

THE MARKETS ON FRIDAY			Chg#
Sensex	41,599.7▲		147.4
Nifty	12,256.8▲		40.9
Nifty futures*	12,290.0▲		33.2
Dollar	₹70.9		₹71.2**
Euro	₹78.7		₹79.1**
Brent crude (\$/bbl)**	65.2**		65.5**
Gold (10 gm)***	₹39,601.0▼		₹121.0

\* (Jan) Premium on Nifty Spot; \*\* Previous close; # Over previous close; ## At 9 pm IST; ### Market rate exclusive of VAT; Source: IBA

RIGHT TO BUSINESS VIA INTERNET PROTECTED BY CONSTITUTION: SC

The Right to Freedom of Expression through the internet is part of Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, is subject to reasonable restrictions, which apply to all fundamental rights, and is subject to judicial review, the Supreme Court held on Friday. Those carrying out business via the internet also have the fundamental right to continue it, the apex court said, and directed the government to review the internet suspension in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) within seven days.

**ECONOMY & PUBLIC AFFAIRS P4**  
**ED attaches Kochhar's assets worth ₹78 crore**  
The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday attached assets and cash belonging to former ICICI Bank managing director and chief executive officer Chanda Kochhar and husband Deepak Kochhar in connection with the Videocon loan case. These include a South Mumbai apartment at CICI Chambers, valued at ₹3.5 crore and other assets.

**BACK PAGE P16**  
**Govt notifies Citizenship Act amid protests**  
The Centre on Friday notified the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The notification came nearly a month after Parliament passed it on December 11, and in the wake of sustained anti-CAA protests across India. The Supreme Court is set to hear petitions challenging the constitutionality of the law on January 22.

**ECONOMY & PUBLIC AFFAIRS P4**  
**ED summons Edelweiss founder in forex case**  
The Enforcement Directorate (ED) issued fresh summons to Edelweiss group founder and Chairman Rashesh Shah in connection with an alleged multi-crore forex violation case. He has been asked to appear on January 13. Confirming the development, an ED official said Shah was earlier called to join the investigation on Thursday, January 9.

**'There should not be any supply policy of coal'**  
Union Minister for Coal, Mine & Parliamentary Affairs **PRALHAD JOSHI** tells Shreya Jai that he wants an open market for coal with no policy restrictions and that state-owned Coal India would remain the primary player in the Indian coal mining space.



**Q&A**  
ECONOMY  
PAGE 4

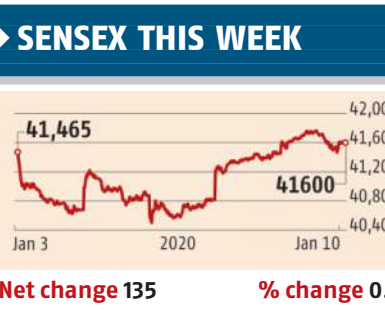
**COMPANIES P2**  
**Oyo plans to fire 1,200 in India in 4 months**  
Oyo Hotels has let go of 5 per cent of its 12,000 employees in China partly due to non-performance, while dismissing 12 per cent of its 10,000 staff in India. It plans to shed another 1,200 in India over the next three to four months, sources said. Oyo is undergoing a restructuring, trimming redundancy in China and India, leading to thousands of dismissals, sources said.

I-T SEARCHES OYO'S GURUGRAM OFFICE P2

**BS** ON SATURDAY SPECIALS

**WEEKEND RUMINATIONS: Beyond taxes**  
There are many ways to make the government's money go further – if it were to bring to the task the same determination it has shown in persisting with the amended citizenship law, writes **T N NINAN**

**NATIONAL INTEREST: Stoooping to lose**  
Six months after returning to power with a huge mandate, Modi government is stuck fighting students – its most ardent voters who are now pessimistic, hopeless and even angry. **SHEKHAR GUPTA** writes



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WEEKEND SEPARATE SECTION

BUSINESS BOROUGHES: SMALL CITIES AS START-UP HUBS

THE SMART INVESTOR P10

CHRIS WOOD SEES GOLD RISING TO \$4,200/OZ



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SC puts on hold NCLAT order in Tata-Mistry case

Mistry gets four weeks to respond to court notice

RUCHIKA CHITRAVANSHI  
New Delhi, 10 January

It took the Supreme Court less than a minute on Friday to stay a National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) order, which had last month reinstated Cyrus Mistry as executive chairman of Tata Sons. While the tribunal verdict had surprised the corporate world, Mistry, who was removed as Tata Sons chairman in a boardroom coup in October 2016, maintained he was fighting for the rights of minority shareholders and was not interested in returning to the post he held more than three years ago.

Around noon, when the three-judge Bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant took up the Tatas' appeal against the NCLAT verdict on Friday, it said the tribunal order suffered from "basic errors". The Bench noted that never before had there been a judgment of this nature under the Companies Act. With this stay, the salt-to-software conglomerate can get back to business as usual with N Chandrasekaran at the helm of Tata Sons. The Mistry camp has four weeks to respond to the court notice, though senior advocate C A Sundaram, appearing for Cyrus Investment had sought two weeks to file a reply.

The court has ordered the \$110-billion Tata group not to exercise power under Article 75 of the Company Law to push out shares of minority holders in the company. Tata Trusts, with a 66 per cent stake, is the largest shareholder in Tata Sons, while Shapoorji Pallonji holds 18 per cent in the Tata group's holding firm.

The top court has stayed the NCLAT's order for conversion of Tata Sons from private to a public entity.

"Our first impression is not good about the order of the tribunal. The tribunal granted the prayer which was not prayed...There was no prayer in the petition for reinstatement of Mistry but the tribunal went ahead with it and ordered his reinstatement," the Bench said soon after the matter, 28th on the list, came up in the court. Tatas are being represented by a battery of prominent

LEGAL TANGLE

2016

Oct 24: Tata Sons board sacks Cyrus Mistry as chairman

2019

Dec 18: NCLAT orders reinstatement of Mistry as executive chairman and conversion of Tata Sons from a private to public entity

2020

Jan 2: Tata Sons files petition in SC, challenging NCLAT ruling

Jan 3: Ratan Tata moves SC in personal capacity

Jan 5: Mistry declines executive chairmanship in a media statement

Jan 6: NCLAT upholds its own order, dismisses RoC's appeal

Jan 10: SC grants interim relief to Tatas



lawyers including Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Harish Salve and Mohan Parasaran. The lawyers for the Mistry family include Aryama Sundaram, Arun Kathpalia and KG Raghavan.

The Bench observed, "You (Cyrus) have been out of the saddle quite a long time...How does it hurt you today?"

The SC has issued notices to Cyrus Investment, Mistry, and others, while posting the matter after four weeks.

YES Bank director quits, says MD misled board on investors

Bank will examine charges as well as director's fit and proper criteria

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA & ANUP ROY  
New Delhi/Mumbai, 10 January

YES Bank's independent director and chairman of its audit committee, Uttam Prakash Agarwal, resigned on Friday, alleging that Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Ravneet Gill had misled the board of directors about the binding offers to raise capital.

The bank's board said in a notification that it had received the resignation of Agarwal, and that certain observations made by him on the bank's governance would be "duly examined by the board". However, the notification on board meeting did not mention if the allegations were discussed. A YES Bank official did not want to add anything beyond the exchange notifications.

The bank also said it was investigating whether Agarwal met the fit and proper criteria as a director after being cautioned by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), but before the issue could be taken up by the board on Friday, he resigned.

BANK'S WOES CONTINUE

The allegations

- Ravneet Gill, CEO of YES Bank, initially only verbally communicated the names of investors
- When demanded, terms sheets were provided which showed no firm commitment
- No effective due diligence was done about the investors
- Even as the board was not convinced about capital raising, the bank issued media releases and notified exchanges of firm commitment

Uttam Prakash Agarwal, former director



What the bank says

- The bank was getting legal opinion on Agarwal's fit and proper criteria, but he resigned before the issue could be taken up
- Board on Friday allowed fundraising of up to ₹10,000 cr, but no investor named
- The board will consider Citax's \$500 mn proposal; rejects SPGP and Erwin Singh Braich's offer
- Citax offer will be discussed in the next meeting

Ravneet Gill, CEO, YES Bank



P4 YES BANK SCALES DOWN FUNDRAISING TARGET TO ₹10,000 CR

IIP in the green after 3 months

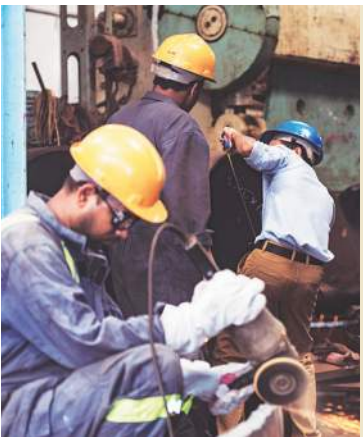
Grows at 1.8% in Nov

SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY  
New Delhi, 10 January

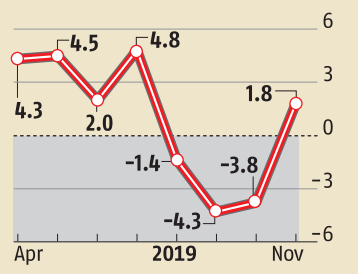
A rebound in manufacturing activity pulled up November's overall industrial output, helping it to grow 1.8 per cent after declining for three consecutive months. Output had declined by 3.8 per cent in October after a 4.3 per cent contraction in September, the steepest fall in eight years.

The rise in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) helped pull up cumulative growth in industrial output to 0.6 per cent in the April-November period of financial year 2019-20 (FY20), the data released on Friday showed.

However, this was still lower than



SOMETHING TO CHEER  
IIP growth in %



the 5 per cent rise in output registered in the previous fiscal year. Broad-based slowdown across sectors has meant that output was neg-

ative in four of the eight months till November in FY20. Manufacturing output rose 2.7 per cent in November.

Infy audit panel says no 'financial impropriety'

DEBASIS MOHAPATRA  
Bengaluru, 10 January

Information technology services major Infosys on Friday said its audit committee found "no evidence of financial impropriety or executive misconduct" at the firm as alleged by whistle-blower letters last year. The investigation was carried out with the help of external agencies.

The Bengaluru-headquartered firm, in a seven-page release, rejected each of the allegations made in the anonymous whistle-blower complaints disclosed on October 21. This came on a day when the company announced its financial earnings for the third quarter of 2019-20.

**"Infosys is a model of strong corporate governance, and the company's handling of these allegations from start to finish has been consistent with these high standards of governance"**

**NANDAN NILEKANI**  
Co-founder and chairman, Infosys

**Q&A 'WHISTLE-BLOWER POLICY SHOULDN'T BE USED AS WEAPONS' P3**

The company said the audit committee, headed by Independent Director D Sundaram and assisted by independent legal counsel Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co and PricewaterhouseCoopers, found that the "allegations are

substantially without merit".

Based on the findings, the committee said the restatement of previously announced financial statements or other published financial information was not required.

"The committee took the complaints seriously and commissioned a thorough investigation. It determined that there was no evidence of financial impropriety or executive misconduct," said Sundaram.

Infosys Co-founder and Chairman Nandan Nilekani, who was present at the earnings press conference, vouched for the firm's corporate governance standards and ethics, which, he said, continued to remain undiluted.

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**Q3 REPORT CARD**

Revenue ₹23,092cr	YoY growth 7.9%	QoQ growth 2.0%
Net profit ₹4,457cr	YoY growth 23.5%	QoQ growth 10.9%
Operating margin 21.9%	YoY growth -70 bps	QoQ growth 20 bps

Source: Company

**INFY MEETS ESTIMATES, EYES DOUBLE-DIGIT GROWTH IN FY20 P3**

SACHIN BANSAL'S CHAITANYA SEEKS BANKING LICENCE

Sachin Bansal-led Chaitanya India Fin Credit on Friday said the microfinance company had applied for a universal banking licence to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The application was made under the RBI's On-Tap Banking License Guidelines, 2016. In September, Bansal had

invested \$104 million to acquire around 90 per cent ownership of Chaitanya, a 10-year-old Bengaluru-based firm that catered to low-income borrowers for vehicle finance, housing loans, small business loans, and education loans in five states.

**T N NARASIMHAN & BIBHU RAJAN MISHRA** report 2



After Gaitonde and Raza, who are the new Masters?

Subodh Gupta is set to enter the big league but there are others too

PAVAN LALL  
Mumbai, 10 January

Seen through the eyes of billionaire collectors and big-ticket auctions, the art world invariably points to a list of signatures that keeps the cash registers ringing: VS Gaitonde, Tyeb Mehta, and SH Raza whose work commands tens of crores at auctions at Christie's and Sotheby's. Following his death on Monday, the work of Akbar Padamsee is also expected to fetch a higher price this year.

But who are the next big-hitters of the Indian art world? Yamini Mehta, Sotheby's deputy chairman, Indian and South Asian Art, deflects the question by making a

Reigning champions  
Average high selling price

Vasudeo S Gaitonde	\$2-3 million
Tyeb Mehta	\$1.5-2 million
Sayed Haider Raza	\$500,000-1.5 million
Akbar Padamsee	\$500,000-750,000
Maqbool Fida Husain	\$350,000-750,000

Sources: Piramal Art Museum, Art Asia, Saffron Art Gallery

ART AND THE STARS



A painting by Akbar Padamsee, 1955

COURTESY: PIRAMAL ART FOUNDATION

broader point. "We look at the artists we offer at Sotheby's within the context of the wider art historical canon and are both careful and sensitive about introducing new artists into our auctions."

Mehta adds that Sotheby's looks for critical and commercial appeal as well as quality in concept and execution.

But she does offer the names of some young contemporary artists doing notable

works such as Abir Karmakar and Salman Toor. "They are the new young 'Old Masters' and interesting artists to watch but it is important for artists to have a strong primary market before including

On The Way Up  
Average high selling price

Subodh Gupta	\$250,000-350,000
Bhupen Khakhar	\$250,000-350,000
Bharti Kher	\$170,000-250,000
Jitish Kallat	\$100,000-250,000
Atul Dodiya	\$100,000-250,000
Jagdish Swaminathan	\$125,000-225,000

them in our auctions," says Mehta. She says Sotheby's looks at where artists have shown their work, who is representing them, who has written about them and who is collecting them carefully before adding them to an auction. Other art experts suggest that Subodh Gupta will be the one living artist to cross the threshold. Ashvin Rajagopalan of the Piramal Art Foundation says Gupta is going to be the fastest living artist to reach the million-dollar mark as an average price. Across the board, a reappraisal is underway of artists who had not received their due but are now getting important retrospectives and are being included in literature.

"The Progressive Artists Group has long cast a shadow in our field but we are happy to see artists such as Bhupen Khakhar, Arpita Singh, Nasreen Mohamedi, Prabhakar Barve, Gieve Patel, Sudhir Patwardhan and others gain ground," says Mehta.

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# SoftBank-backed Oyo plans to fire 1,200 in India in 4 months

BLOOMBERG  
Bengaluru/Hong Kong, 10 January

Oyo Hotels is firing thousands of staff across China and India, people familiar with the matter said, adding to growing signs of trouble at one of the largest start-ups in SoftBank Group Corp's portfolio.

It has let go of 5 per cent of its 12,000 employees in China partly due to non-performance, while dismissing 12 per cent of its 10,000 staff in India, one of the people said. It plans to shed another 1,200 in India over the next three to four months, the person added.

Oyo is undergoing a restructuring, trimming redundancy in China and India, leading to thousands of dismissals, according to the people, who requested not to be named because they aren't authorised to talk to media. An Oyo representative had no immediate comment when contacted.

Oyo's downsizing is another setback for Masayoshi Son's SoftBank, whose portfolio has been buffeted by recent



## LAY-OFF SHOCK FOR SOFTBANK

- Ritesh Agarwal-founded Oyo is undergoing a rejig, trimming redundancy in China and India
- It has let go of 5% of its 12,000 employees in China partly because of non-performance
- In India, the firm has already dismissed 12% of its 10,000 staff
- This is another setback for SoftBank, whose portfolio has been buffeted by troubles at WeWork and slumping share prices at Slack and Uber
- The growing turmoil may complicate SoftBank's efforts to raise a successor to the Vision Fund, the world's largest pool of start-up investments

trouble at WeWork and slumping share prices at Slack Technologies and Uber Technologies. The billionaire has called for greater financial discipline among the founders in his portfolio, spurring job cuts at smaller outfits like Zume Pizza. Other SoftBank investees, including Getaround, Wag Labs, Fair and Brandless, have had to cut staff or change business models once it

became apparent revenue and profits were not living up to their once-grand ambitions.

Adding to Oyo's challenges, hotel owners in China have been protesting in front of the firm's offices, accusing it of violating contractual agreements. The growing turmoil may complicate SoftBank's efforts to raise a successor to the Vision Fund, the world's largest

pool of start-up investments. "Oyo is one of SoftBank's current crown jewels," said Michael Norris, research and strategy manager at AgencyChina. "Issues in China, Oyo's largest market, continues the Vision Fund's woes." It would make raising a similar-sized second Vision Fund a challenge, he added.

Son has been a keen supporter of Oyo founder Ritesh Agarwal, helping

fund the hotel company's fast international expansion. Oyo had been growing at a rapid clip, but its reputation has suffered due to customer complaints about bad experiences along with grievances about poor or unfair treatment from several of the over 20,000 hotel owners in its chain.

SoftBank's Vision Fund has so far invested about \$1.5 billion in Oyo, pushing its valuation to \$10 billion. The company also counts Airbnb, Sequoia Capital, and Lightspeed Venture Partners as backers. It promoted its real estate business chief, Rohit Kapoor, to CEO for India and South Asia in December to shake up the business.

In its aggressive effort to acquire market share, Oyo offered hotel stays for as cheap as \$4 a night, according to a person familiar with its practices. The firm stocked up on rented room inventory by signing exclusive deals and guaranteeing income to hotel owners. It's allegedly renegeing on those guarantees, the cause of the protests outside its Chinese offices, one person said.

## I-T searches Gurugram office

Oyo Hotels and Homes said on Friday income tax authorities had carried out a surprise search at one of its four offices in Gurugram. "There is a routine TDS survey in progress in one of our offices. We are cooperating with the authorities, and are committed to engaging with all relevant stakeholders," an Oyo spokeswoman said.

It was not immediately clear what prompted the search and Oyo did not elaborate. The director general of investigation at India's Income tax department could not be immediately reached for comment.

The news comes at a time when Oyo's major shareholder SoftBank faces renewed investor scrutiny after being forced to bail out one of its best known portfolio companies, the cash-burning, office-sharing firm WeWork, for about \$10 billion last year.

The latest development adds to Oyo's challenges as it faces backlash from some hotel owners in India who say they have been blindsided by hidden fees.

In November, internal projections showed Oyo's India business will likely make losses until 2021.



REUTERS

## IN BRIEF

### HCC lenders initiate carve-out of ₹2K-cr debt to separate SPV



Hindustan Construction Company (HCC) on Friday said its lenders had initiated a carve-out of about ₹2,100 crore of debt along with arbitration claims and awards to a special purpose vehicle (SPV). The SPV is expected to have a new third party investor. "The debt, along with receivables comprising approximately an award cover of one time and claims under arbitration of 1.5 times, will move to an SPV controlled by a new investor," the statement said. HCC added: "The debt/asset carve-out, which will be in the nature of a slump sale, is subject to lenders' final approvals. Lenders aim to seek their internal approvals and target to close the transaction prior to March 31, 2020." The move is expected to deleverage the company. HCC said the tenure of the debt at the SPV will be up to 10 years and repayments from the proceeds of the Awards will yield an IRR higher than current yields offered by HCC.

PTI

### GMR Infrastructure arm raises ₹2K cr through NCDs

GMR Infrastructure on Friday said its arm GISL had raised ₹2,000 crore through issuance of non-convertible debentures, mainly to retire some of its existing debt. "The funds...have been raised by one of the step down subsidiary of the company, GMR Infra Services (GISL). GISL has raised funds of ₹2,000 crore through issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs), in the normal course of its business, primarily to retire some of its existing debt," it said in a NSE filing.

PTI

### Zomato raises \$150 mn from Ant Financial

Online restaurant guide and food ordering platform Zomato on Friday said it had raised \$150 million (over ₹1,065 crore) from existing investor Ant Financial as part of a larger funding round. According to a filing by Info Edge India, also an existing shareholder in Zomato, this transaction is at a pre-money valuation of \$3 billion.

PTI

### Shriram Transport Finance raises ₹3,556 cr via bond

Shriram Transport Finance on Friday said it had raised \$500 million (around ₹3,556 crore) through dollar bond, making it the first international public social bond issuance from the country.

PTI

### NCLT okays demerger of Tata Chemicals' consumer business

Tata Chemicals on Friday said it had received the approval from the Mumbai Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) sanctioning the scheme of arrangement between the company and Tata Global Beverages for the demerger of the consumer products business. The business consists of food brands Tata Salt and Tata Sampann among other products.

BS REPORTER

### HC seeks Centre's reply on RIL plea to recall assets disclose orders

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought the Centre's reply on a plea by Reliance Industries seeking recall of orders asking it to file an affidavit on its assets. the HC issued the notice on RIL's application and listed the matter for hearing on February 6. The plea was filed in a pending petition of the government for execution of an arbitral award in its favour.

PTI

### Merc maintains pole position for 5th straight year

Mercedes-Benz India on Friday said it remained the market leader in the domestic luxury car segment for the fifth straight year in 2019, selling 13,786 units. However, this was 12.7 per cent lower from 2018, when it had sold 15,538 units. In Q3, the firm clocked sales growth of 3.3 per cent.

PTI

# Sachin Bansal eyes bigger role in global financial services mkt

T E NARASIMHAN & BIBHU RANJAN MISHRA  
Chennai/Bengaluru, 10 January

Sachin Bansal-led Chaitanya India Fin Credit (CIFCPL) said on Friday the microfinance company had applied to the Reserve Bank of India for a universal banking licence, making it clear that it intends to play a bigger role in the broader financial services space in the country.

The application was made under the RBI's On-Tap Banking License Guidelines 2016.

In September, Bansal had invested around \$104 million to acquire over 90 per cent ownership of Chaitanya, a 10-year old Bengaluru-based firm that caters to low-income borrowers for vehicle finance, housing loans, small business loans and education loans, across five states.

This follows a disclosure earlier in the day by International Finance Corporation (IFC), the investment arm of the World Bank, that it would acquire around 4.5 per cent stake in Navi Technologies for \$30 million.

Soon after his exit from Flipkart, Bansal, along with his IIT-Delhi batch mate Ankit Agarwal, set up Navi Technologies (earlier BAC Acquisitions) as a vehicle to invest in start-ups through a mix of equity and debt. Navi is in the process of acquiring 100 per cent ownership of Chaitanya from Bansal and other existing investors.

IFC in a statement said that its investment in Navi is to support the transformation of CIFCPL (Chaitanya) into a technology-led universal bank that would provide mass market banking solutions for individuals, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and select corporate houses. The investment values Navi at around \$670 million.

According to a press statement issued by Chaitanya, the proposed bank aims to bridge the credit gap for the retail and MSME sectors by developing industry leading technology and



## FLIPKART CO-FOUNDER'S CHAITANYA SEEKS LICENCE FROM RESERVE BANK

- The application was made under the RBI's On-Tap Banking License Guidelines
- In Sept, Bansal had, via Navi, invested \$104 mn
- to acquire over 90% ownership of Chaitanya
- On Friday, IFC also said it will buy 4.5% stake in Navi Technologies for \$30 million

"OUR VISION IS TO GO BEYOND WHAT HITHERTO HAS BEEN BROADLY DEFINED AS 'FINANCIAL INCLUSION' AND PROVIDE ACCESS TO FORMAL FINANCIAL SERVICES USING TECHNOLOGY THAT PEOPLE CAN USE INTUITIVELY AND EASILY"

SACHIN BANSAL, CEO, Navi Technologies

global best practices as a mainstay.

"Building a universal bank is a reflection of our commitment to provide financial services to those who need them most," said Bansal, who is also the chief executive officer at Navi.

"Our vision is to go beyond what hitherto has been broadly defined as financial inclusion and provide access to formal financial services using technology that people can use intuitively and easily."

The proposed bank seeks to leverage technology platforms and data analytics to simplify loan application processes and tailor loan terms to the needs of individuals and MSMEs. It aims to rapidly scale and achieve higher usage and deposit rates by delivering better terms, convenient and tailored product offerings, compared to incumbent financial institutions.

IFC expects the new bank's success will con-

tribute to increasing competitiveness in the retail and MSME banking segments in India, by leading incumbents to invest in technology-driven products for customer engagement and financial service provision. Thus, it hopes to serve as a catalyst for bringing in new digital banking models in the country.

"We are looking beyond the traditional way of delivering banking services to people with a focus on ease of use and customised offerings. It is going to be an exciting journey," Ankit Agarwal, chief financial officer at Navi, said.

On Thursday, Navi Technologies had also announced that it was looking at acquiring the general insurance business from Wadhawan Global Capital, a step that is seen as part of its strategy for the financial services space. Reports suggest the firm may shell out around ₹100 crore to acquire the business.

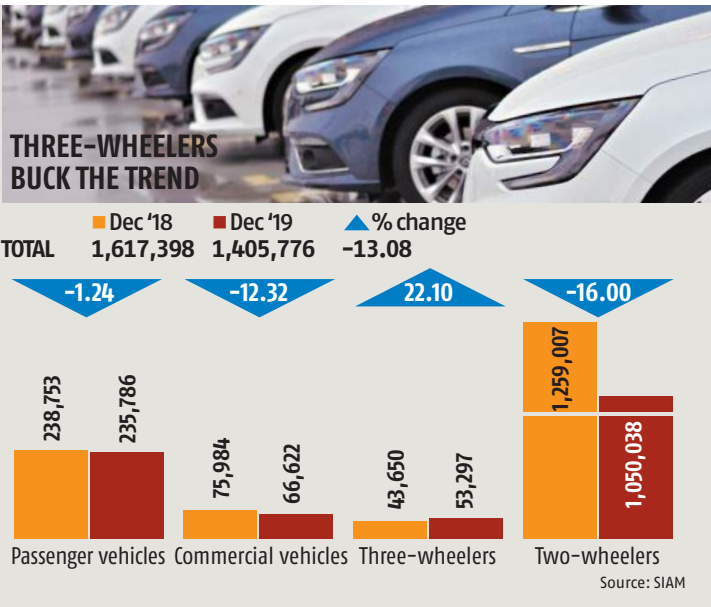
## PASSENGER VEHICLE SALES DOWN 1.24% IN DEC ON PRODUCTION CUT

Passenger vehide sales declined 1.24 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in December to 235,786 units, as manufacturers decided to cut production to match subdued retail demand and reduce inventory of BS-VI emission norms compliant vehicles. The fall was due to an 8.4 per cent decline in car sales to 142,126 units.

The industry said a change in the subdued consumer sentiment leading to an improvement in sales would happen only when overall economic mood improves.

According to the data released by Siam on Friday, factory dispatches of utility vehicles increased significantly by 30 per cent YoY to 85,252 units as a result of the new product launches by incumbents Hyundai Motor India, M&M, and Renault India and new entrants like MG Motor India and Kia Motors.

ARINDAM MAJUMDER



# Broadcasters may not release pricing next week

## Plan to move court against Trai's amendments

SOHINI DAS & VIVEAT SUSAN PINTO  
Mumbai, 10 January

As top broadcasters plan to move court against the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai), challenging the amendments to the new tariff order (NTO) of last February, they are unlikely to adhere to the regulator's deadline of January 15 to publish their new channel prices in line with the new rules.

Broadcasters would move court against Trai seeking stay on the amendments next week, both independently as well as under the aegis of the apex industry body Indian Broadcasters Federation (IBF).

"We are definitely evaluating legal options and plan to move court on the matter. In that case, there are no plans to come out with new channel prices in accordance with the amendments to the tariff order at this moment," said a top executive of a leading broadcaster.

TRAJ came out with amendments to its earlier tariff order on January 1 and

noted that while the changes were applicable from March 1, broadcasters had to publish their new channel pricing by January 15.

Broadcasters say that after the amendments, they have not had any detailed discussions with either Trai or the distribution platform operators (DPOs) after the amendments were released.

"We had already shared our points of view with the regulator during consultations that happened post the earlier NTO. Trai has chosen to ignore them mostly. We have not had any detailed discussions with the regulator after the January 1 amendments," said NPSingh, managing director (MD) & chief executive officer (CEO), Sony Pictures Networks India (SPN) and also president of the IBF.

In a rare show of solidarity the country's top broadcasters came together to address the media on Friday, expressing their displeasure about the amendments to the tariff order.

## AIRING DISSENT



"There have been two tariff exercises in less than a year. What was the need to have a second one so soon?"  
UDAY SHANKAR, Chairman, Star and Disney in India

"There have been two tariff exercises in less than a year. What was the need to have a second one so soon. It only means that the previous exercise was not thought through because it needed to be tweaked so soon," said Uday Shankar, chairman of Star and Disney in India.

In its January amendments, Trai has limited discounting of channel bouquets to 33 per cent besides bringing down the maximum retail price (MRP) of any channel to be included in the



"We have not had any detailed discussions with the regulator after the January 1 amendments"  
NP SINGH, MD & CEO, Sony Pictures Networks

bouquet to ₹12 from ₹19 earlier.

Sudhanshu Vats, group CEO & MD, Viacom18 and vice-president IBF, claimed that since 2003 till date, the rate at which channel prices have grown is less than that of inflation in the country. This is at a time when cost of acquiring or creating content has only gone up.

He added, "The objective of NTO 1 was to give choice to consumers, bring transparency and reduce litigation. While only the first two have happened,

it's too early to talk about the third. Statistically, overall 94 per cent of Indians are aware of the NTO and the choices they have are because of the efforts made by the broadcast industry collectively. The month-on-month churn in the industry shows that people are continuously fine-tuning their choices. The other objective of the NTO was transparency which it has brought in. The question therefore, is "what is the fundamental need to change again? In my opinion there was no need."

On the whole, broadcasters echoed that the industry, consumers and all stakeholders needed to settle down from the changes implemented in the February tariff order. The collective cost to the broadcasters was over ₹1,000 crore in just communicating changes to the consumers. Singh said: "Even with that, there was an overall loss of 12-15 million subscribers in the process."

In the current NTO, if a consumer is paying, say ₹275 per month as his bill, around 60 per cent goes to the distribution platforms, 15 per cent towards taxes, and about 25 per cent comes to pay broadcasters.

## JLR global sales dip in 2019, but show signs of recovery

REUTERS  
London, 10 January

Carmaker Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) posted a 6 per cent fall in full-year sales on Friday after a challenging year in which its performance was hit by the weakening Chinese autos market and falling demand for diesel vehicles in Europe.

Retail sales stood at 557,706 vehicles in 2019, hit by a 13.5 per cent slump in China, but in the past six months the firm reported double-digit growth in the country, with overall company sales up 1.3 per cent in December. "2019 was a year of two halves," said Chief Commercial Officer Felix Brautigam.



In the past six months Tata Motors-owned firm reported double-digit growth in China

At the start of 2019, JLR announced plans to cut around 10 per cent of its workforce and it has been pursuing measures to reduce costs and improve cash flows by £2.5 billion.

The company, owned by Tata Motors, returned to the black in the three months to the end of September 2019, posting a £156-million (\$204 million) profit. JLR, like much of the car industry, has also faced the challenge of stepping up investment in zero and low-emissions vehicles as regulations tighten while simultaneously dealing with a drop in demand for some conventionally-powered models.



# ED summons Edelweiss founder

Rashesh Shah asked to appear on Monday; ED probing forex violations; firm terms allegations baseless

SHRIMI CHOUDHARY & DEV CHATTERJEE  
Mumbai, 10 January

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued fresh summons to Edelweiss Group founder and Chairman Rashesh Shah in connection with an alleged multi-crore forex violation. He has been asked to appear on January 13.

Confirming the development, an ED official said Shah was earlier called to join the investigation on Thursday (January 9), under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). However, he is learnt to have sought some time, seeking personal engagement. The ED now issued fresh summons to him.

Sources said Shah has been called to produce certain documents, including his companies' books of accounts along with details of his companies in India and abroad.

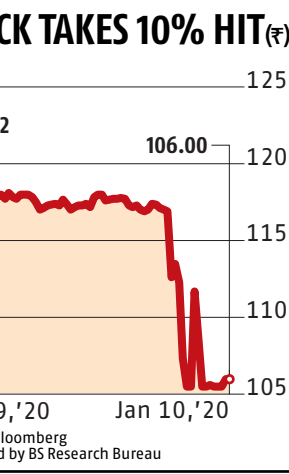
The agency is learnt to be probing whether there is any direct or indirect link between the Edelweiss chief and a Mumbai-based firm Capstone Forex. Sanjay Nathalal Shah, who is working with Edelweiss Finvest, is a 'person of interest' and has already been asked to give his statement on buying huge amount of foreign exchange through several entities, a source said. The information about the case first surfaced after a whistle-blower wrote a letter to the government agencies.

In a media statement, Edelweiss said "We have



received a communication from the Enforcement Directorate to appear and provide information about

Edelweiss Group Companies dealings with a company called Capstone Forex. We would like to state that none of



our companies have any transaction with this company — Capstone Forex.”

“We further deny the wild

baseless allegations contained in the news items which are apparently attributed to unidentified sources. We are in fact shocked at the spread of unauthenticated allegations and inference being drawn there from,” it added.

ED, however, is learnt to have come across some shell firms, which were allegedly created for these activities. Shah's personal appearance was required as the issue is serious in nature, said the official.

The news of the ED summons hit Edelweiss Financial Services shares as it fell by 10 per cent on Friday to close at ₹106 a share. The company has lost ₹1,046 crore in market capitalisation and has already lost 40.6 per cent or ₹6,780 crore of market value in the last one year.

# Kochhars' assets, Mumbai house attached by ED



Assets include a south Mumbai apartment at CCI Chambers, valued at ₹3.5 crore (book value), along with assets of projects belonging to Deepak Kochhar's Nupower Renewables

SHRIMI CHOUDHARY  
New Delhi, 10 January

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday provisionally attached assets and cash belonging to former ICICI Bank managing director and chief executive officer Chanda Kochhar and husband Deepak Kochhar in connection with the Videocon loan case.

These include a south Mumbai apartment at CCI Chambers, valued at ₹3.5 crore (book value), along with assets of projects belonging to Deepak Kochhar's Nupower Renewables and its subsidiaries, such as Wind Farms, Echanda Urja Private, worth ₹74 crore (book value). These farms located in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra were worth ₹33 crore and ₹40.75 crore, respectively.

Besides, a cash amount of ₹10.5 lakh was seized by the ED during searches at premises of Pacific Capital Services, one of Deepak Kochhar's companies.

The total book value of these assets is ₹78 crore. However, the market value is higher at around ₹800 crore. “Some more assets are in pipeline, which we are evaluating. While the attached assets valuation is underway,” said an ED source.

ED has issued provisional attachment order of proceeds of crime under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), which will be valid for 180 days, until the court confirms it and allows it to make a final confiscation on the ground that the assets were created out of the proceeds of laundered money.

“ED has provisionally attached movable and immovable assets consisting of flat, land, seized cash, plant and

machinery in possession of accused Chanda and Deepak Kochhar and the companies owned/controlled by Deepak Kochhar under PMLA,” ED said in a release.

The acquisition of the Kochhar residence in south Mumbai was complex, involving Deepak Kochhar and firms linked to Videocon group. “Flat no 45, CCI chambers, held in the books of Quality Techno Advisors Private (QTAPL) and the share certificate is in possession of Chanda Kochhar and her family,” ED said in the attachment order.

This apartment was owned by QTAPL between 2009 and 2016. During this period, no rent was paid and no consideration was given for such residence. The apartment appeared to have been transferred in 2009 to Videocon group, presumably to satisfy a liability Deepak Kochhar or his business Credential Finance Limited (CFL) owed Videocon group. It was reacquired by Deepak Kochhar (indirectly by the family Trust acquiring 100 per cent of QTAPL) for nominal consideration.

“Investigation revealed that Chanda Kochhar and her family acquired the apartment at Mumbai owned by one of the Videocon group companies, by way of acquiring that company through her family trust at a nominal price by creating book entries,” said ED.

ED findings showed loans were refinanced and new loan aggregating to ₹1,730 crore was sanctioned to Videocon Industries (VIL) and its group companies and these became non-performing assets (NPA) for ICICI Bank on June 30, 2017.

# YES Bank scales down fundraising target to ₹10,000 cr

ANUP ROY  
Mumbai, 10 January

YES Bank on Friday scaled down its fundraising plan to ₹10,000 crore, from nearly ₹14,000 crore approved by the board in November, as it continued with its struggle to get investors.

The bank notified the exchanges that its board approved raising of funds up to ₹10,000 crore, in one or more tranches, through Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP), Global Depository Receipts (GDRs), American Depository Receipts (ADRs), Foreign Currency Convertible Bonds (FCCBs), or any other methods on private placement basis. The bank will hold an extraordinary general meeting for this purpose.

The bank also said it received an updated proposal from Erwin Singh Braich and SGP Holdings, but “decided not to proceed with the offer.”



The bank received an updated proposal from Erwin Singh Braich and SGP Holdings, but “decided not to proceed with the offer”

binding offer of \$1.2 billion, with total interests of nearly \$3 billion. Ravneet Gill, YES Bank's CEO and managing director, had said that the bank expected to close the deal by the end of calendar year.

However, a letter dated January 9 by Uttam Agarwal, an independent director and chairman of audit committee on the board of the bank, alleged that Gill might have misled the board, and shareholders. The letter alleged that the bank really did not have any credible offer, and that the investors that showed interest did not seem to be strong enough to invest the money in the bank. No due diligence was done on these investments and there was no firm commitment. Three other investors were interested in investing in debt papers of the bank, and not equities.

# Govt may seek RBI dividend boost as revenue decreases

MANOJ KUMAR & AFTAB AHMED  
New Delhi, 10 January

The government plans to push the central bank for a fiscal lifeline in the form of another interim dividend, as it struggles to meet its expenditure commitments amid a steep revenue shortfall, three sources directly aware of the matter said. The fresh call comes just months after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved a ₹1.76 trillion (\$24.8 billion) dividend payment to the federal government, including ₹1.48 trillion for the current fiscal year.

The RBI largely earns profits through its trading of currencies and government bonds. Part of these earnings are set aside by the RBI for its operational and contingency needs while the rest is transferred to the government in the form of dividend.

It earned a surplus of ₹1.23 trillion in its last financial year, which was substantially higher than previous years.

One of the officials said the government wants the RBI to consider its demand for an interim dividend given this financial year has been an “exceptional year,” with economic growth projected to fall to an 11-year low of 5 per cent. “We do not want to make an RBI interim dividend a regular thing, but this year can be treated as extraordinary,” said the source, adding the government is likely to push for a payout of between ₹35,000 crore and ₹45,000 crore (\$4.9 to \$6.3 billion). If agreed, it would mark the third straight year in which the RBI has agreed to give the government an interim dividend. Spokesmen for the finance ministry and RBI both declined to comment on the matter.

India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is expected to present the

### THE SAVIOUR

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- Part of these earnings are set aside by the RBI for its operational and contingency needs
- The rest is transferred to the government in the form of dividend
- It earned a surplus of ₹1.23 trillion last financial year, which was substantially higher than previous years

## Payment firms' penalty norms tweaked

The Reserve Bank of India tweaked the norms for imposing penalties on payment system operators for not complying with regulatory requirements, with a view to ensure safety and security to various stakeholders, including customers. The amount of monetary penalty would vary depending on the impact on account of various factors.

PTI

## RBI releases strategy for financial inclusion

RBI released National Strategy for Financial Inclusion for five-year period. The financial inclusion is increasingly a key driver of growth and poverty alleviation world over. Access to formal finance can boost job creation, reduce vulnerability to economic shocks and increase investments in human capital, RBI said.

BS REPORTER

annual budget for the next fiscal year on February 1, and is widely expected to announce a fiscal stimulus including more spending on infrastructure and tax incentives to boost consumer demand and investments.

Shaktikanta Das, who was appointed

ed RBI governor by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in late 2018 after the resignation of Ujjit Patel, has cut the policy repo rate five times by a total of 135 basis points and eased liquidity restrictions to support falling economic growth.

REUTERS

# ‘There should not be any supply policy for coal’



Days after the government eased the entry of domestic and foreign players into the coal mining sector, Union Minister for Coal, Mines & Parliamentary Affairs **PRALHAD JOSHI** said he wants an open market with no policy restrictions. Joshi, in his first interview since taking charge, tells Shreya Jai that state-owned Coal India would remain the primary player in the mining space. Edited excerpts:

**What was the motive behind opening up the coal sector now?**  
We thought this is the best time to do it (coal reforms). Till 2015, it was a different era, and since then we have streamlined things without hampering demand. After gaining experience of auctioning captive mines, we decided to remove all restrictions, including end-use of coal from these mines. We have opened it under the direct route of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). There is no point in keeping such restrictions — otherwise the FDI policy becomes useless.

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi felt now is the time to do it. Having the fifth-largest coal resource in the world, we are importing 235 million tonnes. Of that, 100-135 million tonnes is substitutable.

**What about forest and environment clearance?**  
We are bringing many changes without compromising on environment. The policies are being made keeping environment clearance in mind. We have requested the ministry concerned to have a look at it so that our natural resources are used in India only.

There was a time when you would go to the environment ministry and you had to do multiple things. That has changed now. In some cases, we upload the mining plan on a public portal — Parivesh. It is then available for all the ministries concerned to access. All departments — including the Central Mines Planning & Design Institute, which approves mine

plan — are linked there. So, any successful bidder can directly apply there for clearances. All central-level clearances are integrated.

These reforms are reducing corruption at the highest level. In the past, there used to be an ‘X-tax’, which I don't wish to name. Now you even don't have to go to any ministry.

**Would states be able to join the Parivesh portal?**  
We are ready to open it for them. It will benefit the country and the state. If the states stall mining, I am not losing anything. Industry is losing but the biggest loser is the state, which will miss on the revenue coming from these mines.

**How much time, on an average, would it take to get forest and environment clearance under this new policy?**  
That I cannot say. That is the prerogative for the ministry concerned, especially the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). Of the 20 clearances that a company needs after winning a mine, only nine are from the central government. So, I want to appeal to the state governments to keep party politics and political rivalry aside. They should not think that just because the PM has initiated this reform, they will not cooperate.

The Union of India will not get a penny from these coal and mineral

mines. Whatever revenue comes will go to the state governments. I appeal to the state governments to expedite the clearances at their level, make it a single-window system, which is time-bound.

The minerals available in the country, including coal, should not be imported. This is the advice I got from the PM. I am new to this field. The day I took charge, he told me you do the following — stop imports, talk to all stakeholders and involve them to make mining more industry-friendly, without affecting the environment. One should have a system that's transparent and simple — that's the PM's vision. From ‘X-tax’ to no-human interference to advance clearance, we have progressed.

**What is the estimated revenue expected from these mines?**  
In another four-five years, this prior approval will save eight-nine months for the companies. Calculating the benefit is difficult at this time, but import of substitutable coal will almost stop.

**What would be the revenue-sharing formula for these mines between companies and the state?**  
It will be different for partially explored and fully explored. The rules will be framed. We will talk to the stakeholders and make it a win-



win situation.

**The coal sector is opening up at a time when all sectors are facing slowdown in demand and consumption. Will there be bidders for mines and buyers for so much coal?**  
Demand from the power sector this year was low because of monsoon and more hydropower. The PM has said demand will pick up, we are very confident about it as the government has taken many measures. Even if we imagine there is slowdown, we have to plan for the future. We have to be prepared.

**There have been repeated concerns**

**about coal shortfall, be it under the fuel supply agreement with Coal India or for stressed assets under the SHAKTI scheme. Your take?**  
There is a shortfall and that is why we have opened up the sector. About the SHAKTI Policy... my predecessor Piyush Goyal has done well. It is a good policy. But why are all these policies needed for the sake of coal supply. I think there should not be any policy. One should be able to get coal with ease and from various sources. As far as the power sector is concerned, coal stock at power plants has been rising for three months and stands at 32 million tonnes now. So there is no issue on supply side.

**What are your plans to overhaul the coal supply system?**  
Coal India is already supplying to power and other industries. But every industry should have access to coal in an open market. If I have a mine, one should mine and sell, if possible.

**Will you be changing the long-term fuel supply agreement under which Coal India supplies?**  
Commercial mining by private companies will take three-four years, so we will think about it. But, Coal India would remain our prime supplier, even after these reforms... may be in the ratio of 60:40. We want to strengthen Coal India. They should produce a minimum of 1 billion tonnes by 2023-24. We have allocated 16 blocks to them. We cannot depend on the private sector. But the private sector should meet the shortfall.

**Did this decision face any resistance from Coal India workers' unions?**  
There has been no such thing. We have always duly communicated to Coal India. It already has mining capacity enough to operate for the coming 30-40 years. We are now giving them new blocks too.

**How do you plan to improve the physical and financial situation of Coal India?**  
Coal India is the most economical miner in the world. To make it more efficient as far as mining and economic activity is concerned, we will work out some strategy. Currently, Coal India produces 600 million tonnes. I see India producing 1,400-1,500 million tonnes by 2023-24, including private players.

More on business-standard.com

## Coal-fired plants need time to meet norms: Ministry

The power ministry has asked for coal-fired power plants around New Delhi, the capital city with the worst air quality in the world, to be given more time to install equipment to reduce emissions, after the year-end deadline for action passed.

A government official, who requested anonymity, told *Reuters* on Friday the power ministry had sent its recommendation to the environment ministry, which is in charge of enforcing the emission standards, for the power plants to be given new deadlines starting July 2020 and ending December 2021.

The utilities have cited costs and technical difficulties for missing earlier deadlines, at the end of 2017 and then the end of 2019.

Ultimately, the environment ministry and its federal pollution regulator could shut plants that continue to flout the rules, but such drastic action would appear highly unlikely, observers say, because of the public backlash to power shortages and the economic cost.

India had a phased plan for plants to comply with emission norms with some plants given until end-December 2019, while others had till the end of 2022. The required changes involve some 440 coal-fired units, with a combined capacity of 166.5 gigawatts (Gw). **REUTERS**

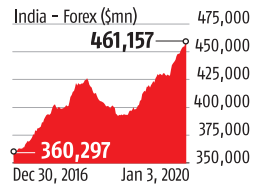
IN BRIEF

WTO sets up dispute panel over India's duty hike on 28 US goods



The World Trade Organization's (WTO) dispute settlement body has set up a panel to examine the US complaint against India which had increased customs duties on 28 American goods last year. The US in July had dragged India to the WTO by filing a complaint against New Delhi's move to increase customs duties, alleging the decision as inconsistent with the global trade norms. According to a communication of the Geneva-based WTO, the dispute settlement body has established a panel "to examine the matter referred by the US". The US had alleged that the additional duties imposed by India "appears to nullify or impair the benefits accruing to the US directly or indirectly" under the GATT 1994.

India's forex reserves touch record \$461.1 bn



The country's foreign exchange (forex) reserves touched a record high of \$461.157 billion, after it surged by \$3.689 billion in the week to January 3, said the RBI. In the previous week, reserves had risen by \$2.52 billion to \$454.948 billion. In the reporting week, the rise was mainly due to an increase in foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, which rose by \$3.013 billion to \$427.949 billion.

Govt extends GST amnesty scheme till January 17

There will not be any fee on late filing of goods and services tax (GST) returns under form 1 (GSTR-1) till January 17, with the Centre extending waiver by seven days. The "amnesty" scheme was to end on January 10.

UBI to cut MCLR across tenors by 10 bps from today

State-run Union Bank of India (UBI) on Friday said it will cut the marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) by 0.10 percentage points across tenors from Saturday. The bank has reduced the MCLR by 10 basis points across all tenors with effect from January 11, 2020. The benchmark one-year MCLR, which is a gauge for pricing of auto, personal and home loans, stands at 8.10 per cent. UBI said this is the seventh consecutive rate cut announced by the lender since July 2019.

CAMS files papers for IPO, may raise up to ₹1,600 crore

The NSE and Warburg Pincus-backed Computer Age Management Services (CAMS) has filed the draft red herring prospectus for its IPO with Sebi. The size may be between ₹1,500 crore and ₹1,600 crore and will be an offer for sale of 12.1 million shares, said sources. Selling shareholders will include Great Terrain Investment — affiliate of Warburg Pincus, NSE Investments, Acys Investments, HDFC and HDB Employees Welfare Trust.

TOP COURT CRACKS THE WHIP

Freedom of speech, biz via Net are basic rights, says SC

Orders J&K curbs review in a week; says Sec 144 can't be used as a curb on democratic rights

ADITI PHADNIS  
New Delhi, 10 January

The Right to Freedom of Expression through the internet is part of Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, the Supreme Court held on Friday. It is subject to reasonable restrictions, which apply to all fundamental rights, and is subject to judicial review, it said.

Those carrying out business via the internet also have the fundamental right to continue it, the apex court said, and directed the government to review the internet suspension in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) within seven days.

The court, however, did not provide immediate relief to petitioner Anuradha Bhasin, Kashmir-based publisher of *Kashmir Times* and journalist; and Ghulam Nabi Azad, Congress leader and former chief minister of the erstwhile state. The judgment was delivered by a Bench of justices N V Ramana, R Subhash Reddy, and B R Gavai after reserving orders on November 27 last year.

Pronouncing the verdict, Justice Ramana said the court would not delve into the political intent of the orders imposing restrictions in Kashmir. He said, "Liberty and security are always at loggerheads. It is the court's job to ensure that citizens are provided all rights and security."

Disagreement does not justify destabilisation, the Bench observed, adding that a complete curb on the internet must be considered by the state only as an extraordinary measure. The order also said: "Powers under Section 144 of CrPC cannot be used as a curb on legitimate expression of democratic rights."

Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) is a remedial and preventive measure and must be subject to the test of proportionality. It can only be used if there is a likelihood of violence and danger to public safety, the court held.



US Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster during his visit to Jagat Migrant camp in Jammu on Saturday

The order said indefinite suspension of services could not be allowed and that the suspension could only be temporary. Any such order must adhere to the principle of proportionality and would be subject to judicial review.

The court went on to direct the government to publish future orders passed under Section 144 of CrPC and orders suspending the internet and telecom services.

The three-Judge Bench heard a batch of petitions that had challenged the validity of government's move to impose restrictions on media, communications, transport, and to impose curfew in parts of J&K immediately after the abrogation of Article 370.

Ghulam Nabi Azad had argued that basic livelihood had been deeply affected by the fetters on the internet, broadband and landline connectivity. Industries such as tourism, handicrafts, manufacture, construction, cultivation, agriculture and information technology have been brought to a state of cessation, with the economy in the region suffering losses running into thousands of crores or rupees. Access to basic healthcare too, he argued, was impeded, with people in the Valley unable to avail of the government's Ayushman Bharat scheme. Over and above all this, the ban has

meant that people in the Valley have been entirely cut out from the rest of India. Residents outside the state have been unable to speak to their families in Kashmir, leading to a great deal of mental stress and anxiety, Azad said.

Jaiveer Shergill, who is also a practicing Supreme Court lawyer, said the top court made an important theoretical observation regarding the five-month internet shutdown in Kashmir. But the lawyer felt "teethy directions" to deter the "thick-skinned" BJP were the need of the hour, asking, "Who will compensate for \$1 billion trade loss?"

PTI quoted locals as welcoming the order. "It is a piece of very happy news for us, a huge relief, as the internet has been suspended for over five months now. We really hope that services will be resumed as soon as possible now," said Ishitiyaq Ahmad, a businessman in Lal Chowk area of Srinagar.

The Congress party said: "The Supreme Court rules that tactics like indefinite internet shutdowns and indiscriminate use of Section 144 to silence dissent are unacceptable in a democracy. We hope this serves as a reminder to the tyrant duo that law and constitution is above their divisive policies."

Experts hail SC verdict on internet access

NEHA ALAWADHI & ROMITA MAJUMDAR  
New Delhi/Mumbai, 10 January

The Supreme Court's judgment on Friday asking authorities to review the suspension of Internet services in Kashmir within seven days was seen by experts as a small step in reducing the government's indiscriminate shutting down of internet access.

The court had held that complete suspension of services should be considered only if "necessary" and "unavoidable". It further said the freedom of speech and expression and the freedom to practice any profession or carry on any trade, business or occupation over the medium of internet enjoys constitutional protection under Article 19(1)(a) and Article 19(1)(g), thus making it a fundamental right.

NS Nappinal, Supreme Court advocate and cyberlaw specialist, said India has already gained global notoriety as an enforcer of internet shutdowns. "We're glad that the ruling recognises the importance of communication channels. There are only very specific stringent processes that could invoke these shutdowns," she said. "But we have seen rampant and very casual use of these processes. These shutdowns that India has seen, as a trend, need to stop and this SC judgment becomes the first step in reversing the trend," Nappinal said.

Apar Gupta, executive director at Internet Freedom Foundation, said the ruling lays down the basic principles and safeguards to be followed by the government in such cases.

"It also says shutdowns cannot be made indefinitely and cannot be applied indiscriminately...Much now depends on further government action, and much falls on future actions of the government to comply with the ruling, as well as the court's own enforcement," Gupta added.

The Software Freedom Law Centre (SFLC), a non-profit legal services organisation, which maintains an internet shutdown tracker for India, estimates the number of shutdowns between 2012 and now at 381.

■ **Software Freedom Law Centre**, a non-profit legal services organisation, which maintains an internet shutdown tracker for India, estimates the number of shutdowns between 2012 and now at 381.

■ **Review of internet shutdown in Kashmir** within seven days was seen by experts as a small step in reducing the government's indiscriminate shutting down of internet access

now at 381. Of these, 106 were recorded in 2019, including the one in Kashmir, which is the longest recorded shutdown anywhere in the world.

US-IRAN FLARE-UP

‘Global oil market well supplied, crude price to remain at \$60/bbl’

At a time when tensions between Iran and the United States (US) threaten to raise crude oil prices, **FATHI BIROL**, executive director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), tells **Shine Jacob** that the world has enough oil to tide over any crisis. He believes 1 million barrels per day of surplus oil will help keep prices at \$60 a barrel. Edited Excerpts:

**How do you see the situation in West Asia and the concerns in the crude oil market?**  
As expected, the oil markets did not react so badly. If you look at the past one year, from January 2019 to January this year, oil remained around \$60 a barrel. This is despite production from one of the most important oil producers — Venezuela — almost going to zero.

Iran, which was exporting almost 3 million barrels per day, is now down to 0.3 million barrels or almost nothing because of the sanctions. There was unrest in Libya and Iraq, an attack on Saudi Arabia's assets, then came the killing of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani. Despite all this, the prices remained around \$60 a barrel.

I see the prices staying at the same level. Oil prices rising to triple digits, as some are people saying, is not something that I believe in.

Is there any reason for this belief?

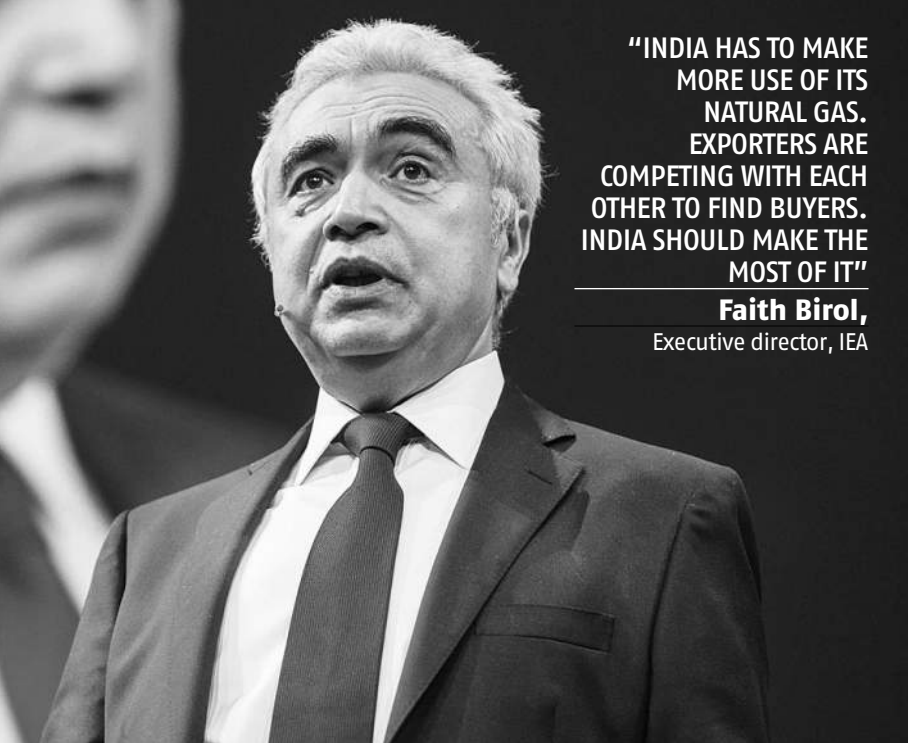
One reason is that there is a huge amount of oil supply coming from the US, Canada, Norway, Brazil and others. And because of continuous production growth in these countries, there will be at least 1 million barrels per day of surplus oil in the market this year. Therefore, those geo-political tensions may have only a short-term impact on the prices and are not going to change the fundamentals of the oil sector and that is why there is no nervousness in the market.

**You recently mentioned that there may be an increase in demand by March. Do you see that?**

The production growth is very strong. We expect production of more than 2 million barrels a day. If the demand is slightly more than 1 million barrels per day, there will be a surplus of around 1 million barrels per day. One year ago, we said that prices are not expected to increase and that is exactly what happened despite all these developments.

**Is this one of the biggest crises, after you took charge of the IEA in 2015?**

Yes, it is and I hope it does not escalate. The world is becoming a dangerous place. Especially, West Asia, a region for oil and gas, is becoming more and more difficult. Countries like India, which imports a substantial amount of oil and gas from West Asia, will be vulnerable to the developments there. But the government is taking the right steps in the right direction to



“INDIA HAS TO MAKE MORE USE OF ITS NATURAL GAS. EXPORTERS ARE COMPETING WITH EACH OTHER TO FIND BUYERS. INDIA SHOULD MAKE THE MOST OF IT”

Faith Birol,  
Executive director, IEA

reduce the vulnerability.

**The rate of growth of India's oil consumption is expected to surpass China's in the mid-2020s. How will this demand be met?**

India recently became the third-largest oil market in the world, right behind the US and China. In terms of other fuel such as gas and solar, too, it is growing very stronger. In a report in 2015, we said India is moving to the centre stage of global energy affairs. That is exactly what happened.

Now, we are seeing that the demand is growing very strongly because India is getting much more modern, the economy is growing and, therefore, energy demand is growing. There are many methods by which India can meet that and I have to suggest three of them — it will be investment, investment and investment only.

These are the most important things for India and in order to get the investments, India needs reforms, it has to open up, and prices for consumers should be rationalised to meet the market realities. India should restructure and reform the energy markets. Otherwise, investments will not come and we will not get necessary infrastructural developments.

**Do you think rationalisation of subsidy too is needed?**

There may be limited areas where subsidy is

needed. But if you look at the overall picture, it should be very well chosen and rationalised.

**The report — India 2020 Energy Policy Review — talked in detail about the role that sustainability initiatives will play by 2050, that can help India save \$190 billion a year. Can you elaborate?**

Energy efficiency is number one. Using energy-efficient measures from air conditioners to trucks to electrical motors to industry and making much more use of renewable energy.

In terms of solar energy, India's achievements are already very good. We need to increase the share — that means in addition to the utility kind of solar, we have to move to rooftop solar. Afterwards, it should be like mushrooms — for both homes, industrial buildings and commercial areas.

India also has to make more use of natural gas. It is easily available and abundant now. Exporters are competing with each other to find buyers and India should make the most out of it. India has to make use of its existing and planned — around 10 — liquefied natural gas terminals.

The most important thing is that as a country, you should have enough pipeline distribution to villages and the towns and the cities, so that everybody gets access to natural gas which will reduce coal-based cooking in parts of the country.



‘India oil demand growth to pip China's soon’

A report released by IEA Executive Director Fathi Birol on Friday said India's oil demand is expected to touch 6 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2024 from 4.4 million bpd in 2017



■ **Electricity demand for space cooling** in buildings in India looks set to increase to nearly 1350 TWh in 2050 and requires an additional 800 Gw of power generation capacity just to meet space cooling needs

■ **Need to ramp up rail infrastructure:** IEA analysis shows by enhancing the role of rail in the transport sector, India could reduce oil demand by 3.1 million barrels per day, save \$60 billion on fuel expenditure and reduce GHG emissions by 585 mt CO2-eq and PM 2.5 emissions by 14 thousand tonnes per year by 2050

Mid-2020s

India's rate of growth in oil consumption will surpass China's, making it attractive market for refinery investment

\$190 billion a year

India's savings in energy imports till 2040 by raising level of its energy efficiency ambition

1 billion units

Expected rise in air conditioners by 2050 from 36 million units in 2018

257 per cent

Growth in India's plastic consumption between 2017 and 2050. The country's petrochemical capacity is expected to further increase from its current level of 16 mt per year, which accounted for 4 per cent of the global capacity in 2017

Gems & jewellery sector banks on Centre's support for growth

GIREESH BABU  
Chennai, 10 January

The gems and jewellery industry in the country is expecting gold prices to be volatile during 2020, as the hostility between the US and Iran may continue this year.

Notwithstanding the price volatility, the industry hopes that various forms of government support may help it grow 10 per cent in terms of volume during the year as compared to a 10-15 per cent decline in 2019.

"The other day, when missiles were fired by Iran, gold prices touched \$1610 and in the Indian market crossed ₹42,000. But luckily, the same night, US President Donald Trump said the country embraced peace. Immediately, the price fell by \$50. The fluctuation will be going on throughout 2020," said N Anantha Padmanaban, chairman of the All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC).

The price volatility has gone up around 5-10 per cent owing to the US-Iran tension. This may impact ability of the jeweller to purchase inventory.

The impact is more considering that customs duty of 12.5 per cent imposed by the government in mid



2019, which along with goods and services tax (GST), is around 15.5 per cent against the earlier 13.5 per cent.

"GJC has approached the Centre, requesting it to withdraw the duty in the upcoming Budget. If this happens, it may help the industry to manage the volatility better," he said.

"This year is going to be very crucial for the industry," he said, adding that during the year it expects the government to support the industry.

"With that in mind, we expect 10 per cent increase in business compared to last year," he added. In 2018,

India imported 766 tonnes of gold, which came down to 710 tonnes in 2019. Around 10 per cent of this may go for investment, while the jewellers get the rest, along with the old gold for recycling during the year.

With Tamil festival Pongal falling next week, and then weddings starting to take place, the industry is expecting the demand, which was down by 25-30 per cent in the recent past due to the economic slowdown, to pick up.

Apart from the demand to reduce customs duty, it also asked the government to raise PAN card limit for gold purchases from ₹2 to ₹5 lakh.

The facility for EMI should be extended to the gems & jewellery industry, which in turn, will lead to a substantial growth in business.

It also asked the government to allow jewellers to be agents for hall-marking and expand the range from 14,18 and 22 karats to 20, 23 and 24 karats, which are prevalent in certain states.

The industry's demand to form a steering committee led by government officials and representation from the industry to discuss the issues has not been considered by the government in the last six months.

# The politics of cool



## TICKER

MIHIR S SHARMA

protests are. Instagram’s winter of discontent has well and truly begun.

On one level, it is easy to mock and deride this phenomenon. Seasoned political types will ask themselves what value to any political movement is added by people who last month were posting about Christmas in Europe and next week will no doubt be back to snaps of their skiing holidays. But I think it is worth unpacking, nevertheless, what has changed for some in urban India since the introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

First, the Act itself seems like the sort of straightforward assault on Indian nationhood that the government has so far been relatively careful to avoid. You could claim that the Babri judgment and the National Register of Citizens were due to the Supreme Court. The revocation of Article 370 and the triple talaq ban could be made to fit into a liberal, right-based framework of equality if you tried. But the CAA is another beast altogether. However much the government and its outreach community might insist it is merely an enabling act, it is hard to see it as anything but the first step towards a constitutionally Hindu nation.

Second, the nature of the early protests in the cities were clear — and attractive. Muslim women sitting on *dharna* at Shaheen Bagh, crowds waving the tricolour — there was nothing there for traditional middle-class prejudices to hang on to. It was clear that the only danger caused by the protests was from police overreaction.

Third, the attacks on universities were repugnant even to people who have not much time for student protests in general. The general notion that university students are going to spend some time waving flags and shouting slogans before settling into a steady job and disdaining politics has sunk deep into the Indian middle-class consciousness. Nothing would have changed if this government had merely dismissed student protests with indulgence, as their predecessors did. But to attack protestors, whether using the police or political thugs disguised as students, is a bridge too far for most.

Deepika Padukone’s courageous decision to go and stand with protestors at Jawaharlal Nehru University is thus more revealing and influential than some might think. It reveals that even those in Bollywood who might have previously been sympathetic but aloof, think that it will either do them no harm to turn out for a cause they believe in, or that things have got bad enough that they are willing to take a risk. But perhaps even more revealing was a short clip that was trending on social media of the film magnate Bhushan Kumar. Kumar had been invited to a meeting meant to “clear up doubts” among the film community about the CAA. He had even been photographed driving into the meeting at a Mumbai hotel. But when asked by a reporter about the meeting in the presence of film stars such as Anil Kapoor, Kumar said that merely being in the hotel didn’t mean he attended the meeting. (Kapoor’s face was a picture of amusement.) When people as exposed, influential — and government-sympathetic — as Kumar feel the need to distance themselves from the CAA in public, you know something has gone very wrong.

Narendra Modi’s rise to power in 2013-14 felt as unlikely before it happened as it feels inevitable now. Part of what underlay that extraordinary ascent was the careful cultivation of influential voices. Somehow the candidacy chief minister with a chequered record was transformed into a cool cause. Nobody knows how the politics of cool works. Sometimes it comes together, sometimes it doesn’t. Barack Obama’s campaign managed it; Hillary Clinton’s campaign did not. But what we are seeing at this moment is a reversal in our own politics of cool. For seven years, Modi has been the cool brand. Now, somehow, he is less so.

Perhaps it is something to do with that period — seven years? Seven years after the UPA rose to power it became embroiled in anti-corruption scandals. And, indeed, there is much that is worth revisiting in UPA-II’s sordid descent into paralysis and unpopularity. The UPA was India’s most inept government when it comes to communication. It came across as either arrogant, or inarticulate, or aloof. Modi’s government is India’s best when it comes to communication. There is little doubt that it will do a better job of recovering the situation than the UPA did. But one thing that even the NDA spin-masters will struggle with is the politics of cool. If you don’t know how it works, you can’t manipulate it.

# The rise of the fringe

They are organised and the opposition to them is leaderless. Who will win the war that is bound to break out?



## PLAIN POLITICS

ADITI PHADNIS

If there is one part of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that is confused by what happened at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in the twilight of 2019 and dawn of 2020, it is the party’s student wing, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). Torn between deep contentment at seeing the pinkos being roundly thrashed (many must have wished they’d been the ones to do it) and self-righteous indignation at supposed Left-instigated vandalism, the ABVP, at least in JNU, needs to ask itself if it is time to move over and make space for the “real” Hindus — like the Hindu Raksha Dal, a fringe group that has claimed credit for carrying out the JNU attacks.

Why only JNU? The “real” Hindus are now all over the place. Ranging from the gang that

killed Gauri Lankesh; to the Hindu Yuva Vahini, dormant but by no means decommissioned; to the Sri Rama Sene, fringe Hindu groups are popping up all over the country. They are splitting but they are not dying. They’re the unicorns of Indian politics.

Anti-BJP activist and editor Gauri Lankesh was assassinated, the Special Investigations Team (SIT) probing her murder has found, by a hired hand, Parashuram Waghmare, who was recruited by one Amol Kale. At least 12 people have been named in the conspiracy that was hatched not just to kill Lankesh but also Govind Pansare, a Left-leaning thinker, and Narendra Dabholkar, the rationalist who questioned many Hindu beliefs and superstitions. The 9,000-page chargesheet says all the co-conspirators had links at one or other time with the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS), the Sanatan Sanstha and the Sri Ram Sene. The HJS says it was formed in response to the demands of the situation as “due to a “secular” democracy today, the state of the society, nation and dharma is on the decline. A system of governance based on Dharma, that is, establishment of the Hindu nation, is the need of the hour as a solution to the problems of Hindus.”

Pramod Muthalik floated the Sri Rama Sene — the very same that would barge into pubs and drag out women having a drink there. He

has since been acquitted of the charge. But despite that, Muthalik’s entry into many states ruled by the BJP is banned — including Goa. The Sene challenged the late Pejawar Swami Vishwesha Theertha (who died last month) to a *shaastraarth* (a scriptural duel) when the latter hosted an *iftaar* at the premises of the Krishna temple in Udipi some years ago.

The Hindu Yuva Vahini was formed on Rama Navami day in 2002 in Uttar Pradesh by Yogi Adityanath. Initially envisaged as a body of young activists, the word “Hindu” was added on the advice of Mahant Aavaidyanath of Gorakhpur, then alive. Sunil Singh, a co-founder of the HYV, recalled, despite the BJP’s Kalyan Singh being in power in UP and Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the helm in Delhi, the pitiful sight of Yogi Adityanath having to beg that one of his supporters be given a seat in the

Assembly elections prompted the formation of the HYV — visualised as a fringe group designed to exert pressure over the BJP and raise Adityanath’s profile in eastern UP. When Adityanath became chief minister but would not heed the HYV’s demand for a share of the power pie, Sunil Singh walked out forming his own HYV Bharat. He was imprisoned almost immediately under the National Security Act

and released many months later.

In response, Adityanath formed the HYV (UP). So in Eastern UP now, there are at least two groups competing for the same fringe. Another organisation, the Yogi Sena, has been launched in Western UP with the same objective: Rousing and organising Hindu youth. While HYV says it will do nothing to embarrass the chief minister and involves itself in such blameless pursuits as delivering flood relief, what it is actually doing, no one knows. HYV acknowledges that its supporters are chafing at the bit at the anodyne activity they’re being asked to carry out and it is hard to keep them reined in.

In America, as in India, fringe group activity has seen a spurt in the last few years. “Antifa” short for anti-fascist, turns up regularly to counter-protest far-right rallies and speaking events. The group’s mission is to fight fascism at any cost, and defend America’s most disenfranchised groups. Most are either anarchists or have far left-leaning political beliefs. “Proud Boys” says it is a “a pro-Western fraternal organisation”. It has an initiation rite that includes “getting into a major fight for the cause”.

In India, it is hard to judge where it will all end. The fringe is organised. The opposition to it is leaderless, inarticulate but determined to contest and fight back. The collateral damage is the ABVP, seen as being quick to strike but afraid to wound. Somebody has to win the war that is bound to break out sooner than later. And it won’t be via the ballot box.

LUNCH WITH BS ► STEVE WINTER | CONSERVATION PHOTOGRAPHER

# Frame by frame

Winter talks to Ruchika Chitravanshi about how he composes shots in his mind before actually shooting them and why he took up an Indian cooking course

It was the twenty-fourth day of sitting atop this elephant in Madhya Pradesh’s Bandhavgarh tiger reserve for Steve Winter, one of the world’s most celebrated wildlife photographers and a big cat specialist. Balancing his camera with its 600-mm lens and a tripod on a shifty elephant which was getting uneasy under the summer sun, Winter was worried yet calm, when suddenly he saw what he had been waiting for all these days. The tiger cubs had just emerged from the trees with their mother to play. Radio silence. Winter had already composed the prized shot in his mind and managed to capture seven frames, hoping at least one of them would be sharp.

Sitting comfortably in the plush Indian Accent restaurant in New Delhi’s Lodhi Road, we admire the final photograph taken around five years ago that made it to the cover of the recently launched National Geographic’s coffee table book, *Tigers Forever*. Winter asks for a shot of double espresso to kick start our lunch while narrating his many adventures.

Even as a nine-year-old Indiana boy, all Winter wanted was to get out of his hometown and travel the world. Although photography came naturally to him — Winter’s father was an amateur photographer — he joined university to study urban renewal... to “become something”. Soon he realised this was not his calling. “I quit and decided to travel the world and came to India... I first came here in 1979...”

Having backpacked from Kolkata and Annapurna in Nepal, all the way down to southern India and then to Lucknow, that too on a third class railway ticket and buses back in his “hippie days”, Winter is no stranger to India or Indian food.

Soon, we are served two baby *naans* stuffed with Danish blue cheese and topped with some champagne honey; the waiter cautions us to wait for it to cool down, almost sensing our excitement to try the dainty mouthfuls.

Winter is narrating his early adventures in the forest of Sierra de las Minas in Guatemala where he had built a shack to shoot the vibrant blue-green bird Quetzal while digging into the sumptuous bites of our first course that takes us through the streets of India with bite-size portions of Maharashtrian *dabeli*, *puri aloo* and Winter’s favourite chilli crab.

Out in the wild, animals mark their territories, the photo journalist says. “So did I... mainly to protect my space from wild boars.”

One night, when he was reading a book, Winter heard a creeping noise on the stairs and a brushing sound on the floor. “And then, I heard scratching under the door... I was so scared. I whacked my machete on the side of the bed and whistled and I heard the thing running down away.”

Next morning, the locals told him it might have been the black panther. That was Winter’s first encounter with a big cat.

Our next item on the menu, pulled pork *phulka* tacos and the jackfruit version of the same, is served just in time. Each preparation takes time and the food arrives slowly, but Winter is a patient man.

I would have thought 24 days in Bandhavgarh was a long wait, but then he tells me how he waited 15 months for one of his most well-known and iconic shots — a mountain tiger strolling in Griffith Park at the edge of Sunset Boulevard with the Hollywood Sign in the background. This was again a shot he had already framed in his mind. “I knew I needed incredible picture to illustrate urban wildlife.”

When he shared the idea with a scientist friend who monitored the wildlife in the area, he looked at him like he was crazy, Winter said. However, as soon as the big cat was spotted, Winter had to figure out ways to install remote cameras he learned to use while shooting the snow leopards in Ladakh.

As a result of the picture, the largest wildlife overpass is being built in the area funded by American actor Leonardo DiCaprio and his foundation. We pore over some more of his work on his latest iPhone. “It has a great camera,” he says.

The *anar* and *churan kulfi* is before us, to cleanse the palate for what is coming up next; roast chicken and smoked *papad* curry. It comes with wine pairing recommendations of Allegrini Valpolicella Classic or Rondinella among others. The idea is tempting but Winter gives it a pass — he has a talk scheduled later for budding photographers and journalists.

Winter loves Indian food. “My first *masala dosa* and *sambhar* with *chutney* in the south on a banana leaf just blew my mind. You know I’m the kid from Indiana. It was amaz-

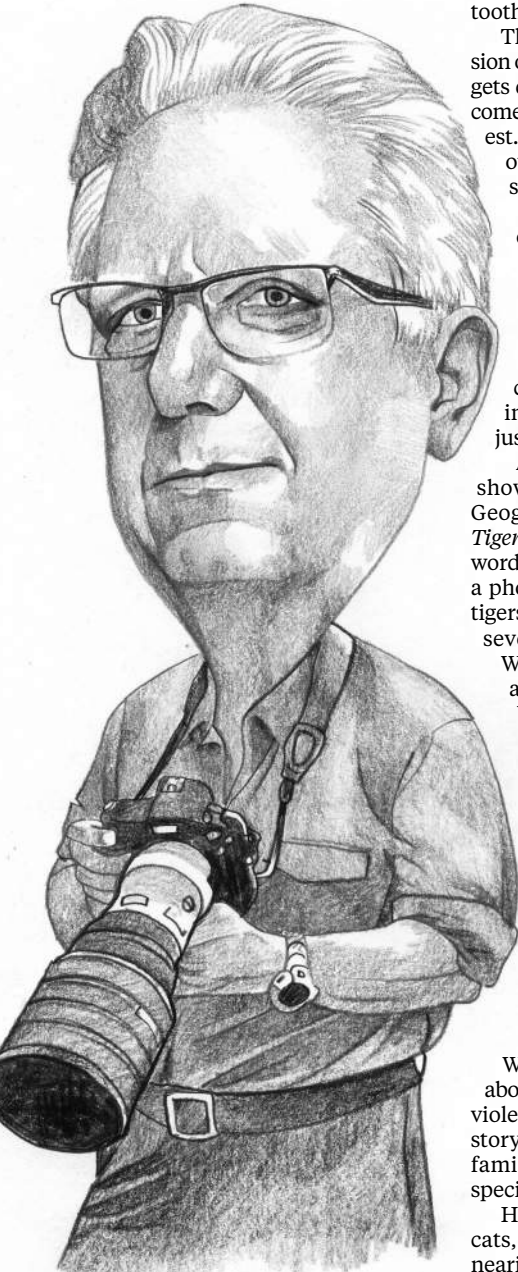


ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

ing.” He even took up an Indian cooking course afterwards.

I am curious if Winter has ever had a close shave with a big cat since I had read how he was attacked by a rhinoceros once. “Twenty-eight years and I have never been attacked and I am super close to them,” the 63-year-old lensman says.

# When survival trumped bias



## PEOPLE LIKE THEM

GEETANJALI KRISHNA

In rural Uttar Pradesh, especially in the heart of Bundelkhand, the annual summer drought regularly wreaks economic and emotional havoc in the lives of villagers. Some months ago, I visited the Mahuee village in Banda district to document the interventions of WaterAid, an international NGO that works on issues relating to water, sanitation and hygiene across the country. I discovered that the drought actually had an unintended positive fallout in this underdeveloped village. Here’s what I saw.

Mahuee is ranked high among the villages worst affected by groundwater depletion in Banda district. Locals attest that in the last decade, water shortage in the vil-

lage has worsened every summer, even though the region receives a reasonable amount of rain during monsoon. Not only wells and tube wells, but even village ponds dry up as the temperature shoots up to nearly 50 degrees Celsius. Deep fissures develop in the fields and the villagers have little water for themselves, let alone for their livestock. WaterAid has successfully set up rooftop rainwater harvesting systems to recharge wells and tube wells in the area. When they approached Mahuee’s gram *pradhan* Malkhe Srivas to build a similar project in the village in 2017, he was excited to help. He even offered to set the harvesting system on his rooftop as he lived next to one of the wells in the village. But there was a hitch.

In the heartlands of Uttar Pradesh, caste fissures tend to run deep and Srivas is a Dalit. “To avoid even accidentally touching lower-caste people like me,” he told me, “some of my upper caste neighbours wouldn’t even draw water from the well at the same time as I did.” He wondered what they would say when they heard that water from a Dalit’s rooftop was going to recharge a common well. Even if the harvested rainwater from his rooftop managed to do the job, there was a strong possibility his higher caste neighbours would not even use that water. After much discussion, they decided

to go ahead with the plan anyway.

Not unexpectedly, the higher caste villagers were horrified at the idea. How could water recharged by rainwater from a Dalit’s rooftop be “clean”, they asked.

As it turned out, the recharge system successfully prevented the well from drying out the following summer while other water sources dried up. “People were amazed to see that this well continued to have abundant water throughout the summer,” Srivas recounted. Eventually, his upper caste neighbours were compelled to set aside their caste prejudices and draw water from the well. “Today, the very people who’d earlier criticised me are clamouring for similar recharging systems to be put up on their roofs as well,” he said. “We’ve now built two more recharge pits independently, and as the *pradhan*, I plan to construct such pits near all water sources in the village in the year ahead.”

And so the drought proved to be a social lever in Mahuee. What years of education, social messaging and reservations couldn’t accomplish, water scarcity did in one summer. The caste taboo, once broken, has somewhat reduced in importance now. “Now everyone drinks water from the well recharged by the rainwater from my rooftop,” Srivas told me. “I’d not believed this would happen in my lifetime.”



## PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

When it comes to breakfast, nothing can beat Indian hotel buffets, so I wonder why I’m feeling blue. The hotel where I am writing this has as lavish a spread as any — but too much food can be off-putting too, which is why I prefer to order a la carte. Usually, a glass of orange juice and eggs is just fine, though I do extend myself over weekends. At the time of writing this, I’ve skimmed past the spreads of baked beans, sausages, scrambled eggs, bacon; the north Indian *puris* and *bhajis*; the south Indian (always tempting) *vadas*, *idlis* and fresh *dosas* off a live counter; pan-cakes and waffles if you’re up to it;

there’s south-east Asian congee which I’ve never been partial too; fruits, flavoured yogurts, doughnuts and all kinds of temptations from the bakery I find easy to resist, and cheeses that I sometimes succumb to. Cold meats left out for hours — ugh! How can anyone even think of it?

This morning, it isn’t crowded in the spillover restaurant where those who didn’t find a seat in the coffee shop have been adjusted, so I decide to be a little adventurous. Having spooned some sprouts and *dahi*, I ask the chef at the eggs counter for a *masala* omelette, lavish with chillies, served over a *paratha* “With toast?” he asks. “No, with a paratha,” I say. “A stuffed *paratha* with *aloo*?” he asks. “A plain *paratha*,” I coax him, “served with the egg on top of it.” When all is confirmed, I retire to the corner table assigned to me. I have work to do.

Fifteen minutes later, I am served a *paratha*, plain, no trimmings, no accompaniments. “Your *paratha*, Sir,” says the waiter solicitously. “I asked for an omelette with it,” I remind him, “placed over the *paratha*.” The *paratha* is removed and replaced, a few minutes later, by an omelette. No accompaniments; no *paratha*. “I’d like a paratha with it,” I explain. “A stuffed paratha,

Sir?” “No, a plain one, served instead of toast.” A few minutes later, all is sorted out. The *paratha* and the omelette finally make it together to my table. Only, by now, they’re stone cold. I tell myself the sprouts will hold me till lunchtime.

But I do like coffee at breakfast. Helpfully, the waiter had taken the order for my preferred choice of cappuccino. “Yes, Sir, a cappuccino.” “A *strong* cappuccino,” I suggest, “even a *very strong* cappuccino.” I am assured of its arrival. Only it doesn’t. “My coffee,” I remind a passing waiter — not mine — and we go through the same sequence again. I wait. No coffee. “Would you like anything else, Sir?” my waiter is back to clear my uneaten plate. “I’m waiting for my cappuccino,” I say. “Very well, Sir,” he says.

Over the shenanigans of the *paratha* and omelette, I’m drawing a little notice to myself, but the cup of coffee remains elusive. I decide to walk across to the hostess to ask for her help. “Coffee, Sir,” she says, “I’ll send somebody across.” Finally, perhaps a half hour and a half-dozen reminders later, I have what I asked for — a strong cappuccino. I’m tempted to ask for a second round, but dare I risk it? I take the coward’s way out. Tomorrow is another breakfast day.

# Thanks, but no thanks

## Beyond taxes

Come Budget time and it is surprising how much of the discussion is on tax rates and revenues — though these account for only 60 per cent of the Union Budget, up from about 52 per cent of the Manmohan Singh government's last Budget. Non-tax revenues, including borrowings to fund the deficit, account for the remaining 40 per cent, or close to ₹11 trillion, but there is little focus on how to boost non-tax revenues or reduce the level of borrowings by saving on expenditure. This is surprising, given how it is non-tax revenues that have fallen short even as tax revenues have grown faster than gross domestic product (GDP).

If tax revenues have done well, thank the oil windfall of 2014-16. Arun Jaitley used the opportunity afforded by the sharp drop in oil prices to soak up tax revenue, though some of it has had to be given back to the consumer. There is also work to be done on individual taxation as well as on goods and services tax (GST). But while the airwaves are full of noise on these issues, not nearly enough attention gets paid to non-tax revenues — where there are repeated shortfalls in disinvestment receipts and mismanagement of revenues from sectors like telecom. A government hungry for revenue has simply fallen back on the companies it owns, asking them to up their dividend payments or borrow on its behalf. This year North Block's long arm also reached Mumbai to extract surpluses from the Reserve Bank of India.

The flip side of this is the story of where the money goes. Trillions of rupees have been used to shore up the balance sheets of government banks, while more trillions invested in highways and railways have not yielded the returns they should have. More highways could have been monetised through maintenance and operations contracts that yield the government net revenue. The railways in turn is into the final phase of building high-speed, high-capacity freight corridors, but it is not yet certain what kind of traffic such lines will attract, given that the existing rail traffic is only partially containerised and new growth centres along the corridors are not yet up and running.

Meanwhile, another ₹20,000 crore is being used this year to keep the postal department going, mostly because the pay and pension bill is much bigger than the revenue. This spares the blushes of perennial loss-makers like Air India and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd, though their losses too run into thousands of crores. Talk of converting the postal network into a bank has remained just that: Talk. If the government were to demand performance from the companies and ministries concerned, the non-tax component of the Budget would get a booster shot, and there would be less infructuous outlay to support non-performing companies.

The irony is that the government thinks it has all the money in the world to give these companies, when the truth is that it is more strapped for cash now than at any other time in the last decade. Can the management of food stocks be made more efficient? Can shortfalls in payment to electricity generators get a prior claim on states' share of Central taxes? Can private shipyards be given business to see if they can deliver within cost and stipulated timelines, because today the public shipyards don't do either? Can politics be taken out of pricing decisions so that the subsidy bill gets curtailed?

In short, there are many ways to make the government's money go further — if the government were to bring to the task the same determination it has shown in persisting with the amended citizenship law? The key question is how much political capital the government is willing to spend on economic reform measures that will be unpopular with one or other section of the population. If Air India is not sold, will it be shut down? After all, private airlines have been shut, so why not Air India? To take such decisions, the economy has to become the government's No. 1 priority, which it self-evidently is not at the moment.

## Lighting the campus tinderbox



AL FRESCO

SUNIL SETHI

The ill wind of rampant violence against students and faculty of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) by masked hoodlums on January 5 took place in some of the most miserable weather the capital has known, with temperatures plummeting to the coldest in decades.

If that was a barometer of national politics, then a bitter winter of discontent augurs a dangerous spring for the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah ruling establishment and their Hindutva-fuelled followers.

From the blur of images of Bloody Sunday — students' union President Aishe Ghosh's bandaged head from wounds inflicted, Deepika Padukone's flying visit,

hundreds of protesting students gathered at the gates — some stark facts stand out. They suggest the complicity of forces on high behind the orchestrated attacks. A large police force turned a blind eye to several hours of mayhem in the students' hostels, the street lights conveniently went off, and the vice-chancellor — a government appointee — fiddled, like Nero, as his realm burned. To this day he has not been held accountable for his failure to restore order. Moreover, the assailants have not been tracked. And, bizarrely, FIRs were filed against Ms Ghosh as the agent provocateur rather than the sinister untraceable attackers. As a Centrally-funded institution, JNU has been very much in the government's line of fire for some time, from February 2016 in fact, when Kanhaiya Kumar, its former students' president, was arrested for sedition and criminal conspiracy for allegedly voicing anti-national slogans, a charge he denied. Like his successor, Ms Ghosh, Mr Kumar belongs to the Leftist union and has long been denounced by the prime minister, home minister and the BJP's students' union as the "Tukde Tukde Gang" — by now a rather jaded phrase that started out to describe

a bunch of "anti-national" students hell-bent on shredding the country but is now applied to anyone politically opposing government policy or ruling party ideology.

Like that other shop-soiled appellation "Khan Market Gang", the label can be embarrassingly ironic. Two pillars of the Modi government, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Foreign Minister S Jaishankar, are former JNU students, and have had to issue cringe-worthy assurances that in their student days there was no "Tukde Tukde Gang" and they were engaged in blameless intellectual capacity-building rather than involvement in the university's established Left-liberal leanings. (The two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, indeed they often go together in places of higher learning.)

Judging by the spillover of students' protests nationwide in expressions of solidarity for the JNU violence, infiltrating campuses and tampering with the aspirations of a restive youth population desperate for degrees and hungry for jobs can have unforeseen consequences. It is not the same kind of control enforced by military might in the lockdown in Kashmir or the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act

through parliamentary legislation. Opposition to both has been swiftly and peremptorily dealt with.

Mr Modi's authoritarian streak is sometimes compared to Indira Gandhi's rise to absolute power. If so, the triggering of a students' agitation carries a fateful echo from the non-so-distant past.

In 1971, fresh from victory in the Bangladesh war and a triumphant election, Mrs Gandhi was at the very zenith of her power. Her international prestige was high and her command of the party and state governments untrammelled. Yet it was precisely her tightening grip on controlling levers that made things go wrong — the lightning rod being the students' unrest in Bihar and Gujarat.

In her incisive political biography Indira Gandhi: *Tryst with Power* (Penguin; ₹399), the writer Nayantara Sahgal gives a detailed account. It was small things (such as JNU students recently protesting a hike in hostel fees) that set off the conflagration. In January 1974 a student revolt against food prices in engineering college hostels in Ahmedabad and Morvi erupted into a citizens' movement against scarcity and misrule. That same year students of Patna colleges held protests

demanding educational reform. In both cities there were police beatings at barricades, arrests, and bloodletting. Thence forward the story of Jayaprakash Narayan's emergence as a galvanising force, Emergency rule and Mrs Gandhi's fall in 1975 is well-known. "In her grasp of the nuts and bolts of the machinery of power," observes Ms Sahgal, "Indira Gandhi installed a strategy of command that depended entirely on personal loyalty".

The student uprisings of 1974 were not abetted by WhatsApp wars, Twittermania, or a body of outspoken supporters from the film world. The smashings and thrashings at JNU are right in our face; they force the most passive observer to take sides. As a pan-Indian (to use that overused but indefinable phrase) community, university students everywhere are the same. Everyone either knows a college-goer, or was one, or, in the basic human desire for self-improvement, hopes to become one. An ill-educated driver I once had, a runaway from rural Bihar, used to regretfully intone: "Sir, *vidya se badi koi sampatti nahin hai*" (Sir, there is no greater wealth than education).

New Delhi's rulers should be alert to lighting a dangerous tinderbox. Besides, the city-state will elect a new government on February 11. The voters will factor in JNU's Bloody Sunday.

## How our lexicon got enriched in the past decade



YES, BUT...

SANDEEP GOYAL

As a student of linguistics one was taught that language changes due to assimilation and dissimilation, mergers and splits, syncope and apocope, prothesis and epenthesis ... new words are borrowed or invented, the meaning of old words drifts or is redefined, and morphology of the lexicon develops or decays every couple of generations. In the past decade all of the above has happened to our language, and our vocabulary. New words, new meanings, new interpretations, new implications and new understandings have created a new lexicon prompted by new technologies, new social realities, and a new way of living life. And it has happened in a fraction of a generation.

The most interesting additions to our active vocabulary in the last 10 years have come from portmanteau words ... blended words ... Brexit, bromance, shero, metrosexual, netizen, screenger, frenemy, freemium, emoticon, unfriend, staycation, podcast, athleisure, buzzworthy, upcycle, solopreneur, sexting, adulting, dadbod, dadance, clickbait, hatewatch, side-eye, humblebrag, meetcute, photobomb ... it is not that the likes of motel or smog or brunch did not exist previously in our conversational language, but in the 2010-20 decade, marrying parts of multiple words or their phonemes and comising them into a new word became almost a fashion in popular culture. Take "dadbod" mentioned earlier. To the uninitiated, it is slang for a body shape of middle-aged men, usually dads, with a slightly protruding tummy out of an otherwise muscular body which is actually being celebrated these days as sexy! Not just that, some new introductions like MeTime are actually profound expressions of how an entire generation wants not just leisure or solitude, but a cocooned personal downtime with zero intrusions. Similarly, bingewatch has

become the newest definition of content consumption yes, but also defines the volume and velocity of the viewing.

There is no dearth of blended words in use today ... affluenza, bodacious, celebutant, chillax, crunk, liger, mansplaining ... in domains that are more sociological ... and the likes of animatronic, bionic, cyborg, mockumentary, docusoap, telethon, and many more that are derived from technology and entertainment. Even choco-holic, fregan and hangry which are related to food. So, anything goes. The other major trend of the decade just gone by has been the heightened embracing of acronyms ... wildly popular ones like BFF, FOMO, FYI, ICYMI, GTG, BRB, IMO, TTYL, TBTF to the more esoteric GOAT (Greatest Of All Times), EGOT (an Emmy-Grammy-Oscar-Tony winner), OOTD (Outfit Of The Day) or the more grounded TLDR (Too Long Didn't Read) or 2C2E (Too Complicated To Explain!)

Our recent vocabulary has also been vastly enriched by words like "woke" which made an appearance on the conversation horizon barely a couple of years ago. Now, who or what is "woke"? Well, it is someone

who is hyper-aware of current social issues, and news, and is generally politically engaged. More and more brands today, in fact, are seeking a "woke" positioning.

Similarly, another buzz-word of recent times is "swag" ... the new-gen word for "cool" ... a certain bold self-assurance in style, expression and manner which in the old days was nothing but "swagger"! To think that just 10 years ago, we did not know, or use, words like selfie, ping, poke, tweet, meme, emoji, troll ... or did not even know what a hashtag was all about.

Talking of hashtags, #MeToo entered the global consciousness when on October 15, 2017, Alyssa Milano wrote: "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet." And world began to talk about its experiences, sparking one of the most acrimonious outpourings and shaming in recent history. And #MeToo became the hashtag that showed us how a few words can galvanize and unite people for a cause. The likes of #Egypt and #ArabSpring, #UmbrellaRevolution and #BlackLivesMatter all became words that were pregnant with

meaning, and the pennants of revolution. So also, #MAGA (the acronym for Make America Great Again) which became easily the most emblematic political hashtag of the decade, catapulting Donald Trump to the American presidency.

Language and lexicon, in conclusion, fulfils a number of roles and functions in a changing society. It interprets the whole of our experience, reducing the infinitely varied phenomena of the world around us, as well as the worlds inside us, to a manageable number of classes of occurrences, types of processes, events and actions, classes of objects, people and institutions. In a way it becomes the "social construction of reality" around us. The rapid change that the world has witnessed in the past decade is truly reflected in the massive enhancement of our day-to-day lexicon, and how new actions, new mannerisms, new attitudes, new thinking, new products, and new ideas have all found names, and expressions, that define them and evoke a common understanding of their meanings amongst us all.

The writer is an advertising and media veteran

## Stooping to lose

Six months after returning to power with a huge mandate, Modi government is stuck fighting students — its most ardent voters who are now pessimistic, hopeless and even angry

Competitive sport follows the system of leagues — upper, middle, lower, senior and junior and so on. A contestant's stature determines the league in which she plays. One who stoops down to play at a much lower level, or fight with the "bachchas" (juniors), diminishes her/his own stature.

We are applying this test to our politics, specifically to the way the BJP government is handling student protests.

A simpler way of understanding this is how our great old wrestler-actor Dara Singh handled any new challenger. He asked him to fight his brother Randhawa first, beat him, and earn the right to fight the champ. I asked him why, and he said every "Lallu Panju" (Tom, Dick and Harry) wants to be able to boast he wrestled with Dara Singh. Why should I lower my own standing to please them?

Back to the game of hard politics. For a month now, that is precisely what this almighty BJP government is doing: Senior, powerful men and women fighting with children. They've seen fires lit in campuses across the country in response to their policies. Their response — especially where the BJP has been in power — has been consistent. Bring down the full force of state power, internet and telecom restrictions, and, at least in one case, Uttar Pradesh, collective fines.

If a government elected with such an enormous popular vote finds it worth its while to fight its students rather than reason or listen to them, three things follow:

First, a tyrant versus the underdog story builds up.

Second, it generates pictures that gravely damage Brand India globally. And you can't stop any of this from "getting out".

Third, and the most significant, it inevitably creates a "children versus uncle/auntie mood" among the youth. Let me elaborate.



NATIONAL INTEREST

SHEKHAR GUPTA

Nobody should also remain under the misconception that it is just a virus specific to the few, liberal, Left, public universities infested by "Urban Naxals". The anger has now spread to expensive private campuses as well, which allow no politics and unions, and cost many students' parents a lot of their savings and inherited assets. I have been speaking at several in different parts of the country, and found anger similar to what you might see at JNU, Jamia, or BHU.

The sentiment is a bemused — and increas-

ingly — angry "but this isn't what we had voted for". I can also say with reasonable certainty that a very, very large percentage of these young people voted Mr Modi, and mostly for the first time in their lives. Once a month, *ThePrint* holds an innovative free-speech event called "Democracy Wall" at a key campus.

One of its features is a giant banner that looks like a wall where the students can freely write what's on their mind and sign their names. These have changed character dramatically over the past six months. In the last three, the change is drastic.

All these are from private or elite universities. Among outbursts of anger and disappointment on the latest one, along with clever lines like "P...k The Police" and "Mera Desh Jal Raha Hai....#SaveAustralia", what catches the eye most strikingly is "bure din wapas kar do" (please return my bad days to me). Until about three months back, there was some criticism. Today we see not a line, not even a word of praise. You ignore this kind of unanimity in anger among the educated young at your own peril.

At most times, a cocktail of nationalism, religion, and an almighty personality cult can win you one election. But it can't win you two in succession. Six months after he rode hope to his second conquest of India, he has senior police officers (who trusts the police on their word in this country, I am so sorry to ask) holding press conferences, calling students rioters and anti-nationals; cabinet ministers speaking out on TV channels, telling boys and girls on our campuses how to behave and be patriotic. But today's young are smart.

They leave them speechless when they retaliate by waving the tiranga, mass-reading of the preamble of the Constitution, and singing the national anthem. Just over six months back you had the cream of Bollywood fawningly pose for selfies with Mr Modi. Today, many of the marquee stars, not just the usual "arty" ones, have lent their support to protests. And the rest may be silent, but almost no star of any consequence has risen in the government's support. You have doubts, check out the worthies who landed at the central ministers' dinner in Mumbai to support the Citizenship Amendment Act. You will need Google to identify some.

And in the middle of all this, you field a second-term cabinet minister like Smriti Irani to mock and taunt Deepika Padukone. Remember, we said the league you choose to play in decides your stature. Show us a more effective way of losing India's youth.

In special arrangement with *ThePrint*

## Remember Safdar

## EYE CULTURE

UTTARAN DAS GUPTA

Deepika Padukone has been at the receiving end of praises and brickbats for turning up at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) earlier this week to express solidarity with students assaulted by armed miscreants, who breached security to enter the campus last Sunday evening. Some have accused her of using the incident to promote her new film *Chhapaak* — in which she plays the protagonist, an acid attack survivor. Others have said that her gesture was "bare minimum" from a celebrity at a time when the entire nation has been roiled by protests against the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act. Yet, some other — mostly supporters of the government — have called for a boycott of her new film for extending support to "anti-national" JNU.

At the same time, a thirty-year-old video has been circulating on social media, in which Shabana Azmi uses her time on stage at 12th International Film Festival of India in January 1989 to read out a note of protest for the murder of theatre activist Safdar Hashmi. In the video, Kabir Bedi asks about her opinion of the new wave theatre director. "My views on my directors can be reserved for a later date," she replies to a surprised Bedi, while Victor Banerjee looks on. "I choose this occasion to read out our protest," she adds. According to some sources, senior Congress leaders — miscreants associated with the party accused of killing Hashmi — were apparently present in the audience.

Hashmi, a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and founder of the theatre troupe Jana Natya Manch (Janam), was beaten up on January 1, 1989 — allegedly by a Congress mob, led by party leader Mukesh Sharma — as he and his troupe were performing their play *Halla Bol!* at Jhandapur Colony in Sahibabad, the industrial town of Ghaziabad on the outskirts of Delhi. The performance was a gesture of solidarity for Ramanand Jha, a communist leader who was fighting the municipal elections in the area. Hashmi succumbed to his injuries a day later in the hospital.

Senior journalist V Kumara Swamy, in an article for *The Telegraph* late last year, wrote: "People talk of Safdar Hashmi as if he was a man who died at a ripe old age. ... In his thick glasses, coat-muffler and wide smile, Hashmi looks much older than he actually was at the time the photograph was taken." When he was murdered, he was only 34 years old. But he "had already made a name for himself as a fiery street theatre actor and director."

Hashmi's fame really grew to mythic proportions after his murder. His wife, Moloyashree Hashmi, who now runs

Janam, was a part of the cast that was performing *Halla Bol!* on the day Safdar Hashmi was murdered. She led the troupe back a couple of days later to complete the interrupted performance; the group has been revisiting Jhandapur every year since then on the day of Hashmi's martyrdom.

Hashmi's vision of street theatre was utopian and internationalist. In an essay outlining the vision of Janam, he noted: "Street theatre, as we know it today, is not more than fifty or fifty-five years old. It began with a short play by Mayakovsky — *Mystery-Bouffe* — during the 1917 revolution in Russia. During the Second World War, the same play was performed more than a thousand times in front of the troops of the Red Army. Street theatre in the Soviet Union has been closely related to the growth of people's movements. In China, North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam, street theatre has been nurtured in the cradle of the Communist party. In Africa, street theatre has been the mouthpiece of nationalist movements. In the US, underclass African Americans have used street theatre to propagate their aspirations. In India too, street theatre has been closely related to the struggle for Independence. But even after Independence, our society is deeply afflicted with class hierarchy, social injustice and improper distribution of wealth." The aim of his theatre was to attack these injustices.

In another article for *The Telegraph*, Vidyarthi Chatterjee writes: "Hashmi was too astute a student of history and too perceptive an observer of the social and economic realities of his time to not realise that given the existing character of the Indian 'system', violent confrontation with the propertied and the privileged would amount to a battle lost before it had even begun. That, in spite of his sagacious understanding of conditions on the ground, violence visited him the way it did carries a lesson immersed in sadness and irony. In a sense, Hashmi's was a death foretold, both moving and enlightening." Other writers, artists and activists have been murdered since Hashmi's death in India by political parties of all persuasion, from the far Right to the far Left. One is almost immediately reminded of the murders of Govind Pansare, Narendra Dabholkar, M M Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh in 2013-14 by a shadowy right-wing organisation. In recent times, it has also become very fashionable to call people "anti-national" if they are critical of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led central government or its policies. But, if Hashmi's death has taught us anything, it is that no amount of bullying, even murder can silence artists or their ideas. One can perhaps take hope from it in our dark times.

Every week, Eye Culture features writers with an entertaining critical take on art, music, dance, film and sport

# Chris Wood sees gold rising to \$4,200/Oz

Figure double of what others estimate; prices had risen 18% in calendar year 2019

RAJESH BHAYANI  
Mumbai, 10 January

The ultimate target price for gold in the long term is \$4,200 per ounce, says market analyst Christopher Wood in his *GREED & Fear* report. This is almost double of what many analysts anticipate. He, however, has not given a time-frame for this but what he sees is more than double the all-time high the gold price saw — \$1,900, on September 5, 2011. The gold bullion price rose by 18.3 per cent in 2019. “The significant break above \$1,460/oz in the last September quarter is, hopefully, further confirmation



THE SIGNIFICANT BREAK ABOVE \$1,460/OZ IN THE LAST SEPTEMBER QUARTER IS, HOPEFULLY, FURTHER CONFIRMATION OF A NEW BULL MARKET IN GOLD  
CHRIS WOOD,  
Global head (equity strategy), Jefferies

of a new bull market in gold,” he said in the report, his weekly note to investors. The positive trigger for gold in 2019 was clearly a renewed easing cycle by the US Federal Reserve (Fed) and the resulting realisation that the Fed will not be able to normalise monetary policy. Gold was trading at \$1,550 on

Friday, down from the \$1,611 seen two days earlier. “This is because central banks, including most importantly the Federal Reserve, will not be able to exit from unconventional monetary policy in a benign manner and will ultimately remain committed to ongoing balance-sheet expansion in one form or another, just as the ECB

(European Central Bank) renewed balance sheet expansion last quarter,” Wood said. Such policies will discredit the central banks that have pursued unconventional monetary policy, threatening the stability and integrity of the current fiat-paper-money system. However, with the US-Iran conflict not escalating, gold prices are now correcting. Philip Newman, director, Metal Focus, a London-based research house, said: “In the very short term, investor sentiment will continue to be dominated by developments in West Asia. Without dramatic escalations, we would not be surprised if gold retreats towards \$1,500 or goes below that in the coming weeks.” He also discussed two near-term headwinds for gold. One is improving bond yields since last September, particularly in

the US, hitting a 15-month high by the end of 2019. The second is the apparent confirmation of a “phase one” trade deal between the US and China. Wood, however, is sure that once the fears pertaining to a global economic downturn re-emerge, central banks will start loosening policies, which will benefit gold. Gold prices are also expected to be volatile. Nigam Arora, author of the Arora Report and a US-based market observer, said: “Algorithmically the projected price range for gold is \$1,450-1,700. Expect gold to be volatile later in the year.” In the mid-term, he is bullish on gold. He said: “The prospect of interest rates staying low for a long time is helpful for gold. In addition, there is heavy speculation that the dollar will fall. Gold is priced in dollars. If the dollar falls, then gold will go up.”

## Sebi issues fresh notice to NSE

SACHIN P MAMPATTA  
Mumbai, 10 January

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sent a supplementary notice to the NSE on appointment irregularities and code of conduct violations pertaining to its chief strategic advisor. The supplementary notice was sent on December 16, and follows a show-cause notice sent on October 9. The details, which also mention actions by the former managing director and chief executive officer, are stated in the draft offer docu-



ments of Computer Age Management Services (CAMS), which is planning an initial public offering (IPO). “The NSE is in receipt of Sebi’s show-cause notice dated

October 9, and a Supplementary notice dated December 16, 2019... in relation to certain alleged irregularities in the appointment of Chief Strategic Advisor and his resignation as ‘Group Operating Officer and Advisor to MD’ by the former MD and CEO, and the sharing of certain internal information pertaining to the NSE with an alleged third party by the former MD and CEO,” it said. It added that the exchange had sought inspection of records related to the matter from Sebi, and had filed a set-

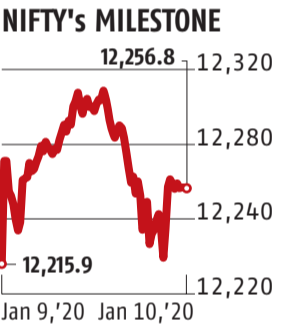
tlement application. It said it was awaiting a response from the regulator. The NSE holds 37.5 per cent in it through subsidiary NSE Investments. The matter is listed as part of disclosures of litigation involving group firms. It also mentioned other matters related to the NSE. One was in relation to preferential access to its co-location facility, and another on connectivity offered to trading members through an unauthorised service provider. More on business-standard.com

## Nifty crosses 12,300-mark on easing tensions

SUNDAR SETHURAMAN  
Mumbai, 10 January

The Nifty rose and breached the 12,300-mark for the first time, on Friday, as crude oil prices eased further on the back of easing US-Iran tensions. The benchmark rose as much as 12,311, before ending the session at 12,257 — a gain of 41 points or 0.33 per cent. The Sensex, on the other hand, rose 147 points and closed the session at 41,600, an increase of 0.36 per cent. Friday’s rise helped the indices mark their first weekly

gain in three weeks. On Thursday, the indices posted their biggest gain in three months following an ease in crude oil prices, which fell on the hopes of de-escalation in US-Iran tensions. “What’s also working in favour of equities are lacklustre alternative asset classes and a supportive global risk-on trade,” said Amar Ambani, head of research (institutional equities), YES Securities. Analysts said that with easing geopolitical tensions, investors will be closely watching the third quarter



commentaries would give investors insight into corporate health at a time when the economic growth is the slowest in years. Advance estimates released by the statistics ministry on Tuesday pegged GDP growth for FY20 at 5 per cent. Coal India, Tata Motors and Infosys were the biggest gainers in Nifty. Foreign portfolio investors or FPIs were net buyers of equities worth ₹578 crore, while domestic institutional investors or DIIs were net sellers to the tune of ₹251 crore.

## Ruling the decade: 66 entities deliver 10x returns from '10-'19

As many as 66 entities have delivered more than 10x returns in the last decade, between 2010 and 2019. Sectors that have large weights in frontline indices Nifty and Sensex have marginal representation in the list. For instance, only two banks — City Union and IndusInd Bank — have delivered over 10x returns. In the financial services industry, five companies came in as ten-baggers during this period. Bajaj Finance and Bajaj Finserv led the financial services pack, with gains of 132x and 27x, respectively. Only two FMCG companies — KRBL (13x returns) and Britannia (18x returns) — feature in the list. Experts say the lesser discovered businesses provide a higher possibility of multi-bagger returns, given it is more likely that the market has not discovered the true value of their underlying business. In the BSE500 universe, the biggest multi-bagger has been the aquaculture company Avanti Feeds, which has given staggering returns of 352x. Dinner sets maker La Opala has delivered 44x returns.



	Dec-end, 2009	Dec-end, 2019	Gains (x-times)
Avanti Feeds	1.66	584.5	352.00
Caplin Point Lab	1.65	301	182.42
Bajaj Finance	32	4,235.1	132.22
PI Industries	17.7	1,447.5	81.64
Astral Poly Technik	14.4	1,176.35	81.57
Relaxo Footwear	9.6	615.5	64.11
Symphony	18.4	1,160.75	63.22
Ajanta Pharma	15.8	974.85	61.85
La Opala RG	3.29	145.9	44.34
Atul	92.2	4,053.3	43.96

Source: Capitaline, from BSE500 universe  
Compiled by BS Research Bureau

▶ FROM PAGE 1

## Infosys audit panel says...

“I am pleased that after a rigorous investigation, the committee has found no wrongdoing by the company or its executives. CEO Salil Parekh and CFO Nilanjan Roy are strong custodians of the company’s proud heritage,” he said. The investigation conducted by Infosys, however, is independent of two other investigations being conducted by the US and Indian market regulators, based on the same whistle-blower complaints. Additionally, the NYSE-listed company is also facing a shareholders’ class-action lawsuit, which was filed in the district court of New York in October. The company said it would contest the lawsuit. “The group is subject to legal proceedings and claims, which have arisen in the ordinary course of business. The company’s management does not reasonably expect that these legal

actions, when ultimately concluded and determined, will have a material and adverse effect on the company’s results of operations or financial condition,” Infosys said in a statutory filing to the exchanges. In a letter dated September 20, 2019, an anonymous group calling itself as “Ethical Employees”, had alleged that Infosys’ current management was taking “unethical” steps to inflate short-term revenue and profit. In the letter, the whistle-blower flagged concerns about several zero-margins deals, saying they were closed by flouting norms. The whistle-blower also made several personal charges against Parekh and Roy. During the probe, Infosys said, the investigation team conducted an extensive analysis -- 128 interviews with 77 persons, including company officials mentioned in the allegations.

The process also involved identifying 46 custodians for collection of relevant documents and electronic data, apart from reviewing over 8 terabytes of electronic data involving 210,000 documents from electronic sources and imaged devices. Additionally, the company consulted independent internal auditors Ernst & Young on large deals and treasury-related processes, the findings of which were shared with the probe team. “While our business is focused on delivering solutions for a changing world, for 38 years our culture and values have remained constant,” said Nilekani. “Infosys is a model of strong corporate governance, and the company’s handling of these allegations from start to finish has been consistent with these high standards of governance.”

## Gaitonde and Raza...

Although Anish Kapoor is based in England, he spent his childhood and formative years in India and is also recognised internationally. Dinesh Vazirani, founder of Saffron Art Gallery, says that in terms of commanding high prices, other upcoming artists include Rameshwar Broota, Jogen Chowdhury and Himmat Shah. “Beyond talent, it takes a specific checklist to cross a certain price threshold. That takes a body of work over several decades, international shows, and dedicated patronage amongst collectors,” he said. Sangita Jindal, publisher of Art Asia, adds that two other vital metrics are consistent critical acclaim and auction performance. If some earlier artists have been neglected, it’s also because of an absence of historical records which has left a lot of deep rich talent remaining unappreciated, according to Mortimer Chatterjee, co-founder of Mumbai art gallery Chatterjee & Lal. “The whole talk of the Bombay Progressives has been such a red herring because it led the conversation away from those not in it,” said Chatterjee. Rakhi Sarkar, founder of CIMA art

gallery in Kolkata, believes that while it is important to note that living artists don’t appreciate more than 10 or 15 per cent a year, the ones with serious long term million-dollar potential include artists such as Ganesh Pyne. Others see it differently. For Reena Lath, director, Akar Prakar Gallery in the capital, it is important to note that in 1997, the first ever homegrown Indian auction house ‘Heart’ was established more as an auction for promoting the arts than for profit. “I remember the room was full of important industrialists and collectors of art. Some had come to watch and some to collect, more to support the initiative than really looking at art as an investment,” she said. At that time, she recalls, a Ganesh Pyne was among the most expensive works, selling for the handsome price of ₹10 lakhs. “In that same auction a Souza which was at least five times larger than the Pyne, sold for just ₹60,000. Today a Souza is considered a ‘super-duper’ investment,” she said. If experts and critics agree on one thing, it is that price is merely one criterion that decides the value of an artwork and not necessarily the definitive one.

## YES Bank...

Agarwal alleged that Citax had a share capital of only £100, and that neither Citax nor Braich’s offers could be called binding commitments. But the bank told the board, exchanges, and the media that it had received a binding offer of up to \$1.2 billion for capitalisation of the bank. Agarwal strongly denied any wrongdoing. Rather, he said the RBI letter was a routine one and was received in April last year as part of annual check on the fit and proper criterion of all the directors. “I had given them six legal opinions on the issue where the chief justice of Kerala and others gave me a clean chit. But they used that tool to pressurise me because I was a vocal member in the board against the malpractices. How much time does it take to ascertain the fit and proper criterion? I am a director since November 2018,” he said. “These are not mere allegations, but hard facts. The capital raising issue is going on for four months. They didn’t even do due diligence on Citax. Did they find if the investor has enough money to invest in the bank? Let us first examine the fit and proper criterion of the management itself,” Agarwal said. He alleged in his letter to the capital markets and banking regulators, as well as to the exchanges, that YES Bank CEO Gill initially did not want to disclose to the board the names of the investors who gave binding offers. In the subsequent meetings, Gill communicated the names verbally, and it was also found that one of them, Citax, had a share capital of just £100. “There are serious concerns as regards deteriorating standards of the corporate

governance, failure of compliance, management practices and the manner in which the state of affairs of the company are being conducted by Mr Ravneet Gill – MD/CEO, Dr Rajeev Uberoi, senior group president governance and controls, Mr Sanjay Nambiar – legal head and board of directors,” Agarwal’s resignation letter said. Agarwal, an independent director at the bank since 14 November, 2018, said he was appointed by the shareholders to serve for a period of five years starting June 12, 2019. Agarwal alleged that on October 31, 2019, when the management held a meeting of the capital raising committee (CRC), Gill said the bank had received a commitment from a global investor to put \$1.2 billion in the bank. However, there was no meeting held by the board of directors for considering this proposal. The bank subsequently informed the exchanges that it had received such an offer, without disclosing the name of the investor. The NSE, according to Agarwal, issued several letters to the bank, seeking details of the investor mentioned on October 31, but the bank had not satisfactorily answered those queries. In the board meeting on November 29, Gill verbally informed the board about the binding term sheet with certain investors. “However, in spite of repeated requests by the undersigned and other board members, the management for reasons best known to them did not table or share any correspondence or paper or a copy of the binding term sheet,” his letter alleged.

## Tata-Mistry case... IIP in the green after 3 months

“We have to hear the matter in detail,” the three-judge Bench said. The NCLAT had last month asked Tata Sons to reverse the status of the company from private to public limited and reinstate Cyrus Mistry as a director on its board and on three other group firms. NCLAT, in its order, had called the conversion of Tata Sons from public to private “illegal” and Mistry’s removal “oppressive” to minority shareholders. Tata Sons in its plea to the SC had said, “The direction to restore Cyrus Mistry for his remaining term, without noticing that the term has come to an end is a recipe for disaster, for the reason that it will create unnecessary confusion in the working of companies and lead to more conflict.” After the Tatas challenged the NCLAT order in the SC, Mistry said in a public statement that he would not pursue the executive chairmanship of Tata Sons, or directorship of TCS, Tata Teleservices or Tata Industries—the three firms listed by the tribunal.

The sector accounts for 78 per cent of the index. In October, it had contracted 2.1 per cent. Return of manufacturing Of the 23 sub-sectors within manufacturing, 10 recorded year-on-year contractions, down from 18 in the previous month. However, economists suggested that the worst may not yet be over. “As anticipated, a favourable base effect led to the IIP posting a turnaround to a mild growth in November 2019, although the pace trailed our expectations. On average, industrial performance remained lacklustre in October-November 2019, with a year-on-year decline of 1.2 per cent, driven by all the use-based categories, except intermediate goods and consumer non-durables,” Aditi Nayar, principal

economist at ICRA, said. Most importantly, the capital goods segment, which signifies investment, contracted 8.6 per cent in November, after a 21 per cent fall in the previous two months. Production in the category remained in the red for the tenth month, despite government efforts to open up even more sectors to easier foreign direct investment (FDI) flows earlier this year. The IIP database showed that contraction remained entrenched across automobile segments, with motor vehicle production falling 12.6 per cent in November, albeit lower than the 28 per cent fall in October. Similarly, production of electronics also reduced almost 10 per cent in November, lower than the 30 per cent fall in the previous month. This comes in spite of the government

pushing domestic production in the sector over the past two years through a series of benefits and a phased manufacturing programme, aimed at reducing imports of electronics goods. Auto components, steel and sugar, were flagged by the government as sectors pulling down overall IIP growth. Machinery production shrank four per cent, lower than the 18.1 per cent contraction seen in the previous two months. Consumer demand fizzles A month after the festive season traditionally begins, November saw production of consumer durables contract for a sixth consecutive month. However, production contracted 1.5 per cent in November, a much lower pace than October’s 18 per cent. The contraction baffled

economists who said e-commerce sales in October were very high. Crucially, the consumer non-durables category turned positive in November, after having contracted for two months, with production growing 2 per cent. “The turnaround in factory output growth still cannot be interpreted as some kind of a green shoot on the industrial front. Until a majority of the use-based sectors show positive growth on a sustained basis, it would be difficult to believe that Indian industrial sector has come out of the woods,” Sunil Kumar Sinha, principal economist at India Ratings, said. Meanwhile, mining output rose 1.7 per cent after an eight per cent fall in October. Contraction in electricity generation fell to five per cent from 12 per cent in October.

### THE COMPASS

## Infosys valuation may rise on Q3 scorecard

At 17 times its FY21 earnings, firm is trading at 26% discount to rival TCS

SHREEPAD S AUTE

Infosys has given its investors multiple reasons to cheer. A decent show in the December quarter (Q3), strong order inflows, improved guidance, and more importantly a clean chit for the management on whistleblower complaints are positives. Its performance in Q3 was broadly similar to what analysts had estimated, with reported revenue and net profit growth rising 2 per cent and 10.6 per cent, sequentially. Even in constant currency (CC) terms, Infosys’ sequential revenue growth of 1 per cent in Q3 was at par with analysts’ expectations of 0.9-2.0 per cent. However, the earnings before interest and taxes or Ebit margin at 21.9 per cent marginally missed Street estimates of 22.3 per cent. As expected, the financial services vertical (31-32 per cent of revenues) grew at a moderate pace in Q3. But better growth by other verticals, such as retail, communication, life sciences, and hi-tech, among others, helped offset the same. The digital business grew a sharp 40.8 per cent year-on-year in CC terms. According to the management, continued softness in the European banking space hurt its financial services segment, and the pressure would continue for a few quarters, while retail segment would remain volatile. Despite the pressure in key verticals, the FY20 CC revenue growth guidance was revised to 10-10.5 per cent, from 9-10 per cent. The firm also increased its revenue guidance for the third straight time, despite sluggish outlook for the sector. However, the move was expected by analysts. Better growth estimates for other verticals, a strong digital business, and the large deal pipeline



are expected to boost revenue growth for the firm. Infosys bagged large deals to the tune of \$1.8 billion in Q3, taking the total to \$7.36 billion in FY20 so far — up 56 per cent year-on-year. Lastly, a clean chit by the audit committee on the whistleblower issue will further support the stock, though a decision from regulators such as the US Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) is pending. Given these positives, the American depositary receipts listed at the Frankfurt Stock Exchange rose 7.5 per cent. Amit Chandra, analyst at HDFC Securities, says that a strong deal pipeline, healthy growth in the digital business, lower attrition, and a positive audit report on the whistleblower issue should help improve valuations. This could also narrow the valuation gap between Infosys and TCS, he adds. At 17x its FY21 estimated earnings, Infosys is currently trading at a 26 per cent discount to TCS. More on business-standard.com

# Modi and Mamata may share stage in Kolkata

AVISHEK RAKSHIT  
Kolkata, 10 January

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar are expected to share the stage with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at a Kolkata Port Trust (KoPT) event on Sunday. This comes amid the raging issue of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

Modi is visiting Kolkata to inaugurate a few historical structures that have been restored, and kick start the celebration to mark

150 years of the KoPT.

Banerjee has been extremely vocal in opposing the CAA and has vowed not to implement it in the state. Modi, on the other hand, has criticised Banerjee on several grounds, including corruption and law and order. The governor has also been a strong critic of the state government.

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will inaugurate the 150-years’ celebration of KoPT. I am going to the state sec-

retariat (Nabanna) to invite Banerjee to attend the event,” said Mansukh Laxmanbhai Mandaviya, Union minister of state for shipping with independent charge.

Mandaviya has already invited Dhankhar. People in the know said Banerjee may meet Modi on Saturday before the event. The development assumes significance as Modi and Banerjee have not shared a public platform in recent times.

Banerjee has also decided to skip Congress president Sonia

Gandhi’s invitation to attend a meeting of like-minded Opposition parties on Monday, to come up with a joint action plan against the CAA and the proposed National Register of Citizens.

The political situation in the country, following the student protests, is also part of the agenda.

Banerjee reasoned that it is in protest against the alleged violence unleashed by the Left Front and the Congress on January 8 in her state. Banerjee and her party are opposed to any bandh and strike.

The chief minister has been supporting the students agitating against the CAA, and has sent delegations to Uttar Pradesh to stand by families of those who died in the alleged police firing. The state BJP unit, on the other hand, had mounted its opposition against Banerjee, alleging her party’s involvement in the violence that rocked West Bengal just after the Citizenship Amendment Bill became an Act.

Mandaviya said the Centre does not object to the state government proceeding with its plan

to establish a deep sea port at Tajpur, which has been a bone of contention between the Centre and the state.

The state initially partnered with KoPT to set up a deep sea port in either Sagar Islands or Tajpur. However, it later decided to go solo and KoPT —under the union shipping ministry — was left behind. People in the know said KoPT was interested in being a partner for the project.

“We are absolutely fine if the state government decides to go alone. We will cooperate with the

state whenever and wherever necessary. Whether we build it or the state, it will benefit the country after all,” said Mandaviya.

The Centre has also decided to set up maritime museums in every major port across the country to host the naval history of India.

Further, the Centre has identified Mumbai, Goa, Kochi, Chennai, Mangaluru, Visakhapatnam, and Kolkata as potential destinations for cruises. The first riverine cruise is expected to start from KoPT.

## LIC chairman: Need cost-effective products for lower-middle class



THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA HAS GIVEN US 12 YEARS TO PARE OUR STAKE IN IDBI BANK.... WE HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO HAVE A BANK. WE HAVE HAD TIE-UPS WITH MANY BANKS. NOW THAT WE HAVE A BANK, IT IS WORKING VERY WELL. IDBI BANK IS LEADING THIS YEAR AMONG ALL BANKS WITH ALMOST ₹500 CRORE OF PREMIUM COLLECTION FOR LIC IN FY20

MR KUMAR, LIC Chairman

SUBRATA PANDA  
Pune, 10 January

People below the poverty line require new forms of social security and should benefit from corporate social responsibility while there is a need for cost-effective and tax-exempt products for the lower-middle class, according to M R Kumar, chairman of state-owned Life Insurance Corporation (LIC).

Addressing the 21st C D Deshmukh memorial seminar on Friday at the National Insurance Academy, Pune, the LIC chairman said although life insurance had been one of the fastest-growing sectors in India since it opened up in 2001, the vast uninsured population and market potential put the achievement of insurance players in the shade.

India has the highest protection margin in the Asia Pacific region, at 92.2 per cent, which means for every \$100 needed for protection,

only \$7.8 of saving and insurance is in place for a typical Indian household, leaving a mortality protection gap of \$92.2.

For the life insurance industry to increase its business and cater for the under-penetrated market in India, banks need to sell insurance aggressively and leverage their customer base. Also, all insurance companies need to recruit agents extensively and provide them professional training, Kumar said.

Kumar pointed out despite the online channel for distributing products on company websites or web-aggregators for over a decade now, the mode is yet to see any traction.

However, banks, corporate agents, and brokers have managed to hold their own, contributing 14 per cent of the sale of new policies, which is still small considering the reach these entities have.

Effectively, individual

agents do 80 per cent of the sales. There are 2.1 million individual agents as of now.

“We will require roughly 4 million people in the next couple of years,” Kumar added.

“Our sales of policies are not growing in number. We are selling more or less 20 million policies every year. We are targeting at least 20 per cent growth in the number of policies and reach 25 million by March this year,” Kumar said.

“The Reserve Bank of India has given us 12 years to pare our stake in IDBI Bank. And we have not heard anything from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India. We have always wanted to have a bank. We have had tie-ups with many banks. Now that we have a bank, it is working very well. IDBI Bank is leading this year among all banks with almost ₹500 crore of premium collection for LIC in FY20.”

## Kerala gets investment offers of ₹1 trillion

The Kerala government has received investment intentions to the tune of around ₹1 trillion during the ASCEND 2020 Global Investors Meet. The largest commitment was by Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, which committed around 66 per cent of the total investment.

Speaking at the meet, which was concluded on Friday, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that of the amount, ₹98,708 crore comes in as direct promise during the two days of ASCEND, while there are “a couple of entrepreneurs whom we happened to miss” at the event but have expressed their willingness to invest.

Overall, the state has received 164 investment proposals. Across the sessions at ASCEND 2020 came in promises worth ₹32,008 crore and towards the end, the Kerala Infrastructure Management Ltd vowed ₹8,110 crore, while the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority promised investments of ₹66,900 crore.

DP World will be investing around ₹500 crore for a logistic park.

The government plans to meet the prospective investors individually. A team led by Principal Secretary (Industries) Dr K Ellangovan has been entrusted

TOP INVESTORS COMMITMENT AT ASCEND KERALA 2020 (₹crore)	
Abu Dhabi Investment Authority	66,900
Kerala Infrastructure Management	8,110
KITEX Apparel Park	3,500
MSME Consortium	2,050
Joy Alukkas	1,500*
Ashique Chemicals & Cosmetics	1,000
Aerotropolis, Kannur	1,000*
Delwan Group, Qatar	1,000
KCM Appliances	750
DM Healthcare	700
Believers Church, Thiruvalla	600
Ravi Pillai (RP) Group	650
Agape Diagnostics	500
DP World	500**
Adtech Systems	500
Fair Exports India	500

\*(LoI); \*\*(Logistics Park)  
Source: Kerala Government

ed with this task, said the Chief Minister.

The government will seriously consider complaints against top officers who are indifferent or negative in their response to industrial investments, A meeting will be convened to sort out the matter by facilitating interaction between top bureaucrats and representatives of

the investors. There would not be any intermediaries between prospective entrepreneurs looking for investment in Kerala and the authorities.

“One can apply directly at several levels starting from the village office to the CMO,” he added. Noting that the government will accord priority to completing the projects proposed in ASCEND 2020, he emphasised the need for skilled labour across sectors. The government is in talks with various universities to improve the standards of Kerala’s courses in skills, he added. Special consideration will be given to the investment proposals from MSMEs at the ASCEND, though it will stay away from projects with negative ecological impact.

The government has convened a meeting on January 21 of local administration presidents and secretaries. The session had saw 100-odd projects, ratified by KPMG as viable, presented across sectors such as petrochemicals, agro and food-processing, defence, life sciences, aeropolis, tourism and hospitality, ports and harbour, fisheries, infrastructure, mobility development, logistics and electronic hardware.

T E NARASIMHAN

## Pakistan epitomises ‘dark arts’: India at UNSC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
United Nations, 10 January

In a hard-hitting response, India said Pakistan “epitomises the dark arts”, but there are no takers for its “malware” after Islamabad raked up the issue of Jammu and Kashmir at the UN Security Council.

“One delegation that epitomises the dark arts has, yet again, displayed its wares by peddling falsehoods earlier today. These we dismiss with disdain,” India’s Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin said on Thursday.

“My simple response to Pakistan is even though it is late, neighbour, heal thyself of your malaise. There are no takers here for your malware,” Akbaruddin said, addressing the UN Security Council open debate on ‘Maintenance of International Peace and Security Upholding the United Nations Charter.’

Akbaruddin’s strong response came after Pakistan’s envoy to the UN Munir Akram raked up the issue of Jammu and Kashmir while addressing the Council during the open debate.

The Pakistani envoy also raised the abrogation of Article 370, communications lockdown in Kashmir and referred to Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, who was captured by Pakistan after an aerial combat in February last year after New Delhi had conducted counter-terror operations in Pakistan’s Balakot. Akram called on the Security Council and Secretary General Antonio Guterres to “act decisively to prevent a disastrous war between Pakistan and India.”

Pakistan has been unsuccessfully trying to drum up international support against India for withdrawing Jammu and Kashmir’s special status and bifurcating it into two union territories. Reacting sharply to India’s decision, Pakistan downgraded diplomatic ties with New Delhi and expelled India’s high commissioner.

India has categorically told the international community that the scrapping of Article 370 was its internal matter. It also advised Pakistan to accept the reality and stop all anti-India propaganda.

In his statement to the Council, Akbaruddin said that it is increasingly acknowledged that the 15-nation Security Council faces crises of identity and legitimacy, as well as relevance and performance.

“The globalisation of terror networks; the weaponisation of new technologies; the inability to counter those resorting to subversive statecraft are showing up the shortcomings of the Council.” Akbaruddin noted that in a world constantly in flux, the challenges to international peace and security are a step ahead of the systems designed to tackle them. “It is evident now that fires are all around the horizon. To undertake a fair evaluation of the available mechanisms without belittling their importance, we need to ask ourselves – are they still fit for the purpose of implementing the fundamental principles of the Charter?” He underscored the need for the Council to be part of the political tool kit to address ongoing and future threats to global peace and security, emphasising that the Council should represent current global realities and be fit for purpose.

# Boeing staff call DGCA ‘stupid’ for 737 MAX approval, reveal docs

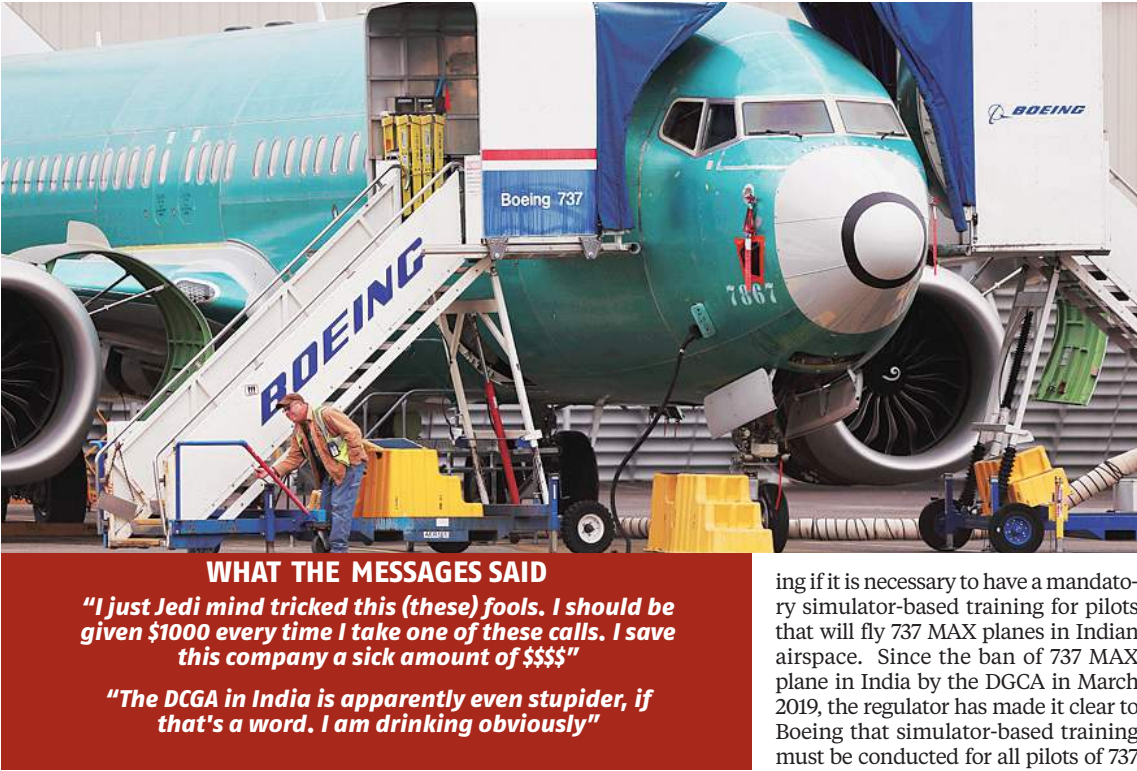
US firm apologises to Indian regulator, SpiceJet, and the flying public

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi, 10 January

During the approval process for 737 MAX planes in India in 2017, Boeing executives used terms such as “fools” and “stupid” for the Indian aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), according to internal documents released by the company.

In early 2019, regulators across the world banned flying 737 MAX planes after two fatal accidents involving the aircraft that killed 346 people. The DGCA also ordered grounding of these planes in March last year.

The latest batch of internal Boeing documents were provided to the US aviation regulator Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Congress last month and released on Thursday. In one of the conversations, a Boeing executive is recorded as stating, “The DGCA is apparently even stupider, if that’s a word. I am drinking obviously.” In another conversation, a Boeing executive says the following about DGCA: “I just Jedi mind tricked this (these) fools.” SpiceJet is the only Indian carrier having 737 MAX aircraft in its fleet. The budget airline grounded 13 such planes in March last year. When contacted regarding this matter on Friday, a senior DGCA official responded, “On the specific issue of simulator training, we have made our stand clear.” On the other conversations among Boeing executives, the official told PTI, “We respect his views and shall come up to expectations.” According to the documents accessed by PTI, on December 12, 2017, two Boeing executives had a discussion around 8.35 pm using text messages regarding the



**WHAT THE MESSAGES SAID**

*“I just Jedi mind tricked this (these) fools. I should be given \$1000 every time I take one of these calls. I save this company a sick amount of \$\$\$\$”*

*“The DGCA in India is apparently even stupider, if that’s a word. I am drinking obviously”*

approvals of 737 MAX plane by DGCA in India.

In one of the conversations regarding 737 MAX approvals, the first Boeing executive states how officials of a regulator — which is not the DGCA — are “idiots”.

The executive then adds, “The DGCA in India is apparently even stupider, if that’s a word. I am drinking obviously.” The second executive responded, “Sounds about right!” An hour later, two executives were recorded discussing the 737 MAX approvals — using text messages — by the DGCA in India. However, it is not clear if these two executives, who are discussing this matter, are the same ones who were talking about the matter earlier.

In this second conversation, the two

Boeing executives are discussing a call that one of them had with the DGCA regarding 737 MAX approvals.

The first executive is recorded to have said, “I just Jedi mind tricked this (these) fools. I should be given \$1000 every time I take one of these calls. I save this company a sick amount of \$\$\$\$.” The second executive then asked what did the first executive convinced the DGCA of.

The first executive responded, “To simply produce an email from me to the DGCA that states all the airlines and regulators... accept only the MAX CBT (computer based training).”

The first executive further said, “To make them feel stupid about trying to require any additional training requirements.” In 2017, the DGCA was enquir-

ing if it is necessary to have a mandatory simulator-based training for pilots that will fly 737 MAX planes in Indian airspace. Since the ban of 737 MAX plane in India by the DGCA in March 2019, the regulator has made it clear to Boeing that simulator-based training must be conducted for all pilots of 737 MAX planes and only then a green light would be given. When asked about the conversations, Boeing India said, “These communications do not reflect the company we are and need to be, and they are completely unacceptable. We regret the content of these communications, and apologise to the DGCA, SpiceJet, and to the flying public for them. This will ultimately include disciplinary or other personnel action, once the necessary reviews are completed.”

In an unrelated message, one Boeing pilot said: “This airplane is designed by clowns, who in turn are supervised by monkeys.” These messages are likely to add to the hurdles for David Calhoun, a longtime board member who will take over on January 13 as chief executive from Dennis Muilenburg, who was ousted last month.

# Amid protests, Centre notifies Citizenship Act

ARCHIS MOHAN  
New Delhi, 10 January

The Centre notified the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) on Friday. The notification comes nearly a month after Parliament passed it on December 11, and in the wake of sustained anti-CAA protests. The Supreme Court is set to hear petitions challenging the constitutionality of the law on January 22.

The Centre, by notifying the law, has indicated its resolve to implement it even as lawyers and retired judges, Opposition parties, activists, students and retired bureaucrats have criticised it as unconstitutional as it discriminates on the basis of religion.

Home Minister Amit Shah's statements in Parliament that CAA would be followed by the National Population Register (NPR) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) have led to misgivings in large sections of the society, particularly Muslims, that they might lose citizenship and sent to detention camps. Kerala and West Bengal have said they would not implement the NPR, with other non-BJP ruled states also expressing reservations, which



could sour Centre-state relations.

In recent weeks, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Shah have said there are no plans to bring in NRC, and that no detention camps have come up. But protests have continued with over 30 people killed, mostly Muslims, across India, including at least 20 in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh.

The law has amended the Citizenship Amendment Act of 1955 to provide for Indian citizenship to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian migrants who have come to India until December 31, 2014, because of religious persecution in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. It does not provide for citizenship to Muslims. It has also brought down the period of naturalisation for such migrants from 12 years to six years.

The Act is not applicable to the tribal area of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura and all other areas of the Northeast covered under the ‘inner line permit’.

# Police release pictures of nine attackers

The Delhi Police on Friday released pictures of nine suspects in the JNU violence case and claimed JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh was one of them, five days after a masked mob assaulted students on the varsity’s campus, leaving 35 injured, including her.

Ghosh was among seven of the nine suspects who are from Left-leaning student organisations, which have been opposing the hike in hostel fees and had called for a boycott of the semester registration process. The January 5 violence at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) is fallout of tensions brimming on the campus since January 1 over the registration process issue, police claimed. DCP (Crime Branch) Joy Tirkey said a majority of the students wanted to register for the winter semester from January 1 to 5, but the left-leaning students’ bodies were not allowing them to do so.

Several people including Aishe Ghosh attacked students in the hostel, the police officer claimed.

Ghosh, who was injured in the attack, however, refuted the charge saying the Delhi Police should make public whatever proof it has against her. “I too have evidence of how I was attacked,” she said. JNU Vice Chancellor M Jagadesh Kumar said all decisions taken earlier at the HRD ministry about the hostel fee are being implemented “in totality” and regular classes at the varsity will start from January 13. The university will extend the deadline for the semester registration process again if needed, he said after the HRD Ministry met with the JNU administration. Later in the day, a TV reported Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad members were part of the masked mob. The two suspects in purported videos, in their sting, state they are ABVP volunteers and varsity students pursuing Bachelors in French. The ABVP has refuted the charges.

HRD secretary Amit Khare later said the JNU had agreed to basic demand of students and requested them to call off the agitation. Three JNU professors approached the Delhi High Court seeking directions to preserve data, CCTV footage and other evidence relating to the January 5 violence on the varsity campus. PTI

# Raghuram Rajan backs Deepika, Lavasa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi, 10 January

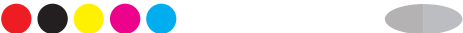
Backing Deepika Padukone, former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan said the actress’ silent protest against JNU violence as also Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa doing his duty impartially despite harassment to his family, showed that for some people, truth, freedom and justice are not just lofty words.

In a blog on LinkedIn, Rajan said the news of a gang of masked assailants breaking into Jawaharlal Nehru University and then going on a rampage for hours, entirely undisturbed by the police, is “worrisome”. Without naming Padukone, who has won both bouquets and brickbats for her silent protest by meeting victims of the attack on JNU, he said despite put-

ting attendance at her latest movie, *Chhapaak* at risk, the actress “inspires us all to take stock of what is truly at stake”.

Rajan said, it is elevating to see “young people of diverse faiths march together, Hindus and Muslims arm-in-arm behind our national flag, rejecting artificial divides stoked by political leaders for their own gain. They show that the spirit of our constitution still burns brightly”.

Without naming Lavasa, the sole member of the Election Commission who refused to give a clean chit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah in the matter of electoral process violations, he said: “When an Election Commissioner carries out his duties impartially despite the harassment it brings upon his family, he asserts that integrity has not been completely cowed.” PTI



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Prateek Kuhad, the indie singing star

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Right-wing writing asserts itself

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MOTORING

The Jaguar XE, all souped up

11 JANUARY 2020

Business Standard

WEEKEND



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1. The Genrobotics team, based in Thiruvananthapuram, makers of sewer cleaning robot Bandicoot

2. Pritika Mehta, whose Chandigarh-based firm SockSoho makes quirky socks for men

3. Vibhu Tripathi (left) and Ayush Jindal of Vizzbee Robotic Solutions

4. The Kabadiwala co-founders, Anurag Asati (left) and Kavindra Raghuvanshi

5. Mayura Davda-Shah; and a model with a MAYU bag

Last November, barely 10 months after they joined hands to launch a startup, Vibhu Tripathi and Ayush Jindal found themselves among the finalists at a championship organised by Airbus in Toulouse, France. Over 140 startups from 51 countries had turned up for the event.

Tripathi and Jindal's venture, Vizzbee Robotic Solutions, eventually came in fourth. And the aerospace company invited them to move to its India office in Bengaluru to be a part of its mentoring programme. But for the moment the two seem content to operate out of their hometown — Bhopal, the city of lakes.

Beyond the pages headlined by the Flipkarts, Olas and OYO is a story of startups in India's smaller cities — Jaipur, Chandigarh, Solapur, Thiruvananthapuram, Ghaziabad, Kochi — which are beginning to catch the attention of the world outside as also of investors.

In 2019, early stage investment fund and startup incubator Venture Catalysts made 13 deals featuring startups in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. It invested ₹42 crore in startups such as Ghaziabad-based eyewear brand ClearDekho and Indore-based content platform, WittyFeed. And, as of January 2020, the Indian Angel Network, which funds early-stage startups, has invested ₹70 crore in 22 companies, among them startups operating out of smaller cities.

"Over the years we have seen quite a lot of good deals coming our way from smaller cities," says Digvijay Singh, chief operating officer at Indian Angel Network. "Of the 10,000-plus deals that we receive annually, 20 per cent are from smaller markets."

Tripathi and Jindal's Vizzbee, for example, specialises in drones that deliver medicines and emergency material in case of natural disaster. Their drones are programmed to navigate obstacles and carry loads up to 2.5 kg, making them ideal for disaster and emergency responses. "These drones can also be used for traffic monitoring besides carrying medicines and food," says Tripathi.

The 23-year-olds had met on an online platform popular with those following developments in the world of aerial robotics. While Jindal studied at the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi, Tripathi graduated from the Rajiv Gandhi Proudhyogiki Vishwavidyalaya, Bhopal. Both were still in their final year at college when they started making investment pitches in the hope of starting a drone company. Last year, Vizzbee raised \$1.20 lakh from Hong Kong-based zeroth.ai, an accelerator for early-stage startups in Asia that primarily invests in AI technology. Food delivery platform Zomato had acquired a similar drone startup, Lucknow-based TechEagle, in 2018. But while India's airspace guidelines currently do not allow use of drones for food or medicine delivery,



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BUSINESS BOROUGHES

Unfolding in India's smaller cities is a story of the next wave of promising startups, finds Nikita Puri



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there's hope that things will change in the future. Jindal and Tripathi work out of B-Nest, an incubation centre that is a part of the Bhopal Smart City initiative. They share the space with 25-odd startups.

Incubation centres, both private and state-led, such as B-Nest that have come up across India have catalysed the small-city startup boom. But finding mentors who can take the young entrepreneurs through the basics of starting a business has been a challenge. Access to resources and exposure to the right kind of audience for their innovations, too, has been limited.

This is, however, changing, with some giants stepping in to help. Last September, for instance, Microsoft announced the "Highway to a Hundred Unicorns" initiative. "India has 27 unicorns today, and none of them is from a Tier 2 city," says Lathika Pai, country head, Microsoft for Startups-MENA (Middle-East and North Africa) and SAARC.

Pai talks of building an ambitious system to ensure that entrepreneurs are not forced to migrate to bigger cities for want of funding or a better ecosystem — the way Razorpay did, shifting from Jaipur to Bengaluru.

Taking along investors and entrepreneurs who can mentor young startups, Microsoft has been holding competitions called Emerge X, since last September,

to choose on an average the best 10 in every state from a shortlist of at least 100 startups. The initiative has so far covered four states: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Kerala. "Two Emerge X winners have already got funding and a bunch of others is in talks with investors," says Pai. One of them is Jaipur-based WholesaleBox, an e-commerce portal that helps shopkeepers bypass dealers and wholesalers to buy directly from manufacturers. The other is Kochi-based Rapidor, which assists in sales order management, inventory control and payment processes.

Besides introducing startups to Microsoft's technological prowess, the Highway event is creating visibility for these startups through workshops, boot camps and webinars, says Pai.

Like Microsoft, there are others doing their bit. Last July, Venture Catalysts launched a centre in Faridabad to help connect emerging startups from the area with high net worth individuals and investors from Faridabad. Similarly, Deloitte became the knowledge partner for Bhopal Smart City in 2018. The city saw 14 new startups emerging last year, according to data tracker Traxn. "Smart cities across India are playing an important role by providing a platform to budding ventures," says Anurag Patni, who is a part of Deloitte's consultancy team.

Like Vizzbee, another success story from Bhopal is that of The Kabadiwala. A familiar sight in some of Bhopal's neighbourhoods is a green and white tempo that goes about trumpeting the benefits of discarding waste properly. The startup allows people to schedule a pickup for scrap, paper, e-waste and plastic (a minimum of 10 kg) and pays them for it. It then segregates the trash and sells it to recycling outfits — like your regular *kabadiwala*. It also lets the customers know of the resources they've helped save (trees, oil, water) by ensuring that the waste material is recycled.



A student-teacher partnership, The Kabadiwala was founded in 2013 by IT professionals Anurag Asati (the student) and Kavindra Raghuvanshi (the teacher). "Our regular customers see us every three months, and those with food or manufacturing businesses or shops call us twice every month," says Raghuvanshi. Last April, the venture secured ₹3 crore from early-stage investors, high net worth individuals and industry leaders. The Kabadiwala has now expanded to Indore, Raipur and Aurangabad after building a base of 75,000 customers in Bhopal. "We'll be launching in Lucknow and Nagpur next," says Raghuvanshi.

Besides state governments that are helping the startup ecosystem are platforms such as Ahmedabad-based eChai, an offline networking community that organises events and meetups to bolster entrepreneurial dreams. The network has over 30,000 participants and presence in cities such as New York and Toronto.

"Look at the number of co-working spaces that have come up in smaller cities. This in itself signals a growing ecosystem and aspirations of the startup community," says Jatin Chaudhary, co-founder of eChai. Next57, a managed office space co-founded by Prashant Sharma and Mohak Goyal in Chandigarh in 2017, is an example of this. In less than three years, Next57 has expanded to Ahmedabad, Kochi and Mohali.

Chandigarh is also the home of the ride-hailing

app Jugnoo. And, the headquarters of a company that makes quirky premium socks for men, SockSoho. Founded in 2018 by data scientist cum entrepreneur Pritika Mehta, SockSoho started with her roping in a few friends to set up a direct-to-consumer fashion brand that would allow for customisations (including handwritten notes for gifting). Today the company counts among its clients sheikhs from Dubai, business honchos such as Curefit's Mukesh Bansal and Lenskart's Amit Chaudhary, and actor Vicky Kaushal.

Another hub to watch out for is Jaipur, which saw 38 new startups and an investment of ₹31.72 crore in such ventures last year (Traxn data). And, there's also Solapur in Maharashtra. Mayura Davda-Shah says she has lost count of the number of times she's been asked how she runs her sustainable premium lifestyle brand, MAYU, out of Solapur.

Crafted out of European fish leather (a waste product from fish farms in Ireland) and vegetable dye, Davda-Shah's premium range of leather goods was launched in late 2018. The brand has since added a vegan line featuring pineapple fibre. With several other plant-based fibre tested for prototypes, Davda-Shah jests her website would soon be akin to a "food menu".

"Solapur is home. Yes, I have to constantly travel for meetings but it's worth it," says Davda-Shah who used to earlier build private jets as a manufacturing engineer with a degree in management and entrepreneurial leadership from Babson College, Massachusetts. The model can work, she says, pointing out that her brand now also has presence in select stores in New York and London.

Like her, for Thiruvananthapuram-based GenRobotics the motto has more or less been "build it and they'll come". GenRobotics has created a sewer-cleaning robotic scavenger, "Bandicoot". After supplying to municipalities in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana, GenRobotics will be sending the Bandicoot to Punjab soon. Started in 2015, the startup has now partnered with Tata Brabo (a robot production company) for bulk manufacturing.

"We've had a lot of help from the Kerala government. And though we've faced issues getting skilled people since everyone moves away to bigger cities, there's no way we'll leave Thiruvananthapuram," says Arun George, one of the four co-founders. The team has taken up a second space in the city to expand its research and development operations. On the cards are also robots to clean skyscrapers so that a human being doesn't have to dangle in the air precariously tied to ropes to do that job.

Davda-Shah of MAYU talks of how she now has "zero friends" in her hometown of Solapur. "People just don't want to come back." For those like her who've chosen to build their businesses in places they've grown up in, the hope is that the attention these cities are getting might encourage some of those who've left to return.

VIEW FINDER



VEENU SANDHU

Puppet police

One year ended with a question mark hanging over the police. And the next too began with a question mark hanging over the police. The first one in Uttar Pradesh, where the police are alleged to have targeted and vandalised homes based on the faith of the occupants. The second in Delhi, where the police allegedly looked away as masked men and women ran amok attacking students of a university with iron rods. In the national capital, the chief minister said: “I don’t blame Delhi Police... They get orders from above.”

Arvind Kejriwal — like chief ministers before him — has been demanding that the Delhi government be given executive control over the Delhi Police. Unlike in other states, where the police report to the respective state governments, Article 239AA(3)(a) of the Constitution bars the Delhi government from passing laws on police and public order, both of which fall under the Union home ministry. This is primarily because Delhi is also the power centre of the country from where Parliament functions. It houses various embassies and high commissions, and has foreign dignitaries visiting practically through the year. So its security requirements are unique.

In an ideal scenario, the city-state would be demarcated into two territories — one, where police control of nationally and internationally sensitive areas of Delhi is placed under the home ministry and the other, under the state government. But for such a judicial demarcation to happen, nothing less than a constitutional amendment would be required.

The problem, however, runs far deeper. It stems from the very idea of the government — and thereby political masters — controlling the police.

The Indian police is governed by the archaic, colonial-era Police Act of 1861, which has no place in a democracy. This Act came into force as a direct fallout of what we call the First War of Independence and which the British called the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. It was created to make the police subservient to its masters and, consequently, antagonistic to the masses. More than 150 years later, the police continue to be a tool in the hands of political masters.

Time and again, voices from within the police force have called out for reforms. Ved Marwah, who served as the Delhi police commissioner and was joint secretary, National Police Commission on police reforms, wrote in *Seminar* in 2009: “The new democratically elected rulers are not very different from the colonial masters. In fact, the situation is much worse. They not only use and misuse the police for party purposes, they manipulate it for all sorts of usavoury ends.” In the context of insurgency-affected states, he went to the extent of calling the police the “armed wing of the ruling party”.

Earlier this week, I spoke with Prakash Singh, who served as director general of police of the Border Security Force, Assam and Uttar Pradesh. It was on his petition (*Prakash Singh versus Union of India*) that on September 22, 2006, the Supreme Court of India delivered a historic judgment that could have had far-reaching consequences on police reform — had the state and central governments complied with it honestly. The country’s top court directed the state and central governments to comply with a set of directives at the heart of which lay two key objectives: functional autonomy for and accountability of the police.

One of the directives was to set up a “State Security Commission” in every state. This would be a sort of check-post between the police and the government, a watchdog that would insulate the police from unwarranted external influences and pressures, and ensure that the force acted according to the law of the land. The commission would broadly include, besides government representatives like the chief minister, home minister, the Lok Ayukta, a retired High Court judge (nominated by the Chief Justice), members of state human rights commission, chief secretary, leader of opposition, the DGP and some independent members.

Dismissing all objections, the apex court directed the governments, which expectedly dilly-dallied, to file affidavits of compliance. Despite the court’s order, the states either did not constitute these commissions or constituted farcical commissions, Singh told me. Some state governments dishonestly packed the commission with people who were favourably disposed towards them. And so an urgently needed reform became a farce. Singh’s lament was that despite its powerful directives, the top court has not issued a single contempt notice to any state government and thus, its role in pursuing the implementation of its own directions has been weak. And that is such a pity.

Recent events have shown us that a correction is in order, urgently.

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THE COUPLE WHO...

quit being ‘senior’ royals

CAITY WEAVER AND ELIZABETH PATON

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex made a big and hasty announcement this week that caught the world by surprise. Here’s what we know so far.

What are Prince Harry and Meghan doing?

It’s not fully clear and it depends whom you ask. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex announced their intentions to “carve out a progressive new role within” the “institution” of the British monarchy; to “step back as ‘senior’ members of the Royal Family”; to “work to become financially independent while continuing to fully support Her Majesty The Queen”; to “balance” their time “between the United Kingdom and North America”; to “honour our duty to The Queen, the Commonwealth, and our patronages”; to launch a “new charitable entity”; and “to collaborate with Her Majesty The Queen, The Prince of Wales, The Duke of Cambridge, and all relevant parties.” According to a frosty statement from Buckingham Palace: “Discussions with the Duke and Duchess of

Sussex are at an early stage. We understand their desire to take a different approach, but these are complicated issues that will take time to work through.”

Is “senior royal” a job?

No. It’s a designation applied to those adult members of the royal family closest to the throne in the line of succession, and their spouses, who tend to carry out the majority of public engagements alongside and/or on behalf of the queen. It currently refers to Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Philip; Prince Charles and his wife, Camilla; and Prince William and his wife, Kate. One could argue that, since Prince Harry has neither removed himself from the line of succession nor given up his title, he and Meghan remain senior royals. Announcing a plan to “step back” from being a senior royal is sort of like declaring an intention to recuse oneself from being famous.

Has anyone in the royal family done this?

The last couple to reject senior royal life was Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson, the origi-



Meghan and Harry

nal divorced American duchess for whom he relinquished the throne in 1936. But he was, you know, the actual head of state, so the decision prompted a full-blown constitutional crisis. Prince Philip retired from public life in 2017, at the perfectly reasonable-to-retire age of 96. After her divorce from Prince Charles, Princess Diana gave back her HRH title and quit her role with 93 charities. And in November, Prince Andrew announced he was stepping back from public duties after an interview with the BBC

about his friendship with convicted child sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Will Harry and Meghan keep their titles?

They have expressed no intentions to relinquish their titles. Their new website consistently refers to them as “Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Sussex.”

How are they going to earn an income?

Unclear. One possible clue about their intentions: In June, Harry and Meghan’s foundation submitted a trademark application for the name “Sussex Royal.” The application covers goods and services including (but not limited to) books, periodicals, stationery, charitable campaigns, charitable consultancy services, sports coaching services, counselling services, T-shirts, caps and pyjamas.

So how do they have money right now?

Harry’s inheritances from his mother and grandmother, coupled with Meghan’s acting earnings, mean that the couple are almost certainly millionaires several times over. While they don’t receive a “salary” as members of the royal family, they are granted allowances from various royal sources.

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PHOTO: HIMON MUKHERJEE

Killing them softly

Prateek Kuhad simply focuses on his ‘job’ — making music that moves people to tears, says Veer Arjun Singh

Prateek Kuhad, 29, has been in love a lot. At five, the object of his affections was a pair of blue denims that he refused to take off. Every night, while he was asleep, his mother would quietly enter his room, remove the pants, have them washed and dried, and slide them back on. The wilful little child would awaken to find that nothing had changed in his perfect little world.

At 14, it was a white, chunky Apple MacBook that Steve Jobs launched in 2006. A software that could stitch together the sound of virtual instruments called GarageBand was already on it. And Kuhad was beginning a flirtation with the guitar.

Kuhad grew up in Jaipur, the youngest of three siblings. He was adored by his two sisters who were adults before he stepped into his teens. His unconventional, deeply invested but non-interfering parents — a lawyer father and an artist mother — would usually indulge his whims.

I meet Kuhad in his house in Delhi last week. The two-storeyed bungalow with modern interiors that he shares with his father could easily house a few more people. Both sisters moved out after they got married and his mother chooses to live in Jaipur, where she runs an art gallery and a school for underprivileged children. The house is frequented by Kuhad’s friends and fellow musicians, who make music in his home studio, and his girlfriend, who is often his first audience.

I am browsing through the books in his living room, when he hurriedly arrives, dressed in a loose black t-shirt, green cuffed cotton track pants and white Crocs slippers. Back from his first big India tour a few days

ago, he looks keen to finish our interview and photo shoot and pack for his vacation in Vietnam that was to start the next day. We begin by talking about similar experiences surfing in Thailand and he tells me about a near-drowning incident in Phuket. Suddenly, the mood changes and it feels like we have more time together.

A kid of the ‘90s, Kuhad grew up on MTV and Channel V. His love for the guitar was amplified by his fondness for Indian acoustic bands like Strings and Jal and the multi-instrument Silk Route. His first exposure to British

and American music came from VHL. Parents contributed by introducing him to Cliff Richard and Harry Belafonte. And with the coming of the internet in the early 2000s, he discovered an affinity with singer-songwriters like Bob Dylan and John Mayer.

“There is not a single musical bone in my family. I would play the guitar at home and sing but nobody was particularly impressed by it,” smiles the independent singer-songwriter whose latest hit, “Cold/Mess”, featured among former US President Barack Obama’s favourite songs of 2019.

But his mathematical ability did impress. “Not a 95 percent, but I was a good kid,” he says. Kuhad was preparing to get into engineering school when he was accepted at New York University, where he received a double major in economics and mathematics.

New York was where he was introduced to the broody, boozy music of folk singer Elliott Smith, who proved to be a big influence later.

By the time Kuhad finished college, he had played at gigs around town, composed a couple of songs and decided on a new course of life. After a few months of working for a corporate outfit, he chose full-time music instead. His first EP, “Raat Raazi”, was released in August 2013. The five acoustic songs spoke of young love and presented the complexities of modern relationships in simple, gender-neutral verses. The EP flowed like a single 20-minute melody and people were charmed by his boy-next-door songwriting.

“I don’t carry a notebook around to pen down my thoughts,” says Kuhad. Still, personal experiences have had a heavy bearing on his songwriting. His first and only full-length album to date, *Tokens and Charms*, released in 2015, is inspired by his first serious relationship.

But Kuhad goes on to observe, “People make a big deal of experiences. But it’s really just one per cent of the whole story behind writing a song.” People

are conditioned to perceive artists as those who have profound life experiences that they are moved to express, he says. “We all live very intense lives. S\*\*\* goes down all the time. This ‘eureka moment’ doesn’t really happen. The discipline of writing and polishing a song is way harder.”

Kuhad has made countless young people cry to his music. But the balladic songs that have touched the nerve of an entire generation may have been allowed to disappear into cyberspace from his computer — the musician is a strong critic of his own music. “Kho

Gaye Hum Kahan”, his duet with Jasleen Royal from the film, *Baar Baar Dekho*, for instance, lived in his computer for two years. “Jasleen was pitching it but I had almost forgotten about it,” says Kuhad. “It sounds okay, though.” The music video he’s referring to received 11 million views on YouTube.

Kuhad has recently finished collecting all his work in one place. “Some songs were in my phone, some on different computers. I also have a lot of half-written verses and have trashed many full songs,” he says. Part autobiographical, part fictional, the self-deprecating musician says he doesn’t want to get attached to his craft, but get better at it.

From his vacation itinerary to his music, Kuhad is a meticulous planner. He isn’t much of a talker and is still nervous on stage. “He likes to rehearse the set before going on stage, sing his songs one after the other and not talk to the audience between them. Basically just do his thing and get out,” says Nikhil Vasudevan, a drummer who has been playing with Kuhad for the last six years. “We often hang after the shows for a bit but then he likes to head home.”

Home is where his craft is. Not on the road, not when he is moved by an experience, but in the backbreaking hours dedicated to writing songs. “The ideas come to you when you have discipline,” says Kuhad. “I have written multiple songs in one sitting.”

On stage, it’s important that nothing is out of place. “We take care of every little detail. We are like, let’s carry even the keyboard stand that he is comfortable using to every show,” says Anirudh Voleti, Kuhad’s manager, who has been booking his shows since 2015.

A rare laugh let out on the mic during a performance catches his fans by surprise, and only adds to his boyish charm. But even rarer is when he directly engages with them. In Mumbai recently, he stopped mid-song, walked closer to his audience and asked them to raise their phone screens in the darkness. Not an original idea, not an unusual sight at a music concert. But for the math graduate turned musician, the reserved person and nervous performer, a musician who is arguably the best independent singer-songwriter in the country today, it was a transformational moment. One in which he finally realised the extent of his popularity and the power of his music.





**RICH PICKINGS:** (Clockwise from far left) Maharaja Yadavindra Singh in Cartier's 'Patiala Necklace'; the 500-year-old La Peregrina that famously last belonged to actor Elizabeth Taylor; the Cartier tiara that Kate Middleton, the Duchess of Cambridge, wore at her wedding; a modern version of the Santos-Dumont watch, among the first-ever wristwatches for men



PHOTOS: REUTERS

# Designed to last

A fascinating account of the fabled Parisian jewellers recounted by the founder's descendant offers an in-depth study of how to run a durable family business, says **Dhruv Munjal**



belonged to Elizabeth Taylor, and fetched a stupefying \$11.8 million at an auction nine years ago.

For Brickell, the inspiration for a book on the family's business empire came some years ago when she stumbled on a dusty leather trunk full of old letters in her grandfather's wine cellar in the south of France. The letters offered a rich and detailed account of her ancestors' many royal associations and subsequent world domination.

Royal patronage, after all, has been a huge part of Cartier's success. In 1856, Louis-François opened his doors to Princess Mathilde Bonaparte, a cousin of Napoleon III, and a member of the Parisian elite whose mansion regularly played host to discussions that featured Alexandre Dumas, Guy de Maupassant and Gustave Flaubert. Mathilde would go on to become a regular customer and also award Cartier its first *brevet* (royal warrant) — recognition that would help the Cartiers gain entry into palaces all over the world, a rarefied position they continue to enjoy even today.

If Louis-François was the architect of the business's



Company founder Louis-François Cartier

early triumphs, it was truly expanded by his three grandsons, Louis, Pierre and Jacques. The book features a brilliant passage on how Louis, a visionary designer keen on extending the company's pursuits beyond jewellery, came up with one of the first-ever wristwatches for men. The story goes that his friend, the legendary Brazilian aviator Alberto Santos-Dumont, demanded a timepiece that would allow him to look at the time without having to take his hands off the controls.

Wristwatches were a decorative item worn only by women at the time, and Louis had to come up with a unique design that was both functional and good to look at. First made in 1904, the watch, named in honour of Santos-Dumont, is still among Cartier's best-sellers, retailing at \$11,800.

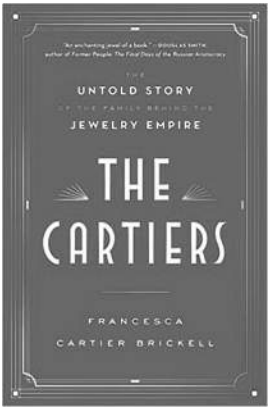
*The Cartiers* makes for a compelling read because of Brickell's ability to artfully juxtapose the family's fortunes with the economic and political conditions prevalent at the time. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870, for example, dented the company's early progress. Another significant blow was the Russian Revolution — the abolition of the monarchy meant that Cartier lost one of its most loyal clients, the Grand Duchess Vladimir, daughter-in-law of Tsar Alexander II. Prince Felix Yusupov, best known for his involvement in the assassination of Grigori Rasputin, was another famous customer who fled Saint Petersburg during the turmoil, but eventually ended up clandestinely selling many of his jewels through Cartier. This very discretion has been a Cartier hallmark down the years, one that has enabled the company to ensure exclusivity despite garnering widespread popularity.

Later, Cartier became popular among wealthy Americans, only for the relationship to hit rough weather with the arrival of the Great Depression. Similarly tough were the years post World War II, when diamond designs underwent a massive shift.

Cartier, as Brickell explains, has not only survived such tumultuous times but also stayed at the top of its industry through constant reinvention. Not to mention how it has always been able to forge favourable alliances. Writing about Louis, Brickell says that he was forced into marriage with Andrée-Caroline Worth — the "mentally unsound" granddaughter of the founder of the iconic House of Worth — because his father insisted that the union would be beneficial for their business.

Such details lend the book terrific depth, but also make it tedious in parts. Brickell's painstaking research into her family's past is praiseworthy, but *The Cartiers* is way too long for its subject, carrying the kind of excruciating detail that will not interest all readers. Instead of conjuring up lengthy portraits of all the family patriarchs, the book would have been better served, perhaps, to have included more anecdotes, such as the famous one about the disappearance of La Peregrina from Elizabeth Taylor's hotel suite, only for her to later retrieve it from her dog's mouth.

That aside, *The Cartiers* is quite a study in how to run a family enterprise. Successful ones that last over a century are extremely rare, with large families often having to deal with ego tussles and power struggles at every turn. That's why Brickell's effort is a dazzling testament to the members of her family, who, through unmatched artistry and smart salesmanship, seem to have left behind a legacy every bit as resilient as so many of their breathtaking diamonds.



**THE CARTIERS**  
THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE FAMILY BEHIND THE JEWELRY EMPIRE

**Author:** Francesca Cartier Brickell  
**Publisher:** Ballantine Books  
**Price:** ₹799  
**Pages:** 625

*the Family behind the Jewelry Empire* by Brickell is a documentation of one of the richest families on the planet, as well as a glimpse into some of the most precious jewellery ever made, from Wallis Simpson's panther bracelet — which sold for \$7 million at Sotheby's in 2010 — to the 500-year-old La Peregrina pearl that famously last

## MYTHIC MANTRA



ARUNDHUTI DASGUPTA

## Young and angry

Students have borne the brunt of the brute force of power over the ongoing country-wide protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). Be it the attack at Jamia Millia, Aligarh Muslim University or Jawaharlal Nehru University, it is their opposition to the Act that has riled the leaders of the ruling party most.

Labelled anti-national, beaten up and their understanding of issues mocked at in elaborate videos, students have been asked to stop wasting their time taking to the streets and focus on their textbooks instead. Do not seek answers to questions you don't understand: that's the message being rolled out.

Thus was Nachiketa tutored too; son of a sage called Vajasravas, his story (ironically) is held up as an inspirational tale for children about how they must be dogged in their pursuit of answers. Nachiketa saw his father give away old and hence worthless cattle to Brahmins, who had gathered for a grand sacrifice where the sage had promised to donate all his wealth. Why, Nachiketa asked his father, are you not giving away the healthy cows?

At first the sage ignored the questions, but grew infuriated when Nachiketa persisted. Finally in a fit of anger, Vajasravas cursed his son and sacrificed Nachiketa to the god of death, Yama. The story told in the Katha Upanishad leads the reader into a philosophical understanding of life, death and karma as revealed in a dialogue between Yama and Nachiketa. Yama, too, is taken aback by Nachiketa's questioning but he does not ridicule him or crush his desire for knowledge that was hitherto forbidden for men. The unsaid, unstated note here is that the tenacious impertinence of the young is not to be trifled with, respect not ridicule shows the way forward.

In the ongoing country-wide protests against CAA, the hostility against young protesters has been intense and relentless. Nothing seems to move the establishment — neither cracked skulls nor pleas for mercy. In many ways this is how barbarous bloodthirsty regimes are profiled in myth and legend.

The kingdom of Ravana, for instance, is prosperous but tyrannical. Bengali poet Chandravati sings in her version of the Ramayana that

**The most tyrannical among rulers is considered to be Roman emperor Caligula. A historical figure, he fits the mythical archetype of arrogant and cruel rulers whose end is foretold by their actions**

Ravana grew so arrogant and desirous of immortality that he stopped listening to his close aides. He went on a rampage, killing Brahmins and collecting their blood in jars to stir up a poisonous brew that could destroy

the gods. His wife Mandodari urged him to stop. His brother Vibhisana warned him that a ruler who lost control over his passions was presaging doom for his subjects and himself. Neither his wife's reservations nor his brother's censure were a deterrent, until Rama came marching in with his army.

Similarly Kamsa. The son of Ugrasena and Krishna's maternal uncle was an insecure king, always worried about being ousted by a challenger. When he was told that the eighth son to be born to his sister Devaki would bring his end, he killed all her children and when the chosen one (Krishna) escaped he hunted down and poisoned all infants in the city. Much like the Pharaoh whose fear of being removed from power led him to kill all Hebrew boys, when Moses was born. Both Moses and Krishna brought down the tyrants who wanted them dead.

The most tyrannical among rulers is considered to be Roman emperor Caligula who is believed to have said (according to Mary Beard's documentary on Caligula's rule for the BBC) "Let them hate me, as long as they fear me". He ruled for just four years but so monstrous was his reign that his name, even today, signals the end of a political career for anyone even remotely compared to him. He was known to push his enemies over the cliff and those that survived the steep fall into the ocean were finished off by his men stationed in the water, who had been instructed to bash down the bodies with their oars.

Caligula, a historical figure, fits the mythical archetype of arrogant and cruel rulers whose end is foretold by their actions. But a story that is perhaps the most chilling is that of Greek king Lycaon. Lycaon challenged Zeus and having invited him over for a meal, sought to test his divinity by serving the god a slaughtered child. The child in some accounts is his own son/grandson. Zeus was furious and he rose from the table in a fit of anger and destroyed the 50 sons of Lycaon with lightning bolts. And the king was transformed into a wolf. He lurks among us still, at times in sheep's clothing and sometimes in full feral glory.

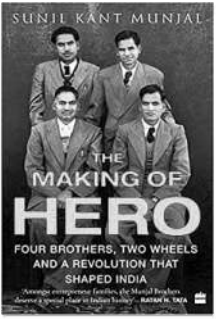
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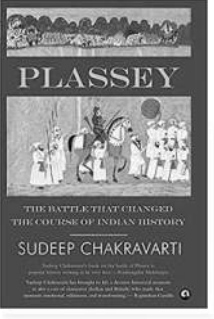
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SMART ART



KISHORE SINGH

## Farewell, gentle giant

It is a pity that the first column of 2020 should begin with an obituary marking the passing of one of the last remaining giants of the Indian art world. Ninety-one-year-old Akbar Padamsee went gently into the Coimbatore night, away from his home in Mumbai, but he did not go unmourned. His was a familiar, gentle, even wise presence recognised by art lovers as not very different from the quietly melancholic faces of so many of his portraits of anonymous people rendered in a warm, orange haze. His outings over the last years had become restricted; he spoke little and was wheelchair-bound; he carried his celebrity lightly around him.

For Padamsee, unlike several of his peers from the Progressive Artists Group, lived to see his success as well as his contribution to the field of art. Early in his career, he won a case for a series of paintings titled *Lovers* that had famously offended a visitor who filed a PIL against the denigration of Indian culture — yes! — but a progressive judge ruled that an artist must be allowed his expression of freedom, setting a legal precedent that kept artists outside the purview of prickly, thin-skinned prejudice.

At the time, Padamsee's work might have been mistaken for F N Souza's given the similarity in bold outlines and jewel-like tones that he subscribed to in his portraits of bearded, robbed figures, and his landscapes — with one exception: Padamsee did not have Souza's scathing sense of anger, and so his lines were strong but never savage, lacking violence. His departure from the style followed soon after, paving the way for a practice that was distinctively his own.



**Padamsee, unlike several of his peers from the Progressive Artists Group, lived to see his success as well as his contribution to the field of art**

Before he arrived at his familiar style, it seemed that Padamsee wanted to purge himself of all that he had been doing thus far. In 1960, he began work on his much-touted *Grey Series*, an almost ethereal

body of works shorn of any pretence at colour, that was exhibited to critical acclaim. His friend and fellow artist Krishen Khanna, then working with Grindlays Bank, bought the astonishing landscape that was printed on the invitation card, and it accompanied him on his travels and hung over his dining table for 55 years before being sold at an auction in 2016 for a record ₹19 crore to an Indian collector based in New York. Even before, and since, his value has increased steadily. Khanna and Padamsee remained friends over the decades and Padamsee agreed to appear in a film on Khanna made for the Piramal Art Foundation a few years ago. A nude from the same series is part of the collection of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art.

It was ironical then that Padamsee's metascapes, or abstract landscapes, teem so richly with colour. Divided over planes, they allude to fantastical landscapes with flaming oranges, deep, tranquil blues and a heaved earth, but have a quality of tranquillity all the more amazing because of the turmoil. This contradiction marked much of Padamsee's career who also turned to nude photography, using the magic of light, form and his favourite tones of black, white and grey to reach out to an entirely new — and young — audience seeking out these editions of his work.

Padamsee will go down as pensive, thoughtful, reserved — that is how many of us who saw him infrequently and knew him from his work — regarded him. From his close circle of friends and admirers who vouch for his mirth, we know also of his enjoyment of conversations; fortunately, he has left behind a vast body of work to do the talking on his behalf.

*Kishore Singh is a Delhi-based writer and art critic. These views are personal and do not reflect those of the organisation with which he is associated*

# An eye for Mumbai

Over the course of four-and-a-half decades in art, Sudhir Patwardhan has tirelessly documented Mumbai's working class people and neighbourhoods, writes **Ranjita Ganesan**



(Clockwise from above) Self portrait with brush and camera; Nostalgia; Another day in the old city; Mumbai Proverbs; the artist



PHOTOS: KAMLESH PEDNEKAR



In Sudhir Patwardhan's *Paying the Bill* (2005), a woman stands stoically at the counter of the Maharashtra State Electricity Board office, umbrella tucked under one arm and her mouth gripping a purse so that her hands are free to rummage in a plastic bag. She is likely searching for the bill. Just hours before seeing this work at the ongoing retrospective of the artist at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Mumbai, I had hiked to one such ramshackle office myself, to pay dues that wouldn't go through on the internet.

It is impossible for Mumbaiers not to glimpse themselves or someone they know in Patwardhan's oeuvre. It is as if he was there, observing as you went about the ungainly performance of everyday tasks, and chronicling on canvas the many ways in which people sweat the small stuff. He had arrived in the city back in the mid-1970s, leaving behind a close-knit community in Pune. "It was a culture shock, being suddenly exposed to this megacity where you are completely anonymous. The scale of the city and number of people in it also made a great impact," he recalls. The city did not let him remain an onlooker. Taking up work, as a radiologist in KEM Hospital, meant he was soon a participant in the city's choreographed chaos.

The traumatic yet deadpan navigation of buses, trains and auto-rickshaws, so often captured in his paintings, owes as much to observation as it does to his own daily experience in the early years. "It is not like I was doing that in order to imbibe the city, I was living that life like so many others going to work." The trains were not as crowded then, he says, and it was possible to sketch a lot. He would draw versions of people he saw, sometimes even after they had got up and left. At home, he drew them from memory. In later years, he took photographs of sites too. Every so often, he found one of the sketches could become a painting if he added references and developed its forms.

In his middle-class upbringing, there had not been a great deal of exposure to art. But his father, who was talented in the crafts, dabbled in carpentry and neatly stencilled his name on trunks each time his transferable job took him elsewhere. From his mother, Patwardhan learned to enjoy reading. The painter in him only awakened while studying at Pune's Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC). There he was moved by books about Impressionist art, and began relating them to his own surroundings — a sunny hostel in the city. He also began reading to understand what it means to be an artist. Handling paint, cleaning brushes, painting, all seemed to come naturally to him.

It was in college that he was also exposed to Leftist thinking. For a young man living through a time of social unrest, with strikes in industry and the farm sector, it presented a way to understand these churns. Though not one for active politics, Patwardhan remained engaged with the ideology. "I saw myself as a painter and not an activist. Representing the lives of the people, that was my work." He made a series of works in 1977 documenting sensitively the labouring body and its exertion of muscle — the unadorned, sari-clad *Running Woman*, the wearied labourer peeling off his vest in *Construction Site*, the worker hanging on an eponymous *Truck*, the waiter resting at a table in *Irani Restaurant*. These works are as much about the city as about the "tragic human species".

The pièce de résistance of the retrospective curated by Nancy Adajania is *Mumbai Proverbs*, a wall-sized seven-panel mural made for the Mahindra family and which usually

hangs in one of their corporate offices. Here, like a partisan historian, Patwardhan records the city's development from its colonial architecture to the rise of industry. He juxtaposes cubicles and cramped housing, luxurious highways and overcrowded streets.

States of flux have been a source of inspiration for him. In his *Lower Parel* (2002), for instance, the old railway footbridge, the tiny enterprises beneath, a closed-down mill in the background and the first of the skyscrapers co-exist, at once peaceably and turbulently. He also captured the natural beauty of far-off *Ulhasnagar* (2001), being rapidly corrupted by effluents from its many industries. In the 1980s, the artist had moved to Thane, where he later ran his own radiology practice until 2005. This distant, verdant suburb, while on the periphery of the city, was still considered a small town then.

A deluge in 1991 submerged his ground-floor home and the paraphernalia of his art in several feet of water. Patwardhan based a set of works on this moment — *Floods* has a morose man bailing out water from his house, while another is seen wading with a television on his head in *Man with TV*. He captured the atmosphere of unease created by the Bombay riots, when the artist felt a flicker of doubt about taking his usual route through Thane's Muslim neighbourhood of Rabodi, in the lowered gaze of the subjects in

*Shaque* (1998). One of his preoccupations has been to get those who are not normally associated with art involved with art. So he painted a series titled *Pokharan*, an area in Thane, and exhibited it to residents there.

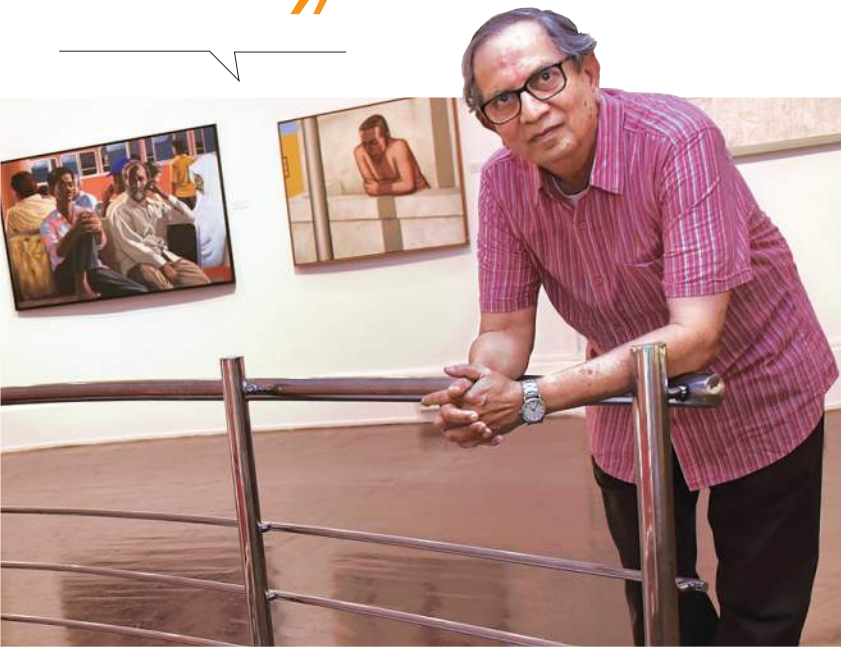
As the artist, now 71, ages and uses public transport less frequently, there is more of the indoors in his recent work. Some of it signals stillness, some a sense of melancholic joy. His own family, particularly his wife Shanta, appears in several of the paintings. Take *Transmigrations*, in which he reflects on home in various contexts on a single canvas. His ancestral home in Sangli merges with the Pune house where his brother stayed which melds into Chicago where his son Tanmay lives.

Patwardhan says the artist's response to violent times should be to identify the capacity for harm within himself. A pile of corpses is on a table in *Inner Room* (2017), where a man, woman and child are in a warped house. The destruction raging outside their windows is evident in their own home too. He notes that in any group of people, even during times of strife, there is a kind of rhythm that connects them. When he painted *Killing* in 2007, he depicted a violent stabbing where the victim and killer end up in an intimate dance-like embrace.

He quotes in this context Carl Sagan's description in *Pale Blue Dot* of an image of the Earth taken from very far away. "Every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there," the astronomer wrote. "In art, we must hold things together so that one understands something beyond violence is possible," Patwardhan concludes, "That we are actually one."

Walking through Soul City — Sudhir Patwardhan: A Retrospective is on at NGMA, Mumbai, until February 12

“ I SAW MYSELF AS A PAINTER AND NOT AN ACTIVIST. REPRESENTING THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE, THAT WAS MY WORK ”

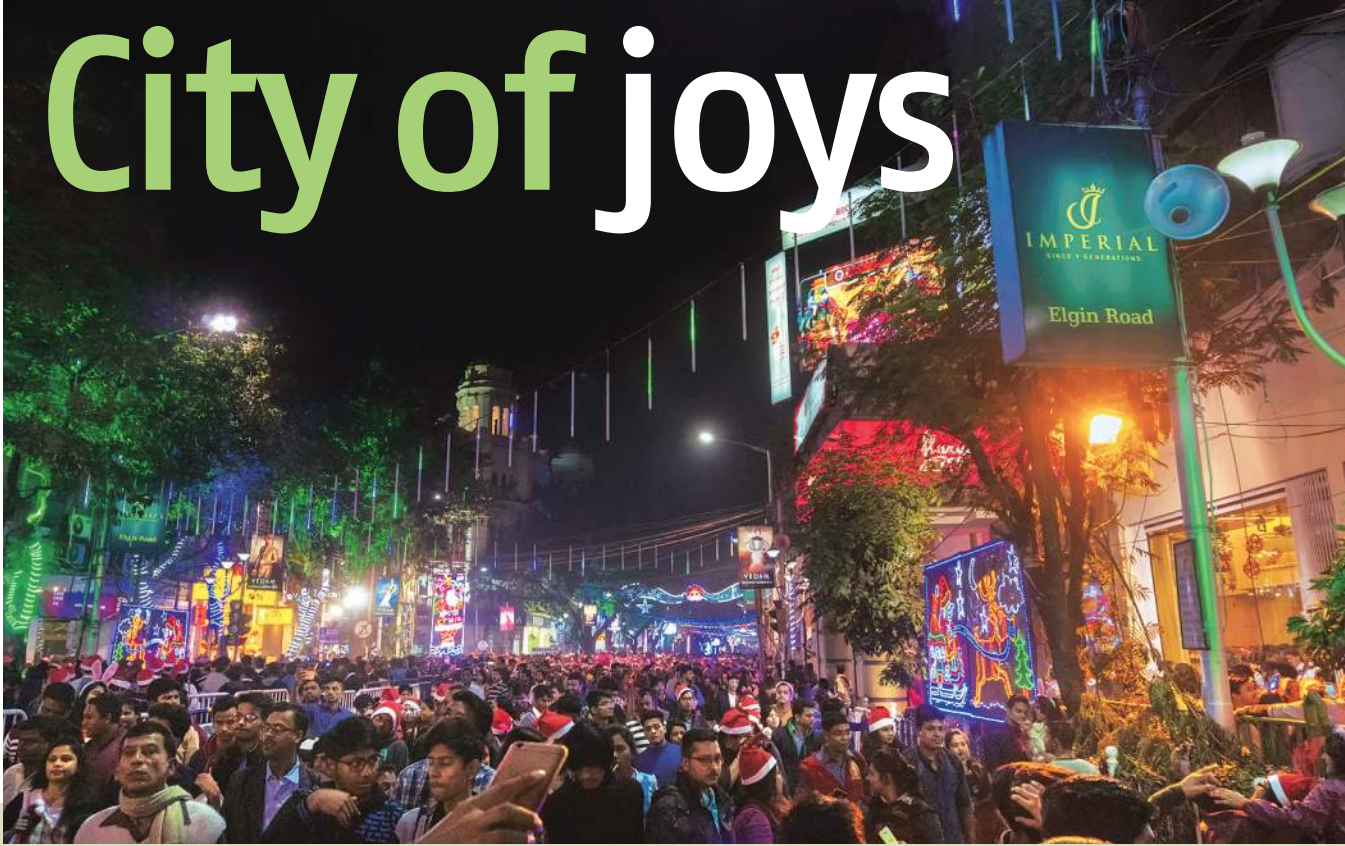


Kolkata is a surprising city, not physically prepossessing but somehow possessed with grace. Its mild winter is the best season in which to experience the city, its festive conviviality and the pleasures of its public spaces. Of course, Christmas is celebrated in Kolkata with a fervour unknown in most other Indian cities. The lights on Park Street, the city's main commercial thoroughfare, are famous. The city authorities have taken the sensible decision of curbing traffic movement in the area because of the thousands of pedestrians who throng the streets to gawp at the lights and take in the festival at Allen Park on Camac Street.

There are lights on too at Elgin Road, where you might find the lady of liberty shorn of her New York grandeur and decked out instead with the razzle dazzle of a sign for a Vegas casino. This is, frankly, not a sophisticated show; it is, though, indisputably cheery. And, compared to a city like Delhi, there is something profoundly heartening about the inclusivity of the celebrations, the crowds enjoying the city together. Crowds also gather at Victoria Memorial, the city's colonial heart, at which there is usually a fair of some kind, with stalls and the ubiquitous carriage rides. Bow Barracks too, in central Kolkata, where the city's small Anglo-Indian population has lived for generations, is a tourist magnet at Christmas. Here you can drink plum wine, or eat a slice of plum cake at Jewish bakery Nahoum and Sons.

But the queues in Bow Barracks offer clinching evidence that word of Kolkata's star-spangled Christmas has spread far and wide. For those who find the crowds and lights overwhelming, there are quieter delights, such as the nolen gurer sandesh, a winter speciality best enjoyed on a balcony with a cup of tea. The ambrosial liquid is made from indigenous date palms. Singaras and kochuris, the former with cauliflower perhaps as an alternative filling, and the latter with peas, are a winter staple, also best enjoyed on this Platonic ideal of a balcony, with the tea and sandesh and gossip that is vital and inspired. Everyone will have a shop to buy sweets and savouries that they swear by, including perennial favourites such as Sen Mahasay, Mullick & Mullick, Ganguram's, 6 Ballygunge Place, and many others.

Food and conversation are, though, always on offer in Kolkata, with just the menu changing according to the seasons. But the mild temperatures — despite all the Bengali gentlemen swathed in their jackets, mufflers and monkey caps — are, when it's not raining, best enjoyed outdoors. Couples flock to Dhakuria Lake (now known as Rabindra Sarobar), the artificial water body in the city's prosperous south. But so do families and joggers and rowers and boys playing football. One of the great joys of Kolkata, for football fans, is to see kids all



Kolkata is best enjoyed in the winter, confirms Shougat Dasgupta, who recently partook of some of its pleasures



(Clockwise from top) A Christmas crowd at Elgin Road; a popular restaurant at Park Circus; a game of football at the Maidan is an usual sight; and a plate of nolen gurer sandesh

VISITORS CAN GO ON ANY OF SEVERAL CITY WALKS THAT, FOR A FEE, GIVE YOU A SENSE OF THE CITY'S STREET FOOD, ITS CULTURAL ECLECTICISM, AND ITS STILL EXTANT (IF ONLY JUST) COSMOPOLITANISM

## Face off

Deepika Padukone's act of solidarity with students is a gamble with an important film, writes Veer Arjun Singh

Actor Deepika Padukone knows how to put up a brave face. She is a moving inspiration as Malti Agarwal, an acid attack survivor in Meghna Gulzar's film, *Chhapaak*, and an influential source of support to the browbeaten students of Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her latter, real-life act lands her film in the middle of a polarising dogfight that has forced people to pick a side: #IsupportDeepika versus #BoycottChhapaak on the internet and Bharatiya Janata Party versus the rest on the streets.

In fact, a contest between two films has never been so deeply divided and political. You can catch *Chhapaak* at free screenings organised by Congress workers or avail of free tickets to Ajay Devgn-starrer, *Tanhaji*, from BJP workers. The calibre of the films will have no bearing on the occupancy and the film critics will have no sway.

*Chhapaak* is an important film: a social commentary



You can catch *Chhapaak* at free screenings organised by Congress workers or avail of free tickets to Ajay Devgn-starrer, *Tanhaji*, from BJP workers

screaming to draw attention to the cowardly act of acid attacks. "*Chhapaak se pehchan le gaya*" from the title track bares the ugliness of how such an act robs

someone of not just their face but their identity. The survivor's unbearable pain is often worsened by an insensitive society, broken criminal procedure and incomplete justice.

Padukone plays Malti, a character inspired by the life of Laxmi Agarwal, a Class XII student who was attacked in 2005 in Delhi. Gulzar uses the length of a feature film to repeatedly hammer her audience with the horrors of the incident. She chronicles the life of her protagonist, who recovers, rebuilds and fights to claim her life back. She does so with intersecting glimpses into the lives of other women: a survivor who was refused treatment due to her caste; a survivor who needs money for a facial reconstruction; and many others who did not survive. Padukone is an act of on-screen bravery and brilliance. She lends a credible face to the fight against this monstrosity. Her screams echo in the mind for a long time and make Malti's unrelenting insistence on fulfilment humble you.

Malti is 18. Despite Padukone's experience in front of the camera and her stellar performance steered by Gulzar's direction, she is not an ideal cast. She is a misfit in Malti's long school dresses and awkward in navigating early



adulthood. Laxmi, who stayed under the gaze of news channels for a long time after the incident and who went on to become an activist and a TV host, is also well-known. Deepika looks her, but not entirely.

Padukone is also in stark contrast to Vikrant Massey's convincing act as Amol, who runs an NGO that fights for acid attack victims at a grassroot level. He is earnest and soft-spoken, but agitated and unsociable. The impending tasks of rescue and rehabilitation keep him perpetually dejected, and Massey does it well. Padukone as Malti pairs well

with an older Amol, as opposed to her school romance with an adoring Rajesh, played by Ankit Bisht.

But a socially important film aiming for box office success often needs a star actor. And Padukone has proven herself to be a brave one. Like Malti, who risks personal loss to be at loggerheads with the authorities in *Chhapaak*, Padukone, as an actor and producer, has chosen to gamble with the success of her film by taking up a simultaneous cause. Her intent in both acts is clear. To be quiet is to be complicit in times when everyone must pick a side.

## CINEPHILE FILES



RANJITA GANESAN

## Bong Joon Ho's basements

Bong Joon Ho is a master of unobtrusive symbolism. He calls *Parasite* (2019), the standout global release of 2019, his "staircase movie". He takes us to some of the lowest depths of Seoul, into the semi-basement house of the Kims where Wi-Fi goes to die, and the city's most impressive heights, the modernist hilltop mansion where the Park family lives. Without ruining the film, which will likely release in cinemas ahead of Oscars season, it can be said that the South Korean director lets inequalities of space show the gaping distance between the working and monied classes.

His indictments, variously of capitalism and of establishments, are clear as daylight. He designs films to be both festival favourites and blockbusters, resolutely unconventional yet very commercial. The approach allows him to inject anti-class sentiments into the mainstream. In two hilarious segments in the new film, in an unmistakable bit of irreverence, the characters coo softly: "It is so metaphorical."

The struggling Kim family in *Parasite* use dubious methods to get enrolled as members of the staff in the Parks' household. Although the Parks come to rely on them, the hierarchy, amplified by all the stair-climbing, hardly shifts even when they are under one roof. In the confined spaces they operate in, Bong Joon Ho, and his production designers and cinematographers, make references that are easy to circle back to. Two private conversations between the two families, which take place at separate times in the Parks' living room, shift the viewer's perception of greed. The director is concerned with the question of where the subaltern in any equation live, where they are told they fit in, and what they come to value in those conditions.



His indictments, variously of capitalism and of establishments, are clear as daylight. He designs films to be both festival favourites and blockbusters, resolutely unconventional yet very commercial

The allegory in his 2006 film *The Host* (available on Netflix) is self-evident but spectacular at the same time. The perils of US interventionism and South Korean compliance take the literal shape of a monster here — a mutant creature the size and colour of a dusty tank. Bong Joon Ho based this fiction on a

real story where an American worker in a US military morgue negligently instructed a Korean worker to empty large batches of poisonous formaldehyde into the sink which carried it to the River Han.

*Han* (which is also the name for the Korean concept of grief and sorrow), and the lizard-like beast shown rising from the river later, stand for the pressure on smaller countries by hegemonic superpowers — a circumstance still wholly relevant to ongoing developments in world news. The creature roams the waters, waiting to nab people and dump them in a sewer to snack on later. The victims who survive are typically young and must work out ways to climb out of the dark recess. Meanwhile America, which has carelessly spawned the problem in the first place, ends up marketing a remedy with damaging side effects. A somewhat Chomsky-esque takedown.

The confined society of a train, where the last survivors of the Ice Age are trapped, lends itself to *Snowpiercer* (2013) or the "corridor film". In the dystopian power struggle within, the front section has emerged at top. It controls supplies and subjugates those living in the train's tail, who then plot revolutions inventively using whatever little is available to them. For anyone who doesn't follow, in the final act, the screenplay (based on a graphic novel by Jacques Lob) lays out in no uncertain terms that the train is a microcosm of the world. Only Bong Joon Ho knows how to work with a heavy hand and still get respectable results.

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# Limits of the laws

Exasperating video reviews showed how football’s rule book is incompatible with the scrutiny of VAR, writes **Rory Smith**

Perhaps, for you, it was way back on the first day of the Premier League season that the doubts set in, when Raheem Sterling’s armpit was deemed offside in Manchester City’s game against West Ham. Or maybe you had a little more patience than that. Maybe you accepted that any innovation, any disruption, drags a learning curve in its wake. Your own tipping point might have come with Son Heung-min’s shoulder blade, or John Lundstram’s toe, or Sadio Mané’s hip. Or it might have come at Anfield, where Liverpool squeezed out of 2019 with a 1-0 win against Wolves to maintain its 13-point lead at the top of the Premier League, thanks in equal parts to a goal from Mané, its visitors’ wastefulness and Jonny Castro Otto’s unforgivable inability to keep the arch of his left foot onside at all times.

There is one final possibility, of course, which is that no matter how long that list of insignificant body parts grows, your faith in the benefits that the video assistant referee (VAR) has brought to English football remains unwavering.

That would be an increasingly niche viewpoint. That Premier League weekend alone brought fans in Norwich, Liverpool and Manchester — among others — to the edge; games are more and more frequently being played out to a background hum of dissatisfaction at the decisions being made by VAR — always the institution, never an individual — and the prominence it has assumed. “It’s not football anymore” is the song that can be printed; there are a couple regularly heard in stadiums that cannot.

The complication is that in all of those cases, whichever referee is sitting in the Premier League’s broadcast headquarters at Stockley Park has reached the correct decision; or, rather, the referee has reached the correct decision, allowing for the margin of error inherent to the system. Otto’s foot, or at least a sliver of it, was offside in the buildup to Pedro Neto’s goal; so, too, Mané’s armpit and Lundstram’s toe and all the rest.

That is not to say the anger is illegitimate; it is just that it is misplaced. There is a tendency



The job of the VAR system is to establish whether a goal should or should not stand in accordance with the laws of the game; it no more denies or approves goals than the referee

for both the news media and fans themselves to see goals ruled out by remote control as being “denied by VAR”, or goals or penalties awarded as being nothing more than the unpredictable whim of some all-seeing, unaccountable entity.

That is misleading. The job of the VAR system is simply to establish whether a goal should or should not stand in accordance with the laws of the game; it no more denies or approves goals than the referee on the field. The video is simply an instrument for enforcing the laws.

And in the case of offside, it has become increasingly clear that the problem lies within the laws. All that VAR has done, with its pinpoint cameras and its geometric lines and its limitless time in which to examine each incident, is to highlight it.

Otto was technically offside when he planted his foot a few yards outside the Liverpool penalty area, albeit only barely — by no more than the depth of the sponsor’s logo on his boot. But he was not offside in the sense that any fan, any coach, any player would understand it. “They say it gets the right decision,” the Wolves captain Conor Coady said after the game, “but I’m not sure it’s worth it.”

That may seem a trivial argument, but although the rules of football have a name full of grandiose self-importance — the Laws, always capitalised — they are not, actually, laws. They are the rules of a game. They draw their authority not from some celestial being or from centuries of jurisprudence, but from the willingness of participants and observers of that game to abide by them. They are a convention, not a covenant. Football is policed by consent, not by coercion.

As soon as they seem invalid to those who are playing and watching, then they are no longer fit for purpose. Otto, Sterling and the rest might have been offside by the letter of the law, but they were not by the spirit of it. In the case of football — unlike, say, criminal justice — the spirit of the law is what matters.

VAR has exposed that fault line, and to some extent we have nobody to blame but ourselves. It is managers who created a climate in which officials felt that only technology could save them from waves of criticism every time they got a call wrong, using the referees as a

convenient scapegoat for their own failings.

It is fans who booed them off the field every time they made an incorrect decision — always, always just a tiny percentage of the decisions they had to make — and who, in extreme cases, hunted out their home addresses, chased them from the game. And the news media pored over their calls, with slow motion video and freeze frame and the benefit of hindsight, and told them they were not fit for purpose.

The solution, now, is not to turn back to those days, to tell the referees that they just have to fail on their own again. VAR can work, as it proved — admittedly aching slowly — in allowing Liverpool’s winning goal. Nor is the solution to stubbornly proceed as we are, surrendering the game to unseen technocrats, making it perfect in a technical sense but unsatisfactory in a spiritual, sporting one.

Instead, it is to accept that the method of enforcement requires an update of the law. Perhaps that means, as has been suggested, that only a player’s feet can be offside, though that would not have saved Otto or Wolves. Perhaps it is a time limit on how long a decision can be analysed or how many replays officials are allowed to see.

Or perhaps it is changing the law so that it is fit for purpose now: a player’s whole body should have to be offside or that any decision requiring the drawing of lines for certainty should be ruled onside.

There will always be marginal calls, of course; there will always be controversy. What matters is to minimize it, to regain that consent once more.

The current impasse works for nobody: not for referees, not for players, not for fans. The song has it right: It is not football anymore. That is not an argument against change, though. Football has always changed. The problem, at the moment, is that it has not changed quite enough.

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## CHESS #1383

By DEVANGSHU DATTA

Ju Wenjun drew first blood in game 4 of the World Title match, winning a scrappy endgame against Aleksandra Goryachkina. The first three games were drawn with the Russian Challenger unable to convert pressure when she had the white pieces. In Game 4, Ju kept some pressure in a queen endgame that was objectively drawn. She converted to a favourable king and pawn endgame after Goryachkina cracked under the strain of defending.

The title match will now compete for attention with the Tata Steel Chess Festival in Wijk Aan Zee. That starts this weekend. It has the usual stellar fields. The Masters group (14 players) is led by Magnus Carlsen backed up by Fabiano Caruana and Anish Giri among Top 10 players. Plus, there’s Wesley So, Viswanathan Anand and Nikita Vitiugov who are all Top 20. The average rating is 2741.

The Challengers has an average rating of 2602. The top seed is David Antón Guijarro. The Indian contingent consists of Surya Shekhar Ganguly and Nihal Sarin. Other exciting youngsters include Nodirbek Abdosattorov, Vincent Keymer, Dinara Saduakassova, Anton Smirnov and Lucas van Foreest. The winner gets a slot in



the 2021 event (apart from prize money). These two events run concurrently with the Open, which has 2000-odd entries. This is about as much as the Delhi Open, which has similar participation across graded sections.

The January rating list shows Carlsen’s triple crown wasn’t enough to take him to the top in all categories. While Carlsen is #1 by wide margins in Classical and Rapid, Hikaru Nakamura holds the top position in blitz. The American GM did tie Carlsen at the World Blitz, although he lost the tie break. Alireza Firouzja might soon be France’s #2 and he’s now #27 and tops the Under-20 list at age 16. There are four Indians in the Top 100 and as many as 11 in the Top 100 Juniors, including four in the Top 20. Most of these young hopefuls and a few more are participating in an intensive coaching session in Chennai with Vladimir Kramnik. That’s sponsored by Microsense.

**The Diagram, Black to Play (White: Yu Yangyi Vs Black: SS Ganguly, World Teams 2019) features one of the more interesting combinations of last year. Black played 23. — Rxe3! 24. Rc6 Bh2+ [This Bishop will repeatedly feature. Black was coping with time trouble. Obviously 24. fe3 Bh225. Kh1 Qf1# is one key variation]**

**Play continued 25. Kf1 Bg3! 26. Kg1 Bh2+ 27. Kf1 Bg328. Kg1 Qxd4 29. Nc2 Bh2+ 30. Kh1 Bf4+ 31. Kg1 Bh2+ 32. Kh1 Bf4+ 33. Kg1 Qxd334. Nxe3 Bh2+ 35. Kh1 Be5+ 36. Kg1 Bh2+ 37. Kh1 Qxb538. Rac1 Bg3+ 39. Kg1 Bh2+ 40. Kh1 Ne7! 41. g3 Nxc6 and (0-1, 66 moves).**

Devangshu Datta is an internationally rated chess and correspondence chess player

## BS SUDOKU #2944

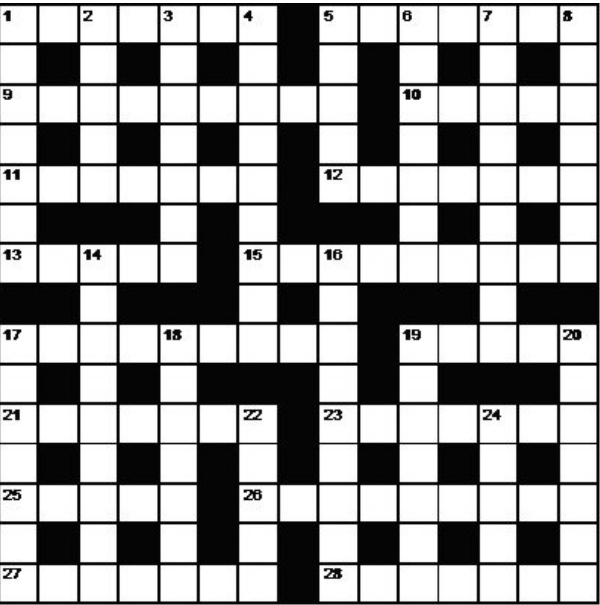
				4	1			3
8				3		4		2
	6	5			4			
	9	2				6		7
				2			4	
		9					3	
					7	1	8	
5	7		6			9		

Hard: ★★★★★  
Solution on Monday

### HOW TO PLAY

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9

SOLUTION TO									# 2943
3	2	5	4	8	9	6	1	7	
6	4	7	3	2	1	9	5	8	
8	1	9	5	6	7	3	4	2	
5	7	8	6	9	3	1	2	4	
4	9	1	2	5	8	7	3	6	
2	6	3	1	7	4	8	9	5	
9	5	6	7	3	2	4	8	1	
1	8	2	9	4	6	5	7	3	
7	3	4	8	1	5	2	6	9	



## THE BS CROSSWORD #3299

- ACROSS:**
- Somewhat pinkish affinity! (7)
  - Takes off the pipes (7)
  - Members of family man such a ship? (4-5)
  - Captain to arm for uprising (5)
  - Jack, Jill or Jane? (7)
  - Demand and obtained, to be precise, a quarter the figure (7)
  - Why pose as an Indian soldier – you’re better off enlisting (5)
  - Big surprise trips meant going round fairground feature (9)
  - Pretty tight, though in good running order (4-5)
  - Old mystic did take in the runners-up (5)
  - Book for using language (7)
  - Gather that the bell has gone? (5,2)

- The Spanish johnnie’s getting scotched in the manner of Charles Lamb (5)
- Diagrammatic form of catechism (9)
- First of all, you undercooked my meat; I enjoy roast more flavorful (7)
- They may be held to throw light on the situation (7)
- Unusually big task carried out by servicemen (3-4)
- Why I find my son somewhat clamorous (5)
- His conservative record of events (7)
- Shared barrier (5,4)

- Look for water to plunge into (5)
- Shorten the time required to find port facilities (7)
- Drink shaken by a neurotic... (9)
- Work on a newspaper and take the bus back with a season return (7)
- I’m a dull Pa, needing variety: here it is! (9)
- Last horde rampaging in town in southern England (9)
- Wary about turned egg, the same being a source of this mischievous drollery (7)
- Islam no problem in this empire (7)
- Tattoo artist’s daughter is increasingly strange (7)
- Describes a northeastern state and

### SOLUTION #3298

W	I	N	C	H	E	S		B	I	G	O	T	E	D
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# Saffron pages

The rise of right-wing ideologies is being helped along by an increase in right-wing book publishing, reports Ritwik Sharma

Urban Naxal” has become a popular pejorative label to describe critics of the government today. When Garuda Prakashan commissioned film-maker Vivek Agnihotri in 2018 for his book titled *Urban Naxals*, the publishing house did not anticipate that it would contribute to the lexicon of political cusswords. But the young startup isn’t complaining.

In its three years, Garuda’s catalogue has included books by the likes of Agnihotri and retired army officer G D Bakshi, both of whom are vociferous defenders of issues that are closely associated with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government on TV and social media.

Garuda is a tiny player in book publishing, an industry dominated by large houses that churn out titles of every ideological stripe. And although its founder and managing director Sankrant Sanu describes Garuda as more cultural than political in its vision, it reflects a growing assertion of right-wing voices in Indian writing.

The focus for Garuda, the publisher claims, is Indic languages and civilisation. Before starting his self-funded publishing business, Sanu, who worked with Microsoft in the US, wrote a book along with two others including Indian-American writer and Indic proponent Rajiv Malhotra.

In the book titled *The English Medium Myth* (2014), he suggests that studying in one’s mother tongue has better outcomes. Sanu says he found that the poorest nations used colonial languages. “My book takes the economic view rather than a cultural view of language. That was also a seed for Garuda.”

Indic refers to Indo-Aryan, but so far Garuda has mostly published books in English and Hindi. Sanu adds that they plan to put out translations of some of their books into Indian languages outside of the Indic bracket, such as Tamil.

“We need to have a platform to tell our own stories. We have been a storytelling civilisation. I felt we needed to have an alternative space because there was a need for somebody who can unapologetically bring forward a civilisational narrative,” he says. “It’s not based on one religion. If you look at Indian Islam and Christianity there are a lot of syncretic plural views.”

Garuda is a “decolonisation” project, one that involves language and excavating “our own experience”. Sanu adds that it is decolonisation from a framework of thought that is alien to us. “We need to define what our framework is, and then have a dialogue with Western thought,” he says, emphasising that it doesn’t imply that Western thought is bad but such a gaze on India fits everything into “stereotypes like caste atrocities or poverty”.

That also becomes a rationale for choosing to publish a book like *Urban Naxals*, whose premise was to “expose the nexus between an India-wide Maoist terror movement and their supporters in urban centres such as academia and media”. Sanu says: “The book is less political than how the term has come to be used. It’s a personal story. We’d like to create more informed civilisational dialogues, else it becomes a slogan-shouting match.” Agnihotri, whose recent films have been accused of being politically motivated, has remained more in the news for his tirade on social media against dissenters than for his book.

Garuda has commissioned about 20 books so far. These include books on the accession of Jammu and Kashmir, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and an “ex-communist’s manifesto” that extols Narendra Modi.

Some small-time publishers are more extreme, more decidedly majoritarian in their vision. One such group, Agniveer, has published 10 books by IIT-Kanpur faculty member Vashi Mant Sharma, who was in the news after he objected to a protest on campus where Faiz Ahmad Faiz’s poetry was read. The college set up a committee to attend to his complaint that claimed the poem, “Hum Dekhenge”, hurts Hindu sentiments.

Nationalist Hindu-centric writing has catered to a section of readers for much longer than the period that has witnessed the rise of Hindutva politics. The late Purushottam Nagesh Oak is one writer whose revisionist ideas and historical denialism find reiteration among leaders who are part of the current dispensation. The Delhi-based Hindi Sahitya Sadan published his books — titles such as *The Taj Mahal Is a Temple Palace* indicate their orientation — back in the ‘60s.

Padmesh Dutt, the owner of the publication house, asserts: “We are not linked to Hindu religion, but nationalism. Ninety per cent of the freedom movement was composed of Hindus. *Kyunki hum nationalism pe kitaab chhaapte hai, baat Hinduism pe aa jaati hai.* (Since we publish books on nationalism, it naturally ends up concerning Hinduism.)”

Dutt’s grandfather, Guru Dutt, began the publishing house in 1953 after moving from Lahore to Delhi during Partition and later authored some of its best-selling books. The third-generation publisher satisfies himself with limited sales, which have increased only marginally in the last five years.

“We will not write against nationalism and Hinduism,” he says, and complains about the trend of Hindu mythology-based writing in English. According to him, writers like Amish (previously known as Amish Tripathi) have portrayed Shiva objectionably, as an intoxicated god.

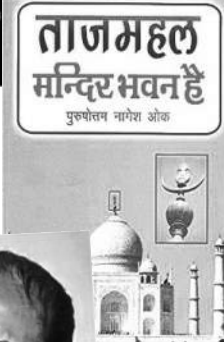
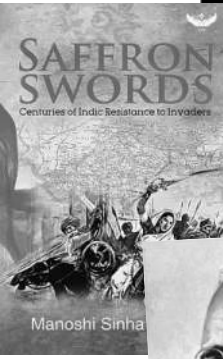
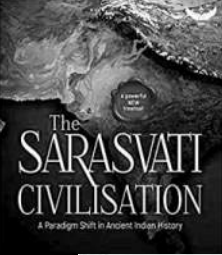
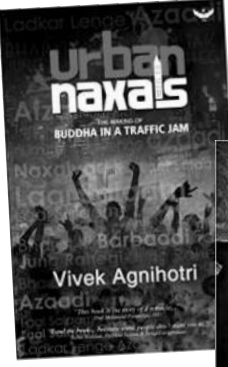
Booksellers acknowledge a growing focus on right-wing leaders and historical figures or on issues that are central to the ruling alliance. Anuj Bahri, owner of Bahrisons Bookstores in Delhi, says it is understandable to be in favour of the ruling party, and that there has been a spurt in political biographies. But few smaller publishers are successful, as their books get noticed only if and when a larger publisher reprints them.

Hindu mythological and fantasy books have become the fastest growing genre since 2008, but not due to a right-wing party at the helm, says Bahri. “It is due to curiosity among the younger generation, which is hungry for information that is not coming to them through their family or education system.”

Much of right-wing literature, especially under the rubric of spirituality, is not considered overtly political. For instance, the Gorakhpur-based Gita Press is known across the country as a publisher of Hindu religious and spiritual books, such as the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Hanuman Chalisa*. Akshaya Mukul, author of the award-winning *Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India* (2015), points out that the perception of Gita Press as a non-controversial, religious

**‘WE ARE NOT LINKED TO HINDU RELIGION, BUT NATIONALISM. NINETY PER CENT OF THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT WAS COMPOSED OF HINDUS’**

**PADMESH DUTT**  
Owner, Hindu Sahitya Sadan



DALIP KUMAR



(Top) Garuda Prakashan's founder Sankrant Sanu with Manoshi Sinha Rawal, the author of *Saffron Swords*, at the New Delhi World Book Fair this week; and Ankur Pathak, co-founder of Garuda, at their office in Gurugram

publishing house persists even though it was in fact part of a larger game plan when it was set up in the 1920s. “It proposed or espoused the template of a great Hindu India,” says Mukul.

In the current scenario, among big publishers, too, there is an awareness that readers are interested in looking at multiple perspectives on the Right. “You wouldn’t do it because you have a mission to proselytise. For that you need to be independently funded and agenda-driven,” says Karthika V K, publisher, Westland-Amazon.

Publishers use buyback clauses — which require writers to purchase their own books — to recover expenses. That, however, need not lead to publishing unfiltered propaganda material, a possibility more likely on self-publishing platforms, according to Karthika. “In major publishing houses we are

ingrained with the idea that it’s not right to allow that. Even if you are commissioning with a sponsored project in mind, you are taking on books that you believe need to exist and be published.”

She concedes that there have been clearly defined segments like the Left press or feminist press, but the Right has somehow not been granted a similar space. At the same time, even though an entity like the Gita Press was agenda-driven it was not frowned upon.

For now, publishing is booming but book sales remain low. “Diversity obviously takes a hit when sales slow down. But given the amount of space public life has granted to right-wing ideology it also reflects in how publishers find space for them. More and more writers are willing to engage with it. So be it as critique and publicity, submissions and proposals are prolific as writers on both sides of the divide are going at it,” she says.

## A raging argument

Damien Cave on how Rupert Murdoch’s publications are influencing Australia’s bushfire debate

Deep in the burning forests south of Sydney this week, volunteer firefighters were clearing a track through the woods, hoping to hold back a nearby blaze, when one of them shouted over the crunching of bulldozers.

Deep in the burning forests south of Sydney this week, volunteer firefighters were clearing a track through the woods, hoping to hold back a nearby blaze, when one of them shouted over the crunching of bulldozers. “Don’t take photos of any trees coming down,” he said. “The greenies will get a hold of it, and it’ll all be over.”

The idea that “greenies” or environmentalists would oppose measures to prevent fires from ravaging homes and lives is simply false. But the comment reflects a narrative that’s been promoted for months by conservative Australian media outlets, especially the influential newspapers and television stations owned by Rupert Murdoch.

And it’s far from the only Murdoch-

fuelled claim making the rounds. His standard-bearing national newspaper, *The Australian*, has also repeatedly argued that this year’s fires are no worse than those of the past — not true, scientists say, noting that 12 million acres have burned so far, with 2019 alone scorching more 15 years combined.

And on Wednesday, Murdoch’s News Corp, the largest media company in Australia, was found to be part of another wave of misinformation. An independent study found online bots and trolls exaggerating the role of arson in the fires, at the same time that an article in *The Australian* making similar assertions became the most popular offering on the newspaper’s website.

It’s all part of what critics see as a relentless effort led by the powerful media outlet to do what it has also done in the United States and Britain — shift blame to the left, protect conservative leaders and divert



A kangaroo with burnt feet pads after being rescued last month; and bushfires in New South Wales earlier last week

attention from climate change. “It’s really reckless and extremely harmful,” said Joëlle Gergis, an award-winning climate scientist at the Australian National University. “It’s insidious because it grows. Once you plant those seeds of doubt, it stops an important conversation from taking place.”

News Corp denied playing such a role. “Our coverage has recognised Australia is having a conversation about climate change and how to respond to it,” the company said in an email. “The role of arsonists and policies that may have contributed to

the spread of fire are, however, legitimate stories to report in the public interest.”

Yet, for many critics, the Murdoch approach suddenly looks dangerous. They are increasingly connecting News Corp to the spread of misinformation and the government’s lacklustre response to the fires. They argue that the company and the coalition led by Prime Minister Scott Morrison are responsible — together, as a team — for the failure to protect a country that scientists say is more vulnerable to climate change than any other developed nation. Climate scientists do acknowledge



REUTERS

that there is room for improvement when it comes to burning the branches and dead trees on the ground that can fuel fires. But they also say that no amount of preventive burning will offset the impact of rising temperatures that accelerate evaporation, dry out land and make already-arid Australia a tinderbox. Even fire officials report that most of the off-season burns they want to do are hindered not by land-use laws but by weather — including the lengthier fire season and more extreme precipitation in winter that scientists

attribute to climate change.

Still, the Murdoch outlets continue to resist. “On a dry continent prone to deadly bushfires for centuries, fuel reduction through controlled burning is vital,” said an editorial in *The Australian*. It went on to add: “Changes to climate change policy, however, would have no immediate impact on bushfires” — a stance that fits hand in glove with government officials’ frequent dismissals of the “bogey man of climate change”.

There are signs that the Murdoch message is making headway — at least in terms of what people make a priority. Many firefighters working the smoky hills south of Sydney hesitated to state their views on climate change this week (some said senior leaders had told them to avoid the issue). But they were quick to argue for more backburning.

Similarly, in Bairnsdale, Tina Moon, whose farm was devastated by the fires, said she was mostly furious about the government’s failure to clear the land around her property. “I don’t think it’s climate change,” she said.

Livia Albeck-Ripka contributed reporting from Bairnsdale, Australia  
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AND ANOTHER THING



AAKAR PATEL

In 1971, *The Anarchist Cookbook* (also known as Jolly Roger’s Cookbook) was published. It was written by an American protesting his government’s war in Vietnam. It had details for his fellow protesters on how to make bombs and drugs. It was a pretty ordinary effort (the author was a teenager at the time he wrote it, and in fact later regretted writing it) but it sold two million copies. The most interesting thing about the work is the fact that it offers those who seek to participate in revolution a guide on how to go about doing this.

Many civil society bodies, known as NGOs, have a route map on how to effect change on the issue they are working on. Of course, their methods are peaceful and lawful. But they seek also to influence and alter the actions of government. Many of these groups have been in the field for decades and so have developed sophisticated systems that can conjure up a strategy for how to tackle an issue. Some of the great victories in the field of rights in the West, for example gay marriage, can be attributed to the development and application of a route map to change.

In India rights victories, especially those

that have come from mass movements, have been few. For the most part this has been because of a lack of public participation at any meaningful level. This is the critical ingredient for change, especially in democratic polities which are presumably more susceptible to public pressure. We can attribute the Indian government’s reluctance to address rights issues, say in Kashmir and the Northeast, or on the issues of health and education, to the absence of meaningful public pressure.

The thing is that such public pressure actually exists in India today on the issue of the various citizenship laws that this government is executing. There are hundreds of thousands of people on the street across India regularly standing up against the laws. There is no sense that the protests are about to go away. Indeed, as the government begins executing the laws, and starts knocking on doors seeking information for the population register, the protests will intensify.

What is missing from the protests is a route map to victory. These are protests that have been spontaneous and not organised by political parties, which makes them even more authentic. The protestors need to see how they can agree on a path to success so that their efforts are more specific, more potent and ultimately more effective.

Where can they start? Obviously the first thing is to agree on what the goal is and what victory looks like. Here the answer is clear: Rolling back the Citizenship Amendment Act, scrapping the National Register of Citizens and the changes in the National Population Register. The next step is also sim-

ple: a power-mapping analysis. This is a graph that maps all the actors who can influence the change that is being sought, and how powerful they are, and whether they are positively or negatively inclined towards the change being sought.

Some of the meaningful actors here are: the government, political parties, the courts, foreign countries, Bollywood, corporate India and so on. The government itself is not monolithic and contains individuals and groups who might differ. And it must function through an apparatus containing the higher bureaucracy that also can be influenced by the protesters.

We have already observed that India’s external affairs minister ducked a meeting with US Congressmen and women because he was afraid of being grilled by one Congresswoman of Indian origin. We can speculate about what he was afraid of, personal embarrassment or just that the actions of his government are indefensible and he could not bring himself to defend them before the sceptics. The fact is that he felt pressure and this can be used productively. The more Congressmen and women are told by their constituents to ensure that India does not misbehave with its minorities, the more pressure there will be on the Indian government from a power centre it values and fears.

Similarly, we have observed that the prime minister ducked a visit to Guwahati because he’s afraid of facing street anger. Apparently it bruises his vanity. This is also useful and can be amplified where he goes. We may have witnessed a seminal moment when Deepika Padukone stood by the battered students of Jawaharlal Nehru University and their hero

The protesters need to see how they can agree on a path to success so that their efforts are more specific, more potent and ultimately more effective



Student protests against CAA-NRC have helped create public pressure

Kanhaiya Kumar. Bollywood has always sided with power over justice because it is beholden to authority and gets serious amounts of money because it stays on the right side of the government. Unlike in the United States, where the film and music industry is extremely liberal and willing to jump into all sorts of causes, in India this has not happened. Deepika’s stance opens up the space for the protesters to see if they can widen the coalition of famous people willing to stand up for them.

Industry is pragmatic and will look at self interest, and this is true. However, upholding rights for all and ensuring a modern rule-of-law state is also in the long term interests of business. Seeking out and briefing the corporate sector is something that the protesters

may not think of doing, but the power-mapping analysis reveals that this group has very strong influence on the prime minister.

These are the kind of things that need to be thought up and followed through as the protesters seek to bring about the change they seek. There will be many people with the knowledge who will be willing to do this work with them. I am personally very excited about what is to come and do not think that we have seen such a moment in our lifetimes. It is not possible that we will allow the industrial-scale brutalisation of India’s minorities as is being contemplated. And I have a feeling that we will win this battle that is being led by the Muslims and the students of India.

MOTORING

ALL SOUPED UP

The revamped Jaguar XE poses a convincing challenge to German dominance, writes Pavan Lall



PHOTOS: KAMLESH PEDNEKAR

In the luxury sedan market, which is dominated by the German trio of BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi, it has always been a challenge to find an alternative that offers a similar experience — until now. With its new, second generation entry-level sedan, the XE P250 SE (top-end variant), Jaguar-Land Rover brings a car that offers a driving experience geared for those who enjoy being behind the wheel.

The vehicle has a sleek silhouette that tapers aerodynamically as it slings toward a well-defined nose marked by the car’s logo in red, one that you also see emblazoned on the rims of the wheels.

Former Jaguar chief of design, Ian Callum, who stepped down last year after being with the company for two decades, once said: “A true Jaguar is something that exists to enjoy and indulge in, both aesthetically and dynamically.” The XE SE comes fairly close to adhering to this descriptor.

When it comes to looks and styling, the XE is a

sharply designed small four-seater sedan that is perfect for city driving. It’s easy to zip in and out of small lanes in this car which scores brownie points on roads that are used to seeing entry-level sedans made by Audi, Mercedes-Benz and the Bimmer.

The car, which has plush but muted interiors kitted out in luxurious leather, is fitted with gizmos that include an entertainment console and premium sound systems. I drove an all-black version that looked like a fast-moving machine even when stationary.

Punch the start button and the XE’s smooth two-litre Ingenium petrol engine, which is built in aluminium, comes to life with trademark Jaguar smoothness. The power effortlessly thrusts the heavy sedan into motion with the kind of torque you’d expect in any fast car. This then makes the XE a

perfect machine for the executive looking for a set of wheels that are understated but loaded with power.

On the road, the XE is well planted and nimble, and at least on city streets driving never feels unwieldy, over- or under-powered, which is a delicate but necessary balance to achieve. Despite many automobiles leaning towards aluminium for building cars, there is no substitute for that solid, heavy feeling you get when going for luxury cars because it does weigh in on how the suspension of the car reacts, how pothole-riddled roads impact the ride quality and on the sound insulation. On all these factors, and more, the new XE scores highly but that

<b>JAGUAR XE P250 SE</b>	
<b>Engine:</b>	2-LITRE INGENIUM, PETROL
<b>Power:</b>	184 kW (250 PS) at 5500
<b>Torque:</b>	365 Nm at 1500-4000
<b>Transmission:</b>	2,808 mm8-speed electronic automatic
<b>Top speed:</b>	250 km/h
<b>No of cylinders:</b>	4
<b>Displacement CC:</b>	1997 (cm3)
<b>Acceleration:</b>	0-100 km/h in 6.5 seconds
<b>Price:</b>	₹46.33 lakh (ex-showroom)

doesn’t mean it isn’t light-weighting.

The BS VI-compliant XE comes built with a lightweight aluminium chassis and double wishbone front suspension that supports commendable handling and manoeuvrability while aiding fuel efficiency. A few days after my moving around in the XE, I noticed that the fuel needle had scarcely moved despite my having activated the dynamic mode, which pushes such cars to perform at sportier levels. So, its range per kilometre is competitively high.

I was also pleasantly surprised to note that unlike the earlier XEs that I have driven this one feels heavy, well-planted and armed with substantial torque in its driving arsenal — something that is noticeable when hurling along a freeway.



First launched in 2015 as a rival to the Mercedes-Benz C-Class, Audi A4 and the BMW 3 Series, the XE disappointed buyers who were expecting a minimised version of the luxury limousine to be a real alternative to these cars. The new XE is a giant step closer to meeting that initial expectation. There is, however, one major area for improvement and that has to do with the seating. The rear seat is a tight squeeze and almost difficult to use when the front chair-back is pushed back far. The message could potentially be that this is a car built for drivers, but in a market like India the rear seat is not an area any manufacturer can afford to ignore.

That said, the new XE offers significant tech. Think auto-dimming power fold, heated door mirrors with memory, approach lights and even a wireless device charging station in the front cabin. Other nifty touches include a pop-out washer in the front of the headlights that have the Jaguar motif engraved on them. There’s also a small projector under the door handles that beams a light, a kind of a halo that reads “Jaguar”, on the ground when the car is opened in the dark. Very Batman-like, very cool.

This car is manufactured, or rather assembled, in Pimpri in Pune but its pricing is still fairly steep when compared to top-of-the-line competitors in its segment that include the likes of the BMW 3 Series. The bottom-line is that this range of XEs is a more evolved, confident rendition of its earlier avatar, and if the company can crack its pricing and sort out issues like rear seating, it has a potential winner on its hands.

