

NEARBY



Count me out for top post, says Priyanka
 NEW DELHI
 Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is believed to have told a meeting of party general secretaries on Thursday that she shouldn't be considered as a replacement for her brother and outgoing party chief Rahul Gandhi. Ms. Vadra's remarks are important in the backdrop of a growing chorus among a section of the senior leaders like Captain Amarinder Singh and Shashi Tharoor asking her to take over the reins.

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FRIDAY REVIEW ▶ 8 PAGES
 (TABLOID)

SC transfers Unnao cases to Delhi court

Court also orders ₹25 lakh interim compensation and CRPF protection to the rape survivor

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
 NEW DELHI
 The Supreme Court on Thursday transferred five cases of crimes committed against the Unnao rape survivor and her family from a CBI court in Lucknow to its counterpart in Delhi and ordered the Uttar Pradesh government to pay her ₹25 lakh in interim compensation. A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi, ordered that the trial in the Unnao cases be held on a day-to-day basis and completed within 45 days.

Judge named
 The court went the extra mile to zero in on District Judge Dinesh Sharma as the trial judge. Four of these cases are the rape of the minor in 2017; a false case foisted on her father under the Arms Act by conniving police officers; the custodial death of the survivor's father after he was arrested in the Arms case; and a second instance of gang

Case history
 A summary of five cases of crimes, allegedly committed against the Unnao rape survivor and her family, which were transferred to a Delhi court

CASE 1 The rape of a 17-year-old, allegedly by BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar (in pic), on June 4, 2017, in Unnao

CASE 2 The alleged false case foisted against the father of the victim. Police officers responsible for framing the case are the accused. The victim's father was booked under the Arms Act on April 3, 2018

CASE 3 The case of custodial death of the father. He was beaten up allegedly by those conniving with Sengar, the main accused. The father died on April 9, 2018

CASE 4 The gangrape of the victim within a week after she named Sengar

CASE 5 The case of conspiracy and murder, after a speeding truck rammmed the car in which the victim, her lawyer and two of her aunts were travelling, on July 28, 2019. The two aunts were killed while the victim and her lawyer are in a critical condition

rape of the survivor. Though the CBI has filed chargesheets in the four cases, the Lucknow court is yet to frame charges against the accused persons. **Probe into 'accident'** The fifth case concerns the 'accident' on July 28 when a truck rammmed into a car carrying the now 19-year-old rape survivor. Days before the accident,

she had reached out to the CJI in a letter. But her cry for help largely remained unnoticed in the court's Registry for almost a fortnight. Her letter, dated July 12, had spelt out threats to her life and her family from the accused persons, including Kuldeep Singh Sengar, four-time BJP MLA from Bangermau. The letter landed at the Registry on July 17, but did not reach the CJI's table till

July 30 – well after the 'accident' on Sunday. **Cheque handed over** In compliance with the court order, Lucknow District Magistrate K.R. Sharma and SSP K. Naithani later in the day handed over a cheque for ₹25 lakh to the survivor's family, PTI reports. **CONTINUED ON** ▶ PAGE 12
GENDER JUSTICE ▶ EDITORIAL

25,000 more troops being deployed in J&K

Amarnath Yatra suspended
PEERZADA ASHIQ
 SRINAGAR
 An additional 25,000 security personnel were ordered to be moved to Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, days after Governor Satya Pal Malik said "all was normal", fuelling a fresh wave of speculation in the State. According to police sources, a fresh order was directed to security personnel to "work on a build-up at the district levels across the State." Sources said 25,000 personnel, in addition to the 10,000 troops, were being inducted and split between the Jammu and Kashmir regions. **Taken off yatra duty** "Yes, we have received additional troops. Many personnel were relieved from the Amarnath Yatra duty to augment security in towns in south Kashmir," a senior officer told *The Hindu*. Sources said there was also a direction to wind up



The personnel are being split between the Jammu and Kashmir regions. **the Amarnath Yatra for the time being.** Even many langars (community kitchens) operating in south Kashmir were vacated on Thursday. Over 40 companies were deployed for the Yatra. A general high alert has been sounded in the State. There is speculation around the Centre's move to take "significant measures" ahead of the Assembly election and fear of immediate repercussions in the Muslim pockets across the State. **(With PTI inputs)**
CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Free electricity for Delhiites using up to 200 units

Move will encourage power saving, says Kejriwal; BJP, Cong. call announcement 'election gimmick'

STAFF REPORTER
 NEW DELHI
 Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced free electricity for people consuming up to 200 units under a domestic connection. The decision, which came into effect from August 1, has been taken barely six months before Delhi Assembly elections due in February 2020. "In Delhi, people who consume up to 200 units will not have to pay electricity bills. Their bills [will be] waived," Mr. Kejriwal said while addressing a press con-

ference. Those consuming 201-400 units of electricity will get about 50% subsidy, he added. "Now people using 210 or 300 units will think that if they use under 200 units, their bill will be zero. We believe this will encourage them to save electricity," the Chief Minister said. Attacking the move, both the BJP and the Congress termed it an "election gimmick". Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari said the Delhi government has "looted" ₹8,500 crore from the people as fixed charge and load charge



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal at a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday. **• SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA**

and demanded that Mr. Kejriwal refund it or else his party will "initiate a movement" against it. The Chief Minister said

around 35% of the total consumers use less than 200 units during summer and in winter, the percentage goes up to around 70. Terming the move "historic", he claimed Delhi has the cheapest electricity rate in the country. The Delhi Congress, however, claimed that the Aam Aadmi Party government was misleading the people on power tariff. "It is a lie that Delhi has the cheapest rates of electricity and I challenge Arvind Kejriwal and other AAP leaders who are misleading people. When

Congress was in power, even then power tariff in Delhi was lowest in the country," senior Congress leader Haroon Yusuf said. Asked about the timing of the move, Mr. Kejriwal said: "When we took over, the power sector was in a bad state. We worked and slowly improved it. Since then, the DERC has been reducing rates... It was not possible earlier, as power companies' financial state was bad. At that point, there was no question of making it free." **(With PTI inputs)**
SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 3

India evaluating Pak. proposal for consular access to Jadhav

Response will be sent through diplomatic channels: MEA

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
 NEW DELHI
 India is examining Pakistan's proposal to grant consular access to Kulbhusan Jadhav, a former Navy officer, who was sentenced to death by a Pakistan military court on espionage and terrorism charges in 2017. Raveesh Kumar, spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, said the established channels were being used to convey India's response. "We have received a proposal from Pakistan. We



Kulbhusan Jadhav are evaluating the proposal in the light of the judgment of the International Court of Justice (ICJ)," he said, without spelling out the modal-

Pakistan arrests 'Indian spy'
 Pakistan has said its border military police arrested Raju Lakshman, 30, an "Indian spy", in Dera Ghazi Khan in Punjab province on Wednesday. **▶ PAGE 13**
 ties. Nor did he say whether conditions were attached to the proposal. **CONTINUED ON** ▶ PAGE 12

Vadodara flooded



Crippled by torrents: Four persons were killed and 5,000 evacuated from Vadodara in Gujarat, which was battered by nearly 500 mm of rain in 24 hours till Thursday morning. The Vishwamitri river burst its banks and entered several areas. **• PTI (PAGE 9)**

Fleeing Maldives leader held off Tamil Nadu

Ahmed Adeb was on a tugboat

HARIPRASAD RADHAKRISHNAN
 THOOTHUKUDI
 Former Vice President of Maldives Ahmed Adeb Abdul Ghafoor, who secretly fled the Maldives on a boat to India, was held by Indian authorities near the coast of Thoothukudi in southern Tamil Nadu on Thursday. Mr. Adeb was convicted by a Maldivian court in a plot to assassinate former President Abdulla Yameen, but the country's Supreme Court had quashed the sentence and ordered a fresh trial. The police said he was on board a Mongolian-flagged tugboat, Virgo-9, that set sail from the Maldives on July 27 on its way back to Thoothukudi after delivering bulk cargo. Besides Mr. Adeb, the boat had nine workers – eight Indonesian nationals and a man from Thoothukudi. While Coast Guard sources in Thoothukudi told *The Hindu* that the boat was intercepted in the sea near Manappad, the Coast Guard IG (Eastern Region), Paramesh, denied that the agency had any role in the detention of Mr. Adeb. Tamil Nadu Director General of Police J.K. Tripathy



Ahmed Adeb Abdul Ghafoor in a boat in Thoothukudi on Thursday. **• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

said the issue was being dealt with by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and other central agencies. MEA official spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, "There are designated entry points through which foreigners are allowed entry into India. The entry is facilitated on the basis of appropriate valid travel documents. In the instant case, since he was not entering through a designated entry point and did not possess the valid document, he has not been permitted entry." **(With inputs from Delhi and Chennai)**
CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

U.S. imposes sanctions on Iran Minister

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
 WASHINGTON
 The U.S. on Wednesday imposed sanctions on Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, effectively slamming the door on the country's top diplomat. The sanctions freeze any of Mr. Zarif's assets in the U.S. or that are controlled by U.S. entities, the government said, saying it would also curtail his international

travel. "Zarif implements the reckless agenda of Iran's Supreme Leader, and is the regime's primary spokesperson around the world. The U.S. is sending a clear message to the Iranian regime that its recent behaviour is completely unacceptable," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement. Mr. Zarif has been at the

heart of the complex talks with foreign capitals over Iran's nuclear power industry, which Tehran says is peaceful, but Washington and regional allies, including Israel, insist is a cover for a secret weapons programme. President Hassan Rouhani said the measure showed Washington was "afraid" of Mr. Zarif. **PATH TO TALKS** ▶ PAGE 14

IN BRIEF

AUD conducts orientation programme

NEW DELHI
Ambedkar University Delhi conducted an orientation programme for freshers to all undergraduate programmes on Thursday. V-C Anu Singh Lather told students that the university strongly believes that no knowledge becomes socially productive unless it spreads across society, transcending barriers of caste, creed and class.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

City	Index	Category
Delhi	89	Moderate
Gurugram	50	Good
Ghaziabad	87	Moderate
Faridabad	57	Good
Noida	82	Moderate
Greater Noida	110	Poor

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

DELHI TODAY

Dance: "Bhagjovindam", a Odissi recital by Monalisa Ghosh and her senior disciples, Arunima Ghosh, Raju Mishra and Tanusree Mullic at The Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

Exhibition: Image-In-Side-Out, an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Sayam Bharat and Yamini Mohan at Triveni Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Exhibition: "Liminal spaces", a solo art show by Kanwal Singh at Open Palm Court Gallery, IHC, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Zenith" a solo painting exhibition by Bhavana Sanon at Experimental Art Gallery, IHC, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

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

RTI activists detained on way to deliver petition to President

Protesters launch mass RTI campaign, raise questions on controversial issues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Right to Information activists attempting to deliver a petition against the RTI Amendments Bill to the President via his Secretariat were detained outside Rashtrapati Bhavan on Thursday.

Later, they launched a new campaign to bombard the government with a mass RTI campaign raising queries on prickly issues of public interest, from the Unnao rape case and the Rafale defence deal to alleged discrepancies in tax revenue data and the impact of Aadhaar.

No permission

The city police said a total of 59 persons were detained, including 45 women and 14 men. "The group did not have any permission. They were detained at Mandir Marg police station for an hour and then were released," a police spokesperson said.

According to the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI), the police detained 66 activists gathered outside Gate No. 38



Police detain RTI activists at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Thursday. • SANDEEP SAXENA

of Rashtrapati Bhavan which has a facility for accepting memorandums from the public. Three of them were later allowed to submit their plea, urging President Ram Nath Kovind not to sign the Bill passed by Parliament last week.

'Attack on rights'

"This is an absolute attack on our democratic rights to free speech and expression," said Anjali Bhardwaj, NCPRI co-convenor who was

among those detained by the police. "There were no slogans, no banners, no posters. It was simply a group of citizens who brought their own signed petitions to the President of the country. If we cannot even do that, it is a joke to call this a democracy," she said.

The petition to the President had almost two lakh signatures, including 1.27 lakh people who joined an online campaign on the Change.org platform.

"The Centre has not allowed this legislation to be publicly discussed anywhere. It was not sent to the parliamentary standing committee or any select committee, there was no information about the Bill on the website, no pre-legislative consultation, or public stakeholders consultation," noted NCPRI founder Nikhil Dey.

"We believe this is because they have information to hide... Maybe they can steamroll Parliament, but they cannot steamroll the people."

In conjunction with social movements across the country, NCPRI activists have drafted and filed 100 RTI queries on high-profile issues of public interest as part of a new campaign called "Use RTI to Save RTI".

On top of the list is an RTI request about the Unnao rape case, asking for details and copies of the FIRs and chargesheets against the accused BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar, and also seeking details of the police protection given to the victim.

Plea in HC challenges triple talaq Bill

Huge possibility of it being misused, says petitioner

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

Within a day of President Ram Nath Kovind giving assent to the Triple Talaq Bill, a petition was filed in the Delhi High Court challenging provisions in the new law that made giving instant oral triple talaq a criminal offence punishable with jail term of up to three years.

Social activist and advocate Shahid Ali, in his public interest litigation petition, has claimed that the Muslim Women (protection of rights on marriage) Act, 2019 was against both men and women and "amounts to institutionalised discrimination against the largest minority of India."

Shayara Bano case

Mr. Ali said there is "huge possibility of it being misused, whenever, there is minor matrimonial discourse or claim for maintenance."

The petition pointed out that the Supreme Court in the Shayara Bano case had already declared the pronouncement of triple talaq as invalid and unconstitutional.

"Once it is declared that the marriage shall not be dissolved by pronouncement of triple talaq, no offence is



made out at all," the petitioner argued.

"However, the government went many steps further... [and] has made the same a criminal offence, however, without making any arrangement in the said Act for reconciliation between the Muslim husband pronouncing the triple talaq and his wife," the petition said.

Order violated

The mere fact of not providing any measure for reconciliation between the Muslim husband pronouncing talaq and his wife is against the government's own statement of objects and reasons attached to the Act, and also violative of the order of Supreme Court in Shayara Bano case, the plea said.

Mr. Ali also argued that

The government went many steps further... [and] has made it a criminal offence, however, without making any arrangement in the said Act for reconciliation between the Muslim husband pronouncing the triple talaq and his wife

there are "high chances" of misuse of some Sections of the Act, since, nothing had been provided in the Act to ascertain the truthfulness of the allegations of pronouncement of triple talaq.

False complaint

"In the absence of any safeguards even if there is a minor discord in the marital affairs, the wife may file a false complaint that the husband has pronounced Triple Talaq upon her by oral pronouncement," the plea said.

This, Mr. Ali, said would result in increasing number of desertions instead of dissolution of marriage in the matter of those who are forced to live under unhappy marriages.

'Illegal constructions in Haridwar forest division to be removed'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Illegal constructions in the Haridwar forest division will be removed within three months, an oversight committee constituted by the National Green Tribunal informed the green panel. This came following a plea alleg-

ing violation of forest laws in Haridwar.

The committee, in its report, informed a Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice A.K. Goel that the delay in proceedings pertaining to the eviction of encroachers was due to the model code of conduct that

came into force due to the general election held earlier this year.

Eviction proceedings

"No new encroachment has now taken place and some encroachments have been removed. In some cases, orders of eviction have been

passed or other proceedings were pending. The remaining eviction proceedings are to be completed within three months," the committee headed by former judge Justice U.C. Dhyani told the Bench. The green panel directed the committee to furnish a final report on the sta-

tus of action taken and recommendations made, by November 30. The directions came when the NGT was hearing a plea moved by environmental activist Gauri Maulekhi who sought action against illegal constructions in the Shyampur range of Haridwar's forest division.

JNUTA against collecting biometrics for smart card

'Violation of constitutional rights'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association (JNUTA) on Thursday opposed the introduction of smart cards for marking attendance, calling the administration move a "draconian measure to coerce employees, faculty and students to give their biometric data in violation of their fundamental right to privacy".

Calling it a clear violation of constitutional rights, the teachers alleged that there had been no deliberation about the necessity for the introduction of All-in-One smart ID cards.

"The notification issued by the administration in this regard states that the biometric card is an "All-in-One" card. It does not specify precisely for what all purposes would the card be used. This is vague and open ended, and includes the possibility of biometric data being used for any unstated purposes without the

consent of the person. This is a gross violation of the right to privacy," the teachers said.

'Coercively imposed'

The JNUTA said that the biometric system was currently being coercively imposed in the first phase of implementation on the most vulnerable employees of the university — outsourced, temporary and contractual — who face the risk of losing their livelihood if they were to refuse to give their biometric data or raise concerns of privacy.

The teachers' body said that the matter is sub judice in the High Court of Delhi and that the court has also issued a stay on collection of biometric data for the purpose of attendance.

"The JNUTA demands that the process of coercing its employees to give information as a condition of employment must immediately be stopped," the statement read.

e-bike-sharing services launched in Gurugram

It will provide last-mile connectivity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

To provide last-mile connectivity to commuters in the Millennium City, Gurugram Metropolitan City Bus Limited (GMCBL) in collaboration with MobyCy launched e-bike-sharing services on Thursday. The GMCBL joint chief executive officer Ashok Bansal inaugurated the facility at a function at HUDA City Centre metro station.

The MobyCy will make its electric scooters and e-bikes available across key Gurugram bus stops, including HUDA City Centre metro station, IFFCO Chowk, Sohna Road, Golf Course Road, for one year under the arrangement. It will allow bus commuters to opt for an environment-friendly mode of last-mile commute.

Daily commuters are ex-

pected to be the prime beneficiaries from this development. MobyCy already has a pilot programme across various stations of Rapid Metro, including Sector 53-54 and Sector 55-56 stations, DLF Cybercity, and Sector 44.

The users can rent the e-bike by unlocking the lock by scanning a digital QR code via the MobyCy app. Upon completion, the e-bikes can be parked in MobyCy designated parking points shown on app. Currently, MobyCy provides over 2,000 rides every day in four cities, with a fleet of over 2,000 bikes.

The commuter will have to pay ₹2 per minute ride or can avail a day plan at ₹149. The monthly subscription plan will cost ₹499 for two half hours rides a day.

DELHI Timings

FRIDAY, AUG. 02		
RISE	05:43	SET 19:12
RISE	06:45	SET 20:26
SATURDAY, AUG. 03		
RISE	05:44	SET 19:11
RISE	07:55	SET 21:11
SUNDAY, AUG. 04		
RISE	05:44	SET 19:10
RISE	09:02	SET 21:52

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	37	28
Safdarjang	37	28
Palam	37	27

Delhi Palam Today
32°C Marginally day temperature will decrease. Humid conditions will increase.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
30°C A comfortable and humid weather will continue. Few spells of rain or thundershower may occur.

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THE HINDU
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Samajwadi Party workers take to the streets in Rampur

Show of solidarity with party leader Azam Khan after an appeal by Akhilesh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

In a show of solidarity for embattled senior Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan, hundreds of party members took to the streets in Rampur on Thursday. They were responding to a call given by party president Akhilesh Yadav. He had appealed to the party cadre to support Mr. Khan and his MLA son Abdullah Azam in what he described as a "witch-hunt" by the Yogi Adityanath government.

District borders sealed

The district administration responded by sealing the borders of the district. Mr. Abdullah and around 200 supporters were detained — the second time in two days for the legislator — for obstructing the work of officials on duty. "Section 144 was in place because of Kanwar Yatra and the upcoming Bakri Id. Those who tried to break the law were arrested," said A.K. Singh, District Magistrate, Rampur.

While Mr. Yadav termed the police action as "unde-



Police detain SP leader Dharmendra Yadav and his supporters after they tried to enter Rampur on Thursday. ■PTI

mocratic", Mr. Abdullah criticised the district administration for being selective in using Section 144. "When the BJP people burnt the effigy of my father, the administration didn't take any action," he said.

On the charge of the administration targeting the Rampur MP because of political reasons, Mr. Singh said he was being investigated because of the cases filed against him. "Action will be taken only on the basis of evidence."

Twenty eight FIRs have been filed against Mr. Khan with charges of grabbing the land of farmers and madrasas for Mohammad Ali Jauhar University. The police have also charged him for stealing books and rare manuscripts from Aaliya Madrasa.

Leaders detained

The SP top brass is seeing the action as politically motivated. On Thursday, Dr S.T. Hasan, party MP from the neighbouring Moradabad

Section 144 was in place because of Kanwar Yatra and the upcoming Id. Those who tried to break the law were arrested

A.K. SINGH
District Magistrate Rampur

and senior leader Dharmendra Yadav also tried to enter Rampur but were detained by the police. Masood Hasan, student leader and the Moradabad MP's son who was leading a bunch of protesters, described the police action as "unconstitutional". "Peaceful protest is our democratic right. The BJP government is trying to divert attention from Unnao case where its own partyman is involved in a heinous crime. The land issue is already in court and will be resolved in due course. As for books, our sources say the police had planted them in the university," he alleged.

By evening, the police allowed the leaders to go home and the protesters were waiting for further orders from the leadership.

CBI closure report 'bad in law': Punjab AG

'State had withdrawn cases from it'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Terming the Central Bureau of Investigation's closure report in the 2015 Bargari sacrilege case "bad in law", Punjab Advocate General Atul Nanda on Thursday said the national agency had no jurisdiction in the matter after the State government withdrew the cases from it last year.

"The CBI lost all authority and jurisdiction to continue with any investigation in the cases, much less to file a closure report, after the State government issued a formal notification to withdraw the cases from the agency in September 2018," said Mr. Nanda. He said that instead of filing the closure report, the correct legal course for the CBI would have been to inform the court that it was no longer charged with the investigation.

The CBI had on July 4 filed a closure report in the three Bargari sacrilege cases of 2015 in the special CBI court in Mohali.

Mr. Nanda also expressed surprise at the CBI's stand that the State of Punjab was a stranger to the events, and

Instead of filing the closure report, the CBI should have informed the court that it was no longer charged with the probe

ATUL NANDA
Punjab Advocate General

thus not entitled to a copy of the closure report. "This stand was absurd, considering that the agency itself had, in its closure report, cited the 'reports' and 'inputs' of the Punjab police," he added.

'Dubious role'

Meanwhile, Punjab Ekta Party president Sukhpal Singh Khaira accused the Chief Minister of playing a "dubious role" in the cases of sacrilege and asking the CBI to reopen the cases.

"The Chief Minister failed to implement the resolution passed by the Vidhan Sabha to take back the cases from the CBI. On one hand, he advocated that the cases be probed by the SIT of Punjab police, while on the other he is asking the CBI to reopen the cases. This raises serious questions about his intentions," said Mr. Khaira.

Refrain from offering namaz on roads, says Aligarh mufti

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ALIGARH (U.P.)

The chief mufti of Aligarh urged Muslims on Thursday to refrain from offering namaz on the streets, making a bid to defuse the controversy over the district administration's recent ban on religious ceremonies on roads.

Mohammad Khalid Hameed said the place for performing Friday prayers was inside a mosque.

"If there is a spill over, the devout should not perform namaz on the streets and cause inconvenience to others," he told reporters. "Instead, they could offer their prayers on rooftops of neighbouring buildings wherever convenient."

The Aligarh administration had imposed a blanket ban on holding any religious function on the roads in the U.P. district without prior permission.

The authorities has taken the step as a precautionary measure to prevent any disturbance after some Hindutva groups had last week planned the recital of 'Hanuman Chalisa' every Tuesday.

Day of deluge



Vehicles wade through a flooded Lal Chowk after heavy rain in Srinagar on Thursday. ■NISAR AHMAD

Triple talaq: FIR against husband

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HAZARIBAGH (JHARKHAND)

Buoyed by passing of the triple talaq Bill by Parliament, a Muslim woman on Thursday filed an FIR against her husband, who divorced her by saying talaq thrice in Hazaribagh district last month.

Inspector-cum-officer-in-charge of Bishnugarh police station Ganesh Kumar Singh said that Subeda Khatoon, mother of three children, filed an FIR against her husband Dildaraj Ansari of Nawada locality accusing him of giving her talaq in July last by recklessly uttering the word thrice.

She complained that he allegedly threw her out of the house after four years of marriage and regularly assaulted her.

She also charged her husband with beating her regularly for dowry.

The woman told the police that she gathered courage after the triple talaq Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha on July 30 and approached them.

BJP MLAs walk out of Commonwealth meet

Professor's remarks during valedictory session upset Opposition lawmakers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Angered by the analysis of the 2019 Lok Sabha election results as the victory of communal and majoritarian politics, BJP MLAs staged a walkout from a seminar of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in the Rajasthan Assembly here on Thursday. Former President Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated the seminar earlier in the day.

CPA-Rajasthan vice-president and Leader of the Op-

position Gulab Chand Kataria and other BJP legislators took exception to the remarks of former professor of Political Science at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Zoya Hasan, during the seminar's valedictory session. BJP MLA Rajendra Rathore disrupted Prof. Hasan's address and accused her of making an "ideological attack" on the ruling party at the Centre.

The seminar, co-organised by CPA and Lokniti-CSDS, was devoted to the theme "Changing nature of

parliamentary democracy in India". Prof. Hasan, invited as a keynote speaker, said the campaign for the Lok Sabha election had witnessed the "spread of disinformation" on social media and promotion of a "personality cult" assiduously built over the last five years.

'One-sided remarks'

When Prof. Hasan ascribed the BJP's landslide victory to the creation of a majority vote bank and Hindu nationalism that could not be suc-

cessfully challenged by the Opposition parties, the BJP MLAs got agitated and stood up, accusing the noted political scientist of making one-sided remarks.

Assembly Speaker C.P. Joshi defended Prof. Hasan's right to address the gathering. When the BJP legislators did not relent, Mr. Joshi said those who were not willing to listen were free to leave the House.

The BJP MLAs boycotted the seminar and staged a walkout.

High Court notice to MP Pragya Thakur

Petition challenges her election

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JABALPUR (M.P.)

The Madhya Pradesh High Court on Thursday issued a notice to BJP Bhopal MP Pragya Singh Thakur on a petition challenging her election to the Lok Sabha, the petitioner's lawyer said.

The petition seeks to set aside her election on the grounds that she allegedly adopted "corrupt practices" and whipped up communal passions during the campaign. Rakesh Dixit, a journalist, has filed the petition in his capacity as a voter registered in Bhopal.

Advocate Arvind Shrivastava, his lawyer, said Justice

Vishal Dhagat served the notice to Ms. Thakur on Thursday and sought response within four weeks.

During the Lok Sabha poll campaign, Ms. Thakur violated Section 123 (3) (seeking votes on the basis of religion) of the Representation of the People Act, the petitioner claimed.

'False statements'

She also made false statements against her rival and Congress candidate Digvijaya Singh which violated Section 123 (4) (making false and defamatory statements about another candidate) of the Act, the lawyer added.

AIKMS plans protest from August 9

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

The All India Kisan Mazdoor Sabha has planned a two-week-long nationwide protest on August 9 against the alleged drive of the ruling class to evict the poor from their livelihood and habitat.

BJP leader's remark on triple talaq victims sparks row in Odisha House

What is wrong in quoting survey reports in Assembly, asks Bishnu Charan Sethi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Assembly witnessed pandemonium on Thursday after Bishnu Charan Sethi, deputy leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, stoked a controversy when he said that triple talaq victims were being forced into prostitution.

The BJP MLA was replying to the Congress members who had on Wednesday criticised the BJP-led government at the Centre for pushing through the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill in Parliament.

Mr. Sethi claimed that some political parties had been opposing the Bill with an eye on minority votes. Those opposing it should keep in mind that the legislation was passed to protect

Bill has nothing to do with religion and is aimed at eradicating a social evil.

BISHNU CHARAN SETHI
Deputy leader of the BJP

the interests of women, he said, while adding that he had only quoted findings of some survey reports.

“What is wrong in quoting survey reports in the House? I have not made any adverse remark against any community, but quoted survey reports that say Muslim women dominate the red light areas in Mumbai and Kolkata,” Mr. Sethi said

The practice of “triple talaq” was abolished in 38 countries including Pakistan and Bangladesh, the BJP leader maintained.

“The Bill has nothing to do with religion and is aimed at eradicating a social evil. Now, one cannot divorce his wife just by uttering ‘talaq-talaq-talaq’ in an inebriated state or via a mobile phone message,” he added

BJD protests

Mr. Sethi's statement soon evoked strong opposition from members of both opposition Congress and ruling BJD members. The Congress MLAs rushed to the well of the House to disrupt the proceedings, while some BJD members protested by standing on their seats.

Senior Congress MLA Narsingha Mishra countered Mr. Sethi by saying that the BJP leader should not make statements against a particular community that would in-

cite communal tension.

Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro had to adjourn the proceedings after he failed to restore normalcy in the House. Similar scenes were created by Congress MLAs in the post-lunch session, forcing adjournments.

The Speaker had to adjourn the House five times and finally for the day after transacting some normal business amid uproarious scenes.

Meanwhile, Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee president Niranjan Patnaik demanded that Mr. Sethi apologise for making derogatory statements about Muslim women. The party will protest if Mr. Sethi did not apologise, Mr. Patnaik said at a press conference.

(With PTI inputs)

Kaziranga tigers: spotlight on official-poacher nexus

Report suggests some staff may be 'involved in poaching'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

An evaluation report on India's tiger reserves has put the spotlight on an alleged nexus between some officials of Kaziranga National Park and poachers.

Kaziranga, a World Heritage Site designated by UNESCO, is more popular as the world's best address for the one-horned rhino. It is also been a major tiger reserve covering an area of 1,080 sq km.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier this week released the management effectiveness evaluation reports for tiger reserves across the country, including Kaziranga.

The report says that some staff of Kaziranga Tiger Reserve may sometimes get involved in poaching by helping the poachers. To drive home the point, the report

cites the poaching of three rhinos in as many days in November 2017 close to the Tunkati anti-poaching camp under the Burapahar Range.

Anti-poaching camps

“When there are 178 anti-poaching camps in a 911-sq-km area, each camp has to protect 5 sq km. Given the resources at the command of the personnel, it should not be difficult to guard the area effectively. Such poaching close to the camps leads to the suspicion of the involvement of officials,” it says.

The report also notes Kaziranga's management weakness in coordinating with forest officials of Karbi Anglong, which runs along the southern boundary of the tiger reserve. This is because the forest officials of Karbi Anglong, an autonomous tribal coun-

cil, are not answerable to the heads of Assam's Forest Department.

The hills of Karbi Anglong not only provide shelter to the animals of Kaziranga during high floods but also cover for poachers, the report said.

Railway line

Assam Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya had informed the 126-member State Assembly that an expert committee had been formed to study the proposal for laying a second track through Deepor Beel, a wetland on the western edge of Guwahati that was listed in 2002 as a Ramsar Site.

“The panel will submit its report to the National Green Tribunal, which will decide on whether or not to go ahead with the project,” Mr. Suklabaidya said.

Delhi HC grants protection to Mukul Roy

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday granted protection to BJP leader Mukul Roy from coercive action for 10 days to enable him to move a trial court in Kolkata for anticipatory bail in connection with a cash recovery case there.

Justice A.K. Chawla also

asked Mr. Roy to join the investigation and to be available for questioning on Friday.

The BJP leader had challenged the notices issued to him by the Kolkata police to appear before it for questioning in the case. Mr. Roy had claimed that the notices were issued to him on a West Bengal address when he was

actually residing in Delhi. The claim was opposed by the police.

The case pertains to the recovery of ₹19 lakh from a person in Burrabazar area of Kolkata on July 31, 2018, leading to his arrest along with a few others. Mr. Roy's phone number allegedly figured in one of the arrested persons' call list.

Man arrested for Cuttack killings

CORRESPONDENT
CUTTACK

The Cuttack city police on Thursday arrested Narayan Sahu, a 35-year-old mentally disturbed youth of Nayagarh district, implicating him in two of the three murder cases that were reported here within 24 hours last week.

DCP Akhileshvar Singh said Sahu, who was picked

up from his Nayagarh house on Monday, has confessed to his involvement in the killing of two homeless persons at Cuttack's OMP square on July 22 and July 23.

“The police will take him in remand for further questioning and establish his involvement in the third murder in which another homeless person was killed,”

Mr. Singh said.

Refuting the claims made by his family and acquaintances that Sahu was in Nayagarh from July 22 evening till the time he was picked up by the Cuttack city police on July 29 morning, the DCP said the arrest was made on the basis of confession statements made by the accused and circumstantial evidence.

'BJP leaders in touch with Congress'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDRAPUR

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Vijay Wadettiwar claimed on Thursday that some disgruntled senior leaders of the ruling BJP are in touch with the Congress. Four MLAs — three from the NCP and one from the Congress — joined the BJP on Wednesday.

"The BJP has started hunting and trapping senior opposition leaders. But many BJP and Shiv Sena leaders are unhappy. The BJP had once called the NCP a party of "Alibaba and 40 thieves", but now the BJP is welcoming senior NCP leaders into its fold," he told reporters. He said, "A section of unhappy BJP leaders is waiting for a chance and is in touch with the Congress."

Car falls into river in Pune; 1 safe, 2 missing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PUNE

Two people were feared drowned in the swollen Indrayani river after the car they were travelling in fell into the river from a bridge near near Takave village, 50 km from here, around 1 p.m. on Thursday, the police said. The third person in the car, Akshay Dhage, managed to swim to safety.

An official from the Wadgaon Maval police said the NDRE, police and a local group are searching for the other two, Sanket Aswale and Akshay Jagtap.

'Fadnavis is our CM candidate'

Rajnath Singh flags off Mahajanadesh Yatra; says BJP-Sena will win 250 seats

SHARAD VYAS
AMRAVATI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) began its campaign for the coming Assembly elections with the Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh declaring on Thursday that Devendra Fadnavis was the chief ministerial candidate for the polls to be contested jointly with Shiv Sena.

Mr. Singh was flagging off the first phase of the one-month-long Mahajanadesh Yatra at Mozari in Amravati. Mr. Fadnavis will travel approximately 4,384 km covering 32 districts in the two phases of the yatra. Mr. Singh declared that the BJP-Sena alliance would win 250 seats under the leadership of Mr. Fadnavis.

"Somebody was telling me that our target for Maharashtra is 220. But we believe if both parties come together we can win at least 250 seats. The workers should go from door-to-door to tell voters that Devendra Fadnavis will be chief ministerial candidate," Mr. Singh said while listing out the achievements by the government in the last five years.

The yatra will cover 668 km in Konkan, 812 km in western Maharashtra, 1,232 km in Vidarbha, and 633 km and 1,069 km in north Maharashtra and Marathwada respectively. Addressing party workers and the people, who had to wait for over four hours for the leaders to arrive, Mr. Singh fully endorsed the leadership of Mr. Fadnavis, and said, "If someone asks me how has Maharashtra Chief Minister performed past five years, I would say Devendra Fadnavis has done wonders for the State. Ear-



Yatra time: Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at the flagging off of the Mahajanadesh Yatra in Amravati on Thursday. • SUDERSHAN



Rajnath Singh with Devendra Fadnavis paying tributes to Rashtra Sant Tukdoji Maharaj before launching the Mahajanadesh Yatra. • PTI

lier, many people had doubts if he would be a responsible administrator at a young age but Mr. Fadnavis has shown in five years has won the trust of every person."

He said steps taken by the State have reduced drought and farm suicides. "I do not want to claim that farmers' suicide is fully eliminated, but the work by the government in the next five years, if voted back to power, will

bring these numbers to zero in this State. Farm income too will double by 2022," the Union minister said.

Earlier, listing out the achievements of his government, Mr. Fadnavis asked people to vote him and his back to power, with a majority. "My government has made fighting drought a priority. If you want me to continue this battle and make the State free of drought and water scarcity

through programmes such as Jal Yukta Shivar, do vote me back to power. Give me a thumping mandate," he said.

Mr. Fadnavis said their work has proved to be a magnet for others to join, even though the party is not trying to woo anyone. "The BJP has never chased anyone. We will take in those leaders who are capable and put a 'housful' board for the rest," he said while referring to exodus of Opposition MLAs to the BJP ranks over the past few weeks.

The Chief Minister said he was launching the yatra to connect with the people and let them know of his government's achievements. "We have done in three years what the previous governments could not do in 15 years. Several projects which were stuck were cleared, and I challenge anyone for an open debate on the pace of the works done by us," he said.

Youth Congress starts campaign to 'wake up Maharashtra'

Will engage with five crore youngsters for a youth manifesto

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

The State unit of the Youth Congress on Thursday launched its 'Wake-Up Maharashtra: Today for Tomorrow' campaign in Mumbai.

"The Maharashtra Youth Congress has decided to come out with a manifesto especially aimed at the youth by engaging with them and listening to their concerns and inputs through this campaign. We will be engaging with four to five crore youngsters in the 18 to 25 years age group from across all tehsils and districts," said Satyajeet Tambe-Patil, president of the Maharashtra Youth Congress.



Satyajeet Tambe-Patil, president of Maharashtra Youth Congress.

He said the youth would be involved in discussions, meetings, seminars, live dialogues, and other programs, in both online and offline formats so that their views could be heard and included in the Congress manifesto to

be released ahead of the Assembly elections.

The Youth Congress campaign is likely to add to the charged political scene in the State with almost all leading parties — Shiv Sena, Bharatiya Janata Party and Nationalist Congress Party — launching their peoples contact programmes.

"India is a country of youth and the government had promised to provide 2 crore jobs every year. This did not happen even as the unemployment rate has reached a peak. We need to tell the youngsters that it is only the Congress which can deliver on jobs and attain economic growth," said Mr. Tambe-Patil.

Maratha Kranti Morcha warns of State-wide protest on Aug. 9

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AURANGABAD

The Maratha Kranti Morcha (MKM) has warned of a State-wide protest on August 9 if the government failed to fulfil the community's various demands.

A delegation of the MKM submitted a memorandum to the divisional commissioner here on Wednesday evening, drawing the government's attention to their demands.

The MKM said the government should pay ₹10 lakh compensation to family members of "42 people, who laid down their lives" during the protests seeking

reservation for Marathas. It demanded a government job to one family member of each of the 42 deceased.

It also said that although the government had decided to withdraw cases lodged against 13,700 Maratha protesters, the decision is yet to be implemented.

In the memorandum, the MKM also complained that nationalised banks were not cooperating in disbursal of loans to the community.

The organisation said that although the State government had promised to make hostels available for the Maratha community students

in every district, it was yet to act on it.

"If the government does not take a decision on these demands by August 8, then members of the community will hold an agitation on August 9," Rajendra Datey Patil of the MKM said.

Marathas, a politically influential community that constitutes around 30% of the population, had launched protests to seek 16% reservation.

The community had earlier taken out silent marches across the State to highlight their demands, prominent among them being that of reservation.

Gadkari suffers another bout of dizziness at Solapur function

Had to sit down during national anthem

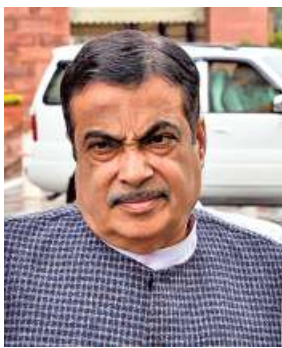
SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and senior BJP leader Nitin Gadkari on Thursday suffered yet another bout of dizziness at a public function in Solapur district.

Mr. Gadkari was the guest of honour on the occasion of the foundation day of the Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Solapur University.

The Minister, who is a diabetic frequently prone to such spells, experienced dizziness towards the end of the hour-long programme as he stood up to sing the national anthem along with others on the dais, which included Maharashtra Cooperation Minister Subhash Deshmukh.

Mr. Gadkari, who slumped in his chair, attempted to stand up again till the completion of the anthem. Following its conclusion, he remained seated in



Nitin Gadkari suffers from Type-2 diabetes.

his chair for some time, being tended with medicines and observed by an anxious Mr. Deshmukh as well as Dr. Mrunalini Fadnavis, Vice-Chancellor of Solapur University, along with doctors and members of the Minister's security detail.

According to reports, the Minister experienced the fainting spell following a sudden dip in his sugar level. His condition is stable now.

However, he was com-

pelled to cancel further engagements for the day following the advice of his doctors.

Mr. Deshmukh said that Mr. Gadkari had headed back to Nagpur after resting for a while in Solapur city.

In December last, Mr. Gadkari experienced a similar bout of dizziness at a function in Rahuri, Ahmednagar district. He fainted and remained slumped on his chair towards the end of the convocation ceremony of the Rahuri Krishi Vidhyapeeth following a sudden dip in his sugar level.

Mr. Gadkari, who suffers from diabetic nephropathy, was forced to undergo a gastric bypass surgery in Mumbai in 2011 to combat his weight problem.

The BJP leader suffers from Type-2 diabetes, which makes an individual highly susceptible to heart diseases and nerve and kidney damage.

Using EVMs plank, Raj Thackeray aims to unite regional players

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray's meeting with the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee seeking her participation in the opposition march against Electronic Voting Machines on August 9, is also seen as an attempt to check whether a front of regional leaders could be set up to take on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), according to senior MNS leader.

Mr. Thackeray was in Kolkata for two days and invited Ms. Banerjee to the anti-EVM protest. He has already raised a demand with the Chief Election Commissioner of India to conduct the Assembly polls in the State on ballot paper.

Mr. Thackeray's visit to Kolkata, at a time when he is struggling to make space for himself at the State level is also seen as an attempt to unite



Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata. • PTI

all regional leaders apprehending being bulldozed by the BJP, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

"This meeting was not about setting up a front of regional leaders but solely about the issue of EVMs and how these machines are turning out to be a threat to the democratic process," said Anil Shidore, party leader who accompanied Mr. Thack-

eray to Kolkata. Mr. Shidore however accepted that the question of setting up a front of regional leaders was posed by reporters to the MNS chief during his visit to which he replied that he wanted to concentrate on one issue at a time. "He did not deny anything. But it must be taken into account that no alliance or a front formed for the sake of elections or votes survives for long," he said.

IN BRIEF

**RBI invites applications for Dy. Governor's post**

MUMBAI
The Centre has invited applications for RBI Deputy Governor's post that fell vacant after Viral Acharya resigned. Candidates with at least 25 years of work experience, including experience at the level of Secretary or equivalent in the Government of India or candidates having at least 25 years of work experience in an Indian or international public financial institution can apply.

Chola Financial profit rises to ₹2.56 crore

CHENNAI
Cholamandalam Financial Holdings Ltd.'s standalone net profit for the first quarter ended June 2019 rose to ₹2.56 crore against ₹2.43 crore in the year-earlier period. Total income rose to ₹4.06 crore against ₹3.89 crore. Cholamandalam Investment & Finance Co. Ltd., in which the firm has 46.5% stake, disbursed ₹8,572 crore against ₹7,014 crore. It's standalone profit rose 10% to ₹314 crore on a consolidated basis.

Colgate-Palmolive (India) has new MD

NEW DELHI
Oral care major Colgate-Palmolive (India) Ltd. on Thursday said Ram Raghavan has been appointed as its managing director. Mr. Raghavan replaces Issam Bachaalani, who will move to another role within the company, the firm said in a statement. "Prior to this role, Mr. Raghavan served as vice-president, marketing, Asia-Pacific division of Colgate-Palmolive," the company said. PTI

Global gold demand touches 3-year high

Continued central bank buying, sustained growth in gold-backed ETFs were the key drivers: WGC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Global gold demand in the first half of 2019 jumped to a three-year high on the back of robust demand by central banks and gold-backed exchange-traded funds (ETFs).

Gold demand was pegged at 2,181.7 tonnes in the first six months of the current calendar year, reflecting an 8% rise compared with the first half of 2018, as per the latest report by the World Gold Council (WGC).

"Continued central bank buying and sustained growth in gold-backed exchange-traded funds [ETFs] were the key drivers of this increase," the report stated.

"Central banks bought 224.4 tonnes of gold in Q2 2019. This took HI [first six months] buying to 374.1



Metal craze: A strong recovery in India's jewellery market pushed overall demand in Q2 by 12% to 168.8 tonnes. • V. RAJU

tonnes, the largest net HI increase in global gold reserves in our data series. In a continuation of recent trends, buying was spread across a diverse range of - largely emerging market - countries," it added.

Meanwhile, holdings of gold-backed ETFs grew 67.2 tonnes in the second quarter to a six-year high of 2,548 tonnes. As per the global body, continued geopolitical instability, dovish commentary on monetary policy

from central banks and the rallying gold price in June were the main factors driving inflows into the sector.

Incidentally, a strong recovery in India's jewellery market pushed the overall jewellery demand in the second quarter by 12% to 168.8 tonnes. A busy wedding season and healthy festival sales boosted demand, before the June price rise brought it to a virtual standstill, the report stated.

Bar and coin

Bar and coin investment in the second quarter dipped 12% to 218.6 tonnes and combined with the soft first quarter number, took the first half total to a six-year low of 476.9 tonnes. A 29% year-on-year drop in China accounted for much of the global se-

cond quarter decline, according to WGC.

On the other hand, gold supply grew 6% in the second quarter to 1,186.7 tonnes. A record Q2 gold mine production and a 9% jump in recycling, boosted by the sharp June gold price rally, led the growth in supply. On an overall half yearly basis, the supply touched 2,323.9 tonnes, the highest level since 2016.

In terms of price, the yellow metal touched multi-year highs, breaching \$1,400/oz for the first time since 2013.

Among the factors driving this rally were expectations of lower interest rates, political uncertainty, with further support coming from strong central bank buying, the report said.

Manufacturing expands faster on fresh orders

Consumer goods lead upturn

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Manufacturing activity expanded at a quicker rate in July due to an increase in new orders and the resultant scaling up of production by companies, according to a private sector survey.

The Nikkei India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index came in at 52.5 in July, up from the 52.1 in June. A reading over 50 indicates an expansion while one below 50 denotes a contraction.

"Economic growth in India's manufacturing industry was sustained in July," the report said.

"Companies scaled up production in response to a quicker upturn in factory or-

ders. This, coupled with optimistic growth projections, underpinned job creation and an uptick in input purchasing."

"Rising from 52.1 in June to 52.5 in July, the IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index was consistent with a further strengthening in the health of the sector," the report added. "The latest reading was slightly higher than the average for calendar year 2018 (52.3), but below its long-run trend (53.9)."

The report said consumer goods producers led the upturn in July, adding that even the intermediate goods makers saw a stronger improvement in business conditions in July.

Ashok Leyland to save up to ₹500 cr. via cost reduction measures

Firm to incur ₹1,700 to ₹2,000 cr. capex for BS-VI vehicles

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Ashok Leyland Ltd., the flagship company of the Hinduja Group, is expecting to save about ₹400-500 crore during the current fiscal through cost reduction measures, said a top official.

"We want to take ₹400-500 crore of operating costs out of the system," said Gopal Mahadevan, whole-time director and chief financial officer, Ashok Leyland Ltd.

According to him, this would be done by having a relook at expenditure under heads such as administration, sales and manufacturing, distribution and productivity costs and analysing how the cost-cutting could be done in the most effective



Gopal Mahadevan

manner.

While classifying the costs as vital, essential and desirable, he said: "Costs that are vital and essential will be incurred and those under the desirable head will be spent on need basis."

To a question, Mr. Mahadevan said that the reduction in administrative over-

heads would not amount to a reduction in head count. On the other hand, the firm would focus on increasing the productivity of each employee.

During the current fiscal, Ashok Leyland would invest about ₹1,700 crore to ₹2,000 crore in capital expenditure for making BS-VI vehicles, on modular vehicle platform and on Project Phoenix.

Talking about production cuts at Pantnagar unit, he said it was done during June and July 2019 to produce vehicles based on demand projections and reduce inventories. On electric-powered buses, he said the firm was in discussions with State governments and private bus operators.

McLeod Russel to sell more estates by Sept.

INDRANI DUTTA
KOLKATA

McLeod Russel India Ltd. is planning to sell at least three more tea estates in West Bengal's Dooars and in Assam by September 2019.

In a bid to pare its debt, the company has been on a selling spree since mid-2018, months after it set up a committee in May to identify the assets which could be put on the block.

"We may sell a garden in Dooars and at least two in Assam," a source said on the condition of anonymity.

The company's debt stood at around ₹1,000 crore at end June 2019 and has also suffered rating downgrades.

Sharp decline in cotton yarn exports worries industry

'Shipments to main market China have almost halved'

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA
COIMBATORE

India's cotton yarn exports between April and June this year was 33% lower compared to the same period last year, leading to concern among textile mills.

The Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council (Texprocil) has pointed out that cotton yarn exports from April to June 2019 was 226 million kg as against 338 million kg during the same period last year. In June, the exports were just 59 million kg, which is 50.74% less compared to June 2018.

China is the main market for Indian cotton yarn exports. But, exports to China have dropped nearly 50%. Besides, exports to Bangla-



des, Vietnam, and Columbia have also declined, Siddhartha Rajagopal, Executive Director of Texprocil, said.

India used to export 32% of its cotton yarn production three years ago. This has fallen to 27% now.

"Considering the large-scale investment in the spin-

ning sector and sluggish demand in the domestic market, exports are the only avenue to ensure uninterrupted production and capacity utilisation," K.V. Srinivasan, chairman of the council, said in a press release.

Since 2014, all benefits extended for yarn exports were withdrawn.

Cotton yarn from Pakistan and Vietnam get duty free access to China. If the domestic textile mills are supported through interest subvention or refund of State taxes and levies, there will be some relief and the industry will become price competitive to explore new markets, Mr. Rajagopal added.

Around the world in a flurry of flavour

One of the youngest chefs to earn a Michelin for her restaurant in Germany, Julia Komp is now blazing a trail across India with meticulously plated food and carrot sharks

SHONALI MUTHALALY

Julia Komp has no time to waste on niceties.

One of the world's youngest chefs to earn a Michelin for her restaurant, Schloss Loersfeld (Germany), in 2016 she's been on a mission all year. Quitting her high profile job, she has spent the last seven months travelling through 19 countries.

Julia is cooking intricate multi-course meals in most of these countries. She signed up for her first internship at the age of 14, then worked her way through a set of high-pressure kitchens, till she snagged the Michelin and a flurry of press in 2016, when she was 27 years old.

"In China, when I arrived they threw me a banquet," she says, shaking her head. She's sitting in Ottimo – the Italian restaurant at the ITC Grand Chola in Chennai, where she'd cooked a multi-course dinner for 50 guests. "I kept saying I have to start work, because I was cooking dinner for their guests the next day. They kept telling me to relax. Finally, by midnight, I could not bear it any more. I stood up and said, 'Enough!' She went to the kitchen and cooked till 4 am. "Even then, I just managed to serve dinner on time."

Her discipline and attention to detail was evident through the six course dinner: from cheeky little sharks cut out of thin carrot slices swimming in the soup to the careful uniformity of every plate. Flavours were bright, light and refreshing, with the chef relying more on quality ingredients and skill, than butter and bombastic technique. One course, for example, featured just tomatoes:



Behind the scenes Julia Komp plating one of the first few courses of her multi-course meal at Ottimo, ITC Grand Chola
■ R RAVINDRAN AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

three varieties, with a quenelle of minty-fresh ice cream, crunchy dehydrated vegetable and quivering puddles of spherified green tomato. Every spoonful tasted different, yet the flavours united seamlessly. Julia's technique has evidently been honed by multiple kitchens: she uses many of the skills of molecular gastronomy, in addition to weaving in unexpected flavours from her journey.

The hotel's senior executive chef Ajit Bangera smiles as he says, "The deal is she cooks, and we teach her about Indian food in return." Julia nods seriously, explaining that she will be learning about regional food in each city she is travelling to, for this festival: Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, and Delhi. "I already have three books filled with notes," she adds.



wrong. There are so many different kinds of food in Asia."

Cooking multi-course dinners in many of these countries quickly taught her to be self-sufficient. "My food is light and fruity. So when a recipe uses lemon, I use passion fruit. When it calls for cream, I use coconut milk... Ingredients are rarely a problem. You get everything everywhere now. I cooked in Ethiopia, and I found everything I needed. If I have micro leeks, coriander cress or edible flowers, I will use them. But when I don't have them, I will not die," she says wryly, shaking her head.

By the end of the year, Julia plans to take everything she has learnt and start her own restaurant in Cologne. "My food will have Indian and Arabic flavours," she says, adding that she plans to distil everything she has learnt from her travels into the menu. "I'm gunning for two Michelin stars," she smiles, her eyes lighting up.

As for her biggest learning from cooking her way through multiple food cultures? She leans forward, dead serious, and says, "Always use enough salt."

Julia Komp was also at ITC Maratha, Mumbai. She will be cooking at ITC Royal Bengal, Kolkata, August 3; ITC Gardenia, Bengaluru, August 7; and ITC Maurya, New Delhi on August 10.

Growing up, Julia says wanted to be a "policewoman". However, her internship at a countryside hotel changed things. "I chose it because all the good looking boys would go to the gym there. The service was rubbish though, with chefs fighting all day." During the weekends, she ran a catering service, with her grandmother's help. "We made finger food... stuffed tomatoes, pork fillet with Gorgonzola cream... I feel ashamed of that food now," she states with a gentle shudder. "I will not cook any of it again."

Her grandmother has a house in Tunisia, which is how Julia developed a fascination for Arabic flavours. "People there are friendly, and often when we returned from the beach there would be a plate of cous cous or shorba placed in front

of our door." Living and cooking in Tunisia taught her that it was important to travel. "It doesn't matter how focussed I am with chicken curry: it will taste better if I come to India and learn how it is cooked."

Julia studied the Arabic kitchen by travelling through Dubai and Abu Dhabi, then went on to work in Bangkok, before moving to Indonesia.

"I take notes everywhere, even if I know I will not be able to replicate the recipe later. With traditional Indonesian food, for example, it is hard to find all the ingredients. It is also very rich and heavy." Then came Vietnam, the Philippines, Japan and Korea. "The food is just totally different in each region," she says, adding, "People should not say something is 'Asian'. It is so

and the fish was a plump piece of rohu. Lau Chingri is chopped bottle gourd cooked with small shrimps, and Kosha Chicken is a variation of Kosha Mangsho, a rich dish of meat cooked with either tomatoes or curd and tempered with spices.

I ordered the food through Swiggy. The rates were reasonable: the fish was priced at ₹135 for one large piece, the chicken at ₹315 a plate, the Dhokar Dalna at ₹205 and Lau Chingri at ₹245.

I didn't have the fish but I

was told it was rather good. The curry was rich, the piece was large and had been fried well and then cooked in the gravy. I enjoyed the Kosha Chicken - it didn't have much of a gravy, and it's not meant to, but it had absorbed the flavour of the spices. The Lau Chingri was a bit of surprise, for it wasn't the way we cook it at home. Our Lau Chingri is dark green, as the gourd is merely tempered with cumin seeds, green chillies and just a pinch of turmeric. This was dark brown, and was a bit runny. But it had quite a few shrimps in it, and overall the gourd dish had an interesting taste.

I liked the food, especially the dhokar. I had thought the family would focus on the other dishes, and there would be some of it left for my breakfast. Sadly, they all enjoyed it as much as I did, and I had to make do with poha the next morning.

Note to self: Next time, order two plates. Or, better still, hide some of the dhokar dalna in the fridge when no one is looking.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

Bengali fare Dishes on offer at Probashi.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

FOOD SPOT

Let's hear it for STEAMED LENTILS

Every culture has a variety, but there's nothing quite like the Bengali version



RAHUL VERMA

I have come to the conclusion that there is something about ground and steamed lentil cakes that truly appeals to my palate. I first discovered this when I had some Gattey Ki Sabzi - a Rajasthani preparation of lentil strips in a curry - many years ago. Then, years later, when I tasted the Bengali Dhokar Dalna, I knew I was a card-carrying member of the steamed-lentil lovers' club.

That is why, when folks at home want to order some Bengali food, I never demur. Because, along with the fish curry, there is always some Dhokar Dalna coming in. I eat it with rice, and, if there is any left, I have it the next morning for breakfast with a soft roti. Bliss.

I just had some a few days ago. I was looking for Bengali delivery outlets in my neighbourhood and came across a place called Probashi in Gha-



ziabad. Probashi is a word used for Bengalis living outside Bengal, though I suppose it refers to the diaspora at large.

Probashi, like most other Bengali eateries, has fish fries, curries, veggies, the typical Bengali dals and dishes like Mutton Curry, Kolk-

ta Biryani. We asked for a plate of, yes, the Dhokar Dalna, Fish Lalia, Lau Chingri and Kosha Chicken. Kalia is a curry of onions and garlic,



ART

A moment with trees

A month-long show, urges us to dwell on the beauty of trees, and think about the many lives that they nurture



The big banyan tree at the Ojas Art @1AQ in Mehrauli is a big part of the gallery's life. They host Under The Banyan Tree, a music series here; and director Anubhav Nath can swear that there's a great, positive energy around that tree.

It is in keeping with the gallery's larger spirit then, that they're bringing together close to 50 works of art, by six artists, in an exhibit called A Message from the Trees. "Also because it's monsoon and with the levels of concrete on our roads, so many trees get uprooted after even one heavy rain," says Nath, who's also the show's curator, adding that this made him want to think of an "artistic way to do something about this".

Five Gond artists are participating in this show - and it isn't new that a city gallery would bring together this school of work for an exhibit about trees. The "folk" form has only been gaining popularity in art circles and beyond, given its simple, yet colourful appeal - each work also brims with powerful stories of the Gond community's age-old social practices, which are intrinsically tied with the flora and fauna around them.

The one exception, Abhishek Singh, is a graphic artist whose 2018 work, Vrikshadootam, inspired Nath to put together A Message from the Trees - the title too, a translation of the title.

Singh's work, an arresting visual of ink on canvas, is 144" by 72" inches. The forest-like scene has various creatures whose horns and antlers grow into long tree-branch-like lines, a style that's popular in Gond art. It's almost a small endearing moment of commonality, especially given the masculine monochrome of Singh's work, in stark contrast to the colourful liveliness of the Gond works. "Also, as a gallery, it's an objective for us to bridge these gaps between tribal and urban contemporary art," says Nath.

The show brings together some of the biggest, most recognisable names in Gond practice today, including Bhajju Shyam, Durga Bai, and Ram Singh Urveti.

The youngest Gond artist of this lot, 32-year-old artist Mayank Shyam's work is interesting - there's a distinct presence of buses and plumes of pollution, which are otherwise minimal presences in the canvases of older Gond artists. Mayank is also the son of the famous Gond painter Jangarh Singh Shyam, who died in 2001.

A Message from the Trees, August 2 - September 1; Ojas Art@1AQ, Near Qutab Minar, Mehrauli

VANGMAYI PARAKALA

PREVIEW

DAG x Taj Palace



After its first edition in Mumbai, the 115 Years Charity Gala of the Taj hotels is announcing its second edition, in Delhi, with a gala tonight. On preview are 25 works from DAG's twentieth-century collection, including those by Amrita Sher-Gil, S.H. Raza, Jamini Roy, and F.N. Souza. A part of the proceeds from the auction will go theTaj Public Service Welfare Trust.

Preview on till August 8; for reservations at the Gala, contact +91-9999620193; at the Taj Palace, 2, Sardar Patel Marg

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

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



EXHIBITION

Wedding couture
Fashion designer Kiran Sharma is hosting her annual wedding and lifestyle exhibition titled *The Bride & Groom*, which will showcase wedding couture. This three-day event will feature previews by designers and jewellers like Kiara, Renu Kakar, Chhabra Sarees, Glitterati Jewels, Ritu Kumar, Anju Modi, and more.
VENUE: The Ashoka Hotel, Chanakyapuri
TIME: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.



ART

On societal behaviour
Tomorrow Belongs to Me, a solo show of paintings by 29-year-old artist Pallav Chander. Through this show, the artist focuses on contemporary societal psychology and behaviour, and paints it as abstract expression. The works also sees the artist accepting his dyslexia, and dealing with personal loss.
VENUE: Alliance Française de Delhi, Lodhi Road
TIME: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.



MUSIC

Malhar festival
Pracheen Kala Kendra is presenting its annual dance event, the Malhar Festival, a celebration of rain. The event will feature a Hindustani classical vocal recital by Aditya Sharma, accompanied by Kharak Singh on tabla, and Chetan Nigam on harmonium. Later, a vocal recital by Jui Dhaigude Pande will be held.
VENUE: Triveni Kala Sangam, Mandi House
TIME: 6:30 p.m. onwards



FOOD

Street food festival
Food Exchange is hosting a 10-day long Mohammed Ali Street Food Festival. The dishes on the special menu are made with the recipes from street kitchens on Mohammed Ali Road in Mumbai. The menu offers Lamb Galouti, Nalli Nihari, Raan Changezi, Mutton Awadhi Biryani, and more.
VENUE: Food Exchange, Novotel Aerocity
TIME: 7 p.m. - 11 p.m.



FILM

Tamil documentary
IIC will screen *Koothu*, a Tamil documentary film, directed by Sandhya Kumar. Koothu is a living theatre tradition of Tamil Nadu, performed as an all-night play. The film takes a close look at Koothu, by recording performances and conducting extensive interviews with its practitioners.
VENUE: C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, IIC
TIME: 6:30 p.m.

TABLE SIDE STORIES

Meals with narratives are a new platform for chefs to showcase their creativity and a great way for diners to connect with their food

RUTH DSOUZA PRABHU

I sat down at a table that had 23 other guests for a curated dinner titled Circle of Life by Lore, at The Courtyard in Bengaluru. I knew no one there and came in as ignorant of what to expect, as a baby. Which was befitting, considering the meal was inspired by our life cycle, from infancy to adulthood.

There was muted conversation among those who knew each other, but it was only when the first course was served that across-the-table banter erupted. Indicative of babyhood, we were served umami milk in a feeding bottle, Farex biscuits and a trio of mashed vegetables. This course had strangers break the ice to discuss childhood memories. From eating baby cereal straight from the box even as adults, to abhorring certain vegetables; and secretly still loving plain milk, old memories found kindred spirits across the table. Each of the next six courses triggered several such memories and had us trying to guess how the next plate would be presented from the picture cards we were given.

Creating narratives

Such meals with a narrative are increasingly giving chefs a platform to be uninhibitedly creative and a way for diners to experience and connect with their food.

"Creating a narrative for a meal helps people make a connection with their food," believes chef and consultant Anumitra, who has worked in Japan; and with brands like Diva in Delhi. Social media today dictates the good and the bad, and eating choices are determined by the market. "Why are people interested in food facts they see online?" she asks. "Because it is intriguing, but often you don't know the context. I usually take five to six months to

work on the concept, read up on the history and then come up with dishes based on ingredients and their availability."

Anumitra has showcased in Delhi. Another showcase in Bengaluru, was of the seven Northeastern states – not by specific dishes, but by blending together key ingredients and flavours, making the discovery of the region's cuisine all the more intriguing.

All about the discovery

"The prospect of discovery, is the oldest way to grab attention," says Kanishka Sharma, founder, The Tenth Muse and Supper Club in Bengaluru. And many a stimulating conversation has come off her tables with themes like Japanese bodega-style dining and a nose-to-tail pork dinner.

"Food that has meaning, where the flavours stimulate your imagination and provide information, is what keeps Supper Club alive."

Speaking of imagination, Ujwala Bhat, owner of The Latin Mess, in Mumbai, has been a regular at The Literary Table, which has had meals centred on Harry Potter, Haruki Murakami, and more recently, *Game of Thrones*. "As a diner, if I like a theme and follow it closely, then it makes sense to relive the memories through food. At A Feast For The Throne, based



It's all in the theme Snapshots from The Literary Table and Navu Supper Club • VARUN SHETTY AND NISHANT RATNAKAR



on the *GoT* series and books, we had a dessert that was set afire at the table. It was inspired by the sequence where Drogon burns down King's Landing and the Iron Throne. To see all those dishes you read about or associate with stories, be translated into a plate of food, is a wonderful way to relive the magic and the entire experience," says Bhat.

Putting that imagination on a plate is what works for co-founders of The Literary Table, Chef Shriya Shetty and travel and food writer, Shirin Mehrotra. With these tables, Shriya found the creative freedom to cook what she loved, without sticking to the theme of a restaurant. For Shirin, working on every aspect of the pop-up, from finalising a theme, finding the right venue, to the DIY menus and setting up the table, satisfied her creative urge.

Bhavisha Dave, co-founder, Capsul Collective, says, "After attending my first table, I realised that I couldn't remember the last time I had a meal that lasted three hours, filled with stimulating conversation, during which I barely touched my

phone! And that's when I decided to keep attending them."

Priya Bala, food writer and author, who has created tables around Sri Lankan conflict regions and its regional cuisine, says, "A drink and a meal is the usual, but if someone wants to come to grips with a cuisine, a story helps. The experience is soulful – from interacting with the chef, to how and where the food presented is rooted. As a chef, to do it in a small format is hugely gratifying."

Memories of flavour

"Food can transport a person, especially through memories. We have

seen guests react to these stories," says Johnson Ebenezer, chef patron of Lore.

"My biggest interest is meeting new people, and that's been my takeaway from all the previous tables I have attended. Apart from food enthusiasts, I've met such an interesting group of new people which has been tremendously enriching," says Dhruv Mullick, partner, zlait Sports.

"Curating an experience from start to finish is at the core of it all," says Kanishka.

"The planning that goes into every meal, begins weeks – sometimes months – in advance, because that's what it takes for each one to be unique. There is a thrill that comes with the pressure, and satisfaction that comes with the sheer amount of work. The story, the chefs, the serve-ware, the libations, decor, table, menu design – all weave themselves around the food. The relationship between all these aspects of the meal is evident to the perceptive diner, and I believe that is what keeps them coming back."



HAND IN HAND

Umami can only really be tasted in the presence of salt. Low-salt foods are deemed better-tasting when there's a lot of umami.

POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



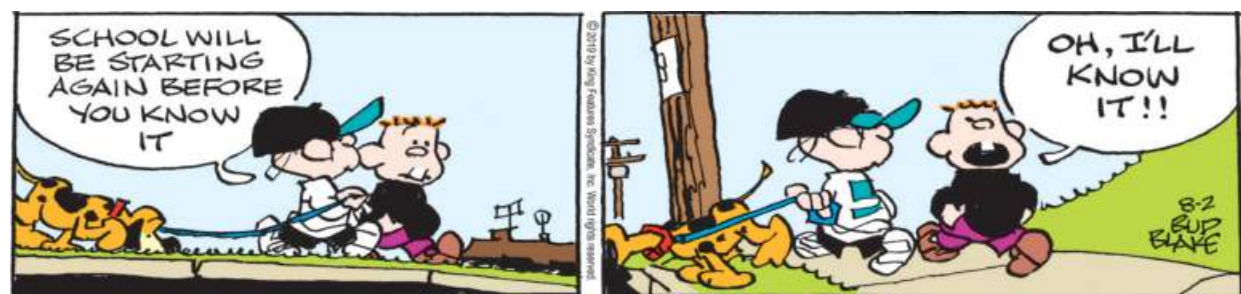
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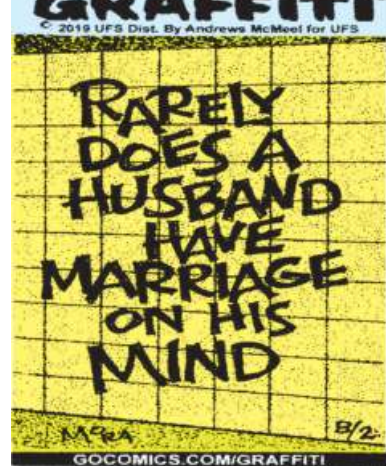
CALVIN AND HOBBS



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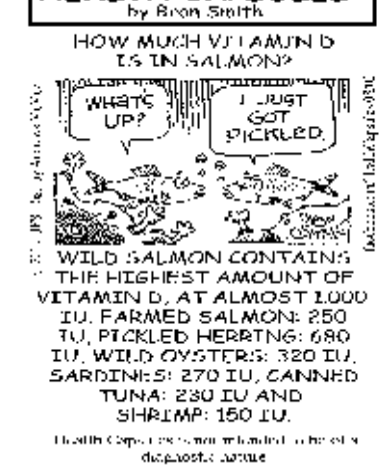
Solution will appear in The Hindu dated August 3, 2019.

Solution No. 13137

WUMO



HEALTH CAPSULES



■ Across

1 Finished for ever (4,3,6)

8 Leguminous plant (4)

9 Head of a government department (8)

10 Number of those present (10)

12 Canadian province (6)

14 Provides what is required (6)

15 Rambling (10)

19 Painstakingly accurate (8)

20 Castle (4)

21 Skin specialist (13)

■ Down

2 Packed with incident (8)

3 Trip the light fantastic (5)

4 Itinerant (7)

5 West African

BLOCKBUSTER

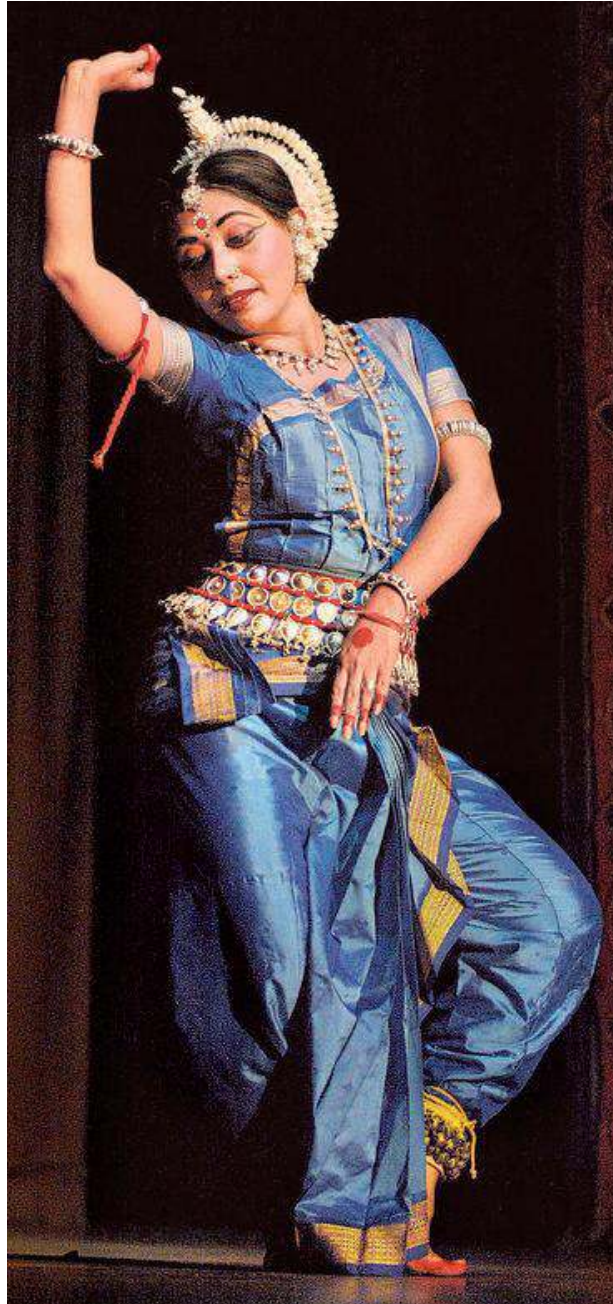
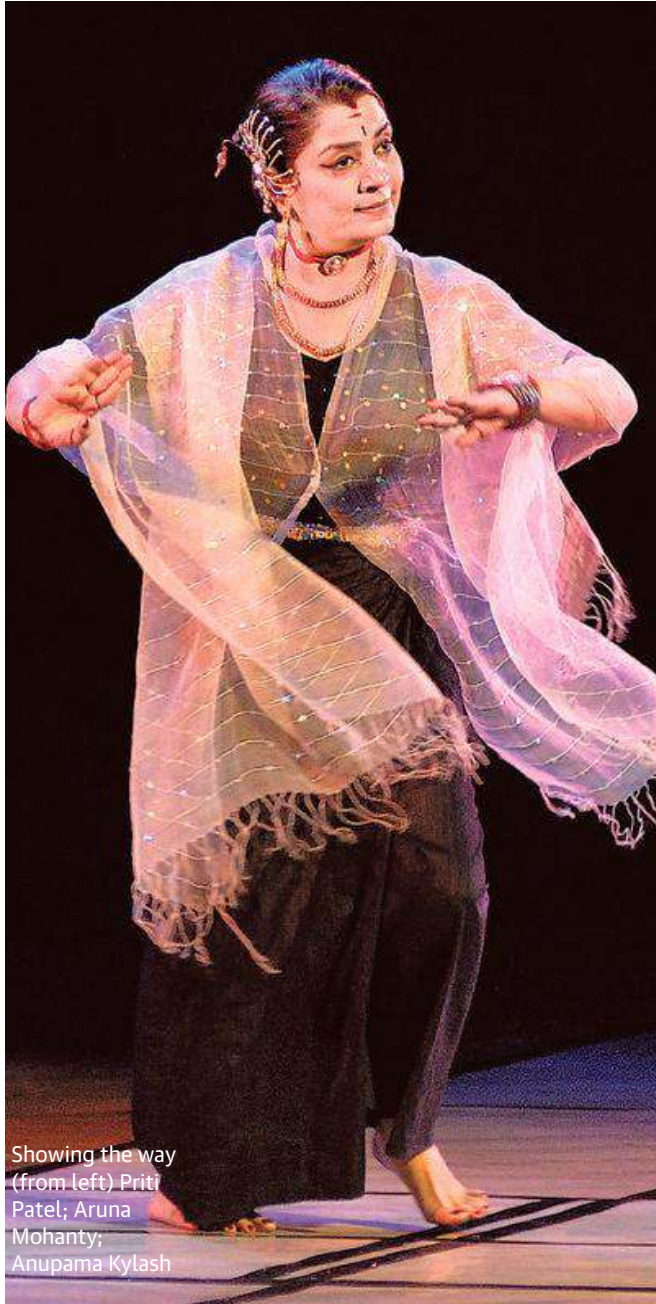
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PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



FRIDAY REVIEW

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Showing the way
 (from left) Priti
 Patel; Aruna
 Mohanty;
 Anupama Kylash

Art of a Soloist

Will the solo dancer survive the onslaught of light and sound show of group choreography?

Pages 4 & 5

INSIDE



Crowning glory

Mohiniyattam exponent Gopika Varma describes the SNA Award as the ultimate endorsement of her art

P3



All puzzles are resolved here

Abhinavagupta puts liberation as nothing but the awareness of one's true nature puzzles are resolved here

P6



A time to sing, a time to ponder

As they prepare to perform at Khusrau-Kabir festival this Saturday, young artists speak on the theme's relevance

P7



Striking a chord A scene from the play ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Chairs as characters

Marked by elements of absurd theatre, Vinay Sharma's "Ho Sakta Hai Do Aadmi Do Kursiyaan" is a thought provoking piece

DIWAN SINGH BAJELI

On a bare stage there are two performers and two chairs. The performers keep on stepping out of one character to act another and the chairs are shifted to different spaces on the stage. In this process the chairs are transformed into characters acquiring the form of metaphors. The narrative is not unified, various fragments from life acted out alternatively in solo form. This is how the director has conceptualised his production of "Ho Sakta Hai Do Aadmi Do Kursiyaan" which was jointly presented by Padatik, Kolkata under the auspices of Atelier at Akshara Theatre recently.

Written and directed by Vinay Sharma, the opening fragmented sequence depicts two performers sitting on chairs. One performer creates loud chewing sound which irritates the other character who protests. Both indulge in squabbles, there is no resolution. The image provides the audience lively moments. In a subtle way this image sets the tone of the anguished humanity living in a grotesque world. The subsequent scenes are enacted as solo pieces, each piece unconnected with another.

In one sequence, the solo performer narrates his life, his father and son to a man waiting outside a railway station. The listener remains invisible who asks him to sit on the chair, he insists he has always been sitting on the ground. His family makes a living by carrying the passengers to their destinations. He keeps the stranger engaged and tells him that he loved his father and one day he disappeared and never came back. A sense of mystery surrounds the scene.

There is a scene where a young man visits one of his relatives who occupy a big room and there is a chair for him. The young man aspires to occupy this chair one day and will work hard to achieve his ambition. A kind of grim atmosphere prevails in the scene.

There is another image where chair is indirectly referred. The man tells his imaginary listener that time has changed and in the process, the fate of men also changed. He says he was once a miserable vendor, sitting on the pavements and now he has a better place to carry on his business. There is no mystery about this piece. It is enacted effortlessly, exuding humour. In one of the scenes a grotesque imagery is created when a man drops dead on a fat woman and her fat son remains a spectator. Possibly, the man dropped dead because of the bomb blast. A voice says death could become a source of entertainment if you are not the victim.

In fact, the central idea is conveyed by two scenes which have comparatively elaborate narrative patterns. In one such scene, we watch the enactment of the imagery of a home revealing the anguish of a husband who suspects the fidelity of his wife. Here two empty chairs are placed in the room which are objects of husband's sexual jealousy. The reference to three duplicate keys magnifies husband's suspicion. The wife is a working woman who insisted to work and now she is too busy in the office to talk to her husband on phone. Alone in the room, the miserable husband has just returned from his office and looks again and again at the chairs. For him, the chairs become symbol of infidelity.

Continued on Page 7

Thumri tales

Aahang Festival offered not just thumri recitals by some of the best voices of different gharanas but also initiated the audience into understanding the origin and intricacies of the art form

MANJARI SINHA

Calcutta Performing Arts Foundation, Kolkata and Kaladharmi BAAG (Begum Akhtar Academy of Ghazal), Delhi jointly organised 'Aahang' Thumri Festival at the Chaudhury House, Kolkata recently. The festival, curated by Prof. Rita Ganguli, was organised as a tribute to Bade Ramdas ji, the reputed vocalist, composer and doyen of Banaras Gharana; through the thumri performances by the torchbearers of different gharanas, including his own.

Breaking myths

Introducing the festival on the first day, Ganguli, herself directly trained under three great thumri singers of yesteryears, Pt. Shambhu Maharaj, Siddheshwari Devi and Begum Akhtar, explained that the purpose of this festival was basically to tell people that thumri is thousands of years old style of Indian classical music which unfortunately got associated with the wrong notion of 'thumak' or thumakana.

This 'thumak' style associated with dance was never the original thumri. 'Aahang', she continued, literally means modulation of sound, melody, and words; emphasising the importance of correct pronunciation of lyrics in this genre which gives utmost importance to sahitya, the text. The aim of the festival, she continued, was also to show the thumri singers, the correct path in order to take it intact further.

Aniruddha Chaudhury, the founder of Calcutta



Raising the bar Pt. Rajeshwar Prasad Mishra in performance ; (below) Rita Ganguli

Performing Arts Foundation, added, "The festival is also associated with the kind of spiritual aura this Foundation has maintained by presenting the classical Dhrupad sangeet by the topmost stalwarts of classical music here at Chaudhury House to date. Thumri also leads to the spiritual path that leads us to be one with the almighty. He invited the esteemed guest Swami Suparnanand from Ramakrishna Mission, to further elaborate on the 'spiritual element of music'.

Ganguli explained that thumri is not confined just to Banaras gharana. Stalwarts of all the gharanas excelled in thumri singing. Who can forget 'Jamuna ke teer...' or 'Piya ke milan ki aas...' sung by Ud. Abdul Karim Khan of Kirana Gharana, "Na manungi..." and "Banao batiyan..." sung by Ud. Faiyaz Khan of Agra gharana, "Aaye na Balam, ka karun Sajni..." sung by Ud. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan of Kasur Patiala Gharana and so on? The festival therefore, was conceived in a manner where a short video film on a particular gharana was screened before the torchbearers of that particular gharana ignited the lamp of his or her gharana and rendered thumris in immaculately perfect diction of words they chose to interpret with total restraint, devoid of jugglery, underlining the special features of thumri



singing in their own gharana.

Authentic flavour

The two-day Festival celebrating Bade Ramdas Ji, presented Pt. Rajeshwar Prasad Mishra, the grandson and a direct disciple of Bade Ramdas Ji, to showcase the most authentic flavour of Banaras gharana opening with thumri Des "Thhaadhi Gori chitwat badra ki ore...".

His thumris in Bihag and Khamaj were also equally impressive with the emotive Bol-Banaav of Banaras Ang evoking the rasa-bhava, musically translating the true meaning of 'Aahang'. Ably accompanied by his well-groomed disciple Aashish Mishra, Rajeshwar Prasad also assured about carrying forward the tradition with due earnestness.

Earlier the festival had opened with the present generation torchbearer of Banaras gharana, Shoma Ghosh, who is the disciple of Bageshree Devi in turn trained under Pt. Ganesh Prasad, another direct disciple of Bade Ramdas Ji.

Ustad Raja Mian created the authentic ambience of Agra gharana with his very first sur-lagav, when he presented a couple of bandishi thumris in Khamaj adorned with the playful rhythmic Bol-Baant, his gharana is known for, before concluding his nostalgic performance with the fa-

mous Bhairavi "Banao batiyan chalo kahe ko jhoothi..." immortalised by the Aftab-e-Mausiqi Ud. Faiyaz Khan.

Madhura V. Sohani, the young torchbearer of Jaipur Atrauli Gharana and Nabhodeep Chakraborty representing the Kasur Patiala gharana were the two youngsters who vouched for their proper training under Vidushi Shobha Gurtu and Uds. Mazhar-Javed, the grandsons of Ud. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, respectively. Rageshshri Das representing Banaras gharana also seems to be a promising talent with huge potential.

All-encompassing

Accompanying artists like Ghulam Ali and Allarakha Kalawant on sarangi, Hiranyamoy Mitra, Jyotirmoy Bannerjee and Ratan Bhattacharya on harmonium, Soumen Sarkar and Biplav Bhattacharya on tabla enhanced the musicality of the performance.

The festival was remarkable in the sense that it offered not just the thumri recitals by some of the best voices of different gharanas but also initiated the audience into understanding the origin, history and intricacies of thumri with Prof.

Rita Ganguli intervening to explain them all to facilitate their Rasaswadan or relishing of the art form; at times at the cost of intruding the Thumri recitals.

Mohiniyattam exponent Gopika Varma describes the SNA Award as the ultimate endorsement of her art

RANEE KUMAR

Danseuse Gopika Varma is all smiles as you compliment her on bagging the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Mohiniyattam dance form. Settling down for a candid conversation, she confides, "It's taken a decade of diligence and dedication to arrive here. The bulk of my work stands as a testimonial." Not just on the performance front, but on the creative side as well as imparting the art to the younger generation, she has been working with missionary zeal. "No, not with an eye to any award or recognition," she is quick to clarify. "My passion for art is my driving force that made for my single-minded pursuit of Mohiniyattam against all odds, possible. Without that zeal, I don't think any achievement is possible in any field of work." Very true of a committed artiste who has no other privileges whatsoever. But in the case of Gopika Varma, well, she is the daughter-in-law of the prestigious Kerala royal family and that makes a world of difference.

Patrons of art

"The difference was more in my personal life," she says wistfully. "I had this penchant for dancing right from childhood. All I wanted to do was to dance; nothing else interested me so much. My mother was also adept in Mohiniyattam. The household into which I married were patrons of art and so I was proclaimed to be very fortunate to be making a home in the royal household which produced great artiste kings like Swati Tirunal. I am fortunate to be blessed with a mother-in-law and other elders in the family who love music and dance and encouraged me in my pursuit. The women of the royal household were all highly erudite and well-versed in music and dance, though they restricted themselves from public performances as it was not the done thing. I should admit that royal households have their own code of conduct that restricts certain freedoms that seem so natural to people outside. I had to toe that line," she says.

If she was free to perform then, what was the hassle? "I



Passionate about dance

Gopika Varma ; Pasumarthi Ramalinga Sastry

took a sabbatical for a decade due to my own health issues which were medically mismanaged. It was only after my son was born that I decided to gather the threads of my jettisoned life of art and make a comeback. It wasn't an easy drive. With a fairly long period of absence, you tend to lose confidence. It was an arduous journey which I undertook with grit, faith and blessings of elders. In the process, I took care not to hurt any established norm and not to let my faith in God get shaken. Human effort is limited but divine will is unlimited," she explains.

Gopika began her dancing lessons at the age of three with her mother as her first guru. She had a great inclination towards Bharatanatyam and learnt the dance form under the tutelage of Vazhoor Ramaiah Pillai's son Samraj master for 18 years. But she couldn't resume it after a mishap that took a toll on her health.

So, she decided to go back to Mohiniyattam after the sabbatical and there was no looking back from then. It was not a rocket soar but a steady climb. She began culling out innovative content for Mohiniyattam by working on the ancient Tamil Sangham literature-Purananuru and Akananuru, Kulashakar Azhwar's divine poetry, Adi Sankaracharya's divine verses, Jayadeva's Ashtapadi, rarest of rare kritis of Swati Tirunal, Balarama Bharatam, Harshawardhana, Kavalam Narayana Pannickar, G. Sankara Kurup, Sugata Kumari's compositions and Sopana Sangeetam, a very popular temple music in Kerala.

Continued on page 7

Crowning GLORY

Place of eminence

It is heartening to note awards being bestowed on classical dancers who are active in the field. Like Gopika Varma, Pasumarthi Ramalinga Sastry (Kuchipudi) is at the peak of his career in dance.

Pasumarthi is a multi-faceted scholar-artist in both Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi. "I'm indeed elated by this recognition of my contribution to Kuchipudi. I have fulfilled my mentor, Vempati Chinna Satyam's desire that I should place Kuchipudi dance on a pedestal of eminence with new choreographies culled out of our ancient tradition."

But he is also an expert in Bharatanatyam which he teaches at Hyderabad Central University. "Kuchipudi is my ancestral legacy, while Bharatanatyam, which I imbibed for a decade in Kalashetra, Chennai under Rukmini Devi, is my hard-earned property. The twain can never seep into each other, as many fear, at least not in my case. Since my entire village that goes by the dance form's name comprises families of dancers, it was very natural for me to begin dancing from the age of three."

At the age of ten, he was a steady performer but had a desire to go to Kalakshetra. "I learnt mridangam and Carnatic music along with dance at Kalakshetra which had a telling effect on my choreographies later. The sense of rhythm and knowledge of music is pivotal to dance. I finished my diploma at Kalakshetra and returned to my native state. I never lost touch with Kuchipudi dance form as I used to practice during summer vacations at home."

Pasumarthi is known for his unique, highly-researched, classical yet topical choreographies. "This art form was essentially dance-drama format. It was never a solo though later masters had imbibed solo format into the system to give it a holistic appeal. I revisited and revived the abandoned mythological 'Shashirekha Parinayam' (an episode from Mahabharat) with the help of its music which is present in the All-India Radio archives thankfully. I brought in innovative stage techniques and a cluster of the melodic raga."

Similarly, he adds, his ancestors were staging Uttara Ramayanam which is full of pathos and somehow they felt the pathos visited their homes too and so gave up this beautiful epic. "There is no Kuchipudi without Ramayana. I revoked it as 'Ramakatha saram' (the essence of Rama's story), wherein I introduced lord Rama's manifestation through the process of evolution in the universe. It is here that I interlaced the Dasavatar until the advent of Rama and went on to build the main episodes to complete the epic story."

His 'Tripathi Ganga' on the sacred river was another milestone production wherein he juxtaposed the eras (Krita, Treta, Dwapara, and Kali yuga) with the maiden Ganga as 'piya, parakeeya and samana' nayika and linked the river's equanimity to present day. "I wanted to bring in a story element to the auspicious start of any dance form - a song in praise of Ganesh. I delved into the mythological significance of lord Ganesh as the eradicator of evil/obstacles and choreographed the ballet, 'Gajaneeyam' (origin of Gajanan). 'Avasyam Swaccha palanam' (Urgent need for clean good governance) was a very contextual dance drama with a reference to mythology. It was a veiled satire on the present-day political scenario."

The element of universality is what makes his choreographies valuable pieces of art. Not just the story part, his rhythmic patterns in introducing each and every character make for an amazing dance element whose aesthetics cannot be missed.



Blissful state Madhavi Mudgal

A lyrical homage

At the 6th Natnaagar Festival, Odissi stalwart Madhavi Mudgal executed a khayal piece in Odissi style

MADHUR GUPTA

Amidst the recent Guru Purnima messages and photos flooding the arena of social media, one felt much was lost in the din and glitter of what otherwise is a very personal and private occasion.

Abhyas - an association of arts and culture provided rasikas with the much needed respite by organising the 6th Natnaagar Festival in remembrance of their Guru, the grand man of Kathak late Pt. Shambhu Maharaj. With the chief guests including Padma Vibhushan awardee Guru Saroja Vaidyanathan and ace critic Sunil Kothari remembering with much fondness their gurus and lives as disciples, the festival featured Odissi by Guru Madhavi Mudgal, Kathak by Daniel Freddy and Rahul Pawar (students of Guru Vaswati Sen), and Bharatanatyam by Vidushi Rama Vaidyanathan.

One was able to witness the Odissi recital in its full glory. Madhavi Mudgal began her recital with a mangalacharan dedicated to Lord Shiva. *Sambhav Lalat...* extracted from the 13th century text "Sangeet Ratnakar", delved into the duality-non duality concept of Shiva and Shakti. One had heard this composition in shuddh Hindustani style by the renowned vocalist Jitendra Abhisheki which the dancer had modulated in her personal lyrical manner.

Next in line was Jhijnhoti Pallavi, a composition by Pt. Madhup Mudgal. Intertwined with sculptural freezes of the alasya kanyas, Madhavi Mudgal, belying her age, beautifully executed the entire pallavi. The pallavi itself quite complex musically had various jati patterns interwoven with the Jhijnhoti raga executed by the orchestra with much finesse.

Recalling how Shambhu Maharaj had seen Mudgal dance as a kid, promising to give her a 'gold medal', the dancer chose to render a dadra by Begum Akhtar as a tribute to both the legends who were doyens of the Lucknawi style of performing arts. Treading the much charted waters of the nayika requesting the koyaliya to go to her lord with her message and bring him soon, the Odissi stalwart found herself at ease executing the khayal piece in Odissi style, owing to her years of training and performance career as a Kathak artiste.

The danseuse aptly chose to draw curtains on her poetically executed evening on Guru Purnima by rendering the much loved ashtapadi of her Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra in raga Bhairavi: "Yahi Madhava Yahi Keshava" echoing through the hall, leaving the rasikas unquenched in their thirst for more....

Saving the lone dancer in the pool of light

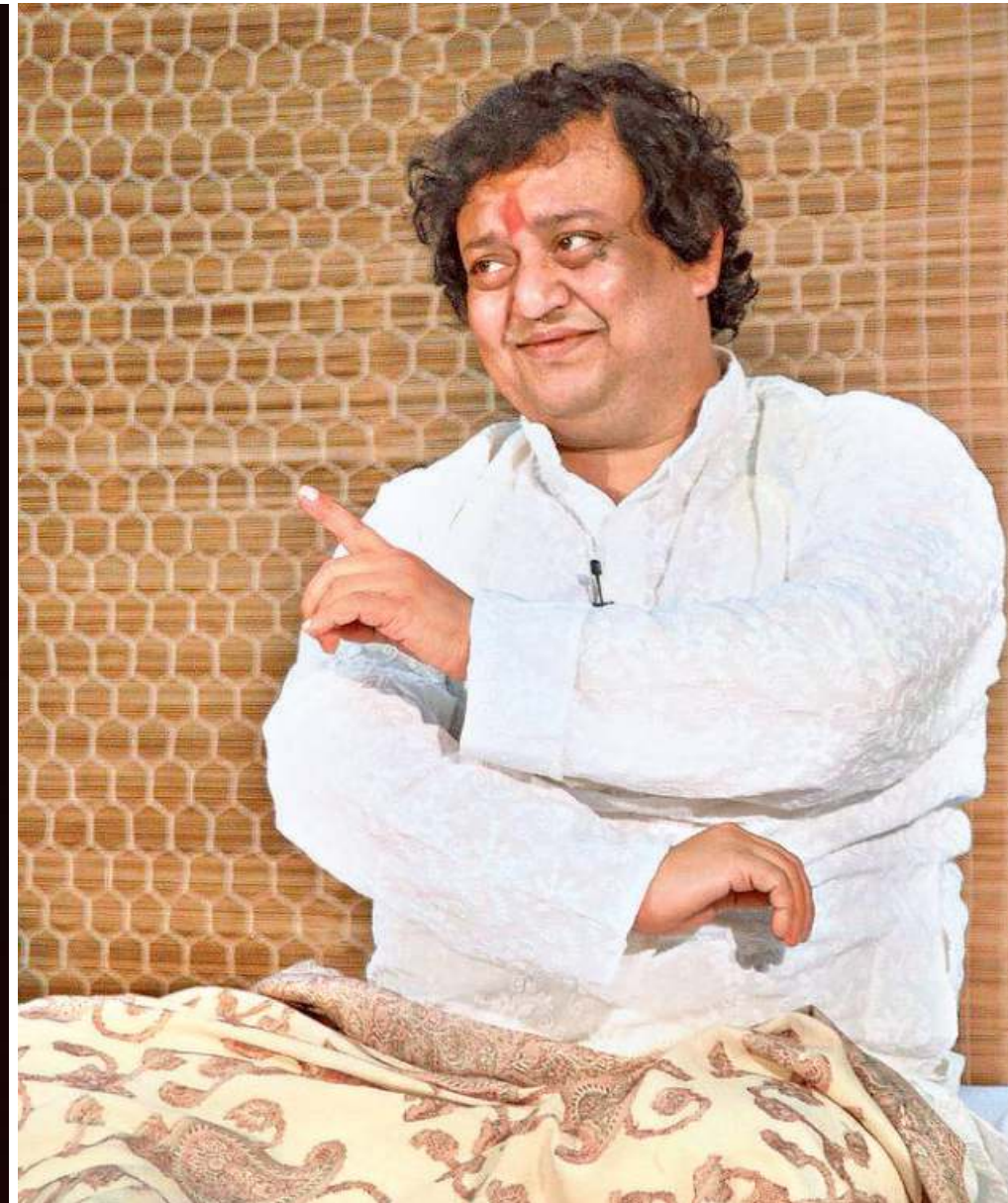
Eminent gurus, who have nurtured solo artistes, give us an insight into the state of the anchoring feature of most Indian classical dances

NAVINA JAJA

The raised curtain reveals an individual body of a dancer standing in a pool of light. There are no fancy lights or stage sets. The musicians play and sing the opening sounds, gradually the flowering of the dance allows the audience to travel a journey. The solo dancer is like a magician weaving multiple dimensions of the art of dance into a long scarf with varied threads of movement, rhythm, and most of all bhava and rasa. The woven scarf swirls igniting the earth with space, igniting the flight of imagination. Claps intersperse as the audience recognise the creative inputs. It is the dancer's victory and the audience's resurrection. Both know they travel to know who they are.

The anchoring feature of most Indian classical dances is the solo dancer. In Kuchipudi and Manipuri, it is gradually evolving. The visibility of a large number of dance festivals and the presence of the Indian classical dance on social media make it appear that the traditions are healthy. Additionally, there are scattered community and individual efforts and belief that the solo dance will remain. However, the lack of qualified cultural administrators have led to the pressure of succumbing to popular forces of group performances, recorded music and a malady of pay to perform. The solo has to survive to conserve the Indian classical dance.

Responding to the emerging threat, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan observes, "The Indian classical dance form is largely an Ekal Nritya (a solo dance form). It is in sync with our philosophy that we come alone, and die alone. Even the theatrical and



Guiding the flow of tradition

The training of solo dance brings with it the responsibility of nurturing a new generation who will ensure the flow of the dance parampara. Students may grow to contribute in various roles as performers, teachers, scholars or even administrators. Concerning both Kuchipudi and Manipuri, an interesting point was the fact that these are primarily group performative traditions.

Priti Patel and Anupama Kyalash admit that the format of the solo is still evolving in both traditions. Kyalash says that initially, the solo identity was defined in the female Dasi traditions. "Kuchipudi was an all-male theatrical format. The dramatic lucid aspects of the dance compositions were imbibed by Bharatanatyam performers like Yamini Krishnamurti and Swapnasundari (who also brought into limelight Vilasini Natyam). I have for example tried to create a formal format keeping in mind that the theatrical aspect of the form is retained."

In Manipuri, the building of the solo format started with Guru Amobi Singh and Bipin Singh. Karuna Devi spoke about Priti Patel's contribution in bringing in the Tandava aspect into the solo repertoire that has contributed to a more compelling performance.

Jaikishan Maharaj says that even as Kathak is equated with speed and overuse of pirouettes (chakkars), he is working to blend stillness, sustaining circularity of movements and grace in his style of teaching. He observed that several percussion instruments, for instance, have a specific repertoire marked only for the left hand. A different world of sound effects and patterns are produced. "Inspired, I realised, perhaps as a left-handed person, I can work to contribute to an aesthetics that revolves on the left section of the body adding to the Kathak tradition."

A. Lakshman has built on the aesthetics of several teachers. For example, inspired by Muthuswami Pillai's aesthetics of using eight directions for adavus (to integrate cadences of movement into dance patterns), he internalised a variety of ways to mediate space and gravity while exploring vertical planes. "My teaching explores holding a stance. It also probes the idea of grounding and simultaneous searching to create an illusion of floating."

Odissi exponent Kavita Dwibedi speaks of Aruna Mohanty's manner of executing movement extensions, and amplifying aesthetics and beauty of performing with the back stance is exciting as much as her courage to engage with contemporary themes and express it in the Odissi dance language.

Leading from the front

Guru A. Lakshman, Jai Kishan Maharaj

R. SHIVAJI RAO

view that "when teaching a large number of students, group performances allow an opportunity of performance for all and thus becomes motivational to align with dance." While Jaikishan Maharaj says that the group allows students to learn and experience performance space, lights, and costumes. The training to be a complete dancer requires after-all several skills such as music, percussion, performance space management and costuming. Odissi exponent Aruna Mohanty asserts that since financial sustenance as a solo dancer is difficult, "I suggest to my students not to negotiate participating in groups. That too is an opportunity. Sometimes, a special talent can be spotted in a group and can be part of public memory."

Spreading wings

It is important to critique the clichéd celebration of the perfection of the Guru-shishya parampara in the present environment. Students cannot be expected to invest full time only in dance/music education. Mainstream education is the requirement that allows dancers to think, question, critique "and for supplementing incomes," observes Aruna Mohanty. Gurus feel that the limited time to teach, and the student's lack of time, do not permit the immersion to happen. "But, it is the talent of a guru to motivate students in such a way that they continue to gradually commit to dance, and keep returning to pursue training," says Kyalash.

Priti Patel admits that she has categorically chosen to perform and choreograph over teaching, "since honestly, both teaching and performing are extremely demanding and justice is rarely done when doing both." Nonetheless, her student

freedom for creativity within tradition on my own body has helped me to mould individual students. I am extremely selective in the choice of students."

Priya Venkatraman observes, "Lakshman Sir is unique. He is selfless, generous and believes in qualitative teaching. He invests, nurtures on a one to one relationship." Such is his motivation and commitment that Kalaisan Kalaichelvan from Canada comes to learn annually for several years." Aruna Mohanty expresses that the dancer as a performer and a teacher needs to consciously develop not to compete with the student and remain large-hearted. Bijan Kumar Palai, a student of Mohanty, started as a Gotipua dancer and is one to watch out for as a strong emerging male soloist.

Positive churn

The solo is the 'centre' of the Indian classical dance. It has to sustain. Spic Macay's Nav Pallava is a recently launched counter-movement against pay to perform and to reinstate the solo form. Ashok Jain, who is spearheading the initiative, says, "Like any cycle, the solo has to re-emerge." The platform brings prominent Gurus and senior dancers to collaborate in different regional cities and present promising solo performers. Audiences are encouraged to donate at the entrance which goes to pay the performer. The movement is gradually taking shape and is becoming popular." Youngsters without any connection, money backing or lineage are still courageously investing in the solo. Of them, some are Janhabi Behera, Lipsa Sathpathy in Odissi, Arunima Sengupta, Sangeta Chatterjee (Kathak), Himanshu Srivastava, Arupa Lahiry (Bharatanatyam), Ayana Mukherjee (Kuchipudi)

In this discourse, locating Bharatanatyam expert A. Lakshman is fascinating. He is not only a talented performer but an extremely successful Guru as well. He has chiselled the likes of Priyadarshini Govind who he taught for around three years, Priya Venkatraman, Urmila Satyanarayan, Jyotsana Jagannathan among others. Lakshman says, "Understanding the



The emphasis in the Indian dance is on nurturing individual creativity and not factory productions, or cloning as evident in the process of group productions Padma Subrahmanyam

group synergy is about the individual journey; its tradition is like a honeycomb. Each bee works independently and yet together the bees are perceived as a community, a unit. By not investing in the creation of solo dancers, the very foundation of the tradition of Indian classical dance is rattled. Whatever the challenges, this central character of the solo dance needs to be nurtured, protected and promoted."

Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam, renowned scholar-dancer, says, "Dance like Hindu practice is individualistic and not collective devotion. It is a one to one journey of realisation. In the Natya Shastra, solo is one form among the ten categories of drama. The emphasis in the Indian dance is on nurturing individual creativity and not factory productions, or cloning as evident in the process of group productions. The objective is bhava and rasa (intrinsic essence, sublime emotion)."

The question to save the solo dance form has multiple aspects - cultural economics, policies, and politics of performance displays, pa-

tronage systems, and attitude of students, gurus and transmission methods. Responses to a series of questions by committed, successful middle generation gurus, who have nurtured already established soloists or have students who are strong potentials, provide hope that the solo will survive.

Pay to perform

Apart from the vibrant month-long 'Dance Season' in Chennai, continuous efforts by Spic-Macay and a few emerging initiatives such as the Rain-drop Festival in Mumbai, there are few platforms for solo dancers. It is rampant that solo performers are made to pay organisers to perform. "It is a disease that needs to be eradicated," says Manipuri exponent Priti Patel.

It does not matter how long and how good a performer is, ironical as it may seem, the legitimacy of dancers in the market is accepted by the hierarchical grading empanelment by Government agencies such as ICCR, and the Doordarshan (National Television). Keeping this in mind,

the Government continues to be the driving patron and manager of Indian dance and other performing arts.

The establishment of the Bismillah Khan Yuva Puruskar by the Sangeet Natak Akademi was a welcome step in ratifying the importance of individual talent. Hence, when the Ministry of Culture, for instance, imparts dancers under solo categories, but demands from them group productions for the Festivals of India, it undercuts the idea of the solo and inspires private organisations too to support large group productions.

Cultural economics

Live music, diminished by the complexities of cultural economics, is essential to solo dancing to bring out the signature identity and individual creativity in movement, rhythm, abhinaya, and other levels of dance de-liberations. Good musicians are few and their cost is perceived as high. However, the prevailing 'market' trend is about creating dance performance spectacles; the spectacles

aim to replace solo with groups and live music with glamorous packaging comprising most times of recorded music, designer lighting, costumes, sound, and multimedia.

Such trendy, re-positioned displays of classical Indian dance are products of the capitalist market-making dance performances more expensive and quite often camouflaging mediocre dancing. Those students who do invest in solos need to self-motivate themselves.

Kuchipudi expert Anupama Kyalash wonders that if a Kathakali dancer is still able to hypnotically hold a large crowd for several evenings by performing in open space between oil-lit torches, why can't a proseni-sol solo performer not assert his/her high-level content/talent in a simple performative setting?

Of course there is a reality - both the publicity and the technical wizardry are essential to draw in the contemporary audiences, such a balance needs to be struck such that neither the content nor the space for improvisation (live music) so essential for the solo performance is com-

promised.

Making of solo dancers

Solo dancing involves the initiative of students within the larger dynamics of long, sustained personalised teaching. This is in contrast to the growing phenomenon of virtual teaching through videos, internet, and television and workshop modules. It is about carving individual styles. "Transmission of Indian dance like other subjects is a journey into the universe of the knowledge system and beyond craft, technique, and items. For instance, the 11th Century philosopher Ramanujacharya came to learn the Ramayana from his Guru but was told to first memorise the text. The former returned five years later and was then taught the text from 18 perspectives."

"Students, after initial years of essential training, require personal attention to recognise and foster their forte. For example, my student Pujita Krishna is an accomplished English writer and speaker, while Usha Kiran is proficient in Telugu. The grooming for Pujita incorporates her

writing/speaking power in her performance; while with Usha, I encourage engagement with Telugu literature for abhinaya." says Kyalash.

Kathak guru Jaikishan Maharaj avers, "The student comes first with a dream that she/he wants to dance. They later realise that they need to do the penance. It's about learning, committing, developing internal focused energy, discipline, and opening to receive knowledge. I too completely involve myself while teaching them to comprehend, for example, the way dance syllables are structured, woven as compositions and movements to create rasa."

Jaikishan has to his credit trained several other potential soloists. For example, Anukriti Vishvakarma's talent in nritt where one can observe her creativity in clear, sharp movements. Ridhima Bagga, who also trained with Malti Shyam and Deepak Maharaj, brings to her performance her engagement as a theatre actor.

The group performance too is useful as part of training and motivation. Padma Subrahmanyam is of the



By not investing in the creation of solo dancers, the very foundation of the tradition of Indian classical dance is rattled. Whatever the challenges, this central character of the solo dance needs to be nurtured Kapila Vatsyayan

Mind Your Yoga

Know your Breath

It tells a lot about your physical and mental well-being

A.G. MOHAN AND DR.
GANESH MOHAN



The first step is to cultivate the skill of comprehensively observing your breath. You can begin doing this right away, whatever position you are in. Take a pause as you read this list and observe each of these parameters. Notice that just observing the breath often changes it. The breath is sensitive. Then make it a point to bring awareness to your breath parameters during your asana practice and at different times during the day. Do not judge your breath as being good or bad. Just cultivate the practice of learning to sense the breath easily.

For this exercise, you need to have a useful list of breath parameters that you can observe. Here it is:

Pattern of breathing:

- Are you breathing through the nose or your mouth?

- Where you are breathing physically - mainly watch the upper chest, lower ribs, abdomen, lower abdomen and back of the body.

Quality of breathing:

- **Rate:** how fast or how many times a minute.

- **Depth:** how full is the inhalation and how deep is the exhalation?

- **Rhythm:** how does the breath vary over several repetitions, say over some minutes.

- **Smoothness:** is the flow of the breath even and steady or is it jerky?

- **Sound:** is there any sound from the throat or nostrils when breathing?

The components of the breathing cycle:

- Inhale, exhale, pauses. Each part has its own effect. Watch the quality, length, smoothness, and effort of each of these components.

Stress

- Holding patterns and tension in the breath and tension in the body (face, neck, jaw, shoulders, chest, abdomen, legs, fingers).

- Restlessness or inability to remain still.

- Other signs of psychological distress

Effort and ease:

- The more effortful the breath, the less likely it is that your body and mind are well. Even when you are exercising, it is wise to breathe as easily as possible.

- Watching over your breath comprehensively by going through these parameters is one of the most important skills you can cultivate for your yoga practice and for your well-being. As you continue to master more techniques of breathing, try to always come back to breath awareness and observe these parameters repeatedly. You don't have to observe all of them at once. Just notice one or two parameters at a time.

The Starting Point:**● Natural Breath**

The breath is not a blank slate upon which we write patterns. It is an involuntary function. The breath is happening whether we are aware of it or not. So, we are always creating a breathing pattern on top of an existing breathing pattern.

What is that existing breathing pattern? That pattern is your natural or involuntary breath.

When you are resting, your natural breath is usually easy and shallow, with your abdomen moving, mainly. This breath is quite short, maybe around ten breaths a minute. The rhythm of your natural breath changes; it is somewhat unpredictable, with some deeper breaths and chest breaths happening every now and then.

Make it a point to notice your natural breath whenever you can. It changes depending on your posture, stress levels and tension, diet, sleep quality and more. Therefore, it can tell you a lot about the state of your body and mind!



Metaphysics in Natya

All puzzles are resolved here

Abhinavagupta puts Moksha or liberation as nothing but the awareness of one's true nature



PADMAJA SURESH



In the process of meditation, AUM expands in stages of Akara, Ukara, Makara and then Nada, Bindu, Kala, Shanta and Ati Shanta. If Vedic

Brahman is Shantam or peace, Tantric Brahman is Anandam or Bliss. The human psychological I-consciousness is 'relative' in the sense; self-consciousness is in contrast with the not-self but the pure I-consciousness is 'absolute' awareness. It is immediate - like a flash of lightning. When one has this consciousness, one can be aware of the real nature of the Self and non-Self.

Vijnana Bhairava's text of Tantric Trika Shaivism of Kashmir, refers to meditation (dharani) on the sound of stringed instruments. The iconic commentator Abhinavagupta was himself known to play the veena. He would have appreciated the vibrant temple culture in which stringed instruments and the drum interwove melody and rhythm and inspired the ritual dances. Abhinavagupta says that the mind naturally tends towards plain sound. A swara or a musical note has the power to superimpose on the mind evolving beyond mere sound, thus making it responsive through emotion. On Taala or rhythm and Kaala or time fractions and Layaa or rest, Abhinavagupta offers a multi-dimensional eulogy to his deity Siva - One who in essence is illusory, yet in whom is perfect equilibrium of every act of the world by means of time divisions. One who is in perfect tempo, based on the substratum of 'rest,' says he. Sound develops into forms in space perceived by us through

light. Sound alone consents to move - to word to sentence, poem, song, dance, painting, sculpture and so on as. The phoneme syllables A to Ksa, bring about will, knowledge and action, appearing in the temporal and spatial as forms, ingeniously varied and distinct.

There are three aspects in Tantra practices - Kula follows Vama/left handed techniques with substance uses, ritualised sex, etc, Mishra both external and internal rites and the purest and highest path of Samaya. The purest Devi Upasana comes under this.

Contemplative devotion

The worship here follows the knowledge of Sri Yantra with meditation. Every experience is in the subtlest state alone with contemplative devotion. In the South, the Tirumantiram (Sri-mantra in Sanskrit) of Tirumoolar, refers to Bhuvanapati/Shiva chakra. This, many understand to be the Sammelana chakra of Srividya. It is the representation through diagram of this Yantra and the worship with the 15-letter mantra, which one needs to correlate as the Tamil equivalent to the Sanskrit syllables. The vowels and consonants of Sanskrit are inscribed in the vertices of the Sri Yantra.

The practice of a Sastra by a Sadhaka becomes a dedication to the supreme only if based on three axioms - Asti (Existence in consciousness), Bhati (splendour of the ONE truth) and Priyam

The 36 chapters of Natya Sastra are significant when expanded as thousands of these bio-plasmic energy fields.

(Blissful awareness). This triad splits into four quarters in learning - Acharyat Paadam or a quarter from the preceptor or Guru, Swayam Adhyaya or by the sishya himself with own intelligence, Brahmacharibhyo or through other students and peers and lastly Kaalakramena or over a period of time. This is how Bharatamuni also advises practitioners while he refers occasionally, that as time moves on, deterioration in values, skills, strength and learning is bound to happen. Dance, however, seems to solve all puzzles inherent in philosophical discourses by leading to their true meaning. The 72,000 nerve currents that are divided as 36,000 for each side - Siva and Sakti - merge in the central channel. The 36 chapters of Natya Sastra are significant when expanded as thousands of these bio-plasmic energy fields. In one Nritta Karana called 'Leenam,' one is doing full prostrations, standing for the body-mind in contemplation. The other Karanas total to 107, energising the secret Marmas or vital points in us.

Siva in his form as Rudra, cries aloud to announce the birth of the worlds, just as a new born would do. He is Tamobhimani - rules darkness or Tamo Guna without which light can never be known.

Worshipping Sakti or energy, dancing as 'light and sound' is itself, the eternal realisation of ONE Consciousness or Siva. Abhinavagupta puts Moksha or liberation as nothing else but the awareness of one's true nature. The highest attainment is that of Siva-consciousness in which the entire universe appears as I or Siva and this comes by Saktipata - the descent of Sakti or Anugraha (grace).

A time to sing, a time to ponder

As they prepare to perform at the Khusrau-Kabir festival this Saturday, young artists speak of the relevance of the theme

ANJANA RAJAN

It was in the 15th Century that Kabir, the weaver who wove magic with his words and spared none, reminded us that religious bigotry was mere hypocrisy, that human beings were created the same before being labelled by caste or community, and that deeds, not clothes or rank or empty rituals, proved a person's worth. And before him, Amir Khusrau was writing mystic Sufi poetry about the Divine Beloved, making an indelible contribution to Indian classical and Bhakti music, as well as leaving a literary and cultural legacy for the common listener that endures to this day. They each lived in an era peppered with worldly struggles and historic upheavals, yet they rose above the strife and came to symbolise the highest in creative and spiritual attainment in the Indian subcontinent.

The words of these centuries-old mystics are going to be recalled and regaled this weekend in New Delhi, when Banyan Tree presents its annual Khusrau-Kabir festival at Kamani auditorium. The event, now a decade old, features five artists – Archana Bhattacharya, Gayatri Asokan, Vidya Shah (all of whom are billed for contemporary presentations), Prahalad Singh Tippania (Kabirpanthi songs) and the Chisti Brothers (Qawwali).

Message for humanity

In today's India, where words like faith and love, rather than exuding comfort and the spirit of oneness, are frequently distorted by intolerance, hatred and violence, we often wonder what the world is coming to. But then, history tells us, the world has an annoying habit of coming to these junctures over and over again. Humanity constantly needs to be reminded of its own mortality, and seers down the ages, Kabir and Khusrau among them, have fulfilled that need.

"Kabir was a visionary who



Music for the soul (Clockwise from top) Gayatri Asokan, Vidya Shah, Archita Bhattacharya

grew beyond rituals, any religious dogma or preconditioning for that matter," says Gayatri Asokan. "He spoke about the ephemeral nature of human life and how important it is to broaden your vision, not identify with the small ego."

As India goes through one of the most critical tests of its civilisational strength, now if ever is the time to dip again into its stash of literary wisdom and remember this strength is based on an amalgamation of cultures, a broad and open-ended worldview.

"The words of Amir Khusrau and Kabir Das continue to be very relevant in the current times," says noted Khayal, Thumri and Dadra exponent Vidya Shah. "These are basically ideas of love, peace, equality that the entire Sufi and Bhakti movements and the poets therein have held forth. So I think in today's time these are probably more relevant than ever, because I think we live in a time when people need to respect each other, to believe in peace, to understand that violence is not the way to go, is not the way to be, and being together is more important rather than being divided."

Besides, adds Asokan, "Khusrau spoke about the misogyny in the society which favours the male child and sidelines the dreams of the girl child in his songs, which is totally relevant in the present times too."

Khusrau and Kabir are icons of India's Ganga Jamuni tehzeeb, which has been battered in the political and social atmosphere prevailing in many parts of the country. In this context, Asokan feels the festival "definitely promotes the true idea of India," defining it as, "grow beyond your



small identities and embrace a common big vision for the betterment of the society."

Archita Bhattacharya is hopeful that "bringing these two legendary poets/saints together and sharing their thoughts will surely bring a change in our current situation and bring peace and harmony."

Moment of peace

Music is an important vehicle to transmit such messages, points out Shah. "Very often people are so caught up in their everyday lives that to actually sit back to reflect and even to introspect, I think music and this kind of lyric provides a peaceful atmosphere to be able to do that." She feels festivals such as this "provide people that moment of peace and quietude."

As for how artists can contribute to shaping public perception, Bhattacharya notes, "It's very important to think of such concepts not only from music point of view but also being a responsible musician, to bring forward our rich culture that also shows a path for a peaceful society through music."

In times of trouble arts are

usually the first to be neglected, the notion being, 'who can be bothered about such refinement when stark realities of survival are at stake?' But it is precisely the removal from the mundane that helps one to see things in perspective, says Asokan. "Art and artists have always made people fall in love with the abstract, find beauty and joy in life and spread this thing called pure joy. We have made life so complex and stressful. Truth is that life is perishable, look beyond petty differences and grow in wisdom. Art is the greatest unifier in this context."

Artists, says Shah, "are really the via media for people to experience values, to understand the joys that music can bring, or any form of art for that matter whether performing or visual."

Enumerating the mind-expanding advantages of the arts, she says, "It allows you to think, it allows you to question, it kindles your curiosity, and therefore it sets you thinking in directions which you may not be able to otherwise. So both art and the manner in which the artist expresses art are very important ways for society to evolve, to adapt and to grow, in organic ways."

It is well known that "soulful, meaningful music and poetry connects with people more easily than words," says Bhattacharya, and thus "can play a vital role in bringing harmony and peace to the society." In the current scenario of divisive politics, she states, it's "high time" artists and established organisations "take moral responsibility of spreading love and peace."

At the performance, while Asokan plans to present a work of Kabir and two Khusrau songs, Shah says her concert will include "some very core ideas that both these saint-poet-seekers expressed through their poetry." There will be "some popular ideas as well," she says, mentioning the widely sung Khusrau lyric, "Mohe apne hi rang mein rang de rangile".

Among other compositions, Bhattacharya plans to sing Kabir's "Koi jape Rahim Rahim, Koi jape hai Ram/Das Kabir hai prem pujari, dono ko parnaam."

In today's India, with religion serving as an incendiary pastime and politicians in the garb of renunciates, many could do with some reminding of this quintessentially Indian idea.

("Khusrau - Kabir: across centuries...", Kamani auditorium, August 3, 6.30 p.m. onwards)

..Chairs as characters

Continued from page 2

Upstage right, wind chimers are placed on a stand which chimes at the end of each scene, symbolising peace with a view to calm down the inner turmoil of the protagonist - this is done in a subtle way.

The script is innovative. Scenes are independent without any link to another. The chairs are centre of the focus. In fact, we have seen Ionesco's "Chairs" which focuses on the absurdist view of man and society. The production under review claims "exposition of emotion in various shades". The protagonists who suffer from mental anguish have no escape and are unable to face forces that oppress them.

The dialogues such as "Your face is not your own" make the production complex and you need complete concentration to comprehend the shadowy world it projects with elements of absurd theatre. The strong point of the production is the excellent performances by two seasoned actors. Vinay Sharma,

in one of the scenes where he reacts in rage against municipal employees, who have destroyed chairs, transforms himself into a schizophrenic out to kill the destroyers of two chairs. Ashok Singh as the husband suspecting the fidelity of his wife gives a highly convincing performance.

..Crowning glory

Continued from page 3

She calls herself 'hardcore' performer from the year 2002 onwards, a period which saw her give thematic performances amounting to nearly 60 every year, both in India and abroad, especially in the Gulf region. "I'm an avowed soloist and my dance is mostly abhinaya-oriented, though I do group choreographies now and then," she states. She opened her dance institute 'Dasyam' in Chennai where she has settled down and also in Bangalore where nearly 250 pupils are into learning Mohiniyattam.

Awards are not new to Gopika. She bagged Kerala's first 'Pushparani' award at the tender age of three from then Tamil film hero Gemini Ganesan! followed by many State honours. I received my Kalaimamani from the hands of the then Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa," she says with a sense of pride! However, she goes on to add, "The SNA is the ultimate recognition an artiste is bestowed with as it is decided and awarded by a committee full of artistes. It is the ultimate endorsement of my art. I couldn't have asked for more."



Music on the move

Groove Gully, a travelling museum of music for children, combines history, geography and music into experiential learning sessions

SHRINKHLA SAHAI

In a regular school trip to the museum, students observe exhibits from a distance, take a long-winded tour that they often find tedious and return with fragments of information that they may find difficult to assimilate into their lives. Here is a museum with a difference that travels to the students, inviting them to explore and experience music in a unique way. The Groove Gully travelling museum of music houses a collection of musical instruments from all over the world. Visiting different schools in Delhi-NCR, the curators ask the children to pick up the instruments, play them under the guidance of musicians and learn about the music that the instruments make. A storyteller weaves a musical tale around the instruments, sharing their cultural significance, the materials and workmanship that make each one unique. They often wrap up the sessions with a music quiz. This turns the 'museum visit' into a 'visiting museum' with engaging ways of combining history, geography and music into experiential learning sessions.

Family bonding

For Jay Chauhan and Bobby Chauhan, founders of Groove Gully, this is a passion project. "Groove Gully is a family bonding platform that weaves music back into family lives." At one of their music festivals, they created a 'percussion zone' where children could touch the musical instruments and try playing them. It generated a great amount of curiosity, wonder and excitement in the children, giving the duo the idea to extend it into a travelling museum. With a collection of about 80 instruments presently, the museum has travelled to schools across the Capital, educating and inspiring over 1500 children per school over three days. Vocalist Shubha Mudgal is part of the advisory board, while Nandini Chatterjee, UNESCO, brings her expertise on Neuroscience and Socio-Emotional Learning that has been integrated into the museum approach. Meanwhile, core team members Vrishali Puranik and Deepak Joshi quit their cushy jobs to be part of the music mission.

"We wanted to question and break the 'don't touch' approach of museums. By allowing and encouraging students to pick up and play instruments, we want them to experience these instruments and take the music



At one of the experiential sessions of Groove Gully

back into their lives," says Jay. "There is always a risk of the instruments getting damaged," he points out, "but we are ready for that, it is still worth it."

The museum recently travelled to a school in Gurugram, featuring a wide assortment like Daman drums from Ladakh, a Chenda from Kerala, Maracas from Peru, Temir Komuz from Kyrgyzstan, Thavil and Kanjiras from Tamil Nadu, Pakhawaj, Tablas, Chimta and Dhol from North India, Bom, Ksing and Padiah from Meghalaya besides Rainsticks, Ocean Drums, Boomwhackers, Ghatam, Manjeera and Djembes.

Professional musicians performed in every morning assembly using instruments from the museum so students could experience a concert setting. The first day featured a Chendamalam performance using Chendas from Kerala. This was followed by a sharing session where musicians interacted with the students, talking to them about the wood used, ceremonies they were played in as well as their role as accompanying rhythm givers in Kathakali. Students were given blocks of wood and initiated the way Chenda is taught to beginners.

Another day had a percussionist from Panama, Fidel Dely Murillo, playing the rhythms of Latin America with a map of all the South American countries as a background. Through a musical narrative he made his way from Argentina, Peru to Brazil, Panama, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico and finally the US. This was a geography primer woven into the music for all the students gathered.

"We want to change the way children experience music today," emphasises Jay, recalling that there were hardly any such opportunities to learn about instruments from around the world when he was a child. Bringing in an approach of tactile exploration, wonder, storytelling and experiential education, this unique museum of music promises to transform the idea of music-making, museum-visits and learning.

Pushing the limits

Amit Sadh on "Barot House" and his progress in the film industry

ATIF KHAN

He might not be able to carry a film on his shoulders, but Amit Sadh is one of those actors who provide the right texture to the script. Right from "Kai Po Che", Amit emerged as a selfless performer who believes in taking the vision of the director forward. Perhaps, that's why he is cast in star vehicles such as "Sultan" and "Gold". He could have been easily slotted in the comedy zone, but Amit steered clear of the trap after experiments like "Guddu Rangeela" and "Running Shaadi" failed to take off. He will soon be seen in mini-series "India Strikes" and "Breathe 2" but before that there is "Barot House" which is a Zee5 original.

Excerpts:
"Barot House" seems intriguing...

It is a very special film for me as I am playing the man of the house, Amit Barot. A suspense drama, it is the story of a family which goes through a set of incidents that take place in the house. It is an intense and brooding role which demands of you to be in a certain zone. A lot goes into preparing for such a role as you have to come out of your comfort zone. For such characters, finding the right beat is very important.

I think I have given everything to this role and after 'Kai Po Che', it is one role that has pushed me. I had to go back to the drawing board and rely on the method that I learned as an artist during the 'Kai Po Che' days. In fact, I called Gattu (Abhishek Kapoor) to tell him that after 'Kai Po Che', it was something special.

How do you see yourself in the industry?

I was never too ambitious. I didn't come here to make a career, it was just to fulfil my desire to perform. People might have a different perception of me, but I am really happy and grateful that good filmmakers have shown faith in me and have invested in my talent. I hope that I keep getting challenging roles which keep pushing me.

It seems casting process is redefining the look of Bollywood films? "Kai Po



Plateful! Amit Sadh ■ THE HINDU

Che" was one such case

Indeed. It was because of the change in casting process that I got the chance to show my calibre to the world. I am a product of this new found process of casting where only your look and acting talent get you the role. If that didn't happen, I don't know what would have been my destiny. I am an outsider. I am not complaining about it but 10 years back it was very difficult to get a break for an outsider.

I feel half the battle is won if you cast right. For this very reason, directors have started paying emphasis on the process of casting and having good casting directors on board.

You have been equally very well received in big-budget films where you had limited screen time as a character artist.

I do not understand the concept of bracketing actors as character artists. I think the term is used in India only. My logic is very simple. I play parts. In some films that may be of more than 100 minutes and in some films like the recently released 'Super 30', I had a part of 10 minutes. Till



I am an outsider. I am not complaining about it but 10 years back it was very difficult for an outsider to get a break

the time I keep getting these parts and continue to entertain, affect and indulge the audience, I think my job as an artist is fulfilled.

Does working with senior stars such as Salman Khan and Akshay Kumar help?

I do not pick films because of that but I am very lucky that I have worked with senior actors like Salman sir and my life did change after 'Sultan'. After losing direction, my career was back on track. In 'Gold', I was one of the main protagonists. I learnt hockey for six months. I auditioned for the role. Big names add to the reach of the film but one doesn't sign a film because of that. I see it as a learning process like in 'Breathe', I am one of the leads but it also gave me an opportunity to work with Madhavan. I learnt so much from him. So, working with seniors is a blessing in disguise.

How do you remember your early days from television and reality shows?

I remember the television days for the upbringing that they gave me as an actor. Television prepared me to dream big. I was 23-24 at that time. Today, I don't have the time to watch television. Life has changed. Having said that, mediums don't matter because one film or series will work, another will not. What is in your hand is you. Till the time you are evolving and are working hard, you are in the best phase of your life.