

Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	79	Gurugram	46
Ghaziabad	81	Faridabad	41
Noida	66	Greater Noida	112
Good 0-50 Satisfactory 51-100 Moderate 101-200 Poor 201-300 Very poor 301-400 Severe >401			
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB			

DELHI TODAY

Dance: The second day of IIC Monsoon Festival of Dance will feature Vilasini Natyam by Purvadhanashree from Bangalore, followed by Odissi recital by Guru Madhavi Mudgal at C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre (IIC), 6 p.m.

Dance: Umeed: Colors of Hope™ tells the story of self-image, chronic illness and mental health through a Kathak dance choreography by Sunena Gupta at The Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

Music: Dhrupad recital by Sagar Morankar, a disciple of Pt. Uday Bhawalkar at Amaltes Hall, IHC, 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Kala Sampada" an exhibition to promote the exquisite traditional Craft at Central Cottage Industries Emporium, Jawahar Vyapar Bhawan, Janpath, 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Screening: "Nabbie's Love" a Japanese film will be screened with English subtitles at The Japan Foundation, 5A, Ring Road, Lajpat Nagar IV, 6.30 p.m.

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

'Why is J&K under curfew if move is welcomed?'

DU students and professors protest against amendment to Article 370; question legality of government's move

AARUSHI AGGARWAL
NEW DELHI

Delhi University students and professors gathered at the Arts Faculty on North Campus on Thursday in protest against the Centre's move to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional status.

Criticising the government's move, third-year students from Jesus and Mary College - Shraddha Rai and Divyakriti Singh - said, "They [government] are sitting in their pretty offices in Delhi, deciding for a group of people who have no representation. The least you could do is consult their erstwhile leaders. I know the Opposition is weak, but people are not."

Remarks condemned
Organised by student activist groups, including the All India Students' Association (AI-



Members of students' organisations stage a protest against the amendment to Article 370 by the Centre, at the DU Arts Faculty on North Campus on Thursday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

SA) and Pinjra Tod among others, the protest was dominated by women students who took the lead in raising slogans supporting Kashmiri women.

Amidst chants of "Kashmir ki auratein, hum tum-

hare saath hain (Women of Kashmir, we are with you)", those protesting condemned the statement made by a BJP MLA who had earlier said that BJP workers are now at the liberty to marry "gori" [fair] Kashmiri women.

A Kashmiri student from Miranda House, while addressing the gathering said, "They've murdered my choice. They've murdered my self-respect," referring to the MLA's remark. She added, "If the move is wel-

6 If they truly believe that the move will benefit people then a referendum should be held. Let the people decide

NABILA ANSARI
Student of St. Stephen's College

comed in Kashmir, then why is it under curfew? These people are hungry for power"

Arfat Jaffri, a resident of Poonch added, "People were ready to go home for Id, but now we do not know if we will be able to leave or come back."

While the legality of the government's move is being questioned, Nandita Narain, former president of the Delhi University Teachers' Association said, "The Presidential order states that support of the J&K Assembly was secured, except there is no Legislative Assembly. Consent

was given by the Governor, a representative of the President. Essentially, the President took permission from himself."

Heavy militarisation

For Nabila Ansari, a second-year student of St. Stephen's College, it is important for the government to hold a referendum.

"If they truly believe that the move will benefit people then a referendum should be held. Let the people decide. The government has taken the current decision with such heavy militarisation. Clearly, they have an agenda and it does not look good at all," she said.

Armed BSF personnel and Delhi Police forces maintained vigil as students marched on shouting slogans of "370 waapas lao" and "Kashmir hum tumhare saath hain".

NGT raps U.P. authorities over solid waste report

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has pulled up the Uttar Pradesh government over a report filed by authorities pertaining to the compliance of solid waste management rules in Agra.

Taking note of the report furnished by the government, a Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said that the report failed to show how the issue related to the treatment capacity of solid waste, was being addressed by the authorities.

Untreated sewage

Noting that 61% of the untreated sewage was being discharged into river Yamuna, the green panel directed the State government to furnish a performance guarantee of ₹25 crore.

The NGT warned the authorities that coercive measures will be taken against those responsible, in case of non-compliance of orders.

Progress report

"A further compliance report may also be furnished on the progress made in cumulative tabular form, indicating the progress against each head, month-wise, by October 31. The timeline must be prompt having regard to the serious implications on environment and public health on account of long time continued failure of the State," the Bench said.

The directions came while the green panel was hearing a plea moved by petitioner D.K. Joshi and NGO Social Action for Forest and Environment (SAFE), which sought compliance of relevant solid waste management rules.

Remove obstacles to flight path: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday asked aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL), which manages the IGI Airport here, to identify buildings around the aerodrome that may be obstacles to the flight path and take action against them.

The direction was issued by a Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar while disposing of a PIL seeking directions to DGCA, DIAL, and other authorities to carry out a survey of obstacles around the Delhi airport and remove them.

NGT demands action-taken report on Tughlakabad 'encroachers'

Panel was hearing plea alleging illegal constructions in area

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following a plea seeking action against illegal constructions in Tughlakabad, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Thursday sought a compliance report from civic bodies on the action taken against the violators.

Directions issued

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel took note of a report filed by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and observed, "The report dated August 5 filed by the DPCC states that directions have been issued for stopping the illegal activities and imposing compensation."



The Bench also noted, "The status report filed by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation states that demolition proceedings have been initiated. The counsel for the corporation states that due process has been initiated and electricity and water supply to the illegal structures will be disconnected within one week."

The civic body also in-

formed the tribunal that demolition activities will be undertaken "with police help at the earliest".

The directions came when the panel was hearing a plea that alleged violation of environmental norms by illegal constructions that had come up in the Tughlakabad Extension area.

Earlier, the tribunal had sought a factual and action-taken report from a joint committee comprising representatives from the Central Pollution Control Board and the SDMC. A report furnished by the committee had stated that the properties in question "were unauthorised having no clearance or sanction or approved building plans".

Order on plea for NBW against Kamal Nath's nephew today

Accused is evading probe, claim ED prosecutors

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday reserved order on an Enforcement Directorate's plea for issuance of a non-bailable arrest warrant against Ratul Puri, nephew of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath, in a money laundering case connected with the ₹3,600 crore AgustaWestland VVIP chopper deal.

Special Judge Arvind Kumar reserved the order for August 9 on conclusion of argument by Special Public Prosecutors D.P. Singh and N.K. Matta for the Directorate.

'Accused may flee'

The prosecutors submitted that Mr. Puri was evading probe and the investigating agency had the apprehension that he might flee the country. To buttress their charges, they

said the accused had slipped away midway through his interrogation on July 26 when he sought leave for lunch and the very next day applied for anticipatory bail. It showed that his conduct was not bona fide so far the investigation was concerned, they submitted.

They submitted that in the past two days, the probe agency had sent two summons to him for appearance for investigation but there was no response from him.

Meanwhile, counsel for the accused Vijay Aggarwal moved an application for the impleadment of his client in the matter. Taking his application on record, the court said that it would hear him on Friday.

The Directorate had approached the court for NBW against the accused a day after his anticipatory bail plea was dismissed.

New bus route connects Bhondsi to HUDA City Centre metro station

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

The Gurugram Metropolitan City Bus Limited (GMCBL) on Thursday launched another city bus service route connecting Bhondsi to HUDA City Centre metro station. The new route passes through Subhash Chowk, while the earlier bus service route passed through Vatika Chowk.

Journey and fare

Chief Executive Officer, GMCBL, Chander Shekhar Khare said the new route - III C - from HUDA City Centre metro station to Bhondsi would benefit residents of Sector 38-47, Bhaktawar Chowk, Sector 46, Unitech Cyber Park, Sector 39-45, Sector 40, Sector 45-South City-I and Subhash Chowk.

The buses on the new route will be available at HUDA City Centre metro station from 7.35 a.m. to 5.20 p.m. The commuters can avail of the bus service at Bhondsi from 8.30 a.m. to 6.25 p.m. The total journey time on the route is 55 minutes. Two fare

slabs have been fixed for this route at ₹10 and ₹20. While, the commuter will be charged ₹10 for up to 15 stops, they need to pay ₹20 for travelling beyond it.

Major stops on the new route would be HUDA City Centre metro station, Sector 44, South City-I, Unitech Cyber Park, Sector 46, Bakhtawar Chowk, Subhash Chowk, Malibu Town, South City II, CD Chowk, Vatika Chowk, Badshahpur, Power Colony, Bhondsi Jail Mor, BSF Camp, Maruti Kunj and Bhondsi.

The GMCBL has another route, III B, running between HUDA City Centre metro station and Bhondsi passing through Ramada Hotel, Wazirabad, Ambedkar Chowk, Indira Colony, Samaspur T-Point, Mayfield Garden, Good Earth City Center, Park Hospital, South City-II, CD Chowk, Vatika Chowk, Badshahpur and Bhondsi. Buses on this route ply between 6.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. at an interval of 10-15 minutes and the children up to 12 years of age are allowed free travel.

China says it will never seek hegemony in national defense white paper

China says it will never seek hegemony, expansion or spheres of influence in its latest white paper on national defense.

"This is the distinctive feature of China's national defense in the new era," said the white paper released by the State Council Information Office.

Titled "China's National Defense in the New Era," the white paper expounded on the country's defensive national defense policy and explained the practice, purposes and significance of China's efforts to build a fortified national defense and a strong military.

The 27,000-character white paper is the 10th of its kind since 1998 and the first comprehensive one since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012.

DEFENSIVE STRATEGY

China pursues a national defense policy that is defensive in nature, which is determined by its socialist system, strategic decision to follow the path of peaceful development, independent foreign policy of peace and cultural traditions, the white paper said.

The fundamental goal of China's national defense in the new era is to resolutely safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests, according to the white paper.

"China firmly believes that hegemony and expansion are doomed to failure, and security and prosperity shall be shared," it said.

The white paper shows the trans-



BEIJING, April 25, 2018 (Xinhua) -- The military band of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force takes part in a military band parade held at the Beijing Olympic Park during a military band festival of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in Beijing, capital of China, April 25, 2018. (Xinhua/Ju Zhenhua)

parency of China's strategic intentions, and will help reassure countries worrying about China's development and shatter the fabricated "China threat theory," said Shi Qingren, an associate research fellow

with the Academy of Military Sciences (AMS).

MILITARY SPENDING

China's defense expenditure is reasonable and appropriate, said the white paper.

Defense expenditure as a percentage of GDP has fallen from 5.43 percent in 1979 to 1.26 percent in 2017. It has remained below 2 percent for the past three decades.

The fact that China's defense expenditure ranks second in the world is determined by the demands of its national defense, the size of its economy, and the defensive nature of its national defense policy, according to the white paper. From 2012 to 2017, China's average defense expenditure, as a percentage of GDP, was about 1.3 percent, ranking the lowest among the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

In step with national economic development, China's defense expenditure will maintain moderate and steady growth, said the white paper.

TRANSPARENCY

The white paper disclosed information about the People's Liberation Army Djibouti Support Base, the organization of different services of the armed forces, details on the deployment of cutting-edge weaponry and equipment, as well as the

building of infrastructure and deployment of necessary defensive capabilities on the islands and reefs in the South China Sea.

By addressing those hot issues, the Chinese armed forces have shown their frankness and self-confidence, said Deng Bibo, also an AMS associate research fellow.

Concrete facts, figures and tables have given more information to the readers and enhanced the white paper's transparency and cogency, according to AMS researcher Cao Yanzhong.

WORLD PEACE PROMOTER

The white paper proposed for the first time that actively contributing to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind is the global significance of China's national defense in the new era.

"Peace, stability and prosperity in China present opportunities and benefits to the rest of the world," said the white paper. "A strong military of China is a staunch force for world peace, stability and the building of a community with a shared future for mankind."

China's armed forces have provided a number of public security goods to the international community to the best of their capacity, including the UN peace-keeping operations, vessel protection operations, international efforts in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Committed to the principle of win-win cooperation, China's armed forces will fulfill their international responsibilities and obligations, it said.



BEIJING, Jan. 12, 2018 (Xinhua) -- A military parade is held to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army at Zhurihe training base in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, July 30, 2017. (Xinhua/Yao Dawei)



ZHURIHE, July 30, 2017 (Xinhua) -- Troops make preparation for a military parade at Zhurihe training base in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, July 30, 2017. (Xinhua/Ju Zhenhua)

Commentary: China's national defense white paper sends signal of peace



QINGDAO, April 24, 2019 (Xinhua) -- Visitors view the landing vessel Jingtangshan of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy during a warship open day event in Qingdao, east China's Shandong Province, April 24, 2019. (Xinhua/Guo Xulei)

China issued a white paper on national defense in the new era, sending a strong signal for peace.

The white paper titled "China's National Defense in the New Era" made clear China's peaceful stance of never seeking hegemony, firmly maintaining world peace and stability and actively contributing to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

The world is witnessing changes unseen in a century. While peace is an irresistible trend in today's world

international security systems and order are undermined by growing hegemonism, power politics, unilateralism and constant regional conflicts and wars.

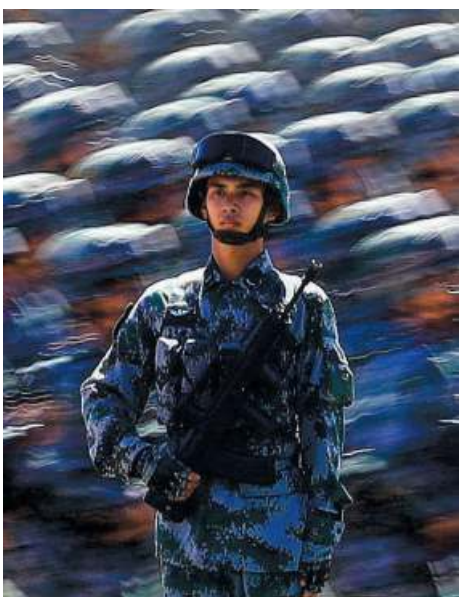
Humanity has once again come to a crossroads. Important choices must be made between multilateralism and unilateralism, cooperation and confrontation, win-win progress and a zero-sum game.

It is clear that China will never seek hegemony, expansion or spheres of influence. No matter how it might

develop, China will never follow the beaten track that a country will inevitably seek hegemony when it becomes powerful.

China firmly believes that hegemony and expansion are doomed to failure, and security and prosperity shall be shared.

For the first time, the white paper defined the global significance of China's national defense as actively



ZHURIHE, July 30, 2017 (Xinhua) -- A soldier is seen during a military parade at Zhurihe training base in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, July 30, 2017. China on Sunday kicked off a grand military parade to mark the 90th founding anniversary of the People's Liberation Army. (Xinhua/Ju Zhenhua)



BEIJING, Aug. 13, 2017 (Xinhua) -- The Sky Wing Air Demonstration Team performs in the sky during the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force Aviation Open Day in Changchun, capital city of northeast China's Jilin Province, Aug. 11, 2017. (Xinhua/Lin Hong)

national defense as actively contributing to building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Peace is a common aspiration of people around the world. Development is an ever-lasting theme.

China has made every effort to create favorable conditions for its development by maintaining world peace and has equally endeavored to promote world peace through its own development.

A peaceful, stable and prosperous China brings opportunities and

benefits to the rest of the world.

A strong Chinese military is a staunch force keeping world peace and contributing to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

China is committed to peaceful development and will work with people of all countries to safeguard world peace and promote common development. This is China's answer to the world.

IN BRIEF

Murder accused on the run for two years nabbed

NEW DELHI

A man, who was wanted in an attempt to murder case in Mangolpuri area and was absconding for the past two years, has been arrested, the police said on Thursday. Hemchand had previously served 17 years in prison in Kunjum Budhiraja murder case, said an officer. The accused was previously involved in seven cases of heinous crimes, the police said. DCP (Crime) Dr. G Ram Gopal Naik said after a tip-off Hemchand was arrested from Moti Bagh on Wednesday.

Constable found dead in Dwarka

NEW DELHI

A 33-year-old constable was found dead at her rented accommodation in Dwarka's Chhawla on Wednesday night, the police said on Thursday. No note has been recovered, they said. An officer said she was upset.

Youth held for killing 8-yr-old

Accused kidnapped the boy as he needed money for studies

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 19-year-old youth was arrested for allegedly kidnaping and killing an 8-year-old boy, the police said on Thursday.

Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Rajiv Ranjan said Gautam had committed the crime as he needed money for his studies. On July 23, the boy went missing from outside his house in Aman Vihar after which a kidnapping case was registered based on his father's complaint, the police said.

Demanded ₹25 lakh

Two days later, a body was found in a drain in Kirari and was identified as the complainant's son. "When the father was at Sanjay Gandhi Hospital, he received a call



The accused in police custody on Thursday.

* SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

wherein the caller said the body recovered was not of his son's but was of someone else. The caller demanded a ransom of ₹25 lakh," Mr. Ranjan said, adding that when the father went to give the money, the kidnapper didn't turn up.

During investigation, the caller's details were analysed and it was concluded that the kidnapper knows the family. Gautam's movement was found suspicious

and he was then picked up for questioning, the police said.

During interrogation, Gautam confessed to the crime. The police said he had also stolen jewelry in 2018 but the matter was never reported. "He used to often visit complainant's house. Gautam had dropped the boy to school a few times. His friend had found a SIM card on the road and gave it to him. He thought he will use it for making ransom calls," the officer said.

On the day of the incident, Gautam took the boy with him on the pretext of taking him to the market and pushed him into a drain. Following this, the accused helped the family find the boy.

The police are now probing the role of his friend.

Minor kidnapped, gang-raped twice in one night in Nuh

Complaint lodged days after the incident; no arrests made yet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NUH

A teenaged girl was allegedly kidnapped and gang-raped twice, first by the kidnapers and then by two men she sought help from, in one night in Punhana here over a week ago.

The matter was reported to the police earlier this week. No arrests have been made in the case so far.

According to the police, the 15-year-old girl had gone missing from outside her house in Punhana on July 30 evening.

Her family looked for her in the neighbourhood but failed to find her. She returned home the next morning.

Initially, the girl did not

reveal her ordeal to the parents, but confided in her mother a few days later about the sexual assault on her. Her father, a driver, approached the police on August 5 and lodged a complaint.

The girl, in her statement, alleged that one of the suspects, who is known to her, lured her to the fields on his motorcycle.

Two of his friends were already present at the spot.

Threatened at gunpoint

The three allegedly threatened her with a country-made pistol and took turns to rape her.

Later, some villagers gathered at the spot and the accused fled.

The girl found her way to the road and sought help from two men travelling in a car.

The duo instead took her to a building and gang-raped her. They dumped her on Jurhera Road from where she reached her home the next morning.

A case has been registered on charges of kidnaping and criminal intimidation under sections of the Indian Penal Code, the Arms Act and Section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

The investigation into the case has been transferred to the women police station.

The police said the allegations made by the girl are being verified.

DCW notice to police on acid attack victim's complaint

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Women on Thursday said they issued a notice to the police regarding an acid attack victim's complaint, seeking details on why the accused have not been arrested yet.

"The commission received a complaint from a girl who said she had complained to the police in 2014 that a few men in her neighbourhood molested her. She said ever since the complaint, she and her family members have been subjected to several attacks," a DCW official said. There was also an alleged acid attack on her in March this year. The commission asked the police to respond by August 12.

IN BRIEF

Deputy CM meets 250 entrepreneurs

NEW DELHI
Deputy CM Manish Sisodia addressed a group of 250 entrepreneurs on Thursday at the Delhi Secretariat Auditorium. He has, over the past few days, interacted with a total of 1,000 entrepreneurs over participation in the Delhi government's flagship Entrepreneurship Mindset Curriculum.

Seven arrested for duping people in Noida

NOIDA
Noida Police on Thursday busted a gang of seven that duped people by taking their debit and credit card details on the pretext of offering them discounts and reward points. Accused Deepak Mishra, Sumit Raj, Ravi Paswan, Sandeep Singh, Abhishek Kumar, Arvind Kumar and Monu Kumar are residents of Delhi. **PTI**

Clarification

A report in *The Hindu's* edition dated August 8, 2019, stated that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal distributed smartphones to 10,000 anganwadi workers on Wednesday. The Chief Minister actually launched the distribution of 10,000 smartphones at an event. The error is regretted.

Cabinet's green light to proposal for free Wi-Fi access for Delhiites

Chief Minister says 11,000 hotspots will be set up in the first phase of the project

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

The Delhi government on Thursday approved a proposal which will allow residents of the city to avail of free Wi-Fi services across the Capital within the next three to four months.

A proposal to instal 1.4 lakh more CCTV cameras was also given a go-ahead.

15 GB data for free

Announcing these decisions approved by the Delhi Cabinet at a press conference here, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said people will also be able to use up to 15 GB free data every month as part of the Wi-Fi project, which envisages the setting up of 11,000 hotspots in the first phase.

"Every user will be given 15 GB data for free, which is, I think, the single biggest initiative of a government anywhere in the world. We will learn from the experience of the first phase of the project and will create



Arvind Kejriwal

more hotspots, if required, later," Mr. Kejriwal told the media.

"In the next three-four months, the Delhi government will start providing free Wi-Fi to people. Our government will allot ₹100 crore annually for the project," he said, adding that with this, the AAP-led Delhi government fulfilled its major electoral promise of providing free Wi-Fi in the Capital.

According to the Chief Minister, the 70 Assembly constituencies in Delhi will have 1,000 hotspots, totalling to

7,000 such hotspots spread across these Assembly segments, each, while 4,000 hotspots will be set up at bus queue shelters as part of the project that will be executed under a Public-Private Partnership model.

Wi-Fi services with 200 MBPS internet speed will be available within a 50-metre radius of the hotspot which will cater to connectivity for around 200 people at a time. The government also said that the Wi-Fi hotspots will be connected with CCTV cameras being installed under the AAP government's ambitious project in this regard.

In addition, the Chief Minister said, while the Delhi government was already in the process of installing 1.4 lakh CCTV cameras across the 70 Assembly segments - 2,000 per constituency - the Delhi Cabinet cleared a proposal to procure an additional 1.4 lakh such cameras for installation in the city.

"Delhi has become the

first city in the world where the government is installing nearly three lakh CCTV cameras in one go to ensure women's safety and to provide a major push to infrastructure. This was a major commitment of this government to the people. Whatever we can do towards ensuring women's security is being done," the Chief Minister said.

Mr. Kejriwal, however, added that while public response in relation to the project had been "overwhelmingly positive", 2,000 cameras in each Assembly constituency "may not suffice".

"Today, the Cabinet has approved the purchase of 1.4 lakh more CCTV cameras. The tender process will now follow and the additional 1.4 lakh cameras will also start getting installed in the next three-four months," Mr. Kejriwal said, adding that a total of 2.8 lakh CCTV cameras will be up and running by the end of the year.

Delhi Assembly Speaker disqualifies 2 more AAP MLAs

One terms it CM's political vengeance; other calls it Goel's bias

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

AAP rebel MLAs Anil Bajpai and Devinder Sehrawat were disqualified by Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel on Thursday, with effect from May 3 and May 6, 2019, respectively.

"Shri Anil Kumar Bajpai, the respondent in this case, an elected Member of the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, elected from Gandhi Nagar, Assembly Constituency No.61 has become subject to disqualification under Paragraph 2 (1) (a) of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution. That the disqualification of said Shri Anil Kumar takes effect from 03rd May 2019," the disqualification order signed by the Speaker said.

Mr. Bajpai on May 3 and Mr. Sehrawat on May 6 had allegedly joined the BJP in two press conferences at the BJP headquarters in Delhi, in the presence of senior BJP leaders.

The BJP had also issued press releases on the same.

The CM is corrupt and has been robbing Delhiites... I will show him the way out of Delhi

**DEVINDER SEHRAWAT
Disqualified MLA**

In June, AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj had moved a petition in the Delhi Assembly to disqualify the two MLAs.

"Consequently, the Gandhi Nagar and Bijwasan seats have fallen vacant," a press release by the Delhi Assembly on Thursday read.

On August 2, AAP MLA Kapil Mishra was disqualified by the Speaker under the anti-defection law. The Speaker said that now a request to disqualify AAP Sultanpur Majra legislator Sandeep Kumar is pending with him.

Explaining his decision, the Speaker noted in the case of Mr. Bajpai, "The appearance of the respondent [Mr. Bajpai] in the BJP office in Delhi, the press conference announcing his joining the party and the press note of

the BJP declaring that he has joined the party on 3.5.2019 clearly proves that he has voluntarily given up the membership of his party namely the AAP on 03.05.2019. Hence the respondent has become subject to disqualification on 03.05.2019."

MLAs to move HC

When reached out, both Mr. Sehrawat and Mr. Bajpai said that they had told the Speaker that they never took a BJP membership and that they would challenge the order in the High Court.

"This is a political vengeance by Mr. Kejriwal. He is corrupt and has been robbing Delhiites of ₹50 lakh a day by charging ₹600 for high-security number plates that cost only ₹150. I had organised his initial meetings in Munirka and Bijwasan and shown him the way into Delhi and I will show him the way out of the city too," Mr. Sehrawat said.

Mr. Bajpai, meanwhile, termed the Speaker's decision as "undemocratic" and termed him "biased".

'CM kept all 70 promises made before 2015 polls'

Atishi says 4,000 buses will be in place in 6 months as parking depots are ready

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

AAP leader Atishi on Thursday said that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has fulfilled all promises made before the 2015 elections.

Addressing a press conference, Ms. Atishi said, "With the fulfilment of the promise

of free Wi-Fi for all, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has now fulfilled every single promise he made to the people of Delhi in the run-up to the 2015 election. The party had released a 70-point action plan before the election, which had said that free Wi-Fi is a right of the people as it

is a basic infrastructure that any modern city should have. It is a big step to empower the youth of the city."

When *The Hindu* asked about the promise of increasing the bus fleet by 5,000 and pointed out that the AAP government has been able to procure only about 25 buses

in the last four-and-a-half-years, Ms. Atishi said, "With in the next six months, 4,000 buses will be in place." She said that the government was not able to purchase new buses as there was no bus depots to park those, adding that the Delhi government has now created them.

Anil Bajjal takes stock of Delhi Police housing, office amenities

L-G chairs meeting with Chief Secretary, police top brass

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal on Thursday reviewed Delhi Police housing, amenities at police stations and field offices and the status of police station buildings at a law and order meeting chaired by him at Raj Niwas.

Delhi Police made a detailed presentation in this regard at the meeting which was attended by the Delhi Chief Secretary, Commissioner of Police and senior officials from the Delhi Police top brass.

"At the outset, the L-G was informed about the accommodation of constabulary and their satisfaction levels, including future planning regarding housing. Delhi Police is pursuing the revival of Delhi Police Housing Corporation for minor civil works of Delhi Police," Raj Niwas said in a statement.

"Currently, the satisfac-



Anil Bajjal

tion level of housing in Delhi Police is 18.83% [i.e. percentage of housing available to sanctioned strength]. It was informed that 701 quarters are under construction, 491 are being sourced from the DDA and proposal of 4,865 staff quarters at Dheerpur is being followed up. It was informed that all future projects of Delhi Police will have 30% components of housing," the statement said further.

Mr. Bajjal directed Delhi Police to expedite its efforts

to augment housing satisfaction level for its staff and monitoring of projects of housing and police station buildings every month, the statement also said.

He also urged senior officers to inspect police stations periodically for checking the status of these facilities and to ensure their good condition.

"Since policing has an extremely demanding work environment filled with danger, ambiguities and conflicts, interventions are required to help officers deal with this difficult and stressful occupation. Therefore, the L-G advised the Commissioner of Police to explore implementation of mandatory 'Annual Health Check up Scheme' in respect of Delhi Police personnel apart from other ongoing measures to manage stress levels and health issues related to it," the statement added.

'Co-ed schools outperformed others schools in Boards'

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI**

Co-ed school students have performed better in the Board exams than their counterparts studying in all-girl and all-boy schools, data shared by the Delhi government said.

Co-ed schools had a pass percentage of 88.16 in Class X Board examinations, while all-girl and all-boy schools had pass percentages of 82 and 74.8% respectively.

In Class XII Boards, co-ed schools had a pass percentage of 98.03, marginally better than all-girl schools which had a pass percentage of 97.42, while the boys-only schools had a pass percentage of 93.42.

The statement also said that the compartment examination system has helped schools come up with better overall results.

'Linking farmers with futures market can benefit both'

Higher farmer participation will provide more liquidity to market: ICRIER study

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

With the Finance Minister's budget speech announcing the Centre's commitment to create 10,000 new farmer producer organisations (FPOs) in the next five years, a new study has made the case for empowering these FPOs to trade in the commodities futures market.

Such a move could help farmers make their cropping decisions based on next year's prices rather than last year's rates, as well as break the crippling hold of middlemen and traders and ultimately boost income for agricultural families, stated a study published by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) on Thursday. Lessons are being drawn from China's success in getting small farmers connected to the commodities market since 2005.

The first futures trade by an Indian FPO took place in 2014 when the Ram Rahim Pragati Producer Company - an enterprise started by 3,000 women belonging to self-help groups in a tribal area of Madhya Pradesh - hedged soyabean price risk on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX). By May 2018, a total of 69 FPOs had traded on the exchange. However, a whopping 80% of them - 55 FPOs - had only made a single transaction.

Between April 2016, when NCDEX began making formal efforts to directly engage with FPOs, and May 2018, FPOs had a minuscule 0.004% share of the agri-futures trade at NCDEX. More than half of the FPO futures trade of ₹50.8 crore was in soyabeans, while another third was in maize. Bihar, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh account for 92% of

the trade.

The ICRIER working paper, titled 'Linking farmers to futures market' in India, notes that small farmers often do not have the required scale to trade in the futures market as individuals, and also view it with some suspicion, as akin to "satta" or gambling. Instead, they depend on traders in traditional marketing channels who charge high commissions, but provide easy access to credit and market. However, FPOs, as aggregates of small farmers, can provide the scale of production needed if they receive sufficient information and support.

Lessons drawn

Some of the lessons drawn from Indian case studies include the need to focus on commodities with limited government intervention on prices and procurement, and the need to identify produc-

tion centres and build warehouses and delivery centres around them in order to encourage futures trading in these areas. In China, the state has been helping small-holder farmers by providing customised products and reducing price distortions, said the study.

"Linking farmers with futures market can be mutually beneficial to both," says the ICRIER paper. "Farmers, when linked with a consistent, liquid and deep futures market will be able to reap benefits of efficient price discovery. Higher farmer participation will provide more liquidity to the market, helping it achieve its objective of price discovery. If farmers start finding that the markets are consistent [i.e. without abrupt interventions], reliable and accessible, their participation will also increase, making markets more liquid and deep."

24 get life imprisonment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
FAZILKA (PUNJAB)

A court here on Thursday sentenced 24 accused to life imprisonment in a murder case of a 27-year-old Dalit man in Punjab's Abohar in 2015.

Kashmiri students hold silent protest in AMU

Students' union condemns 'constitutional coup' to amend Article 370, demands consultations

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

Kashmiri students studying in Aligarh Muslim University protested against scrapping of special status for Kashmir on Wednesday. At a meeting, the students called for a national debate on the subject.

Around 1,000 students from Jammu and Kashmir study in the university; there are many Kashmiri teachers as well. Around 40 students participated in the silent protest wearing black bands on their arms. The protest happened in the presence of the university proctor and the participants didn't allow it to be videographed.

Shafey Kidwai, university spokesperson, said, "As the summer vacations have just ended, there are around 270 Kashmiri stu-



Students holding a silent protest on AMU campus. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

dents on campus. The biggest concern of the students was their inability to get in touch with their parents because of the lockdown in the Kashmir Valley."

Proctor's assurance
Proctor Afifullah Khan said the administration reas-

sured them of their security and told them not to leave the campus without informing the authorities.

In a statement, the Aligarh Muslim University Students' Union has also condemned the "constitutional coup" to amend Article 370 of the Constitution. Union president Salman Imtiaz

said no power centre should decide the fate of people without their consultation.

"The trust deficit between Delhi and Kashmir has reached a new low," he said.

The relationship between Kashmir and AMU goes back a long way. Former Chief Minister Sheikh Abdullah, popularly called Papa Mian, was an important cog in the team of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. "He was instrumental in propagating education among Muslim women. He opened a madrasa for girls which later became Abdullah College," said Prof. Kidwai. Sheikh Abdullah, popularly called Sher-e-Kashmir, also studied at AMU. According to Prof. Kidwai, his "progressive views" took shape in AMU.

"In the last decade, the number of Kashmiri students has swelled because of disturbance in the Valley. It is not just AMU, Kashmiri students are spread across the State. It shows the importance a common Kashmiri gives to education," said Mirza Asmer Beg, who teaches political science. He said Article 370 was already reduced to a shell and was only of "emotional value" to both the parties.

'Not in spirit'

"The bifurcation of J&K might look maintainable in letter but not in spirit and the Supreme Court could question it on grounds of constitutional morality," Prof. Beg said

On Thursday, the university organised a seminar on Kashmiri language and literature.

Rajasthan wants Jaipur district's 4 towns in NCR

NCR tag likely to generate employment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The Congress government in Rajasthan is planning to send a proposal for inclusion of four towns of Jaipur district in the National Capital Region (NCR). Alwar and Bharatpur districts in eastern Rajasthan are already in the NCR, while Jaipur and Kota are among the counter-magnet cities.

The State government intends to send the proposal for inclusion of Jaipur district's Kotputli, Manoharpur, Shahpura and Chandwaji towns to the NCR Planning Board. The issue was discussed at a meeting presided over by Chief Secretary D.B. Gupta here, while the final decision will be taken by Urban Development Minister Shanti Dhariwal.

According to official sources, the State government has started the exercise for identifying the towns for inclusion in the high-profile zone, created to reduce the traffic and population stress from Delhi, in view of the NCR sub-regional plan slated to end in 2021.

New plan

The Centre had recently sought suggestions from the Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh governments for the formulation of the new plan. The four towns in the State, on which deliberations were held, are situated along the Jaipur-Delhi national highway.

The NCR tag is expected to bring investments and generate massive employment opportunities in these towns.

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THE HINDU

Rajeev Kumar summoned in Rose Valley case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has summoned senior IPS officer and former Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar in connection with the ongoing probe into the Rose Valley chit fund scam case.

The IPS officer was scheduled to appear before the agency on Thursday but he sought more time. A few officers from the State's Criminal Investigation Department, which is headed by Mr. Kumar, reached the CBI office during the day and submitted a letter in which the IPS officer sought

more time.

Mr. Kumar is already caught in a legal tussle with the CBI in the Saradha chit fund case. A hearing on Mr. Kumar's anticipatory bail is going on in the Calcutta High Court. This is the first time a senior officer has been summoned by the CBI in the Rose Valley case.

In February, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had staged a dharna when CBI officers tried to question the former Kolkata Police Commissioner. The Election Commission of India had transferred Mr. Kumar to the Home Ministry in New Delhi during the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

Flood situation improving in south Odisha districts

Train services remain affected

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

With decrease in rainfall on Thursday, the flood situation is slowly improving in south Odisha districts.

Continuous heavy rain since August 6 had created flash flood-like situation in Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Gajapati, and Kandhamal districts.

Speaking to newsmen, State Revenue Minister Sudam Marandi said the situation had started to improve in Malkangiri, Koraput and Gajapati districts.

However, during the past 24 hours, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Koraput and Jajpur districts recorded over 100 mm of rainfall. Around 300 mm of rainfall was received by Thuamul

Rampur and Karlamunda blocks of Kalahandi district. According to Mr. Marandi, nine blocks of the district received 200 to 300 mm of rainfall, while 53 blocks recorded 100mm to 200mm rain.

Train services remained affected on the Rayagada-Titilagarh route. Several trains have been cancelled or short terminated or diverted till Friday by the East Coast Railway.

According to railway authorities, heavy rain on Wednesday night had badly hampered and delayed the restoration work. Movement of traffic may start by Friday morning.

Problem of water-logging in low laying areas continues despite water level receding in the rivers.

Sengar framed Unnao case victim's father: CBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday told a Delhi court that Uttar Pradesh MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar and his brother assaulted the father of the 17-year-old Unnao rape case victim and framed him in an Arms case, in collusion with three State

police officials and five others.

The agency submitted to District Judge Dharmesh Sharma that the MLA and his "accomplices", got an FIR lodged, accusing the rape victim's father of possessing a country-made pistol and four live cartridges.

After aerial survey, CM says situation in Sangli very serious

Karnataka agrees to release five lakh cusecs of water from Almatti dam following Fadnavis's request to Yediyurappa; 67,000 hectares of crops damaged in Kolhapur

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday assured the people in flood-hit regions in Sangli and Kolhapur districts that rescue operations are proceeding apace, and that there is no need as yet for a declaration of national emergency.

"The situation in Sangli is very serious. I have requested Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa to release five lakh cusecs of water from Almatti dam to ease the plight of the Sangli residents," the CM said, adding, "Our priority is to first evacuate pregnant women, children and the sick."

Meanwhile, Karnataka agreed to release five lakh cusecs of water from Almatti dam, located downstream on the Krishna river, an official from Mr. Fadnavis' office said. This will help bring down the water level in the flood-affected areas in Western Maharashtra, he said.

Mr. Fadnavis was speaking in Kolhapur after conducting an aerial survey of the flood-affected zones in Satara, Sangli and Kolhapur districts. He reviewed rescue work at Shivaji Bridge and visited affected people at a transit camp in Kolhapur district. While four persons in Kolhapur have lost their lives in rain-related accidents in the last few days, the CM said there have been no casualties owing to the floods so far in the district.

Mr. Fadnavis said 67,000 hectares of crops have been damaged in Kolhapur owing to the deluge, which has also destroyed 3,813 houses



Rising to the occasion: Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis with ministers (from left) Girish Mahajan, Chandrakant Patil and Eknath Shinde during an aerial survey to take the stock of the flood situation in Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara districts. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

while rendering 390 water supply schemes dysfunctional. "If the situation demands, we will declare a national emergency. As of now, the government is carrying out relief efforts comparable to one," the CM said.

Explaining why he was compelled to take an aerial survey, the CM said he attempted to land his helicopter in flood-hit Karad but was unable to get permission owing to inclement weather.

Responding to accusations of tardiness in responding to the crisis, Mr. Fadnavis said he had cancelled his 'Mahajanadesh Yatra'. "Maximum evacuation will be car-

'Impounding of water is not the issue'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BELAGAVI

Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa has clarified that impounding or release of less water in the reservoirs in Alamatti or Narayanapur is not causing floods in Maharashtra.

"Some media houses are carrying stories that impounding of water in

Alamatti and Narayanpur dams is causing floods in Kolhapur and Sangli. This is not true. Sangli and Kolhapur are very far from Alamatti or Narayanapur. Holding water in our reservoirs does not cause or accentuate the flood situation in any district in Maharashtra," the CM told journalists in Chikkodi.

"In fact, we are not storing any water. The full reservoir level (FRL) in Alamatti is 123 tmcft but we are holding only 85 tmcft. The FRL in Narayanpur is 33 tmcft but we are impounding only around 17 tmcft," he said, adding he had spoken to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and clarified this issue.

ried out by the end of Thursday. Water levels in Karad are going down. The rescue

teams are conducting operations at full throttle." Mr. Fadnavis said the chal-

lenge is to tackle the petrol and diesel shortage in Kolhapur and Sangli districts.

Hand over relief work to Army: Oppn.

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Opposition parties in Maharashtra on Thursday slammed Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis for neglecting the flood relief work and delaying suspension of his mahajanadesh yatra.

Maharashtra Congress committee president Balasheb Thorat demanded immediate financial aid of ₹4,000 crore for people in the flood-affected areas. "The government was busy planning its political campaign while people were trapped in floods. What did the Guardian Ministers do? They were nowhere to be seen when people continued to suffer. The Prime Minister has not even bothered to take note of these floods where thousands are still trapped," said Mr. Thorat, while demanding that relief work be handed over to the Army because the state administration and disaster response forces have failed.

Leader of Opposition in Assembly Vijay Vadettiwar said that the floods should be declared a national calamity. "The relief and rehabilitation minister Subhash Deshmukh was addressing a party meeting when Kolhapur and Sangli was suffering. The Shiv Sena has the biggest representation of MLAs and MPs from Kolhapur, but it is busy recruiting turncoats. The government has failed absolutely on every front while tackling this natural calamity," said Mr. Vadettiwar.



Animal care: An Indian Coast Guard official with a stray dog rescued in Sangli on Thursday. •INDIAN COAST GUARD

Nationalist Congress Party's national spokesperson Nawab Malik said it was the late chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh who had convened all-party meeting during the 2005 floods to involve all in flood relief measures.

"This CM preferred political campaign over flood relief measures. The Cabinet was discussing land related issues when parts of State were submerged under water. This is the sensitivity of

this government," said Mr. Malik. The government has also come under criticism over the deaths in Sangli district following Thursday's boat capsizing while they were being taken to a safer place.

"The villagers had to use a faulty boat because local administration refused to give them one despite repeated demands. These are murders due to apathy shown by the administration," said Maharashtra's former chief minister Ashok Chavan.

Maharashtra to set up task force on climate change

Experts to study measures taken against flooding, unplanned reclamation

SHARAD VYAS
MUMBAI

In the wake of an unprecedented flood like situation and record rainfall this season, the State government will constitute a task force of local and global experts to study impact of climate change on Mumbai.

The task force will study measures taken against flooding and unplanned reclamation in cities such as Venice, Geneva and London, and coordinate with the European Climate Change Programme of the European Union to prepare a blueprint. The task force will be set up by the environment depart-



Grim: A woman stranded in floodwaters at Shahupuri in Kolhapur on Thursday. •DEEPAK KUMBHAR

ment in coordination with Mumbai First, a not-for-profit, policy-influencing think tank, officials said.

Narinder Nayar, chair-

man, Mumbai First, said the proposal for the task force has been sent to the government while only the last-minute modalities are remain-

ing. On Wednesday, Mumbai First held a meeting with Chief Secretary Ajoy Mehta and discussed the need to set up a task force compris-

ing scientists and experts on climate change from around the globe.

"We have seen Mumbai has witnessed unprecedented floods and rain this monsoon. There are new flooding spots in the city while the construction of major projects is going on. All of these have raised concerns over the impact of climate change," Mr. Nayar said after meeting Mr. Mehta.

Officials said the government has agreed to not only form the task force but also participate in an international conference on climate change, which will be organised by Mumbai First.

The task force will also study patterns of climate change and steps taken by leading countries such as the Netherlands, which has taken a lead in flood management and measures against climate change.

2 Gadchiroli police officials to learn air medical evacuation in Germany

Techniques will be implemented on H-145 chopper of Airbus

SHARAD VYAS
MUMBAI

The State government has decided to send two personnel of the Gadchiroli police to Manching airfield training centre of Airbus in Germany, for training in medical evacuation techniques, which will be used in Naxal-affected areas.

Between August 6 and August 15, they will learn to operate a 'winch' system, which controls equipment with powered cables to hoist and move loads too large, which are generally transported by other means, into a chopper.

A State government official said, "We are spending about ₹5 lakh on training these two police officials, who will learn how to use pedals and levers to operate the system. The training is being provided free of cost by the French company, who had also supplied us a helicopter."

The State had bought a H-145 chopper from Airbus



Wake-up call: Mangled remains of a police vehicle carrying security personnel that was destroyed in an IED blast allegedly carried out by Maoists in Gadchiroli on May 1. •FILE PHOTO

following an attack on security forces in Gadchiroli on May 1. This was in addition to the two existing choppers in the region, which are mainly used for transporting jawans into the combat zone, officials said. The new medical evacuation techniques will be implemented on the H-145 chopper. After the 10-day training, the team will return for assessment.

The IED blast in Gadchiroli had killed 15 jawans of

the Quick Response Team and one civilian. The police had struggled to airlift the injured out of the affected areas in the absence of proper medical evacuation equipment. The Naxals had also torched 27 vehicles belonging to a road construction company the very next day.

Earlier, the State government had sent three pilots for a 75-day training to fly the H-145 helicopters.

ADB to give \$200 m aid for State's rural road project

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday said it has approved a \$200 million loan for improving road infrastructure in 34 districts of Maharashtra for better connectivity of rural areas with markets and services. Roads in rural areas would be upgraded to all-weather standards which will boost links between local residents and economic centres across the State, the ADB said.

Maharashtra accounted for almost 15% of the Gross Domestic Product in 2016-17. However, economic development is concentrated around the urban centres of Mumbai, Pune, and Thane, ADB said.

About 20 million people, or 17% of the State's population, still live below the national poverty line, while in some districts — particularly in rural areas — it is as high as 40%, it said.

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THE HINDU

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9 feared dead as boat capsizes in Maharashtra

It was ferrying 30 people stranded in flooded village

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

At least nine people, including seven women and one child, were killed while four others are feared drowned when a boat ferrying more than 30 people stranded in Sangli's Brahmanal village capsized on Thursday.

District authorities said that nine bodies had been recovered, while a search is on for the missing persons. Fifteen people have been rescued, said officials.

The incident is believed to have occurred when the residents of the village, cut-off by rising floodwaters, attempted to head for safety on their own.

"The boat, which belonged to the Brahmanal Gram Panchayat, was not part of official relief operations being conducted by the



Rescue mission: Soldiers moving villagers from flooded areas near the Pune-Bangalore highway on the outskirts of Kolhapur city on Thursday. ■ ABHIJEET GURJAR

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Army personnel," said Pune Divisional Commissioner Dr. Deepak Mhaisekar.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced compensation of ₹5 lakh for the

kin of the deceased. "According to information I have received, it appears that the boat was overloaded. The machine of the boat got entangled in the branch of a tree which caused the mishap," said the Chief Mi-

nister, appealing to those who were marooned to be patient and not venture out on their own. Residents of Brahmanal accused the district administration of apathy, stating that the authorities had forsaken

3,500 rescued by armed forces, NDRF personnel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Coordinated operations by the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Coast Guard and the National and State Disaster Relief Force on Thursday rescued 3,500 persons and evacuated 10,000 others across southern Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Incessant rain over the past few days resulted in flooding in southern Maharashtra, Karnataka and

northern Kerala. A Joint Operations Centre was established in Pune for coordinating operations in the three States. Till now the Army had deployed 16 columns, 14 Engineer Task Forces, including a Para Special Force team for ongoing flood relief and rescue operations in Kolhapur, Sangli and Raigad districts of Maharashtra and Bagalkot, Raichur Belagavi and Kodagu districts of Karnataka.

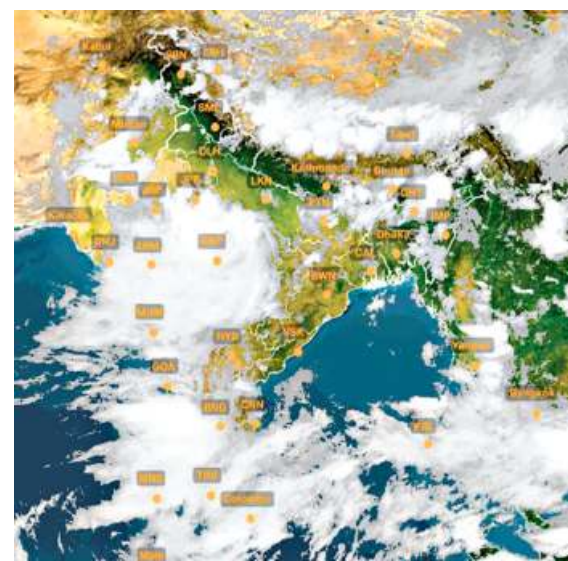
them by not sending them help when they sought it.

"The water here has now crossed 20 feet...when the sarpanch of Brahmanal had urged the administration to provide boats, the latter had turned a blind eye to our

plight, thus forcing villagers to take their own initiative and make this hazardous journey to safer quarters," said Sandeep Rajoba, a resident of Brahmanal and an activist of the Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18:00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Heavy to very heavy rain likely at isolated places over Gujarat, Kerala, Mahe, Karnataka, central Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Konkan, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karikal, Rajasthan, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Vidarbha, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	13.0	30.1	25.8	Kozhikode	13.3	31.0	26.4
Ahmedabad	0.1	31.0	26.4	Kurnool	—	30.6	25.7
Aizawl	37.0	31.1	22.1	Lucknow	32.6	34.3	25.2
Allahabad	1.3	33.8	27.5	Madurai	0.8	38.2	26.2
Bengaluru	2.7	25.2	21.1	Mangaluru	31.5	30.1	23.0
Bhopal	14.5	25.3	23.4	Mumbai	1.4	28.8	26.2
Bhubaneswar	13.8	27.4	24.5	Mysuru	23.0	25.0	19.6
Chandigarh	—	35.6	27.8	New Delhi	—	37.9	27.5
Chennai	—	34.2	27.9	Patna	—	31.0	26.8
Coimbatore	7.8	28.8	21.0	Port Blair	1.3	30.5	26.4
Dehradun	0.4	34.8	25.9	Puducherry	1.6	35.4	25.4
Gangtok	59.6	19.4	17.6	Pune	6.4	26.4	22.4
Goa	48.4	28.0	24.6	Raipur	3.8	25.5	24.0
Guwahati	—	39.2	27.8	Ranchi	15.8	28.0	22.5
Hubballi	—	25.0	22.00	Shillong	7.1	24.1	17.0
Hyderabad	4.5	28.0	23.1	Shimla	0.9	24.7	18.1
Imphal	3.7	28.5	22.1	Srinagar	—	33.1	21.8
Jaipur	4.5	31.5	25.1	Thiruvananthapuram	34.1	28.8	23.2
Kochi	40.2	29.8	22.6	Tiruchi	—	36.8	28.0
Kohima	2.4	29.8	19.0	Vijayawada	—	30.7	25.4
Kolkata	49.5	31.2	25.6	Visakhapatnam	8.2	27.2	25.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	50	54	72	96	163	■	■
Bengaluru	07	46	69	26	53	■	■
Chennai	06	19	82	34	—	■	■
Delhi	18	30	18	30	146	■	■
Hyderabad	19	66	14	19	29	■	■
Kolkata	03	25	54	17	18	■	■
Lucknow	04	26	51	99	—	■	■
Mumbai	10	18	103	33	63	■	■
Pune	74	08	68	38	38	■	■
Visakhapatnam	16	36	47	36	62	■	■

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

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters. CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

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

IN BRIEF



Air India case: Praful Patel appears before CBI

NEW DELHI
Former Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel on Thursday appeared before the CBI in connection with the Air India route sharing case. He had refuted the allegation of his role in the case. Deepak Talwar, an accused in the case, is already in the CBI custody.

Shahid Balwa planted trees, HC informed

NEW DELHI
Swan Telecom promoter Shahid Usman Balwa and two others on Thursday informed the Delhi High Court that they had complied with its order to plant trees for failing to file in time their response to the ED's appeal challenging their acquittals in 2G scam cases. The court listed the matter for further hearing on October 24, the date already fixed in the main appeals filed by the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation. ■ PTI

Can 'janmasthan' be a 'juristic person', asks SC

Hearing continues on the third day

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

On the third day of hearing in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute, the Supreme Court asked whether the birth place or 'janmasthan' can be regarded as a 'juristic person'.

A five-judge Constitution Bench, headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, made the query to 'Ram Lalla Virajman', one of the parties in the case, on Thursday.

Legal rights

The Bench said that as per Indian law, Hindu deities were treated as 'juristic person', who could hold properties and initiate litigation, but queried how 'janmasthan' came to acquire similar rights. The Bench, also comprising Justices S.A. Bobde, D.Y. Chandrachud, Ashok Bhushan and S.A. Nazeer, asked senior advocate K. Parasaran, representing Ram Lalla Virajman, if the source of worship could be a benchmark for deciding whether it was a 'juristic person'.

Mr. Parasaran said that in Hindu religion, idols were not necessary for a place to be regarded as a holy place of worship. "Rivers are worshipped. Sun is not an idol but is also worshipped as deity," he said, adding birth place in itself could be treated as a 'juristic person'.

The court referred to a 2017 verdict of the Uttarakhand High Court, according to the status of 'living human entities' to the Ganga and the Yamuna.

Arguments will continue on Friday on the appeals filed by Hindus and Muslims, contesting each other's claims of ownership over the 2.77 acres in Ayodhya where Hindus believe Lord Ram was born in Treta Yuga. Babri Masjid, which stood on the disputed land was demolished by 'kar sevaks' on December 6, 1992.

The Allahabad High Court gave joint possession to the deity, Nirmohi Akhara and the Sunni Waqf Board in September 2010. But the parties filed cross-appeals in the Supreme Court.

'Educational institutions should focus on academic excellence'

Venkaiah exhorts students to stay away from controversies

SIDHARTH YADAV
INDORE

Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu on Thursday said students studying in universities who wished to complete Afzal Guru's "incomplete job" of blasting Parliament should be ashamed of themselves. He was addressing students at the convocation ceremony of Shri Vaishnav Vidyapeeth Vishwavidyalaya here.

"Out of the 920 universities in the country, few are in the news for the wrong reasons. People there say - Afzal Guru aapne jo kaam adhura choda hai, hum usse poora karenge (Afzal Guru, we'll complete the job you left incomplete). They should be ashamed of themselves. Guru tried to blast Parliament. Even I was there, but nothing happened to us," he said.

Although several private institutions had contributed to the sector, he said, higher education in the country still faced the challenges of access, equity, affordability

and equality. "There was a time we gave knowledge to the world and now we do not figure even in the top 100 universities of the world," he said.

"Educational institutions should focus only on academic excellence. Then physical fitness, mental alertness and social consciousness. Students should not get into other things and controversies."

Stating that although everyone had the freedom to eat whatever they wanted, some people made an issue out of it, and added, "But then there are those who celebrate beef festival and anti-beef festival."

'Why create tension?'

"In some areas, they even celebrate kissing festival. It's a different matter if it's consensual between two people. But by celebrating it as a festival, why create tension in society? Therefore, I advise students to focus on education and raise its standards," he said. Exhorting

students to be physically fit, he said he played badminton, went for a walk and practised yoga every day.

Yoga benefits

"The Prime Minister was kind enough to promote yoga across 172 countries, where they have even opened institutes for it. But in our country, we doubt it. One child asked me once about the benefits of yoga. I told him - if you do yoga, you'll be yogya (able)."

"One child had an issue with doing Surya Namaskar, so I told him, do Chandra Namaskar instead," he said. "Yoga is not political. It is not because of Modi, it is for your body."

BrahMos missile to be deployed along coast for maritime security

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) on Thursday approved the procurement of a Software Defined Radio (SDR) and the Next Generation Maritime Mobile Coastal Batteries (NGMMCB) for the Navy.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh chaired the meeting, the first after the NDA returned to office.

"The NGMMCB will be fitted with the BrahMos surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missiles and deployed along the coast," the Ministry said in a statement.

The SDR has been designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation, Bharat Electronics Limited and the Navy's Weapons Electronics Systems Engineering Establishment (WESEE). It will facilitate high-speed data and secure voice communication with anti-jamming capability.

The DAC also approved amendments to the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP), 2016, to improve the ease of business, the statement said.

Man mauled by tiger near Pench reserve

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Mounted on elephants and patrolling in jeeps, scores of foresters are out along the fringe of the Pench Tiger Reserve in the Seoni district of Madhya Pradesh to search for a tiger that mauled and ate a villager in the area on Tuesday. This is the first incident of a human killed by a tiger in the Reserve.

Vikram Singh Parihar, Field Director, Pench Tiger Reserve, told *The Hindu*, "On Thursday, We found a photograph of the tiger captured in a camera trap. We even found pug marks on the day, but they are distorted due to continual rain."

In Jammu border villages, many dream of a future full of opportunities

They say children can get jobs when industries come, and people who moved in after Partition can get the right to sell their land

DAMINI NATH
R.S. PORA
Having been in the line of fire over the years, villagers along the International Border between India and Pakistan in R.S. Pora of Jammu said on Thursday that they finally had something to look forward to.

While the past year has been free of shelling from across the border, Lal Chand of Suchetgarh village said he did not expect the lull to last. After the Union government revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status and decided to divide the State into Union Territories on Monday, he said, the "firing" could start again. While India has maintained that it

is an internal matter, Pakistan has responded by downgrading diplomatic ties.

The Suchetgarh border has been closed to the public by the Border Security Force (BSF) since Monday. The Jammu and Kashmir government's restaurant and tourist centre also remained closed. A BSF official said that while visitors were being allowed on Monday morning, they were stopped later in the day, after Pakistan had closed its gate.

For Mr. Chand and many others in the area, the amendments to Article 370 and 35A, which allowed the Jammu and Kashmir government to define who was a permanent resident of the



On the edge: Gurditta and Kanta Devi with the remnant of a shell that hit their home at Suchetgarh. • DAMINI NATH

State, gave some hope. "We will not leave. We have no idea when the firing can start and it will, but we

who moved here after Partition can get the right to sell their land, we feel *azaad* [free]," Mr. Chand said.

Avinash Kumar, 23, also a resident of Suchetgarh, said he was hopeful of getting a job now. After completing high school studies, he has been tending to the family farms along the border.

"There is nothing for the youth here. For months, there would be curfew and schools would be shut. Even now the schools are shut," he said.

Some consolation
For those who have borne the brunt of shelling in Suchetgarh, there was some consolation in the govern-

We will not leave. We have no idea when the firing can start and it will, but we are used to it

LAL CHAND
Suchetgarh village

ment's decisions. Gurditta and his wife Kanta Devi's home was hit by firing in January 2018. While they have been able to replace the damaged water tank, they are yet to repair the holes in the front facade of their house.

"We are the ones who face the problem. The loss is always ours. And on top of that, we have not been able to get a fair share under the State government. All the

funds go to Kashmir. Now, we think things will improve. The biggest benefit is that the state subject system will end. Aadhaar, voter ID card will be all you need," he said.

In Flora village, farmer Jasbir Singh said a big worry had been lifted. His daughter had moved to Punjab after marriage and would not have been eligible to own land in Jammu and Kashmir under Article 35(A).

"I always worried if something happens to her husband, how will I be able to take care of her and her two children," he said, taking a break on his field.

Roshan Lal, another Flora resident, also worries about

his children, but does not think anything will change for them under the new status for J&K. Having lost his leg in firing by Pakistan on August 24, 2014, he said he had not been able to get back to work as a *mistri*, nor had any substantial compensation come his way. Unable to afford school fees, he said two of his children could not complete their studies. Now, he spends his time sitting outside his house on a plastic chair, watching the rest of the village go about its day.

"There is no help from the government at all and I don't think it will change. It's better to be dead than live like this," he said.

'Our main concern is our neighbour'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

"No one should have a neighbour like we have," Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday in reference to Pakistan.

"Our main concern is our neighbour. The problem is you can change your friends but it is not in your hands to change your neighbour," Mr. Singh said at the annual general body meeting of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses.

He said the decisions taken by the government on Article 370 had ended the discrimination faced by people in the past 70 years. "The neighbouring country is not happy and it will try to disturb peace," he said.

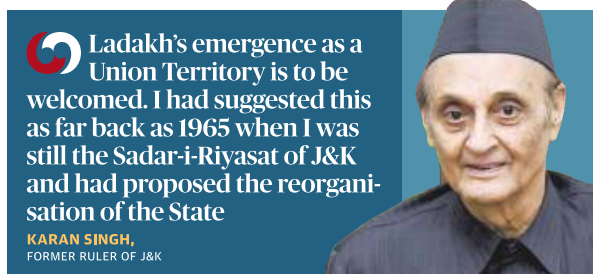
Karan Singh backs Centre's move

He, however, demanded restoration of Statehood for Jammu and Kashmir

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

As Congress leaders continued to speak in different voices on Jammu and Kashmir, party veteran and former ruler of J&K Karan Singh on Thursday said he supported the Centre's move to remove Article 35A and make Ladakh a Union Territory. He, however, stressed that the decision should not lead to any communal tension and J&K should be restored as a State as soon as possible.

"The drastic measure, however, appears to enjoy the overwhelming support of Parliament as well as around the country, including Jammu and Ladakh. I have been pondering deeply over the issue. Personally, I don't agree with a blanket con-



Ladakh's emergence as a Union Territory is to be welcomed. I had suggested this as far back as 1965 when I was still the Sadar-i-Riyasat of J&K and had proposed the reorganisation of the State
KARAN SINGH, FORMER RULER OF J&K

demnation of these developments. There are several positive points," he said in a statement.

"Ladakh's emergence as a Union Territory is to be welcomed. In fact, I had suggested this as far back as 1965 when I was still the *Sadar-i-Riyasat* of J&K and had proposed the reorganisation of the State," he said and suggested retaining the Hill Councils of Kargil and Leh.

"The gender discrimina-

tion in Article 35A needed to be addressed as also the long-awaited enfranchisement of lakhs of West Pakistan refugees and the reservations for the Scheduled Tribes, which will be welcomed. There will be fresh delimitation, which for the first time will ensure a fair division of political power between Jammu and Kashmir regions," he noted.

His statement comes just two days after the Congress Working Committee (CWC) adopted a resolution deploring the move as "unilateral, brazen and totally undemocratic".

Dr. Singh, who has been a special invitee to the CWC, seemed undeterred even as he urged the Centre to start a dialogue with mainstream political parties of J&K to normalise the situation.

"Communal harmony should be maintained and violence should be eschewed... With my lifelong involvement in J&K, my sole intention is to further the intention of all sections of the State," Dr. Singh added.

The party has convened a meeting of the heads of all State units and Opposition leaders on Friday to brainstorm and explain the nuances of its position.

Pak. airspace curbs will not have much impact: Air India

The restrictions have been put in place till September 5

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

Air India has said the partial airspace restriction imposed by Pakistan in its present form only requires its flights to make a 12-minute detour and hence does not have much impact.

Pakistan, on Wednesday, partially closed its airspace for all airlines till September 5.

The development comes amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan over Article 370 concerning Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier, Pakistan closed its airspace to all types of civilian traffic for 15 weeks following the Balakot IAF strikes in February.



This was lifted just 22 days ago, on July 15, and officials said it had cost Pakistan over \$55 million as overflight fees.

Air India, however, is now monitoring the situation closely. Its spokesperson said, "One air corridor has been closed [in Pakistani

airspace], requiring a maximum 12-minute diversion. It will not affect us [much]." Air India operates around 50 flights daily through the Pakistani airspace. These include flights from Delhi to the U.S., Europe and the Middle East.

An official of the Mumbai Air Traffic Control (ATC) said a Notice To Airmen (NOTAM) issued by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority said three of the nine routes would be unavailable in the Lahore Flight Information Region. As per the NOTAM, the partial closure is between 2.45 a.m. and 11 a.m. "Alternative transit routes over Karachi remain open," the official added.

J&K identity taken away, says Ghulam Nabi Azad

He accused the Centre of 'destroying and massacring J&K'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, who was not allowed to go out of the Srinagar airport on Thursday, asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah to apologise to the people of Jammu and Kashmir for taking away their identity.

He accused the Centre of "destroying and mercilessly massacring J&K".

"Jammu and Kashmir people are not allowed to raise their voice. As long as I am outside and not behind bars, I will speak on behalf of the people of Kashmir and all the regions. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Prime Mi-



Ghulam Nabi Azad

nister Modi and Home Minister should bow down and apologise to each person in the State because they have finished Jammu and Kashmir," Mr. Azad told presspersons at the Delhi airport after he was sent back by an evening flight.

The Opposition leader, accompanied by J&K Congress

chief Ghulam Ahmed Mir, had reached Srinagar at 11.30 a.m. but was not allowed to go out to his party office.

The former Chief Minister of J&K had convened a meeting of party leaders in Srinagar to assess the situation after the dilution of Article 370 and the removal of special status.

"Where did the food come from? Everyone has been paid to eat food. BJP has first destroyed the whole country and now they have done the same with the State," he said. His comments, made on Wednesday, were a reference to the photograph of National Security Adviser Ajit Doval walking food with locals in the State.

SC declines urgent hearing on J&K status

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday declined an urgent hearing of a petition challenging the revocation of the special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

During a brief hearing, advocate M.L. Sharma, who filed the petition, contended that Pakistan may take the matter to the United Nations.

However, a Bench headed by Justice N.V. Ramana asked the petitioner whether the UN can stop Parliament from passing amendments.

Mr. Sharma, in his petition, challenged the August 5 notification of the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order of 2019, which amends Article 370 of the Constitution.

The Court also declined an urgent hearing of a plea by Tehseen Poonawalla seeking the withdrawal of curfew/restrictions and all other regressive measures, including blocking of telephone lines, Internet and news channels in Jammu and Kashmir.

A Bench headed by Justice Ramana said Mr. Poonawalla's plea would be put up before a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi for appropriate listing.

Mr. Sharma, in his petition, referred to how the political leaders of Jammu and Kashmir were detained/arrested before the issuance of the August 5 notification. There was no meaningful legislative or representative debate, he submitted.

By tweaking the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order of May 14, 1954, the notification took away the special rights and privileges enjoyed by the residents of Kashmir. It had effectively allowed the entire provisions of the Constitution to apply to the State, he said.

Pakistan will stop Samjhauta services, says Minister

He says this is in response to change in Kashmir's status

MEHMAL SARFARAZ
NEW DELHI

Pakistan's Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad on Thursday said that Islamabad had decided to stop the Samjhauta Express train service immediately in response to India's decision to change the status of Kashmir.

Mr. Ahmad announced the stoppage at a news conference in Islamabad. He also said he would not allow a resumption of the train service till such time he was the Railways Minister.

However, Northern Railway spokesperson Deepak Kumar said the train had not been suspended. "The Samjhauta Express train has not been suspended. It will run," Mr. Kumar said. The clarifi-



Bidding adieu: A woman with relative ahead of her departure via the Samjhauta Express in Lahore on Thursday. • AFP

cation came after the train from Lahore was stopped at Wagah by Pakistani authorities. After several hours' delay, the train with the Indian crew reached Attari at 5.15 p.m. The return train, carrying about 70 passengers waiting to cross over to Pakistan, left Attari station at 6.40 p.m.

"After leaving the train at

Wagah, Indian engine returned to Indian territory at 19.29 hrs. Now Pakistan engine will haul train to Lahore. It is confirmed by Pakistan authorities," Mr. Kumar said. Samjhauta Express runs between Lahore and Attari, he explained.

Attari in turn is connected to Delhi via a link train. (With PTI inputs)

IN BRIEF

**IDBI Bank, BoM reduce lending rates**

MUMBAI
More banks have started reducing their lending rates, a day after the Reserve Bank of India reduced the repo rate by 35 bps to 5.4%. IDBI Bank reduced its one-year marginal cost of fund-based lending rate (MCLR) by 10 bps to 8.85% with effect from August 12. Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has also reduced the one-year MCLR by 10 bps to 8.5%. On Wednesday, State Bank of India reduced its MCLR by 15 bps to 8.25% from 8.40%.

Nissan unveils diesel variant of Kicks SUV

NEW DELHI
Nissan Motor India on Wednesday introduced a new entry-level diesel variant of its SUV Kicks priced at ₹9.89 lakh. The new XE diesel variant will be positioned below the XL variant which is currently priced at ₹11.09 lakh. "Responding to the immense interest in an entry-level diesel variant, we have introduced the new XE Diesel trim," Nissan Motor India V-P marketing Sriram Padmanabhan said. PTI

Rane Holdings June quarter net declines

CHENNAI
Rane Holdings Ltd. (RHL) standalone profit for the June quarter dropped to ₹6.84 crore from ₹6.89 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal. "Group sales declined by 7% on drop in volumes in the domestic automotive sector. We were able to partially mitigate this with the support of higher sales to global customers and Indian after-market customers," said L. Ganesh, CMD, RHL.

SFL to focus on exports to beat slowdown

Major chunk of ₹350 crore, to be invested this fiscal, will go towards exports, says chairman

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Sundram Fasteners Ltd. (SFL) is focussing on exports to enable the company to tide over the slowdown in the domestic automobile sector.

"Currently, our exports stand at 35% and retail at 10%," said Suresh Krishna, non-executive chairman, Sundram Fasteners Ltd. "In the coming years, we aim to increase it [exports] to 50%."

Mr. Krishna also said that SFL had committed to invest ₹800 crore during 2018-19 and 2019-20, of which ₹350 crore would be deployed during the current fiscal.

A significant portion from this would go towards exports.

"We were able to mitigate the adverse impact of the



SFL is setting up an SEZ at Sri City to make and export high precision engineering components, says Krishna. ■ V. GANESAN

slowdown due to a combination of various measures such as focus on exports, after-market, product innovation, cost reduction themes and adherence to TQM [total quality management] principles," he said.

"We have managed the

downward trend. A good company has to manage both upward and downward trends," he added.

Q1 net declines

During the first quarter of 2019-20, SFL's standalone net profit declined to ₹93.11

crore from ₹106.65 crore in the year ago period. Revenue from operations was lower at ₹945.35 crore against ₹968.51 crore. The company reported domestic sales of ₹557.22 crore (₹614.29 crore). Exports were ₹348.28 crore (₹321.71 crore).

In the first quarter of 2019-20, SFL's domestic sales dropped by 9.3%, compared with the corresponding period last year, while exports revenue increased by 8.3%.

"The drop in overall revenue was 2.5%. If not for growth in exports, the dip would have been higher," said S. Meenakshisundaram, chief financial officer, SFL.

Mr. Krishna said SFL was in the process of setting up a Special Economic Zone unit at Sri City to manufacture and export high precision

engineering components. In order to expand growth in non-auto segments, SFL has incorporated a wholly owned subsidiary named Sunfast TVS Ltd.

The new firm would focus on growth opportunities in aerospace and defence segments and continue to expand SFL's existing business in the aerospace segment.

On introduction of electric vehicles, he said more charging stations were required for EVs to gain momentum. "One has to deal with the disposal of batteries, which none has talked about," he said.

Mr. Krishna also disclosed that K. Ramesh, who was associated with SFL as a director since December 1971, resigned in June 2019 due to personal reasons.

City Union Bank Q1 profit rises 15%

Slippages lower than in Mar. quarter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Private sector lender City Union Bank Ltd. reported a standalone net profit of ₹162 crore for the first quarter ended June 2019, representing a 15% growth over the year-earlier period, despite an increase in provisioning.

"We were able to post 15% growth in our net profit due to the implementation of risk management system and our decision to stay away from troubled corporates," said N. Kamakodi, CEO and managing director, City Union Bank.

CUB's net interest income increased by 11% to ₹417 crore while the net interest margin stood at 4.11%.

The bank increased its

provisions and contingencies on non-performing assets to ₹116 crore from ₹78 crore.

Gross non-performing assets rose to 3.34% from 3.02% and net NPAs to 1.89% from 1.70%.

It had a provision coverage ratio of 65%.

During the period, the bank recorded fresh slippages of ₹200 crore (₹126 crore) and recovered ₹80 crore (₹61 crore).

"The overall slippage in the first quarter was lower than Q4 of 2018-19. We expect to have net NPAs of 1.75% to 2% of advances, which we would achieve by the year end. Till then, there would be some aberrations," he said.

Maruti Suzuki launches BS-VI compliant Ertiga

Sixth vehicle in firm's BS-VI portfolio

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki on Thursday launched the BS-VI compliant version of its MPV Ertiga, taking the total number of BS-VI compliant vehicles in its portfolio to six. The BS-VI petrol variant is priced ₹7.54 lakh onwards (ex-showroom Delhi).

"With the introduction of BS-VI petrol option in Ertiga, Maruti Suzuki has the largest offering of BS-VI compliant models – Alto, WagonR, Swift, Baleno and Dzire. The availability of the BS-VI variants on these large volume models several months ahead of the mandated date reflects Maruti Suzuki's commitment towards environment friendly

vehicles," the company said in a statement. Currently, the MPV is available in diesel and CNG variants, at a starting price of ₹9.86 lakh and ₹8.87 lakh, respectively (ex-showroom Delhi).

Emission cuts

The BS-VI compliant petrol vehicles will lead to reduction of nearly 25% in Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) emissions and can run on BS-IV petrol as well. "The BS-VI petrol cars from Maruti Suzuki have been extensively tested with BS-IV fuel and there is no operational concern," the company added.

Over 70,000 units of the Next Gen Ertiga have been sold since its launch in November 2018.

UltraTech net nearly doubles to ₹1,208 cr.

Merger synergies, better operational efficiencies boost cement firm's bottomline

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

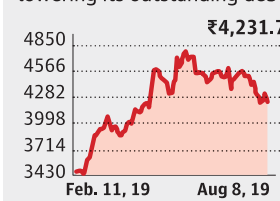
UltraTech Cement Limited's net profit for the first quarter almost doubled to ₹1,208 crore compared with the net profit of ₹631 crore registered in the year-earlier period, due to merger synergies and better operational efficiencies.

The rise in profit for one of India's largest cement makers came on a 15% growth in net sales to ₹10,027 crore during the quarter.

The company's profit before interest, depreciation and tax stood at ₹2,840 crore compared with the ₹1,763 crore in the year-earlier period. The company achieved an operating EBITDA per tonne of ₹1,466 as EBITDA margin improved to 28%

Terra firma

The firm has repaid over ₹1,000 crore worth of debt, lowering its outstanding debt to ₹18,565 crore.



Metrics	Q1 FY20	Q1 FY19	Growth (%)
Revenue from operations (₹cr.)	10,177.6	8,900.1	14.3
Net profit (₹cr.)	1,208	631	91.4
EPS (₹)	44	23	-

compared with the 19% in the year-earlier period.

Overhauling of plants

"With major overhauling of the plants and completion of quality upgradation, Ultra-Tech's Nathdwara Cement

Limited has been fully integrated with UltraTech systems and processes. The plants have achieved optimal efficiencies," said the company in a statement.

The cement plants acquired from Jaiprakash Asso-

ciates in 2017 are operating in line with the existing plants of the company and have achieved PBT (profit before tax) break-even during the quarter. The company's Bara grinding unit is scheduled for commissioning during Q3 FY20 due to project delays.

The company is in the process of merging the cements division of Century Textiles with itself and after completion of the transaction and coupled with the ongoing expansions, Ultra-Tech Cement will achieve an installed capacity of 117.35 MTPA, inclusive of its overseas operations.

The company has repaid over ₹1,000 crore worth of debt during the quarter to take its outstanding debt to ₹18,565 crore.

Siemens India profit up 21.4% to ₹248 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Siemens Ltd. has reported a 21.4% rise in its third quarter net profit to ₹248 crore for FY 2019.

The rise in profit came on a 4.9% increase in revenue to ₹3,110 crore during the quarter. Siemens follows October - September financial year.

Commenting on the results, Sunil Mathur, MD and CEO Siemens Ltd., said, "We have delivered very solid results in the third quarter although we see a slowdown in capex-related ordering by our customers. Liquidity is becoming a concern with payments being delayed and inventory offtake slowing down."

The difficulty of being bad

Veteran actor Gulshan Grover on his favourite roles, what he's learnt from filmi villains and his dream role in a Bond film

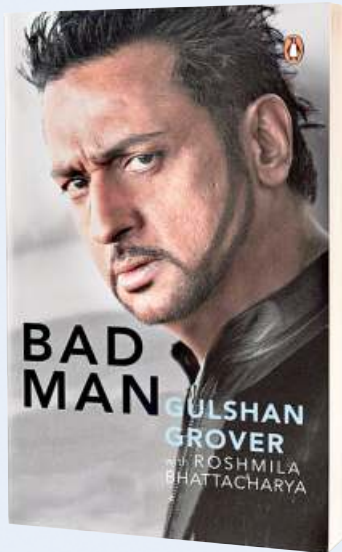
VASUNDHARA RATHI

Gulshan Grover's current state of mind is slightly-on-edge-and-anxious, akin to the Friday release feeling. One of the most popular villains of contemporary Hindi cinema, Grover has recently released biography, *Bad Man*, which he's co-written with journalist Roshmila Bhattacharya. Grover's film career began in the early 1980s. After getting a Masters' degree from Shri Ram College of Commerce in Delhi, Grover decided to leave behind all that was familiar to become an actor. Nearly four decades and over 400 films later, the actor's fondest memories on a film set dates back to his first few films.

"I'd waited for years and struggled to actually get in front of the camera to experience the life within, after and before the shot. Some of the most fantastic memories are of shooting films like *Hum Paanch* (1980), *Rocky* (1981) and *Sadma* (1983)," shared the actor.

In deciding to play the villain, Grover had the challenging task of having the audiences hate him, film after film, while effectively striking fear and anger into the hearts of the audiences. Without the intimidating personality that the yesteryear baddies had, Grover had to build his persona differently. "I had to work very hard to build that brand where people may not notice me when I walk into an event but they could not ignore me on screen," said the actor. Taking inspiration from legendary baddies before him like Amrish Puri, Pran, Amjad Khan and Ajit, he added, "Each actor who has played the villain is truly fantastic because of the difficult job they have. I had the great honour of knowing many of the legends like Pran-ji, Amrish Puri-ji personally or I've worked with them. They've been a great source of guidance to me."

Grover highlights Shatrughan Sinha and Vinod Khanna's exem-



Long career: Gulshan Grover has acted in over 400 films over four decades.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

plary portrayal of negative characters. "Audiences would whistle and cheer for them when they were hitting the hero! You wanted to play the villain because they did it so well." He loved Khanna in films such as *Reshma Aur Shera* (1971) and Sinha in *Bombay To Goa* (1972).

After scores of films and accolades in Hindi cinema, Grover ventured to the West and has been a part of numerous Hollywood films such as the Brett Lee and Tannishtha Chatterjee starrer *Un-Indian* (2015) and *Desperate Endeavours* (2012). A self-proclaimed fan of the James Bond villains, he was supposed to be a part of the Daniel Craig-starrer *Casino Royale* (2006). "I am a huge fan of the Bond villains. They have panache and leave an impact. I had the opportunity to play the villain in *Casino Royale* but it didn't work out. But I will someday play the Bond villain," emphasised the actor.

■ The many shades of villainy

As his book narrates the journey the actor has had in his impressive career, we asked him to share some of his favourite roles that he enjoyed playing and pat came the reply, "I can list my top 50 instead of my top five!"

Sir (1993) directed by Mahesh Bhatt starred Grover as 'Chhapan Tikli' along with Paresh Rawal in negative roles. The drama also starred Naseeruddin Shah in the titular role with debutante Atul Agnihotri and Pooja Bhatt in the lead. Rawal won the National Award for Best Supporting Role for *Sir*.

Shola Aur Shabnam (1992) directed by David Dhawan starred Grover as gangster Kali Baba and is often considered his breakout performance. A commercial blockbuster, the film had romance and action in equal measure and starred Govinda and Divya Bharti as the leads.

Ram Lakhan (1989) starring Anil Kapoor, Jackie Shroff, Gulshan Grover and Rakhee, was directed by Subhash Ghai.

Grover's character Kesaria Vilayati or 'Bad Man' is widely remembered for his spine-chilling dialogue delivery and menacing unibrow. The film's cast recently celebrated 20 years since its release and the film is widely remembered for the song, *My Name Is Lakhan*.

Mahasangram (1990) by director Mukul S. Anand also starred Vinod Khanna, Madhuri Dixit and Govinda in leading roles. The action-packed drama starred Gulshan Grover, in one of the few positive roles in his career, as the police inspector.

16 December (2002) starring Danny Denzongpa, Milind Soman, Gulshan Grover among others was directed by Mani Shankar. The fast-paced thriller saw mastermind Dost Khan played by Grover.

Bawandar (2000) based on the true story of gang rape survivor, Bhanwari Devi, portrayed social evils. Starring Nandita Das, Raghubir Yadav, Deepti Naval, the film was directed by Jagmohan Mundhra. Grover essayed the role of a lawyer seeking justice for Sanwari (played by Das).

Deepa Mehta's Earth (1999) is set during Partition and showcases the ramifications of the traumatic event on the lives of the different communities. Grover played a character called Mr. Singh. The film was also India's official entry to the Oscars that year.



PEOPLE

A gene for art

A 27-year-old joins her grandmother's work in finding homes for Thangka and Kalighat paintings



When she brings out a well-preserved design magazine, the copy hardly a few years older than she is, 27-year-old Mallika Mookerjee handles it with a sense of reserved respect. In it is featured her grandmother's home, full with photographs of the plot's outdoor flora and indoor art.

The structure has since made way for the home-gallery, called Thakalis, which they're in currently; and the lady of the house, Asha Chopra, is now a wizened, yet glamorous, 80-year-old. But what has remained constant through this period, is the prominent presence of art, on most of their walls, tabletops, and ledges.

Chopra recalls her growing up years in Delhi — she'd save up a bit of her pocket money every month, to finally collect it all and invest in a glass or jade artefact from the Chinese Art Palace in Connaught Place.

This eye for art stayed with her, and when she moved to West Bengal in her early 20s, with her husband, who worked at a British-era tea company in the state, she got acquainted with the age-old

Buddhist tradition of Thangka scroll paintings, and later also with Kalighat paintings, a 19th century school of art that originated in then-Calcutta.

Once her husband retired and they moved back to Delhi, Chopra started commissioning paintings from the artists she'd been in touch with in Kolkata, Darjeeling, and parts of Sikkim. This was her way to stay in touch with "the people we lived with and connected with," she says, and also to keep alive both these fading traditions. She started putting up the works at home, and invited people for guided walks, or viewing and buying.

"It's always been word of mouth only," says Mookerjee, 27, adding that the duo tries to keep a certain "sanctity of the place, only inviting in people who are genuinely interested in the arts." But now, armed with a graduate degree from Polimoda in Florence, and her experience in fashion and design communication, she now joins her grandmother to "take this many notches higher."

Thakalis tries to keep art affordable, with pieces starting from about ₹20,000. With each Thangka or Kalighat you acquire, Chopra encloses a little note that details the form's significance and the story the specific piece tells.

37, Poorvi Marg, Vasant Vihar. For an appointment, mallikamookerjee@hotmail.com

VANGMAYI PARAKALA



FOOD SPOT



RAHUL VERMA

I was a callow teen went I first went to Shillong. I don't remember much of that trip, barring the fact that I was struck by its scenic beauty. I went back a few years later, and that sojourn is etched in my memory. I had my first drink (a bottle of beer, which promptly did me in), walked around the town on my own, heard some nice music being played at street corners by young men on their guitars, and ate some memorable food.

That is why, I suppose, I am still greatly fond of the food of the northeast. Apart from nostalgia, it is also because the food is simply cooked, yet delicious. Plus, the cuisine includes various kinds of pork dishes.

In Delhi, there are some excellent eateries that offer northeastern fare these days. But I was surprised when my friends in Kolkata took me to one such eatery in their city



Eastern flavours Dishes of the North-East at Shillong Point

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



PORK PLEASURES

A little bit of the northeast in Kolkata

when I was visiting last week. Run by two Assamese partners, it is called Shillong Point and is located in the Ballygunge area (20/1/1 C, Ballygunge Station Road; 9830316747).

The restaurant is a tiny, three-table affair. The menu card includes many popular Naga and Khasi dishes. It offers, among other things, Naga-style pork cooked with lai

pata, chicken with bamboo shoot, galoh (soupy spinach rice) and Naga-style fish with bamboo shoot wrapped in a banana leaf.

My friends had already visited the place, so they knew what to order. We asked for a plate of Dohneiong (pork with black sesame, ₹330), pork with bamboo shoot (₹330), dohklieh (pork meat salad, ₹150) and tungtap (fer-

mented fish chutney, ₹50).

Our food came to our table, and we focused on the dishes. The salad — a preparation of pork meat (including the brain, we were told), chopped onions and ginger — was delicious. The taste of the ginger lingered on, and it was a light starter that whetted our appetite. I love pork with black sesame and this one didn't disappoint me. The gravy was thick and flavourful, and the pork — nice-

ly fatty — had soaked in the juices. I mixed it with the rice, and made a great meal out of it.

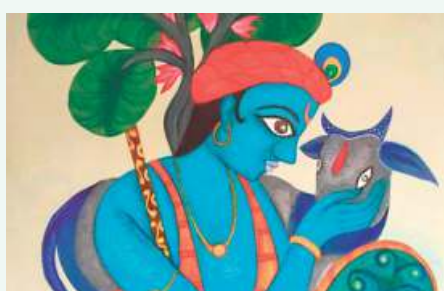
The pork with bamboo shoots was red, hot and tasty, and I loved the sharp aftertaste of the chillies in the gray. The fish chutney, on the other hand, set the tongue on fire. I just had a tiny bit of it, but it was enough to make me want to call 101. The dry and fermented fish had apparently been prepared with the famous — or infamous, depending on your own Scoville Scale — bhut jolokia chillies. For dessert, we asked for the home-churned ice creams,

which turned out to be surprisingly good. They had two varieties — butterscotch and vanilla — and both were nice and creamy and not too sweet.

What made the meal special was the discussion with the cook-cum-server, a long-haired, music-loving young man called Imon. He used to work in Kasol in Himachal Pradesh, and dreams of cooking Italian dishes for food lovers in the near future. The next time I am in the city, I hope I will be able to share Imon's culinary dream.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



ART

Mixed media

Close on the heels of Independence Day, artists from various army families will come together for a group exhibition titled Rainbow, at the gallery of All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society. On view till August 15, their artworks comprise of sketches, oil painting, and acrylic drawn in traditional as well as contemporary styles.

VENUE: AIFACS, 1, Rafi Marg
TIME: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.



FOOD

Singapore Day special

Marking National Singapore Day on August 9, Mallacca Malaysian Kitchen will hold a Singapore Festival every weekend, for a month. The restaurant will serve popular Singaporean dishes like Rojak and Laksa. Guests can also enjoy Singaporean folk music and view traditional dance forms, while dining.

VENUE: 32nd Milestone, Gurgaon
TIME: 6 p.m. onwards



MUSIC

Sangeet Samaroh

Gandharva Mahavidyalaya and Saraswati Samaj are hosting the annual Vishnu Digambar Jayanti Sangeet Samaroh 2019. Starting today, this three-day festival will feature a sarod recital by Pratik Shrivastava, and a Carnatic vocal performance by the Akkarai sisters, Subhalakshmi and Sornalatha.

VENUE: Kamani Auditorium, Mandi House
TIME: 6:30 p.m.

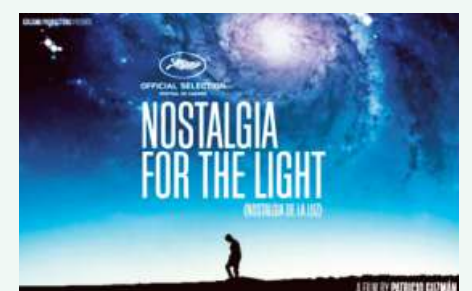


GIG

Sumit Sethi live

Imperfecto Shor Club is hosting Delhi-based DJ producer and music composer Sumit Sethi live tonight. Sethi has made his mark in Bollywood with tracks in several films, also performing at award shows. He specialises in different music genres including Bollywood, hip-hop, and house music, among others.

VENUE: Hotel Pride Plaza, Aerocity
TIME: 10 p.m. onwards



FILM

Documentary

Habitat Film Appreciation Forum will screen the Spanish film *Nostalgia for the Light*. Directed by Patricio Guzman, this is a documentary that addresses the lasting impacts of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile. The screening will be followed by a discussion led by film research scholar, Mallika Viswanathan.

VENUE: Gulmohar Hall, IHC
TIME: 7 p.m.

SHONALI MUTHALALY

A revolution is on the boil. Quite literally. Chef Anthony Myint's mission to halt, and even reverse, climate change begins in the kitchen.

Armed with research, practical ideas and unflagging energy, the San Francisco-based chef partners with restaurants to find bespoke ways to reduce their environmental impact. His work has been so inspiring that he was recently awarded the Basque Culinary World Prize, a €100,000 annual award given to chefs whose work transforms society through gastronomy.

Anthony advises food businesses on viable options to reduce their carbon footprint and has convinced restaurants around the globe to join his crusade, including Noma (Denmark) and Benu (San Francisco). In 2019, via his 'Perennial Farming Initiative', he collaborated with the state of California to launch the Restore California Programme, which provides consumers with the environmental footprint of restaurants.

Explaining how he started cooking because he believed that "restaurants can make the world a better place", Anthony discusses the positive impact healthy soil, thoughtful farming and responsible consumers can have on the world, in an e-mail interview.

Judging by social media, everybody seems to be looking for the perfect meal. Does the current obsession with food make it easier to educate consumers on the effect their choices have on global warming?

The perfect meal, almost depends on your philosophy: are you just a consumer working within an existing, and somewhat broken food system? Or are you trying to create a sustainable, delicious and healthy food system?

If you're just asking as a consumer, then the perfect meal is something that is part of a farming and ranching practice that is contributing to healthy soil.

If you're trying to create an ideal food system, then my ideal meal is a carbon-neutral McDonald's cheeseburger, hopefully in the near future, because it means that corporations have begun implementing managed grazing and compost application in their supply chain, and society is on track to reverse global warming. Until

SOIL on the menu

Can chefs fight climate change? Anthony Myint has just been awarded the Basque Culinary World Prize for his crusade, convincing restaurants to reduce their carbon footprint

then, it would be any meal where a portion of proceeds is going to fund the transition to renewable farming.

When people talk about the transformative power of gastronomy, it is usually in the context of breaking down social or cultural barriers by bringing people together at the table. Does gastronomy have the power to trigger political change?

A 1,000%. Chefs are the leaders of the food system. They influence each other, their staff and their customers. In the US, restaurants represent the largest part of


the food system economically – more than farming or retail. And the industry accounts for one in 10 workers. If a few of the best chefs focussed their efforts on a movement that other chefs and food businesses could follow, the entire food culture would shift. We are already in-process on a state-wide restaurant programme with California, the world's fifth-largest economy.

Could you tell us how your work with Noma can be used as a blueprint by restaurants around the globe?

There is new science – it's actually bio-geo-chemistry, which has just confirmed that carbon farming can reverse global warming. Given this civilisation-level finding, we need to urgently create change on millions of hectares of farmland. This does not mean a few chefs sourcing pristine in-

DID YOU KNOW?

It takes 500 years to produce just under an inch of topsoil – the most productive layer of soil. And there are more microorganisms in a handful of soil than there are people on Earth.




Be the change Anthony Myint firmly believes healthy soil translates to healthy food
*ALANNA HALE AND JON ADAM

crease per hectare represents about 12 tonnes of carbon that is pulled from the atmosphere – the same as not burning 5,000 litres of petrol. We must re-envision the increase in soil biology along the same lines as planting trees – a very practical and substantive climate solution.

You say that how an ingredient was produced matters much more than what the ingredient is – why? And does more responsibly grown produce result in tastier produce?

Healthy soil – soil with a high level of SOM% – is a complex micro-biome full of beneficial organisms that make minerals bio-available to the plants, resulting in more nutritious food with more depth of flavour. If you have an incredible cherry tomato, it's probably because the soil was full of living things.

You have been working on mobilising the restaurant industry as part of the solution to global warming. What got you started on this path? And what have the successes been so far?

We got started after having a daughter and thinking about the future and specifically being concerned about climate change. We learned that the food system contributes about half of global emissions (agriculture 15%, deforestation for food 18%, transportation, storage, processing, waste, etc 17%). We learned food and farming could be a practical solution. And then in the past two years, scientists confirmed that a shift to renewable farming could remove excess carbon from the atmosphere.

When we started, zero chefs were working on climate change. It is because not only is the restaurant industry extremely challenging, but these concepts are brand new to almost all chefs. And so the fact that so many great chefs and restaurants are already carbon-neutral, and the jury of the Basque Culinary World Prize has pledged to go carbon-neutral, might signal the beginning of a big global movement toward supporting the shift to renewable farming.

redients and hoping that somehow the world reinvents itself – there is too much inertia from the currently extractive food system.

Restaurants like Noma can lead by both high integrity internally, and by inspiring adoption in a global movement that every single restaurant can participate in, which is adding a one per cent charge toward transitioning farming toward practices like compost application, cover cropping, reduced tillage etc.

Consumers have shifted interest from exotic ingredients to local, responsibly grown produce over the past decade. However, your focus is soil health, which is rarely discussed...

Healthy soil should be the number one priority in food. Full stop.

Unfortunately, most chefs, myself included a few years ago, could not define healthy soil. Here's my definition today:

Healthy soil is soil with a lot of living things in it – literally, soil with a high percentage of Soil Organic Matter (SOM). A farm with five per cent Soil Organic Matter has healthier soil than its neighbour with 1.1% SOM. Pesticides and GMOs and certifications are all worth noting, but instead of focussing on false binaries, we could focus on actual data and a metric that would reward a farmer making the crucial jump from one per cent SOM to two per cent SOM.

In today's food economy, there is no reward for that increase, but farmers have that data and we could start asking and spending accordingly. SOM is 50-58% carbon, and so each one per cent in-

POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



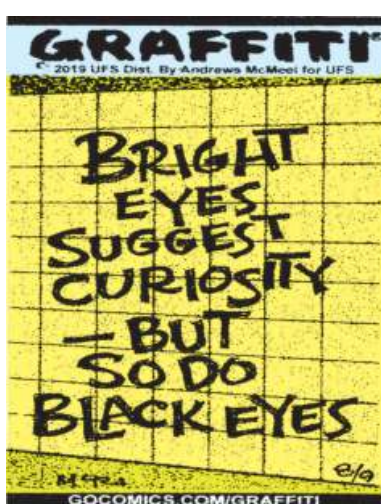
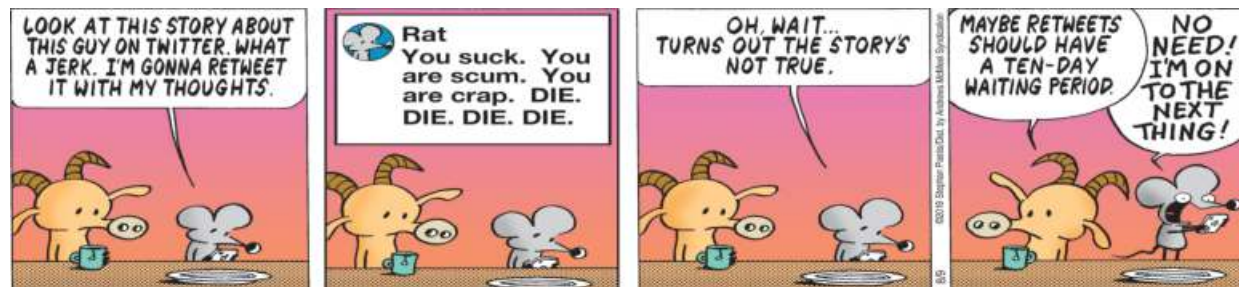
TIGER



WUMO



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HEALTH CAPSULES
by Bron Smith

HOW MANY PEOPLE GET ENOUGH FIBER IN THEIR DIET?

IT ONLY DOUBTS WERE TO LIGHTEN FIBER ON.

ONLY 5% OF US GET ENOUGH OF THE RECOMMENDED DAILY AMOUNT OF FIBER IN OUR DIETS. THE DAILY RECOMMENDED AMOUNT: 25 GRAMS FOR WOMEN AND 38 GRAMS FOR MEN UP TO AGE 50, 21 AND 30 GRAMS RESPECTIVELY. AFTER THAT, 23 ALMONDS (1 OZ.) CONTAIN 3 TO 5 GRAMS OF FIBER.

HEALTH CAPSULES is not a medical product and is not a substitute for medical advice.

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13144

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- Folies-Bergère, d.1883 (7,5)
- 5 Topping of a king (12)
- 6 Oscar (7,5)
- 7 Resources for achieving something (4,3,5)
- 12 Gaping (4,4)
- 15 Breakfast cereal with fruits (6)
- 18 Make very hot and dry (4)

- Across
- 1 Advocate (9)
- 8 Disordered state (5)
- 9 Destroy completely (4,3)
- 10 Originator (8)
- 11 Young salmon – a wife of Henry VIII (4)
- 13 Repaired (6)
- 14 Concealed (6)
- 16 Charitable donations to the needy (4)
- 17 Tepid (8)
- 19 Rouses from sleep (7)
- 20 Hymn of praise (5)
- 21 Abandonment (9)
- Down
- 1 Calmly submissive (8)
- 2 Vocation (6)
- 3 Natural satellite of a planet (4)
- 4 Painter of A Bar at the

Solution will appear in The Hindu dated August 10, 2019.

Solution No. 13143

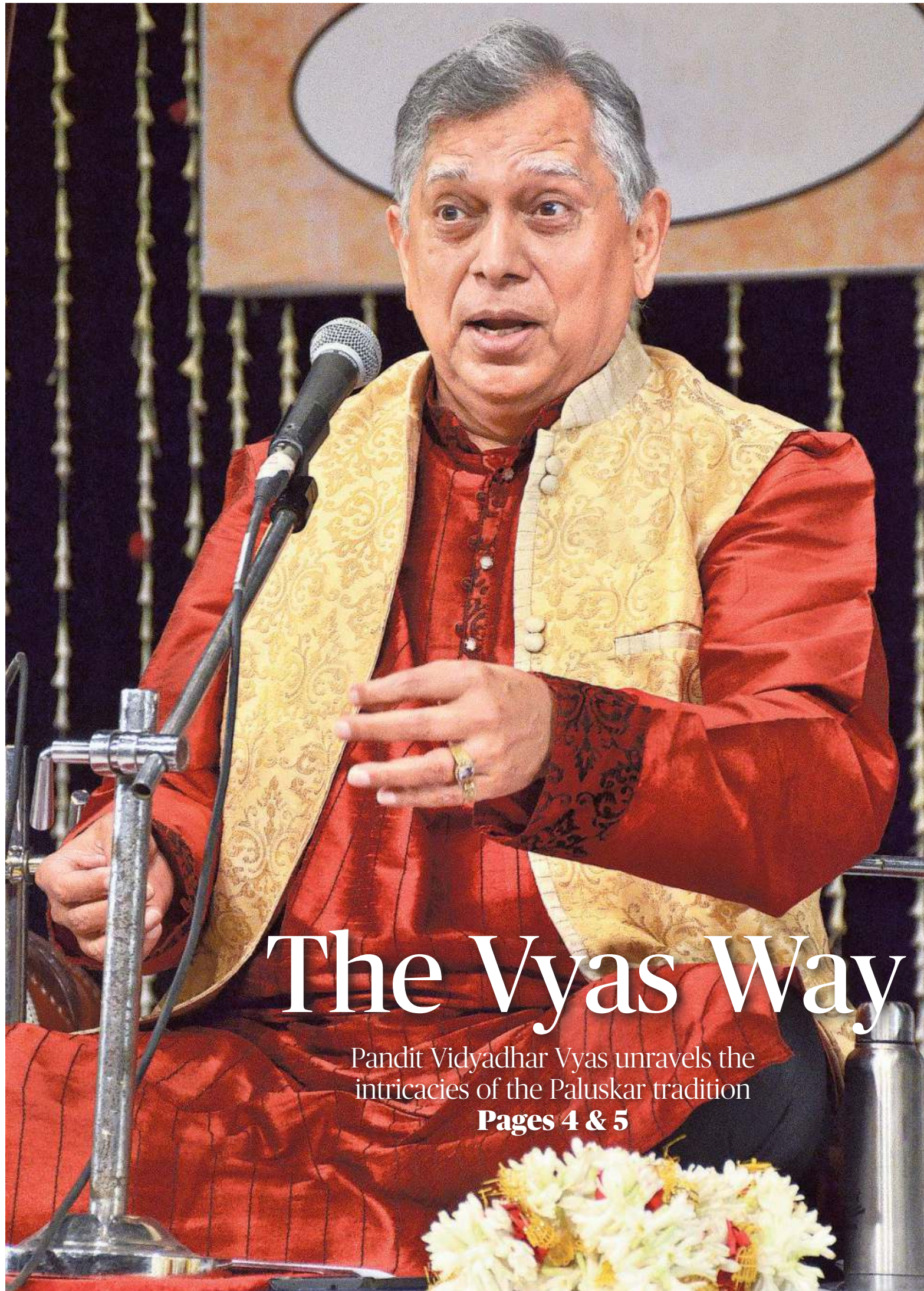
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FRIDAY REVIEW

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The Vyas Way

Pandit Vidyadhar Vyas unravels the intricacies of the Paluskar tradition

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Many shades of Malhar



Artists presented myriad moods of the monsoon at festivals in Delhi and Kolkata

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Eveready, for any role



Kamlesh Mota, who has been staging plays since he was in school, is a prolific producer, director and actor

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On popular demand



Drawing from immediate concerns, Masroor Jahan's stories conjure up a bout of bliss, a risk of ruin

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The aroma of Awadh



As "Umrao Jaan Ada" finds a new life on stage, we speak to the artists who have given it the shape of a musical

P8

Many shades of Malhar

Artistes presented myriad moods of the monsoon at music festivals in Delhi and Kolkata

MEENA BANERJEE

Close proximity to Nature empowered our ancient seers to realise that life is not born out of sin; in fact we all are 'Amritasya putraah' because a couple's union replicates the union of heaven and earth, as we experience during Monsoons. The cleansing power of the raining bliss removes all the impurities of mind and body before implanting the seeds of a healthy life/crop. The word Malhar embodies this philosophy. Since Indian music is a unique blend of science, philosophy and myth, Malhar has become synonymous to a set of approximately 18 ragas that celebrate the spirit of surging love, devotion-charged surrender, gestation and fruition. A variety of such ragas inundated a parched Kolkata recently during two noticeable among several Malhar Fests.

Sublime vocalism

The sublime vocalism of slide-guitar maestro Debashish Bhattacharya was the crescendo of the evening organised by Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture at Vivekananda Hall. Bhattacharya chose Miyan Malhar. To suit the brooding mood of the raga, he tuned his instrument four scales lower than the usual D. This sensitive step instilled a rain-soaked mellowness in the otherwise perky and taut tonality of his self-designed 'four-coloured' chaturangui. It now sang in the deep tones of a veena!

The alaap had steady bends of elongated meends, swaying notes, fine-grained sharp moving taans, octave jumping phrases and filigree of lighter nuances along with West-leaning staccato note-clusters, chords and harmonised phrases. All these etched the Monsoon sky with different dynamics of key-phrases and occasional flashes of very crisp taans. The brief jod was succinctly designed with heavy rhythmic gamaks which paved way for a composition of Tansen supported by Ujjwal Bharati's broad-faced tabla playing chautal a la pakhawaj.

For the slow Teental gatkar, the same tabla came up with a brilliant utthan. Both musicians enjoyed the ensuing layakari with a repartee receiving dramatic reply in the form of a taan which began very softly but gradually acquired commanding tone, challenging tabla to engage in a dialogue, and closed with a tihai. The fast teental, supported by a high pitched tabla, had a taan encrusted mukhda that inspired sprinting passages leading to jhala. Bhattacharya closed with an equally enchanting Desh Malhar.

Aesthetic exploration

The melodious finale of another two-day fest, presented by ITC SRA at Bir-la Sabhagar, was pitched by dhruvad maestros (Umakant and Ramakant)



Master at work Pt Debasish Bhattacharya

Gundecha Brothers. Embellished by reverberating mandra and ati-mandra swaras, harmonised notes and, more importantly, the aesthetic exploration within each sets of notes, their exposition of ragas Jayant Malhar (sampoorna alap, chautal dhruvad) and Megh (aochar, jhaptal composition) sparkled radiantly. Pakhawaj wizard Akhilesh Gundecha's tani-like longish solo round towards the end of the chautal dhruvad was equally captivating.

Khayal exponent Omkar Dadarkar, a Guru with SRA now, etched the features of Surdasi Malhar with surdipped elongated notes in the longish aochar very leisurely. His literary bent of mind helped relish the lyrics of 'Ma chamake bijuri barase meha' (slow teental) in a way that painted lightning-laced formation of heavy clouds with the help of mellow meends and sharp taans; and the exciting grip on tala empowered him to design excellent bol-patterns within the tala-bars - to build a breathtaking climax till the last beat of a cycle and to strike the sam with a massive relief of arrival.

Superbly chiselled, lyrics-based heavy gamak taans and fine-grained fast aakar taans replicating 'Nanhin-nanhi boondan' of the fast teental bandish 'Badarwa barsan ko aaye' further enriched the pictorial beauty. The empathetic support from Bivash Sanghai (tabla), Sarwar Hussain (sarangi) and Gourab Chatterjee (harmonium) played indispensable roles in this gripping act of music-making.

The most encouraging aspect of this fest was that, guided by Guru Ajoy Chakrabarty, the youngsters tried out less explored Malhars. Sitar virtuoso Ayan Sengupta caringly handled Gaud Malhar along with its vocalised nuances at full display; brilliant vocalist Meher Paralikar delineated a complex Meerabai ki Malhar with impressive confidence of a veteran; promising Sohini Koley sang Ramdasi Malhar.

MANJARI SINHA

The rainy season brings a number of Malhar festivals with it. The Pracheen Kala Kendra (PKK) presented their variant, 'a celebration of monsoon melodies', at New Delhi's Triveni Sabhagar featuring Aditya Sharma from the U.S. and Jui Dhaygude Deshpande from Mumbai, two young voices with ample potential.

Initiated into classical music by his parents, Aditya has done M.A. in Music and Ph.D on Voice Culture from Panjab University, Chandigarh. His talent was recognised when he came first in the All India Radio (AIR) competition and became a graded vocalist of the AIR. He was further groomed at the ITC-SRA Gurukul, Kolkata under the tutelage of Pt. Ulhas Kashalkar and is presently teaching at the Gandharva Academy in California. This evening he seemed to be a meticulous craftsman of music like his guru, when Aditya opened the Festival with Miyan Malhar, one of the major varieties of Malhar. This was partly due to his nature and partly due to his mentor.

Deft handling

Accompanied by Khadga Singh on tabla and Chetan Nigam on harmonium, he leisurely handled the raga. The very opening statement of auchar (the introductory alaap) etched the profile and Vakra Chalan of the Kafi Thaat raga, when he stood on shadja, underlined both the (komal and shuddha) nishads in the mandra saptak (the lower octave)



Showcasing their potential Jui Dhaygude Deshpande; (below) Aditya Sharma

and reached for the oscillation on komal gandhar, the focal points of this austere raga.

Elaborating further with the systematic badhat of the bada khayal at a slow pace in the 16-beat time cycle of Tilwada, he impressed with his scholastic exposition of the raga with scores of melodic sequences.

Here is a humble suggestion for the harmonium player. Aditya was about to reach the Taar Sa, creating the musical aura of the raga around the intended swara when Chetan jumped to Taar Rishabh. There is an unsaid rule and etiquette which the supporting harmonium or sarangi players conventionally follow, 'be within the boundary of swaras the main artist has reached'!

Aditya treated the raga with riveting focus and penetration. And the exquisite intonation of Pt. Ulhas Kashalkar came forth through his

voice. The vilambit and madhya laya (medium tempo), both Khayals rendered with technicality elaborate passages of the raga, were sung as though they were one piece carefully locked with phrase after alternate phrase, subtly sculpted and adorned with a variety of taans. The mukhda (opening phrase) of the chhota khayal "Gheri aayo re badarwa..." set to Teental, for instance, was a visual depiction of the lyrics with its built in taans like the random showers of Badarwa, the clouds in the sky. The Tarana in drut Teental led the raga to a natural climax with lively phrasings and short and rapid spurts of taans.

Right grooming

The other vocalist was Jui Dhaygude Pande, a new generation vocalist of Jaipur Atrauli Gharana, endowed with a well-trained powerful voice. Born in a musical family, Jui started her fundamental music lessons with Prema Sabne.

She was further trained under Pandita Sheela Joshi, Late Veena Sahatsrabuddhe and Vidushi Kishori Amonkar. No wonder she exhibits systematic exposition of the raga structure, brilliant phrasings, variety of taan patterns and a graceful reach in higher as well as lower octaves.

Jui opened her performance with 'Meera Bai Ki Malhar, one of the most uncommon varieties of Malhar indeed. Jaipur Atrauli Gharana is known for its Jod-Ragas and this was a melodious combination of Miyan Malhar and Sur-Malhar. Defining the significant features of the raga, Jui presented the composition, "Tum ghana se Ghan-Shyam...." set to Rupak Tala.

The beauty of her flawless rendering of this Jod-Raga was her seamless meandering between the two component ragas having apparently different shades of emotion.

The authentic way of Sthayee bharna, the bolbadhat with rhythmic play and the well conceived taans especially the double swara taans so specific to this gharana, were dealt with utmost clarity. The popular sur malhar bandish "Badarwa barsan ko aaye...." was rendered in addha theka of Teen-tala.

This was followed with a lovely bandish "Megh-Shyam Ghana-Shyam..." in Megh, set to drut Ek-Tala. The poetic lyrical content of her chosen compositions, a fine sense of texture of swaras and finely executed aakar and bol-taans were the chief elements of Jui's impressive performance.

Reviving an eclipsed tradition

Ahead of Dhrupad Sabha, Sumeet Anand talks about presenting the Darbhanga tradition to newer audience

SHRINKHLA SAHAI

The decision to quit a lucrative corporate job to pursue his passion for dhrupad was a natural and intuitive leap for Sumeet Anand. It was also the beginning of a long and challenging haul to re-establish a musical tradition that is far from 'popular' and has remarkably few avenues for economic sustenance. As a classical vocalist, Anand remains true to his lineage of the Darbhanga gharana of dhrupad while being rooted in the contemporary conundrum of making the form accessible, entertaining and relevant.

"As an artist one often needs to ask oneself - why am I doing this?" shares Anand. "For me, the answer was my inner voice, Dhrupad is the special gift I wanted to explore, express and establish." Hailing from the family of dhrupad exponents like Pandit Siyaram Tiwari and Pandit Ram Prasad Pandey, Anand received extensive training in the Darbhanga style from both sides of his family in his formative years in Patna. This year being the centenary celebrations of his maternal grandfather, Pandit Siyaram Tiwari, Anand feels it is more



Meticulous approach Pandit Siyaram Tiwari; (below) Sumeet Anand ■ RITIKA PANDEY

important now than ever to revisit the musical genius of these dhrupad masters. The focus is on presenting the lost world of Darbhanga tradition to newer audience and connecting it with the mainstream of Indian classical music.

Decoding a style

One of the flourishing classical music traditions at the turn of the 20th century, the Darbhanga gharana struggled in the post-independence era and almost vanished in the decades that followed. "The shift from Raj gharanas and royal patronage to a new kind of art market brought up a tough time of uncertainty for Darbhanga dhrupad artists," Anand points out. He believes that the socio-political situation in Bihar and the financial insecurity during that time were major factors behind the eclipse of the tradition. "Centred predominantly in areas of Bihar, an entire generation of musicians vanished from the public arena, leaving the form languishing without any performers to take it forward."

His present guru, Pandit Abhay Narayan Mallick, was among the few practising artists in the later part of the last century. Anand recalls meeting him in Delhi-NCR in 2008, when he was driven by the passion to delve deeper into the depth of the Darbhanga Dhrupad gayaki, "He (Pandit Abhay Narayan Mal-

lick) just asked me one question - do you have patience, a lot of it? I nodded, uncertain of what he meant but sure that I wanted to learn from him. I realised later that the kind of rigorous training and riyaz he was talking about takes immense patience, and can't be done half-heartedly or in a state of restlessness. I had just been taxiing along, but to take-off requires full focus and a leap of faith. It is important to start early in classical music if you set out to be a performer, but there are also a lot of late bloomers in the field!"

Striking a balance

The Darbhanga gharana of Bihar is based on the Gauhar Vani tradition of Dhrupad. A number of unique features differentiate the style from other schools of Dhrupad. The emphasis on layakari, with improvisational balance between rhythm as well as melody splits the Darbhanga presentation into equal proportions between the alaap and bandish whereas most other styles emphasise the alaap portions more. Unique aspects of the Been-ang within the Alaap, Jod (slow and fast) and Jhala are also unique characteristics of the gharana.

As a young performer, Anand is often questioned about the relevance of the age-old musical tradition in contemporary times. It is completely connected to our

daily lives, believes the artist. "By nature, dhrupad is meditative, spiritual, almost Yogic in the way it uses breath and voice. In today's context, when we are leading highly stressful lives, it is calming and engaging. While the alaap is about exploration, the jod and jhala are about virtuosity and technique. The bandish presents rich poetry and the pakhawaj as the percussion instrument of accompaniment plays a major role."

Centenary celebrations

It is believed by many musicians of the Darbhanga tradition that Pandit Siyaram Tiwari's music embodied the soul of the gharana. The genius of Pandit Siyaram Tiwari lay in his mastery over the four different genres or 'Choumukhi' gayaki - Dhrupad, khayal-tarana, thumridadra and bhajans. He also sang tappa with ease. He initiated a unique concept of presenting dhammar with tabla accompaniment along with Pandit Kishan Maharaj of Banaras Gharana. The tabla maestro's understanding of the intricacies of rhythm and the 'khula baaj' of Banaras made his playing suited to dhammar singing and layakari of Pandit Siyaram Tiwari. Their performances were akin to jugalbandis and became immensely popular among music lovers of that era.

For Anand, his grandfather's music plays a crucial role in revitalising the missing historical link within the Darbhanga tradition. In his memory, he founded the Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Memorial Sangeet Trust in 2015 that has been consistently organising concerts in Patna and Delhi apart from research and documentation. "As a dhrupad performer and arts organiser I believe it is critical for artists to have a dialogue, engage in exchanges across gharanas, widen the opportunities for audience and musicians and build a strong sense of community for Dhrupad."

(Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Memorial Music Festival- 11th Dhrupad Sabha, would be held at Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi on August 12, 2019, 6.30 pm, featuring Dhrupad vocal by Pandits Naval Kishore Mallick and Uday Kumar Mallick and pakhawaj solo by Sukhad Munde)



Stark reality A scene from the play

Where desire is muzzled

"Khwahish Gali" explores the dark underbelly of flesh trade where women are exploited by men of high society

DIWAN SINGH BAJELI

Much efforts seem to have gone into writing the script and conceptualising the production of "Khwahish Gali" staged at Abhimanch recently as the opening piece of the Graduate show organised by National School of Drama which was thematically disturbing, visually dazzling and absorbingly interesting. An innovative production, it provides the scope for innovation for the young student cast to enrich the production with their histrionic talent and youthful energy.

First hand experience

Written by Pallav Singh and designed and directed by Hari Shankar Ravi, the duo in search for concrete reality of the life of sex workers to project as an art on the stage went to G.B. Road, Shradhanand Marg, to interact with them, to know their social and economic backgrounds that forced them to enter flesh trade. After facts were collected, Pallav Singh recreated his narrative into a larger canvas, laced with captivating songs and dances set to evocative tunes. Threatening to unmask the men in authority of their sexual perversity, the protagonists express their ardent resolve to liberate themselves from the sordid world of sex market.

Connecting with audience

The entire cast standing in front of the entry gate of the auditorium sing, "Har Gali Mein Jab Hangama Huye, Nukkar Pe Katle Aam Huye, Sare Jahaan Se Achchha Phir Bhi Hindustan Humara Hai..." leading the audience through foyer into the auditorium. The brightly-lit huge gate suddenly opens wide into a radiant space with three tier structure. The performers occupy their spaces. This is the narrow lane where powerful men commit cardinal sin, making female body their object of lust. The audience for a while appears to be stunned to watch the dazzling light and the young women in colourful saris but gradually it dawns on them that behind colourful façade is hidden the dark face of society in which poverty-stricken young women trafficked, deceived and lured are confined as an object of naked sexual exploitation by brutes masquerading as men of high society with high moral grounds.

Continued on page 7



As a Dhrupad performer and arts organiser I believe it is critical for artists to have a dialogue, engage in exchanges across gharanas, widen the opportunities for audience and musicians and build a strong sense of community for Dhrupad

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'I enjoy humanisation of ragas'

Ahead of his 75th birthday, Pandit Vidyadhar Vyas, the guardian of Paluskar Paramapara, talks about the inimitable blend of melody and lyrics

MEENA BANERJEE

As a student of Sanskrit, one was besotted by the pictorial similes of Kaidas, especially the one which won him the epithet 'Deepshikha'. Describing princess Indumati, it said, "Like an incense lamp, when she breezed through the aisle to single out and garland one of the mighty princes as her husband, the anticipant, glowing faces submerged in darkness the moment she walked past them." Despite my exposure to Avadhi and Bhojpuri, I was not aware that this had an echoing effect in "Ramcharitmanas".

Decades later, it was the music of Dr Vidyadhar Vyas that unravelled the meaning peal by peal when he sang "Jabahi sab hi narapati mitras bhaye" (When all kings lost heart) in raga Bhupali set to slow Ekra. The excellent melodic handling of this gem from Saint-poet Tulsidas' magnum opus, tuned by the legendary Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar as *bada-bhaval*, opened the floodgates of emotions. There was mounting hope on one side and desolation of tidality on the other. "Guru-pada vande Raghunath tab chandh sameep gaye" (Rama paid obeisance to his guru and went near the bow) completed the picture as its *antara*.

This left an indelible mark on all those members of a dying clan who also relish the lyrics; because, usually, a khayal bandish is treated like a peg to hang the raga on; firstly because, as compared to Tagooran oeuvres, many believe that there is no literary value of these bandishes, and more importantly because no one, even Hindi speaking musicians or their listeners make an effort to understand the intrinsic philosophical connotations of these lyrics in olden Hindi dialects. One vividly remembers this concert even after several years now simply because it, very naturally and smoothly, wove an interesting story around Ram-Sita's wedding through the marriage of melody and lyrics.

Vyasji let "Mora jhanjh mandalari" in Madhyalaya (central to breeze in without any jerk in changam (four-time faster tempo) of the vilambit. After theeingly touching Panchnam of the upper octave, fast linear taans had sprinkled happiness in descending order before a dancing tental-tarana replete with ecstatic rhythmic patterns etched the jubilant mood of the auspicious occasion. It was something unique!

"But this is the typicality of our Paluskar Paramapara" Vyasji had said with a boyish smile soon after the concert while entertaining his admirers. On a later date, the erudite musicologist with



Keeping a tradition alive Pandit Vidyadhar Vyas giving a scintillating performance; with wife Sitarist Suneera Kasliwal in front of photographs of Guru Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, Pandit Shankarrao Vyas and Pandit Narayanrao Vyas ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

his deep interest in sociology caught the questions zestfully while we discussed his music at length.

What is the root of your blissfully different approach of presenting ragas music?

This has an interesting history. The present khayal form of Hindustani raga sangeet was eventually formatted in the royal court of Gwalior towards the end of 18th Century. The identity it acquired was its 'Ashrang' gayaki which assimilated elements from different prevalent vocal forms, such as dhruvap, *gaawal*, *thumri*, etc. The major development of khayal form, with its variety of compositions and talas, crystallised gradually.

Different gharanas branched out from Gwalior but Gwalior remained the 'Pitr-gharana' or the fountainhead of khayal. Several specialised genres of khayal compositions such as *tappa*, *tarana*, *chaturanga*, *trivat*, *raagmala* (*raag sagan*), *ashtrapadi*, *sargam get*, etc. came to the fore.

Gwalior gharana produced generations of outstanding performers and teachers beginning from Ursad Haddu and Hasru Khan, the founders of the gharana. Gwalior Gayaki reached out to wherever Hindustani raga sangeet spread, but unlike other gharanas, it never left its place of origin. A stream of Gwalior gharana came down to Maharashtra with its doyen Pandit Balkrish-



Illustrous lineage Born to Pandit Narayan Rao Vyas on 8th September 1944, Dr Vidyadhar Vyas is an eminent vocalist. The Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (2007) winner, he is a proud torchbearer belonging to the direct lineage of the Gwalior Gayaki and Paluskar Paramapara - bestowed through his guru and father who was one of the prime disciples of Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar. In his concerts, he attempts to showcase and focus the essence of Gwalior Gayaki through its different specialised compositional varieties which are the shining gems of Hindustani music. Unfortunately, these are fading away into oblivion since these require highly accomplished literary sense and musical skills to perform. Towards established finale of his tradition, Vyasji always concludes his concert with Paluskar Parampara Bhajan.

An erudite musicologist, captivating orator and guru as well, Vyasji held administrative positions as the Principal, Government Music College (Rajasthan Sangeet Samsthan) Jaipur; Head of the Department of Music, Mumbai University. In 2004 he was selected as the first Vice Chancellor of Bhaktkhande Music Institute Deemed University, Lucknow and in 2007 he became the Executive Director of ITC Sangeet Research Academy, Kolkata.

Both his sons are settled abroad with lucrative jobs but are good listeners of classical music. Fortunately, the grandchildren are drawn to his music. Both Vyasji and his starlet wife Sumita Kasliwal are striving to nurture their interests along with a few dedicated disciples who live and learn with Vyasji in Mumbai. Their extended family in the form of Vyas Academy of Indian Music (better known as Vyas Sangeet Vidyalyaya since 1937) is organising a country-wide celebration of the 75th birth anniversary of Dr Vidyadhar Vyas with its inaugural session on 8th September at Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.

was not sure that I will pursue music. My father never prevailed upon his only son's decisions; but when I decided in favour of music, suddenly he began treating me as one of his disciples. In 1972, my father's close friend heard my bandishes were *stree-vaachi*, based on a woman's agony and ecstasy, which inhibited educated musicians to a great extent during public performances. Besides, while teaching young girls and boys in institutions, the use of devotional literature proved an innovative and successful way to foster raga sangeet among the masses and keen learners. Paluskarji himself introduced several revolutionary changes in the music world of his generation. Legends have it that after completing his taleem in Gwalior, Ichalkaranjikarji settled down in Meeraj as the court musician of the Maharaja and trained several vocalists including Paluskarji, an intelligent young boy then, who belonged to a venerated local kirtankar's family and was a close friend of the Maharaja's son. The royal connection gave him certain privileges which even his much acclaimed guru could not enjoy.

This disturbed Paluskarji and motivated him to fight for learned musicians' respectability in society which was plagued with prejudices. He also strived for the spread of raga sangeet among the masses and instilling spirituality in the process as this music has emerged from Samveda. He established the first Cand-



His tryst with Kedar, Kamod and Hamcer — a set of three ragas — one after the other, in quick succession is noteworthy. All three are so close that it is very easy to trespass from one to another territory. It takes a lot of grooming not to do so. Vyasji does so easily and with such superb clarity that each raga stands out with self-assured magnificence.

harva Mahawadyalaya, a music school, in Lahore (then a part of India) on 5th May 1901. The rest is history!

Albeit a non-Hindi speaking Marathi, he was aware that most of the khayal bandishes were *stree-vaachi*, based on a woman's agony and ecstasy, which inhibited educated musicians to a great extent during public performances. Besides, while teaching young girls and boys in institutions, the use of devotional literature proved an innovative and successful way to foster raga sangeet among the masses and keen learners. Paluskarji's prominent performing disciplines Omkarnath Thakur, Vinayakrao Patwardhan, Narayanrao Vyas and son DV Paluskar and several others, took this mission to greater heights as performers and teachers. Many of them tuned devotional songs belonging to every region of India. Perhaps, the best example of this can be seen in the melodic composition of the immortal bhajan "Vaisnav jani" in raga Khamaaj by my uncle Pandit Shankarrao Vyas, another learned disciple of Paluskarji who is hailed as the "modern Sadarang".

None of these stalwarts mentioned by you are stylistically similar. How did you chisel your identity?

Since boyhood, I was very proud and conscious of my musical lineage. Initially, this mindset encouraged me to copy my father and DV Paluskarji though I was doing my Masters in Sociology and

New stars on the horizon

The recipients of this year's Bismillah Khan Yuva Puruskar for

Hindustani Classical music see the award as a motivation to do better

SHALAJA KHANNA

In 2006, the Sangeet Natak Akademi decided to institute a new category of awards, for younger artists who have "demonstrated conspicuous talent". Instituted in the name of Ustad Bismillah Khan, the age limit of the awardees was increased from 35 to 40 years recently. No doubt, the recognition carries with it greater visibility, acknowledgement of achievement and is sure to act as a spur to achieve greater heights.

Sameehan Kashiakar like his illustrious father Pt Ullhas Kashiakar is a man of few words. "I am very happy and honoured to receive this prestigious award; it is an encouragement for any young musician. Of course, this is only possible because of the blessings and hard work that both my gurus Ullhas Kashiakar ji and Girija Devi ji. I was also lucky to spend my childhood at ITC Sangeet Research Academy (SRA), Kolkata and interacting with the stalwarts, watching them live in concert. I still remember the ragas they played in memorable concerts."

'Toughest years'

Pune-based Ruchira Kedar started learning music from her father Dipj Kale from the age of 10. "He was very keen I took up music professionally," she said. A few years later, when she was 14, she went to Pune to learn from Vidushi Alka Deo Murrkar. "She literally brought me up, and I was with her till 2006." After that she went to Kolkata to SRA for five years to learn from Pt Ullhas Kashiakar and also Vidushi Girija Devi. "I feel there may be many talented children who remain only talented amateurs because they don't have the Divine Grace to come to the right guru, at the right time. I am so blessed that each of my gurus nurtured me with such care."

She said her "toughest years" were during her training at SRA, which was in the old Gurukul way of learning. "We used to stay on the top floor and Gurujii could hear our *riyaz*," and nothing escaped his eyes! We were really scared of him, and that I think was so necessary then, Gurujii really brought out the potential he saw in me."

Sitarist Dhruv Beadi is the winner in the instrumental category. He has had the rare privilege of performing since his early 20s in front of several Heads of State including two Presidents of India, and the Heads of the BRICS countries: A Sikh, his great grandfather was from Dehra Baba Narnak. He sent both his sons to Gwalior to learn under the great Pt Krishnarao Shankar Pandit. He has been learning from Pt Budhadriya Mukherji since 2006, and is ecstatic. "I am humbled to receive the prestigious SNA Award. I wish to continue improving my music and making those associated with me even more proud."

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On the right track Ruchira Kedar; Sameehan Kashiakar

A word of caution

Interestingly, this year both winners in the Hindustani vocal category are disciples of Pt Ullhas Kashiakar, a testimony to his mentorship. The doyen commented on the awards received by his disciples, "Sameehan was lucky because he was surrounded 24 hours by music and he was able to listen to my senior disciples like Shashank Mukherkar. So unconsciously, he imbibed a lot of *taalm* in both raga and tala while just listening to the other more advanced disciples. SRA is a small campus and with great gurus like Khan sahabji, and Ustad Nissar Husein Khan there at the time, there was constant inspiration."

He added that the Yuva Award is an award to encourage youngsters. "It doesn't mean the awardee is already a great artist. Voice is God given but it needs a lot of hard work to develop it. I wouldn't say *ki usi oward se woh kadalori ban gaye hain*; it's only that *haan, aap sahi raste pe hain, baathe jao*" Also, it's not as if I am their only guru. Ruchira had already trained extensively with others before she came to me."

me with such care."

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All ragas cannot get cracking with each other; some refuse to blend – just like humans

The Piano Man

Why a mentor is a must

ANIL SRINIVASAN



There is a famous story about the meeting of two great composers – Ludwig Van Beethoven and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart around 1787 in Vienna. For Beethoven, Mozart was his idol and role model. A young Beethoven is said to have taken leave of absence from his court orchestra services in Bonn to travel to Vienna just to meet Mozart and possibly study under him. Mozart was not very welcoming when Beethoven landed at his house. He was in the midst of composition work and was very sick.

Beethoven persisted, and was asked by Mozart to play a piece on the piano. He immediately chose to play Mozart's Piano Concerto no. 24 in C Minor, only to have the latter stop him mid-phrase with an admonition. Mozart asked the younger maestro to play something original, and not indulge in flattery. Beethoven is said to have immediately played the opening bars of his inspiration for what was to become the 'Tempest' sonata much later in life.

A visibly excited Mozart is said to have run out of the room to summon his wife and children to listen to a glowing Beethoven, saying that this is someone the world should watch out for. While Beethoven's family situation did not permit him to continue to learn under Mozart for longer, the adulation continued. Beethoven did accept Mozart as his mentor, and is said to have corresponded with him.

Mozart must have been both a muse and a good mentor, as he himself had been good friends with and been mentored by the great composer Joseph Haydn. The pattern of mentoring and close confidence between composers seems to have been a big factor in that era. A practice that is not as

common in today's rather competitive zeitgeist.

A good mentor is not just a confidant or a teacher. In the best of cases, mentors shape destinies, selflessly devoting themselves towards pushing their mentees towards the right path, the right opportunities to shine. To a mentor, the mentee's accomplishment is a collaborative victory, a fruition of belief and a proof of their faith in each other. Famous personalities through time have been guided by equally important or influential individuals. Elizabeth Taylor as a mentee of Audrey Hepburn, Gandhiji as a mentee of Gopala Krishna Gokhale, Gandhiji as a mentor to Mandela and to Martin Luther King Junior – history is full of such examples.



In the demise of Mrs. Y.G. Parthasarathy, many of us in the fields of education and music have lost perhaps the best mentor we could ask for

In the demise of Mrs. Y.G. Parthasarathy, educator extraordinaire and Iron Lady of Chennai, many of us in the fields of education and music have lost perhaps the best mentor we could ask for. She was all the adjectives many celebrities are using, and more. To me, perhaps, she was the most direct and most influential mentor I could ask for. Pressing

on me the importance of taking music as a responsibility, and as a platform to forge a different educational pathway to children. She was fond of reading, and was a voracious reader, and would often send across photocopies of passages from great works on education or on music. I am sure thousands of teachers and students across the world would possibly have their own personal anecdotes about her that outrank mine.

But in her passing, I believe that an era in mentoring has passed. To be able to draw upon her reserve of selfless encouragement, to create the next generation of mentors would possibly be a key takeaway from her life.

To her, I dedicate this column.



From Kamlesh Mota's play 'Mrutyunjay'

Eveready, for any role

Kamlesh Mota, who has been staging plays since he was in school, is a prolific producer, director and actor

Theatre Talk

DEEPA GAHLOT



As a child, Kamlesh Mota auditioned for a school play, and expressed the intention to pursue theatre. His mother took him to the Bhangwadi Theatre in south Mumbai (a venue, now defunct, where traditional Gujarati plays were staged) and told him that she and his father used to watch plays there. She recalled a particular performance of 'Raja Bharthari', starring the legendary Ashraf Khan. "My mother said that after the show, that ended at dawn, the actor came out and was mobbed by fans, who wanted to emulate the character he played and become *sanyasis*. And he told them that he was an ordinary person, and like them, he would be buying milk and going home. She told me that if I was able to play characters that audiences took home with them, only then should I get into theatre, otherwise I did not want to work in a shop! But what she said has remained with me."

Over 30 years later, Kamlesh is a prolific Gujarati theatre producer, director, actor as well as Director of Programming at the Bhavan's Kala Kendra (a thriving cultural centre); so packed is his schedule with shows, rehearsals and travel that his colleagues joke he must have found a way of being in several places at the same time.

His latest play, 'Dhummas' (fog) is a hit and he is happy that a thriller (about a doctor fighting to save his daughter from kidnappers) amidst the plethora of family dramas in Gujarati theatre, has been appreciated by the audience.

When he was in school, he did a few children's plays, where he met three other "like-minded" kids, and they decided to produce their own play. "We found a financier, and at the bookstore at Surat railway station, we picked up the book, *The Mystery Of The Whispering Mummy* (one of the Alfred Hitchcock children's series), and adapted it into Gujarati as 'Ek Do Teen.' "It was quite a grand production, with se-

ven sets. This play for children and by children did very well. We produced a couple of more plays, by which time I reached college, participated enthusiastically in inter-collegiate theatre competitions and acted in plays in several languages. Those five years were an excellent training ground for me.

"When I was in the 11th standard, I got a small part in an Indian National Theatre production, an adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, directed by Suresh Rajda. It was a wonderful play with music, dance, sword-fights and all, but it folded up after six shows. The audience was not ready for it. We were all shocked, but for me, the eight-month rehearsal and working backstage on costumes for 48 actors was a learning experience. Rajda offered me a cameo in another play, and my brief was also to step in for any other actor who was absent. He trained me to shift from one role to another in the same play and do multiple parts. So it has become very easy for me to also step out of a character."

Realistic plays

Kamlesh produced his first commercial play when he was in the 12th standard; called 'Vansh,' it was adapted from a Marathi story, which was based on a real incident. He got Gujarati film and stage star Rajeev and Priya Tendulkar to act in it. It was about a medical scam to cheat infertile women, by giving them pills to simulate pregnancy and then handing them stolen newborn babies. "This play taught me how to reach audiences with realistic plays. 'Vansh' did not do too well, but it gave me a lot of confidence. Meanwhile, I continued to direct plays for inter-collegiate competitions, and one of my plays, 'Khelando', won awards too, so my mother was happy."

What he calls his breakthrough, came with the play 'Amari Duniya Tamari Duniya', starring Siddharth Randeria, based on the Marathi play 'Natsamrat' – about a great stage actor past his heyday. "I was called at the last minute, handed two sheets of paper and told to come to the grand rehearsal the following day. In the past, I had actually been given my lines in the wings, two minutes before going on stage,

so I can deal with any emergency."

He recalls another instance, when he was called to the theatre to see the play 'Shriman v/s Shrimati' and told to watch it carefully since he was going with the team to Chennai the next day. "Once I was in two plays called 'Kautilya' and 'Chanakya', and they had to stagger their show times so that I could perform in both on the same day. All this was great fun."

Soon, he was producing and directing plays for the Birlas and travelling all over the country to perform at their factories. "We did Hindi and Gujarati plays and had actors like Rohini Hattangady and Reema Lagoo, who were without any airs. They would help backstage, would put up the set if we were running late; once I found Rohini ironing costumes because the *dhobi* was ill. I gained tremendously from these experiences."

Kamlesh says he has lost count of the plays he has worked on, but the biggest hit of his career is 'Muktidham', starring Smriti Irani at the height of her TV stardom, as an old woman who goes to Benaras to die. "She was a complete professional, would come an hour early for rehearsals and observe everything. It was an intensely emotional play; I remember a scene when she walks towards the Ganga, which we had created with lighting effects. A man shouted in Gujarati, 'Sister, don't go any further, there is water, you will drown.' This can happen only in theatre!"

He gives credit to his creative directors and set designers like Chhela-Paresh. "In 'Dhummas' for instance, I gave the designer the idea of creating a multi-level set, so the action moves on different locations without any blackouts. Whenever I can, I try to take Gujarati theatre away from box sets and conventional lighting. I have understood over the years that we have to be ready for changes. I am afraid commercial plays have killed art in Gujarati theatre, that pursuit of excellence is lost. I have to work hard to be financially comfortable, but the whole creative process keeps me going. I am constantly working on scripts. I love rehearsals. My kids Sharvi and Dhruv also act on and off in plays. My wife is our monitor, without her, we can't function," says Kamlesh.

Going Native

On popular demand

Drawing from immediate concerns, Masroor Jahan's stories conjure up a bout of bliss, a risk of ruin

SHAFAY KIDWAI

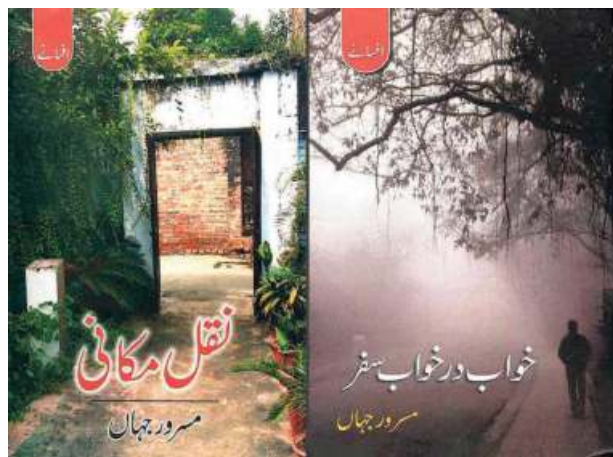
Does poignant portrayal of every occurrence still put interactive social media buffs on a celebrated site of hope, dreams, despair, introspection, and self-discovery? Do the multi-linear narratives of commonplace romantic experience and the uncomplicated process of living with social conformity make a big splash in the world where selfie has become a folk art?

Gifted writer

Nicholas Sparks, J. K. Rowling and Chetan Bhagat's immense popularity provides the answer and it is a conclusive 'yes'. They are not the only bestselling writers as many authors of different languages can vie with them and one of them is the celebrated and prolific Urdu writer, Masroor Jahan, whose short stories, employing vivid and exciting plot, sharp and witty dialogues, engaging characters and nuanced functional prose, go beyond the dime fiction.



Masroor Jahan, extremely popular in the subcontinent, has depicted all the contradictions of life through the eyes of an individual whose warm-hearted love surfaces in her oeuvre comprising 500 short stories and 65 novels.



Her two collections - "Naqal-e-Makani" and "Khwab Dar Khwab", carrying 30 short stories, two novelettes, and three sketches appeared recently.

The tantalising prose demands that it is to be read straight through from beginning to end. Masroor Jahan, extremely popular in the subcontinent, has depicted all the contradictions of life through the eyes of an individual whose warm-hearted love surfaces in her oeuvre comprising 500 short stories and 65 novels.

Entitlement must not make one insensitive to the plight of the other, no matter how intimate two individuals are. Sometimes evildoers seem more considerate than those who share a strong emotional bond. Masroor Jahan's story "Lutera" brilliantly depicts how a miscreant abducted a married woman but when he realised that the woman is pregnant, he let her go but her husband has not cared about her medical condition. It prompted the heroine to conclude "can

a husband put the well being of his offspring being nurtured in the womb into jeopardy just to fulfil his lust? Pregnancy has softened a hardened criminal though he can rape her if he wishes. The delinquent was her husband, Prakash who virtually raped her".

Abstract and vexed questions that remain unanswered for five years hardly find their way in her stories whose creative dexterity makes everyday disasters, the decimation of age-old cultural values and the perils of chasing ambitions like a hot commodity.

Further yearning for companionship produces a sense of benightedness and it is astutely depicted in the story "Basharat". Romance is always a timely topic and it simultaneously cultivates a sense of intimacy, belonging and a sense of alienation and Masroor Jahan is intrigued by a series of such manifestations of desire. Her stories, "Intizar Ki Sadi", "Khwab Dar Khwab", "Qafas", "Pichhla Darwaza", "Izzatdaar",

"Do Raha", "Dhanak Ke Saat Rang", "Khoye Hue Lamhe", "Apna Suraj aur Apna Chand" weave a captivating narrative of desire that ticks rage, pity and solace at once.

Communal harmony and cultural cohesion is the topic that captures the wakeful attention of the prominent writer. "Gudiya" and "Zaroorat" offer priceless insights into the human psyche that is both terrifying and exhilarating. Unostentatious love can fetch moments of epiphany and this is what Masroor Jahan creatively documented in her short story "Sath Sath".

The author's sweep is quite amazing and female protagonists of her stories do not conjure up self-pity. In her stories, a woman is not presented as a completely helpless entity as she is invested with the tremendous potentiality of shaping her destiny.

Committed to the silenced

Masroor Jahan's creative outpourings manifest her unflinching commitment to the silenced and dispossessed and who cannot be put into the fixed definition of religion, caste and creed. Her many stories, drawing sustenance from immediate concerns, conjure up a bout of bliss and also show the risk of ruin. Masroor Jahan's nuanced writings make it clear that romantic flourish is not doomed at all and her stories are not vulnerable to technological advancement. Book is still an inseparable part of popular entertainment.

...desire is muzzled

Continued from page 3

In the midst of bevy of young girls, three protagonists stand out as an embodiment of defiance and narrate the sordid tale of "Khwahish Gali" and its caged habitants. We meet Baidehi and Kajal - both sex workers - and a woman journalist who interacts with them to write about them. Through her and Baidehi's blog, they are determined to tell the world their story, their tormentors and their resolve to change the system and liberate themselves from the chains of sexual slavery.

Baidehi tells the journalist that the man to whom she was married used her to take her to high society to entertain its members and through her he tries to climb up the social ladder. Suffering untold pain, she succeeded in keeping her daughter Durga away from the wretched environment, wishing her to grow as a morally and socially conscious human being.

Kajal tells the journalist that a man posing as her husband brought her here and once arriving here there is no escape for her. As the journalist starts exposing men wearing the mask of respectability and Baidehi's blog start pricking the conscience of society, men with vested interests become alarmed. Baidehi decides to contest election to expose the so-called moral guardians of society in authority. The journalist supports her wholeheartedly.

Inhuman aspect

The production also brings out to the fore another inhuman aspect of brothel - the social and legal issues of children given birth by sex workers. A group of such young people forms a musical band with the refrain that they are searching for their fathers. On the surface the scene is lively with thrilling musical tunes but beneath the surface there runs elements of irony and wry humour.

The director has ingeniously enacted the rape scene set inside a car in which a sex worker is being taken to entertain debauched men. The director has created the ambience of a deserted road in the night and dark image of sex worker's grim struggle with her perpetrators. In the dim light, the audience watches terrifying sequence with bated breath.

As the play opens with a song remarkable for its ironic comment, it ends with Faiz Ahmed Faiz's most celebrated revolutionary poem: "Darbar-e-Watan Mein Jab Ek Din Sab Janewaale Jayange..." which is sung by entire cast in tuneful voices full of passion and conviction. It offers highly rewarding and inspiring moment.

The ensemble acting is remarkably impressive.

IN SHORTS

Celebrating the Guru- shishya bond

Utsav - Guru Ranjana Gaur's Odissi Dance Academy will celebrate its annual dance festival, "Saare Jahan Se Accha 2019", at Stein Auditorium of India Habitat Centre, on August 13 and 14. The festival of Indian classical dance celebrates the Independence Day through classical music and dance under the guidance of Gaur.

Eminent artists, upcoming talent and musicians

from across India as well as abroad are given a platform to perform.

This year, the 14th edition of the festival is dedicated to the guru shishya parampara. Five different styles of classical dances namely Odissi, Kathak, Mohiniyattam, Sattriya and a multi-style dance presentation will be staged.

Day one's highlight will be a creative dance drama presentation based on Odissi style titled "Khud Mein Ka-



bir, Kabir Mein Hum" which emphasises the power of love, peace and surrender to the Guru.

...New stars on the horizon

Continued from page 5

The only percussionist from the Banaras gharana to receive the Yuva award, Shubh Maharaj is the grandson of the iconic Pt Kishen Maharaj. He pointed out, "Ustad Bismillah Khan, in whose name the award is instituted, was from Banaras, and I feel proud to be honoured in his name. This award is really special because the selection is by other artists. I am also grateful it's been given to me at this

young age. Of course, the journey of learning goes on. Sadly, nowadays, our world of music has become quite fragmented, and we live in pockets. There are artists in Kolkata, Pune, Delhi and Banaras. One does not just sit with others and share the music. Festivals are no longer occasions to spend time with other musicians; earlier I remember at Saptak there used to be pressure as seniors and peers would always turn up for the concert



Shubh Maharaj

of youngsters. One needs that as a spur. I see this award as a spur, to carry on."

Quick Five: Raaj Shandilya

Finding humour

ATIF KHAN

Writer and director Raaj Shandilya is the new name in humour business. He has written dialogues for “Jabariya Jodi”, and is directing Ayushmann Khurrana’s upcoming film “Dream Girl”. “The film’s idea came from my co-writer Nirman in 2013 and he wanted me to write it. In 2015, we completed the story of a man who speaks in the voice of different women. Ayushmann loved the story and agreed in ten minutes. We shot the film in Mathura as my maternal family is from there,” informs Raaj, who made a name for himself by writing for comedy shows on television.



Excerpts-

What went into writing dialogues of “Jabariya Jodi”?

There is sudden attention towards the small city and its people. After experiencing the world, today’s generation is more passionate about small city’s distinct flavour. We shot ‘Jabariya Jodi’ in Lucknow and we wanted to have the flavour of Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar region. We worked a lot on the diction. I am not from Bihar but I have a lot of friends who come from that region and I have done many comic acts on Bihar. At the same time, I wanted to write in such a way that was understood across the country, so we did not stress too much on typical Bihar tone and kept it simple.

It was tough to make Siddharth (Malhotra) shed his urban image. We showed him many Bhojpuri films and asked him to react normally. It is his most realistic work.

How did your journey start?

I was doing engineering in Bhopal when “Laughter Challenge” started. As I used to write in my school days and loved humour, it inspired me a lot. I kept looking for some opportunities until I met a singer from Jhansi, my home town, who was living in Mumbai. I accompanied him to Mumbai and met several “Laughter Challenge” contestants. I started writing for them which they loved.

I wrote without credit for two-three years until “Comedy Circus” started. I have written almost for all the stand-up artists working in the industry.

Where do you get your ideas from?

Life inspires me. I love meeting people, particularly Punjabi people! I think you become a writer by being around with people.

Even now when my passion has changed into my profession, nothing has changed. I think what I do is something special as not everyone can make people laugh. I take this as a responsibility. Plus, I read a lot.

Tell us about the stand-up comedy scene

We started late. It was only Jaspal Bhatti ji who was doing something on the lines of stand-up comedy. There was no settled genre and comedians were hardly seen beyond cinema. When these shows arrived, Indian audience liked the unique style of presentation.

Earlier people only used to tell jokes or mimic actors, but we came up with sketches and different varieties of stand-up. We borrow a lot from the tradition of Tamasha, Nautanki, and Ragini. There are problems everywhere and humour can be created out of these problems.

How did screenwriting happen?

Till 2013, I wrote around 2000 scripts and I was thinking of doing something new. I got a call from Anees Bazmee and he wanted me to write dialogues for the sequel of “Welcome. It was a big opportunity because Anees ji is himself a writer. I realised film writing gives a different kind of satisfaction.

You have to understand what the story wants to convey and how crisply you can say that. I was very much inspired by Kader Khan and love the writing of Salim-Javed. No writer has given industry more than Kader sahab in terms of humour and comedy.

The aroma of Awadh

As “Umrao Jaan Ada” finds a new life on stage, we speak to the artists who have given it the shape of a musical

MURTAZA ALI KHAN

When Mirza Hadi Ruswa would have penned down “Umrao Jaan Ada”, which is widely regarded as the first novel written in Urdu, around the turn of 19th century, he wouldn’t have imagined that one day it will become the emblem of the Lucknow’s rich courtesan culture for the posterity.

Over the years, the novel has had several film and television adaptations in both India as well as Pakistan - the most famous being Indian filmmaker Muzaffar Ali’s 1981 film “Umrao Jaan” starring Rekha in the eponymous role of a Lucknow-based courtesan in desperate search of true love. Almost four decades later, Mirza Hadi Ruswa’s magnum opus has received another major adaptation. Only this time it’s meant for theatre and not cinema. The project titled ‘Umrao Jaan Ada - The Musical’, featuring singer-actor Pratibha Singh Baghel as Umrao Jaan, is being staged in New Delhi’s Jawaharlal Nehru Weightlifting Indoor Stadium.

The musical is helmed by the noted choreographer Rajeev Goswami who had the clarity from the world go that the theatrical rendition wouldn’t be a remake of the Muzaffar Ali classic.

“It is one hundred percent pure adaptation, completely inspired by Mirza Hadi Ruswa’s book. Now every director likes to bring a unique vision and so we have tried to present it keeping in mind the 21st century audiences but without diluting the source material,” reveals Goswami who has previously directed another musical “Beyond Bollywood”.

But dealing with an epic work like “Umrao Jaan Ada” was no cinch for Goswami. “It was a big challenge to adapt a 19th century story for the stage. The novel of course is a masterpiece. Now, I can understand Urdu and even appreciate its nuances but unfortunately I



Striking a chord Pratibha Singh Baghel

can’t read Urdu and so I had to rely on a Hindi translation. But I must tell you that having a writer and lyricist like Irfan Siddiqui in our team is really an added advantage,” adds Goswami.

Performing live

The musical features live music by Salim - Sulaiman Merchant who are also the presenters of the play. The composer duo previously collaborated with Goswami on “Beyond Bollywood”. “Right from a very young age we have been watching plays, both in India as well as abroad. Musicals such as ‘Phantom of the Opera’, ‘My Fair Lady’, ‘The Lion King’, ‘Wicked’, etc. have been our favourites. During our early training we were taught both Indian classical as well as Western music. And since we had good training we were able to use it to our advantage in our work for Hindi films. But what differentiates Broadway and West End-style music is that the actors themselves sing, dance and perform live. So there was a deep desire to replicate something similar for the Indian audiences,” explains Salim Merchant.

“There was also this thought at the back of our minds that we are not getting to hear our traditional forms of music such as folk, ghazal, khayal, and thumri in movies and on radio as much as we should. So that’s how we got the idea of

adapting Ruswa’s novel into a grand musical production,” adds Sulaiman Merchant.

Once the idea was in place, the biggest challenge was to find someone who could essay the character of Umrao Jaan. What made it more difficult is that fact that the person was also required to be a good singer and a dancer. “For the role of Umrao Jaan, we were looking for someone who could sing, act and dance live. It’s actually a very unique skill set to possess. So during the quest when we set our eyes on Pratibha she looked quite suitable for the part. And so far she has lived up to it with her commitment and dedication,” says Salim.

The formal training in Indian classical music has really helped Pratibha, a 2009 SaReGaMaPa finalist, in becoming a natural choice for roles that require live singing.

She previously essayed the character of Bahar in Feroz Abbas Khan’s musical “Mughal-e-Azam”. “Pronunciation / diction wasn’t an issue for me since I have been singing ghazals since my childhood but I had to work really hard to get the acting right. The character belongs to a completely different age and is nothing like the lives we live today. Also, the story and her life’s circumstances are so devastating. How a young girl

named Amiran gets abducted from her house and is sold to a courtesan called Khanum Jaan who runs a brothel in early 19th century Lucknow. She grows up to become the famous courtesan Umrao Jaan who dares to fall in love with a Nawab. As an actor, it is very difficult to essay a character with such a complex arc. I really had to struggle for days in order to get a proper hold over the character,” confesses Pratibha.

The most exciting part about the musical is how it incorporates Khayyam’s original music and songs from the 1981 film. Other than three original songs composed by Salim - Sulaiman, the musical has four songs of Khayyam in addition to a fifth one which Umrao hums during the play. The duo has re-recorded the classic songs to suit the needs of live theatre. “We primarily like to see it as a re-documentation of a 40-year-old classic work as the style and everything else is all authentic. The flair and the drama of the musical only add to it. The Prague Philharmonic Orchestra has helped us with the strings, violins, cellos, and the brass instruments. It’s a great flavour of thumri, ghazal, and khayal with live symphony orchestra. It’s something that hasn’t been done before and the western part never gets to overshadow the Indian classical components,” reveals Sulaiman who is chuffed that such a complex arrangement has come out so well.

But, despite the novelties, the composer duo has made conscious efforts to ensure that the originality of the music in the songs in terms of the use of orchestra, how those songs were produced, and the use of beats is pretty much intact.

“We have made sure the authenticity of that is there. However, we wanted a little more than what was there in the film so that we could incorporate the Kathak beats and the different dance movements so almost all the songs have some form of change in terms of creating the right atmosphere for a musical play,” sums up Salim who is keen on taking the musical abroad once the Indian leg gets completed.

“Umrao Jaan Ada” is being staged at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi, until August 11, 2019)