8.5; P.V. Nandhidhaa 7.5 lost to Divya Deshmukh (Mah) 8.5; Aarthie Ramaswamy (AI) 7 lost to Srija Seshadri 8; Nisha Mohota (PSPB) 8 bt K. Priyanka 7; Harshita Guddnati (AP) 7.5 bt P. Bala Kannamma 7; Mary Ann Gomes (PSPB) 7 drew with V. Varshini 7; S. Meenakshi (AI) 7.5 bt Michelle Catherina 6.5.

Sakshi Chitlange (Mah) 7.5 bt L. Jyothsna 6.5; Rutuja Bakshi (Mah) 6.5 drew with Soumya Swaminathan (PSPB) 6.5; V. Toshali (AP) 6 lost to S. Vijayalakshmi (AI) 7; Sanskriti Goyal (UP) 6 lost to Swati Ghate (LIC) 7; Isha Sharma (Kar) 7 bt Srishti Pandey (Mah) 6.

Nityata Jain (MP) 7 bt Nandhini Saripalli (Goa) 6; Dhyana Patel (Guj) 6.5 drew with Bhagyashree Thipsay (Mah) 6.5.

Final standings (top 20): 1. Bhakti Kulkarni (10); 2-3. Vantika Agrawal and Divya Deshmukh (8.5); 4-7: Pratyusha Bodda, Mrudul Dehankar, Srija Seshadri and Nisha Mohota (8); 8-11. P.V. Nandhidhaa, S. Meenakshi, Harshita Guddanti and Sakshi Chitlange (7.5); 12-20. K. Priyanka, S. Vijayalakshmi, Nityata Jain, Mary Ann Gomes, V. Varshini, P. Bala Kannamma, Aarthie Ramaswamy, Swati Ghate and Isha Sharma (7).

World junior squash teams announced

CHENNAI: A total of 11 Indian players will take part in the World junior men's and women's individual championship (July 30 to August 4) followed by the World junior women's team championship (August 5 to 9), both to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The junior women's team comprises Sanya Vats, Yoshna Singh, Aishwarya Khubchandani and Ananya Dabke. They will be joined by Amira Singh and Megha Bhatia for the individual competitions that precedes it.

The team event is held once in two years.

The boys who will be taking part in the junior men's individual championship are Tushar Shahani, Veer Chotrani, Arnaav Sareen, Rahul Bhaita and Yash Fadte.

Spirit of London wins

BENGALURU: Spirit of London (Sandesh up), won the Elusive Pimpernel Cup, the main event of the races on Saturday. The winner is owned by Mr. Dilip R. Ranka and trained by B. Prithviraj.

1 **AUREOLE TIME PLATE** (1,100m), rated 15 to 35: **AINE** (Srinath) 1, Sun Power (A. Ramu) 2, Genuine Star (Suraj) 3 and Areca Angel (Rajesh K) 4. 1-1/2, 2-1/4 and 5-1/2. 1m 08.32s. ₹17 (w), 12, 13 and 12 (p), SHP: 33, THP: 45, FP: 76, Q: 58, Trinella: 95 and 25, Exacta: 762 and 713. Favourite: Aine. Owners: Mr. Rajan Aggarwal & Mr. Gautam Aggarwal. Trainer: Pradeep Annaiah.

2 **ASTRONOMIC PLATE** (1,400m), rated 15 to 35, 4-y-o & over: **COLONEL HARTY** (Rajesh K) 1, Sharp Response (Zervan) 2, Stars In His Eyes (R. Manjunath) 3 and Raw Gold (Chetan G) 4. 5-3/4, 7-3/4 and 1/2. 1m 26.97s. ₹20 (w), 13, 18 and 24 (p), SHP: 60, THP: 52, FP: 162, Q: 75, Trinella: 1,505 and 598, Exacta: 5,607 and 1,730. Favourite: Colonel Harty. Owner: Mr. S.N. Harish. Trainer: Narayana Gowda.

3 **BARALOY PLATE** (1,600m), rated 15 to 35: **ELECTRA** (Chetan G) 1, Radiant Treasure (Arshad) 2, Smile Of Joy (Srinath) 3 and Fotogenic (Vaibhav) 4. Not run: Armenia. 1-3/4, 2 and 2-3/4. 1m 39.61s. ₹23 (w), 12, 12 and 11 (p), SHP: 32, THP: 42, FP: 77, Q: 51, Trinella: 108 and 42, Exacta: 1,285 and 794. Favourite: Electra. Owners: M/s. Blazing Saddles (PF) rep by. Mr. Niraj Tyagi & Mr. Vikas Sachdeva. Trainer: Neil Darashah.

4 **ELUSIVE PIMPERNEL CUP** (1,400m), rated 30 to 50, 5-y-o & over: **SPIRIT OF LONDON** (Sandesh) 1, Reczai (Suraj) 2, Tokyo Rose (Chetan G) 3 and Casey (Antony) 4. Not run: Morrane Gabriella. 1-1/2, Nose and 1-1/2. 1m 26.81s. ₹22 (w), 13, 14 and 30 (p), SHP: 30, THP: 56, FP: 60, Q: 33, Trinella: 324 and 269, Exacta: 4,096 and 2,743. Favourite: Spirit Of London. Owner: Mr. Dilip R. Ranka. Trainer: B. Prithviraj.

5 **SHA TIN PLATE** (1,600m), rated 00 to 20, 4-y-o & over: **DREAMS UNITED** (Irvan) 1, Phoenix Reached (T.S. Jodha) 2, Silent Ruler (R. Manish) 3 and Shaktiman (John) 4. 6, 2-1/2 and 1/2. 1m 39.95s. ₹30 (w), 15, 13 and 16 (p), SHP: 38, THP: 51, FP: 107, Q: 66, Trinella: 270 and 219, Exacta: 1,184 and 575. Favourite: Dreams United. Owners: Mr. Naresh Kumar Pawar & Mr. P. Ranga Raju. Trainer: Sharat Kumar.

6 **DIVINE LIGHT PLATE** (1,200m), maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms): **SCHAFENBERG** (Trevor) 1, Magic Stream (Zerven) 2, Rorito (Sandesh) 3 and Star Sapphire (Mark) 4. Not run: Flamboyant. 3, 1 and Nk. 1m 13.79s. ₹17 (w), 11, 17 and 17 (p), SHP: 42, THP: 37, FP: 95, Q: 58, Trinella: 180 and 59, Exacta: 1,691 and 1,153. Favourite: Schafenberg. Owner: Mr. Prithiv Sivaji Dorai. Trainer: S. Attaollahi.

Jackpot: ₹1,514 (351 tkts.); Runner-up: 338 (674 tkts.); Treble (i): 150 (75 tkts.); (ii): 259 (123 tkts.).

'The way we play is completely different now'

'I hope the boys come injury-free and we'll put up a good fight, says Chhetri

FOOTBALL

SHYAM VASUDEVAN
UDAIPUR

Indian football team captain Sunil Chhetri said he hoped the side would get enough preparatory matches ahead of its 2022 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers campaign.

The Indian team, drawn alongside 2022 FIFA World Cup host Qatar, Oman, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh in Group E, will begin its chase for a FIFA World Cup berth when it hosts Oman in the second round of Asian Qualifiers on September 5.

Like the word

When asked about the "interesting group" by this reporter, Chhetri quipped: "I like the word interesting, man. Thank God. People use the word easy sometimes! It is interesting and I'm really looking forward to it. It's a good group. The only thing is I just hope we get some training matches before the tournament starts."

He added: "I heard that the Super Cup is not going to happen. So it's just 10-15 days of our preparation and the tournament starts. We have two tough games – Oman at home and Qatar away. I hope the boys come injury-free and we'll put up a good fight." Chhetri spoke to the media during his visit to the Zinc Football Academy here on Saturday.

Showing the way: India captain Sunil Chhetri teaches a trick or two to the trainees at the Zinc Football Academy at Udaipur on Saturday.

The Indian team has been undergoing a period of transition since coach Igor Stimac's arrival in May. The Croatian has inculcated a more refreshing build-up based, passing-oriented game, and has tried multiple combinations on the pitch. However, the team hasn't enjoyed great success and was ousted from the King's Cup and the Intercontinental Cup. Chhetri, though, is unperturbed.

Completely different

"The way we play is completely different now. You've seen it in the last two tournaments. We didn't do well because a lot of payers were injured and also because he (Stimac) was trying new things. His philosophy and what he wants is quite clear. He's very knowledgeable and is somebody who really wants to change things. All the boys love him, so I think we all want to rally with him and give our best," he said.

"The way we build-up is different. He wants us to build from behind, he wants us to pass the ball and you've seen it. The likes of Sahal (Abdul Samad), Udanta (Singh) and Anirudh (Thapa) are flourishing under him. I like this kind of game because in my club (Bengaluru FC) also we play like this. The Spanish players play the same," he added.

When asked if he personally advocated this style of football, he said: "I don't know, man. I'll play in any way. I just want to win. You tell me a way to win and I'll do that."

TV PICKS

Badminton: Japan Open, Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 8 a.m.
Sri Lanka vs Bangladesh: 2nd ODI, Sony Six (SD & HD), 2.30 p.m.
TNPL: Star Sports 3, 3 p.m. & 7.15 p.m.
Tennis: Hamburg Open final, Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.
Formula One: German GP, Star Sports Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.35 p.m.
England Women vs Australia Women: 2nd T20I, Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.
Ultimate Table Tennis: Star Sports 1 & Star Sports Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.10 p.m.
PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.15 p.m. & 8.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF

Bale close to Jiangsu Suning move

PARIS

Real Madrid forward Gareth Bale is on the verge of signing a £1million-a-week deal with Chinese Super League outfit Jiangsu Suning, reports on Friday claimed. The 30-year-old Welshman has already been told by Real coach Zinedine Zidane that he does not form part of his future plans. Spanish daily *Marca* claimed that Bale will earn €22 million per season in China. However, later reports by *Sky Sports* suggested the player's representatives were negotiating a mind-boggling £1million-a-week contract before the Chinese transfer window shuts on Wednesday. AFP

Play abandoned

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Play was washed out by rain in the ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament here on Saturday.

Faisal Qamar was leading 6-4, 2-2 against Ahutosh Tiwari when the semifinal was abandoned owing to rain on Friday. The match will continue on Sunday.

Fardeen Qamar has already reached the final from the top half of the draw.

Momota rallies to beat Sai Praneeth

The Indian squanders early lead to go down to the top seed yet again

JAPAN OPEN

IANS
TOKYO

India's campaign at the ongoing Japan Open came to an end as B. Sai Praneeth lost his men's singles semifinal clash to World no. 1 Kento Momota at the $750,000 tournament on Saturday.

Praneeth lost 21-18, 21-12 to Momota in a match that lasted for 45 minutes.

Great start

The unseeded Indian started off the match on a great note as he took an initial 3-1 lead in the first few minutes.

However, Momota came back with a great fight and took an 11-8 lead at the mid-game break.

Praneeth, who had been in great touch in the tournament so far, tried to up the ante and earned some points but ultimately lost the game in 23 minutes.

Overtuns deficit

In the second game, the top-seeded Japanese didn't led Praneeth take a long lead from the start and overturned a 6-9 deficit to make it 12-9 with the help of six straight points.

From there on, the World No.1 raced to a seven-point lead and eventually won the match 21-12 in 22 minutes to make it to his second consecutive final.

The result: (semifinal):

Men: Kento Momota (Jpn) bt B. Sai Praneeth 21-18, 21-12.

Well played! Kento Momota of Japan is congratulated by B. Sai Praneeth. ▪AFP

Divij & Erlich pair goes down fighting

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU
ATLANTA

Divij Sharan and Jonathan Erlich of Israel put up a strong fight against top seeded Bryan twins, Bob and Mike, who won 6-4, 6-7 (4), [10-7] in the doubles quarterfinals of the $777,385 ATP tennis tournament here.

The quarterfinal entry fetched 45 ATP points and $6,240 for Divij and partner.

In ITF men's Futures in Thailand, Arjun Kadhe and Timur Khabibulin of Kazakhstan lost 10-4 in the super tie-break to the experienced Ratiwatana twins, Sanchai and Sonchat. In singles, Manish Sureshkumar's fine run was halted in the semifinals by Vladyslav Orlov of Ukrane who conceded only four games.

The results:

$777,385 ATP, Atlanta: Doubles (quarterfinals): Bob Bryan & Mike Bryan (US) bt Jonathan Erlich (Isr) & Divij Sharan 6-4, 6-7(4), [10-7].

$25,000 ITF men, Nonthaburi, Thailand: Semifinals: Vladyslav Orlov (Ukr) bt Manish Sureshkumar 6-2, 6-2.

Doubles (final): Sanchai Ratiwatana & Sonchat Ratiwatana bt Timur Khabibulin (Kaz) & Arjun Kadhe 4-6, 6-2, [10-4].

$15,000 ITF Tabarka, Tunisia: Doubles (semifinals): Men: Mousa Alkotop (Jor) & Alexander Boborykin (Rus) bt Anirudh Chandrasekar & PC Vignesh 6-7(2), 6-3, [10-6]. **Women:** Elizabeth Danailova (Bul) & Chelsea Vanhoutte (Bel) bt Sowjanya Bavisetti & Sravya Shivani Chilakalapudi 6-4, 1-6, [10-7].

Lanning makes highest individual score ever in women's T20Is

Her 133 n.o. sees Australia coast to victory over England

ANI
MELBOURNE

Skipper Meg Lanning's unbeaten 133, the highest individual score ever in a women's T20 International, helped Australia defeat England by 93 runs in the first of the three-match series on Friday.

Chasing 227, England got off to a horrendous start as it lost its first four wickets with just 22 on the board. Danielle Wyatt (0), Amy Jones (0), Tammy Beaumont (8), and Heather Knight (3) all failed to put up substantial scores.

Natalie Sciver and Laura Winfield put up a brief partnership of 36, but their resistance was cut short as Sciver (28) was sent back by Sophie Molineux.

Katherine Brunt came out to bat next and she, along with Winfield, added 39 runs. However, Winfield (33) was dismissed in the 15th over by Megan Schutt.

With Winfield's dismissal, England could not do anything substantial with the bat as it was restricted to 133 for nine, handing Australia a victory by 93 runs. Schutt was the leading wicket-taker as she scalped three England batters.

Earlier, Lanning's undefeated knock of 133 off just 63 balls with 17 boundaries and seven sixes propelled Australia to a record total of 226 for three in 20.

After the game, the destructive Lanning laughingly said she tried to hit the final delivery of the innings for a 12. "I tried to hit it for 12," Cricket.com.au quoted Lanning as saying.

"I was just really pleased and proud of the group that we were able to win at such a ground, The Fortress.

"To come here and play so well was great," she said.

Into the record books: Meg Lanning sent the England bowlers on a leather hunt, hitting 17 fours and seven sixes. ▪HENRY BROWNE/ GETTY IMAGES

Vishnu, Chirag dazzle on day one

Syed Muzammil unstoppable in the Gixxer Cup

MOTORSPORTS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE

Chennai's Vishnu Prasad and young Chirag Ghorpade stole the show on the opening day, winning in contrasting styles in the first round of the 22nd JK Tyre FMSCI National racing championship here on Saturday.

The revamped opening round saw 27 young guns line up for the first time to have a shot at the Novice Cup. And, Bengaluru's Chirag (Momentum Motorsports) clinched the pole at the start of the day and went on to win the first race.

The 14-year-old timed 13:37.912s to beat the aggressive field by 0.338s, leaving his teammate Aaroh Ravindra and Mohamed Ryan (MSport) fighting for the other two places on the podium.

He exhibited speed and skill to wrest the second race as well.

However, all eyes were on the Formula LGB4 which had seven national champions in the fray. It was a three-way fight between Vishnu (MSport), Rohit Khanna (Dark Don Racing) and Ashwin (Dark Don Racing).

Ashwin shot into the lead, going past MSport's Sohil Shah who began on pole at the first opportunity. He hung on to it all the way to the final lap but the safety car that had come out a couple of laps earlier hurt his flow as Vishnu and Rohit stepped up the heat to overtake him for the top two positions.

Syed Muzammil Ali was the other lad from Bengaluru who was unstoppable in the Gixxer Cup. He topped the practice rounds, grabbed the pole in the qualifiers and later finished on top in the race.

The results (provisional):

JK Tyre Novice Cup: Race 1: 1. Chirag Ghorpade (Momentum Motorsports); 2. Aaroh Ravindra (Momentum Motorsports); 3. Mohamed Ryan (MSport). **Race 2:** 1. Chirag; 2. Aaroh; 3. Parikshit Dardhalli (DTS Racing)

JK Tyre Suzuki Gixxer Cup: Race 1: 1. Syed Muzammil Ali; 2. Tanay Gaikwad; 3. Amul Angadi.

Formula LGB4: Race 1: 1. Vishnu Prasad (MSport); 2. Rohit Khanna (Dark Don Racing); 3. Ashwin Datta (Dark Don Racing).

Exhibiting his skills: Seasoned racer Vishnu Prasad, who won Race 1 in the LGB Formula 4 category, negotiates a curve. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Opportunity to raise Commonwealth TT's profile'

First priority is to regularise the championship: Vivek Kohli

CTTF

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Last week, Indians accomplished an unsurpassable feat of sweeping all seven gold medals at stake in the Commonwealth table tennis championship in Cuttack.

Concurrently, in a significant development in Bhuvneswar, India claimed the post of chairman and secretary-general of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation (CTTF) for the first time.

These Indian triumphs were not unexpected. The players capitalised on the lack of quality opposition while for the two elected representatives – chairman Vivek Kohli and secretary M.P. Singh – the election arithmetic was never a concern.

As it turned out, M.P. Singh was elected unopposed and Kohli won 22-6.

Though the margin of Kohli's victory was a reflection on the support he enjoyed, England's Alan Ransome proved a reluctant outgoing-incumbent as he vacated the chair after 26 years.

"This change provides India with an opportunity to raise the profile of Commonwealth table tennis," Kohli told *The Hindu* on his return to the Capital.

Kohli, 50, is actively attached to the sport since turning up for Uttar Pradesh as a junior. At present, he is the co-chairman of Stag International, a well-known equipment and apparel-maker in table tennis.

Spreading the sport

In his new role, Kohli has set his eyes on spreading the sport to all 71 Commonwealth nations.

"At present, we have only 45 affiliated members, of which around 38 are active. Once we reach out to all the nations, CTTF will have more members than the African TT Federation, Asian TT Union and the European TT Union, all of whom have 50-plus member-nations," said Kohli.

Elaborating his plans, Kohli declared, "When we hold events, we gain visibility. So far, even the Commonwealth championship is not held regularly. So, my first priority is to regularise the championship and invite the best from Singapore, England, Nigeria etc. Soon, we plan to introduce competitions for cadet, sub-juniors, juniors, youth and veterans.

"Constant activities bring visibility to all stakeholders. Revenue from affiliation and entry fees, sponsorships, etc., will give us a buffer to get started.

Thereafter, in due course, we plan to hold competitions for schools, universities, military, railways, etc., from Commonwealth nations.

"We will hire professionals to run the day-to-day affairs of the CTTF. I see that the CTTF holds the potential to be the biggest sporting body in the sport after the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF). We will surely borrow ideas from the ITTF to help the cause of Commonwealth nations at all levels," concluded Kohli.

New roles, new goals! Vivek Kohli, right, and M.P. Singh after being elected chairman and secretary-general, respectively, of the CTTF. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Atletico humbles Real

REUTERS
NEW JERSEY

Diego Costa scored four goals as Real Madrid was embarrassed 7-3 by rival Atletico Madrid in the final match of the United States tour on Friday.

Real fielded a strong side once again, with new signings Eden Hazard and Luka Jovic starting up front and Gareth Bale again on the bench, but was 5-0 down at the end of a shambolic first half.

Atletico fielded a host of new arrivals, including club-record signing Joao Felix, who immediately caught Real cold on the counter before playing Costa in for his opening goal in the first minute.

Felix got among the goals himself seven minutes later before Angel Correa, an early substitute for the injured Alvaro Morata, shocked Real with a third in the 19th minute.

Saul Niguez capitalised on more slack defending from Real to thread through to Costa who fired in the fourth with just 28 minutes on the clock.

Costa capped a disastrous half for Real in stoppage time, winning a penalty before converting from the spot.

Felix again fed Costa six minutes into the second half before Nacho pulled one back for Real near the hour-mark.

The Costa onslaught ended abruptly, with he and Real's Dani Carvajal both red-carded for fighting, adding further drama to an incredible friendly.

Vitolo added a seventh for Atletico, before Karim Benzema and Javi Hernandez scored late for Real.

Indians grab eight medals

Ashish Kumar bags his first international gold

BOXING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Asian Championships silver medallist Ashish Kumar on Saturday bagged his first international gold, even as Indian boxers finished their campaign with a rich haul of eight medals at Thailand Open International boxing tournament in Bangkok.

India finished with a gold, four silver and three bronze.

On the final day, the Indians who won silver were former world junior champion Nikhat Zareen (51kg), Asian Championships silver medallist Deepak (49kg), GeeBee Boxing silver medallist Mohammed Hussamuddin (56kg), and India Open silver medallist Brijesh Yadav (81kg).

Ashish (75kg) was in impeccable form and outpunched Korea's Kim Jinjae 5-0 for the biggest medal of his career, just two months after claiming a silver in the India Open.

Strandja Cup gold medallist Nikhat, who pocketed a bronze from the Asian Championships as well as the India Open, faced a tough opponent in Asian Games gold medallist Chang Yuan.

The Chinese proved too strong for Nikhat as the Telegana pugilist was handed a 5-0 blow.

In 56kg, reigning India Open champion Chatchai Decha Butdee of Thailand continued his fine form to inflict a 5-0 defeat on Hussamuddin while Uzbekistan's Mirzakhmedov Nodirjon proved a tall order for Deepak in 49kg.

In 81kg, Brijesh Yadav gave his all but was edged 1-4 by Thailand's Anawat Thongkratok amidst some vociferous support for the home supporters.

Earlier, Strandja Cup silver medallist Manju Rani (48kg) failed to breach the barrier of Thailand's former World Championships bronze medallist Chuthamat Raksat and had to be content with the bronze.

Ashish (69kg) and Bhagyabati Kachari (75kg) are the others who brought bronze for India.

While Ashish succumbed to a 1-4 defeat to Thailand's former Asian Games champion Wuttichai Masuk, Kachari was outplayed 0-5 by China's Rio Olympic bronze medallist Li Qian.

Windies tour: MyTeam11 is title sponsor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

MyTeam11, a fantasy sports platform, will be the title sponsor of India's upcoming tour of West Indies.

The tour will be called 'MyTeam11 International Series'.

The tour commences on August 3, when the first of three T20Is between the two sides is scheduled in Florida and will see a total of three T20s and ODIs each as well as two Test matches in a five-week period in the West Indies.

Will provide the athlete's perspective: Narang

Rijiju forms high-level panel to oversee Olympic preparations

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

London Olympics bronze medallist and ace shooter Gagan Narang is one of only two Olympians (besides tennis great Leander Paes) on the high-level committee appointed by Union Sports Ministry Kiren Rijiju to oversee, support, coordinate and strategise preparations of Indian athletes for the 2020 and 2024 Olympics.

The Committee, chaired by Rijiju, comprises Sports Secretary Radheyshyam Julaniya, IOA president Narinder Batra, IOA secretary-general Rajeev Mehta, Athletics Federation of India president Adille Sumariwalla, Boxing Federation of India president Ajay Singh as members and Talent Olympic Podium Scheme CEO Cdr. Rajesh Rajagopalan as convenor.

Objective

"The objective of the committee is to ensure the performance of Indian athletes is optimised at the Olympics and other multi-disciplinary events," says Gagan in a chat with *The Hindu*.

"For the Tokyo Games next year, the task includes advising and ensuring support to potential and qualified athletes, facilitating smooth logistical arrangements for participation, ensuring seamless acclimatisation and hospitable environment for the contingent in Tokyo and coordination among all stakeholders," he said.

"And, for the 2024 Paris Olympics, the focus will be on charting out a road map, continuous review and suggesting corrective measures, ensuring coordination among stakeholders," Gagan said. "I will draw from my experience of four Olympics to provide inputs," the star shooter said.

"Leander and I being the only Olympians on the panel, we can give bring the athlete's perspective, given that we have ourselves gone through the process," he said.

Gagan Narang. ▪FILE PHOTO

IN BRIEF

Giant dinosaur bone found in France

PARIS

The thigh bone of a giant dinosaur was found this week by French palaeontologists at an excavation site in southwestern France where remains of some of the largest animals that ever lived have been dug up since 2010. The animal probably weighed 40 tonnes. REUTERS

Underwater glaciers melting at rapid pace

NEW YORK

Underwater melting of glaciers is occurring much faster than was predicted, a study published in *Science* said. Scientists used a new approach to directly measure submarine melt, which could improve projections of sea level changes. IANS

A$AP Rocky fans join in protest against Sweden

WASHINGTON

U.S. fans of rapper A$AP Rocky have issued a call to arms, including meatball moratoriums and an end to binges at Ikea, in protest at Sweden's move to put him on trial for assault. Several fans on Twitter sought a boycott on Swedish products. AFP

Swarms of grasshoppers invade Las Vegas Strip

LOS ANGELES

Massive swarms of grasshoppers descended on the Las Vegas Strip this week, startling tourists and residents as the insects pass through town on their northbound migration. Even street pavements were covered with the insects. AFP

When Santa takes a summer break

A group of people who live every day like it's Christmas get together for an annual cruise

AARON REISS

During the Christmas season, Santa may circle the globe in a flying sleigh, but during the summer, he vacations on a cruise ship.

In May this year, 77 Mr. and Mrs. Clauses embarked on a seven-day, Alaska-bound voyage aboard the *Royal Princess*. This was the 11th annual Santa Cruise, an event conceived by Santa Tim Connaghan, a 50-year veteran of the red suit, as a chance for professional Santas to gather, schmooze, and stay sharp during the off-season.

The men on this cruise are "real bearded Santas", as opposed to "designer bearded" or "skin chin" Santas. They introduce themselves as "Santa Steven" or "Santa Bill", the same way another professional might introduce themselves as "Doctor Jacobs" or "Professor Bryant".

"I had read some stories of people – like real estate agents or doctors – having training conferences on ships, and I said, 'Why not Santa?'" Santa Tim said.

Time to cheer: (Clockwise from left) Santas on their way to the *Royal Princess*; relaxing on the ship; Christmas-themed cash for use on board and a cap for vacation wear. ▪ NY TIMES/CHRIS MAGGIO

Aboard the ship, Santa Tim organises lectures and workshops covering logistical topics like the proper cradling of a baby, correct hand placement (to prevent lawsuits), and beard-bleaching, as well as more philosophical topics, such as how to be true to the teachings of the historic St. Nicholas. For the cruise-goers, Santa is a way of life.

Santa Marcel painted his fishing boat in bright red and green. Mrs. Claus Debbie and Santa John renewed their vows for their 45th anniversary in North Pole, an Alaskan city that is known for year-round Christmas-themed decorations.

Of course, being Santa year-round isn't always easy. You can never be naughty.

"You've always got to be aware of the children around you, and be ready to act as Santa at the drop of a hat, even in July," Santa Dave Starr said. "If someone cuts you off on the expressway, you have to wave back with five fingers, not one," Santa Jerry Owens said. "You can't say anything slanted or particularly political, because you are Santa. You don't have those views. All you do is make toys."

And yet, for the fully committed, the sacrifice is worth it. "The wide-eyed wonder you see in a little one's eyes," Mrs. Claus Mary Shannon said, "or the smile that spreads across a child's face suggests you and that child are sharing a special secret that the adults don't know, and that is priceless." NY TIMES

WHO recommends use of innovative HIV drug

'Dolutegravir safe for pregnant women'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Based on new evidence assessing benefits and risks, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has recommended the use of the HIV drug dolutegravir (DTG) as the preferred first-line and second-line treatment for all populations, including pregnant women and those of childbearing potential.

According to a release, initial studies had highlighted a possible link between DTG and neural tube defects (birth defects of the brain and spinal cord) in infants born to women using the drug at the time of conception.

"But new data from two large clinical trials comparing the efficacy and safety of DTG and efavirenz (EFV) in Africa have now expanded the evidence base. The risks of neural tube defects are significantly lower than what the initial studies may have suggested," the release said.

It noted that DTG is more effective, easier to take and has fewer side effects than alternative drugs. It also has a high genetic barrier to developing drug resistance, which is important, given the rising trend of resistance.

Dolutegravir pills

In 2019, 12 of the 18 countries surveyed by WHO reported pre-treatment drug resistance levels exceeding the recommended threshold of 10%.

All the above findings informed the decision to update the 2019 guidelines, WHO noted.

In 2019, 82 low- and middle-income countries reported to be transitioning to DTG-based HIV treatment. The new recommendations aim at helping more nations improve their HIV policies.

Vanishing wildlife: 22 species have gone extinct in India

Ministry lists habitat degradation as one of the causes

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Four species of fauna and 18 species of flora have gone extinct in India in the past few centuries, according to wildlife survey organisations.

The data was tabled earlier this month in the Lok Sabha by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

A.A. Mao, Director of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) said India is home to 11.5% of all flora in the world. According to the International Union for Conservation Of Nature, a new study has shown that since 1750, more than double the number of plants have disappeared from the wild than birds, mammals and amphibians combined.

As per information given by the BSI, 18 species of plants – four non-flowering and 14 flowering – have gone extinct. The notable among them are *Lastreopsis wattii* , a fern in Manipur discovered by George Watt in 1882 and three species from the genus *Ophiorrhiza* (*Ophiorrhiza brunonis* , *Ophiorrhiza caudate* and *Ophiorrhiza radican*), all discovered from peninsular India. *Corypha taliera* Roxb, a palm species discovered in Myanmar and the Bengal region by William Roxburgh is also extinct.

Cheetahs once lived in the Indian sub-continent.

Among mammals, the cheetah (*Acionyx jubatus*) and the Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensisi)* are considered extinct in India.

The pink-headed duck (*Rhodonessa caryophyllaceai*) is feared extinct since 1950 and the Himalayan quail (*Ophrysia supercilios*) was last reported in 1876.

Kailash Chandra, Director of ZSI, said that the four animals can be found in other parts of the world. India has about 6.49% of all the fauna species in the world, he said.

Factors like "competition, predation, natural selection, and human induced factors like hunting, habitat degradation" are some of the important reasons that have led to these extinctions, the Ministry said.

Selfie museum clicks in Budapest

Pink palm trees and a banana swing a hit with visitors who love social media

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BUDAPEST

A new so-called 'selfie museum' in Budapest that lets visitors pose by pink palm trees and frolic in multi-coloured sprinkle baths has proved to be a hit with social-media savvy locals and tourists alike.

With almost 30,000 visitors since it opened last December, the the 400-square-metre large "Selfie Museum", billed as the first of its kind in Europe, is already one of the Hungarian capital's most popular attractions.

Its creators say their idea, inspired by a similar venue in the U.S., is targeted at the younger generation looking for an edge to their status updates or profile pictures. However, recently a pair of pensioners also popped in to top up their photos for an annual calendar they present to each other, said Lilla Gangel, who co-founded the museum with her partner Balazs Koltai.

Picture perfect: Visitors taking pictures in the pink room of the Selfie Museum in Budapest. ▪ AFP

Visitors entering the first of 11 exhibition rooms are met with palm trees growing from the walls and pink-coloured surroundings. "Here you can stand out from the crowd, perhaps by finding a crazy new perspective like an aerial photo, or by playing with the quirky props," said 33-year-old Ms. Gangel. "There are more and more places on the Internet where you can share photos, we're living in this type of world now, whether we like it or not," she said.

The 11 interactive installations at the museum include a ride on banana swings, a climb on a unicorn, or a lounge on giant macaroons.

"We play with shapes and colours, and try to push people's borders and let their creativity bloom," Ms. Gangel said.

Word about the new museum has spread fast, unsurprisingly, on platforms like Instagram and Snapchat.

"They're typical teenagers, They like Instagram and photos," said Oli, an Israeli tourist, while her young daughters threw exaggerated poses behind her. "These are the times we are living in, what can you do," she laughed.

Panka Major, an 18-year-old Hungarian student, said she was an avid user of social media but lamented that "nowadays everyone checks their phones every minute".

"It's a natural thing but also bad, as you do not live in the moment, and instead reach for a phone to record it," she said.

Hill of soap suds claims victim

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MEXICO CITY

A towering hill of soap suds floating atop a heavily polluted stream in Mexico has apparently claimed its first victim. A man who stopped to take a selfie fell into the quivering mass and disappeared.

Authorities in the central state of Puebla are still looking for the man who fell into a mound of suds about 20 feet high.

The local civil defence office launched a search on Monday, using fire hoses to compact the suds and a large fan to try to blow a path into the mass.

It took almost a whole day just to locate his car.

Authorities say excess detergents from homes that drain into streams feeding the Valsequillo reservoir caused the suds to accumulate.

Born free

Pop of colour: Participants of the Christopher Street Day gay pride parade walk through the streets of Berlin on Saturday. ▪ AFP

Pakistani policeman channels life stories into gritty novels

Books explore crime and violence in Karachi

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KARACHI

His father was assassinated by a notorious Karachi hitman, while his police partner was murdered by the Taliban.

Personal tragedy haunts the hard-boiled novels that are turning top cop Omar Shahid Hamid into one of Pakistan's most popular English-language authors.

For nearly two decades Mr. Hamid has worn a badge in Karachi. Now a deputy inspector general, he is also fast becoming one of Pakistan's most recognisable writers, publishing four books in quick succession since 2013.

His work has even nabbed the attention of major streaming outlets on the hunt for new original material from South Asia, including Netflix, which has already seen major success with similar material in TV series such as *Sacred Games*, about Mumbai's corrupt underworld.

Mr. Hamid said the secret to his success is his unflinching accounts of political corruption, contract killers, and crooked cops alongside nuanced portraits of Karachi's divided neighbourhoods.

"Books like mine wouldn't work if I pulled punches," he says. "It's that grittiness, that uncompromising reality that I think a lot of readers enjoy."

Omar Shahid Hamid

At times, the reality has hit dangerously and heartbreakingly close to home.

Mr. Hamid did the bulk of his writing while he was on sabbatical after being advised to leave Karachi and take a break from policing in 2011 when he was threatened by extremist groups.

Personal loss

Weeks after the release of his first novel *The Prisoner*, his mentor and police partner Chaudhry Aslam – the inspiration for one of the book's protagonists – was killed in a Taliban-claimed suicide blast.

In his third novel, *The Party Worker*, Mr. Hamid portrays the rise of a brutal hitman who killed at the behest of a fictional political party ruling the city with an iron fist.

For Karachi insiders, the character mirrors the life of feared hitman Saulat Mirza, who served as the feared enforcer for the once-powerful Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) party, and whose list of victims include Mr. Hamid's own father, Shahid.

"It's less a thing of making a sketch of Saulat Mirza," explains Mr. Hamid, calling the character a "sketch of a particular type of young man... who kind of in the last 30 years or so essentially gave their lives away to these ideologies thinking they were doing the right thing."

"What he has written is fiction but it's very close to reality," says Faheem Siddiqui, Karachi bureau chief for Geo News. "As a crime reporter, I know what had happened in the city. It took a great deal of courage to write about these events."

Writing, Mr. Hamid explains, is a release.

"I had a lot of frustrations about things that had happened in my career until that point," says Mr. Hamid. "I felt a need to vent about them."

Though he often takes aim at Karachi's dangerous and powerful, he has received little blowback, he says. But he says his latest novel *The Fix* released in June may ruffle more feathers, as he explores corruption in cricket.

"For a nation of cricket fanatics and conspiracy theorists, it's strangely been an area that has never really been explored," he explains.

Mr. Hamid remains hopeful for his beloved home town. "It may not be everyone's cup of tea," he shrugs, "But as a city, it will keep going."

Kidnapped triathlete talks her way to freedom

Nathalie Birli during a practice session. ▪ INSTAGRAM

27-year-old was abducted while on a bike ride

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
VIENNA

An Austrian triathlete kidnapped while riding her bike talked her way to freedom by complimenting her captor's orchids, a police source said on Saturday.

Professional triathlete Nathalie Birli, 27, was struck by a car on Tuesday and broke her arm while falling to the ground near Graz in southeastern Austria, press reports said.

The driver then knocked her out with a piece of wood and took her to his isolated home. "When I regained consciousness, I was naked and tied up in an armchair in an old house," Birli told the *Kronen Zeitung* newspaper.

The man forced her to drink alcohol and tried to suffocate her. However, she managed to placate the man by complimenting him on the many orchids growing in his home.

Though he was initially "filled with hate", the man suddenly became "nice to me" and confided that gardening was his passion before opening up about his troubled childhood, she said. Finally, he agreed to let her. Police arrested the man on Wednesday.

THE HINDU

DELHI

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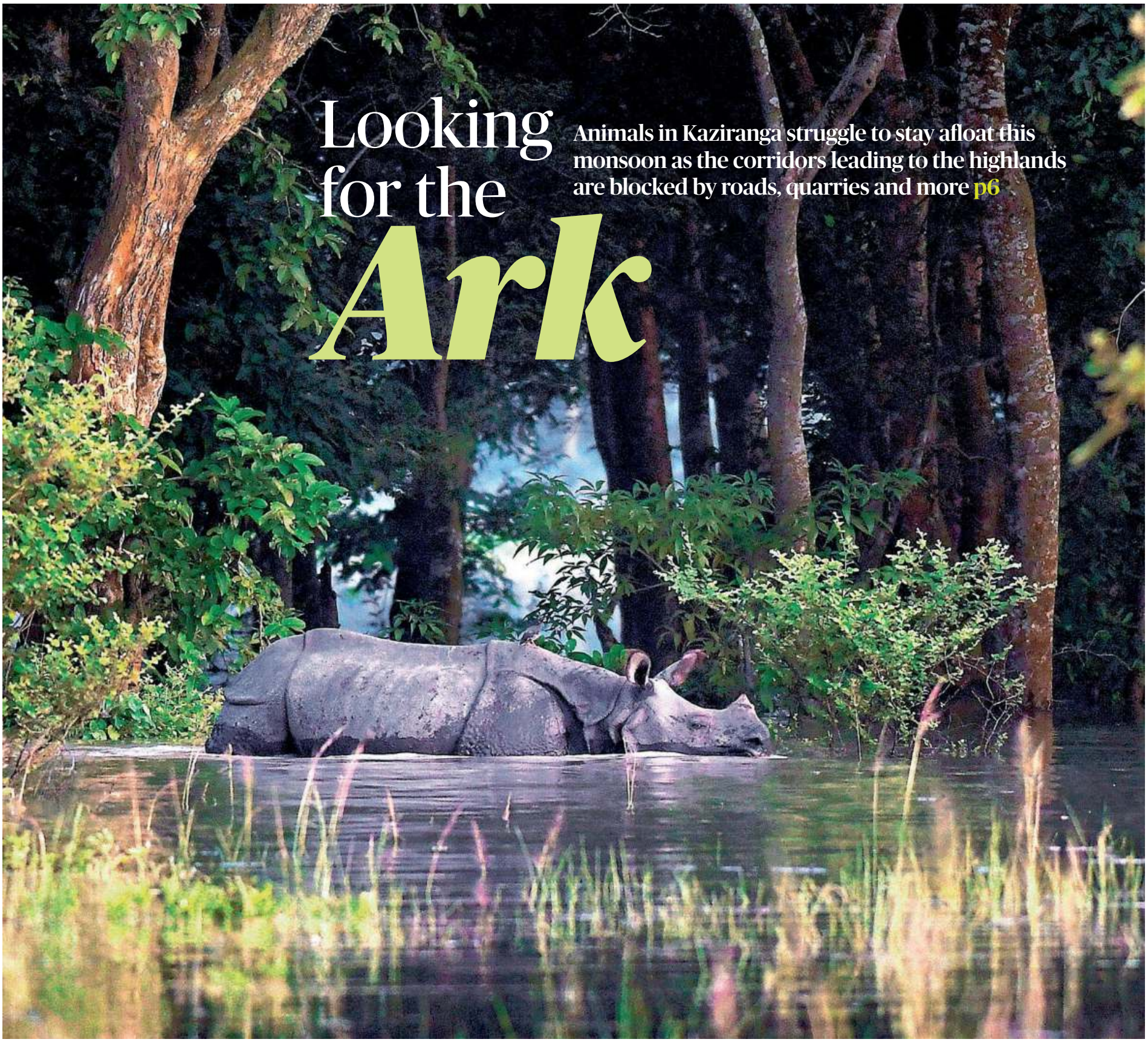

Looking for the *Ark*

Animals in Kaziranga struggle to stay afloat this monsoon as the corridors leading to the highlands are blocked by roads, quarries and more p6

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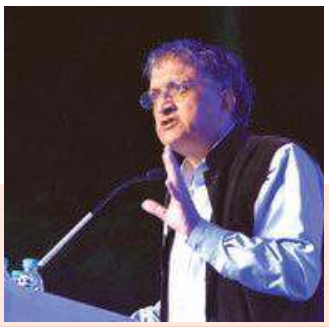
Trumped up U.S. President Donald Trump said he was willing to mediate on Kashmir, and that PM Modi had asked him to do so at last month's G20 summit. This triggered a diplomatic furore, with India furiously denying the request. Both countries' records reportedly show that there was no meeting where the issue could have been raised.

No confidence'd Karnataka's Congress-JD(S) coalition government collapsed after a 105-99 loss in the floor test following the defection of 15 MLAs. Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy resigned, and as this edition went to press, the BJP's B.S. Yeddyurappa was set to form the new government.

Bill bombshells Two controversial amendments were tabled. Both houses passed the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill amid criticism that it would let governments cherry-pick chairs of the National Human Rights Commission. The RTI Amendment Bill, criticised for compromising the independence of Information Commissioners, cleared the Lok Sabha on Monday and was passed in the Rajya Sabha amid high drama on Thursday.

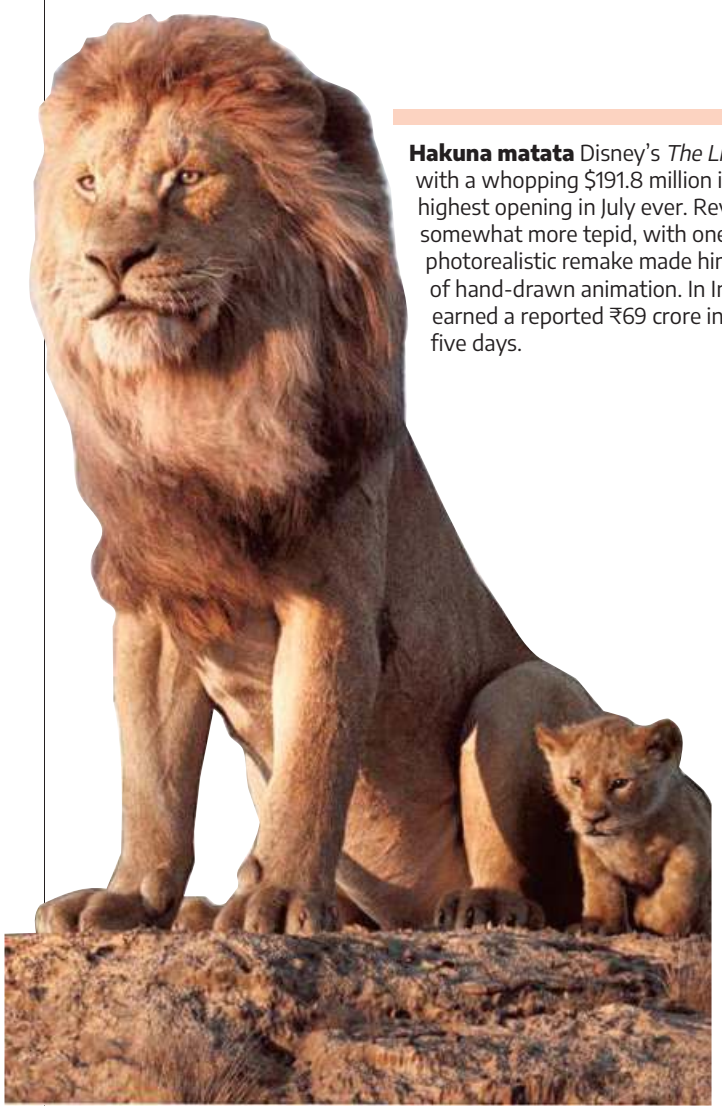
Red alert
Amid the ongoing European heatwave, temperatures in the French city of Bordeaux hit 41.2 °C, breaking its 2003 record of 40.7 °C. With temperatures set to reach further highs across Europe next week, several countries including France and Spain issued warnings.

Destination moon India's Chandrayaan-2 took off smoothly in its second attempt, a week after the scheduled launch was aborted for a technical fault. The craft is expected to reach the moon on September 6, where its rover will search for water and collect data on the moon's surface composition.



Dear Prime Minister Filmmaker Aparna Sen and historian Ramachandra Guha were among 49 personalities who wrote to the PM calling for more action against lynching. "You have criticised such lynchings in Parliament, but that is not enough... We strongly feel they should be declared non-bailable," they wrote.

In good books Salman Rushdie and Margaret Atwood, both Booker Prize winners, are back on the long list this year. The list of 13 has Rushdie's latest novel, *Quichotte*, and Atwood's *The Testaments*, a sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*. The winners will be announced on October 14.



Hakuna matata Disney's *The Lion King* opened with a whopping $191.8 million in the U.S., the highest opening in July ever. Reviews were somewhat more tepid, with one critic saying the photorealistic remake made him wish for the days of hand-drawn animation. In India, the film earned a reported ₹69 crore in the first five days.

Rain deaths Flooding and landslides caused by torrential rains in eastern India, Bangladesh and Nepal resulted in more than 300 deaths over the past weeks, including at least 102 people in Bihar and 69 in Assam. Millions were displaced. Rainfall in the north-east is expected to reduce in intensity as the monsoon moves to central India.

Prime Brexiteer Boris Johnson became Prime Minister of the U.K., succeeding Theresa May, after winning a Conservative Party leadership contest in which he defeated Jeremy Hunt. Johnson, a leading Brexiteer, vowed to "get Brexit done" and take the U.K. out of the EU by the October 31 deadline.

She's home As Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced his cabinet, Priti Patel became Britain's first Indian-origin Home Secretary. Patel, 47, a leading Brexit campaigner, was forced to resign as International Development Secretary in 2017 after she failed to disclose meetings with Israeli officials to the Foreign Office.

Medal maker The gold, silver and bronze medals for the Tokyo Olympics have been designed by Junishi Kawanishi, and were unveiled exactly one year before the opening ceremony. The medals feature the Tokyo Olympic emblem on one side and Nike, the Greek goddess of victory, on the other.

Forest footage A video released by an indigenous media group seemed to show a member of the uncontacted and threatened Awa tribe in the Amazon forest. In the footage, a man briefly sniffs a machete before he realises he's being watched and flees into the forest. Activists hoped this would highlight the threats to this tribe from loggers.

ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

WITH JAYANTA MAHAPATRA

The first Indian-English poet to get the Sahitya Akademi award and now the first Indian-English poet to be made a Fellow of the Akademi, he is a literary giant of our times

'I want the thunder and lightning to come in'

SAILEN ROUTRAY

- A postgraduate in physics from Patna University, Bihar
- Taught physics at several government colleges in Odisha, retiring in 1986
- Has written 20 books of poems in English and seven in Odia
- Has won many awards, including a Padma Shri that he returned in 2015

If you want to reach Jayanta Mahapatra, it is enough to mark the epistle to 'Jayanta Mahapatra, Cuttack' for it to find him. You don't need any better testimony to the reputation this grand old man of Indian literature enjoys, built on the foundation of more than half a century's prodigious creative output.

In May this year, Mahapatra was made a Fellow of the Sahitya Akademi. In 2018, the Akademi published *Jayanta Mahapatra: A Reader*. Last year also saw the release of his 744-page *Collected Poems*. He hasn't been in very good health, but agreed to an interview with the same rare grace that shines through his poetry. Excerpts:

The Sahitya Akademi Fellowship is perhaps the highest literary honour ever bestowed upon an English poet in India...

■ When a poet, a writer, keeps doing his work seriously, awards will come his way. I have thought of awards as little flowers that fade the next morning. But what is strange is that when I was given the Sahitya Akademi Award almost 40 years ago, in 1981, I was the first Indian English poet to be so awarded; I am now also the first poet writing in English to become a Fellow of the Sahitya Akademi.

Your poetic voice is an ambiguous one. In several of your poems, the authorial voice and the narrative voice are not always in consonance. It is not a distraction though; in fact, it produces a startling intimacy. How is this achieved?

■ I would not be able to talk about what you have pointed out. You see, I have always tended to go back to those images which have built my life. And these have always come from the place I have lived in. When I was a boy, a child of five or six, my father had taken me to Puri, and I still remember being at Narendra Tank – there were very, very old turtles there – with people shouting, "*ekade, ekade*" ("this side, this side"). These images have made my life; it is the land that has made me, and in turn shaped my poetry. So, yes, I am intimate with the land; I could not have lived elsewhere, nor could I have written poetry anywhere else.

> I am intimate with the land; I could not have lived elsewhere, nor could I have written poetry anywhere else

In your English poems, the sentences are intricately crafted. But the Odia poems are simple. Also, sometimes you have 'paired' poems in both languages, that are not translations of each other, but seem related to the same experience.

■ I do not know Odia very well. Writing in both English and Odia has been a complementary exercise for me. I have explored my innermost thoughts in English, which I have not been able to do in Odia, at least not deliberately. I want to be understood more generally by everyone when I write in Odia. Many years after I began writing in English, I started composing poems in my own tongue, because I wanted to be closer to my brothers, to my own people, to my neighbours.

For example, the Odia poem 'Aamba Gachha' ('The Mango Tree') from the collection *Baayaa Rajaa* has come directly from flesh and blood; it is more intimate. It has come straight from the Jayanta Mahapatra who lives, who was there with his father – the father and son who planted the tree – and that intimacy is not there in the English poem 'Collaboration' from *Lie of Dawns*, which is an altogether different poem, although somehow springing from the same experience. Influences of poems I have read in English have contributed significantly to 'Collaboration,' whereas 'Amba Gachha' has come out of my own mind and experiences.

Descriptions of small-town Odisha, say, Cuttack or Sambalpur, in your poems as well as in your Odia autobiography *Pahini Rati* (*The Night is Yet to End*; Bijayinee Publications, 2013) are populated with trees, creepers, birds and other aspects of nature. What has been your relationship with 'urban nature'?

■ Look at this house. In its yard I have planted bamboos. Many of the older mango and pear trees are now gone, felled by successive cyclones, but many still stand and their leaves often enter this house and make a mess. When it rains, I open my doors and windows. I want the thunder and the lightning to come in. I also want the dust to come in. I do not mind the dust of Cuttack. I do not mind the way of life of Cuttack. I feel really bad when I see everything changing so fast. All the trees in the city are gone. It has a couple of rivers on its two sides; 60-70 years ago, you had water just beside the banks. Now the rivers have very little water. And that itself brings a pang to my heart. I can't live like this. It is as if I am now living in a totally different environment.

Your poetry is suffused with rain, both as a climatic event, but also as metaphor. Increasingly we live in times when rain is decreasing in intensity. How do you relate to this shift?

■ Rain is tied to my inner longings; the inner longing that is always there and which my years of writing poetry have not been able to subdue or take care of. Rain is a metaphor, a correlation, for the life that I lead inside.

In *Paahini Raati*, we get lyrical descriptions of the dark in small-town Odisha. How do you relate to darkness?

■ Darkness is a part of our world, a part of life. When I was a child, our house was located at the edge of the neighbourhood. It was surrounded by huge deodar trees. We had no electricity then. And the clamour of fruit bats and the wind howling through the leaves of the deodars, these brought unknown fears to me. I still remember the shadows from the kerosene lamps that I used in my little room to study by. All this instilled in me a certain fear that I took a long time to overcome. When I started writing poems, the Bombay poets had a big, big hold on Indian poetry in English; they had created their own lingo. The twist of language, the inherent mystery that emerges in a poem to provide different meanings to readers – it was totally absent in that tradition. But mystery has always fascinated me.

The writer is an author and researcher based in Bhubaneswar.

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SAO PAULO

The 'lungs of the planet' are under attack

Caught through the lens of a shaking camera hidden in the bushes, a bronze-bodied man is calmly looking at his spear, probably planning a hunt in the forest. Suddenly, as he and his hunting partner become aware of being watched, they turn nervous and quickly jump behind the trees and vanish.

The men belong to the Awa people, one of more than 100 uncontacted tribes in the Brazilian rainforest. Having lost many of their people to encroaching loggers and murderous machines, the tribe is fighting for its survival. "We hope this film will bring a positive outcome and has an international repercussion with a focus on protecting a people, a forest, a nation, a land and a story," says Flay Guajajara, an indigenous filmmaker who shot the video while traversing the woods near his village in the Amazon last August.

Mr. Guajajara's video, released last week, is now part of a documentary that captures the fear, isolation and resistance of many Amazonian tribes living in the world's biggest and richest ecosystem for thousands of years. "We were not allowed to shoot but we know the importance of using this Awa image. If we don't show it to the world, they will end up being murdered by the loggers. There is a need to show that they exist and their life is at risk," says Mr. Guajajara, whose film is being screened at an ongoing film festival in Sao Paulo. With armed loggers and miners on their trail, the Awa are at such a risk of being hunted, says the filmmaker, that they teach their children not to cry – and reveal their location. "They live in constant fear. They are now hiding deeper in the forest to save themselves."

Unprecedented attack

It's not just the Awa, the entire world needs the Amazon, the world's largest rainforest, to survive and fight global warming.

Called the "lungs of the planet" for its role in sucking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and adding fresh oxygen to it, this green cover which spreads over several South American countries – 60% of it in Brazil – is crucial for sustaining the human civilisation.

But with Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro slashing environmental regulations and opening the region for farming and mining, the country's portion of rainforest faces an unprecedented attack on its flora, fauna and tribes. In just six months of the Bolsonaro presidency, the deforestation rate has spiked up dangerously. According to data released by Brazil's National

The Amazon rainforest in Brazil lost 739 sq km in just 31 days, which is equivalent to two football fields every minute, according to govt. data

Space Research Institute (INPE), deforestation in the tropical rainforest soared more than 88% in June compared with the same month a year ago. The rainforest lost 739 sq km in just 31 days, which is equivalent to two football fields every minute, according to the INPE data.

But the alarming figures failed to have any impact on Mr. Bolsonaro, who has called his own government's satellite monitoring data "a lie". The President has also snubbed the European governments, which have been pressuring Brazil to protect the forests. "You have to understand that the Amazon is Brazil's, not yours," Mr. Bolsonaro said last week, while talking to a group of foreign journalists.

But Mr. Bolsonaro and most western firms and investors, particularly in the resource sector, are on the same page when it comes to exploiting the Amazon for mining and money. "It could be a good time to be a mining investor in Brazil," Anna Prusa, a former U.S. State Department official who now researches Brazil at the Wilson Center, said recently, talking about business opportunities in the country. "Bolsonaro has said pretty publicly he would like fewer restrictions..."

Mr. Bolsonaro's policies are music to the ears of mining investors who hope to make millions by destroying the Amazon. But the indigenous people, who will undoubtedly bear the brunt of this development, are also getting ready to fight for their turf.

Several Guajajaras, a tribe the filmmaker Flay belongs to, have formed a group called the "Guardians of the Forest", which tries to defend territories threatened by encroachers. A few dozen of them are trying to protect the Awa. As his film is shown in the country's biggest city, Mr. Flay hopes to get a few more "Guardians" who can help them in "saving a people, a history - and a planet".

Shobhan Saxena is a journalist based in Sao Paulo.

DHAKA

A minority rights activist in the eye of the storm

A Bangladeshi minority rights activist found a rare opportunity to meet President Donald Trump at the White House, but those moments of fame turned into colossal outrage back home. At the meeting, Priya Saha, a director of Dhaka-based SHAREE that works with the marginalised and disadvantaged communities, alleged that 37 million people of minority groups have "disappeared" from Bangladesh, without mentioning time references.

In a video, Ms. Saha was seen urging President Trump at a meeting on July 17 to help Hindus, Buddhists and Christians in Bangladesh. She also alleged that her land was grabbed by Muslim fundamentalists. Legions of her critics came down on her on social networks for her "unpatriotic" and "treasonous" comments.

Ms. Saha's Dhaka home became a site, however briefly, for simmering protests. Lawyers threatened her with legal action, vowing to throw her into jail. Apparently embarrassed by her comments, Hindu leaders shunned her in a swift change of mind. A minority lobbying group, the Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, expelled her as an organising secretary for "breach of discipline".

The first official reaction came from the Foreign Ministry on July 20. "It appears that there was an ulterior motive behind Ms. Saha's absolutely false and concocted stories that were targeted to malign Bangladesh," the Ministry said. "Bangladesh is a beacon of religious freedom and communal harmony, where people of all faiths have been living in peace for ages."

Next came two influential Ministers. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan insisted that Ms. Saha must prove the allegations or face stern action. Road Transport Minister Obaidul Quader signalled that Ms. Saha would be sued for sedition. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's son and ICT affairs adviser Sajeeb Wazed hit out at the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka for choosing her as part of a delegation to Washington. But government functionaries dialled down their rhetoric after Ms. Hasina stepped in and disapproved of any hasty action against Ms. Saha.

Shrinking population

In the immediate aftermath, Ms. Saha was conspicuously silent. Then on July 22, her rights organisation posted a video in which she defended herself with some data, basing her assertion on a study by Abul Barkat, an economist and a professor at Dhaka University. She said she was familiar with the findings as she had worked with Prof. Barkat.

The Hindus now

Activist Priya Saha's comment, in a meeting with Donald Trump, on the persecution of minorities in Bangladesh has triggered outrage in the country

account for 9.7% of the total population, compared to 29.7% during the 1947 Partition, Ms. Saha said in the new video. That means many people have gradually left Bangladesh, she said.

"All I meant is that the number of minority people has gradually declined. I didn't mean to comment on the government. I just mentioned what happened in my village," she said referring to Pirojpur, a district in southern Bangladesh. "There were 40 families in my village in 2004. That number is now 13."

Taqbir Huda, a research specialist at Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, said: "It is absurd to report about minority oppression to the very man who has come to epitomise racism and anti-minority bigotry in his own country. Furthermore, some may argue that asking to be 'saved' in this context only works to feed into the 'white saviour complex', which has historically proven to be hazardous for the subcontinent."

After Ms. Saha came up with self-defence, Prof. Barkat said she had never worked with him, and accused her of making "misleading and unprincipled" comments. For his part, Prof. Barkat said some 10.13 million Hindus went missing over five decades – from 1964 to 2013 – and Ms. Saha did not mention the 50-year period.

"While Hindus are in fact leaving Bangladesh in huge numbers, portraying it as 'disappearance' might be disingenuous since that is quite different from migration, even if caused by persecution," said Mr. Huda. There is an astonishing difference between Ms. Saha's claim and the calculation by Mr. Barkat, but both crystallise one pattern – the gradual, quiet departure of Hindus from Bangladesh. The unsavoury subject that Bangladeshis often prefer to sweep under the carpet has now opened emotionally-charged debates.

Arun Devnath is a journalist based in Dhaka.

LAHORE

A visit seeking to reset Pakistan-U.S. relations

It was a much-awaited meeting. Ties between Pakistan and the U.S. have strained since Donald Trump became the President and the U.S. withheld some aid to Pakistan. But the meeting between Prime Minister Imran Khan and President Trump went smoothly, in which the leaders discussed a host of issues from the Afghan peace process to the Kashmir issue. Mr. Khan later thanked "President Trump for his warm & gracious hospitality, his understanding of Pakistan's point of view & his wonderful way of putting our entire delegation at ease".

The Prime Minister's visit has "begun the journey of restoring Pakistan's dignity, pride and respect, which will serve as the foundation for further positive developments and progress to come," Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Haider Zaidi, who was with Mr. Khan during his U.S. visit, told *The Hindu*.

Sherry Rehman, parliamentary leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the Senate and a former Ambassador to the U.S., said she would not pass judgment on a single meeting, given the volatility in U.S.-Pakistan ties. "But by Trumpian standards, where his White House lives in the constant transactional present, this was a good set of meetings. It's the outcome that will judge if it's a sustainable reset or not," Ms. Rehman told *The Hindu*.

Afghan factor

Analysts are of the view that Islamabad and Washington have been trying to reset ties for quite some time. The U.S. is now in advanced stages of talks with the Taliban, seeking a peace deal to end the war in Afghanistan. It needs Pakistan's support for any sustainable peace deal to take effect.

The visit by Prime Minister Khan was part of a series of events planned to build confidence, said journalist Arifa Noor. "The Afghanistan peace process has provided an opportunity to Islamabad." It was not a visit that was expected to be followed by any major announcement and hence, the focus was on how the two leaders would interact with each other, Ms. Noor said. "By this standard, the visit has gone well for it appeared that the two leaders got along nicely. The informal exchange in front of the cameras in the Oval Office inspired hope for the coming days. However, the process to rebuild and repair ties continues and as the White House readout suggests, a lot will depend on the expectations of Washington and what it expects Islamabad to deliver, especially with regards to Afghanistan."

Madiha Afzal, author of *Pakistan Under Siege: Extremism, Society and the State*, said the goals of the trip were to lift the relationship from the low of 2018, to establish a personal relationship between Mr. Khan and Mr. Trump, and to provide Pakistan with a publicity boost. In this regard, the visit was a success, at least for the moment. "On issues such as changing Washington's perception of Pakistan and building the kind of relationship that Mr. Khan wants between the two countries, it will take a great deal more time and effort."

The Pakistan government says Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Washington has set off a journey to restore the country's dignity, pride and respect

In the view of Andleeb Abbas, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, this was "a historic visit". Talking to *The Hindu*, Ms. Abbas said: "The U.S. President has acknowledged Pakistan's fight against terrorism, Pakistan's sacrifice and Pakistan's very important role in peace efforts in Afghanistan."

She noted that President Trump praised Prime Minister Khan, saying he is a great leader, a great athlete. "The fact that the Prime Minister met Nancy Pelosi [House Speaker] and Mike Pompeo [Secretary of State], and the Army chief met Pentagon officials meant that now Pakistan and the U.S. are working on a win-win situation with mutual benefits."

"President Trump's offer to mediate as a peacekeeper between India and Pakistan to solve the Kashmir problem is also unprecedented because one, it makes the Kashmir issue an international and global issue recognised by all. Two, it also shows how keen the big powers are to have peace and stability in the region and appreciate the Prime Minister's role in bringing peace to the region. So I think it was a very very successful visit," Ms. Abbas said.

She added the visit had redefined the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, and it had also explained to Washington the Pakistan Prime Minister's vision for bringing peace, prosperity and security to the subcontinent.

Mehmal Sarfraz is a journalist based in Lahore.

SHENYANG

Brushing the rust off China's northeast

China's rust belt in the northeast, known for polluting and sluggish heavy industry, is yearning for a revival.

Local officials in Liaoning – a coastal province with a natural outreach to Japan, the Korean Peninsula and Russia – are in a rush to position their province as a key driver of growth in northeast Asia. They anticipate that the province will be on the frontline to engage North Korea, where stirrings of change are already turning heads.

For the local elite, well-attuned to the barrage of instructions and signals emitting from Beijing, the game is to leapfrog the old economy into a new one based on the industry 4.0 model. That means establishing factories run by robots feeding on big data delivered by the state-of-the-art 5G network.

But provincial planners are aware that the new smart economy requires massive funding in digital infrastructure.

In Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning, where elegant Russian and Japanese buildings are a reminder of the eventful history of the early 20th century, the hardware for the new economy is being pillared into place. "In Shenyang, we have already established the Big Data Comprehensive Pilot Area. More than 200 enterprises have marked their presence there. Besides, a Future City, focussing on robotics as well as a software park area, has already taken root," says Liu Zhuangye, director of the Shenyang people's government information office. A massive 5G roll-out is also expected later this year.

Coastal development plan

In order to break from its rust belt shackles, national and local planners have taken the cue from the stunning rise of Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Shanghai – coastal eastern cities that leveraged their harbours and hinterland to marshal the rise of world class manufacturing a few decades ago. "We also have a coastal development plan as part of our strategy to revive the economy," says Shen Shiyunng, deputy head of the industry and information department of Liaoning province.

For the coastlines of the adjoining Bohai and Yellow Sea to propel northeast China's revival, the role of the Dalian and Yingkou ports will be crucial. The Yingkou port has been designated to serve Shenyang and its hinterland.

Dalian is a mature deep water port, favoured by foreign powers since the Boxer War that took place at the turn of the 20th century.

In order to leverage its coastal advantage, local authorities are looking for massive foreign investment, especially from South Korea and Japan, to boost export-led growth. However, the trade and techno-war launched against China by the Trump administration of the U.S. could drag down the northeast's soaring hi-tech dreams.

Authorities in Liaoning province, known for sluggish heavy industry, are trying to rebuild the region's economy based on Big Data and robot-run factories

On the shop floor of Siasun – a Shenyang-based giant that makes all kinds of robots – it would be surprising if the management is unfazed about possible supply restrictions, which could include semiconductor chips, from the U.S.

But at the company headquarters, where shiny blue service robots greet visitors, Wang Yupeng, vice-president of the mobile robot division, says the impact of the U.S. trade restrictions would be minimal as 80% of the inputs for making the bots are homegrown.

Well aware that the western markets may be losing some of their shine, local planners are already focussing on opening up to other economies – South Korea, Japan, Russia, and countries in Southeast Asia, Central Europe and Africa – as the demand centres of the future.

At the headquarters of the privately-owned Yuanda group, which makes a range of products from escalators to curtain walls and new energy products, Freeman Chou, a company executive, says the group had been engaged for developing Terminal 3 at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International airport. Pictures of commuters at the Lucknow Metro station, climbing escalators built under the BLT brand of the company, are on display at the main exhibition hall of the enterprise.

"In China, there has been a real estate slowdown, prompting us to export our products to emerging economies and developing countries," says Wang Feng, the regional head of the company's elevator division.

Atul Aneja is *The Hindu's* Beijing correspondent.

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ECOLOGY

Deluged by *development*

The animal corridors leading to the Karbi Anglong hills — where Kaziranga's animals would take refuge during the monsoon each year — are now blocked by quarries and hotels. We need to act fast if we want to save one of the country's most famous wildlife parks

RAHUL KARMAKAR

Hamida Khatun, 42, has never visited Kaziranga National Park (KNP), although it is some 900 metres behind her house in Harmoti, Assam. Her populous village adjoins the Bagori range of the wildlife preserve, best known as the address of the greater one-horned rhino.

On the evening of July 18, Khatun froze when she found a tiger by her home. So did the tiger. The tiger was some 10 ft away from Khatun, between her and a tube-well in the backyard to which she was headed to wash her plates. She clanged the steel plates to chase the animal away, and the tiger disappeared into the bushes.

The people of Harmoti are used to the odd deer taking refuge in their village during the annual floods in Kaziranga. But a tiger has never crossed their path in more than four decades. Nor has a rhino or elephant.

What happened after Khatun's encounter was also unprecedented: angry villagers almost lynched Bagori Range Officer Pankaj Bora and other forest officials who had been trying to guide the animal back to the forest.

They were angry that the foresters had let the tiger lie all day inside scrap dealer Rafiqul Islam's house. "They should have tranquillised the animal and taken it away instead of endangering our lives," says Khatun's 24-year-old son Hafizuddin Sheikh.

The villagers were in no mood to understand that tranquillising was not a good idea for an animal that was probably hungry and tired after having swum through a flood. "We think the tiger slipped into the hills of Karbi Anglong district in the dead of night when there was less traffic on the highway," says Bora.

A 750 sq. km. stretch of hills in Karbi Anglong, south of NH 37, which runs along the southern periphery of KNP, has been the natural refuge for all animals when the park floods each monsoon. Unfortunately, commercial activities on or close to the animal corridors, especially along the 60 km stretch between Jakhalabandha and Bokakhat towns (on the western and eastern ends of KNP), have forced the animals to take unconventional monsoon migration paths over the years. Within the park, 144 artificial highlands were created for the animals, but they cover only 50 acres.

"Stone quarrying in Karbi Anglong over 15-16 years has virtually blocked some of the corridors, preventing animals from moving higher into the hills. This makes them vulnerable to poachers too," says environment activist Rohit Choudhury, whose petition in the Supreme Court led to a ban on stone mining this April.

Follow the floods

This year, when forest officials followed a few animals, including rhinos and elephants, they found them foraging around the abandoned stone quarries; they also found tiger pug marks there, underlining the importance of leaving animal corridors alone.

While wildlife activists are encouraged by the fact that wildlife is returning to the areas around the quarries, they point out that the bigger picture is far from heartening. "Floods are necessary for Kaziranga even though they kill scores of animals every year. The park won't survive without the floods – they replenish the wetlands and grasslands that the region's flagship species, the rhino, is

In the middle A forest camp surrounded by floodwaters inside Kaziranga. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Cover photo A one-horned rhino looks for dry land at Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary in Morigaon district. RITU RAJ KONWAR

dependent on," says N.K. Vasu, former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests. "The water, most importantly, helps drain out aquatic weeds that would otherwise choke the water bodies." So clearly it's not the flooding that's the problem. The biggest problem, as Vasu says, is the "construction and increasing human presence along and around the highway."

There are, for instance, scores of dhabas, restaurants and guesthouses on a 10 km stretch between the Bagori range office and the Burapahar range office. Many of these, allegedly without permits, came up after KNP was declared a tiger reserve in 2007. The scrap dealer's shack, where the tiger rested on July 18, was one such structure. Local people say the area also has an illegal cement block-making unit in Najan near Harmoti, whose effluents flow into the Gelubeel water body. The walls built around these structures also hinder animal movement.

Bending rules

"These structures are beyond our jurisdiction. Ideally, the civil administration should intervene," said a KNP official, speaking anonymously.

While officials of Golaghat and Nagaon districts, which Kaziranga straddles on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra, claim that no land has been bought in the vicinity of the park for more than a decade, local people say that the circle offices have been bending rules to let investors usurp land to expand hotels and other tourism-related activities. Dhabas, for example, have virtually turned into truck terminals,

River Diffolu, Kaziranga's lifeline, has suffered because of contamination

Local people say the circle offices have been bending rules to let investors usurp land to expand hotels and other tourism-related activities

of some of its tributaries by stone mining in the hills. "Quarrying affects the water quality, impacting wildlife habitats in and around Kaziranga," says a report by the Divisional Forest Officer of Eastern Assam wildlife division, which was sent to the national park director last June.

Much of Kaziranga's existence, since it was made a 'Proposed Reserve Forest' in June 1905, has depended on the cooperation of people who live along its periphery. Over the years, villagers have tipped off park officials about poachers, and also volunteered to rescue animals during floods. They have also taken rare attacks by wild animals in their stride; a few years ago a wild buffalo that had escaped the flooded park injured a person in Silimkhowa village on the foothills of Karbi Anglong.

Which is why forest officials were taken aback by the anger in Harmoti this time. They attribute it to the anxiety among people living along Kaziranga's periphery that they might lose lands and livelihoods if a 10-km Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) is demarcated around the park, which would ban several activities.

ESZs are envisaged as 'transition zones' for wildlife moving from areas of high to low protection. In March this year, a Central Empowered

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

On the move (Top to bottom) Wild buffaloes wade through water inside Kaziranga National Park; the carcass of a one-horned rhino floats in flood waters; and the lucky ones that managed to reach high ground.

AFP, RITU RAJ KONWAR, PTI

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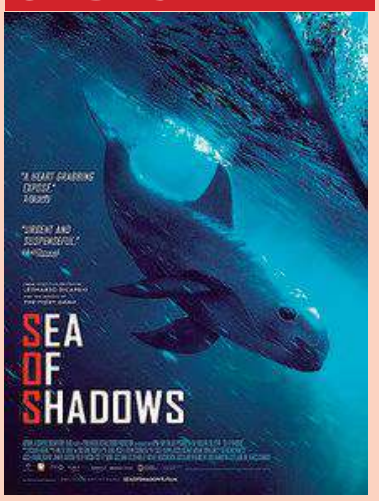
CREDITS



Sea of Shadows

RICHARD LADKANI, 104 MIN

Poaching in the Gulf of California is endangering both the totoaba, a prized fish, and the vaquita, the world's smallest whale. Scientists, investigators and the Mexican navy take on drug cartels and the Chinese mafia in this documentary.

The Great Hack

KARIM AMER & JEHANE NOUJAIM, 113 MIN

Facebook users' data was harvested and sold to political campaigns in the Cambridge Analytica scandal. This Netflix documentary primarily follows whistleblower Brittany Kaiser and academic David Carroll.

Inside the Secret World of Incels

BBC THREE, 50 MIN

Incels are a subculture of sexually frustrated men who blame women for their troubles. One, Elliot Rodger, 22, killed six fellow students in 2014. Three incels tell their personal stories in this BBC documentary.

Deluged...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Committee submitted to the Supreme Court a recommendation for an ESZ around Kaziranga as "some kind of shock absorber for the protected areas". The next month, the Supreme Court asked the Assam government to respond to the recommendation.

"We are not opposed to the ESZ, but it cannot be 10 km everywhere around the park," says Jitu Sarma Rajkhowa, president of Greater Kaziranga Human Resource Development and Environment Protection Committee. "Yes, we need environment protection, but we cannot let the people suffer. Villages have always existed 50-100 metres from KNP's boundary. It will be a great injustice if they are shifted. Kaziranga sustains more than 5 lakh people." .

Shrinking spaces

Deben Konwar of Jakhalabandha talks of the sacrifices made by local people for Kaziranga. "We were from Gotonga, a revenue village that was inundated by the Brahmaputra in 1969. We then moved to Kawoimari, which was acquired after Kaziranga became a national park in 1974. We moved again. Now we may be displaced again if an ESZ is established. Why should Kaziranga keep expanding and our space keep shrinking," he asks.

But KNP director P. Sivakumar points out that Kaziranga is not expanding. "People usually talk about its core area, which is 430 sq. km., but the national park is 898 sq.km, and Kaziranga Tiger Reserve, demarcated in 2007, covers 1,080 sq. km." Sivakumar says the ESZ need not be 10 km all around the park. "It can vary from zero to 10 km, depending on the level of sensitivity. There are stretches on the highway that animals do not use. We have no issues with commercial activities there. But areas along the nine animal corridors and about 50 *dandis* (paths) have to be protected."

On June 27, at a meeting headed by Assam Chief Secretary Alok Kumar, following the Supreme Court's direction of April, a suggestion was made about a possible relaxation of the ESZ width where necessary: "in areas of conflict the zero kilometre (boundary of KNP) limitation should be delineated and a minimum of 300/400 metres should be spared where there may be already existent public utilities/interest, government installations, building, etc," the minutes of the meeting stated.

Assam forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya says "We are yet to take a call on how wide the ESZ will be. The people will be taken into confidence to work out a formula that suits both humans and animals."

Park officials know that Kaziranga needs tourists. But there are plans now to contain them within Kohora, the most popular halt, which is away from the animal corridors

Forest officials believe these fears have been fuelled by commercial stakeholders. "The ESZ protects villagers and agricultural lands and prescribes a ban on new commercial and industrial activities. We believe the hospitality lobby is behind this misinformation campaign," says a senior forest official.

Communication gap

The Kuthari-Bagmari Eco-Development Committee is one of many such formed by the KNP authorities to involve villagers in conservation efforts. Its president Jayanta Rajkhowa points to a communication gap between foresters and the people. "Most people here are poor and subsist on agriculture. They don't know what the changing status of Kaziranga from reserved forest to national park to World Heritage site and tiger reserve entails in terms of conservation."

To address misconceptions, a meeting was held recently between Sivakumar and the people of Silimkhowa village, some 5 km south of the highway, facilitated by Pranab Bora of the World Wide Fund for Nature-India.

As Jonah Sing Engti of Silimkhowa explains, "Unlike commercial establishments along the highway, our houses have traditionally been spaced apart, so animals can pass through between them during floods. But the stone quarries not only came in their way, they have dried up five streams and damaged farmlands downstream. We are ensuring these quarries don't come up again."

Park officials know that Kaziranga needs tourists. But there are plans now to contain them within the centrally-located Kohora, the most popular halt for tourists, which is away from the animal corridors. Plans are also afoot to develop Bokakhat and Jakhalabandha towns as tourist hubs. A three-lane elevated highway in three stretches, totalling 35 km, has also been proposed to free up the nine animal corridors between the park and the hills.

"The world recognises Kaziranga as one of the best conservation stories of a century. But if we don't act fast, we might lose the park in less than 100 years," warns a range officer.

Long walk Wild elephants cross a highway to get to the elevated areas in Kaziranga; and (top) wildlife perched on the ridges inside the Park.

AFP, PTI

The centre has preserved about 20,000 manuscripts so far, from the 11th-century Dhavala manuscripts that contain Jain teachings to India's only existing copy of Kautilya's *Arthashastra*

FORENSIC ARTS

The doctors of *paintings*

Hidden away in a modest basement, Intach's art conservation centre in Bengaluru turns 25

JAYANTHI MADHUKAR

Past the large granite steps where students hang out between classes, past the galleries, and across the little open courtyard, I make my way to a long room tucked away in the basement of Chitrakala Parishath, Bengaluru's premier art institution. This is the Intach Chitrakala Parishath Art Conservation Centre (Ickpac), the only centre in South India where art conservation happens. And for all its anonymous digs, Ickpac is about to celebrate 25 years of a rather famous existence.

In this basement, paintings, art objects and old manuscripts are painstakingly restored by a team of 10 specialists who jokingly call themselves 'the doctors of painting'. "We examine paintings for symptoms," says Mrinalini Mani, centre coordinator, sitting behind her desk at one end of the long room.

"Nowadays, we've stopped using the term 'restoration'; it is a misnomer. It implies taking it back to the original. We prefer 'conservation' where the focus is on the health of the artwork and on slowing down the ageing process," says Mani. The centre's silver anniversary celebration, which included a four-day exhibition called *Simhavalokana* where 14 restored works were displayed, just concluded.

Transformed The Velankanni altar before (top) and after conservation; (left and below) ongoing conservation work. ICKPAC

Gilded splendour

Senior conservator Nalini B. Prabhakar takes out a painting from under a sheaf of white paper on a table. It is a magnificently gilded Russian icon of St. Nicholas. "All I can say is that this painting was acquired in 1890," she says. Ickpac is reluctant to name artists or collectors. "It was highly damaged, but after conservation, it looks good."

Paintings are scattered around the room in various stages of conservation. There is a Bacchus and Ariadne painting that's over a 100 years old. There's a large painting of an old woman from Kerala from the Raja Ravi Varma school. "That painting has come from a very remote corner of Kerala," says Prabhakar. "One regular client brings his paintings to us all the way from the U.S."

Conservation is like forensic art, says Mani. The materials used, the anatomy of the surface, the age of the painting – these are all deciphered using technology. It is easier to estimate the age of a European painting because there is ample documentation. "The Indian context is harder because ancient art was mostly religious and anonymous, like the Chola bronzes, and used traditional material and methodology. "This can make our work difficult," says Mani.

The artwork is first examined in natural light and then through transmitted light (shone from the back), and finally under UV light. Next, the consolidation process begins. The work is placed under a massive periscope-like contraption fixed to the ceiling, a suction unit to suck away vapours of chemicals like acetone. Tears are repaired, a base layer applied, and then the retouching or inpainting begins. "That is the part I love," says Prabhakar, showing me the specialised microscopes and visors used for the job.

On one of the tables is stacked a bunch of palm manuscripts. Ickpac has been declared a manuscript conservation centre, and is headed by Bhanu Prakash T.V. He estimates that the centre has preserved about 20,000 manuscripts so far, from the 11th century Dhavala manuscripts that contain the teachings of Jainism to India's only existing copy of Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, housed in the Oriental Research Institute in Mysuru.

Monkey king

The team that pores over damaged manuscripts also conserves massive heritage structures such as the Mucukunda panels at the Tyagarajaswamy temple in Tiruvarur. The documentation, cleaning, consolidation and reintegration that began in 2008 took over two years to complete. "The painted panels depict the story of Mucukunda Chakravarthi, the 'monkey-faced' Chola king who is said to have brought the idol of Tyagaraja to earth. Dating back to the 1660s or 1670s, to the late Nayaka or early Maratha period, the paintings are among the finest to have survived from the period," says Madhu Rani, former centre director.

Mani remembers being subsumed by the project. A particularly stubborn patch was giving them a lot of trouble. Then one evening, as she sat staring at the walls, she noticed a beehive. "That was a eureka moment," she laughs. A beehive must have been smoked out, and the beeswax dripping down had created a film. A wax solvent was applied and the patch disappeared.

Ickpac has also intervened at the Shrine Basilica in Velankanni. It has conserved paintings and murals at Chennai's Senate House, at Thanjavur Maratha Palace, Ramalinga Vilasam in Ramanathapuram, and Nalknad Palace in Coorg. The team jokes about how they had to get over the fear of heights to complete these projects. Prabhakar has been up 30-40 feet high, Mani about 50 feet. "Today, we have harnesses and metal scaffolding. Earlier it was just you and the casuarina scaffolding," says Mani.

Interestingly, Rani talks of how more than actual conservation they end up "having to undo wrong interventions." Now, Intach is conducting workshops and awareness programmes to sensitise people to these issues. Things are, however, changing for the better. As Rani says, "There have been international collaborations. Institutions are coming forward to support research, a lot of young people are being trained. The future looks bright."

The freelance writer believes that everything has a story waiting to be told.

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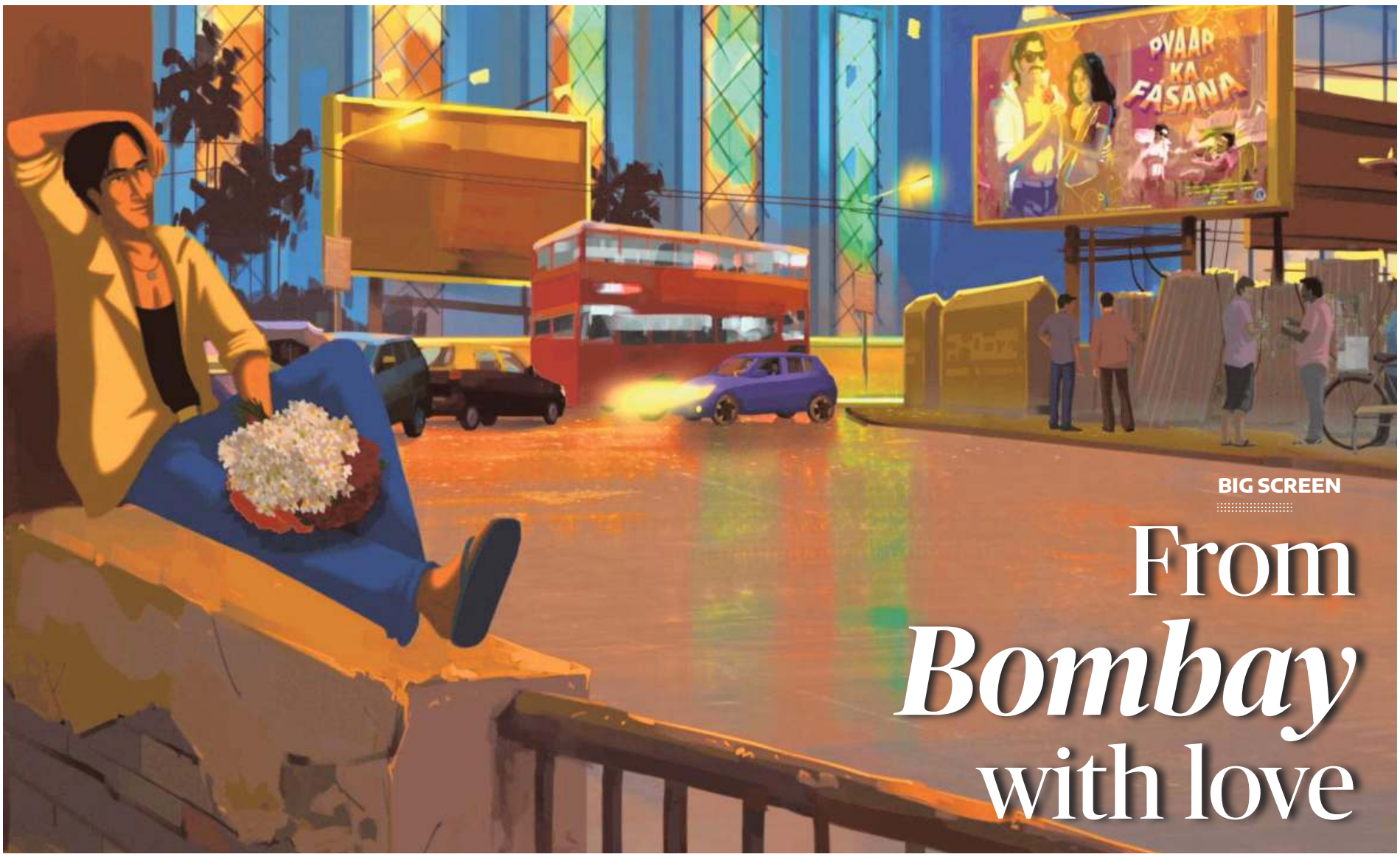


BIG SCREEN

From *Bombay* with love

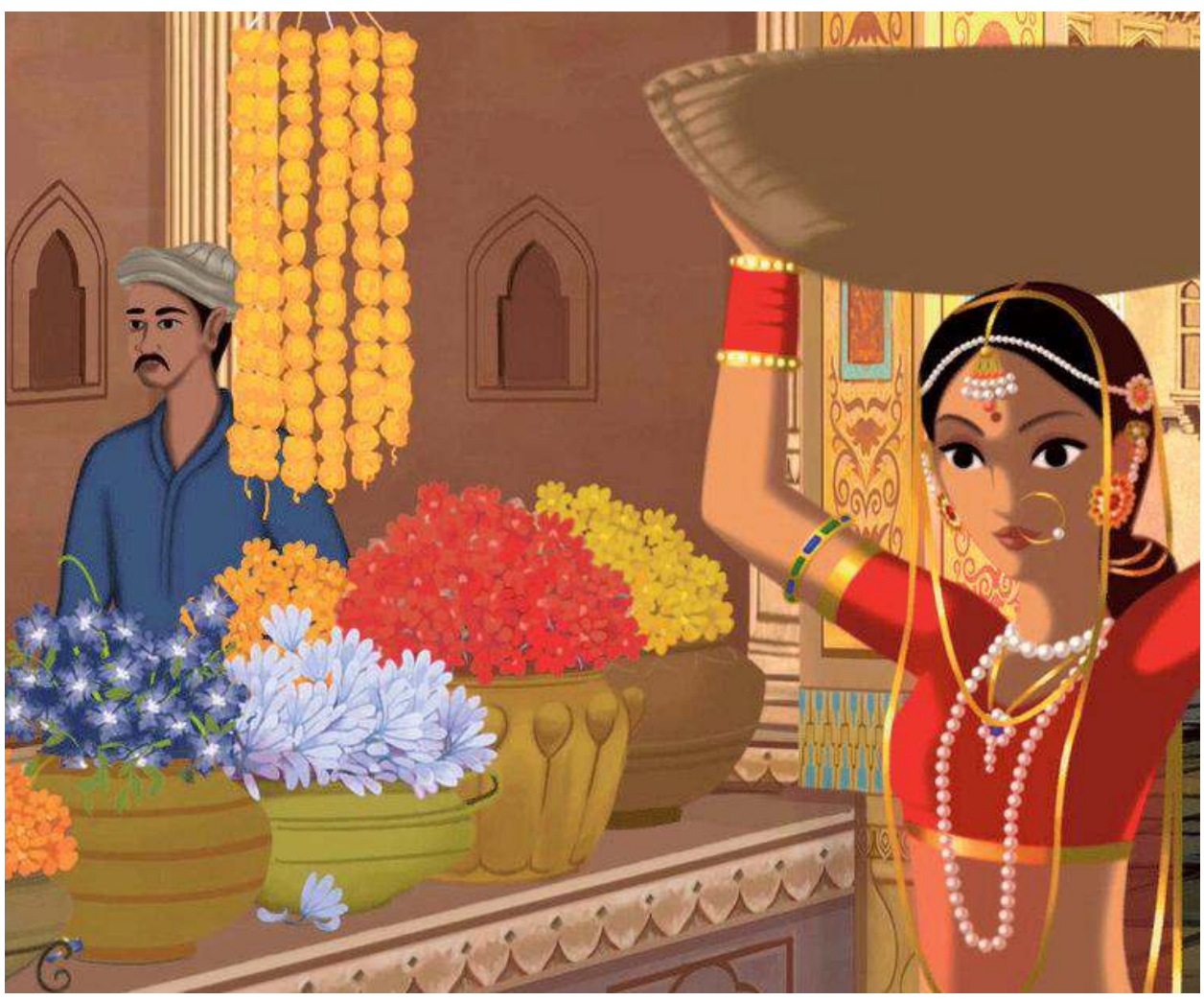
Animated film *Bombay Rose* will open Critics' Week at the Venice International Film Festival this August

NAMRATA JOSHI

It was 1992 that redefined Bombay and also changed the course of Gitanjali Rao's life. For Rao – now an animator, filmmaker and actor, then an 18-year-old student at the Sir J.J. School of Art – the megapolis had always been the centre of the universe, and a place where everybody lived happily with each other. "For a lot of people in my arts college, Bombay was a muse, a lover, something that inspired us to be artistic," she recollects. The demolition of Babri Masjid, the riots, the divisiveness and hatred brought politics right to the centre of their world of arts. "You had a Riyas Komu, a Bose Krishnamachari writhing in pain as artists, seeing the city burning," she says.

Over the years, she has found Mumbai becoming less safe for women, migrants and minorities, while growing more violent and aggressive. But then there's also the city's wonderful duality: there is still a reserve of love, a huge survival instinct that towers above all. "The infamous cutthroatedness and survival instinct that make you selfish also render you very vulnerable," says Rao.

Bombay Rose, her maiden animated feature film, will open the Venice Critics Week at the Venice Film Festival in end-August. It's about showing that side of the city to the



The film brings three characters together. One is a Kashmiri man, another a flower girl from Madhya Pradesh. The third is an old Anglo-Indian woman

Migrant city (Above and facing page) Stills from *Bombay Rose*; (bottom) Gitanjali Rao. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

world – and also to people who were born and have grown up in new Mumbai, who wouldn't know the Bombay of old.

"It was extremely tolerant, versatile and a truly migrant city like New York; built by people from outside, for people from outside," she says. So is it a love letter to Bombay, as someone has described it? "It is not a love letter to the city. It is a love letter about the city to the rest of the world," she tells us, as we sip on kahwa.

A rose is a rose

The film brings three characters together. One is a Kashmiri man, another a flower girl from Madhya Pradesh who sells *gajras* in Juhu woven from flowers bought at Dadar flower market.

The third is an old Anglo-Indian woman, a character inspired by Cuckoo, the dancing queen of Hindi cinema in the 40s and the 50s, who was forgotten in her later years. A rose forms the essential link between the three; it's the purveyor of love.

Rao's love for flowers vies with her love for cats; she has eight cats moving in and out of her flat. Her family has been in Mumbai for two generations and she feels strongly about the migration issue. "I was born here, I am of this caste, this belongs to me and the rest are unwelcome – the moment you start getting these feelings [from someone belonging to the city], you know you are a migrant.".

The essential dichotomy of Mumbai again comes into play here. "This city has been welcoming to migrants, yet the politics keeps pushing them out, doesn't give them voting rights, neither here nor in the place they come from," says Rao.

Mumbai's physical spaces and architecture are a special force in the film. "The city and the people are not separate at all. Through animation I bring spaces and people almost into each other, offset by spaces that they might have left to come to Bombay," she says.The film spans Juhu, Bandra and Mahim. Rao, a Borivli girl now living in Malad, has been in love with Bandra for the longest time. "To me Bandra is very interesting because it is where the town comes to meet the suburbs. You see a lot of Bandra as it must have been in the 1950s, and what it is now," she says.

Merge with reality

Mandu, as a dream space, an inspiration for where the flower girl comes from, is offset against the reality of Bombay in the film. The characters don't reject this reality. They merge into it, try to make the most of it. "Which is what migrants do," says Rao.

Mumbai also inspires the film's music. The soundtrack uses archival music from the 50s, not just Indian but Pakistani and Spanish too. There is one original song composed by Swanand Kirkire, which is the inner voice of the flower girl who doesn't talk too much but sings in her mind. And then there is Lorna Cordeiro's 'Red Rose' to tie it all up.

After five independently produced animated shorts – *Blue, Orange, Printed Rainbow, Chai* and *True Love Story* – that have been to over 150 film festivals, Rao is getting ready to take Mumbai to Venice through her first feature film. And to many other festivals after that, she hopes. Her immediate concern, however, is about who will feed her eight cats while she is away.

ONE MOMENT PLEASE

The dance of the inanimate

When 'lifeless' objects move — and heighten the humanity of a scene

In a luxury ship's dining room – grand, opulent, but for the moment deserted – a strange waltz begins. An unattended serving trolley is moving about on its wheels, going back and forth, sometimes bumping into furniture. With its large hemispherical metallic "head", the trolley looks like a prototype of the restless little droid R2-D2 from *Star Wars*. But there are no cute beeping sounds, just an eerie silence.

Because this is happening on RMS *Titanic*, and the movie is the 1958 *A Night to Remember,* generally regarded as the best of the feature films made about the famous tragedy, or at least the one that presents the most authentic depiction of what happened, unfettered by fictionalised narratives.

Through much of its running time, *A Night to Remember* is a restrained film about British stoicism in crisis – it's only in the final half-hour that we see people screaming and panicking, throwing themselves into the water, fighting for lifeboat space. But for me, some of the most chilling scenes are the ones involving the lonesome trolley, which makes very brief appearances at various points in the film.

Shortly after the iceberg collision, we see it for the first time. It moves only a few inches, but this is still ominous: after all, in an earlier scene, a passenger had placed a pencil upright on his plate and impressed his co-diners with the fact that it stayed still – so serene was the Titanic's progress through the water.

Lifelike lurch

Later, with the evacuation underway, as a group of steerage passengers encroach on the lavish dining room - and stand transfixed, murmuring "First Class!" - it is the sudden movement of the trolley that shakes them out of their stupor and reminds them that they must hurry. And later still, as the ship starts to tilt and scenes of carnage unfold, our R2-D2 is lurching frenetically all over the room. It looks more human than before.

We think of emotional moments in films as being centred around people, or at least living beings: sentient faces, voices, even animal sounds will do. When a scene focuses on lifeless *objects*, there is a tendency to think of it as detached, coolly dispassionate. But sometimes, inanimate things can heighten the humanity of a scene.

Consider another doomsday film of the late 1950s: *On the Beach*, set in a future where nuclear fallout is shutting down life on Earth and only a few survivors are left in the Southern Hemisphere. (The story unfolds mostly in Australia.) Then comes what might be a ray of hope: indecipherable Morse code is picked up from the Pacific Coast. Naval officers travel to the U.S. to investigate... and find that the signals were created by a vagrant Coca-Cola bottle knocking against the telegraph machine. Mankind's achievements – our technological advances, our ability to communicate in complex ways – lie neatly exposed, in much the same way that the iceberg put an end to the hubris that "God himself could not sink the Titanic."

As the ship starts to tilt and scenes of carnage unfold, our R2-D2 is lurching frenetically all over the room. It looks more human than before

Comedy of remarriage

But if the scenes mentioned above suggest hopelessness, objects can also be used funnily and reassuringly. I can think of no better example than the final sequence of the great 1937 screwball comedy *The Awful Truth*, an early version of what Stanley Cavell called the Hollywood "comedy of remarriage".

Jerry (Cary Grant) and Lucy (Irene Dunne) have separated, but it is obvious to anyone watching that they are still in love. Misadventures, pratfalls and games of one-upmanship build to a climax where – on the very night that their divorce is to come through – they are staying in adjoining rooms in a cabin, both clearly awkward and yearning to be together. Two moving objects punctuate this sequence: a cheeky door that refuses to shut properly, giving them an excuse to stay up and chat; and a fancy clock with a tiny male and female figurine coming out of adjacent niches each time the quarter-hour is struck.

I won't reveal what happens to this clock at the end, except to say that the last shot – which allows the film a way round the censorship restrictions of the era – is witty, perfectly executed, and might cause the first-time viewer to gasp in delight. Once again, an inanimate object has provided an achingly human touch.

Jai Arjun Singh is a Delhi-based writer and film critic who finds it easier to concentrate on specific scenes than entire films as he grows older.

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SPOTLIGHT

Between art and the everyday

An interesting exhibition in Bengaluru that allows paintings to converse with recipes and potted plants

Layered Krishnaraj Chonat's *Juice*, acrylic on canvas; and (facing page) Sudarshan Shetty's *No Title*, acrylic letters, LED on wooden frame.

PRIYANKA SACHETI

Entering the spare whitewashed interiors of Galleryske, the first work you encounter is an iridescent fabric-kumkum layered Sheela Gowda hanging above a skyline of potted grasses. The room on your right flickers in aqua, pistachio, rose, lavender and cobalt blue, displaying a movingly rendered recipe-prose piece by Archana Phantom Hands bench. In a back room, a Krishnaraj Chonat painting in mauve and cobalt depicting a root-wrapped tree communes with plants, mounds of red soil, a copy of Richard Powers' The Overstory, and a Dia Mehta Bhupal miniature of quiet landscapes.

'Reclaiming the House' is an interesting and unusual convergence of ideas and layers, where art and the quotidian is juxtaposed intimately on an island of Bengaluru heritage. The diverse strands of experience complement the centrality of the art experience. "The show is a gesture towards including non-visual art voices into the space," says Sunitha Kumar Emmart, founder of Galleryske. A long-time patron and collector of arts, Emmart says putting together the exhibition contributed equally towards her own redefinition of what it means to be a gallerist.

Food, books, music

The art that resides in the fabric of everyday life is increasingly becoming a subject of contemplation and engagement for artists. In this exhibition, layers of ordinary, everyday life and works of art are in dialogue with one another, just as one might find in any home. Emmart was particularly preoccupied with the idea of a house and all that it encompasses: the spaces and objects in it, the art hung there, the food cooked and its attendant smells, the books and music, and the conversations conducted there. It is thus that the house becomes a receptacle of accumulated memory and experience.

As you travel from one space to another in the gallery, you realise that there is a small ecosystem or environment for each artwork to exist on its own. "After all, houses aren't curated," Emmart points out. The house is, therefore, as much a participant in this exhibition as the artworks and the other complementary components.

A colonial house dating back to 1870 was converted into this art gallery, and so the home's physical dimensions and heritage details add another layer to the multifaceted exhibition. "We have been able to trace all the owners except the first one," says Emmart, pointing out how the house is a sum of all of the people who lived here. In some ways, the exhibition therefore is a reclaiming of the house as it once was, with its wealth of experiences.

Featuring the works of Dia Mehta Bhupal, Krishnaraj Chonat, Sheela Gowda, Prabhavathi Meppayil, and Sudarshan Shetty, the gallery then invited five collaborators to respond to each work. Arjun Jayadev selected a book that would relate to each of the five artists; Pidathala wrote a piece of text that's also a recipe reflecting on each work; Michael Little curated a plant display; Phantom Hands and Avinash Veeraraghavan chose furniture and music pieces, respectively, as their responses to the works. That all the collaborators were Bengaluru-based made their responses also uniquely space-specific.

Space for music

Emmart talks of how certain individuals have an amazing ability to engage with just one thing and in the process open up the world in many other ways. Jayadev's engagement with literature and poetry or Veeraraghavan's relationship with music are such examples. "Avinash could bring music into the space in a way that would make sense," she says.

Landscape designer Michael Little had already, a few years ago, worked on the garden that surrounds the house. "Before choosing the plants, I wanted to understand both the artists' works and the gallery space. I saw the books, I listened to the music, I sat on the lovely chairs and benches. I then did some sketches to find a point of resonance or syncopation between room, space, art and the plants," he says, describing his artistic process.

Little points out the various factors that influenced his selection of plants, and describes planting design as "a combination of common sense and intuition." In the case of arranging plants for an art exhibition, he talks of keeping in mind environment conditions, particularly light intensity. "Here the challenge was very low light... and there were a narrow range of plants that would work," he says.

For Sudarshan Shetty's work, Little uses Horsetail plants, which are relatives of the Giant Horsetail forests that covered the earth 400 million years ago. Inside the room illuminated letters spell out 'When we travel, we forget who we are'. "On a geological scale, how much we have forgotten," Little says, of the relationship between the horsetails and this particular work.

Speaking of why she chose to contribute hand-written recipes to accompany the art works, Pidathala says, "Over the past few years, food has become my most natural and intimate form of expression." When Galleryske asked the author of *Five Morsels of Love,* which was based on her grandmother's cookbook, to respond to the artworks, she says she used the voice she was most expressive in, resulting in food and

As you travel from one space to another in the gallery, you realise that there is a small ecosystem or environment for each artwork to exist on its own

SCANNER

A cinematic imagination

An exhibition at Lalit Kala Akademi, Chennai, is showcasing photographs from early Indian cinema, shot by German cinematographer Josef Wirsching between the 1920s and 60s. On show until August 4, the collection includes publicity images and behind-the-scenes photos.

Regionalism and identity

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the Madras Art Movement, spearheaded by the likes of K.C.S. Paniker and S. Dhanapal, engaged creatively with indigenous traditions. A show that focuses on this core group of artists is on at Mumbai's Kala Ghoda Gallery until October 12.

recipes. "Sunitha gave me the freedom to choose the form. I could have used images or photographs but we exist in a world where we are already too exposed to visual imagery."

Tribute to grandmom

She used pages taken from her grandmother's notebook, where the recipes were written out by hand with pen and ink. "I attribute my whole journey in food to my grandmother and try to pay a tribute to her and the gift of her generosity in some way in everything I do – hence the notebook," she says.

Pidalatha found the concept a great way for the viewer to make connections. "So much is left unsaid and is left to the viewer and her imagination to connect the dots." The interesting thing about an exhibition of this kind is that it reinforces the multiplicity of human beings; the fact that they each respond to the world from the lens of their own interests and past and understanding. Setting these facets next to and against each other in shared spaces helps create multiple entry points for the viewer and multiple communication points for the artist.

The writer is a poet and tree lover based in Bengaluru.

Mixed matter Sheela Gowda's *No Title*, kumkum, cowdung, cloth on paper board.

STAGE WHISPERS

Motley turns 40

Four decades of Naseeruddin Shah's theatre group is ample reason to pop the bubbly

Running forever A scene from *Dear Liar*. R. SHIVAJI RAO

As I write this, Motley (better known as Naseeruddin Shah's theatre group) is celebrating its 40th birthday with a two-week festival at Prithvi Theatre in Mumbai. I complete 40 years in December, and I assure you it's a very long time.

The festival has some old favourites, plus some newer hits based on stories by Ismat Chughtai and Saadat Hasan Manto. All the Shahs – Naseeruddin, Ratna Pathak, Heeba, Imaad, and Vivaan – are participating, along with the (pun not intended, or maybe it is) motley crew of performers that have contributed to the group over the last decade. There is also a 'fringe' section, where new work is being tried out, storytelling, poetry, play readings, shorter pieces etc.

Bold choice

One fringe production was 'Godot ki Dastaan', which had Benjamin Gilani and Naseeruddin Shah sharing stories of their production of Samuel Beckett's masterpiece, *Waiting for Godot*. This was the first play produced by Motley, and the bold choice has stood the test of time. As they kept saying, they have never pretended to understand it completely, but have discovered more about it with every visit. I believe it is a play that ages well, particularly if you're ageing well too. I've had the privilege of being part of this production. There is a small part of a character simply called The Boy. Because getting taller is a natural process for most, that part had the shortest shelf life for actors. I believe I was the third actor to play the role. There have been seven or eight in total. My memories of this experience are vague, primarily because it was over three decades ago. I do look rather cute in the photos though.

> I was blown away. I saw the 1954 film later, and remember thinking I preferred Naseeruddin Shah to Humphrey Bogart

A new meaning

During this freewheeling talk, 'Naseer Uncle' and 'Ben Taya' shared a story of how the play was once performed in a Methodist church in place of the Sunday sermon. They talked of how it was a special experience, and how the play took on another meaning altogether in that hallowed space. I remember being a part of this show too.

While Motley has dabbled in a lot of Hindustani and Urdu work lately, a lot of their earlier work was English. Besides *Godot*, their production of *Dear Liar* by Jerome Kilty has been running forever. Directed by the late Pandit Satyadev Dubey, it depicts, through their letters, the relationship between George Bernard Shaw and the actress, Mrs. Campbell.

Another of Motley's earliest English plays was *A Romance for Ruby* by Aruna Thosar Dixit, a PR officer at IIT Mumbai. It was directed by the senior Shah, and had Ratna Pathak Shah, Mahabanoo Mody-Kotwal, and Sagar Arya, who was the second Godot boy, on the stage.

Favourite performance

Motley and I are turning 40 in the same year. And I've watched almost everything Motley has produced, but I think my favourite remains their adaptation of *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial* by Herman Wouk. A taut naval courtroom drama which featured, in my favourite performances, Naseeruddin Shah as the eccentric Captain Queeg and my father Akash Khurana as defence attorney Barney Greenwald.

I was around 11 when I first saw it, and I distinctly remember some of the sequences even today. I was blown away. I saw the 1954 film later, and remember thinking I preferred Naseeruddin Shah to Humphrey Bogart. Motley did revive the show later with a new cast, but I was too biased in favour of the original cast.

Coincidentally, the first play of Aadyam's fifth season reminded me of *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial*. Nadir Khan directed *A Few Good Men*, by Aaron Sorkin, also a naval courtroom drama, which opened last weekend. A super slick show, with terrific production values, I suppose its biggest challenge was being constantly compared to Rob Reiner's film starring Jack Nicholson, Tom Cruise and Demi Moore . Those are the shoes Rajit Kapur, Neil Bhoopalam and Ira Dubey had to fill.

If the response I saw is anything to go by, I think the production held its own rather well. I'm directing the next play from Aadyam this season, a stage version of *The Kite Runner*. We have a much-loved book and a critically acclaimed film that we will be constantly compared to. I should probably wind up this article and go rehearse.

Akarsh Khurana, theatre producer and director, is often broke. To cope, he writes and directs films and web series and occasionally acts, albeit reluctantly.

The art of Banksy

The world's largest touring collection of street artist Banksy's works will be on show in Sydney from September 13. More than 80 works, including sculptures and screen-prints, are featured. The exhibition is curated by Steve Lazarides, Banksy's former manager and photographer.

Buddha, the golden legend

The Guimet Museum of Asian Arts in Paris is hosting an exhibition on the spread of Buddhism in Asia, as illustrated by 159 works of art — iconographic representations of the Buddha in paintings, sculptures, architecture — from different time periods and countries.

DELHI THE HINDU Magazine
Sunday, July 28, 2019

Point-blank Chandro Tomar, 87, at her home in Johri village in Uttar Pradesh; (bottom) young shooters at a training session; and (facing page) 82-year-old Prakashi Tomar. R.V. MOORTHY

FIRE POWER

Johri's shooting stars

They are making a movie on the lives of these two octogenarian women shooters, but the village is still loath to let go of patriarchy

HEMANI BHANDARI

A signboard with the words 'Shooter Dadi' welcomes those who enter Johri village in Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat district. After all, Johri's claim to fame this past decade has been a pair of intrepid sharpshooters, sisters-in-law Chandro Tomar and Prakashi Tomar, now octogenarians, whose unusual and rule-breaking journey to fame has been documented several times.

Johri and the two women are back in the spotlight, with a movie being made around their lives. The *dadis* quit shooting some years ago, and now stroll around their farms and play with their grandchildren.

I reach Johri, some three hours from Delhi, on a rainy morning. I am directed to a vast haveli with a neem tree in its courtyard. Chandro emerges in a full-sleeved white shirt and blue ghagra, a pale pink dupatta covering her head. She has the air of having interacted with the media for decades. After the initial greetings, she goes back inside to change into "better clothes" for the photo shoot, and then poses like a pro, victory sign and all.

A corner of the house is filled with medals. The green walls have photos of her with celebrities, the latest being with actors Taapsee Pannu and Bhumi Pednekar, who will play the sisters-in-law in the upcoming film.

It all began in 1998 when a makeshift shooting range was opened in Johri by Rajpal Singh, former shooting coach, who founded the Johri Rifle Association. Village youngsters flocked to the range to learn shooting, and among them was Chandro's granddaughter Shefali Tomar, now an international trap shooter. "It wasn't considered safe for girls to go alone anywhere, so I went with her," smiles Chandro.

Chandro recalls how Shefali was initially nervous, till one day Chandro walked up to her and said, "*Main dikhaati hun kaise karte hain*" (let me show you how it's done), and shot a bullseye. "The coach asked me to do it again, and that's how the journey began. No one in the family knew we were going to the range; I used to lie that I was going to the fields."

Till that moment, life for Chandro had revolved around veils, children, cattle and the farm. Married when she was 15, her life was strictly monitored. "So when I got a chance, I didn't want to let go," she says. Her secret was found out only when a photograph was published in a local newspaper. It led to a storm, with family and neighbours mocking her and demanding that she stop. She refused.

Meanwhile, her sister-in-law Prakashi entered shooting in a similar way, persuaded by her daughter Seema Tomar, who went on to win the silver medal in the ISSF World Shotgun Cup 2010 in Dorset. Over the years, as Chandro and Prakashi won medals, often going up to the pre-national tournament stage in the veterans segment, their fame as women who had broken barriers of age, patriarchy and tradition grew. More importantly, their success and Rajpal Singh's shooting range fostered a culture of shooting that has now produced some of India's finest shooters and turned all of Baghpat into fertile medal-hunting ground.

Shooting out of sight

The two *dadis* continue to encourage girls and women to take up shooting and other sports. "*Ladki bachao, ladki padhao aur ladki khilao*," the two say. "I used to go door to door asking people to send their daughters to the shooting range and the men would refuse. Sometimes, the women would agree and send their daughters in secret," recalls Chandro.

At the Johri shooting range, though, there are only some 20 girls. Girls and boys have a brick tied to their wrists for strength and concentration. Manvi, 15, a Class X student, is a national-level shooter. She pays ₹500 a month to use the range for three hours, six days a week, after school. She was brought here by her mother who used to clean the floors of the shooting range. "If my parents don't get me married then I want to become an international level shooter," says Manvi.

Dolly Jatav, all of 11, is the star and poster girl of the academy. Dolly used to once work with her parents in a

brick kiln. She won a silver medal in the U.P. State Shooting Championship in air pistol shooting, and dreams of representing India globally one day. "Mummy *kehti hai dekhengey* (mother says, we'll see)," she says.

But even now, more than half the trainees at the range are boys. Hari Om Tomar, 17, is from a village nearby. He has shot nationally. "The infrastructure is good and affordable," he says.

Students come to Johri from nearby villages and some from as far away as Loni in Ghaziabad. Those who don't pursue shooting as a sport, get jobs as security guards or join the security forces. Rajpal wants the *dadi*s to visit his range often and attract more girls to the sport. He wants to ultimately hand over the shooting range to Nita Ambani, he says, showing me a picture of her visiting the range. He is waiting for the day "at least 50 girls sign up."

Women don't talk

Despite the famous *dadi*s, though, this might not happen overnight. A few metres from Chandro's house lives Pawan Kumar. He doesn't want his wife named, and we watch as she walks about doing chores, sari firmly covering her head. She hasn't studied and doesn't step out of the house unless "asked to". The men of the family do all the talking because the women are "not allowed to".

"The *dadi*s have brought fame and development to the village," says Kapil Tomar, 25, a farmer. "But women their age or even younger women don't

Chandro used to train girls from Haryana, Punjab, and Bihar, using household chores for muscle strengthening

indulge in all this." Sitting next to him is Sher Singh, 30, who works in Delhi. He says Johri girls are not allowed to step out after sunset or wear jeans or use social media. They are mostly married off after high school.

Surely all that's changing now, since there are more women shooters from the village? "Change *kya aana hai? Jo chal raha hai sahi hai*. (What change? Whatever is going on is fine)," says Singh. Ironically, Chandro never pushed her own daughters-in-law into the sport. "They weren't interested," she says.

She used to train girls from Sirsa in Haryana, Patiala in Punjab, and even from Bihar, using household chores for muscle strengthening. She would ask them to hold a jug of water to learn stillness, clean floors with broom and mop, or wring clothes dry to strengthen fingers. So why hasn't she trained any women in Johri yet? "No one has ever asked," she says.

In many ways, revolution and reality continue hand in hand in Johri. In the star shooter's household, it's still Dolly who wakes at 5 a.m. to bathe, pray and exercise before she tends to the cattle and takes care of her four siblings. Only then can she go shooting.

SERENDIPITIES

Cleaved into two

In our times, nowhere are binaries more visible than in the stories told by modern nation-states about how to think of identities

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Every so often, when I hear a discussion veer to the topic of freedom, I think of my arts and crafts teacher, Mehr Contractor. I was eight or nine years when I joined her class. What struck me most about her was that she, in her 60s, was unlike most women I knew. She sometimes drove a car, a car itself was a rarity in my childhood, a woman driving even more so; she hopped on the back of scooters to hitch a ride home. To my eight-year-old mind, she embodied freedom. Freedom from what, I couldn't say then.

Nearly three decades later, what strikes me as remarkable was the world view that divided the world neatly into twos. Those who were free and those who weren't. Those who ate ice cream and those who didn't. Those who liked cricket, those who didn't. This willingness to construct binaries came without any prodding or training. As if the default mechanism in human brains involves conceptualising the world into simple either-or's. This instinctive schemata becomes all the more vivid in our times as one watches political vocabularies in complex democracies find newer and virulent expressions of us-vs-them. Countries like the U.S. that had seemingly found ways to sidestep such binaries and all the accompanying awkward questions have returned to it.

Exclusive spheres

Perhaps unsurprisingly, across human history, this has been the norm. Binaries allowed us to think of the world as comprising distinct, mutually exclusive spheres, the sum of which exhaust our cognitive universes. Among the oldest of such efforts was crystallised in the Zoroastrian religion, which reduced the world into spheres of light and non-light, the Ahura Mazdas against the Ahrimans. The original Platonists in Greece similarly divided the world into perfect archetypes and imperfect manifestations. The Islamic world view was of believers and non-believers.

In our times, nowhere are binaries more visible than in the stories told by modern nation-states about how to think of identities. Indians versus Pakistanis, Americans vs Russians, Arabs vs Persians, and so on. Institutions, contracts, civic

A grammar of difference is enshrined in ways that we can no longer speak about the world except in this language of cleaved alternatives

norms, culture – all have accreted around such dualities. A grammar of difference is enshrined in ways that we can no longer speak about the world except in this language of cleaved alternatives.

Different loyalties

Adherents of this world view speak of nationalism in its present avatar as a permanent fact of human history. Yet, none-too-long ago, this was often not the case.

Scholars who study 'empires' as political entities – from the longest lived Ottoman empire to the global project of the British empire – tell us that individuals who lived under these vast conglomerates carried a portfolio of different loyalties. One could very well be a Greek, an Orthodox Christian, a resident of Istanbul, and a speaker of Turkish. Political power in a 19th century empire was always distant and inaccessible to most. One could only hope to get close to power, but never become power itself. Thus, individual identities were often context specific, with the end goal being proximity to power. In turn, political identities were multi-layered and political inequality an unremarkable fact. One always knew one's place in an empire.

Citizenship and identity

In contrast, the modern nation-state reverts to a more binary approach to identity where it privileges one identity above all others: membership in a group or, presently, citizenship in a nation-state. The flip side to this elevation of one identity over all else is that it has also theoretically allowed for egalitarianism among citizens as the foundational conceit of its self-image.

Thus, within the last hundred years, we have seen two visions of identities in a political society: to pick and choose from a portfolio of individual identities in an inegalitarian society versus maintaining a singular identity in an egalitarian society. All this may have been merely of theoretical interest in the past for most of us. But with climate refugees, economic migrants, internally displaced peoples on the rise, the very language we use to describe ourselves will come under strain. Who belongs, who is an outsider, how should we treat them – questions with no easy answers.

As traditional states double down on these ideas, we'll find almost all our social and moral institutions coming under stress, as we see fellow humans enclosed behind barbed wire, unshaven, unclean, awaiting a piece of paper that will one day set them free.

Keerthik Sasidharan is a writer and lives in New York City.

First stop The train on its way to Kallar station, the first stop after Mettupalayam. Between Mettupalayam and Coonoor, the line uses a rack-and-pinion system to help it along the steep gradient.

Tunnel vision There are 16 tunnels on the route. The first tunnel is after Kallar. From here, the vistas the route is known for begin to unfold.

LOCOMOTIVE

As old as the hills

With a 14-year World Heritage tag, the 111-year-old Nilgiri Mountain Railway is the grande dame of toy trains

TEXT BY SOFIA JULIET R. AND
IMAGES BY M. SATHYAMOORTHY

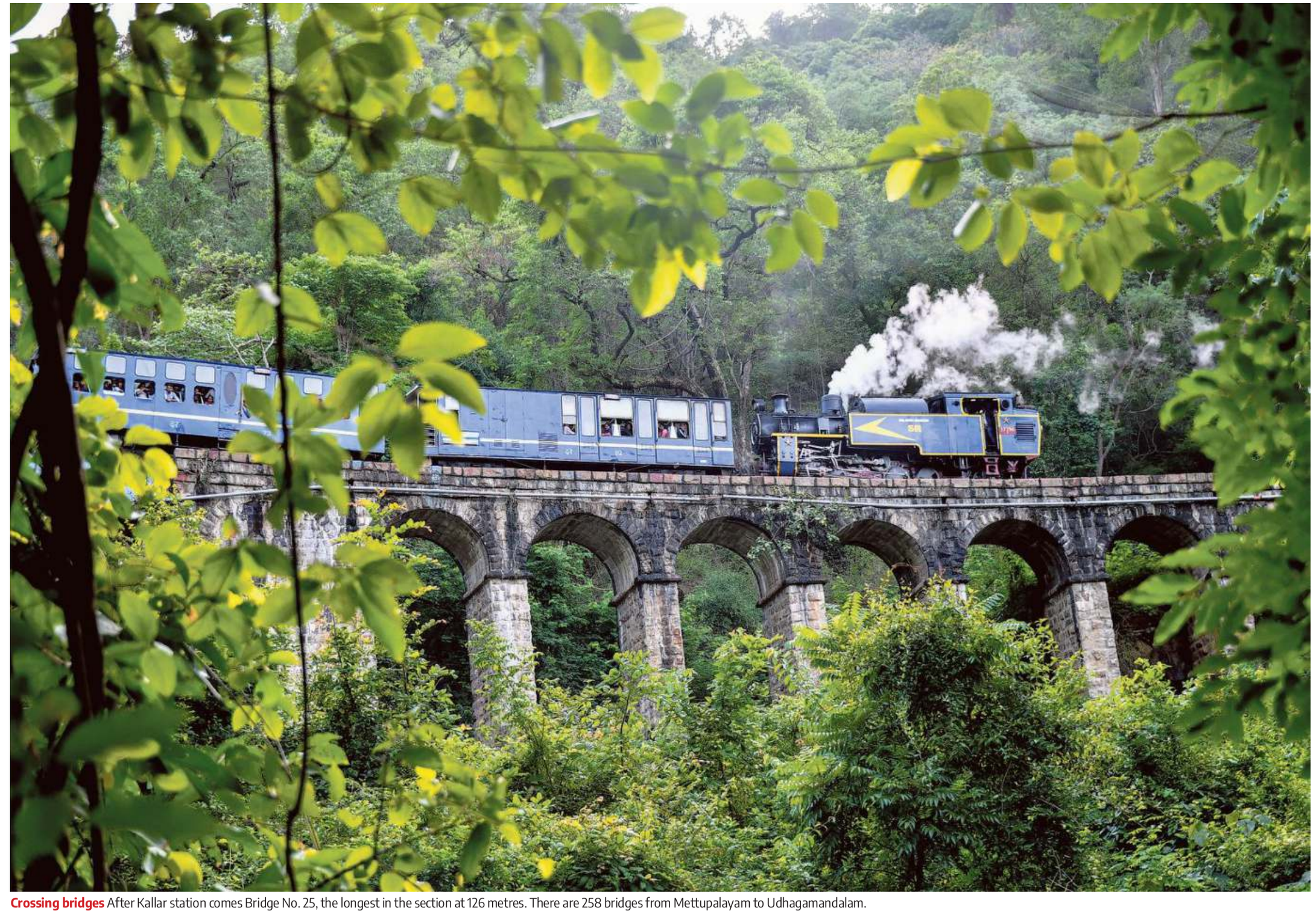
My first ride on the Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR) was as an eight-year-old with my cousins. I remember how we screamed – partly in excitement, partly in fear – each time the 'toy train' went through the 16 tunnels it crosses from Mettupalayam to Ooty. We held our breath when it chugged over bridges (there are 258 of them), awed by the vista of mountains and valleys, tea estates and waterfalls that lay below.

On July 15, NMR celebrated the 14th anniversary of its induction as a Unesco World Heritage Site. Now, along with the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and the Kalka-Shimla Railway, NMR is also part of the heritage 'Mountain Railways of India'.

NMR has more than a few distinctions. On its 46 km journey, the little blue train climbs from 325 m to 2,240 m, negotiating along the way the steepest gradient of any railway line in South Asia. It does this with its rack and pinion system – it is the only rack railway in India – where cog wheels mesh with a toothed rack rail to ease the climb. It is also India's only train that uses a Swiss X-class coal engine, one of the world's oldest engines.

When this railway was completed in 1908, the last stop was the hill town of Coonoor. The line was later extended to Ooty (Udhagamandalam). It now passes through 13 stations: Mettupalayam, Kallar (now closed for passengers), Adderley, Hillgrove, Runnymede, Katteri, Coonoor, Wellington, Aravankadu, Ketti, Lovedale, Fernhill and Ooty.

The train leaves Mettupalayam at 7.10 each morning, switches from a steam to a diesel engine at Coonoor station, and chugs into Ooty at noon.



Crossing bridges After Kallar station comes Bridge No. 25, the longest in the section at 126 metres. There are 258 bridges from Mettupalayam to Udhagamandalam.

Ahead of the curve The train snakes its way to Coonoor.

Breather At Runnymede station, passengers stop to take in the beauty of the hills.

Changing gears At Coonoor station, where the main loco shed is situated, the steam engine is changed and a diesel loco takes over.

Check-up After decoupling at Coonoor, the engine is given a thorough check.

Letting off steam It takes two to three hours to completely empty the engine's boiler of steam.

GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

THE LEAD

Imagine a country *that needs no saving*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's sci-fi novel, *Herland*, created a template that no one has since adapted — of a women's utopia that's neither fragile nor threatened

ANAND VENKATESWARAN

Published in 1915, five years before women were granted voting rights in the U.S., *Herland* punched way above its weight

We seem to be discovering women-centred sci-fi with the web series on *The Handmaid's Tale*. And yet Atwood is not the first writer to have imagined the possibilities. One of her most remarkable literary predecessors would be the American author Charlotte Perkins Gilman, born this month 159 years ago. Although we remember Gilman mostly for her haunting short story, 'The Yellow Wallpaper', she had blazed a trail for women's sci-fi with her novel, *Herland*, published in 1915, about an ideal society composed entirely of women who have done away with the need to have men in their lives – *The Handmaid's Tale* in reverse, apparently.

Herland is so masterfully written that it can hold its own in any age of sci-fi – nascent to golden to post-modern. However, it assumes particular resonance when you examine the social and literary context it stems from.

Through the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Gilman's fierce fiction was part of the tectonic forces powering the First Wave of Feminism – the fight for voting and equal contract and property rights – that first search for identity beyond that of Adam's rib. 'The Yellow Wallpaper', her devastating short story, is a blow-by-blow account of a woman's post-partum slide into insanity, but it's also a rebellion against a medical system that was frustratingly patronising of women's psychological illnesses.

Fighting the male gaze

And as far as sci-fi of that time goes, the bar was set by the definitive works of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, who wrote furiously from the 1860s well into the 90s. A rash of leading authors of the day, including Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling, also dipped their toes in the genre.

Sci-fi, even in its more cerebral forays, has always been an extension of man, well, an extension of manhood. The perspective, the conundrums, the intergalactic crises have all been reflections or exaggerated extrapolations of society as it was at the time of writing. Gender is either redundant, or used as narrative upholstery.

Published five years before the 19th Amendment which granted voting rights to women in the U.S., Gilman's *Herland* punched way above its weight. Not only as feminist literature that dared to exist, but also as sci-fi that brought a fresh perspective to the increasingly weird and wonderful visions of an otherworld.

Gilman brilliantly caricatures the response of the contemporary man by stereotyping him in three of the lead characters. One idolises womankind. One is a pragmatist, a man of balance nonetheless trapped by generations of conditioning. And the third, the spearhead of the expedition, is the alpha male of the late 19th and early 20th century – unsurprisingly similar to his 21st century counterpart.

He finds it improbable that women could overcome or behave in a manner other than what he *knows* to be their nature, their biological limitations, their allure. The details of how *Herland* functions as an all-woman country, told from the viewpoint of the trio, are incomplete and narrow. Despite a scientific and/ or exploratory disposition, what else could the male gaze be capable of, Gilman seems to ask.

Unadulterated utopia

Another aspect that sets *Herland* apart is that it is an unadulterated utopia. There is no hidden rot to be uncovered, no sudden scandal or crime. The arrival of the three men, though of huge significance, does not throw the everyday out of whack. The women of *Herland* do away with even the biological necessity of the male and with it, the need for sex. In other words, they do not need men, and they do not need saving from anything.

Herland captured the tough optimism of the First Wave of Feminism. And it is fascinating that the Third Wave was championed (not exclusively, of course) by a chilling dystopia viscerally conjured by Atwood in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

In some ways, *The Handmaid's Tale* is a black mirror of *Herland*. In both worlds, motherhood is the raison d'etre for the woman. However, while the Gilman brand of motherhood fuels greater individual pursuits towards a common good, Atwood's women are 'vessels,' no more.

Both authors make their work all the more effective by placing their worlds within reach. *Herland* offers solutions for mankind's ills in greater social cooperation, equal education

The Unlikely Adventures of the Shergill Sisters combines levity and seriousness with panache p22

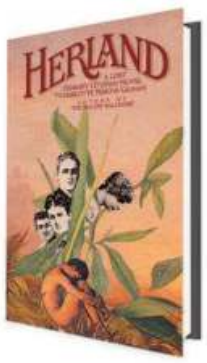
Superior: The Return of Race Science is not about the 'return' but a thorough history of race science p24

and equal treatment for children of both sexes. And Atwood says we're on our way to *The Handmaid's Tale*, we just need to continue to do nothing.

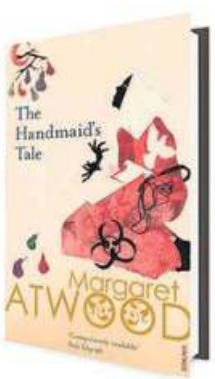
If we stepped back from the feminist point of view and looked at utopias and dystopias – and not just in print – with a slightly unfocused eye, there are some fun patterns hiding in plain sight.

Power corrupts

First, let's rattle off some dystopias off the cuff: *Nineteen Eighty Four, Brave New World, Brazil, V for Vendetta*. Or post-apocalyptic worlds like the *Resident Evil* series, *Mad Max: Fury Road, The Hunger Games, Divergence, The Maze Runner*, and so many more. All these stories carry a common denominator. Either a malevolent force radiates outward and consumes all, or crushes the rights of 'other' people. The individual loses all agency. The force controls the dominant class as much as it subjugates the underclass.



Both destruction and the sudden voiding of rights are symptoms. The cause, at the risk of spoiling every dystopian story ever, is this – a toxic concentration of power.



Power in the hands of one person or a very specific demographic or entity. It could be an omnipotent state, a mad king, a power-hungry corporate, or an AI that attained sentience. A pathogen wipes out humanity in *Oryx and Crake*; the corporate that did it had absolute control over the distribution system. The Republic of Gilead in *The Handmaid's Tale* chokes its world in a vice-like grip because it holds the reins of the military, economy, mobility and media.

And the fixes to this are all typically 'clean slate' protocols, where the status quo needs to be reduced to ash for the future to rise like a phoenix. The galactic empires – of Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series or of George Lucas' *Star Wars* – crumble. They must, so that a new order can rise. And fall again to warrant another trilogy. Utopias rarely fare better.

Guns & glory

Geek alert. See *Star Trek – The Next Generation*; Season 1, Episode 8, titled 'Justice'. The Starship Enterprise disembarks on a utopian (yawn) world, where everyone is fit and fetchingly polygamous. A young crew member inadvertently breaks a greenhouse boundary line and, according to local law, is sentenced to humane lethal injection. How Captain Picard resolves the dilemma, and also wields diplomacy against a celestial entity that oversees the planet, forms the rest of the plot.

Why is it that even if things start well, even if a story begins in a utopia, it all goes sideways? Let's face it – utopias are boring. There is no struggle, there is nothing to overcome, no victory at the end of a journey. A world which has resolved all conflict and is engaged in nurturing harmony must either be child-like, thumb-sized (*Gulliver's Travels*) or populated by milksops (every civilisation that begs starships or superheroes to save it).

At the same time, highly developed civilisations – from the dynasties of *Jupiter Ascending* to Asimov's empire – must crumble into chaos and conflict. And red-blooded stories demand guns and glory and good old-fashioned capitalist, patriarchal enterprise. Unless, of course, we're talking about *Herland*.

Simply better

One realises that Gilman opened up a template which no one has since adapted. She wrote of a utopia that was affected, but not disturbed, by contact with the new. One that was in no way innocent or gullible. It was not powerless against attack.

It countered barbarism and violence with intelligence, strength, patience and pragmatism. And at no point did it lose its humanity. It was not a more advanced people. It was simply better.

The feminist ideologies in *Herland* – particularly the linking of female identity so completely with motherhood – might not have aged particularly well, but the space-time Gilman occupied, and the caveats she built in (motherhood is *the* honour, but it is also a choice), more than exonerate her.

Best of all, as we read the story, it reads us too. Three kinds of men went in and did what they did. What kind of man are you and what would you do? For the male reader, it is not an easy question.

In us all, there are elements of the brash patriarch who was exiled, the hopeless romantic who discarded his own identity for a place among *them*, and the balanced pragmatist who a *Herland*er decided to accompany on the journey back home. The trio was not ready for *Herland*.

The legend was weighed down by the considerable exposition that 20th century men needed to get their bearings. If a trio were plucked out from among us today, 104 years after the book was written, and sent to *Herland*, it is difficult to say if we would be ready for it either. Until we are, we will continue to wallow in memories of dystopic futures and failed utopias.

The former journalist works as a consultant in fintech and crypto-economics.

As we read the story of *Herland*, it reads us too. Three kinds of men went in and did what they did. What kind of man are you and what would you do?

REPRISE

If This Is a Man *by Primo Levi*

GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

SUDIPTA DATTA

This is the centenary year of Italian writer Primo Levi – he would have been 100 years old on July 31. A survivor of Auschwitz, Levi fell to his death in 1987, from the landing of his third-storey apartment in Turin. He wrote several books on the Holocaust, keeping the devastating memory alive.

Levi, who trained as a chemist, was sent to Auschwitz on February 21, 1944, "a name without significance for us at that time..." He spent 20 months there, and was one of the three, out of the 125 Jews sent from Fossoli, to make the journey home when the camp was liberated.

After some years lapsed, Levi sat down to write about the experience in *If This Is a Man,* first published in Italian in 1947. "You who live safe/ In your warm houses... Consider if this is a man/ Who works in the mud/ Who does not know peace/ Who fights for a scrap of bread/ Who dies because of a yes or a no."

Demolition of man

The inmates were first taken to a work camp, where they were "shaved and sheared" and forced into shower rooms to be disinfected before being taken to Auschwitz. "Then for the first time we became aware that our language lacks words to express this offence, the demolition of a man. In a moment, with almost prophetic intuition, the reality was revealed to us: we had reached the bottom. It is not possible to sink lower than this; no human condition is more miserable than this, nor could it conceivably be so. Nothing belongs to us anymore; they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair; if we speak, they will not listen to us, and if they listen, they will not understand."

Nothing belongs to us anymore; they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair; if we speak, they will not listen to us, and if they listen, they will not understand

Soon the name was taken away for a number. Levi was assigned *Häftling* (prisoner) 174517, a tattoo on the left arm to be carried till he dies. The clinical detail he provides is to "furnish documentation for a quiet study of certain aspects of the human mind," and how one is capable of behaving with another. For Levi, "precisely because the Lager was a great machine to reduce us to beasts, we must not become beasts."

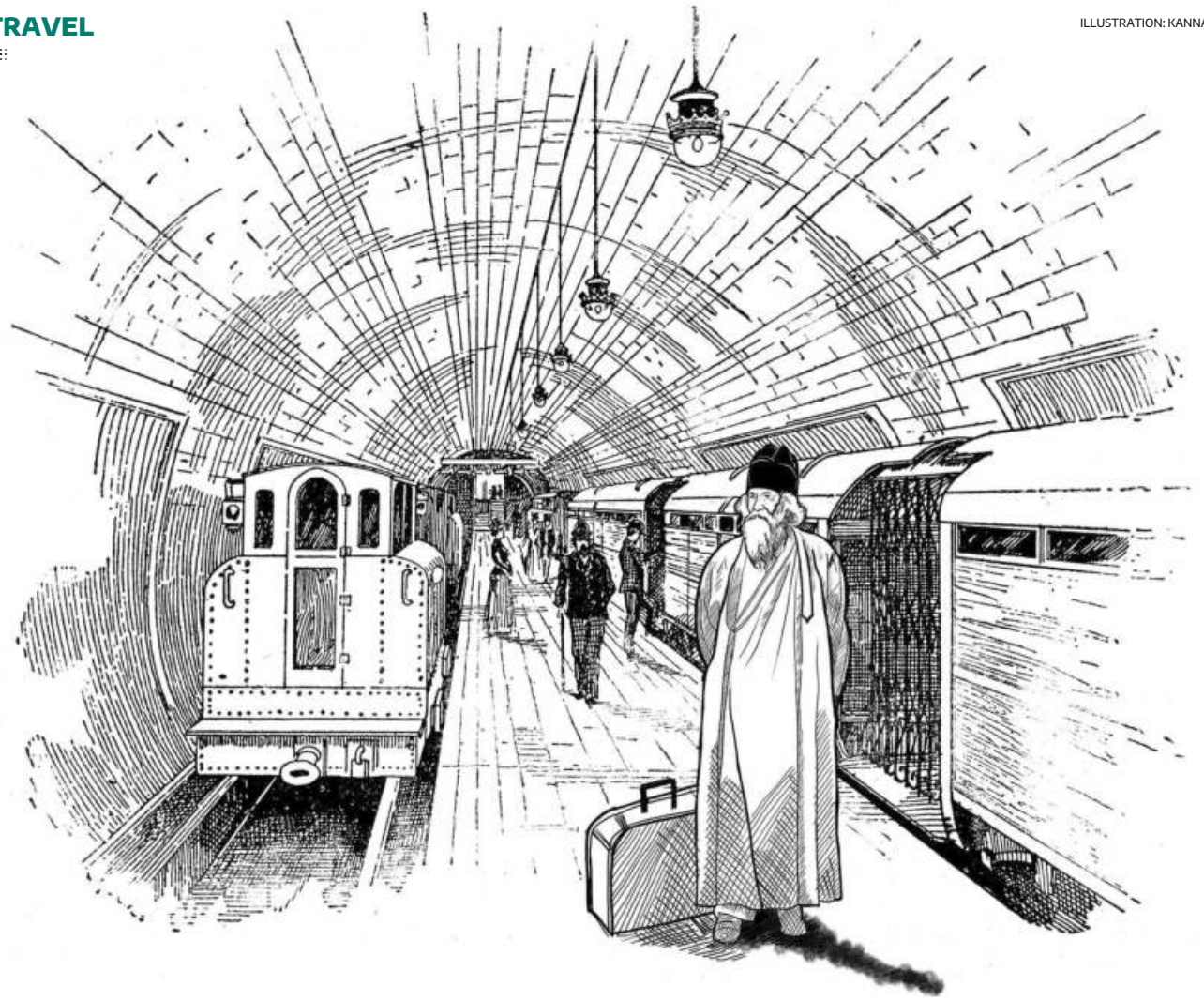
He endured the pain to "tell the story, to bear witness," remaining alive so that he wouldn't "begin to die." Asked once why there is no expression of hate for the Germans and if he had forgiven them – the Afterword of the English edition has a host of questions, answered by Levi – he said: "My personal temperament is not inclined to hatred."

If his first memoir was about the "descent into hell," years later he wrote another book, *The Truce*, which describes the journey to a celebration of life around him. But that's another story.

The writer looks back at one classic each fortnight.

TIME TRAVEL

ILLUSTRATION: KANNAN SUNDAR



Tagore in the Tube

The story of how the book that brought India its first Nobel went missing is a thrilling adventure set in the London Underground

ARUP K. CHATTERJEE

Since the 1830s, well-to-do Indians had been travelling to England, for diplomacy, entrepreneurship, leisure, and education. From Raja Rammohun Roy to Ardaseer Cursetjee Wadia to Dwarkanath Tagore and Keshub Chandra Sen, to a panoply of law students and civil service aspirants – they all headed to the capital of the British Empire with burning curiosity. However, Indian travelogues from the city really took flight only after the London Underground came of age.

Inaugurated at Paddington in 1863, what is today the London Tube was an elegant companion in most Indian perambulations in the city, taking them faithfully to famous landmarks: the British Museum, Parliament House, Westminster Abbey, Crystal Palace, Madame Tussauds and so on. For early travellers, London also meant a throbbing commercial metropolis. Krishnabhabini Das, an early woman traveller, described the London of 1885 as a "mammoth theatre of shops": a city highlighted by blazing advertisements for everything from textiles to teas to carbolic smoke balls to curry powder. And although the advertisers promoted their wares in magazines and newspapers such as *The Illustrated London News*, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, *The Times*, and later, *The Strand*, soon their most preferred space became the London Underground network.

Puffing and whistling

The visitors were awed by the underground stations. St. Pancras and Victoria, with their gigantic façades and gothic interiors, inspired much admiration. T.N. Mukharji (or Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay, the famous writer of ghost stories) was appointed as supervisor by the Government of India to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in 1886, and he returned, captivated by the city's railway system, which to him was "one of the wonders of the world."

"The trains ran every three minutes," wrote Mukharji, "from 7-30 a.m. to 12-30 or 1 p.m. and every one is thronged with passengers... Engines puffing and whistling, passengers running in and out, guards shutting doors, faint hum of voices, all combined to create a grandeur of busy life which must be seen to be realised."

Others like Sivanath Sastri found the railways to be traffickers of easy virtue and eccentric outcasts. "At ten thirty in the night I came to King's Cross from Waterloo Station by bus... As the night grew everyone around appeared drunk. Even the booking clerk at the station was in a particularly jocular mood. He asked me with a smile, 'Are you alone?' A woman came up enquiring, 'Are you coming my way, dear?' Getting no reply, she realised that this was not the right place to look for business. Another lady had drunk so much that she had lost her ability to move. The workers on the station were similarly out of their senses. When the tram came at twelve in the night I found that almost no passenger could stand up properly," wrote Sastri disapprovingly.

Roaring giant

A few years later, in 1888, M.K. Gandhi would spend his 19th birthday, alone, at a Victorian room in Richmond, haunted by memories of his home and by reports of the Whitechapel murders by Jack the Ripper, while the melancholy engines of the London Underground trains trundled past the rows of Tudor houses behind him. He later moved to West Kensington to live as a paying guest with a widow and her two daughters, in a four-storey house that stood in a row past which "roared London's District Line Trains."

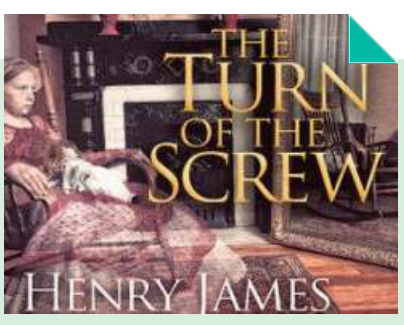
Besides his long solitary walks, the Tube led Gandhi to numerous explorations, the most notable being that of a vegetarian restaurant off Farringdon Street. Here, armed with a copy of Henry Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism and Other Essays*, Gandhi devoured his "first hearty meal" since his arrival in London. With that serendipitous find, the Mahatma would go on to wage a minor dietary revolution in the heart of Albion before being called to the Bar.

In 1912, Rabindranath Tagore visited London for the second time. He had gone there first in 1878, but wasn't very impressed. This time, he wanted to show the English translation of his book *Gitanjali* to the English painter and art critic, William Rothenstein, hoping he could urge William Butler Yeats to write an introduction. Tagore's son and daughter-in-law, and probably Soumendra Deb Burman from the Tripura royal family,

BOOKMARK

Jarul Picture Book Awards

Maneka Gandhi's book for children, *There's a Monster Under My Bed! And Other Terrible Terrors,* has been shortlisted for the Jarul Picture Book Awards. The Mumbai-based award celebrates children's picture books and has children voting for their favourite books.



The Turning

Henry James's 1898 horror novella, *The Turn of the Screw*, will get a modern makeover in 2020. *The Turning*, directed by Floria Sigismondi, has the same storyline as that of *The Turn of the Screw*. Starring Mackenzie Davis, it will hit the theatres on January 24.

The case was found and returned safely to Tagore, uncannily enough, by the office of 'lost property' at the Baker Street station

accompanied Tagore on this journey.

In mid-June, Tagore and his party travelled from Dover to London, from where they were to take the Tube to Rothenstein's Hampstead residence the following day. On the way, they discovered that the attaché case in which Tagore had been carrying the manuscript had disappeared. After several anxious hours, the poet asked his son, Rathindranath, to inquire with the London Tube authorities.

The case was found and returned safely to Tagore, uncannily enough, by the office of 'lost property' at the Baker Street station. Sherlock Holmes, the most famous fictional tenant of the neighbourhood, had just solved 'The Adventure of the Devil's Foot' and was in probability involved at this point in 'The Adventure of the Dying Detective.' But he almost certainly had no hand in the retrieval of Tagore's case.

Happy accident

Tagore did meet Rothenstein, but only the next day. Needless to say, he carried the manuscript this time, which was later read and reviewed by Yeats, who also wrote the famous introduction. In November that year, a limited edition of an anthology of 103 poems by Tagore was published by the London India Society. *Gitanjali* was published in March next year by Macmillan. By the time Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in November 1913, he was a global phenomenon.

The greatest conceit of Western technology and civilisation, the railways, had inadvertently left its footprints on the book of Eastern spiritual wisdom that would comfort a whole generation of Europeans during the turbulent years of the Great War. In 1932, Tagore wrote to Rothenstein that he had found a place in the history of English literature by virtue of "an accident", a happy accident if ever there was one.

In 2004, Tagore's Nobel medal was stolen. With neither Sherlock Holmes nor the Baker Street station office being anywhere at hand to intervene, it has been missing ever since.

The writer is founding editor of *Coldnoon: International Journal of Travel Writing*, and Associate Professor, O.P. Jindal Global University.

WORD COUNTS

Where cities breathe

Great parks surpass the ambitions of their designers

GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

There is likely no better way to get the measure of a city than to wander around its parks, at least for those of us given to people-watching. And yet, it's odd that we mostly get to know of a city's green and common spaces only in the passing in travelogues and novels. In a volume she edited in 2013, *City Parks: Public Places, Private Thoughts*, Catie Marron wrote: "...I've been fortunate to visit a number of the world's most vibrant and revered cities, and I noticed after a while that I always gravitated to the nearest park. I started to look for books about my favourite parks and wondered why there were so few."

There are still too few, and it's interesting to return to *City Parks* to deepen one's own appreciation of the local park. Some essays stand out.

Shared experience

Some spaces demand companionship, and invite a contrast with places not yet visited. David Lida, an American writer, asked a fellow traveller on his flight to Mexico City for recommendations on the sights around town, and at the end of a long list the impromptu guide said he should not leave without going to Xochimilco, comparing it with the canals of Venice. Xochimilco is one of the 16 boroughs of the Mexican capital, but the reference was to the network of canals in certain parts.

Lida went there on a Sunday, when all of Mexico City seemed to be about, and he observed entire families playing out their weekend routines. But as he navigated through the food and sounds of Xochimilco, he felt he had missed out on something: "I had experienced alone, as an outsider, what would ideally have been a shared experience."

Some time later, after moving to Mexico City, Lida went back with a friend he had made in town, and got an insider's tour, including to the "creepy" Island of the Dolls, where decades ago a man started hanging dolls from the trees to ward off a lost spirit. Lida concludes by saying he had not, at the time or writing, been to Venice for fear of being confronted with "a grand decaying centre of Europe", as opposed to the "vibrancy" evident in Xochimilco.

Egyptian writer Ahdaf Soueif finds resonance of Cairo's current and past rhythms – "Cairo, historians say, was built around a garden, and was always full of pleasure parks and amusement grounds" – in the city's al-Azhar Park, where there's room for everyone.

Writing in the afterglow of the Arab Spring, Soueif says as she spies guards around checking on couples: "We're in transition, we say to each other, from dictatorship to democracy, from oppression to freedom. We'll get there. In an ideal world there would be no guards, no walls, no entrance fee. But in an ideal world, there would be at least twenty parks like Azhar dotted over Cairo, a park for each million of the city's inhabitants."

Art in nature

Perhaps no other city has shown better how to develop green, common spaces within the urban grid as New York City has with High Line, the redeveloped public park on a discarded elevated railway line/ yard. The rail line facilitated deliveries in the meatpacking and industrial districts of Manhattan, till it was abandoned in the 1980s. For the New York-based writer André Aciman, to appreciate that transformation is also to meditate on time: "It is time that confers meaning to the High Line; time is the film we bring to everything we wish to see when we hope to amplify what our eyes are seeing."

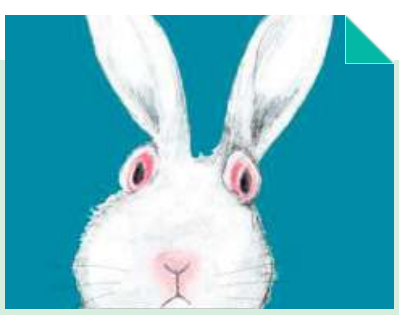
Even as it has attracted glitzy real estate development around, and is a magnet for city-dwellers, High Line is aware of the city's and its own past. Writes Aciman: "High Line... is a park that loves itself, its past, and its city. It has all the untamed, dishevelled growth you expect to find on any abandoned railway track." Those tracks are key – they were removed, cleaned and restored to the High Line, so that: "The park remembers its unshod days of abandonment. But it isn't held hostage to them. And in this compromise lies art."

But in the end, it's the people who validate a park's existence. As former U.S. President Bill Clinton concludes his piece on Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., "Something surprising lurks around each corner – someone with a fascinating story who came from far away to visit; or every once in a while, a young man or woman, resting on a bench, peacefully absorbed in a book."

Mini Kapoor is a Delhi-based journalist.

Big Bad Wolf

The annual Big Bad Wolf discounted bookfair is back. It will be held in Bangkok from August 9 to 19. There will be more than three million books on sale, on 50-90% discounts. In addition to books in English, this year's event will also feature books in Thai.



Kerr's last work

Judith Kerr passed away on May 22 just after completing a book called *The Curse of the School Rabbit*. The book and its audiobook adaptation are out now. It's about a boy called Tommy who has to look after the school rabbit and is soon convinced that the rabbit is cursed.

DELHI THE HINDU Magazine
Sunday, July 28, 2019

BROWSE FICTION

Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam
Elias Khoury,
trs Humphrey Davies
Archipelago
$20
• Exiled in New York, Palestinian ex-pat Adam Dannoun thought he knew himself. But an encounter with a father figure from his childhood changes everything. As he investigates what happened in 1948 in Lydda, his birth city, he gathers tragic stories about his people.

Knife
Jo Nesbo
Penguin Random House
₹599
• In this new Harry Hole mystery, the detective is in the dumps: his girlfriend has left him, he's working on cold cases and the notorious criminal, Svein Finne, whom Hole had put behind bars, is out. Harry is responsible for the many years Finne spent in prison, but now he's free and ready to pick up where he left off.

What Mina Did
Geeta Menon
Rupa
₹295
• This novel shuttles between Bengaluru and the U.S. Alternating between flashbacks and the present day, it narrates the story of Mina and her best friend, Neelu. Their friendship hits rock bottom when Mina is unable to reciprocate the support Neelu had given her when Mina's life had been shattered by a murder.

The Stationery Shop
Marjan Kamali
Gallery Books
$27
• Roya is an idealistic teenager living in Tehran in 1953. Amidst the political upheaval of the time, she finds a literary oasis in kindly Mr. Fakhri's neighbourhood bookshop. She also finds love there, with a little manipulation by Mr. Fakhri. Then fate intervenes in the form of a coup d'etat that forever changes their country.

Love Story of a Commando
Swapnil Pandey
Westland
₹250
• Riya is a millennial who falls in love with a Black Cat commando with the NSG, Captain Virat. They meet under the burning dome of the Taj Palace hotel, and later, amidst violence and gunfire in Kashmir. As they find themselves behind the enemy lines in PoK, can Virat snatch Riya away from death?

GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

COMEDY

They've got a ticket to ride

A racy novel that combines the seriousness of Greek drama with the frivolity of a contemporary soap opera

INDIRA CHANDRASEKHAR

In this novel about three sisters who are directed by their dying mother to undertake a pilgrimage together to find themselves and each other, Balli Kaur Jaswal reveals herself to be a master storyteller. From the moment the tale begins, we are drawn into the lives of the protagonists – the British-born Punjabi sisters and their soon-dead mother, whose last wish thrusts the three together. They converge in Delhi, and from then on starts a rollercoaster ride of those crazy, ludicrous incidents that an Indian from abroad often has to face in her home country. We laugh in recognition, and sometimes grimace at the coarseness of the blatant stare.

The women go from one adventure to another, each ending in a tantalising teaser about the complex backstory of one of the sisters. In each episode, we travel inwards, as Jaswal unfolds the emotional chaos of each sister.

Responsible Rajni discovers, just before she departs for Delhi, that her wayward son is in love with a woman closer to her age than his. Raunchy Jezmeen (with a 'z'!), the reality-disaster-TV-show host, is floundering because her career is threatened when she is caught on camera in an incredible disaster of her own making. Sensitive Shirina, in a marriage that she has arranged for herself, because, in addition to giving her a charming husband, it holds out the safety of tradition, is finding out that the life she has tied herself to is all about control.

Promise of peace

Each sister has a terrible secret that she cannot share with the others, each sister presents a façade that she believes is important for maintaining the family dynamic. Each sister is burdened with the guilt of their mother's death, which is rooted in past secrets. Will the journey create chinks in the walls that the three have built between themselves? Will it bring them closer? Will it help ground them in their heritage as their mother had hoped it would?

They stumble from Delhi, with its strange yet familiar landscapes, to Amritsar, with its promise of peace and absolution in the Golden Temple tank. It's the height of summer and the temperature touches 45 degrees. Despite the physical discomfort, the sisters find themselves reliving their shared childhood memories. They are nostalgic but they also look back with the wisdom of hindsight.

There are questions to be asked: How did their mother recover after the sudden death of their father? How did they manage through the years of penury that followed? Their childhood joys, quarrels, tensions – it all trickles back into their psyche. The memories sometimes result in a gentler

The Unlikely Adventures of the Shergill Sisters
Balli Kaur Jaswal
HarperCollins India
₹499

understanding of one another, but that does not always last as old frustrations return, and exasperation at the choices each has made rises to the surface. How will Rajni, Jezmeen and Shirina forgive and care for each other again? It will take a momentous denouement to do that and to reveal the many truths they have buried.

Injustices of patriarchy

The story is fast-paced, engaging and comic, yet addresses dark issues. Jaswal uses humour to highlight the patriarchal assumptions the sisters fight. She is adept at this – her previous novel, *Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows*, while hilarious, had also underlined ugly social realities.

Despite the physical discomfort, the sisters find themselves reliving their shared childhood memories. They are nostalgic but they also look back with the wisdom of hindsight

It is tempting to simplify Jaswal's novels as those revealing the clash between the traditional and the modern, between East and West, but the issues she addresses run deeper. Jaswal hits out at the injustices of patriarchy and the fact that she does this through humour does not take away from the seriousness of the problem.

The happily-ever-after ending with its neat closure left me faintly dissatisfied. But this is just a tiny irritant in an otherwise superb novel. *The Unlikely Adventures* combines the seriousness of Greek drama with the frivolity of the contemporary soap opera. Its faith in the power of human relationship to build bridges makes it a heartwarming read.

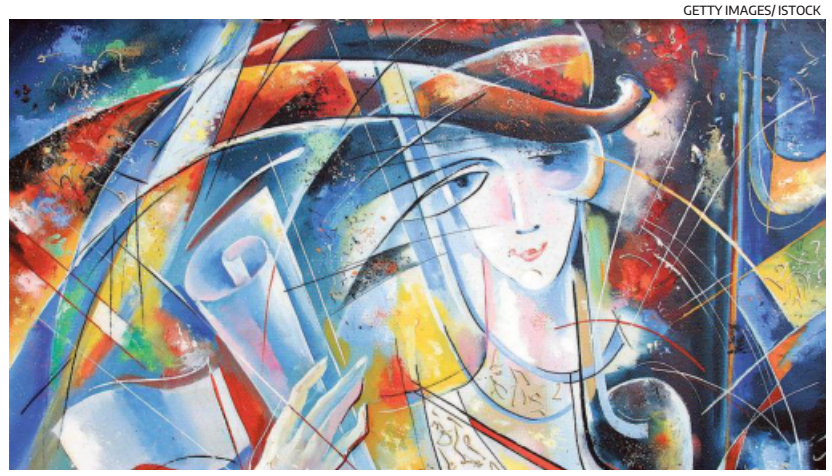
The scientist, fiction-writer, editor and founder of *Out of Print*, is the author, most recently, of *Polymorphism*.

POETRY

A sprig of jasmine

Poems that are focussed on loss but are also about being fully alive

GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK



KEKI N. DARUWALLA

The title of K. Srilata's latest book, a bit long, tells us that it is focussed on absences, so to speak. She has every reason, of course. Her introduction tells us that she has been raised by a single (divorced) mother. The absence of a father obviously tells. The first poem, 'It is 1966', starts in a sort of limbo where dream and memory meet.

I am not born.
My father knocks at the door of a house
I have never seen.
There at the door stands my mother, slender
a sprig of jasmine in her hair.

She sees her mother later, *the edge of her sari already a grieving afterthought*. In the end she sees her mother looking at *the crumble of her years*. Women's poetry is always more poignant and intimate.

Srilata has changed. In her previous volume, *Writing Octopus*, she talked of others – *the leopard- prowl of your thoughts*. But here, whether she is talking of Sita or of Penelope meeting Ulysses after 20 years, or of *a disappeared person*, she is thinking of herself and her mother.

In 'Nestle' she moves from elevators to *falling through cracks/ of being locked out/ of being locked in/ and just the awful, permanent fright of being/ the weight of the self in resistance to the world*. Here she has touched upon the existential and raised it to a higher level.

The Unmistakable Presence of Absent Humans
K. Srilata
Paperwall
₹300

The poem 'Not in the Picture' starts with an *Adoption Agency file*. We know what to expect. Later, a professional photographer is hired to take pictures of the wedding. When the album is produced, the mother is nowhere to be seen.

Some of her poems indulge in pleasant whimsies like 'What the Tamil Poet Says About Herself in her Bio.' But on the whole the landscape is bleak.

Veering away is an essential talent, moving from a complex of images to the home where the poem is headed. 'Gujarat 2002' talks of burning heat and *news of another lynching* and moves to longing for water *from old stepwells*. It is a short stab in a fine imagistic poem. Another poet would have done the obvious, gone to the lynching at the end. The stepwells and the cool, shadowed water become a metaphor for sanity and longing.

In lines like *each morning I sweep the spores/ of a new silence,* the poet emerges. In 'One False Step' she does take a false step, talking of a *cliff-edge*, followed by *the earth is a landmine*. Doesn't the unreality of it, a landmine at a cliff-edge, strike poets? Metaphors need to be based on some sort of reality, even if a poetic one.

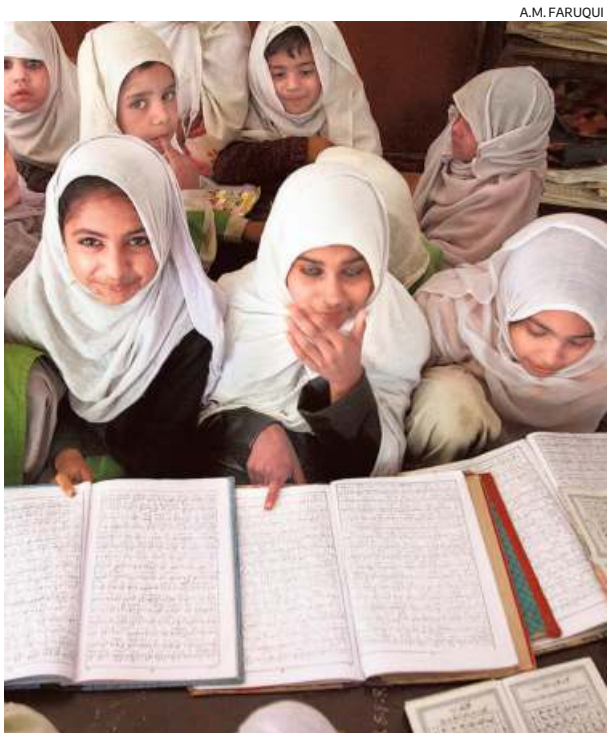
Srilata, a professor at IIT Madras, teaches creative writing among other things. A self-assured poet, she is not desperate to make a splash. This, her fifth volume of poetry, is not merely focussed on loss, but fully alive to the times.

Srilata has got into the habit of leaning on poems by others. I counted four poems modelled after Nâzım Hikmet, Agha Shahid Ali, Wendell Berry, Daniel Bosch, and three others. She is a fine poet with a distinct voice of her own and we would like to hear her *ab initio*.

The writer is a poet and novelist.

CHILDREN'S TALES

A.M. FARUQUI



Let there be light

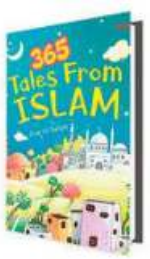
A collection of tales from the Quran and the Hadiths made accessible for children

ROHAN MANOJ

This book is a collection of tales from the Quran and the Hadiths, presented as very short, simple stories, each accompanied by an illustration and aimed at children. They are strictly religious in nature and origin; there's nothing from, say, folklore. Many of the stories, from that of the creation of the world to the tales of the prophets – including of Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus) – who preceded Muhammad, may also be familiar to non-Muslims.

Indeed, the tale of Satan's fall is given the title 'Paradise Lost'. The prophet Muhammad's life, teachings, battles and other incidents from early Islam supply most of the remaining stories.

The tales have a didactic bent and not all of them are stories per se – a number of sections simply describe right conduct and right practice according to Islam, sometimes supported by some teaching of the prophet. For example, one section describes the proper way to drink water: "One should sit facing the Kaaba and take water in three slow sips and conclude it with a prayer to Allah." The book also includes some stark eschatology, with scary flames illustrating the fate of "he who disobeys".



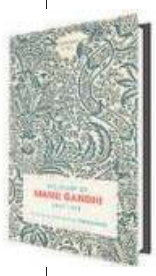
365 Tales from Islam
Ziya Us Salam
Om Books International
₹595

The prose is unexceptional. A certain traditional style of storytelling can be detected in the narration, but the diction may not always be simple enough for children. For example, from the tale 'Time for Goodbyes': "Extend your right hand, so that I might swear allegiance to you," and "Thereafter, we were made responsible for many things, and I do not know how I would fare with respect to them. When I die, no mourner should do so over my bier. When you bury me, throw the earth over me and tarry over my tomb..."

This kind of writing, with its slightly archaic words, does suit the religious origin of the stories, but it might have been a good idea to simplify it for children.

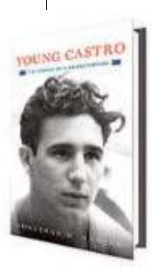
BROWSE NON-FICTION

The Diary of Manu Gandhi
Tridip Suhrud
Oxford University Press
₹750
• The two volumes is a record of Manu Gandhi's life and times with M.K. Gandhi between 1943 and 1948. Authenticated by Gandhi himself, the meticulous entries in the diary throw light on Gandhi's life as a prisoner and his endeavour to establish the possibility of collective non-violence.

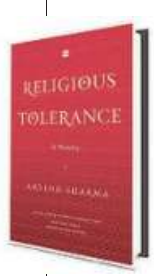


One Giant Leap
Charles Fishman
Simon & Schuster India
₹699
• From the halls of MIT, where digital pioneer Charles Draper created the two computers aboard Apollo 11, to the factories where hundreds of women weaved computer programs with copper wire, Fishman captures the sweeping achievement of these ordinary Americans in the 20th century to go to the moon.

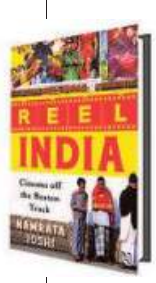
Young Castro: The Making of a Revolutionary
Jonathan M. Hansen
Simon & Schuster India
₹799
• An American historian who gained access to the Castro archives in Havana and spoke to people close to him writes a portrait of the early years of the Cuban leader showing why he embraced communism and how he led his country in revolution.



Religious Tolerance: A History
Arvind Sharma
HarperCollins
₹899
• Can religious tolerance be placed on a firmer footing by finding grounds for it within the faiths? Sharma addresses this question by examining Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Daoism and Shinto, whose followers together cover over two-thirds of the globe.



Reel India: Cinema off the Beaten Track
Namrata Joshi
Hachette India
₹599
• A film critic travels through interiors of India chronicling the nation's obsession with the movies. Joshi traces the lives of superstars like Amitabh Bachchan that began in small towns; and provides us an insight into how films affect people far removed from the silver screen.



SOCIETY

Prejudice within science

Angela Saini argues that the need to classify human beings into groups is a problematic impulse that hasn't gone away, even among scientists

GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

JACOB KOSHY

The world is afflicted by a rash of majoritarianism. This has contributed to the emergence of the alt-right, or more widely in many countries, a frantic search among the majority for evidence that gives them a greater claim over their countries than besieging foreigners.

In this backdrop science writer Angela Saini's book *Superior* has a startling subhead: *The Return of Race Science*. The book's jacket asserts "...as ethnic and religious nationalism rises around the world, race science is experiencing a revival, fuelled by the misuse of data by politically motivated groups..."

That's an astounding claim. Has the disenchantment with globalisation afflicted scientists, scientific institutions – and their sponsors – in that they are now exhuming pseudo-science? And giving breath to ideas of the superiority of certain races?

However, it turns out that the book isn't about the 'return' but a scrupulously reported history of race science and its connections to contemporary research into the genetic history of populations.

Nazi experiments

Saini begins with colonialism and how in its quest for legitimising slavery and subjugating natives, it invented a hierarchy of man where the white European was at the apex of human development and the African the lowest.

Phrenology, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, the application of statistics to the study of human populations, eugenics, Josef Mengele and his gruesome experiments in Nazi concentration camps on twins and genetic inheritance, are mentioned in this narrative arc.

With the end of World War II, the formation of the United Nations and the universal declaration of human rights, one thought that it would mean the end of 'race science', but some researchers continued to investigate on these lines.

Closer to the present, Saini examines the controversy surrounding projects such as the Human Genome Diversity Project (HGDP) that was conceived in 1991 and aimed to collect DNA from indigenous populations from around the world and explore global genetic diversity. Even though it was led by anthropologists and researchers, who were 'anti-racist' and meant to dispel notions of superiority and inferiority, it somehow – according to Saini – ended up packaging old ideas about race into newer bottles. The need to classify human beings into groups is a problematic impulse that has never gone away, she argues. Even in some scientists.

Superior: The Return of Race Science
Angela Saini
HarperCollins
₹599

She cites the racism of James Watson, Nobel Laureate and co-discoverer of the double-helical structure of DNA, who has frequently spoken of the intellectual inferiority of black people and "Indians being servile and Chinese being left genetically conformist by their society." If people as accomplished and knowledgeable reason thus, what hope is there for the rest, she implicitly suggests.

Race is a social construct and has always been exploited by dominant power groups and therefore cannot be useful as a biological category and it perplexes Saini why avowedly 'anti-racist' scientists today would want to pursue the frequencies of certain genes in particular population groups, unless they had unconscious 'racist' tendencies.

Intellectual racism?

In interviews with Indian geneticists who observe that India's traditional fixation with caste groups and strictures prohibiting intermarriage has led to communities that are disproportionately prominent in certain sport such as wrestling or archery, Saini is again "surprised" that it comes from a "well-regarded" geneticist. "...It demonstrated that more than half a century of research into human variation hasn't eliminated prejudice within science." This is akin to reasoning that anybody studying nuclear physics secretly aspires to build a bomb.

While Saini gives ample space and perspective to those with views she doesn't agree with, she elides what motivates bulk of contemporary geneticists interested in variation today, which is disease.

She ignores work that is looking at gene frequencies in India's endogamous communities to understand what role single genes and clusters of them may play in the inheritance of uncommon diseases and sensitivity to certain drugs. Warfarin, an anticoagulant, is used in patients who are at increased risk of developing blood clots and studies in India show that certain genotypes have reduced benefits from the drug.

These were insights gleaned from studying prevalence in consanguineous communities but it's no one's argument that a community, or a caste, is necessarily vulnerable to specific diseases.

Across the world, millions of patients afflicted by rare diseases struggle due to lack of medicine and research-attention to genetic disorders because there isn't enough work done. Disease and cure have primarily focussed on developing one-size-fits-all (read Western European) drugs and cures.

Superior is a necessary, compelling and informed read but no, there aren't evil scientists trying to dig up a supremacist past.

ECONOMY

Balancing a relationship

A veteran traces India's roller-coaster ties with the International Monetary Fund

KANDASWAMI SUBRAMANIAN

Policymakers in developing countries, especially those under threat of an economic crisis, face a painful dilemma: "to reach or not to reach the IMF." If they reach the IMF, they are politically damned; if they don't, they are economically ruined.

The trouble with IMF assistance is that it is subject to rigid conditions under the rubric of the Washington Consensus (WC). Developing countries have viewed it as anti-poor, anti-welfare and pro-capitalist. Though the IMF did not soften its stance for years, it had to subsequently bow to changes in global developments. Reacting to the harsh conditions, developing countries began to move away from the IMF and seek assistance from alternative sources like bank credit or China. By 2008, this trend threatened the relevance of the IMF with the drying up of loan disbursements. It created an embarrassing budgetary crisis and the IMF had to sell a part of its gold reserves to finance its budget. By then, the Beijing Consensus sponsored by China challenged the primacy of the WC. The IMF felt the heat and reviewed lending policies.

Author speak The IMF's relations with member countries find a mention. GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

The book under review is on India's relations with the IMF from 1991-2016. A long chapter offers views of former senior colleagues such as finance secretaries, RBI governors, etc. on topical issues and about their stint in the IMF. Another chapter describes the author's years in the IMF; these accounts are interesting but do not add value to the core theme of the book and how the ties evolved.

Srinivas holds a rosy view of our relations with the IMF, especially the impact economists and senior officials had on its thinking. This enthusiasm is misplaced. Some Indian economists working with the IMF may have influenced its policies, but India, as a long time borrower, could not dine at the high table. It was in later years with the growing strength of the South, China's rise and the emergence of G-20 as a group that our voices were heard and respected. By then, we had also ceased to borrow from the IMF and even began to contribute to its capital resources.

He writes about the devaluation of the rupee in 1966 which led to antipathy towards IMF programmes that were in conflict with our socialistic policies. Srinivas documents the balance of payments crisis of 1981 and the borrowing from the IMF that followed. The author provides details of the discussions in the IMF's Executive Board and how the U.S. abstained. He notes that the conditions imposed were in line with the strategies adopted by us under the Sixth Five Year Plan. The significance of the 1981 programme was that India, which had agreed to draw $5 billion over a three-year period, foreclosed the loan. The IMF had objected to our extending credit to the Soviet Union which was a non-member. Srinivas does not mention this fact. The 1991 balance of payments crisis was handled better; by then there was a convergence of views between negotiators from our side and the IMF.

On the whole this book will be of value to students to understand the IMF, its working and relations with member countries.

India's Relations with the International Monetary Fund
V. Srinivas
Vij Books India
₹995

TRAVEL

Notes from a small island

A fresh perspective on Sri Lanka, warts and all, laced with humour and empathy

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR

Sri Lanka springs a multitude of stereotypes – beaches, tea gardens, civil war and the word 'serendipity', which was inspired by the island's ancient name Serendip. But there is much more to this neighbouring island split by the Palk Strait, and its layers can be peeled during a sojourn to Colombo and beyond.

But if you would rather read, then delve into Rohini Mohan's *The Seasons of Trouble*, Samanth Subramanian's *This Divided Island*, Shehan Karunatilaka's *Chinaman*, Gopalkrishna Gandhi's *Refuge* or Ashok Ferrey's novels seasoned with black humour. You get a sense of a small nation that has an all-embracing culture despite subterranean fissures. To this great body of above-mentioned work, please add Andrew Fidel Fernando's *Upon a Sleepless Isle*.

It is a splendid book where the author dwells upon his country, exhibits awe and exasperation, and often slips into self-deprecatory humour with shades of Bill Bryson.

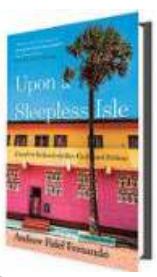
Unesco site Ancient rock fortress Sigiriya in Central Sri Lanka. GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

Recently, Andrew, who works for ESPN-Cricinfo, scripted a mind-boggling 1,493 words on one single ball bowled by Angelo Mathews against the West Indies during a World Cup game in England. He started that piece with this line: "Gather round, kiddos. Let me tell you a story about Sri Lankan cricket." The same easy style, with pithy observations and rippling laughter, elevates this 244-page tome.

"The smiles in Sri Lanka are as wide as the horizon," Andrew writes and as he backpacks his way past the coast, through the hills, peeps into forests, gobbles rice and curry and gulps the odd glass of arrack besides conversing with a wide array of people, he opens our eyes to the beguiling mix of history and a desire for peace that binds the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims together. Andrew himself is of mixed ancestry with both the Sinhalese and Tamil strain coursing through his veins.

He has a chuckle even if the trishaw crashes and leaves him with five stitches or when angry dogs pursue him. But Andrew can be caustic when he gazes at the rulers: "I am not sure why politicians feel they must continually remind the public that they exist." There is anger too when foreigners get a touch patronising or when his countrymen dump garbage. Yet what lingers is Andrew's love for Sri Lanka, warts and all: "I had more invitations to home-cooked meals all around the island than I could accept. This generosity, I felt, I had begun to reconcile with the island's many great follies."

Past the 100-page mark, the editing wanes, an extra word stays, another reference goes missing but these are minor quibbles. If a book's primary goals are about broadening perspective and luring a smile, both boxes surely get ticked.



Upon a Sleepless Isle
Andrew Fidel Fernando
Picador India
₹599

DELHI THE HINDU Magazine
Sunday, July 28, 2019

NOSHTALGIA

Remembrance of teatimes *past*

All afternoon we would lounge about in the cool confines of closed doors and drawn curtains, waiting for what KP would offer when the clock struck four

GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

SHEILA KUMAR

It is a truth universally acknowledged that young persons forced to spend an entire hot and humid month in their 'native place' will be forever restless, forever hungry.

Back in the 80s, it was no different for our large brood of siblings and cousins when we landed up in Palakkad for our summer holidays. The days were spent endlessly prowling about the sprawling grounds of Amma's, my grandmother's, house, dislodging many a sleeping snake in the stacked-stone compound wall, going for long walks on noodle-thin paths set among paddy fields, playing cricket on a sandy patch nearby, sneaking ciggies by the pond overhung by a lush weeping willow at the far end of the house, and suchlike.

And then, there was the food. We'd gorge on everything the wildly overgrown orchard had to offer: gooseberries, mango, jackfruit, chikoo, the cashew fruit and nuts, badam, coconut. We'd munch on salted tapioca chips all day long, sneering at its poorer cousin, the *kaaya varuthathu*, banana chips, both to be found in giant Mason jars kept, strangely, inside a bedroom cupboard.

However, tea-time was the highlight of the holidays. Of course, all mealtimes at Brindaban, Amma's house, were veritable feasts, given that her head cook/ major-domo/ family retainer Kesavan Nair (or KP as we called him for some reason) was a culinary whiz who raised the bar on sambar, *mezhukkupuratti* (stir-fry), *ishtew* (stew) or chakka pradhaman (jackfruit payasam) to impossibly high levels. Once you'd had KP's food, all other Malabar dishes were sternly judged and invariably found wanting.

Between lunch and tea

Tea-time, though, was in a league all of its own. Everything was that much more delectable because of our enforced imprisonment within the cool confines of closed doors and drawn curtains between lunch and tea. The elders would doze off, the house slowly filling with the far-from-mellifluous sounds of snoring. Some of us would pull down Amma's 1950s' bound copies of *Woman & Home* and study the recipes for scones, crumpets and mince pies with rapt concentration. One or two brave souls would sneak into the pantry, pull the stoppers off the giant stone *baranis* and sample the hottest mango pickle ever. Yet others would sit by the window alcoves and hold long spirited discussions – in stage whispers – on whether the *ari nellika* (star gooseberry) they had eaten platefuls of with chilli powder was the reason their tummies were cramping now. A few would stretch out on the many divans and discuss what KP would offer when the clock struck four. It was always all about food.

And when the clock struck the hour, we'd troop to the dining room. KP and his assistant (a procession of young cheerful boys who'd stay a few years and then move on seeking fresher pastures but always return to visit) would have taken down the fine china teacups and saucers from the giant sideboard that ran the length of the dining room and poured out the tea. The fine china was for the adults, of course, we got our tea in glass tumblers.

Wonderfully caramelised

But it was not the liquid we were there for. From the smoky interior of a then-gasless kitchen, where the musical sounds of an iron pipe aimed at the *chulha* could be heard, would emerge the *palaharam* (snacks) that accompanied the tea. The standard was two cooked snacks and one crunchy one each evening, but the range was mind-boggling.

Topping the list was banana fritters, the oil glistening lightly atop the wonderfully caramelised sides of the golden nendrapazham bananas. Another spin on the fruit was the pazham nurriki, banana pieces boiled in their skins. In yet another variation, KP would score a deep cut down the length of a ripe nendrapazham, grill it over hot coals, drizzle ghee over it, and dust it with granulated sugar. Served hot, the flavours of the smoked pazham, ghee and sugar made for an ambrosial mix.

Then there was ele ada, jaggery and grated coconut wrapped in rice flour and steamed in a banana leaf; or

From the smoky confines of a then-gasless kitchen would emerge the *palaharam*. The standard was two cooked snacks and one crunchy one each evening

sukhiyan filled with a delicious mix of mung bean (*cherupayar*), coconut and jaggery On days when KP didn't feel particularly inspired, we'd get bondas or vadas, the *uzhunnu* or the *parrippu* versions where the peppercorns, green chillis and fried onions exploded in a sensory rush inside our mouths. Or there were plates of beaten rice, *aval*, lightly tossed in ghee and gur. There was neyyappam, made from rice flour mixed with jaggery, roasted coconut bits and powdered cardamom. There was also unniappam, where the filling was mashed banana, jaggery and roasted coconut bits. KP's kozhukatta range spanned the regular kozhukatta, the upma (rava) kozhukatta and the ellu (sesame seed) kozhukatta.

The crunchy-munchies were not made by KP, yet were truly sublime. Brindaban was one road away from one of Palakkad's famed agraharams, from where Amma would regularly order in fried snacks, especially when we were around. The women would come home with large stainless steel containers full of murukkus, kuzhalappam, thattai (the Mallu version of Karnataka's nipattu), cheeda, muthusaram, manoharam; savouries as well as sweets, and all made with rice flour.

My father's family would visit often, from Kerala's deep south. Tea-times would then turn even more interesting, with the appearance of southern snacks like kappa and chamanthi, achappam (rose cookies), and the to-die-for chakka varatti, a jackfruit spread that carried within it the taste of heaven.

All good things come to an end, of course. Amma passed away, KP passed away, and as for us, we grew up. Those wondrous tea-times at Brindaban passed into gilded memory. Over the years, many of us have tried our hand at making the snacks we used to enjoy at Amma's table. Only, it isn't KP making them, so they never really taste as good.

The writer is a manuscript editor and novelist based in Bengaluru.

Notes from Sofia

RAUL DIAS

Here's an honest observation. Sofia isn't a beautiful city. The modest sized capital of the Eastern European country of Bulgaria will never be up there with the top five 'must-visit' destinations in one's lifetime. Nor will it ever be bestowed with those silly, rather patronising monikers of 'Paris of the East', 'Venice of the South', and so on. But what it does have in abundance is character. Everywhere you look there's oxymoronic grittiness coupled with breathless vibrance. And probably one of the greatest contributors to this is Sofia's bounty of street art and graffiti in all their candy-coloured brilliance and in-your-face insouciance.

Ever the thrifty traveller, one of the first things I did after checking into my hotel was to sign up for a free graffiti and street art tour of the city. Run by a bunch of passionate art students and experienced street artists who double up as guides, the two-hour-long walking tour is their way of helping visitors discover Sofia and its colourful history.

And speaking of history, I was told by my guide, Stella, that it is thanks to Bulgaria's socialist past that the street art sub-culture and era of the true-blue graffiti artist has emerged. The drab, Soviet-style apartment blocks with their plain, grey exteriors provided the city's 21st century street artists with a range of ideal surfaces for large scale mural art. It was also the sudden invasion of satellite television and the emerging hip-hop scene of 90s America that served as harbingers of this sub-culture.

At first frowned upon, slowly, street art came to be respected for what it is – art! In fact, graffiti is so well-accepted in Sofia that the tram stop under the National Palace of Culture (NDK) is officially called 'NDK Graffiti', thanks to the abundant, ever-evolving graffiti than can be found around the place.

Artist's signature

Municipally sanctioned street art in particular also started to be used as a means to deter artists from committing random acts of vandalism. A few years ago, Theatre on the Street – an art project by Bulgarian NGO, aptly named Transformers – saw 30 artists, over 10 days, transform 51 pavement-side electrical boxes into graffiti art along Sofia's theatre-infested Rakovski Street.

At one of our stops, a car park on the city's arterial Knyaginya Maria Luiza Boulevard, a little north of the busy Serdika metro station, we come upon a rather evocative mural by a local graffiti legend who goes by the name, Bozko. A veritable nom de plume, a tag we're told, is not just an artist's signature and mark of territory, but also an allusion to their style.

In the case of Bozko, that style is something that borders on hallucinogenic with otherworldly characters harbouring hidden social messages. For instance, painted below a peeling Chupa Chups lollipop advertisement, his Pinocchio-like figure from a project series titled Urban Creatures seems to reference the untruths the advertising industry perpetrates with its ever-growing beak-nose. The interpretations are limitless.

With a diametrically opposite style from Bozko, Nasimo, another local Bulgarian muralist, does dreamy, largely figurative works that draw a lot of inspiration from classical art and convey a sense of escapism from reality. Behind the old Turkish thermal bath house, we stopped by two of his pieces a few metres away from each other. Both sublime. But the one that caught my attention the most was a photorealistic mural depicting an embracing couple with cupid superimposed on to them. The fading rays of the evening sun bouncing off the glass panels of the adjacent building and casting fluid-like rippled effects on the wall, made the piece even more magical than it was.

GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

Graffiti is so well-accepted in Sofia that the tram stop under the National Palace of Culture (NDK) is officially called 'NDK Graffiti'

The Mumbai-based writer and restaurant reviewer is passionate about food, travel and luxury, not necessarily in that order.

SUNDAY RECIPE

Ellu kozhukatta

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 12)
Rice flour – 1 large cup
Boiling water – 1 to 1 ½ cup
Salt – a pinch
Sesame oil – 1 tsp (Coconut oil overpowers other flavours)
White or black dry-roasted sesame seeds – 1/2 cup
Grated jaggery – 1/2 cup
Grated coconut – 2 tbsp
Cardamom powder – a pinch
Ghee – 1 tbsp

METHOD
1. Boil the water adding salt and oil. Add the boiling water little by little to the rice flour and make into a smooth but not sticky dough.
2. Grind the roasted sesame, add grated jaggery and coconut and heat on stove till jaggery has melted. Add ghee and cardamom powder to the mix, roll into small balls and keep aside.
3. Roll the dough into medium-sized balls and flatten them with your palm. Don't make them too thin or else they will crack while steaming. Place the filling and close up the ball.
4. Steam cook the kozhukatta in an idli cooker for about 8-10 minutes or till done. When cooked, the kozhukattas take on a shine.
5. Serve hot or cold, it's delicious either way.

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Sunday, July 28, 2019

GETTY IMAGES

OFF-CENTRE

When I was a young book buyer

We saved our money, we sneaked the books into the house, we hid them among our clothes, we gloated over them...

JERRY PINTO

I was looking at a glossy magazine which is about interior design, I think. And I turned a page and there was one of those magnificent rooms which featured a library. There was a shelf of Penguins, all their spines orange and white, orange and white, orange and white, a syncopation of colour. It was perfect. Immediately, I felt envy surging up inside me and with it the spiteful feeling: 'You can't possibly love books. This looks like clickbait, like a shelf set up so as to be admired rather than for reading. This is not very different from the way British gentlemen designed their libraries, by the yard, in the right shade of leather, as a backdrop to the drinking and the snoozing that they planned to do in their man caves.'

I felt ashamed of myself. Perhaps the young people who had set up house together had actually had the good fortune of loving a series of Penguin books, not impossible surely, and had managed to acquire the right editions. I have never been able to do that. My books come from a variety of sources and have made their way into this house on the immediate need for them. I have only ever had one set of show books, an *Arabian Nights* translated by Richard Burton, 11 volumes of the nights and seven volumes of the supplementary *Nights*. The books were bound in faux leather, they were embossed in gold (for the Nights) and silver (for the Supplementaries) and I bought them at a small circulating library in Dadar for a total of ₹700. My sister and I chipped in for them and we had to take a small loan too. Then we had to smuggle them into the house because we were under-age.

Forget the birthdays

My father had a rule. He did not think children should be allowed to buy books. He thought they should get them out of circulating libraries and read them and return them and get others. He said, "You'll outgrow all the books you want to buy now." Neither my sister nor I believed him. We thought we would read Enid Blyton for the rest of our lives. But this proscription made us into surreptitious book buyers. We saved our money, we sneaked the books into the house, we hid them among our clothes, we gloated over them... and I sometimes wonder whether my father did not intend exactly that to happen. Today, I give the children of my friends and cousins books and I see their faces fall almost immediately. I have books, they seem to say, Mom gets me books, Dad gets me books, everyone gets me books, everyone wants me to read books, I want video games and data and chocolate. It's enough to make you want to forget about their birthdays entirely.

By and large, though my father was right about the books we bought as children. Most didn't survive; all the Blytons are gone as are the Alistair MacLeans and the Jack Higginses. The Gerald Durrells are still around, so are the Wodehouses as is the first book my sister ever bought new: an Agatha Christie.

As young book buyers, new books were out of our reach. We could only buy what washed up on the streets of the city and we went looking faithfully. We once joined a circulating library simply to get a copy of *These Old Shades* by Georgette Heyer which did not seem to exist anywhere else in the

New books were out of our reach. We could only buy what washed up on the streets of the city and we went looking faithfully

city. And since we had managed to get hold of *Devil's Cub*, this was an imperative. That meant we were not really interested in editions. In fact, we quite disliked editions. There was a time when some American editions of Wodehouse came to Bombay with quite different titles. We were delighted only to go home and find we had been swindled. Brinkley Manor turned out to be Right Ho, Jeeves but by then we were faithful buyers and were allowed to return the next day and take other books.

The books therefore look like books, they don't look like an army. For a while, *Arabian Nights* did look a little like that but I soon grew embarrassed by them because I had not managed to read them. They are very tedious, if you want the truth. Many of the stories start and then encircle others. A young man sets out and he meets with misfortune and he comes to a village where there are three barbers and the first barber tells

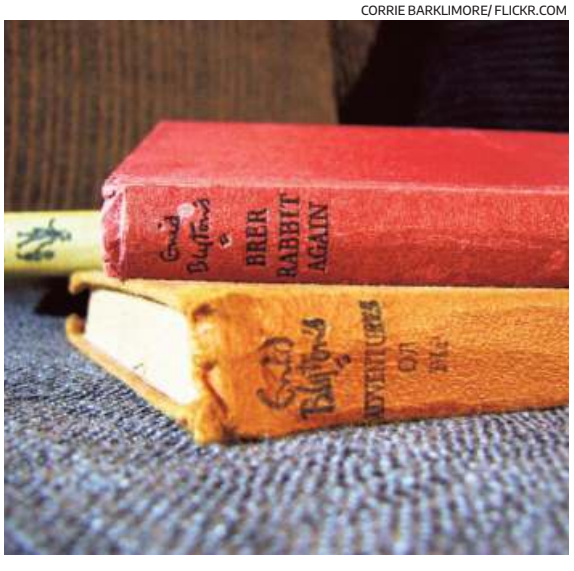
All the Blytons are gone as are the Alistair MacLeans and the Jack Higginses. The Gerald Durrells are still around, so are the Wodehouses

him about how he went to a certain city where he met three seamstresses and the first seamstress tells her story... all very fine and good but as soon as the first seamstress has told her story, you're back with the second seamstress and then the third and you think, 'Okay now' but no, you're back with the young man and the three barbers and it's the turn of the second barber and he meets three djinns and so on... I could never keep track and when you've returned to the original young man who set out and met with misfortune, you couldn't give a toss. *The Wedding Guest* got away lightly, you'd think.

There are times when a new edition comes out. Someone brings out all the old Wodehouses in a new 'look' and I wonder if I should. Then I look at my prizes and each one tells me of how I walked home and saved the bus money for that one or how I read that one on the train home, laughing aloud all the way and I think: these books have decorated my heart.

The author tries to think and write and translate in the cacophony of Mumbai.

CORRIE BARKLIMORE/ FLICKR.COM



PASSING BITE

Is Hindi going the German way?

Between 1925 and 1945, the German language had become the vehicle for the most odious ideas of racism and genocide

GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

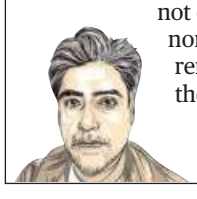
I grew up during the second and third decades of Independence in Calcutta which was – with Bombay – one of the two most multilingual cities in the country. Calcutta may have been the home of Bangla but, as a non-Bengali kid, I had no sense that you could not get by without knowing 'Bungali', as we non-Bong speakers called it. My mother taught Gujarati in a college and my father was a well-known Gujarati writer, so there was a lot of value put on the language in our house and among my parents' Gujarati friends.

Speaking mostly Gujarati at home, I nevertheless picked up lots of Bangla just outside the home, as one also picked up what one thought of as Hindi between home, street and school. For me, English came a limping fourth after the primary trio of tongues, until, that is, I discovered the narrative pleasures contained within Enid Blyton and P.G. Wodehouse and British comics about World War II. Despite not being from a Westernised background, my English zoomed well past the other languages.

Target of derision

It was only later I realised that the Hindi I spoke wasn't really Hindi but the typical Calcutta dialect of Bihari-Marwari flecked with Bangla constructions, or what I now think of as Biharwari. Similarly, it was my involvement with a Bengali girl in my early 20s that brought home the fact that my so-called Bengali fluency was anything but, that I'd been managing in the kind of pidgin-argot half-Bungla that a lot of non-Bengalis deployed, sometimes for their entire lives in the city.

In my early years, it was Gujarati that was the minority language under siege from Bangla and Hindi, with the usual jokes about "*shu chhe, saaru chhe, danda le ke maaru chhe*". In the boarding school in Rajasthan, to which I shifted after Class VIII, it was the Bangla us Calcuttans supposedly spoke that was the target of derision, as also the Biharwari Hindi I spoke. In college in the U.S., not only were all my non-English languages rendered irrelevant to the point of non-existence, my quite adequate Indian English too often raised eyebrows. Now, as an 'Indian writer writing in English', I once again find myself having to defend 'my' language and justify my use of it. Why do I write in English? Because it is a fully paid-up member of the group of Indian languages and has been for over a century, that's why.



So, when the HRD Minister has the temerity to demand that all communication be made to him in Hindi, I feel a double or even a triple anger. One, why should someone be making official communications in Hindi when their mother tongue might be Telugu, Odia, Kutchi or Khasi?

Why do I write in English? Because it is a fully paid-up member of the group of Indian languages and has been for over a century, that's why

Two, my chosen Indian language is English, which has the advantage of being understood across so many linguistic barriers in our country; it is now spoken and understood by more people than ever before; why shouldn't English continue to be the main language linking North and South, East and West? Third, Hindi is but one important language of this country and the official, ersatz-Sanskritised Hindi so loved by the BJP-RSS is a minority language even in the cluster of Hindi-Hindustani-Urdu, not to mention the larger family that includes Punjabi, Sindhi, Awadhi, Braj, Bhojpuri, Maithili, and other connected languages. Why should this triple-minority Hindi rule over all the others?

Political misuse

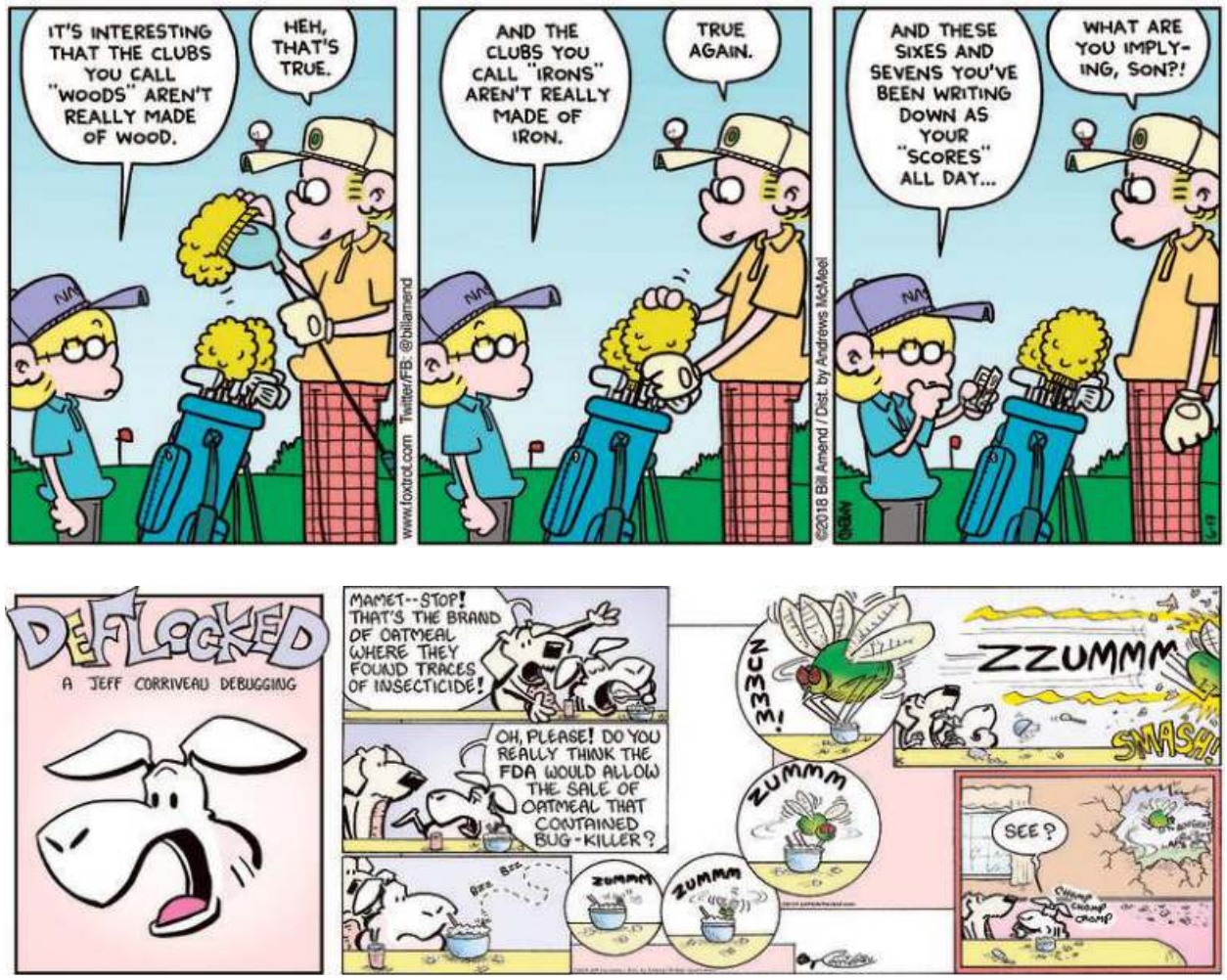
There is also a fourth anger and worry to be added to the first three, and it has to do with the damage a language suffers when it is put to political misuse by an ideology or a regime. After World War II, not just Germany and Germans but the German language itself was ostracised for a while. It didn't matter that this was the beautiful tongue of Goethe and Rilke, of great Jewish writers such as Heine and Kafka. The fact that between 1925 and 1945 the German language had become the vehicle for the most odious ideas of racism and genocide meant that internationally German was labelled as 'harsh', 'guttural' and 'ugly', as a language meant solely for evil military command and to exact the mass massacre of innocents.

There is a real danger that this might happen to Hindi or to certain sectors of it in a few years, when it is seen as having been the vehicle for the worst regressive religious majoritarianism, as the alibi language for lies and political lynchings, as the language via which our republic was brought to ruin. Just as we have to resist the imposition of Hindi across India, resist the entwining of poisonous language and poisonous ideas that a certain kind of Hindi currently represents, so must we try and minimise and undo the deep harm that is being inflicted on Hindi itself.

Ruchir Joshi is a writer, filmmaker and columnist.

BROWN PAPERBAG BY SAILESH GOPALAN

FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND



F MINUS BY TONY CARRILLO

GREEN HUMOUR BY ROHAN CHAKRAVARTY

GOREN BRIDGE

Don't hold up

East-West vulnerable, South deals

BOB JONES

NORTH
♠ 9 2
♡ K J 10 5
◇ A Q 9
♣ A 8 5 2

WEST
♠ 7 3
♡ 9 8 7 3
◇ 7 5 2
♣ Q 10 9 6

EAST
♠ Q J 10 8 5 4
♡ A 6 2
◇ K 6 3
♣ J

SOUTH
♠ A K 6
♡ Q 4
◇ J 10 8 4
♣ K 7 4 3

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1◇	Pass	1♡	1♠
1NT	Pass	3NT	All pass

Opening lead: Seven of ♠

South played low from dummy on the opening seven of spades lead, overtaken by East with the eight. South asked and found out that his opponents lead the middle card from three low cards. East would not have played the eight without the queen, jack, and 10. Declarer decided East likely had a six-card spade suit and a hold-up play would be pointless, so he won the opening lead with his ace.

The queen of hearts was ducked, but East won the heart continuation with the ace and led the queen of spades to declarer's king. South crossed to dummy with the ace of clubs and cashed the two high hearts. He discarded two diamonds as East parted with a low diamond. South was hoping that West started with three clubs. A club could then be conceded to West and declarer would have his ninth trick in clubs.

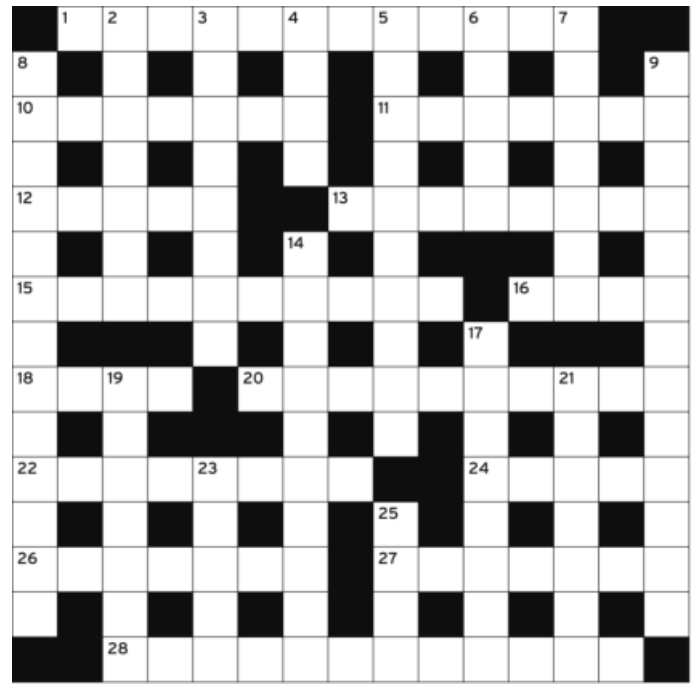
That was not possible when East showed out on a club to the king. East, however, discarded a spade, so it was now safe to throw East in with a spade and force him to lead from his king of diamonds in the end. Note that this line of play would not have been possible if South had "held up" in spades. It was important for South to win the first two rounds of spades, retaining the small spade in his hand.

It would not have helped East to discard another diamond, as then a diamond to the ace would have assured the contract no matter who held the king.

BAKER STREET

ANSWER: 20 HOURS HAVE PASSED

THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 3058



Across

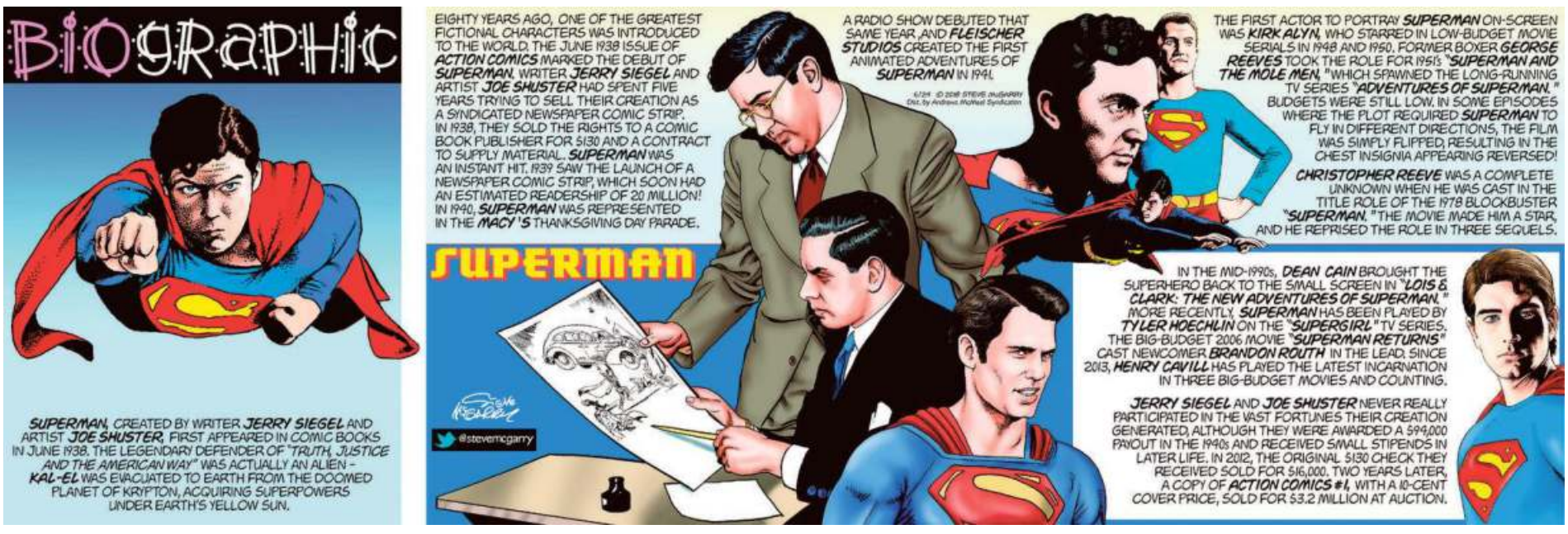
1 HS2's plans: official reports describe detailed electric transportation (6,6)
10 Disney tune the French singer's getting to at last (3,2,2)
11 Hanover king, egregious lunatic after losing America (6,1)
12 Get on... get on... about... about... (5)
13 Final half of bowling, champ's losing heart a lot (4,4)
15 Rashly, he sued aunt for carelessness (5,5)
16 Vain and regularly indulged (4)
18 Dutch speciality that's made round? (4)
20 To be summarily dismissed, you might do this at the butcher's counter (3,3,4)
22 A polenta stew requiring next to no effort (2,1,5)
24 Sun god's receiving thanks from worshipper (5)
26 Original impetus for feminist campaign (5,2)
27 Actually, half-missing dearly departed balloon (7)
28 Atmospheric processes produced by automobiles overtaking bishop on bike (6,6)

Down

2 Spoke, and mumbled, without mumbling at first (7)
3 Um... I'd like to have a look at that (3,2,3)
4 Also, knight removed from chessboard (4)
5 Taking last two slices, bistro guest ate in country, not respecting others (5,5)
6 Make horizontal axis the reverse of what you'd expect (5)
7 'Good to enter into unrestrained nudism': big name in psychoanalysis (7)
8 Somehow, seaport usable for vessels used only for fun (8-5)
9 Pershing felt a worry, creating machines of war (7,6)
14 Become a success, capable of recompense (4,2,2,2)
17 Enormous jerk about to commit sin with one female (8)
19 American cinema, oddly uninspiring (7)
21 One caught in childhood game wearing quaint socks (7)
23 Behold! First half of pulpit address delivers one that's been left behind (5)
25 Element derived from quartz in compounds (4)

Solution No. 3057

T	R	A	V	E	L	■	D	R	A	W	N	O	U	T
E	■	L	■	X	■	■	■	A	■	A	■	N	■	U
S	O	F	T	I	E	■	S	T	R	I	D	E	N	T
T	■	R	■	S	■	R	■	S	■	T	■	D	■	O
T	H	E	A	T	E	A	M	■	F	I	N	G	E	R
U	■	S	■	E	■	I	■	D	■	N	■	E	■	S
B	A	C	O	N	A	N	D	E	G	G	S	■	■	■
E	■	O	■	T	■	M	■	A	■	F	■	V	■	A
■	■	■	G	I	N	A	N	D	T	O	N	I	C	S
T	■	B	■	A	■	N	■	S	■	R	■	T	■	L
I	F	O	N	L	Y	■	B	E	L	G	R	A	D	E
C	■	W	■	I	■	G	■	A	■	O	■	M	■	V
T	A	L	K	S	H	O	P	■	A	D	M	I	R	E
A	■	E	■	T	■	B	■	■	■	O	■	N	■	L
C	H	R	I	S	T	I	E	■	S	T	O	C	K	S



DELHI THE HINDU Magazine
Sunday, July 28, 2019

QUIZ

Easy like Sunday morning

All of the bacteria in our body collectively weighs about 4 pounds

BERTY ASHLEY

1 Born on July 28, 1635, Robert Hooke was a scientific inquirer who was the curator at the Royal Society. In 1665, he published *Micrographia* which contained observations he had made using telescopes and microscopes. In it, he coined a term describing a biological organism. A term he used because of the apparent resemblance to the rooms monks had in a monastery. What term is this that refers to the basic structural, functional and biological unit of all living organisms?

2 Bacteria are made up of only one of the entities that Hooke discovered. They have been on the planet for more than 3.5 billion years, making them the oldest known life-form on earth. The human body has around 39 trillion bacteria at any given time; all helping us live normal lives. One of the most important parts of our body is a descendant of bacteria engulfed by larger micro-organisms billions of years ago. What is this entity usually referred to as 'the powerhouse'?

3 *Yersinia pestis* was first isolated by Alexandre Yersin and he gave it the name 'pestis' as a reference to the Latin 'pestilentia' from which we get another word in English that refers to a particular epidemic. *Y.pestis* causes that particular epidemic and has been reported to have been the cause of the highest number of human deaths in history. During the 14th century, the bacteria was responsible for the death of at least one-third of the population of Europe. Thanks to modern medicine the epidemic is now under control. Which disease does the bacteria cause and what word shares its origin with it?

4 Superbugs are resistant to antibiotics and a huge threat to medicine. One mechanism which contributes to antibiotic resistance involves an enzyme called NDM-1. NDM-1 was first observed in a Swedish man who fell sick after visiting the capital of a country. M-1 stands for metallo-beta-lactamase-1. ND stands for a place which is also referenced in a 2011 cult Bollywood film starring Imran Khan, the title of which refers to the after-effects of NDM-1. What does ND stand for and what was the movie?

5 Deinococcus radiodurans is a bacterium that can survive cold, dehydration, vacuum, and acid. It gets its name from its extraordinary ability to withstand extremely high doses (up to 2,500 times higher) of a certain process that is extremely fatal to human beings even in small doses. Its amazing ability is thanks to an incredible DNA repair mechanism it possesses. What can this microscopic bacterium survive that makes it so special?

6 *Thiomargarita namibiensis* is a coccoid Proteobacterium, found in the ocean sediments of the continental shelf of Namibia. They contain microscopi sulphur particles that scatter light. Unlike other bacteria which are usually 1.1 µm to 1.5 µm wide, this one is a staggering 0.75 mm (750 µm). Due to this, what makes *T.namibiensis* special?

7 Bacteria are single-celled organisms, but that doesn't mean they lack the ability to coordinate and work together. *Myxococcus xanthus* travel in a wandering swarm that scientists refer to as a "___". On finding a victim, the swarm release antibiotics to paralyse it and then release digestive enzymes to break it down. What is the term, which refers to an animal that travels in groups led by an alpha male when hunting?

Heavy duty This American thrash metal band gets its name from a bacterial infection. STEFAN BRENDING

8 These bacteria cause black blisters and is spread by contact with the bacterium's spores. Although the bacteria have killed thousands of people and animals, only recently has it kindled major interest after some countries developed it as a bioweapon. The bacteria also lends its name to the only band from the East Coast of the U.S. in the 'Big Four' of thrash metal bands. What is the name?

9 *Acidithiobacillus* bacteria are usually found in mines and live off sulphur, iron and pyrite. They are responsible for the characteristic sparkle in caves. They digest these metals and excrete a liquid that dissolves limestone, creating tiny gypsum crystals in the process. What does *Acidithiobacillus* excrete that your chemistry teacher would have sternly asked you to stay away from in school?

10 Magnetospirillum magneticum are bacterium that collect iron, and make magnetite nanocrystals that are arranged in a straight line. This leads to the bacteria being naturally aligned by the action of Earth. The bacterium then follows this line up and down without getting lost, knowing exactly where it was. What device which humans only learnt to use in 200 BC have these bacteria been emulating for millions of years, earning them this nickname?

Answers
1. Cell
2. Mitochondria
3. Plague; pestilence
4. New Delhi; *Delhi Belly*
5. Radioactivity
6. It can be seen with the naked eye; microscope not needed
7. Wolf pack
8. Anthrax
9. Sulphuric acid
10. Compass

A molecular biologist from Madurai, our quizmaster enjoys trivia and music, and is working on a rock ballad called Coffee is a Drink, Kaapi is an Emotion. @bertyashley

LETTER FROM A CONCERNED READER

Too much tension

Respected Madam/Sir,

In decades and decades of dedicated service to public sector bank, madam/ sir, can you tell me how many times Mr. Mathrubootham has broken any official rules and regulations or basic decency and ethics and morals of society?

Thousand times? Never.

Five hundred times? Your father is breaking rules 500 times.

Hundred times? How dare you?

Zero times? Whether you have heard of realistic expectation or not? This is India, not some Belgium-type country where total population is 43 and inside that 32 are policeman.

10-15 times? Absolutely correct.

In whole life, 10-15 times maximum, I have broken rules or done illegal shortcuts and all. Sometimes customer will come to bank and signature is not matching. But face is matching because I have seen same face since Jambuvan period. Please take the money.

GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

Sometimes cashier will say, manager, customer is saying she has dropped passbook in the water and now requesting replacement passbook for free. For 25 minutes I am telling her, nothing free, please pay fees. Now she is saying she will not leave without passbook even if you call Prime Minister.

Rats since 1972

Then I will tell cashier, Mr. Joseph Joseph, have you seen inside stationery cupboard? Same family of rats living in that cupboard since 1972. If you go to High Court, they will say cupboard is now family property of rat, please vacate the building without fail. Do you know what rat family is eating for breakfast? Cheque book. Lunch? Passbook. Dinner? Customer feedback form. You please give replacement passbook quietly without other customer seeing.

Madam/ sir, you are thinking 100% I have made typing mistake in Joseph Joseph name. No. He is from Kottayam. First time we met I asked him, what is your name, he said Joseph. What is your father's name, he said Joseph. What is your son's name, also Joseph. I said whether ladies in your family are giving delivery in hospital or Xerox shop? But it is the culture.

So what happened today? Suddenly I got one phone call from Mrs. M. She has gone to see brother family in Nagercoil. She said old man emergency danger! I said oh my god what happened in Nagercoil. She said health insurance has expired, I totally forgot. Please renew immediately.

I said Kamalam what nonsense tension you are giving me? Imagine if I got heart attack and esteemed *Hindu* newspaper is publishing two-page cover story about Mathrubootham. Can you imagine humiliation when people are reading that Mr. Mathrubootham got heart attack during phone call for health insurance form?

She said all the forms are in the drawer inside purple *alamaari*. Please submit immediately without fail. So I did all the work and madam/ sir, I noticed one very big problem. Paper is needing signature of Mrs. Mathrubootham. I called her and said, Kamalam, signature is needed, we will send after you return to Chennai.

She said whether you are Queen Elizabeth of honesty? Just put one sign for me and give off papers.

Madam/ sir, full tension is going through my body. How can I forge wife signature? What if computer is finding out automatically? What if it becomes police case? What if *Hindu* newspaper is doing two-page cover story about criminal Mathrubootham of Anna Nagar?

One hour I took tension in living room. One hour in balcony. Two hours I saw *Guns of Navarone* DVD for calming. Then I did one prayer and put her signature and took it to insurance office. One fellow in the counter looked at form for five minutes, then said, thank you uncle, all okay.

I said, *thambi*, please check all signatures? He said uncle, signature and all just one *lollu jollu jujubi*, who will give us money to give someone else insurance? Uncle, whether you have any experience in financial sector?

Madam/ sir, now I am going to see *Guns of Navarone* one more time.

Yours in unnecessary tension,
J. Mathrubootham