

Voters will punish divisive gang: Shah

Minister says the Congress-led group disrupted peace in Delhi during protests against the CAA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said here on Thursday that it was time to "punish" the "tukde tukde [splintering] gang led by the Congress", which had "disrupted the peace" in Delhi during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The people of Delhi would punish them, he said referring to the coming Assembly election.

Mr. Shah's statement comes in the wake of protests against the Act across the country, including in Delhi, where violence broke out during some of the protests.

When the Citizenship Amendment Bill was discussed in Parliament, "no one was willing to say anything", but then they started "misleading" people, he said at a ceremony for laying the foundation stone for the East Delhi Hub at Karkardooma.

"Delhi has seen it after a long time that people have come out on the streets and



Poll bugle: Amit Shah at a function to lay the foundation stone for a transit hub in New Delhi on Thursday. •PTI

peace has been disrupted. The Opposition has misled people and disrupted the peace in Delhi. I want to ask Delhiites, that the police will

do its work, but should you not bring in a government in Delhi that maintains peace?... Time has come to punish the *tukde tukde* gang

under the leadership of the Congress that is responsible for making Delhi tense. Delhi's public will punish them," he said.

Swipe at AAP

With election to the Delhi Assembly expected to be announced soon, Mr. Shah hit out at the Aam Aadmi Party administration, accusing Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's government of obstructing development projects.

He said the "Kejriwal *jhaadu* [broom, the AAP's election symbol] government" was the biggest obstacle before Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri's efforts to develop Delhi. The Centre's healthcare scheme, Ayushman Bharat, and the affordable housing initiative, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, had been obstructed by the Delhi government, he alleged.

He said Delhiites would

elect a BJP government to accelerate development works. The AAP government was trying to take credit for the work of the Modi government by issuing advertisements.

Along the lines of the Sabarmati riverfront in Gujarat, Mr. Shah said, the Centre had decided to redevelop the banks of the Yamuna in Delhi. The first phase, covering 90 hectares, had started and the second phase of 107 hectares would be started soon — both would be done in the next five years.

Mr. Puri spoke about the East Delhi Hub project being made by NBCC (India) Ltd., formerly National Buildings Construction Corporation Limited. The first transit-oriented development (TOD) project in the country, the first phase of the hub would cost ₹1,393 crore spread over 30 hectares. Under the TOD policy, 70% of the hub would be for residential use, 20% commercial and 10% civic amenities.

Rahul, BJP trade charges on Assam detention centres

Congress leader will address rally in Guwahati on Saturday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi is scheduled to address a rally in Guwahati — the epicentre of the nationwide protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act — on Saturday.

His visit will coincide with the foundation day of the Congress.

Mr. Gandhi's rally will mark a break with the past when the party's foundation day was celebrated at its headquarters in Delhi and the States.

In a tweet on Thursday, Mr. Gandhi attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his remarks that there were no detention centres in the country, alleging that "RSS's Prime Minister lies to Bharat Mata". He posted a video clip of Mr. Modi's address at the Ramlila Maidan last week where the PM had



Rahul Gandhi

"*Jhoothon ka sardar* (master of lies)". The party said Mr. Gandhi was "obfuscating" the fact that detention camps for illegal migrants in Assam were set up when the Congress was in power both at the Centre and the State.

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said at a press conference at the party headquarters in Delhi that Mr. Gandhi had used objectionable language, but that it was too much to ask for decency in public discourse from him. Mr. Patra showed the official statement issued by the Congress-led UPA government in 2011 stating that detention centres had been set up in Assam.

"RSS's Prime Minister lies to Bharat Mata," Mr. Gandhi said in the tweet in Hindi with the hashtag #JhootJhootJhoot [lies, lies, lies]. The BJP responded to Mr. Gandhi's post by calling him

accused the Congress and its allies of being "urban Naxals" and spreading rumours that Muslims would be sent to detention centres. The video is joined with a clip from the BBC's Hindi service on the detention centres in Assam.

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FIR filed against 1,200 unnamed AMU students

They had taken out candlelight march

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

The Aligarh police have lodged an FIR against 1,200 unnamed Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) students who took out a candlelight march against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act to show solidarity with the students who faced police action in the university and Jamia Millia Islamia.

Most of the participants were non-resident students. All were charged with Sections 188 and 341 of the Indian Penal Code for violating Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The FIR said students blocked a thoroughfare for an hour and did not move out of the



Students taking out a march on the AMU campus.

university campus.

"Does it mean we could not protest peacefully even inside the campus," asked a student who participated in the protest. A senior university official said the road after the Sir Syed Gate was not a thoroughfare.

U.P. DGP orders SIT probe into riots

Internet suspended in five western districts; 1,113 arrested so far, say police

ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL
LUCKNOW/MEERUT

Uttar Pradesh Director-General of Police (DGP) O.P. Singh on Thursday ordered a Special Investigation Team (SIT) inquiry into the incidents of violence during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in the State.

Anticipating further trouble, Internet services were suspended in Meerut, Ghaziabad, Muzaffarnagar, Bulandshahr and Shamli in the evening and will be resumed on Friday evening, officials said.

Police and administration in all these districts and elsewhere in the region have been placed on alert.

Earlier in the day, the U.P.



Remains of the day: Charred motorbikes lying at a police post set on fire by demonstrators in Lucknow. •REUTERS

police in a statement said 1,113 people had been arrested in different parts of the State in connection with the anti-CAA protests and preventive action was taken against 5,558 others.

The statement added that

a total of 327 FIRs were lodged in connection with the protests and 19 people had lost their lives in the violence.

"288 policemen were injured, and 61 of them had received bullet injuries during

the protests," it added. "124 people arrested for posting inciting content on social media. 93 FIRs registered. Action was taken on 19,409 social media posts. 9,372 Twitter, 9,856 Facebook, and 181 YouTube profiles blocked," the statement said.

Minister sparks row

U.P. Minister Kapil Dev Agarwal stoked a controversy after he refused to meet the families of two victims of the violence.

"Why should I go to the homes of rioters? Those who are rioting and want to inflame passions, how are they part of society? Why should I go there? This is not about Hindu-Muslim," he said. (With PTI inputs)

ATS rearrests five persons in 2008 Jaipur blasts case

Shahbaz Ahmed, acquitted in 8 cases, named in new case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of Rajasthan police has rearrested four persons, who were sentenced to death for the 2008 serial blasts in Jaipur, as well as the one who was acquitted for want of evidence, in connection with the case registered for a bomb which was defused. The five persons were picked up from the Central Jail here on Wednesday and arrested as accused.

Shahbaz Ahmed, 43, who had a production warrant in minor cases, was not released after his acquittal by a special court here on December 18. All the five accused, who were produced in a court on Thursday, were remanded in ATS custody for two days.

The case pertains to a bomb strapped to a bicycle parked in Chadpol Bazaar, which was defused by the police personnel before it could explode on May 13, 2008. Eight other ammonium nitrate-based bombs, packed with metal splinters, went off at different locations within a two-km radius in the densely populated Walled City, killing 71 persons and leaving about 200 injured.

The trial in eight cases registered by the police resulted in the conviction of four persons from Uttar Pradesh, but the case pertaining to the planting of unexploded bomb was not tried with the rest of the blast matters.

The four persons who were awarded the death penalty are Mohammed Saif, Mohammed Sarwar Azmi, Saifur Rehman and Mohammed Salman. Shahbaz, a resident of Lucknow who



Police van carrying the men convicted in the 2008 Jaipur serial blasts case earlier this month. •FILE PHOTO

was the first one to be arrested three months after the blasts, was acquitted in all the eight cases. He was charged with sending an e-mail which claimed responsibility for the blasts on behalf of the Indian Mujahideen, but the court did not find evidence beyond doubt to connect him with the crime.

PUCL poser

The People's Union for Civil Liberties questioned why the ATS had not investigated the case of the defused bomb earlier and filed its charge-sheet along with those for the eight other cases. "Why was this case left out? Does it not show a vindictive and malicious attitude to implicate a person held innocent by the court?" said PUCL-Rajasthan president Kavita Srivastava, while alleging lack of transparency in the ATS.

Ms. Srivastava sought the

intervention of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, who also holds the Home portfolio, to ensure immediate release of Shahbaz. She said the police had booked Shahbaz as an accused in the new case with the intention to prevent his release, adding that the PUCL would move the NHRC in the matter.

The ATS had claimed to have cracked the Jaipur blasts case after arresting Shahbaz from his computer and career consultancy centre in Aminabad locality of Lucknow.

He was referred to as the mastermind of serial blasts in Jaipur and elsewhere till the controversial Batla House encounter took place in Delhi on September 19, 2008, and some alleged IM operatives were arrested in Mumbai and Pune. The four persons convicted with death sentence were nabbed in Delhi and different towns in U.P.

Breastfed child in distress after parents are jailed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Support has poured in for activist couple Ekta Singh and Ravi Shekhar who were among the more than 60 persons arrested in Varanasi for protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act last week.

As both of them are in jail, with the bail hearing at a sessions court expected to be taken up only after January 1, their friends and well-wishers have expressed concern for their 14-month-old breastfed child.

The 60 persons, including several social activists

and students of the BHU and the Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth, were arrested on December 19 while taking out a march in protest against the CAA and the NRC. The police charged them for rioting, unlawful assembly, disobedience and assault among other charges. Associates of those booked say the protests were peaceful, and accused the police of excessive action.

While the FIR alleges that the protesters had created a sense of chaos and fear, there is no mention of any violence.

BJP, RSS take out rally in Bhopal

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

A day after Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath-led a rally, 1,000 members of the BJP, the RSS, the Bajrang Dal and the Yuva Morcha took out a rally here on Thursday.

Vikas Virani, BJP Bhopal district president, said the Congress was indulging in "vote bank politics" over the citizenship Act.



Actors Swara Bhaskar and Mohammed Zeeshan Ayub at a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday. •R.V. MOORTHY

'Reign of terror' prevailing in U.P.

Activists seek SC-monitored probe

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Activists on Thursday alleged that with the Uttar Pradesh government "intimidating" citizens who were protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens, a "reign of terror" was prevailing in the State.

Addressing the media, activists demanded a Supreme Court-monitored SIT probe into police action in the State.

Organised under the banner of "Hum Bharat Ke Log: National Action Against Citizenship Amendment", which includes several rights groups, activist Harsh Mander said the Centre was spreading "blatant lies" especially with regard to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement on the

non-existence of detention centres in the country.

He also added that the government could use details collected through the National Population Register (NPR) to identify people as "doubtful citizens" and use the information for the NRC.

"There is so much of distrust with what the Prime Minister is saying," said Mr. Mander. "He has said that there are no detention centres in the country, while fact of the matter is that I have visited such centres myself. This kind of blatant lying is unprecedented," he contended.

An appeal signed by film personalities was also read out by actors Swara Bhaskar and Mohammed Zeeshan Ayub, seeking a judicial inquiry into the incidents in Uttar Pradesh.

Violent protests rock Iraq over PM pick

President says he is ready to resign rather than put forward a candidate rejected by protesters

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BAGHDAD
Iraq's President said on Thursday he was "ready to resign" rather than put forward the candidate of a pro-Iranian coalition for the post of Prime Minister, deepening the country's political crisis. Barham Saleh's announcement came as anti-government protesters blocked roads and bridges in Baghdad. In the southern city of Nasiriyah, demonstrators set the provincial government building ablaze overnight for a second time since the protests began. Protesters also torched the new headquarters of a pro-Iran militia in Diwaniyah.



Sticking to their demands: Anti-government activists walking with a national flag at a makeshift roadblock in the southern city of Basra late on Wednesday. •AFP

In a letter to Parliament, Mr. Saleh said he wished to guarantee the "independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity" of Iraq. But he cited the Constitution, which obliges the President to task the candidate put forward by Parliament's biggest bloc with forming a government.

"With all my respect to (Basra Province Governor) Mr. Assaad al-Aidani, I decline to put him forward" for the post, Mr. Saleh wrote.

As that could be seen as violating the Constitution, "I place before members of Parliament my readiness to resign from the position of

President", Mr. Saleh added. Mr. Aidani is considered as the candidate of Iran, which protesters accuse of meddling in Iraqi affairs.

'Independent PM'
Weeks into a protest movement that has rocked Baghdad and Iraq's south, leaving

hundreds dead, Parliament is in deadlock over the selection of a replacement for previous Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi. He resigned last month in the face of massive demonstrations over official corruption, economic woes and poor infrastructure despite the country's oil

wealth. The demonstrators oppose the entire political class and have vented their anger against leaders who are negotiating to nominate an establishment insider as the next Prime Minister.

Pro-Iranian factions have touted outgoing Higher Education Minister Qusay al-Suhail for the post, later opting for Mr. Aidani after the President rejected Mr. Suhail's nomination. Both are unpopular choices with protesters, who also have slammed Mr. Aidani for crushing previous demonstrations in Basra province last year.

"We don't want Assaad the Iranian!" said protesters in the southern city of Kut.

The protesters want a technocratic premier who has had no involvement in the political system set up after the U.S.-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003.

"The government is hostage to corrupt parties and sectarian divisions", said an activist in Nasiriyah.

Russian authorities raid Alexei Navalny's office

Move was linked to criminal investigation, say officials

REUTERS MOSCOW

Russian authorities raided the Moscow headquarters of Opposition politician Alexei Navalny on Thursday, using power tools to gain entry before dragging Mr. Navalny out by force and confiscating technical equipment such as laptops.

Mr. Navalny and his allies said the raid on his Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) was carried out by the Federal Bailiffs Service and was connected to his refusal to delete a video investigation which levelled graft allegations against Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and billionaire businessman Alisher Usmanov.

The Federal Bailiffs Service said it was carrying out investigative activities at Mr. Navalny's foundation as part of a criminal investigation. It said it had not detained



Alexei Navalny sitting outside his office during the raid on Thursday. •REUTERS

anyone during the raid. Mr. Usmanov brought and won a defamation lawsuit against Mr. Navalny in 2017.

'Won't delete video'
That case ended with a court ordering Mr. Navalny to delete within 10 days all references to the allegations in his video, which Mr. Medvedev and Mr. Usmanov said were utterly false.

Mr. Navalny said on

Thursday he would not delete the video, which has been watched over 32 million times on YouTube since it was first posted in March 2017.

The raid occurred a day after Mr. Navalny said that the forcible military conscription of one of his allies to a remote air base in the Arctic amounted to kidnapping and illegal imprisonment. Allies said Mr. Navalny, who was barred from running in a presidential election against Vladimir Putin last year, had been due to present his own show, which is critical of the authorities, on his online TV channel later on Thursday.

Mr. Navalny's foundation, which specialises in publishing exposes on the alleged corruption of state officials, is the subject of a separate criminal investigation into alleged money laundering.

ELSEWHERE



Italian coalition hit as Minister quits

ROME
Italian Education Minister Lorenzo Fioramonti said on Thursday that he had resigned, dealing a blow to the country's four-month-old coalition government. Mr. Fioramonti, of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement, wrote on Facebook that he resigned because his demand for a minimum level of funding had not been met. •AFP

Typhoon Phanfone kills at least 16 in Philippines

MANILA
Typhoon Phanfone swept across remote villages and popular tourist areas of central Philippines on Christmas day claiming at least 16 lives, authorities said on Thursday. Tens of thousands of people in the mostly Catholic nation were also forced to evacuate their homes, they added. •AFP

Over 16,000 complaints filed over Afghan polls

KABUL
More than 16,000 complaints have been filed to Afghan election authorities over the handling of this year's presidential polls, officials said on Thursday, days after preliminary results gave President Ashraf Ghani a slim 50.64% majority. If the numbers hold following these investigations, the result is enough for Mr. Ghani to avoid a run-off, after he easily beat his long time rival Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, who won 39.52% votes. •AFP

China, Russia and Iran to hold naval drills in Gulf of Oman

'An attempt to deepen cooperation between the three navies'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BEIJING

China, Russia and Iran will hold joint naval drills starting Friday in the Gulf of Oman, Beijing and Tehran said, at a time of heightened tensions since the U.S. withdrew from a landmark nuclear deal with Tehran.

Set to take place from December 27 to 30, the military exercises aim to "deepen exchange and cooperation between the navies of the three

countries", Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Wu Qian told reporters on Thursday.

Mr. Wu said the Chinese navy would deploy its Xining guided missile destroyer - nicknamed the "carrier killer" for its array of anti-ship and land attack cruise missiles - in the drills.

For Iran, the drill's purpose was to bolster "international commerce security in the region" and "fighting ter-

rorism and piracy," said senior armed forces spokesman Brigadier General Aboldazl Shekarchi.

The exercise would "stabilise security" in the region and benefit the world, state news agency IRNA quoted him as saying on Wednesday.

China's Foreign Minister said the exercises were part of "normal military cooperation" between the three countries.

Netanyahu faces party leadership challenge

Election results are expected today

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE JERUSALEM

Israel's embattled premier Benjamin Netanyahu faced a challenge on Thursday for the leadership of his Likud party from a longtime rival, former Interior Minister Gideon Saar.

Likud's roughly 1,16,000 eligible voters have until 11 p.m. to choose between Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Saar, with the result expected by early Friday morning.

A defeat for Mr. Netanyahu, 70, would be a shock, but even a relatively close result could weaken his influence over the conservative party he has dominated for 20 years.

After a decade in power,



Benjamin Netanyahu

Mr. Netanyahu is Israel's longest serving premier but he has been weakened by a series of corruption indictments. After months of political stalemate, he faces a third general election within 12 months early next year - but only if he first defeats his challenger.

Pakistan files review petition in army chief's extension case

'Several legal gaps in verdict, govt. wants their rectification'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government on Thursday filed a review petition against the Supreme Court's decision about legislation on the extension of service of Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa.

A three-member Bench headed by then Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa on November 28 granted a six-month extension to Gen. Bajwa after being assured by the government that Parliament will pass a legislation on the extension/reappointment of an army chief within six months.

The ruling came in the

Protesters march through malls

Hong Kong govt. criticises violence, but says 'human rights remain top priority'

REUTERS HONG KONG

Hundreds of protesters marched through Hong Kong shopping malls on Thursday, disrupting business in the Asian financial hub for a third day over the festive period and prompting the riot police to close off a mall in a tourist district.

The "shopping protests" have targeted malls across the Chinese-ruled city since Christmas Eve, turning violent at times with the police firing tear gas to disperse demonstrators in areas filled



Protesters at shopping mall in Hong Kong. •AP

with shoppers and visitors.

While the turnout on Thursday was smaller than on the previous two days, the riot police stepped up

patrols at shopping centers on the Kowloon peninsula and in the rural New Territories.

"I think the purpose for us to come out is to... let people realise that so many frontline protesters sacrificed (things) for them. They should not forget and (simply) celebrate Christmas," said Sandy, a young demonstrator who wore a black mask to hide her identity.

"We have been fighting for almost seven months now, and the Hong Kong police have done so many bad

things." The protests began more than six months ago in response to a now-withdrawn Bill that would have allowed extraditions to mainland China, where courts are controlled by the Communist Party.

They have since evolved into a broader pro-democracy movement.

The government on Thursday criticised "unprecedented violence" by some protesters in the city, but said that protecting freedoms and human rights remained a top priority.

17 civilians killed in attack on Yemen market: UN

Third incident in same area in a month

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE SANAA

Seventeen civilians were killed in an attack in a market in Yemen's northern Saada governorate, the United Nations said, the third deadly assault on the same location in just over a month.

The attacks come despite relative calm in Yemen, where large-scale combat between government troops - backed by a Saudi-led military coalition - and the Iran-aligned Houthi rebels has largely subsided.

The UN said 12 Ethiopian migrants were among the 17 civilians killed in the incident on Tuesday at the Al-Raqw market in Saada go-

vernorate, a Houthi rebel stronghold.

At least 12 people were wounded, it said, without saying who was responsible or what weaponry was used.

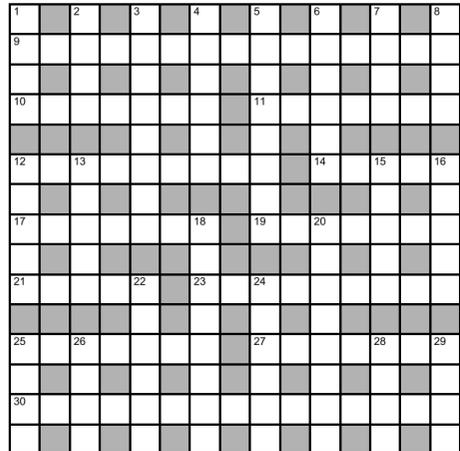
The Saudi-led coalition acknowledged on Thursday it had carried out an operation in Monabbih, a Saada district where the market is located.

The coalition did not provide further details.

An attack on Al-Raqw market on November 22 killed 10 civilians, again including Ethiopian nationals, and just days later, at least another 10 civilians were killed and 22 wounded in a second such incident.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12817

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



(set by Hypatia)

- 14 Gruff Arctic dog (5)
- 17 Mark Twain's plot changed show (7)
- 19 Exactly near main tourist location (4,3)
- 21 Supply, it can crawl without support (5)
- 23 Place for visitors to check out? (9)
- 25 Curtail banter to ban fool? (7)
- 27 Walking outfit (7)
- 30 Take out drawing tip near Joan Miro, perhaps (8,7)
- 7 Shout in Hindi, started by parliamentarian (4)
- 8 Resent messenger delivering nothing (4)
- 12 Is A, B...C possibly this? (5)
- 13 Dull if not drunk (5)
- 15 Charge that woman picked up for Japanese food (5)
- 16 Long story about earth (5)
- 18 Plebiscite re-held suppressing rising dissidents (8)
- 20 Encourage boring 1 playing ordinary broken chord (8)
- 22 Say artist picked up prize (6)
- 24 Chaplin didn't finish playing dictator (6)
- 25 Wife left cereal in microwave (4)
- 26 Look before stone is misplaced (4)
- 28 Hypatia? Not otherwise keen! (4)
- 29 Crow over clothing (4)

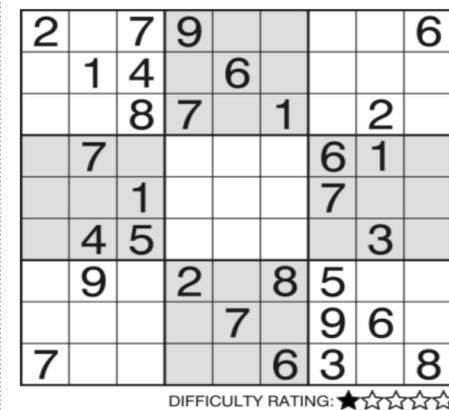
DOWN

- 1 Just softly pushed out loud couple (4)
- 2 Fight with woman's outlook (4)
- 3 What one on trial should do - lose one's temper? (4,1,3)
- 4 Feel sick, going through doctor's prescription? It's a natural reaction! (6)
- 5 Wretched queen blamed nurses (8)
- 6 Bear hugging river duck (6)

ACROSS

- 9 No actor got this kind of movie (8,7)
- 10 Actively lead revolutionary struggle before harsh treatment (3,4)
- 11 By and large, UK, for one, is outside EU, at last (7)
- 12 Spooner's sped past packs of Arctic animals (4,5)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12816

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M | S | A | O | P | O | K | | | |
| C | O | U | P | O | N | F | O | R | A |
| S | R | O | F | O | C | I | | | |
| S | Q | I | R | R | E | L | P | L | U |
| U | N | A | I | O | L | H | | | |
| M | I | S | T | A | K | E | N | S | M |
| T | H | E | A | T | | | | | |
| C | O | M | P | A | C | T | A | L | L |
| A | F | F | A | I | R | S | A | R | N |
| L | L | S | E | V | E | R | A | N | |
| N | O | V | E | N | A | S | U | F | F |
| W | O | T | H | U | J | I | A | | |
| D | E | P | U | T | I | S | E | A | N |
| R | T | D | O | E | G | E | | | |

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Compassionate to a fault

The Lord is hailed as not only the abode of all auspicious qualities, but also as ever free of any doshas whatsoever. If at all He has any dosha it might be said that it is His magnanimous nature that makes Him compassionate to a fault when He does not see any doshas in His devotees, pointed out Kalyanapuram Sri Aravamudhachariar in a discourse. While both the Lord and His consort are the very embodiment of compassion, there is even a subtle competition between them and Sri is seen to be a cut above Him. For, when it comes to disciplining the erring jivatmas, while the Lord is stern in His dealings, Sri adopts only soft measures that would transform each one by gradually eliminating the tendency to err that is inherent in beings.

Yet it is interesting to note that Periazhwar in one of his hymns presents an imaginary exchange between Goddess Sri and the Lord when she informs Him that the same Vibhishana whom He accepted in His fold had cast aspersions on her. This is a reference to the Hitopadesa section in Valmiki Ramayana when Vibhishana calls her a poisonous serpent tied to Ravana's neck. But the Lord justifies His act with the firm assertion, "My bhakta will not err or commit any mistake on any count," says the azhwar. This is His firm stance even if Goddess Sri raises a complaint against any devotee which is only a purely hypothetical situation. In the Vishnu Sahasra Nama, the term 'Avignatha' has a special significance. The literal meaning is not being aware. When applied to jivatmas it indicates their ignorance of the true nature of their Self; but when applied to the Lord it refers to His tendency to not heed any fault in His bhaktas. The upkeep and welfare of the universe and all beings is the prime concern for the divine couple.

MARKET WATCH

| | 26-12-2019 | % CHANGE |
|-----------|------------|----------|
| Sensex | 41,164 | -0.72 |
| US Dollar | 71.31 | -0.05 |
| Gold | 39,630 | 0.29 |
| Brent oil | 67.56 | 0.86 |

NIFTY 50

| | PRICE | CHANGE |
|-------------------|----------|--------|
| Adani Ports | 363.65 | -4.95 |
| Asian Paints | 1809.60 | 6.15 |
| Axis Bank | 736.50 | -4.35 |
| Bajaj Auto | 3230.05 | 3.20 |
| Bajaj Finserv | 9350.10 | 55.25 |
| Bajaj Finance | 4187.10 | 47.60 |
| Bharti Airtel | 447.55 | -9.60 |
| BPL | 477.20 | -0.60 |
| Britannia Ind | 3062.30 | -28.75 |
| Cipla | 474.15 | -4.55 |
| Coal India | 197.30 | -1.65 |
| Dr Reddys Lab | 2865.60 | -30.35 |
| Eicher Motors | 22045.70 | 177.05 |
| GAIL (India) | 118.10 | -1.65 |
| Grasim Ind | 736.75 | -1.75 |
| HCL Tech | 560.50 | -0.05 |
| HDFC | 2414.10 | 1.35 |
| HDFC Bank | 1270.45 | -18.70 |
| Hero MotoCorp | 2438.65 | 6.00 |
| Hindalco | 215.00 | -1.25 |
| Hind Unilever | 1944.95 | -1.45 |
| ICICI Bank | 538.75 | -2.35 |
| IndusInd Bank | 1515.40 | -6.45 |
| Bharti Infratel | 256.20 | 0.90 |
| Infosys | 728.95 | -4.45 |
| Indian Oil Corp | 125.10 | -2.30 |
| ITC | 236.80 | -1.95 |
| JSW Steel | 269.15 | 2.40 |
| Kotak Bank | 1694.25 | -17.30 |
| L&T | 1279.30 | -21.70 |
| M&M | 528.35 | 0.85 |
| Maruti Suzuki | 7240.90 | -86.90 |
| Nestle India Ltd. | 14599.25 | 13.25 |
| NTPC | 116.40 | 1.20 |
| ONGC | 128.00 | 2.00 |
| PowerGrid Corp | 184.85 | -2.30 |
| Reliance Ind | 1515.40 | -31.05 |
| State Bank | 329.85 | -1.60 |
| Sun Pharma | 422.15 | -7.65 |
| Tata Motors | 174.60 | -0.90 |
| TCS | 467.90 | 4.90 |
| Tata Steel | 2201.95 | -13.65 |
| Tech Mahindra | 770.40 | -1.65 |
| Titan | 1192.50 | -11.60 |
| UltraTech Cement | 4062.75 | -34.60 |
| UPL | 569.45 | 0.30 |
| Vedanta | 150.70 | 2.65 |
| Wipro | 250.30 | -1.95 |
| YES Bank | 48.65 | -2.55 |
| Zee Entertainment | 297.30 | 0.05 |

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on December 26

| CURRENCY | TT BUY | TT SELL |
|--------------------|--------|---------|
| US Dollar | 71.11 | 71.43 |
| Euro | 78.83 | 79.19 |
| British Pound | 92.22 | 92.67 |
| Japanese Yen (100) | 64.89 | 65.18 |
| Chinese Yuan | 10.16 | 10.21 |
| Swiss Franc | 72.46 | 72.79 |
| Singapore Dollar | 52.49 | 52.73 |
| Canadian Dollar | 54.06 | 54.31 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 17.20 | 17.28 |

Source: Indian Bank

BULLION RATES CHENNAI

December 26 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses

| | | |
|--------------------|------|--------|
| Retail Silver (1g) | 50.4 | (47.9) |
| 22 ct gold (1 g) | 3697 | (3636) |

More 5G spectrum sale on anvil

Telecom department to seek TRAI's views on auction for 24.75-27.25 GHz band

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

Preparations have started to bring in more 5G spectrum to be put on sale towards the end of 2020, according to an official.

This comes in the wake of the Centre's decision to conduct auctions for more than 8,300 Mhz of spectrum, including those to be used to offer 5G service, in March-April next year.

The Department of Telecom (DoT) will soon seek the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) recommendation on the auction of spectrum in the 24.75 to 27.25 Ghz band, which is considered highly suited to 5G services deployment.

"We will soon be making a reference to TRAI for millimeter bands (24.75 GHz to



DoT has received applications from Ericsson, Samsung, Nokia, Huawei, ZTE and two others for 5G trials. •P.V. SIVAKUMAR

27.25 GHz)... these are 5G bands... This we plan to auction sometime late next year," a senior Ministry official said.

The official said currently, three spectrum bands are considered good for offering

5G services, two of which – the 700 MHz and 3.4 GHz-3.6 GHz – will be put up for sale in the upcoming auction.

The Cellular Operators Association of India has been requesting the government to seek TRAI's views on 26

GHz band. Earlier this month, the Digital Communications Commission – the highest decision-making body in the DoT – gave its approval for TRAI's recommendation to put 8300 MHz of airwaves across 22 circles up for sale. About 35% of this spectrum is for 5G services.

5G trials

Asked about 5G trials, the official said the DoT had received seven applications, including from players such as Ericsson, Samsung, Nokia, Huawei and ZTE.

"The DoT will be calling each one of them to discuss what their plans are and evaluate their needs and then take a call accordingly. This should be finalised in the January-March quarter," the official added.

Oil nears \$68, highest in three months

REUTERS
LONDON

Oil rose towards \$68 a barrel to its highest in over three months on Thursday, buoyed by a report showing lower U.S. crude inventories, hopes of an end to the China-U.S. trade dispute and OPEC-led efforts to constrain supply.

The American Petroleum Institute, an oil industry group, said that U.S. crude stocks fell by 7.9 million barrels last week, much more than the decline forecast by analysts.

Brent crude, the global benchmark, reached \$67.83 a barrel, the highest since Sept. 17, and by late afternoon GMT was up 39 cents at \$67.59. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude gained 14 cents to \$61.25.

Tepid enthusiasm

In 2019, as many as 47 companies – with a cumulative issue size of over ₹51,000 crore – allowed regulatory approvals to lapse even though such approvals by the Securities and Exchange Board of India are valid for a period of one year

All figures in ₹ cr.

| Year | IPOs | OFS | QIPs |
|------|--------|--------|--------|
| 2019 | 12,982 | 25,811 | 35,238 |
| 2018 | 33,246 | 10,672 | 16,587 |
| 2017 | 68,827 | 18,094 | 61,148 |
| 2016 | 27,031 | 13,066 | 4,712 |
| 2015 | 13,874 | 35,566 | 19,065 |
| 2014 | 1,468 | 5,011 | 31,684 |
| 2013 | 1,619 | 23,964 | 8,075 |
| 2012 | 6,938 | 23,769 | 4,705 |
| 2011 | 5,966 | - | 3,459 |
| 2010 | 37,535 | - | 26,147 |
| 2009 | 19,544 | - | 34,676 |

Source: Prime Database

Initial public offers stayed muted in 2019

Offers-for-sale, however, saw a surge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Even as initial public offers (IPOs) stayed muted in 2019, significant fund-raising through offers-for-sale (OFS) and qualified institutional placements (QIPs) ensured that overall mobilisation remained vibrant in the year.

In 2019, a total of ₹81,174 crore was raised through the public equity markets, which was 28% higher than the ₹63,651 crore raised in calendar year 2018, according to Prime Database. Incidentally, this was about half of the all-time high of ₹1.6 lakh crore seen in 2017.

In terms of IPOs, 2019 saw only 16 main board issues that collectively raised ₹12,362 crore, a decline of 60% compared with last year's ₹30,959 crore raised from 24 offers. The largest IPO in 2019 was of Sterling & Wilson Solar for ₹2,850 crore. The average deal size was pegged at ₹773 crore.

The overall response to the main board IPOs of 2019 remained quite strong with two issues – IRCTC and Ujjivan Small Finance Bank – getting subscribed over 100 times. Others like CSB Bank, Affle India, Polycab India, Neogen Chemicals and In-

diamart Intermesh also registered a strong response.

The year saw 47 companies – with a cumulative issue size of over ₹51,000 crore – allowing regulatory approvals to lapse even as such approvals by the Securities and Exchange Board of India is valid for one year.

SME issues dipped

Interestingly, IPOs in the segment reserved for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) dipped for the first time ever since the platform was launched. In 2019, there were only 50 SME IPOs that collectively raised ₹621 crore, much lower than last year when 141 SME IPOs raised ₹2,287 crore.

Meanwhile, OFS saw a significant jump in the year with a total of ₹25,811 crore raised in 2019 against ₹10,672 crore in 2018. Of this, the government's divestment accounted for ₹5,871 crore, or 23% of the overall amount. The largest OFS was by Axis Bank, followed by SBI Life Insurance and HDFC Life Insurance.

As many as 11 firms mobilised ₹35,238 crore via QIPs, which was more than double last year's ₹16,587 crore raised via QIPs.

IL&FS: SEBI fines 3 rating agencies ₹25 lakh each

'No due diligence done for rating NCDs'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has penalised rating agencies India Ratings & Research, CARE and ICRA for alleged lack of proper due diligence while rating non-convertible debentures of crisis-hit IL&FS.

In three separate orders, the SEBI imposed a penalty of ₹25 lakh each on them. "Though there is no allegation of any mala fide on the part of the Noticee, the failure by the Noticee is blameworthy and serious considering the degree of responsibility bestowed upon it by the statute," said the orders. "Further, in the peculiar facts and circum-

stances of this case, the default has occurred due to lethargic indifference and needless procrastination and laxity of the Noticee...

"The brazen failure had clearly defeated the purposes of the regulations i.e. investor protection and orderly development of the securities markets... the default is grave and the gravity of this matter cannot be ignored." The SEBI probe has alleged the agencies placed excessive reliance on the submissions made by the IL&FS management while failing to change the rating or placing it under 'watch' even as there were reports related to the slow pace of asset monetisation and leveraging of the group.

Rising prices to aid Essar Steel

'U.S.-China deal to spur metals; quicker turnaround likely'

PYIYUSH PANDEY
MUMBAI

ArcelorMittal, along with Japanese partner Nippon Steel, is likely to financially turn around Essar Steel sooner than expected as steel prices have bottomed out globally and are likely to improve in 2020.

ArcelorMittal has formed a 60:40 JV with Nippon Steel to operate Essar Steel and its immediate focus is to enhance the operating capacity of the plant to 8.5 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) in the medium term and to 15 MTPA in the long term.

Discussion on plans

The board of the JV held a meeting to discuss turnaround plans. The company declined to offer any comment on the plans beyond its

commitment to enhance the capacity to 15 MTPA.

Sanjiv Bhasin, director, IIFL Securities, told *The Hindu*, "Steel prices have already bottomed out and 2020 will be a great year for metal stocks with the trade deal between U.S. and China. Globally, steel prices have started improving and the same trend is expected in India with lower imports."

However, the JV may find it difficult to ramp up capacity especially when the demand is yet to pick up in India. "Selling steel in India becomes difficult amid weak demand," said an analyst.

Vivek Kamra, MD of Alvarez & Marsal's performance improvement and restructuring business in India, told *The Hindu*, "There was a 25% rise in production to 7

MTPA while the company was still under IBC."

Rising market share

It also helped that, as the IBC process was going on, the firm was not liable to pay interest during the moratorium period.

"They were able to offer a discount of about 2% compared with competition to enhance market share as the company saved around 12% on interest costs during the moratorium period," a person close to the development said.

Analysts said the JV could have a competitive edge over Indian peers as it can raise funds from Japan and the global markets at sub-4% compared with double-digit interest costs paid by competitors in India.

Greaves Care, TVS Motor in service tie-up

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Greaves Care, a multi-brand spares and service arm of Greaves Cotton Ltd., has entered into a pact with TVS Motor Company to act as an authorised service centre for TVS three-wheelers. Under the pact, about 165 Greaves Care Centres will provide service support in the form of free service and campaign-related repairs.

"Greaves created the multi-brand service and spares ecosystem support for uninterrupted mobility, pan-India. The partnership is in line with our vision to create a robust network of after-sale services for our customers and nurture a long-lasting relationship," said Nagesh Basavanahalli, MD and CEO, Greaves Cotton Ltd.

Reliance values retail arm at ₹2.4 lakh crore

Offers 1:4 share swap to retail unit staff

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Reliance Retail has been valued at ₹2.4 lakh crore, with its parent Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) offering one share in RIL for every four shares held in the retail arm to its employees under a share swap scheme.

RIL shares on the BSE dipped 1.94% to ₹1,515.95 in a weak Mumbai market on Thursday, valuing the company at ₹9,60,991.56 crore, implying a valuation of ₹2,40,248 crore for its unlisted retail arm.

This is double the valuation of ₹1,20,388.9 crore for Avenue Supermarts Ltd., that owns and operates the D-Mart retail chain in India.

According to a notification on RIL's website, the stock swap scheme will be applicable to Reliance Retail

employees who were allotted shares or restricted stock units, under various employee stock options schemes.

The proposed scheme will not alter the capital structure of any of the companies.

"This will provide liquidity to Reliance Retail employees as RIL shares are listed, while Reliance Retail's are not," said a source in the know of the development.

RIL chairman Mukesh Ambani, during the company's annual general meeting, promised to list the retail and telecom arms after selling strategic stakes to investors by 2024.

Reliance Retail is an unlisted subsidiary of Reliance Retail Ventures and an indirect subsidiary of RIL.

Nirmala to meet PSU bank chiefs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will hold a meeting with heads of public sector banks (PSBs) on Saturday to review financial performance of the lenders and their business growth, sources said.

Given the importance of the banking sector in generating demand and boosting consumption, the sources said the meeting with the MDs and CEOs of PSBs ahead of the Budget 2020-21 is considered important.

Ms. Sitharaman is expected to present her second full Budget on February 1. The meeting is also expected to take up discussion on non-performing asset recovery through both NCLT and non-NCLT means, the sources said.

New wagon to boost cargo capacity

Volume may rise 4-fold; trials for Dedicated Freight Corridor's wagons underway

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
SRI MADHOPUR

The Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India, Ltd. (DFCCIL) tasked with building the over ₹81,000 crore freight corridor in the country, on Thursday began testing a new wagon that will help boost the cargo carrying capacity by four times due to increased length of the train, use of double-stack containers and more payload carrying capability.

"The new wagon – called BLCS (type A & B) – is currently a prototype. A total of three such wagons have been manufactured with inputs from the industry as to what their requirements are," said Ved Prakash, GM (operations), DFCCIL.

The wagon – used for hauling freight – have been tested by the Research Design and Standards Organisa-



Currently, the maximum speed of goods trains varies from 40 kmph to 100 kmph on Railways' tracks. •K. PICHUMANI

tion (RDSO) and are manufactured at the Golden Rock Railway Workshop in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu.

These wagons will be under trial till January 26, 2020. If approved by the RDSO, wagons will be manufactured commercially as per industry requirements.

On Thursday, the trial was conducted at a speed of 100

km/hour on a 270-km-long section of the western freight corridor from Rewari to Kishangarh. Currently, maximum speed of goods trains varies from 40 kmph to 100 kmph on the Indian Railways tracks. The DFC tracks are separate from the Indian Railways tracks. However, mostly they run parallel to each other.

The corridor, touted as one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the country, will cover a 3,360-km stretch consisting of eastern and western corridors.

The 1,504-km western freight corridor begins at Dabri, Uttar Pradesh, and goes up to India's largest container port, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, near Mumbai, passing via Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat. The 1,856-km eastern corridor will run from Ludhiana in Punjab to Dankuni near Kolkata, traversing Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand.

Once the entire corridor becomes operational in December 2021, the average speed of the freight trains is expected to increase from the current 26 km/hour on Indian Railways line to 70 km/hour on the dedicated freight corridor.

Who put chicken in my sushi?

RANJANI RAJENDRA

His Instagram feed is usually filled with posts of him travelling either through the country or abroad. His trips are typically centred around food; after all, they are the Chef On The Road trips that Thomas Zacharias, executive chef and partner at The Bombay Canteen, undertakes several times a year. These trips go on to inspire his innovative menus at the restaurant that has gone on to be voted as one of the best in the country.

Here, he shares the five best foods he got to try this past year during his travels.

Chicken sashimi

I'd gone to Japan early this year, and one of the dishes that completely blew me away was a chicken sashimi I had at a yakitori place in Kyoto called Kuchibashi Modern.

They have a special breed of poultry that is bred for sashimi; the bird is processed just before it is served to ensure freshness. It is typically eaten with wasabi and soy; and honestly, the dish made me rethink a lot of things about textures and flavours.

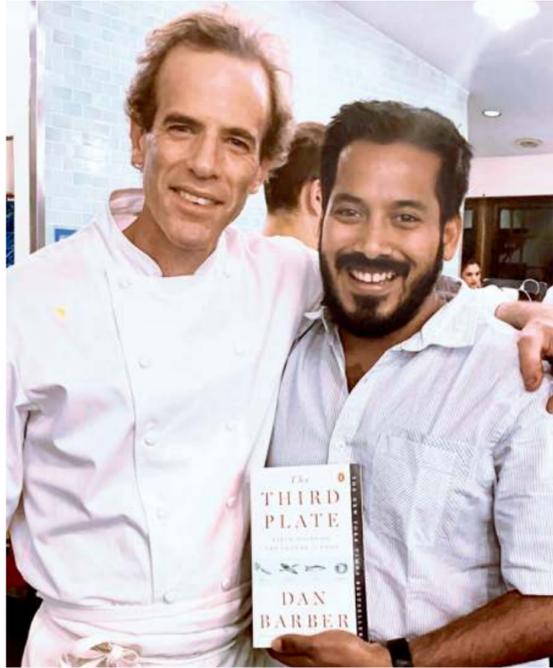
Until then, I had never thought that chicken sashimi would be so enjoyable or that I would be wowed by it. But it was one of those dishes that I wanted to order again.

Mushroom ceviche

This one was closer home; a delightful mushroom ceviche created by Chef Hussain Shahzad at O Pedro in Mumbai. It was a simple enough dish with some pickled oyster mushrooms, lima beans and a crisp tempura.

However, the depth of flavour the dish boasted was something else. I simply loved it.

Thomas Zacharias picks the top five dishes that blew him away during his Chef On The Road trips in 2019



Wild thali

Before the monsoon season, I had gone with the guys from the OOO Farms to Akole in the Sahyadri hills. Here, I met tribals and got to sample their cooking. They use vegetables that are either foraged or locally found, like *pendra*, *gharbandi*, *chai vel* and mahua fruit. Their cooking technique itself was quite simple but flavourful. All they would use was some

green chillies, onions and garlic. I realised just how little we know of local produce; it was a turning point for me and also paved the way for the evolving food at The Bombay Canteen. It was following this trip that we hosted Taste of the Wild, a two-month-long exploration of vegetables found in Maharashtra.

Chhatu patra poda

During my trip to Odisha, I happened to dine at the home of Alka Je-



Year in food
(Clockwise from left) Thomas Zacharias with Dan Barber; mushroom ceviche; chicken sashimi; *chhatu patra poda*; wild thali in Akole
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

na, where I had the *chhatu patra poda*. It is basically straw mushrooms, mustard, green chillies and onions that are wrapped in *sal* leaves and charred. I loved the technique and the way the different flavours came together. It opened my eyes to how different Odia food is.

Beet steak

In November this year, I worked at Blue Hill at Stone Barns for a week while travelling to New York. Helmed by Dan Barber, it is a modern farm-to-table restaurant. I have followed Dan's work closely and to be able to work and talk to him was undoubtedly the highlight of my year. Towards the end of my week there, the team treated me to a 30-course meal that lasted four-and-a-half hours! It was here that I tried the beet steak; it was one of the last savoury courses. The beet was charred and sliced to look like steak; it was then served with some beet greens, beet purée and four slices of beef. The coolest part: the sauce



basically looked like a candle and we'd assumed it was part of the table décor. The wax, however, was made of beef fat, which was then poured into a gravy boat. The meal was a re-look at how to achieve a balance on our plates, which are usually meat heavy with some starch and vegetables. Here, the vegetable was the star and the meat a mere accompaniment.

FOOD SPOT

Dinner on a cold night

How to turn on the heat with food, especially dessert



RAHUL VERMA

It was a cold and foggy night. I needed something that would warm my soul. And my thoughts naturally turned to food. I had been getting calls from a delivery outfit, and decided I'd try their dishes out. To give away the conclusion of my story, the food was excellent, and I had a great meal that blew the winter blues away.

The delivery outlet is called Heritage Food, and it has two subsections: Indian Heritage and Orient Heritage. It is based in Malviya Nagar, and delivers food to neighbourhoods in south Delhi (through Swiggy and Zomato). But it also runs a catering service, for which orders have to be placed in advance.

The food came neatly packed in well-sealed boxes. I enjoyed their rainbow vegetarian sushi – nicely flavoured rice rolls with



Strictly for the epicurean (From left) Thai Chicken Red Curry; Dim Sums
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



ghee. But another old favourite of mine – the fiery Andhra speciality Chicken 65 – did not impress me much. I found the chicken a bit too dry and salty. The Lemon Rice was not bad, but it was a wee bit dry, too. I love it when the lemon rice is moist.

The delivery services (Swiggy and Zomato) right now have the old menus, but I am told they will soon include all these delightful dishes – Sushi Rolls, Chinese Chilli Chicken with capsicum and onions, tempuras, Dim Sums, Chicken Korma, Dhaba Chikken, Aviyal, Vegetable Chettinad et al.

To end your meal, I would suggest that you get some Kheerer Singara – samosas prepared with sweetened and thickened milk – from New Annapurna Sweets near Yusuf Sarai. My brother-in-law sent some across, and I thought they were the most delicious sweets I had eaten in a very long time. That, to my mind, was the best way to end a meal on a cold winter's night.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

bits of veggies tucked into them. The rice was soft, and the veggies were crunchy. The Thai water chestnut dim sums were not bad either, though I think the casing could have been a bit thinner. But the filling was delicious, and I enjoyed their fiery chicken dim sums, too.

Their menu is quite comprehensive and includes everything from the Andhra Chicken 65 to Chicken Ghee Roast, Vegetarian Chettinad, Aviyal and Thai Red Chicken Curry. I thoroughly enjoyed the curry, which had the delightful flavours of galangal and lemon grass. The gravy had been nicely thickened with coconut milk, and I actually had it with some flaky Malabar parottas.

The catering service has on the menu dishes such as the Kashmiri Rogan Josh, Crispy Palak, Nadru and Haaq as well as Punjab's Sarson Ka Saag and Amritsari Fish. It has Delhi's Chaat, Shami Kababs, samosas, Bedmi Kachori and Rajasthan's Lal Maas, Dal Baati Churma and Mirchi Vada. Gujarat's Bajrey Ki Khichdi, the Parsi Dhansak and patrani machhi – it has the choicest of dishes from across the country, including many from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

I love southern Indian food, so I tried out the Mangalorean Chicken Ghee Roast. The chicken was soft and moist, and had soaked in the flavours of the spices and the aroma of

PEOPLE

Clay plan

A weekend course will begin this weekend, at Claying Thoughts, a roof-top pottery studio in Noida



"You just need to love mud," says Pooja Verma, founder of Claying Thoughts, as she talks of how anyone can be a potter. She herself worked in PR and marketing, before turning to pottery full-time, first exploring the wheel, and then shifting to hand-building items, setting up her terrace studio in 2013. "I was always inquisitive about 3D craft and that drew me towards pottery," she says, adding that the first thing she ever crafted was a coil pot. The technique is her favourite style. Here, she talks about her journey and the course she has instituted.

Is pottery a sustainable practice?

We potters are really connected to the earth. We don't waste anything, so if something can't be used at home, we get it to the studio because anything can be utilised there. I believe in sustainability, that way my expenditure on the studio is minimal. If my neighbours have to throw something out, they ask me if I can get some use out of it.

What has your passion for pottery taught you in life?

Besides patience, I have learnt the art of detachment. Making a pot is like rearing a child. You spend a lot of time in preparing the clay, smoothening, designing and perfecting the details. Then you have to send your piece for bisque firing, where there is a good 10% chance that your pot will break. Initially, I used to get very upset over not receiving my art back in one piece. Eventually I learnt to enjoy the process and not be focused on the results.

What is the course all about?

The course is for beginners to experience pottery-making using handbuilding techniques. Participants will learn foundation techniques – slab, pinch, and coil building and combine them to create some interesting clay forms. They will be given a step by step demonstration of processes and will get a chance to create an independent clay project using their own idea or choose from the projects available. At the end of workshop, participants can take back their creation home.

Every weekend, from December 28th to January 26th at Claying Thoughts, Noida, Sector 21; ₹5,500 for eight sessions

SHUBHRA ROY

PRODUCT

History on your hands



Jaipur Watch Company's new limited edition series makes dials out of Indian postage stamps from 1937-1940. The stamps, originally printed at the Security Printing Press in Nashik, featured a portrait of King George VI. These watches come with a handmade leather strap, and a lotus engraving much like the reverse side of the One Rupee coin from the same era.

Upwards of ₹1,40,000; for more details about stores and ordering, jaipur.watch

Contact us at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



MUSIC

Ghazal

Popular singer and composer Shakeel Ahmed will perform *Rooh-e-Ghazal*, an evening of music celebrating the ghazals of *Ustad Shayars*. The presentation will highlight the work and contribution of poets who were instrumental in shaping the ghazal. The evening promises some original compositions by the singer.

VENUE: Amalats Hall, India Habitat Centre
TIME: 7 p.m.



F&B

Winter special

Masia, a new restaurant which specialises in Indian and Asian cuisine, has launched a special menu with signature cocktails for the winter. Curated by chef Chanchal Dutta the menu has Hanoi Lotus Root, Burmese Chili Garlic Corn, Lemongrass Chicken and Avocado, Shrimp Rolls, Gosht Seekh, Gunpowder Prawn, and others.

VENUE: Plot 102A, Sector 38, Noida
TIME: 11:30 a.m. - 12 midnight



GIG

Pop

The Piano Man Jazz Club presents rock, pop and fusion music tonight by Saptak Chatterjee. A singer-composer and producer based out of Delhi, Saptak is an independent artist, belonging to a third generation of a Hindustani classical music family. He has already released two albums titled *Kehshiba* and *Material & Mind*.

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



DINING

Festive menu

Asian cuisine BOA (Best of Asia) Village has introduced a special menu for the New Year festive season. On until 31st December, the special spread offers traditional favourites such as, Peking Duck, Honey Glazed Salmon Steak, Chicken Katsu Sushi, Hakusai Hoso Sushi, and Blueberry Cheese Cake and Plum Cake.

VENUE: Exchange Store Building, Civil Lines
TIME: 11 a.m. - 1 a.m.



FILM

English classic

American Center, New Delhi will screen *Miracle* on 34th Street, an English classic film, this evening. Directed by George Seaton the story of this 1947 film takes place between Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day in New York City. It revolves around an elderly man Kris Kringle, who believes he is Santa Claus.

VENUE: American Center, 24, K. G. Marg
TIME: 6 p.m.



Chills and thrills Anurag Kashyap, Karan Johar, Zoya Akhtar and Dibakar Banerjee, a still from *Ghost Stories*
• ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Zoya Akhtar, Anurag Kashyap, Dibakar Banerjee and Karan Johar talk to *MetroPlus* on what scares them in film and in real life

United in HORROR

NAMRATA JOSHI

Five years after *Bombay Talkies*, Zoya Akhtar, Anurag Kashyap, Dibakar Banerjee and Karan Johar had directed another four-film omnibus, *Lust Stories*, last year for Netflix. They must have liked being in each other's company, as they have reunited again after 18 months for a quartet of scary tales, *Ghost Stories*, that drops on Netflix on the very last day of this decade. Edited excerpts from a short but no-holds-barred interaction with them, in which we started off by asking the obvious question...

Why ghosts?

Karan Johar: I got carried away at the screening of *Lust Stories* and decided let's jump in the deep end of the ocean. I suggested horror and everyone really got excited.

Then I realised how stupid I was to have suggested it, because I didn't know if I had the ability to pull off this genre. I dug my own grave but I ventured into it, kicking and screaming. I tried very hard to get out of it. We have a group chat in which I kept saying 'I can't do this, can we think of something else', but by then they had already shot their films. I was too late.

You work independently on films, do not consult each other. How have each of you interpreted horror? How similar, different?

AK: We are very different I think... But it

somehow falls together. **KJ:** It never seems to jump out. Thematically we are unified.

How is your horror different, Karan?

AK: Mine is a ghost story. **KJ:** It's a spooky. **AK:** Mine is a pretty ghost story. Zoya described it really well. She said it was a Disney horror film. **DB:** It is fun.

AK: There are at least two very laugh-out-loud moments.

KJ: Mine comes right at the end so after you have got scared, mine is the relief at the end.

What about yours, Dibakar?

DB: I haven't done a 'ghost ghost' story as such. I have grown up on stories that come from Indian folklore - *bhoot, pret, pishaach, raakshas, daitya*. Then there are lots in Bengali culture like *brahmodaittyo, shakchunni, petni*. It came somewhere from there...

So yours is a sanskari ghost?

DB: No... Is it? [wonders] **KJ:** His film will shake your foundation off. That's what it did to me. I thought I was going to have a cardiac arrest... **AK:** It is a sanskari ghost. He has made a sanskari ghost story; how dangerous sanskari can be.

KJ: It is not sanskari but it is definitely a commentary-wala ghost.

AK: Most political... **DB:** But the ghost is not doing the com-

mentary, ghost is having fun. Commentary *kuchh aur hai*.

Yours, Zoya?

AK: Hers is a ghost story. She is very diligent.

ZA: It's a classic ghost story. About two women. I think it's a bit of a feminist film. I don't know how else to put it.

DB: When we finished watching each other's films, I turned to her and said 'heartbreaking'.

And Anurag, is yours sledgehammer, like you are [these days]?



AK: Mine is a story that crawls upon you. It's atmospheric horror. What I like is what I got to do. It's a slow burn...

Are you all admirers of horror?

KJ: Not at all. I am not admiring of any such thing.

AK: I like horror. **DB:** I like. **ZA:** I also.

So 3:1!

KJ: I don't admire the genre at all. I don't watch it. I would admire it if I watched it.

I can't tell you that I have admired

Ramsay Brothers because those are the ones I have seen.

Then I can't ask you your favourite horror film...

KJ: No

DB: For the 23rd time in two days [of media interactions] *The Blair Witch Project*. So many people have asked me. Can I change it? The film that really scared me and also fascinated me is actually a short film by [Satyajit] Ray. Called *Monihara: The Lost Jewels*. It is part of *Teen Kanya*. One of the stories in it. It was the original anthology that he did. It was made out of three [Rabindranath] Tagore stories if I am not mistaken. And this is a ghost story somewhere in the 20th century Bengal.

ZA: There are some that are scary and still creep me out. *Rosemary's Baby*, it's just an amazing film, *The Shining*, the first *The Omen*, *The Exorcist*. *The Sixth Sense* freaks me out.

AK: Classic horror is always good.

KJ: I remember one film I saw that I never recovered from, that scared me was *Carrie*. I think that's what scared me when it comes to the genre.

DB: The Brian De Palma version or the new one?

KJ: Sissy Spacek... **ZA:** That's Brian De Palma and it's superb.

AK: I like them all. I can talk about the last two decades. *Let The Right One In*, *Midsommar*, *The Witch*, *Halloween*, *Us*, *Get Out*, *The Devil's Backbone*.

DB: I have one schlock favourite, *Jeep-*

ers Creepers I.

KJ: There are two of those? **DB:** I think there are three.

KJ: It's a franchise! **DB:** You should see it.

KJ: I will not do any such thing. **AK:** You don't like *Scream*, *Halloween*?

KJ: I don't like. **ZA:** *Halloween* is very good.

AK: I know *What You Did Last Summer* bhi nahin dekha? [asking Karan]

KJ: I have seen this anthology like this [covers his face].

DB: *Wahi to mazaa hai*.

Let's move on to horror in real life?

AK: What's happening in the country...

That's also your fear? [posed to all the four]

AK: My biggest fear is the people I have put at risk by putting myself out there. More than [about] me, it's people close to me, who I work with... I am inherently a survivor, but people around me, I don't think are equipped to be survivors.

ZA: Loss of human rights is horrific. It frightens me and it's here, there, everywhere. It's global.

AK: Power in the hands of people who are so unaware.

[Turning to Johar] You dislike turning. Is that why you keep away from it for real too?

KJ: The way I have addressed any kind of horrific situation, be it within the confines of our country or anything else, is to do it in my way. The film I am making next [*Takht*] is a very solid film based on commentary. I don't like to say these things. I think the more you state it, the more it dilutes what it is. It's a solid commentary film and it's saying something very strong.

DB: Three-four years ago, when the process started with the clamping down of JNU [Jawaharlal Nehru University] and FTII [Film and Television Institute of India] and when FTII was butchered with, we did something [referring to *award waps*] and at that point I had said that it wasn't a cinema industry issue.

I said that it was an education issue. If you stop students from asking questions then how will they learn? If you stop people from questioning then how will anyone learn anything and how will the society go forward?

POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



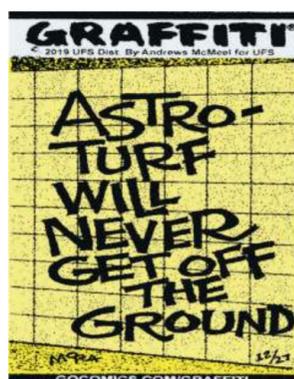
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



TIGER



THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13261

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- moon (6)
- 5 Sway, as if about to fall (6)
- 6 Variety of plum (9)
- 7 Postgraduate degree (9)
- 11 Attacker (9)
- 12 Mexican state - breed of dog (9)
- 13 Synthetic acrylic fibre (5)
- 14 Fine net fabric (5)
- 18 Like a dead parrot? (2,4)
- 19 Situated (6)
- 22 Soft regional accent (4)
- 23 Spiteful - excellent (slang) (4)

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WUMO



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WHAT ARE THE BEST SUPPLEMENTS FOR BRAIN HEALTH? DON'T FORGET TUDACRIN!

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PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Smith eyes ton as Australia seizes control

Labuschagne and Warner rally after Boult dismisses Burns first ball

NZ IN AUSTRALIA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Master batsman Steve Smith ground out an unbeaten 77 on Thursday as he zeroed in on yet another century, putting Australia in the driving seat after the opening day of the second Test here against New Zealand.

In the Black Caps' first Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground since 1987, skipper Kane Williamson opted to bowl, and it looked to be a good decision with Joe Burns out first ball and David Warner just before lunch.

Frustration for Kiwis

But first Marnus Labuschagne (63), the world's leading run-scorer for 2019, and then Smith smacked half-centuries to seize back control and leave Australia on 257 for four, frustrating the disciplined Kiwi bowlers.

Along with the fidgety Smith, Travis Head was not out on 25, desperate for runs after a lean spell.

The signs are ominous for New Zealand with Smith scoring centuries in his past four Tests in Melbourne, and a fifth looking likely.

It was a bold decision by Williamson to bowl on a pitch that has traditionally been docile and favoured the batsmen.

And it appeared to pay dividends in a sizzling opening



Thunderbolt: Trent Boult rearranges Joe Burns' stumps for a golden duck. ■ AP

over from Trent Boult, back after missing two Tests with a rib injury. After three testing balls to Warner, his fourth clattered into Burns' middle stump, with the opener out for a golden duck.

Boult and Tim Southee found early swing and zip with the ball.

Boos and cheers

After Burns fell, Labuschagne and Warner dug in to wrestle back the initiative before a Neil Wagner delivery saw Warner caught at slip for 41, with Southee taking an

outstanding one-handed catch. The in-form Labuschagne looked set for another big score after plundering his fifth consecutive 50, having converted three of his previous four into centuries.

But it wasn't to be and he was out in bizarre fashion, with a rising de Grandhomme ball ricocheting off his elbow and onto the stumps as he attempted to leave it. Smith was met with a mix of boos and cheers as he walked to the crease and after a poor summer, by his standards, appeared deter-

mined to build a decent score. It was slow going, but he brought up his 28th Test half-century off 103 balls – his first in four Tests.

Along the way he passed Greg Chappell (7,110 runs) to

become Australia's 10th highest run-scorer, with David Boon's 7,422 his next target.

As in Perth, Matthew Wade again came under a short-ball barrage from Neil Wagner.

SCOREBOARD

Australia – 1st innings: D. Warner c Southee b Wagner 41, J. Burns b Boult 0, M. Labuschagne b de Grandhomme 63, S. Smith (batting) 77, M. Wade c Watling b de Grandhomme 38, T. Head (batting) 25; Extras (lb-11, b-1, w-1): 13; Total (for four wkts. in 90 overs): 257.
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-61, 3-144, 4-216.
New Zealand bowling: Boult 20-2-60-1, Southee 21-5-63-0, de Grandhomme 21-5-48-2, Wagner 21-7-40-1, Santner 7-1-34-0.
Toss: New Zealand.

Kohli among Wisden's Cricketers-of-the-Decade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

India captain Virat Kohli has been named in the Cricketers-of-the-Decade list alongside four others by *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*.

South Africans Dale Steyn and A.B. de Villiers, Australia's Steve Smith and women's all-rounder Ellyse Perry also find a place in the list of five.

Kohli, who has scored 5,775 more international runs than anyone else in the last 10 years, has arguably been the best batsman over the last decade. The 31-year-old Indian was named captain of the *Wisden* Test team of the decade, while also

featuring in the ODI XI. "His genius has been to rise, time and again, to the challenge. Between the end of the England tour in 2014 and the second Test against Bangladesh at Kolkata in November, Kohli averaged 63, with 21 hundreds and 13 fifties," *Wisden* says.

"It left him with a unique set of statistics – the only batsman to average at least 50 in all three international formats. Even Steve Smith was moved to remark recently that there is no one quite like him.

"In many ways, there isn't. Since the retirement of Sachin Tendulkar and the gradual waning of M.S.

Dhoni, no cricketer in the world has operated under such daily pressure as Kohli."

In the past decade, Kohli has amassed 7,202 runs in Tests – including 27 hundreds – while in the shorter formats the Indian skipper has 11,125 runs in ODIs and 2,633 runs in T20s.

Kohli has already amassed 70 international hundreds and is only behind Ricky Ponting (71) and Sachin Tendulkar (100).

He is third in the list of leading run-scorers of all time with 21,444 runs, behind Ponting (27,483) and Tendulkar (34,357).



Imperious: Virat Kohli has scored 5,775 more international runs than anyone else in the last 10 years. ■ FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

Virender Sehwag to deliver Pataudi lecture

SHAYAN ACHARYA
MUMBAI

Virender Sehwag will deliver the seventh Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi Lecture in Mumbai on January 12. This was confirmed by BCCI president Sourav Ganguly to *Sportstar* on Thursday. The BCCI awards will also be given away on the same day.

Earlier, it was speculated that Sachin Tendulkar could deliver the memorial lecture, which is being organised since 2013. However, with Tendulkar travelling around that time, the Board has zeroed in on Sehwag – who has played 104 Tests, 251 ODIs and 19 T20Is for India.

Established to honour the former India captain, who passed away in 2011, the in-



Virender Sehwag. ■ FILE PHOTO

augural lecture was delivered by Sunil Gavaskar in February 2013 at Chennai.

Apart from Gavaskar, Anil Kumble, V.V.S. Laxman, Rahul Dravid and Farokh Engineer have done the honours. Former England player Kevin Pietersen had delivered the last lecture in Bengaluru.

de Kock to South Africa's rescue

ENGLAND IN SA

REUTERS
CENTURION

Quinton de Kock fell five runs short of his century after dragging South Africa out of early trouble to 277 for nine at the close on the opening day of the first Test against England at the SuperSport Park on Thursday.

England took a wicket with the opening delivery of the four-Test series and had the host teetering on 111 for five after lunch but de Kock's belligerent innings brought South Africa back into the match.

First-ball wicket

James Anderson marked his 150th cap and return to the England attack with the first-ball wicket of opener Dean El-



Taking responsibility: Sam Curran led the way for England by picking up four wickets. ■ AFP

gar, setting the tourists up for early domination of an inexperienced home side.

Sam Curran's skilful bowling earned him figures of four for 57 and Stuart Broad returned from illness to claim three for 52. Broad also be-

came the second bowler after Anderson to take 400 Test wickets this decade.

But de Kock wrested the initiative away from England with an innings that combined early aggression with later circumspection.

SCOREBOARD

South Africa – 1st innings: D. Elgar c Buttler b Anderson 0, A. Markram c Bairstow b Curran 20, Z. Hamza c Stokes b Broad 39, F. du Plessis c Root b Broad 29, H. van der Dussen c Root b Curran 6, Q. de Kock c Buttler b Curran 95, D. Pretorius c Root b Curran 33, V. Philander (batting) 28, K. Maharaj c Stokes b Archer 6, K. Rabada b Broad 12; Extras (lb-4, nb-2, w-3): 9; Total (for nine wkts. in 82.4 overs): 277.

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-32, 3-71, 4-97, 5-111, 6-198, 7-245, 8-252, 9-277.

England bowling: Anderson 20-4-69-1, Broad 17-4-4-52-3, Curran 19-5-57-4, Archer 19-4-65-1, Root 4-0-26-0, Denly 3-0-4-0.

Toss: England.

Ganguly, Dravid have a 'general meeting'

SHAYAN ACHARYA
MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly had a long meeting with National Cricket Academy (NCA) director Rahul Dravid at the Board's headquarters on Thursday.

It has been learned that the duo deliberated on the roadmap for the academy in a two-hour long meeting.

Dravid did not take questions from the media, and Ganguly termed it as a 'general meeting', without elaborating. "It was a general NCA-related meeting," Ganguly told *Sportstar*.

The meeting happened days after reports surfaced that the NCA allegedly re-

fused to conduct a fitness test for pace ace Jasprit Bumrah.

Though it could not be confirmed whether this matter was discussed in the meeting, it was learnt that there were conversations on how to make the academy more effective in terms of injury management.

Ever since taking charge as the BCCI president in October, Ganguly has reiterated that he wants the NCA to be an academy of excellence.

Last week, Ganguly had told reporters in Kolkata that the Cricket Advisory Committee will be formed in the 'next couple of days'. But there hasn't been a decision on the CAC yet.

Goa comes out on top in a thriller

Chennaiyin's errors in the first half cost it dear

ISL

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

FC Goa took ample advantage of Chennaiyin FC's laxity in the first session to script a thrilling 4-3 win in the Indian Super League match here on Thursday.

The three goals conceded in the first 45 minutes put paid to the hopes of the host in the end analysis.

Trailing 3-0, Chennaiyin fought well to score two quick goals in the second session and one more towards the final moments of the match, but those weren't enough.

The contest saw 11 yellow and two red cards being flashed. Edwin Vanspaul (Chennaiyin) and Sergio Lobero (head coach of Goa) picked up red cards.

With this win, Goa took its tally to 21 points from 10 matches to remain at the top while Chennaiyin is in eighth position with nine points

from as many encounters. For the first 20-odd minutes, even though Goa had more ball possession, Chennaiyin clearly had the edge in attack.

However, Goa scored first. A Tondonba Singh back-pass found Ferran Corominas, who ran past from the right to pass it to Hugo Boumous. The Frenchman then neatly passed it to Ahmed Jahouh and the Moroccan's right-footer gave little chance to the keeper Vishal Kaith.

The next two goals were in large part due to error in judgement of the host captain Lucian Goian. First, a back-pass from Edwin Vanspaul saw the Italian central defender fail to collect the ball properly. As a result, Brandon Fernandes had enough time to put it across the 'keeper.

Later, Goian hardly made an effort to stop a ball from the right as it landed straight to Hugo Boumous who converted. A header from Andre Schembri off a corner from

Crivellaro and a fine left-footer by latter reduced the margin for Chennaiyin. But Corominas hit the final nail on the coffin with a clean strike.

Crivellaro's curving left-footer gave a faint glimmer of hope for the host, but all went down the drain, thanks to lethargic moments in the first half.

Displeasure over refereeing

Chennaiyin's co-owner Vita Dani has expressed his displeasure on the quality of refereeing. "It was a disappointing game, but the standard of refereeing is getting poorer and poorer. I am sure all teams are suffering from this. However, I think Chennaiyin is suffering the most from it," she said while speaking to Star Sports.

The result: Chennaiyin FC 3 (Andre Schembri 57, Rafael Crivellaro 59 & 90) lost to FC Goa 4 (Ahmed Jahouh 26, Brandon Fernandes 41, Hugo Boumous 45, Ferran Corominas 63).



Cool finish: Brandon Fernandes of FC Goa had enough time to put one past Chennaiyin FC goalkeeper Vishal Kaith. ■ R. RAGU

Aubameyang saves Arsenal's blushes

Kane and Alli give Spurs full points



Drawing level: Harry Kane fires in Spurs' equaliser. ■ AFP

PREMIER LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Mikel Arteta got off to an underwhelming start as Arsenal manager with a 1-1 draw at Bournemouth as Chelsea slumped to another shock home reverse, losing 2-0 to Southampton, on Boxing Day.

Carlo Ancelotti had a more positive impact on his Everton bow as Dominic Calvert-Lewin's brilliant diving header earned a 1-0 win over Burnley.

Chelsea's defeat allowed Tottenham to move back to within three points of the top four as it came from behind to beat Brighton 2-1 thanks to goals from Harry Kane and Dele Alli.

Arteta got an early lesson in the flaws that have blighted Arsenal's season as it was caught out trying to play

from the back to concede the opening goal from Dan Gosling. Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang again rode to the Gunners' rescue to equalise just after the hour mark.

After the highs of victory at Spurs, Chelsea again struggled when faced with breaking down stubborn defensive opponents in Southampton.

The Blues have now lost to West Ham, Bournemouth and the Saints in their last four home league games.

The result: Aston Villa 1 (Hourihane 64) bt Norwich 0; Bournemouth 1 (Gosling 35) drew with Arsenal 1 (Aubameyang 63); Chelsea 0 lost to Southampton 2 (Obafemi 31, Redmond 73); Crystal Palace 2 (Kouyate 68, Ayew 90) bt West Ham 1 (Snodgrass 57); Everton 1 (Calvert-Lewin 80) bt Burnley 0; Sheffield United 1 (Norwood 36-pen) drew with Watford 1 (Deulofeu 27); Tottenham 2 (Kane 53, Alli 72) bt Brighton 1 (Webster 37).

2020 Sportstar ACES Awards

Readers will have a chance to pick their favourites for the 10 Popular Choice Awards. The top two contenders from each category, based on popular vote, will be sent to a jury, which will decide the winner

THE NOMINEES

SPORTSMAN OF THE YEAR (RACQUET SPORTS)



G. SATHIYAM (TABLE TENNIS)

Sathiyam clinched the bronze medal at the Oman Open Challenge Plus and finished sixth at the Asian Cup in Yokohama, thereby booking a ticket for the World Cup that was held in Chengdu, in November. His dream debut, saw him become only the second Indian to make it to the knockout stage of the competition. Additionally, he also reached the round of 32 at the Worlds in Budapest. Sathiyam dazzled at the Asian championships in Yogyakarta, as well, becoming the first Indian in 43 years to reach the singles quarterfinals.



G. PRAJNESH (TENNIS)

Prajnesh rose to a career-high world rank of 75 in 2019. He is the sixth-best ranked Indian tennis player in the Open era, behind Vijay Amritraj (18), Ramesh Krishnan (23), Somdev Devvarman (62), Leander Paes (73) and Anand Amritraj (74). He played all four Grand Slams this year. While he qualified for the Australian Open, Prajnesh had direct entry at the French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open. Prajnesh also qualified and beat 69th ranked Benoit Paire and 18th ranked Nikoloz Basilashvili at the ATP Masters event in Indian Wells.



SAURAV GHOSAL (SQUASH)

Ghosal reached his career-best ranking of 10, in April this year, becoming the first Indian male player to do so. He entered the quarterfinals of the 2018-19 World Championships and also the Grasshoppers Cup (PSA World Tour Gold event) that catapulted his ranking. Not just that, he also bagged the Asian Individual title in Kuala Lumpur. His best achievement this year was reaching the semifinals of the JP Morgan China Squash Open (PSA World Tour Gold Event), in September.

To vote, log on to <https://sportstar.thehindu.com/aces-awards>

TV PICKS

Australia v New Zealand: 2nd Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 5 a.m.
NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6 a.m. & 9 a.m.
Ranji Trophy: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 9.30 a.m.
Big Bash League: Sony Ten 3 (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.
South Africa v England: 1st Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.
ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Clippers downs Lakers in LA showdown

LOS ANGELES
Kawhi Leonard (in pic) scored 35 points as the Clippers rallied to beat the Lakers 111-106 in an all-Los Angeles NBA showdown on Wednesday. The Western Conference heavyweight clash was part of the NBA's five-game Christmas extravaganza, which saw the Philadelphia 76ers make a statement with a 121-109 victory over the league-leading Milwaukee Bucks. **The results:** Denver Nuggets 100 lost to New Orleans Pelicans 112; LA Clippers 111 bt LA Lakers 106; Philadelphia 76ers 121 bt Milwaukee Bucks 109; Golden State Warriors 116 bt Houston Rockets 104; Toronto Raptors 102 lost Boston Celtics 118. AFP

Sumit Sangwan suspended for failing dope test

NEW DELHI
Former Asian silver medalist boxer Sumit Sangwan was on Thursday banned for one year by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) for failing a dope test. Sangwan, who competed in the 2012 London Olympics and formerly a 91-kg category boxer, was set to appear for the Olympic qualifier trials. But that will not be possible now as his suspension starts with immediate effect. "Sumit Sangwan banned for 1 year with immediate effect for consuming specified prohibited substance," NADA DG Navin Agarwal posted on his twitter handle. PTI



Australia adds Swepson to Sydney Test squad

SYDNEY
Australia has added leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson to the squad for the third and final Test of the ongoing three-match series against New Zealand. The 26-year-old has played one T20I for Australia, against England last year, and was part of the Test squad for the tours of India and Bangladesh in 2017, but is uncapped in the longest format. Swepson has been rewarded for an excellent showing this summer — 12 wickets from six Sheffield Shield games at 26.58. IANS

Ishant, Simarjeet scalp four each

Hyderabad in dire straits after folding up for 69

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Hyderabad was staring at its third defeat in as many outings in this season's Ranji Trophy after Delhi's pace duo of Ishant Sharma and Simarjeet Singh made the most of the friendly conditions at the Ferozeshah Kotla ground here on Wednesday.

At stumps on the second day, Hyderabad was 20 for two in its second innings after folding up for 69 in the first. This was after taking the last four Delhi wickets for 15 runs to keep the host at 284.

As things stand, Hyderabad trails Delhi by 195 runs with eight wickets in hand. Two more days remain. On a day when 16 wickets fell in 45 overs, Hyderabad batsmen came a cropper. Though struggling to cope up with the cold conditions, Hyderabad lacked application as it scored 89 runs for 12 wickets. By default, the poor batting display of the visiting team also enhanced the importance of Delhi skipper Shikhar Dhawan's 140.

Though Delhi opted to go in with just three specialist fast bowlers — Ishant, Simarjeet and Pawan Suyal — it still proved a good bargain with

the Hyderabad line-up looking in a hurry to return home.

Briefly, Suyal made things a bit challenging for Delhi when by limping off without completing his ninth over. He did not return to the field for the rest of the day. After Suyal had taken two of the first three wickets, Simarjeet, who bowled the best on this day, and Ishant took four wickets each.

In the second innings, Kunwar Bidhuri caused the damage and left Hyderabad in a lurch.

Earlier, Ravi Kiran took the last four wickets for just two runs to halt Delhi's innings. Dhawan, overnight on 137, could add just three runs before being caught behind. The Delhi tail did not wag for long.

The scores

Delhi — 1st innings: Kunal Chandel c Sumanth b Siraj 1, Shikhar Dhawan c Sumanth b Kiran 140, Dhruv Shorey lbw b Siraj 0, Nitish Rana c Sumanth b Milind 25, Jonty Sidhu lbw b Hasan 15, Lalit Yadav c Hasan 19, Anuj Rawat lbw b Hasan 29, Kunwar Bidhuri c Sumanth b Kiran 27, Ishant Sharma c Hasan b Kiran 5, Simarjeet Singh c Thyagarajan b Kiran 0, Pawan Suyal (not out) 1, Extras (b-4,

lb-13, nb-4, w-1) 22, Total (in 71.4 overs) 284.

Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-4, 3-49, 4-100, 5-128, 6-212, 7-276, 8-279, 9-279.

Hyderabad bowling: Siraj 19-2-72-2, Kiran 17.3-32-59-4, Milind 13-1-34-1, Hasan 17.1-2-61-3, Thyagarajan 4-1-25-0, Chaitanya 1-0-16-0.

Hyderabad — 1st innings: Tanmay Agarwal lbw b Simarjeet 8, Akshath Reddy b Suyal 0, Chaitanya Reddy c Yadav b Suyal 3, Himalay Agarwal lbw b Simarjeet 14, B. Sandeep c Chandela b Simarjeet 16, K. Sumanth b Simarjeet 0, C. V. Milind c Rawat b Ishant 14, Tanay Thyagarajan c Shorey b Ishant 6, Mehdi Hasan (not out) 5, Mohammad Siraj c Rawat b Ishant 0, Extras (lb-2, nb-1) 3, Total (in 29 overs) 69.

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-10, 3-24, 4-32, 5-38, 6-43, 7-58, 8-65, 9-69.

Delhi bowling: Ishant 10-4-19-4, Suyal 8.4-3-25-2, Simarjeet 10-1-23-4, Rana 0.2-0-0-0.

Hyderabad — 2nd innings: Tanmay Agarwal (batting) 11, Akshath Reddy c Rawat b Bidhuri 2, Chaitanya Reddy b Bidhuri 0, Himalay Agarwal (batting) 7, Total (for two wickets in 10 overs) 20.

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-12.

Delhi bowling: Ishant 4-1-10-0, Simarjeet 2-1-1-0, Bidhuri 3-1-7-2, Rana 1-0-2-0.



Firing it in: Simarjeet Singh, along with senior pro Ishant Sharma, broke the back of Hyderabad batting to give Delhi a huge advantage. •SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

RANJI SCORES: ROUND 3, DAY 2

GROUP A

Kolkata: Bengal 289 in 104 overs (Abhishek Raman 112, Manoj Tiwary 46, C.V. Stephen 4/78, K.V. Sasikanth 4/64) vs Andhra.

New Delhi: Delhi 284 in 71.4 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 140, Ravi Kiran 4/59) vs Hyderabad 69 in 29 overs (Ishant Sharma 4/19, Simarjeet Singh 4/23) & 20/2 in 10 overs.

Surat: Gujarat 127 & 210 in 60.4 overs (Manprit Juneja 53, Chintan Gaja 50 n.o., Basil Thampi 5/56) vs Kerala 70 & 26/0 in 7 overs.

Nagpur: Vidarbha 196/6 in 67 overs (Ganesh Satish 88 batting) vs Punjab.

GROUP B

Mysore: Karnataka 166 vs Himachal 235/7 in 93 overs (Priyanshu Khanduri 69, Nikhil Gangta 46, Rishi Dhawan 72 batting).

Indore: Tamil Nadu 149 vs Madhya Pradesh 281/7 in 79 overs (Rameez Khan 87, Venkatesh Iyer 88, Mihir Hirwani 54 batting, T. Natarajan 4/96).

Mumbai: Mumbai 114 & 64/3 in 22 overs vs Railways 266 in 74.1 overs (Arindam Ghosh 72, Karn Sharma 112 n.o., Tushar Deshpande 4/44).

Rajkot: Saurashtra 331 in 92.5 overs (Harvik Desai 54, Cheteshwar Pujara 57, Sheldon Jackson 57, Saurabh Kumar 4/89) vs Uttar Pradesh 222/3 in 65 overs (Aryan Juyal 52, Akshdeep Nath 80 batting, Mohammad Saif 41 batting).

GROUP C

Jammu: Jammu & Kashmir 210/2 in 52 overs (Suryansh Raina 73, Shubham Khajuria 87 batting) vs Assam.

Jamshedpur: Haryana 285/6 in 91 overs (Ankit Kumar 53, Chaitanya Bishnoi 75 batting, Shivam Chauhan 53, Harshal Patel 47 batting) vs Jharkhand.

Pune: Maharashtra 289 in 95.4 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 108, Vishant More 53, Veer Pratap Singh 5/80) vs Chhattisgarh 131/3 in 47 overs (Harpreet Singh 59 batting).

Cuttack: Uttarakhand 117 vs Odisha 145/6 in 55.2 overs (Shantanu Mishra 54 batting).

New Delhi: Tripura 126 & 16/1 in 8 overs vs Services 173 in 53.3 overs (Arjun Sharma 54, Manisankar Muringh 7/63).

PLATE

Dibrugarh: Manipur 196 & 80/3 in 35 overs vs Arunachal Pradesh 143 in 47 overs (Rahul Dalal 53, Ajay Singh 4/23).

Patna: Bihar 326 in 112 overs (Babul Kumar 160, Shasheem Rathour 69, Felix Alemao 4/74) vs Goa 65/2 in 24 overs (Aditya Kaushik 44 batting).

Kolkata: Mizoram 73 & 30/4 in 11 overs vs Pondicherry 458/5 decl. in 86 overs (Paras Dogra 200, K.B. Arun Karthick 86, S. Suresh Kumar 103 n.o.).

Bhubaneswar: Sikkim 274 vs Nagaland 45/1 in 11 overs.

Mangaldoi (Assam): Day 1: Chandigarh 168/4 in 58 overs (Manan Vohra 90, Raman Bishnoi 40 batting) vs Meghalaya. **Toss:** Chandigarh.

Odisha ready to reinvent itself against Jamshedpur

ISL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha FC and Jamshedpur FC will be looking to end their indifferent run of form in the Hero Indian Super League when they meet at the Kalinga Stadium here on Friday.

It should make for a spectacle in Bhubaneswar as Odisha FC finally make its debut in its home city. Josep Gombau's side has had to play its previous home games of the

season from Pune due to the unavailability of the Kalinga Stadium.

The Spanish coach will hope that a change of setting will turn its fortunes around and give it an impetus in its push for the playoff spots. Odisha, placed seventh on the table (9 points), has won just one out of its last six games and is coming off a demoralising 3-0 defeat against FC Goa.

"Yes, there is a chance (of reaching the playoffs). We have nine points and we have

played nine games away. We are very excited to finally play at home," said a confident Gombau.

Crucial games

"We now have three crucial games at home. Depending on how these three games go, we will know if we have a chance to get into the top-four or not. Jamshedpur is fourth in the table with 13 points. But if we beat them tomorrow, we will be just one point behind them."

Jamshedpur FC is also in a

rut. It is winless in the last four matches and is placed fourth on the table (13 points) only because of a strong start to the campaign. However, a win on Friday will see it go level on points with third-placed Bengaluru FC.

Odisha has been inconsistent in front of goal. It has drawn blanks in four out of its nine matches and the attack, led by Aridane Santana, needs to start converting chances if it is to make a push for a top-four spot.

The likes of Xisco Hernan-

dez, Jerry Mawihmingthanga and Nandakumar Sekar have looked good, but have failed to show consistency. The defence has caused alarms for Gombau. Odisha has scored joint second-lowest goals from set-pieces (2) and has conceded joint-highest goals from set-pieces (6).

Set-piece is an area that Jamshedpur FC will look to utilise and hurt Odisha FC. But the Men of Steel have their own worries, especially in defence. They have struggled to keep hold of leads,

winning only one out of three games where they were ahead at half-time.

Moreover, seven out of the 11 goals conceded by Jamshedpur this season have come in the second half, something which Tiri and team will be looking to improve on.

Interestingly, Odisha has conceded more goals (10) in the second half than Jamshedpur. Jamshedpur has also failed to keep a single clean sheet in its last four matches.

"In our style, we don't care

about defence or attack. We make a balance in both. We know the numbers but it is not a big deal for us. We don't have the offensive players to score many goals now and we have to improve," said Iriondo.

"The essence of our football is to have the ball for more time and keep it. We will try to score more goals than the

Star striker Sergio Castel is still doubtful for this match while Noe Acosta remains on the sidelines.

ICC ranking is absolute garbage, says Vaughan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Former England captain Michael Vaughan has slammed the International Cricket Council's ranking system, terming it as "absolute garbage".

India is currently ranked No.1 in ICC Test team rankings, followed by New Zealand, South Africa, England and Australia.

The cricketer-turned-commentator feels New Zealand and England don't deserve to get the second and fourth spot in the ICC Test rankings as they haven't won enough Test series in the last two years.

"I will be dead honest about the ICC rankings. I think they are absolute garbage," Vaughan was quoted as saying by the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

"I have no idea how — New Zealand have won plenty of series over the course of the last two years — but for them to be second, and where it stands out for me that the



Michael Vaughan •GETTY IMAGES

opinion, have New Zealand as the second best Test match nation in the world. I think, particularly over here in Australia, Australia are a far better Test match team."

Vaughan also picked India as the only team that can trouble Australia at home.

"I think there are two teams, India and Australia, they are the best Test match teams in the world, without question. I think there is only one team that can come here and put Australia under pressure, that was 12 months ago, that they won here, India," he said.

"There was no Smith, no Warner, no (Marnus) Labuschagne in the Australian ranks in that series, I think the series later on next year, when India arrive back here, hopefully everyone will be fit.

"That Indian attack has got the pace, it has also got the spin, the batting unit has got all the experience. I only see only one team at this stage that can compete with Australia here and that is India."

rankings can't be right is that England in Test match cricket are third, and England for three or four years have struggled in Test match cricket, particularly overseas," he said.

The 45-year-old said the ICC ranking is confusing.

"They have won series at home. They have only just drawn the Ashes in English conditions, they only just beat Ireland. I think the rankings are a little bit confusing.

"I certainly don't, in my

Rakesh stuns Bhag

SPORTS BUREAU
BHILAI

Fourth seed Rakesh Kohli beat top seed Bhag Nand Singh Negi 6-1, 6-2 in the semifinals of the over-60 age group in the ITF grade-3 seniors tennis tournament on Thursday.

In the final, Rakesh will play second seed Surinder Mohan Sharma who outplayed third seed murthathi Suresh for the loss of two games.

In the over-40 age group, Dilip Mohanty beat top seed Swarandeeep Singh Dhodi 6-3, 6-1. He will play the winner of the match between Kohinoor Govardhan and second seed Binoj Mani.

The results (semifinals):

Over-35: Kannan Sethu bt Vikas Agrawal 6-3, 6-0; Sachin Patil bt Prateek Deogirikar 6-2, 7-5.

Over-40: Dilip Mohanty bt Swarandeeep Singh Dhodi 6-3, 6-1. **Over-45:** Jagdish Tanwar bt Binu Mani 6-0, 6-0; Rohit Rawat bt Vijay Kumar 6-1, 4-6, 6-3.

Over-50: Tuleswor Ssingh Thongbam bt Ravi Shankar Singh 6-1 (ret.); Gurdarshan Singh Ramana bt Tikam Singh Panwar 4-6, 6-4, 6-0.

Over-55: Chandra Bhushan bt Kranti Kumar Mandlekar 6-0, 6-1; Nagaraj Revanasiddaiah bt Rajesh Patil 6-0, 6-4. **Over-60:** Rakesh Kohli bt Bhag Nand Singh Negi 6-1, 6-2; Surinder Mohan Sharma bt Murthathi Suresh 6-1, 6-1.

Need to find specific coaching pattern: Gopi

Issue must be addressed with a long-term perspective, says chief National coach

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

"Yes, it was definitely not bad. We produced a World champion in Sindhu and a World championship bronze medallist B. Sai Praneeth. We have had good results from Lakshya Sen, Sourabh Verma and in doubles from Satwik and Chirag," says chief National badminton coach P. Gopi Chand in an exclusive chat with *The Hindu*.

After another tough session with World champion P.V. Sindhu at the Gopi Chand Academy here on Thursday, Gopi believes he has a bigger task ahead – producing an Olympic champion at next year's Tokyo Games.

Consistency factor

Are you happy with the results in 2019?

"There is a lack of consistency, but it is because of poor management of the international schedule. Sometimes you can't complain as they (Indians) are competing



All for a cause: P. Gopi Chand with Sameer Verma, B. Sai Praneeth and K. Srikanth at the Gopi Chand Academy in Hyderabad.

against each other to be in the race for the Olympics," Gopi says.

"We still don't follow a clearly demarcated system,

like addressing the coach's role in training and deciding players' schedule," he avers.

On his role, Gopi said: "It is only advisory. I cannot im-

pose myself in the given structure and format. Sometimes, out of respect, some players may listen. My advice is not binding."

Is there a need to change the coaching style for some of India's premier shuttlers, especially in singles?

"Definitely, coaching pat-

terns are changing. We need to find our path with clarity, a specific programme," he says. "It is not just about the Olympics. The problem needs to be addressed with a long-term perspective."

Despite the strain of striving tirelessly Gopi is not about to give up because of a faulty system. "I would still love to see an Olympic medallist in Tokyo."

So, will there be a point when you might just give up? "No way. For the simple reason, who else will do this. One should understand I am only raising relevant issues and want answers from the top," he says.

Not too concerned

On Sindhu, Gopi says: "Not too concerned. Seen her go up and down, has the ability to raise the bar on her day and she has done it at the Olympics and World championships." On Saina: "Yes, she is struggling. But, I believe it is an issue of fitness."

Real shock for Chennai City

The defending champion slips to eighth spot



Tussle: Danish Farooq, who opened Real Kashmir's account, is challenged by Chennai City's Charles Anandraj Lourdasamy, right.

Devang Gandhi asked to leave Bengal dressing room

Move to avoid breach of anti-corruption protocol

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

National selector from East Zone Devang Gandhi was involved in an unsavoury incident on Thursday when he was asked to leave the Bengal dressing room for unauthorised entry by the BCCI anti-corruption unit at the Eden Gardens.

As frequent breaks owing to bad light curtailed the Ranji action between Bengal and Andhra, Gandhi wanted to get into the Bengal dressing room to consult the team physio.

However, senior players, including former captain Manoj Tiwary, cited anti-corruption protocol and Gandhi was asked to leave. "We have to follow anti-corruption protocol. A National selector

cannot enter the dressing room without authorisation. Only players and officials who have their mug-shots at the entrance have access to the dressing room," Tiwary told reporters.

Gandhi maintained that he had not broken any anti-corruption protocol. "Knowing that I was having a back problem Bengal coach Arun Lal asked me to consult the team physio.

"Before entering the dressing room I took permission from the anti-corruption official and asked the physio to attend to me in the CAB medical room," Gandhi presented his point.

In the end CAB secretary Abhishek Dalmiya stepped in to get the situation under control and clear Gandhi of

any misconduct.

"Mr. Devang Gandhi, being a National selector, wanted to enter the dressing room area today when the game was not in play. He was allowed to enter the PMO (players and match officials) area as a temporary visitor by the ACU official only after obtaining necessary permission from the match referee.

"However, when Mr. Gandhi wanted to get some medical treatment done, he was instantly asked by the ACU officer to get it done in the medical room outside the PMO area in order to maintain required protocol. Accordingly, Mr. Gandhi moved to the medical room forthwith to ensure there is no breach," said a statement signed by Dalmiya.

No harm in playing big shots: Rohit

Says youngsters should have the freedom to express themselves

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Playing flamboyant shots is not a "crime" if they translate into results, reckons batting maestro Rohit Sharma, who says youngsters should have the freedom to express themselves freely.

Memorable 2019

The 32-year-old had a memorable 2019 when he scored 10 hundreds across formats, including five in the World Cup.

Rohit shared his experiences of his early days as a cricketer during an interaction with the young trainees at his own cricket academy, here on Thursday.

"There is no harm in playing big shots, trying to play a flamboyant cover drive. When we were growing up and used to play shots in the air, we were taken out of the nets, which was not right because eventually you want the results," said Rohit.

"If the guy is giving you results by playing the big shots, there is nothing wrong in that. As a young kid, growing in this generation, you want to play shots.

"You want to look good (while batting) but again it is very important what they think of their game and the understanding they have about the game," he added.

"What we need to be careful of is, if the player is doing mistakes again and again, then he needs to be told how he should go about it the next time. I mean playing shots is not a crime."

Rohit emphasised that backing the young players is important to make them confident about their game.

"I would encourage them to play shots if they want to, but at the same time they need to understand that they need to produce results, that's the game. You score 100 off 50 balls or 200 balls, it doesn't matter, it still is a hundred. These young players should be allowed to bat freely, that's how they will produce results."

Bidhuri cries foul at exclusion from trial

Seeks Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju's intervention in the matter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Former World Championship bronze-medallist boxer Gaurav Bidhuri has challenged the selection procedure for the upcoming trials for next year's Olympic Qualifiers and sought Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju's intervention in the matter.

In a letter addressed to Rijiju, the Boxing Federation of India, and the Sports Authority of India, Bidhuri has said he has been unfairly kept out of the trials to be held on December 29 and 30 in Bellary, Karnataka.

"I have had enough of this unfair system. The medallists from this year's world championships were given direct slots in the Olympic Qualifiers. But when I won the world bronze in 2017, I wasn't even allowed to appear for Commonwealth and Asian Games trials," Bidhuri told PTI.

'Doesn't make any sense'

"At that time I was told I hadn't competed enough, this time I am being told I haven't competed against strong opponents. Can somebody explain what is the selection criteria here? It doesn't make any sense," he said.

Bidhuri wants to appear in the 57kg category trials for the Qualifiers scheduled in February in China. The world medallists exempted from trials are Amit Panghal (52kg) and Manish Kaushik (63kg).

The boxers finalised for the trials in the 57kg division, on the basis of a ranking points system, are former world quarterfinalist and Asian silver winner Kavin-



Gaurav Bidhuri. FILE PHOTO

der Singh Bisht, Commonwealth Games medal-winning duo of Mohammed Hussamuddin and Gaurav Solanki, and former world youth world champion Sachin Siwach.

Responding to Bidhuri's allegation, a top federation official, on condition of anonymity, said that the boxer's exclusion was based on performance.

'No discrimination'

"The selection policy has been in public domain for a long time. There is no discrimination as he has alleged. Don't want to get into details, but the rankings have been made purely on performance," the official said.

Bidhuri said the "inconsistent" policy has left him confused about how to approach tournaments.

"Ok, I lost to Kavinder and Solanki in the league but they were exceptionally close bouts. After 2-3 (score-line) losses to them, I at least deserve a trial bout against them. I can't be simply told that I am not good enough," he asserted.

The Sports Minister, in the past, has made it clear that he cannot intervene in selection matters as it would be considered a violation of the Olympic charter.

Railways overcomes Karnataka

BASKETBALL

SPORTS BUREAU
LUDHIANA

Railways recovered from a slow start to beat Karnataka 93-78 in the men's quarterfinals of the 70th National basketball championship at the Guru Nanak Dev Stadium here on Thursday.

Karnataka led 27-9 at the end of the first quarter, but Railways bounced back to lead 48-41 at half-time. Sahil top-scored with 23 points for Railways.

In the women's quarterfinals, Punjab beat Telangana 72-65. The Punjab girls will meet the winner of the match between Kerala and Maharashtra in the semifinals.

The results: Men (quarterfinals): Railways 93 (Sahil 23, Lovneet Singh 22, Rajan Sharma 13, Gagandeep Singh 10) bt Kar-

nataka 78 (M. Harish 26, Anil Kumar 19, Aravind Arumugam 11).

Pre-quarterfinals: Kerala 63 (Basil Philip 18, Rahul Sarath 15) bt Uttar Pradesh 55.

Haryana 87 (Vikas Kumar 31, Yudvir Singh 21) bt Chandigarh 85 (Ravi Bhardwaj 36, Amit 20).

Women (quarterfinals): Madhya Pradesh 64 (Nima Doma 22, Anjali Dhasmana 10, Norzom Bhutia 10) bt Delhi 59 (Aparna Saini 18).

Punjab 72 (Harsimran Kaur 23, Anmolpreet Kaur 18, Rajandeep Kaur 18) bt Telangana 65 (Gulabsha Ali 23, Divya palani-vel 20, Trittimol Josseph 10).

Pre-quarterfinals: Maharashtra 94 (Anshika Kanojha 23, Anishara Suzanne Pinto 22, Crina Meenez 13) bt Chandigarh 67 (Pinri Nee Manoj 14, Aachal Ahlawat 12, Neeru 12).

Karnataka 54 (Lopamudra Thimmaiah 22, Varsha Nandinin 12, G. Chandana 10) bt Rajasthan 47 (Rasi Khatani 18, Shilpy Gehlot 12, Asha Nayak 10).

Doping and over-age controversies held centrestage in the year 2019

Neeraj and Hima hampered by injuries; little to celebrate for Indian athletes except Dutee Chand's performance at World University Games

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The two biggest stars of Indian athletics – Neeraj Chopra and Hima Das – were largely sidelined due to injuries, leaving the sport with very little to celebrate and mired in doping and age-fraud controversies in yet another barren year in terms of global medals.

Amid the many disappointments, Dutee Chand scripted history by becoming the first Indian woman athlete to clinch a gold at the World University Games, winning the 100m event.

The country also booked 2020 Olympic Games berths in mixed 4x400m relay and the men's 3000m steeplechase event (Avinash Sable).

Neeraj's transformation

In 2018, India watched with joy, the transformation of Neeraj into a world-class jav-



In the record books: Dutee Chand won the 100m, becoming the first Indian woman athlete to clinch a gold at the World University Games.

elin thrower as he grew in maturity after the 2016 world junior record to clinch both the Commonwealth and Asian Games gold medals.

But the 22-year-old from a village near Panipat injured himself during training in Patiala and underwent surgery on his right elbow in May this year. As a result, he remained on the sidelines and

could not defend his Asian Championships gold in Doha. He also missed the World Championships.

Hima's back injury

Junior world champion quartermiler Hima, on the other hand, was in action in the first part of the season, but the lower back injury she suffered after the 2018 Asian

Games returned to haunt her.

She hogged the headlines with her training stint in Europe, winning six gold medals in average competitions in Czech Republic and Poland, creating a media frenzy here.

The 19-year-old "Dhing Express" from Assam, however, pulled out of the Asian Championships without finishing her first 400m race. She was named in the World Championships team, but was dropped at the last minute by the Athletics Federation of India.

Gomathi stripped of gold

As usual, doping controversies hurt athletics with the biggest offender being half-miler Gomathi Marimuthu, who was stripped of the Asian Championships gold after testing positive for steroids.

Sanjivani Jadhav, who won a bronze at the Asian Championships, was suspended provisionally for failing a dope test. Shot-putter Manpreet Kaur was banned for four years by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) for flunking four dope tests in 2017.

Athletics also became the third dirtiest sport in the country, behind body-building and weightlifting, with nearly 20 doping cases this year.

Fleeing tests

Rampant age-fudging also continued as 51 youngsters were found over-aged while another 169 fled to avoid verification tests during the National inter-district junior meet, which was touted as one of the biggest talent hunt programmes in the world.

More than 100 athletes were found to be over-aged



Neeraj Chopra. FILE PHOTO

in meets in 2018 and nearly 100 were again caught for age-fudging during the National junior championships at Guntur, this year. Another 50 were found to be over-age during the National youth championships in Raipur.

In the World Championships held in Doha in September-October, the 27-member Indian team performed better than expected but did not win any medal.



Hima Das. FILE PHOTO

The Indians entered the finals in three events – mixed 4x400m relay, men's 3000m steeplechase and women's javelin throw – as against one in the last edition in 2017.

Annu's creditable show

Out of the three finals, 3000m steeplechaser Sable and the mixed 4x400m relay team booked quotas for the Tokyo Olympics, while jave-

lin thrower Annu Rani finished a creditable eighth.

Annu became the first Indian woman to qualify for javelin throw finals while Avinash broke his own national record twice in three days.

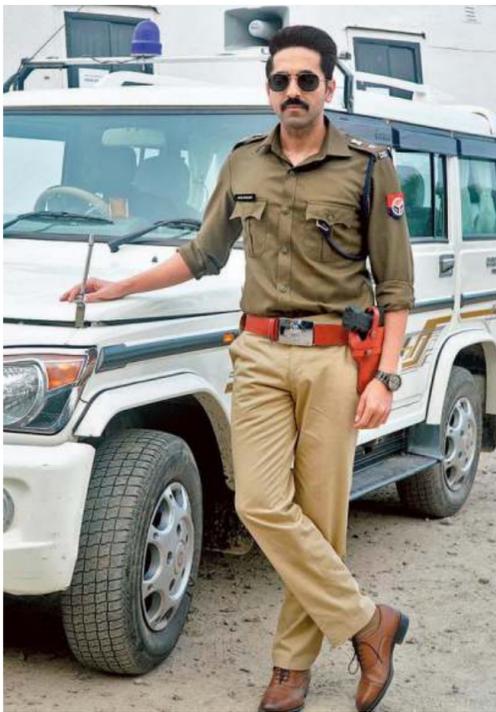
On the administrative front, Athletics Federation of India president Adille Sumariwalla was re-elected as a member of the World Athletics Council for a second term.

FRIDAY REVIEW

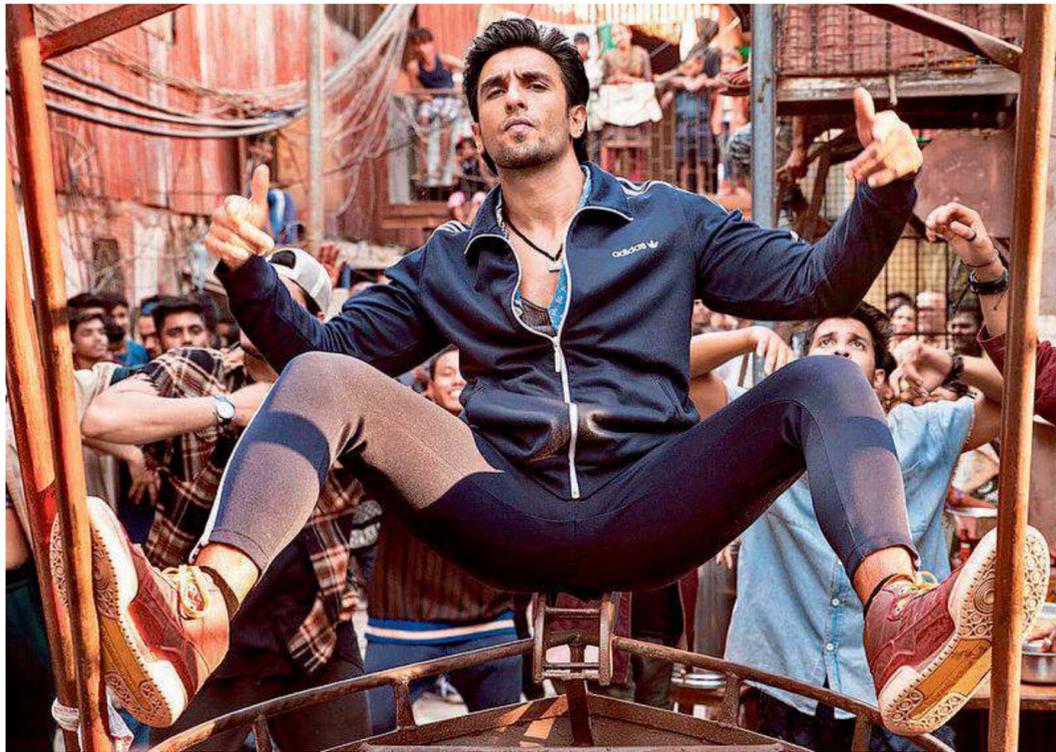
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ANUJ KUMAR



Lasting impact (Clockwise from far left) Stills from "Article 15"; "Gully Boy"; "Leila" ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

While covering the Uttar Pradesh by-polls in October this year, one came across a branch of Aryavrata Bank in a village near Iglas town. Curious, as one had just watched "Leila", the Netflix series set in a dystopian future when Indians live in Aryavrata, where the political class is obsessed with 'purity', one discovered that the bank was formed by the amalgamation of Gramin Bank of Aryavart and Allahabad UP Gramin Bank in April 2019.

At a time when a section of news channels are venturing into the realm of fiction, there are works of fiction that are showing a mirror to upheavals in Indian society. "Gully Boy", "Leila", "Article 15", "The Family Man" are some of the films/series released in 2019 that reflected who we are and where we are headed in no uncertain terms.

Dream vs social status

Aptly named, Murad, the protagonist of "Gully Boy" reflects the aspirations of Indian youth who are living on the margins. Based on a real life story, it takes us into a Muslim household where the driver father of the aspiring rapper admonishes him for trying to dream beyond their status. "We are supposed to keep our head low and work," he advises, but the boy doesn't listen, and ultimately proves that his dream will decide his social status. Unlike, his

MAKING A POLITICAL STATEMENT

From "Gully Boy" to "The Family Man", 2019 saw films/web series that reflected socio-political realities of our times, without sugar-coating them

predecessors like Salim in Saeed Mirza's "Salim Langde Pe Mato Ro", Murad doesn't go the 'underworld' way.

The Zoya Akhtar film doesn't blink at showing the problems that polygamy and patriarchy bring to families. There is an effervescent Safeena, sporting an abaya, who is more than just the love interest of Murad. A surgeon in the making, she deftly dissects into stereotypes that a conservative mindset perpetuates. In a heart-rending scene, Safeena shouts at her mother, "I wouldn't have lied to you (about her friendship with Murad) if you had allowed me to lead a

'normal' life like my friends."

For once, the Muslim in the film is not just a good friend or a terror accused or a bearded fellow out to prove his loyalty to his country. He is just like any other Indian trying to make the best use of his talent and opportunities but at the same time not shying away from looking within.

And yes, he might be marginalised in the political space, here he is leading the narrative with good box office results. They may have lost out in the Oscar race, Murad and Safeena will stay with us for a long time to come.

Dangers of purity

Deepa Mehta's "Leila" fills you with fear because the perceptive could watch the lines between fiction and reality blurring with a disconcerting frequency. For years, we have watched Hollywood generated dystopia from a distance, and chuckled. But watching Leila is disturbing because you could easily draw parallels with what is happening around you. Based on the Prayag Akbar's book of the same name, on the surface, it is a mother's search for her daughter but as the narrative unravels, we could gauge its political undertones. From the obses-

sion for purity to hating the 'other' or for that matter water scarcity, one could easily join the dots. The violent detestation for mixed marriages becomes a brutal metaphor for the recent attacks on the plural character of the nation.

In an interview with this journalist, Huma Qureshi, who played the feisty mother said, the makers were only intending to be true to the source but then all "art was political."

Critique of casteism

After "Mulk", Anubhav Sinha, who seems to have hit a purple patch, came up with another hard-hitting statement on the state of Indian polity with "Article 15". It denudes us of all our pretensions of being a state where everybody is equal before the law. Based on the Budaun rape case, the film is an indictment of everything that is wrong with our behaviour towards the Dalits.

Unlike "Mulk", Sinha's tone is a lot more subtle here. The journey of the superintendent of police Ayan Ranjan, from a Bob Dylan loving idealist to someone who decides to get literally into the muck, exposes all the stakeholders in the system. As a journalist, the most telling comment is when SHO Brahma-dutt Singh feeds dogs with glucose biscuits before a local journalist enters to extract his pound of flesh.

In an interview with *Friday Review*, writer Girish Solanki described it as "a critique of casteism". "Ayan is not a hero, and he is not shown as one. It is unfortunate if people felt that he emerges



Fuelling contemporary folk

The Barmer Boys on how the band has stormed the international stage with their unique sound and crossover aesthetics

SHRINKHLA SAHAI

Dressed in black jackets and colourful turbans, Manga, Magda and Rais Khan present an image of the musical fringe they occupy. Accomplished folk musicians from Rajasthan, the trio are known as the Barmer Boys and have stormed the international stage with their unique sound and crossover aesthetics. Performing at the 'Musical Mélangé' themed December edition of 'Under the Banyan Tree' series at IAQ in Delhi, the contemporary folk band blended traditional repertoire with groovy rhythms.

Sounding out

"Mostly people assume that Rajasthan folk music is one singular category," explains Rais, "but it has a variety of styles, each one with different techniques and compositions." Attempting to break the general public's limited view of Rajasthan folk, when not on performance tours, the trio digs deeper into traditional compositions they have learnt from the masters in their villages. These are songs and sounds that are often on the verge of slipping away from the community's collective memory. To present it to



Pushing the boundaries (From left) Rais, Manga and Magda ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the urban audience is another challenge altogether. "City audience mostly know only the folk repertoire that has made its way into Bollywood. So, they ask us to play 'Kesaria balma' or 'Nimbooda nimbooda'. But there is a world of folk music from Rajasthan beyond that and we want to share those lesser-known but equally rich compositions

through our unique style." Manga and Magda nod vehemently as we chat over chai, looking for a chance to break into an impromptu baithak to demonstrate Rais' point.

They open their set with their signature 'Nagma'. Manga's harmonium sets the tone, followed by his alaap. Finding the right space, Magda joins in with the

dholak, complimenting Manga's winding movement through the high notes. Rais further embellishes the leisurely melody with his range of folk instruments – morchang, khartal and bhapanag, concluding with a flourish of rhythm play.

While they seem perfectly synchronised on stage, like any other band they have their tiffs and

creative arguments behind the scenes. Manga has trained with several Ustads over the years and has a refined voice that traverses the octaves smoothly. "Sometimes, I lose track of time when I get into the alaap," reflects Manga. Rais, on the other hand, with his passion for percussion, is raring to go deeper into high-paced musical phrases. He has experimented with beat boxing and other contemporary percussion techniques. "Long alaaps may not be suited to all kinds of audiences and sometimes they get restless and we need to pace up," he quips. Just as they are about to get into a heated debate about alaaps, rhythms and audience choices, Magda calmly chuckles, "It has to be balanced, we can't hurry up the alaap, but we also can't have an infinite one!" Magda hails from a family of vocalists, yet chose to train in playing the dholak. His adept understanding

of melody and rhythm is the balancing harmony between the trio, on and off stage.

The moorings

The band's versatility is rooted in their eclectic approach. Sindhi influences and Gujarati garba-like beats merge with local interpretations of ghazal, qawwali and Sufi kalaam. The band was formed in 2011 at the Amarrass Desert Music Festival in Delhi. Since their international debut at the Roskilde Festival in 2014, they have been featured on MTV's Coke Studio, BBC, NPR and at major festivals such as Mood Indigo, Bacardi NH7 Weekender, ZIRO Festival of Music, Winnipeg Folk Festival and others.

Their layered music style can be traced back to their early years of traditional training. For each one, music is a treasured inheritance. Manga recounts the days of relentless riyaz with his Ustad in

a village near the border. "Taking a murki at a high pitch is not easy," he shares, "but my Ustad used to make me practise till I got it right, that's why it is second nature now."

Rais has been a fan of Ustad Zakir Hussain as far back as he can remember. "As a teenager I could do anything to listen to a recording of the tabla maestro! While walking 12 kilometres to and fro from school, I was obsessed with the tala and matras I had heard."

For Magda, musical instruments were the toys he reminisces playing with, as a child. "Since everyone in my family used to sing, I would play the beats. In fact, when I didn't have an instrument handy to accompany them, I would play the rhythm with my fingers on my head!"

New infusions

Audience members often join them on stage to dance to the compelling combination of sounds. The trio have collaborated with musicians across the globe now. "Our folk melodies remain intact," points out Rais. "Yet the same composition sounds fresh because we bring in electronic beats, new rhythms, sometimes a groovy and clubby feel. We want our music to have that kind of range - from folk to rock!"

The talent of the Barmer Boys lies in mixing the contemporary rhythmic edge with an archive of traditional melodies. "We have new ideas, and we hope the audience will be open to exploring folk music in a new way with us," Rais concludes. Manga and Magda smile and gesture to each other to finalise the set for the next performance. As they tune their instruments, they are also tuning in to what the audience wants to hear on a full moon night.



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In the web of gross desires

Standardisation of ragas, the debate over purity and the return of thumri marked the decade of synthetic music

MEENA BANERJEE

At the turn of the last millennium, the term '2K' had brought with it a frightening word 'crash' - albeit related to the cybernetic world. Ironically, down two decades, on the threshold of welcoming the year 2020, one realises that while the universe of the Internet, rightly named 'world-wide-web', has caught the entire human existence in its net, it is the value-system which has faced the brunt of 'crash'; what was slipping out of our fingers slowly - is now falling apart with resounding repercussions - some good, some bad, as usual for every dark cloud comes with a silver lining.

This is a known fact that cultural activities (music in particular) are hopelessly intertwined with social, geographic, economic and political changes. To admit that music world has gone through a sea change in the last decade will not be hyperbolic at all. The global market has been successful in fanning the 'taamasi vritti' (gross desires) of artistes to a great extent which alienates their art from its spirituality - the root of all Indian arts for ages.

What was to be learnt 'seena-ba-seena' (one-to-one), has given way to distant learning through skypes and streaming; what was to be 'heard', has definitively become a show to be 'seen' on stage or on the net; looks, mannerisms, and fashion statements, therefore, are important now; what was 'sadhana' for many, has become a mere means to earn name and fame only; what was supposed to be 'traditional and pure' so far, has started losing its ground.

Driven by his passion for 'standardisation of Ragas' to arrest the 'impure treatment', Milon Debnath of Lucknow was running from pillar to post when one introduced him to ITC SRA gurus and several other eminent musicians of Kolkata.

Predictably, 'impossible' was the answer from all; because each gharana has its own way of looking at a raga, a typical Indian 'fluidity' that baffles 'logic-driven' gen-next with global vision. To solve the issue in his own logical way, an undaunted Debnath launched his "Classical Voice of India" in 2011 to give a 'permanent, standardised, fundamental, complete raagrop to the participating contestants. His net-savvy team has reached it to every nook and corner of India and in the wake of several different music genre-based reality shows on the TV, this commendable, nationwide classical music contest gained momentum. By 2020, the preliminary round of this contest will be held in the web space.

Net-tale

This is but one of the innumerable such projects that are swarming all over the Internet. With easy access to digital equipment, the same applies to the field of recorded music - so much so that it is im-



Thumri in demand Vocalist Vidya Rao performing in front of a packed house; (below) Pt Ulhas Kashalkar

THE HINDU

possible to spot gold from the dross. Social media sites are flooded with 'riyaz sessions', seeking comments from 'friends', while traditionalists insist that riyaz is not to be shared.

Streaming of live programmes is on the rise which may lead to lesser footfalls in auditoria and change the total panorama of cultural events. With such vast connectivity, innovative ideas are multiplying in leaps and bounds. Every other musician, big or small, is trying to dish out something new in the garb of serving the tradition which, unfortunately, eludes most Indians - thanks to the persistent presence of McCauley's education policies.

As such ungainly fusions have gained momentum in every walk of life - just like socially accepted strange bedfellows in live-in relationships without any commitments. Even committed musicians, who used to sneer at these ventures not long ago, tend to compromise with the intrinsic character of their chosen raga and tala to toss-up exhilarating new taste. This, along with the great influx of artistes on the performing arena, has inspired duets, quartets, and ensembles. Kolkata witnessed a whole night soiree based on jugalbandis in August this year.

Audience reaction

Heartless city culture with resultant restive mindset has changed the listenership which looks for excitement, essentially churned out of numerical permutations. The obsession for breakneck speed during taans and jhalas, the growing popularity of tabla-solos and instrument ensembles prove this point. Very few care for an introspective raga elaboration. But this is also indisputable that several instrumentalists along with dhrupad maestros Gundecha Brothers and Uday Bhawalkar know how to keep their listeners glued to their alaap.

Change within tradition

For this magic, the dhrupad exponents changed the technique of voice-throw that is very different

from the members of the Dagar clan of yore. They also rely on rhythm-play, clear enunciation of select Dhruva-pada, especially one thrillingly speedy composition towards the end of their recitals. On the other hand, most new-age khayal exponents have developed a synthetic style that incorporates best of all gharanas according to their aptitude and limits.

The Victorian values, that developed a love-hate relationship of social police with the tawafiq clan who preserved the art of thumri, were on the decline since classical music and related genres entered the living rooms of the masses. The so-called erotic lyrics started radiating a new spiritual inference when educated ladies adapted them in their repertoire. Legends like Siddheshwari Devi, Begum Akhtar, Girija Devi and many others took this genre to dizzy heights but groomed very few torchbearers.

This decade saw Vinod Kapur, the lifeline of VSK Baithak, resuscitating Purab Anga Gayaki in such a way that almost all khayal vocalists, who abhorred thumri on stage earlier, have started giving exclusive concerts. This gayaki infuses elements from dhrupad, khayal, ghazal, tappa, folk - even bhajan!

Frankly, the mighty river called classical music has been fuelling different genres, contemporary fusions borrow heavily from it even now. This leads to collaborations

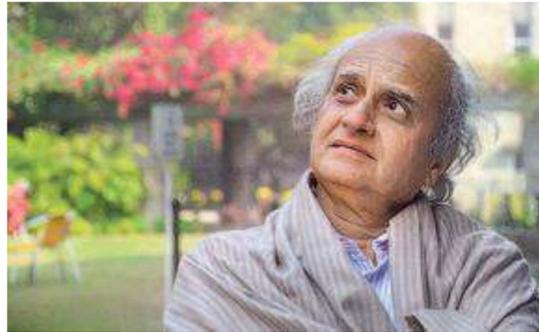
between the 'godly' classical artistes and 'commoners'. This is a healthy trend that should bridge the gap between the two worlds.

'What is pure?'

Veteran vocalist Ulhas Kashalkar puts the change in perspective. While facing the question of raga-standardisation almost a decade ago Kashalkar had asked, "Who will decide what is pure?"

Even now, after regaling listeners with his tradition-bound delineation of Kafi Kanada, he reiterates, "Music keeps changing its trends like a living river, it is not an object like gold which is evaluated as 24 or 22 carats. A musician needs to follow the principles and raagrop of his gharana as handed down to him by the guru. For example, Agra gayaki ka matlab keval Ustad Faiyaz Khan nahin, it should have nom-tom alap, rhythm-play, layakari. Jitendra Abhisheki too belonged to Agra, maar alag (but he is different); apne andaaz se (in his own style)!"

"Aur dekhiye, Bhaskar Buwa Bakhleji trained with three gurus belonging to different schools and evolved his style. So did Ustad Amir Khan. 'Pure', maar hat-ke jab tak nahi hota, we remain copy cats. Who remembers the clones of Lataji or Ashaji? My music evolved with age; I slowed down the tempo of Gwalior. This provided space and peace and led to other changes. Yehi hamaara tradition hai (this is our tradition)," he emphasises.



A visionary turns 100

Guru V.S. Ramamoorthy has influenced generations of dancers with his dedication and passion for dance

S.B. VIJAYA MARY

While India was celebrating its freedom from Britain on August 15, 1947, the classical dance fraternity in Mylapore, Chennai, had another reason to celebrate. They were welcoming into their fold a multi-talented young man who was set to perform his Bharatanatyam arangetram on that day. V.S. Ramamoorthy, at 27, was no mere young dreamer. He was a passionate and dedicated artiste who had set out to make his illustrious guru Dandayudhan Pillai proud, by virtue of being his first male *shishya*. Now, nearly eight decades on, at the mention of dance, V.S. Ramamoorthy's eyes light up and his lips curl in a smile. As his family, friends, disciples, dance connoisseurs and cultural associations gear up to celebrate his centenary year, Ramamoorthy is a picture of poise and content.

Though Ramamoorthy arrived in Hyderabad/Secunderabad only in 1969, he embraced the twin cities like a second home and selflessly imparted Bharatanatyam training to scores of stu-

dents here.

Born on September 20, 1920, in Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu, Ramamoorthy, as a young boy was charmed by the tradition of *katha-kalakshepam* and was drawn towards the narratives from the Ramayana and Bhagavatam. He won accolades for enacting the role of a grief-stricken Kausalya, after Lord Rama leaves for *vanavasam*. Also that became a turning point in his life. Despite not having any formal training in dance or drama, Ramamoorthy successfully imbibed the nuances of dance-dramas.

After completing his Diploma in Electro-technical engineering, Ramamoorthy moved to Calcutta and then to Bangalore to join Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, as Sub-divisional Officer. In 1942 he joined Military Engineering Services (MES) and was posted in Madras. At the age of 22, Ramamoorthy approached Kalasagaram Rajagopal - a sculptor-dancer at Kalakshetra - to get trained in Bharatanatyam, even if he had to travel from Avadi to Mylapore after work. He also strengthened his repertoire by acting in plays by Amateur Sabha. Rajagopal introduced Rama-

moorthy to Dandayudhan Pillai, who accepted him. Ramamoorthy was his first male disciple. A memorable occasion for Ramamoorthy came in the form of his arangetram, held at Rasika Ranjani Sabha on Independence day.

A guru emerges

His continued tryst with plays and Sri Ramakrishna Kripa Amateurs Association brought him laurels, specially in the roles of Sita in *Sita Kalyanam*, as Chintamani in *Chintamani* and Krishna in *Karna Arjuna*. What perhaps took him to the zenith of his acting career is Kalki Krishnamurthy's popular Tamil play *Sivakamiyin Shapadam* where he played the role of Sivakami that was staged across the country. His prowess in dance enhanced his portrayal of Sivakami. Soon the portrayal of female roles became his forte in drama - Kundavi in *Parthiban Kanavu*, Anarkali, Sita, Kaikeyi, Kousalya, Thilakavathy and many historical characters were enacted by him flawlessly. He held sway over a series of dance-dramas that also gave him scope to portray characters that need to dance.

A master of technique and tradition,



Ramamoorthy stood out for his impeccable expressions and abhinaya during his performances.

His versatility ranges from being a dancer, singer, actor, painter and also turning into a make-up man when required. His experience in theatre result-

Going Native

Rhymed translations

In "Nava-e Sarosh: Voices from Beyond", Sanjiv Saraf sews up faithful translations of the ten most outstanding Delhi poets lived between 1730 and 1900

Nuanced but an intentional rearrangement of linguistic and semantic import and cultural and literary convictions subvert the surface structure of the text, but it simultaneously retains the charisma and splendour of the original. The mediated version produced with resourceful inventiveness stitches up an intimate contact with creative dexterity. It hardly loses the 'humour' which, according to Vladimir Nabokov, "is the first gift to perish in a foreign language."

It is what Sanjiv Saraf achieved in his astutely produced anthology, "Nava-e Sarosh: Voices from Beyond". The book, carrying rhymed translations of ten most outstanding Delhi poets lived between 1730 and 1900, is published by the Penguin Enterprise recently.

It is impossibly daunting to hang on to Ghalib's much-admired wit and sense of humour, but Sanjiv, armed with a deep understanding of the original, sews up faithful translation in the contemporary idiom: "Kitne Shirin Hain Tere Lab ki Raqib/ Galiyan Kha Ke Be-maza Na Hua (How honeyed are your lips, that though my enemy/ was showered with abuse, is yet in a happy state.)

Ironical posturing and existentialist angst depicted in interrogative diction sums up Ghalib's oeuvre, and its translation is intellectually more enervating, but the translator makes a refreshing effort to get the reader quite close to the experience narrated in the original: "Dair Nahi Haram Nahi Dar Nahi Aastan Nahin/ Baithe Hain Rahguzar Pe Hum Ghair Hamein Uthae Kyun" (Neither door nor threshold, nor temple nor a mosque/ Why should rivals bid me rise? the street's public domain.)

Emotional chord

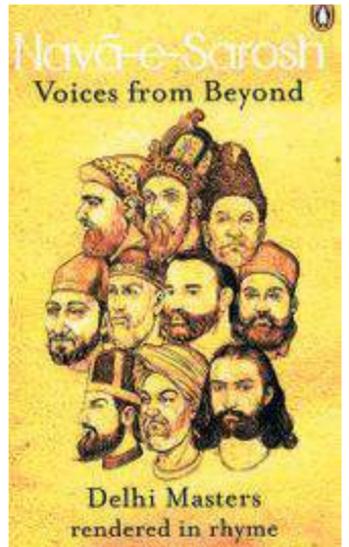
Urdu Ghazal continues to strike an emotional chord with a large number of non-Urdu speaker and Ghalib, Meer, Iqbal Faiz, Firaq and a couple of others are read through translation across the globe.

There are several renderings of Urdu poetry. Still, rhymed translations are infrequent, and Sanjiv attempts to supplement what has been left out.

It is perhaps for the first time that an assortment of the rhymed translations of ten prominent classical Urdu poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appeared together in English. Delhi has been the vibrant cultural and literary hub of the country for many centuries, and Sanjiv selected ten celebrated poets such as Mirza Mohammad Sauda (1713-1781), Khawaja Mir Dard (1721-1785), Mohammad Taqi Mir (1723-1810), Ghulam Hamdani Mushafi (1747-1824), Bhadur Shah Zafar (1775-1862), Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim Zauq (1790-1854), Mustafa Khan Shefta (1809-1869), and Nawab Mirza Daagh (1831-1905).

The central metaphor of Ghazal is unrequited love and fidelity, promiscuity, alienation and elemental human predicament in the backdrop of cultural context is depicted through the primary motif. Frequent literary allusions and aesthetic specifications create the semantic space for ghazal, and one can hardly find its resonance in English. It looks tempting to reconcile with fluent but off the mark translation instead of zeroing in on the nuanced connotations.

The book betrays a strong sense of skilful reshaping, but occasionally turgidity obscures the meaning. Creative prowess and synthesising exuberance elude Sauda's poetry, and Sanjiv's renderings aptly affirm: "Jis Tirgi Se Roz hai Ushahaq Kaa Siyah/ Shayad Usi se Chera-e-Khuban Pe Til Bana" (the inkiness which leads each day/of lovers to be



dark/is the thing maybe that makes / beloved's mark).

Similarly, Dard's poetry subtly rejects the maudlin and mundane notion of love and seeks to portray the ultimate or mystical concern of life in a diction made up of conversational lexicon. "Jag Mein Aa Kar Idhar Udhar Dekha/ Tu Hi Aya Nazar Jidhar Dekha". (I came into this world and looked around/ you, manifest, in every place, I found).

Ghalib's widely admired ghazals do find their way in the anthology. However, they have come in for non-rhymed translations; here one comes across with renderings that make Ghalib's unparalleled cerebral outpourings tangible: "Yaa Rab Zamana Mujh ko Mitata hai kis Liye/ Lauh-e-Jahan Pe Har-e-Mukarrar Nahin Hun Main". (Lord! the world erases me, pray, what is the cause?/ I am not a word, that on life's slate has been writ before). "Tire Vade par Jiye Ham To Ye Jaan Jhut Jana/Ki Khushi Se Mar na Jate Agar Eitbar Hota". (It was your vow that made life, be not thus deceived/happily my life I'd give if could have but believed!)

Distinctive features

Saraf's concise introduction of the poets readily acquaints the readers with the distinctive features of the poets. Not much is known about Shefta who was an accomplished poet, and a disciple of Momin, and Sanjiv opines with a marked sense of critical acuity. With refinement and sophistication of culture running through his veins, Shefta mastered the language and idioms of Delhi and developed an uncompromisingly fine taste of high poetry. He wrote Persian verse with Mirza Ghalib as a guide, but it is in Urdu poetry where he has left a mark of his own. His love-affair failed him in life but powered him to write some of the finest lines of Love-poetry.

Another remarkable feature of the anthology is an astutely drawn transliteration key as many non-Urdu speakers falter on this count. Sanjiv's discerning selection and its impeccable translation is destined to blaze a new trail in the ever-increasing corpus of translation of Urdu poetry.

SHAFEY KIDWAI is a senior literary critic



Dedicated to dance Guru V S Ramamoorthy with his daughter and disciple Manjula Ramaswamy ■ KVS GIRI

ed in distinct productions and dance ballets. Going beyond Bharatanatyam, Ramamoorthy trained himself in *Kurathi* dance - a folk tradition of Tamil Nadu. His repertoire would always generate a lot of interest and budding dancers were eager to learn the new genres. On request from his well-wishers, Ramamoorthy started a dance school, Sri Devi Nritya Niketan in Perambur, Madras in 1966. His second daughter Manjula became his first disciple. Ramamoorthy revelled in the experience of training a batch of students who went on to give their arangetram on March 29, 1970. Soon after, Ramamoorthy had to move to the twin cities on job transfer and settled down at the Defence quarters in Mudfort, Secunderabad. He ensured that his daughter continued her practice between 4 and 5 in the morning.

Eventually, as word spread, children, mostly from families of defence personnel joined in the training, thus paving the path for establishing Sri Rama Nataka Niketan, a new name for Sri Devi Nritya Niketan. By now Manjula had started assisting her father in running the dance classes. Post-retirement, Ramamoorthy focussed on choreographing and producing innovating ballets and compositions that were gaining wide recognition. Rigorous rehearsals, discipline and dedication to the art became the hallmarks of Sri Rama Nataka Nike-

tan. Performances standing atop inverted mud pots became a unique feature of the repertoire of guru Ramamoorthy's students. Winning various competitions and coming out with flying colours on TV reality shows, became a routine for his students.

Acknowledging his dedication, renowned Bharatanatyam dancer Ananda Shankar Jayanth says, "He has taught generations of students with the same dedication. That is so rare! What is also amazing about him is the love and warmth he has for me and my students - even though I'm not his student! He always treated all dancers in Hyderabad as his children, taking pride in all our work and taking time to call and share his appreciation for our work."

Ananda was at the forefront of the Artists and Arts Association that honoured guru Ramamoorthy in the city recently. "A Centenarian amongst us - one of our own gurus and an icon of our city - when we felicitate such a living guru, we receive blessings. What can be more apt than all artists coming together to celebrate a doyen who has served the cause of arts in our city? And so a simple idea, got traction with every senior artiste joining in enthusiastically," she adds.

Last month city-based Kalasagaram honoured Ramamoorthy with the 'Centenarian Award' during their annual cultural festival.

For guru Ramamoorthy though, as his daughter Manjula Ramaswamy says, happiness is when he observes his students carry forward the dance legacy in the path that's laid by him.

S. RAVI

Documentaries have always tried to present the socio-political upheavals of the times. The genre while mirroring concerns of society, also brings to fore touching human stories that keep the audience abreast with reality.

Leading documentary filmmakers, Kamal Swaroop, Kavita Bahl and Nandan Saxena, Umesh Aggarwal and Prantik Basu, suggest films they loved in 2019.

And What Is The Summer Saying

Director: Payal Kapadia
"What Is The Summer Saying" is a film poem about a small village in Maharashtra and its surrounding forest, and it explores the intimate stories told by the voices of some women. The strange smoke emits from the ground like a dream of a time gone by.

What fascinates me about this film is the way it is constructed; memoirs of number of village women are recorded, edited and later taken to studio and an evocative dramatic voice track made. Supporting this voice track, a series of fine composition of the village, its forest and people placed with great cinematic precision.

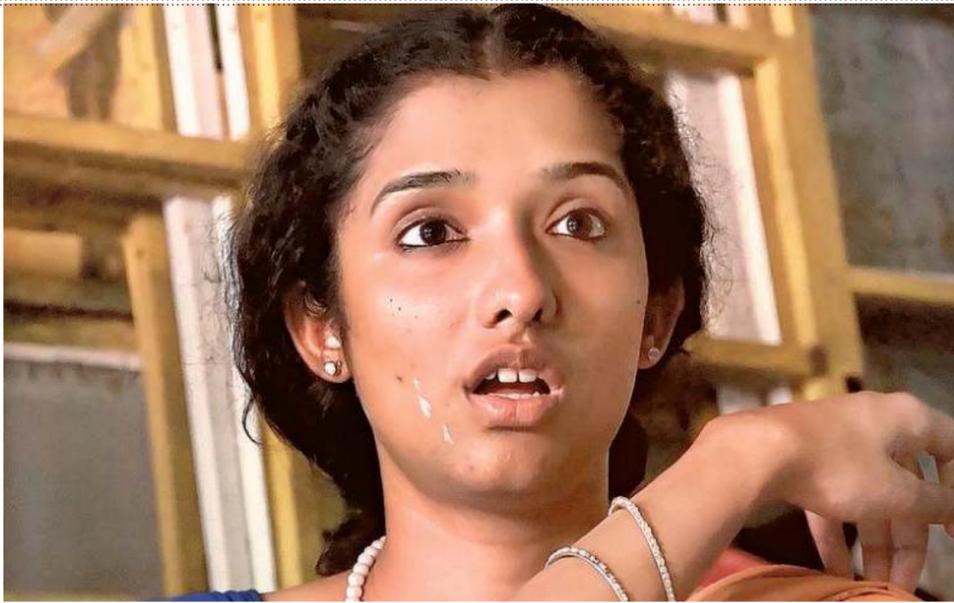
Oh That's Bhanu

Director: R.V. Ramani
On the other hand, Ramani's, "Oh That's Bhanu", is stylistically totally different. Over the years, Ramani has developed his own kind of mise en scene where everything is almost a living picture. In "Oh That's Bhanu", Ramani explores the life of dancer-theatre artist Bhanumathi Rao, who suffers from memory loss. In Ramani's words, "Bhanumathi makes up stories most of the time, but that's all right. I don't believe in the idea of truth. I nullify it. Here, Bhanumathi (the character) nullifies it herself. So, her memory loss was never an issue. I started this film in 2014 and two weeks ago, we got a projector and made her watch the film. At first, as usual, she didn't recognise me; but later, she hit me on the hand."

Kamal Swaroop, a veteran documentary filmmaker, has made "Pushkar Puran" and "Battle For Benaras", among others, and won the National Award for "Ranghoomi"

Janani's Juliet

Director: Pankaj Rishi Kumar
"Janani's Juliet", India's official entry to the Oscar's unsettles you. A poetic, political exploration of love - pitting the lovers against moribund social mores, Pankaj brings Shakespeare into our liv-



ing rooms. A sparse set, a set of actors, a director ready to explore - in the spirit of six characters in search of a story...

The film digs into the violence unleashed in the name of "honour-killings" in India. As we plunge directly into the action, the film lets you draw upon your own lived experience in these times.

The film is an exquisite performance within a performance - as we watch Pankaj craft his film from the theatrical performances - rather the "making" of the play; the candid discussion between the actors and the director - and the testimony of Kausalya - whose parents tried to kill her for marrying a boy of lower caste. They killed 'Shankar' - the boy she married.



The very premise of the film that we are watching a play places the viewer in the gallery. As the main protagonists go through adapting Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" into the Indian context of caste violence, the play transforms into a powerful social statement. The film is rooted in reality through the real story of Kausalya and Shankar.

Pankaj Rishi Kumar subtly keeps introducing the layers of complexity into the film by weaving-in the making of the play, "Chandala". The dialogue between the theatre director and the actors to adapt the play into the Indian context works as a Greek chorus and keeps the viewer engaged. "You are Juliet's messengers to me," the director tells the women cast. As they dig deeper into their own psyche, we also question - why it was all about Romeo even in Shakespeare's

time. Why do we not know more about Juliet?
Pankaj skilfully manages to keep the tension alive between the tender world of love between Jack and Janani (Romeo and Juliet) and the looming threat of its annihilation by a dogmatic society.
Kavita Bahl and Nandan Saxena who have making films for over two decades, have won National Film Award for "Cotton For My Shroud", "Candles In The Wind" and "I Cannot Give You My Forest".
Period, End Of Sentence
Director: Rayka Zehtabchi
The film which picked up the Oscar for Best Documentary (Short Subject) at the 91st Academy Awards in 2019, is about village Kathikhera in Hapur, Uttar Pradesh, which is less than 75 km away from the national capital -



Mirroring reality

Four leading filmmakers share their thoughts on the documentaries that impressed them in 2019

New Delhi.

The film underlines the condition of girls in Hapur, living with the stigma, taboo and shame associated with menstruation. Apparently, most of them have not even heard of the word "pad". Yes, that too in a country that boasts of more than 900 satellite television channels and all of them are full of TV commercial about sanitary pads. The film chronicles the struggle of these girls. One day, a sanitary pad vending machine is installed in the village. Women learn to manufacture and market their own low cost, biodegradable pads.

Umesh Aggarwal has been producing and directing television shows and documentary films for 20 years. His films include "The Whistle Blowers", "Brokering

for them. This year as per our rough estimates as many as 10,000 people have visited the festival. We have succeeded in providing a platform to local filmmakers to screen their films. Also, our mobile filmmaking workshop has been a huge success with the youngsters. We have got a wonderful atmosphere for film shooting and the facilities have also improved in the recent times. However, there is still a long way to go but I think we are on the right track.



Why did you choose comedy as the theme this year?
We have reached a point that we mostly get to read and watch about things that tend to disturb us. Also, comedy is disappearing from cinema at an alarming rate. Earlier, there was hardly any film without a comedian. Scenes and situations were specifically introduced in movies to provide comic relief at regular intervals. But all that is disappearing from our movies now. There is too much of grimness in our films these days in the name of realism. So by choosing comedy as a theme this year we endeavoured to remind everyone about the rich tradition of comedy that our cinema has always enjoyed.

What are your plans for the next year?
For the next year, we are planning to have a Bachchan week. We are already in touch with Amitabh Bachchan. We will also feature literary works of Harivansh Rai Bachchan along with the films of the entire Bachchan family. So, other than cinema, we also intend to include literature in our scheme of things in a big way going forth.



Not to be missed
(Clockwise from far left) Stills from "Janani's Juliet"; "Oh That's Bhanu"; "Period, End of Sentence"; "Tales From Our Childhood" ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



News" and "Jai Ho", among others.

Tales From Our Childhood

Director: Mukul Haloi
Looking back and reflecting upon the various documentary films that I saw last year, two films that particularly moved and inspired me are "Tales From Our Childhood" by Mukul Haloi and "The Strike and I" by Kshama Padalkar.

In both the films, the filmmaker meanders away from the conventional tropes of non-fiction and re-envisions what it truly means to engage with a subject. They do not shy away from self-doubt and reflect upon the formalism of filmmaking, sometimes even staging a sequence.

In "Tales from our Childhood", Haloi asks his friend to pose in a uniform borrowed from a dead



Assam.

The Strike and I

Director: Kshama Padalkar
In "The Strike and I", Padalkar



What fascinates me about Payal's film is the way it is constructed; memoirs of number of village women are recorded, edited and later taken to studio and an evocative dramatic voice track made
Kamal Swaroop

almost takes the viewer by their hand to keenly observe the internal, as well as the inter-personal dynamics of a four and half month long student protest at FTII. We hear the slogans, the protest songs, at the same time, we are made familiar with the vulnerability of the ones who are in the fringes of the protest. In both these films, the political becomes the personal and the personal, the political.

Prantik Basu, has been making documentaries and short films since 2007. His film "Sakhisona" (2016) won the Tiger Award for Short Films at the 46th Rotterdam IFF.

Quick Five

Taking cinema to the grassroots

MURTAZA ALI KHAN

The 5th edition of the Khajuraho International Film Festival (KIFF) concluded in Khajuraho earlier this week. The festival's theme this year was comedy.

Actor Raja Bundela, founder and chairperson of KIFF, talks about the vision behind the festival, the concept of setting up tapra talkies in remote places, and his plans for the next edition of the festival.

Excerpts:

What's the vision behind the Khajuraho International Film Festival?

I have always had a strong desire to do something for the people of Bundelkhand. It's the place of my birth and I think I owe it to the people of the region. Back in the year 1995, I got associated with the movement demanding creation of a separate Bundelkhand state. Later on, I realised that there are other ways of promoting welfare in the region. I have gained a lot through my long association with film, theatre and cinema. So, I thought of leveraging upon it for the benefit of the people in the region. Now, Khajuraho had been in my mind for quite some time and so one day I got the idea of starting a film festival in Khajuraho as the place is already known worldwide for its cultural heritage. My wife Sushmita Mukherjee who is also from NSD backed the idea fully. While, there was a lot of pressure from the authorities to host it in Bhopal or Indore instead, I was totally convinced that it had to be done in Khajuraho only.



Making a point Raja Bundela ■ R.V. MOORTHY

What prompted you to set up tapra (tent) talkies in Khajuraho and surrounding areas as part of KIFF?

During the first year we began by having film screenings in halls and lounges of some of the leading hotels in Khajuraho. Now, the cultural evenings we had were really successful. But we didn't get any audiences for the movie screenings. It was a big disappointment. So we did a survey in the villages. We learned that they were getting intimidated by these big hotels. There is always this fear that the

watchmen might drive them away. It was a huge challenge to overcome the problem before the second edition. It seemed impossible to set up theatres in such a short time. Then I was reminded of the touring talkies that would come during our childhood days. They would set up tents and screen movies to the village people. So that's how I decided to set up tapra talkies.

To what extent have you succeeded in realising your vision?

Our very first show was a sold

out even though we were screening an American film as the US was our partner that year. The idea really took off. By the third year we had four tapra talkies up and running. In the fourth we had as many as eight. It was really unbelievable but we did make it happen. You see cinema is a powerful medium of reaching out to the people. So it's important to make people literate towards cinema. When noted film personalities visit Khajuraho it brings the entire region in the limelight. Also, it inspires the local people and creates opportunities

CATCH UP

Winter concert



The Winter Festival of Music, a two-day event begins today at C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre. The first day will feature a Rudra Veena recital by Sharada Mushti and a Hindustani vocal recital by Adarsh Saxena. The second day will see a Sattriya performance by Meenakshi Medhi and a Kuchipudi recital by Vidhya S.

Mixed-media show

Alekhya, an exhibition of painting and sculpture, showcases a union of different genres of fine arts. It showcases works of artists Nidhi and Mohit Bhardwaj along with their mentors, Ganesh Prasad Sahu and Krishna Shreshtha at AIFACS Gallery, Rafi Marg. It features Nidhi's coloured canvases on water colour wash technique, Sahu's fine oil painting on paper and the mirror work and paintings of the Buddha articulated by Bhardwaj.

Tribute to musicians



This Sunday, at Amaltas Hall, India Habitat Centre, eminent singer and composer Runki Goswami will present Tujhe Mere Kale Kamli Waale ki Saun, a live concert to showcase the underline melody of ragas used to portray moods and seasons in Hindi cinema. In this show, she will pay tribute to yesteryear Bollywood music legends like Laxmikant Pyarelal, S.D Burma, and Anand Bakshi.

Mirza Ghalib Festival



Ghalib Memorial Movement is hosting Mirza Ghalib Festival, a three-day event to celebrate the life and work on Ghalib's 150th Death Anniversary at India Islamic Cultural Centre, Lodhi Road.

Starting today, the first day event will see a Mushaira dedicated to Ghalib where eminent poets will participate. Other events include a cultural dance programme by Dr. Uma Sharma and group show based on Ghalib's poetry.