

We briefed nations on CAA, says govt.

MEA spokesperson denies that foreign diplomats in India are unhappy with lack of communication

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union government pursued a rigorous “two-pronged” strategy on conveying its explanation on the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) controversy in India, the External Affairs Ministry said on Thursday, stressing that the Act merely speeds up citizenship applications for communities mentioned in it and is not seeking to change the Constitution.

Responding to reports that foreign diplomats in India were unhappy with the lack of communication from the government on the issues that have set off protests in various parts of the country, the Ministry said the reports were “factually incorrect”.



“We did reach out to countries across regions, and wrote to all our missions and posts asking them to share our perspectives with host governments [on CAA and NRC],” Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar told journalists, adding that this was done in addition to meeting diplomats in Delhi.

The government’s brief

mentioned that the CAA was an internal process, which did not seek to strip any community members of citizenship. Nor did the CAA alter the basic structure of the Constitution, Mr. Kumar said.

“We asked [the embassies] to convey that the Act provides expedited consideration for Indian citizenship

to persecuted minorities already in India, from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. It doesn’t affect the existing avenues already available to other communities,” he said.

Call with Hasina

Mr. Kumar declined to comment on whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi had discussed the issue with his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina when he greeted her on New Year’s day.

A release said the two leaders discussed how to further strengthen bilateral ties. Bangladesh Deputy Foreign Minister Shahriar Alam, who cancelled his visit to Delhi in December ostensibly over the passage of the

CAA at the time, is expected to attend the Ministry’s annual Raisina Dialogue from January 14 to 16. Ten Foreign Ministers are attending the Dialogue, which will be addressed by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

The Ministry spokesperson said India had expressed strong concern to the Malaysian chargé d’affaires about what he called Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad’s “ill-advised and avoidable” comments on the CAA, and the government has spoken to other members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Dismissing reports that the OIC plans a special meet on Kashmir and the CAA in Pakistan, he said they were “speculative” at present.



Back home: Activist Ekta Shekhar reunited with her 14-month-old baby in Varanasi on Thursday, after a court granted bail to her and her husband Ravi Shekhar. •PTI

‘BJP talks of Emergency, but labels protesters anti-national’

Activist Ekta Shekhar, husband released on bail after 14 days

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The BJP boasts of its opposition to the Emergency imposed by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, but while in power the party wants to crush dissent and label citizens protesting peacefully as “anti-national,” said Ekta Shekhar, an environment activist from Varanasi.

Ms. Shekhar was released on bail on Thursday after spending 14 days in jail for opposing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

On December 19, Ms. Shekhar had been detained along with her activist husband Ravi Shekhar and more than 60 others, including Banaras Hindu University students and Gandhian and Ambedkarite activists,

while marching to protest against the CAA and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC). The couple’s incarceration led to much outrage as they had a 14-month-old breastfed toddler at home, waiting for their return.

‘Protesting a policy’

“They [the BJP and the RSS] say they ran a movement against the Emergency,” Ms. Shekhar told *The Hindu*. “Now, when it is their turn, we are being labelled ‘anti-national’ for merely protesting. It is not being mentioned that we are opposing a specific policy or law of a particular political party, but we are being projected as anti-national,” she added. On Wednesday, a local court

granted bail to the couple, an associate Saniya Anwar and more than 50 others.

Ms. Shekhar said the BJP-led Central and Uttar Pradesh governments were “intolerant” of any form of protest. “It wants to implement the CAA and is firm on it. They want to suppress people’s voices,” she added.

Ms. Shekhar, who focusses on climate change in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s constituency, contended that the State government was taking “disproportionate” action against protesters to deter others from joining them or speaking out.

“If they don’t arrest people or give it such a form, then other people won’t stay at home in fear,” she said.

Priyanka slams ‘gag’ in Varanasi

‘Section 144 in force 359 days a year’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he has the “gall to tell people they have nothing to fear” when Section 144 was imposed in his Lok Sabha constituency of Varanasi on “359 out of 365 days”.

Under the Code of Criminal Procedure, Section 144 prohibits an assembly of more than four persons in an area.

“On 359 out of 365 days in the year 2019, Section 144 was imposed in Varanasi town... and he has the gall to say that people have nothing



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

to fear,” Ms. Vadra tweeted, and tagged a *The Hindu* report from Varanasi published on Thursday.

The report mentioned how the political and cultural discourse around landmark spots such as the Pappu tea stall near the Assi Ghat Chowk had disappeared.

40,000 indigenous people to get land deeds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

To calm the tempers stoked by the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the Assam government on Thursday decided to distribute land deeds to over 40,000 indigenous people.

The deeds will be handed over on January 28, and the number of beneficiaries will be increased to one lakh, officials said after Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal had a meeting with the Re-

venue and Disaster Management Department.

The meeting also decided to give ₹2 lakh each a year to 160 ‘satras’ (Vaishnav monasteries) and ‘devalayas’ (temples), besides the annuity.

“The Arundhati Gold Scheme will be launched in the first week of March. Under it, the poor will be given money for buying 10 g of gold ornaments for registering marriage,” a government spokesperson said.

Videos show protesters being roughed up in Assam

Police say mild force was used on man who resisted detention

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Videos posted on social media have shown security personnel roughing up those protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and showing black flags to Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal in Nalbari district of Assam on Wednesday.

Members of the All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) and the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chhatra Parishad waved the flags and shouted slogans as Mr. Sonowal was going to the ashram of Vaishnave cult leader Krishnagarur.

Chased away

A video showed the security personnel chasing away the protesters from the highway, another showed a protester being caught and taken away in a police van. Another protester, identified as Chandan Bezbaruah, was caned.

The police downplayed the incident, saying the security personnel used mild



To the fore: Women staging a protest against the new citizenship law at Chabua in Dibrugarh on Thursday. •PTI

force on a protester who resisted detention. “An agitator who was detained was caned once or twice for pushing after he was detained. The security personnel did not resort to any baton-charge,” Nalbari Superintendent of Police Amanjeet Kaur said.

Police officers said Section 144, restricting large gatherings, was in force, and the protesters had not taken permission from the police.

AASU leader Himan Bar-

man on Thursday said the member who was caned was undergoing treatment at a hospital in Nalbari.

BJP’s charge

The Bharatiya Janata Party, meanwhile, said AASU activists had damaged the property of party workers after an anti-CAA rally in Morigaon district a couple of days ago. The AASU denied the allegation, insisting that its workers had not deviated from their peaceful, democratic protests.

999 Bangladeshis were in India illegally, says border force head

They were arrested while going to India or returning home

SUVOJIT BAGCHI
KOLKATA

Nearly 1,000 Bangladesh nationals were detained in Bangladesh in 2019 for living in India “illegally”, and the Bangladesh government has initiated legal proceedings against them, Major General Shafeenul Islam, Director-General of Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB), said in Dhaka on Thursday.

This is the first time in recent decades that Bangladesh has made public the number of its citizens who had lived “illegally” in India.

The announcement came following the talks between the Directors-General of the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guards Bangla-

desh in New Delhi from December 25 to 30, 2019.

Nine hundred and ninety-nine Bangladesh nationals – 135 children, 258 women and 606 men – were detained, Major General Islam said at a press conference. And 312 of them were arrested in November and 133 in December.

Legal proceedings

Officials said they were arrested on the border, while going to India or returning home. Their identities were ascertained and legal proceedings initiated “as per law for illegally entering and staying” in another country.

Those arrested were either kept in custody or freed

on bail.

A couple of weeks ago, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s foreign policy adviser Gowher Rizvi said in Kolkata that Bangladesh would take its citizens back if they were illegally staying in India. “But it has to be proved that the person is a Bangladesh citizen,” he had said.

Bangladesh also submitted a list of 96 Indians “illegally” staying in Bangladesh. Of them, 62 were handed over to the Border Security Force (BSF) and the rest were detained. Legal proceedings were opened against them. At least 35 Bangladesh nationals have been killed in border firing, Major General Islam said.

AGP workers question leaders on CAA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Members of the Asom Gana Parishad, an ally of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in Assam, on Thursday questioned their leaders for supporting the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Party workers laid siege to the AGP headquarters here and pointed out that the leaders’ decision to be on the same page with the BJP had made them “lose face”. They were critical of Ministers Atul Bora, Keshab Mahanta and Phani Bhushan Choudhury for backing the CAA. Mr. Bora is the AGP president.

The Ministers also came under attack for criticising former Chief Minister and AGP founder-president Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, who has opposed the CAA.

BJP State president Ranjeet K. Dass blamed the violent start to the anti-CAA agitation on Maoists and the Popular Front of India (PFI). “The torching of the house of BJP MLA Binod Hazarika at Chabua [in Tinsukia district] and government buildings was done by Maoists through the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti,” he said, adding the authorities were tracking PFI members trying to start communal riots.

Taiwan’s top military official killed in crash

Air Force’s Gen. Shen Yi-ming was among 8 killed as chopper force-landed in a hilly area near Taipei

**REUTERS
TAIPEI**

Taiwan’s top military official was among eight people killed on Thursday, after a helicopter carrying them to visit soldiers crashed in a mountainous area near the capital Taipei, the Defence Ministry said.

The main portion of the helicopter lay in a northern forest wreathed in mist, its blades shattered, as dozens of rescuers combed the wreck for survivors, pictures released by emergency authorities showed.

Five survive

The reasons for the crash, in the wake of a forced landing, were unknown, the military said in a statement, adding that the chief of general staff, Air Force General Shen Yi-ming, had died, while five of the 13 aboard survived.

Gen. Shen, who took up his post in July, was Taiwan’s highest-ranking general to die in the line of duty, President Tsai Ing-wen said, adding that she had asked the



Major loss: A rescue team searching for missing military officers after the helicopter crashed near Taipei on January 2. Air Force General Shen Yi-ming, inset, died in the crash. • REUTERS

Defence Minister to launch an investigation.

“We must find out the reason for the incident,” she told reporters in the north-eastern county of Yilan, where the helicopter had been heading after setting out from Taipei.

“Most importantly, (we) must ensure the stability of

our military and national defence.”

The Defence Ministry said it had dispatched a rescue team following the Black Hawk helicopter’s crash in New Taipei City, after aviation authorities lost contact with the craft at 8:07 a.m.

“Eight of our colleagues were killed,” a military spo-

kesman told a news conference broadcast live on television.

Elections on Jan. 11

The incident, which comes a week before democratic Taiwan holds presidential and parliamentary elections on January 11, disrupted campaign events.

Ms. Tsai, who is seeking re-election, cancelled all campaign activities until Saturday, while opposition presidential candidate Han Kuoyu of the Kuomintang party called off campaigns until Friday. “Kuomintang urges related authorities to probe the incident as soon as possible and make a thorough check on the same type of aircraft to prevent the tragedy from happening again,” the party said in a statement.

The helicopter involved in Thursday’s incident was one of 60 UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters the United States sold to Taiwan in 2010, the official Central News Agency said.

Although the United States has no formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, it is the island’s strongest international backer and main arms supplier.

The de facto U.S. Embassy in Taiwan expressed its condolences, saying it stood ready to assist in the aftermath of the tragedy, but without detailing what such help might entail.

Relief for Netanyahu as SC refuses to rule on his eligibility

PM asks Parliament to grant him immunity from prosecution

**ISABEL KERSHNER
JERUSALEM**

With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu under indictment, Israel’s Supreme Court on Thursday refused to weigh in on whether a prime ministerial candidate charged with serious crimes can be asked to form a new government.

The decision gave Mr. Netanyahu a temporary reprieve ahead of a general election on March 2 and staved off a potential showdown between the government and the judiciary.

On Wednesday, he took the contentious step of asking Parliament to grant him immunity from prosecution. Mr. Netanyahu is Israel’s first sitting Prime Minister to be charged with crimes and the first to run for re-election while under such a serious legal cloud.

Dozens of people from Israel’s high-tech industry and academia had petitioned the



Benjamin Netanyahu

court to resolve the question of Mr. Netanyahu’s eligibility, after he was indicted in November on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three corruption cases. He has denied any wrongdoing.

During the hearing, the judges made clear they felt it was premature to rule on the petition before the election – the third in a year – and they appeared far from eager to intervene at such a delicate time.

In their ruling on Thursday, the three senior justices

described the election period as a “kingdom of uncertainty,” adding a ruling would significantly depend on the results and which candidate comes out on top.

Under Israeli law, a Prime Minister charged with crimes can remain in office until a final verdict, in part to ensure legal authorities cannot topple a Prime Minister. The resignation of an Israeli leader automatically brings down the government. There is nothing in the law to stop Mr. Netanyahu, Israel’s longest-serving Prime Minister, from running for a fourth consecutive term in office, and there is no limit to how many terms he can serve.

Mr. Netanyahu is accused of trading official favours worth hundreds of millions of dollars to Israeli media moguls in exchange for positive news coverage, as well as cigars, Champagne and jewellery. NY TIMES

U.S. airlines face risk of extremist activity in Pakistan airspace: FAA

Exercise caution during flight operations, the regulator warns

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI**

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on Thursday warned American airlines and their pilots that there is risk involved in operating flights in Pakistan airspace due to “extremist or militant activity”, according to an official document.

“Exercise caution during flight operations. There is a risk to U.S. civil aviation operating in the territory and

airspace of Pakistan due to extremist/militant activity,” said the FAA, in a notice to airmen (NOTAM) dated December 30, 2019.

The NOTAM is applicable to all U.S.-based airlines and U.S.-based pilots.

The U.S. regulator said in its NOTAM that there continues to be a risk to U.S. civil aviation sector from attacks against airports and aircraft in Pakistan, particularly for aircraft on the ground and

aircraft operating at low altitudes, including during the arrival and departure phases of flights.

“The ongoing presence of extremist/militant elements operating in Pakistan poses a continued risk to U.S. civil aviation from small-arms fire, complex attacks against airports, indirect weapons fire, and anti-aircraft fire, any of which could occur with little or no warning,” it said.

Turkey approves Libya military deployment

Ankara had received a request for support from the Tripoli-based govt.

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ANKARA**

Turkey’s Parliament passed a Bill on Thursday approving a military deployment to Libya, aimed at shoring up the UN-backed government in Tripoli.

The beleaguered Tripoli government has been under sustained attack since April by military strongman General Khalifa Haftar, who is backed by Turkey’s regional rivals – Saudi Arabia, Egypt

and the United Arab Emirates.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s office confirmed last Friday that a request for military support had been received from the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA).

No details have been given on the scale of the potential deployment, and Vice-President Fuat Oktay told state news agency Anadolu on Wednesday that no date had



Military push: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan speaking at a symposium in Ankara on Thursday. • REUTERS

yet been set.

“We are ready. Our armed forces and our Defence Ministry are ready,” he said, ad-

ding that parliamentary approval would be valid for a year.

He described the Parlia-

ment motion as a “political signal” aimed at deterring Haftar’s Army.

“After it passes, if the other side changes its attitude and says, ‘OK, we are withdrawing, we are abandoning our offensive,’ then what should we go there for?”

The Bill passed easily through Turkey’s Parliament, by 325 votes to 184.

A UN report in November said several countries were violating the arms embargo on Libya in place since the overthrow of its long-time dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011.

Lebanon receives Interpol arrest warrant for Ghosn

Former Nissan boss fled from Japan

**REUTERS
BEIRUT/TOKYO**

Lebanon received an Interpol arrest warrant on Thursday for fugitive former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn, while Turkey launched an investigation into his daring escape from Japan.

Ghosn has become an international fugitive after he revealed on Tuesday that he had fled to Lebanon to escape what he called a “rigged” justice system in Japan.

The Interpol red notice was received by Lebanon’s internal security forces and has yet to be referred to the judiciary, a Lebanese judicial source told Reuters.

Ghosn has deep ties to



Carlos Ghosn

Lebanon, the country of his childhood, where his investments include a stake in a bank, real estate and a vineyard.

Meanwhile, Turkish police has detained seven people as part of an investigation into Ghosn’s passage through the country.

Austria’s unlikely coalition to unveil government programme

The Greens and the conservatives form coalition govt.

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
VIENNA**

Austria’s conservatives and their Green partners were set to present the government programme of their unprecedented coalition, a plan with right-wing leader Sebastian Kurz’s clear imprimatur that could set a European precedent.

The two parties announced late on Wednesday that they had agreed to govern together after key election gains in September following a corruption scandal that broke apart 33-year-old Mr. Kurz’s ruling coalition with the far right.

Mr. Kurz – who has styled

himself as a tough anti-immigration fighter – said his People’s Party (OeVP) and the Greens had “succeeded in uniting the best of both worlds” in protracted negotiations aimed at “protecting the climate and borders”.

‘Daring experiment’

“Historic accord fixed” ran the *Kurier* daily’s main headline on Thursday, while a column in the left-leaning *Standard* described the coalition as a “daring experiment” and a “political adventure”.

Papers said the pact bore the conservatives’ stamp, with tabloid *Oesterreich* bill-

ing the OeVP as “powerful as never before”.

It is the Greens’ first entry into the Austrian government at a national level – and that in the unlikely marriage of conservatives and ecologists.

Observers say Germany and others may follow suit as parties seek to cater to voters’ increasingly populist sentiments as well as worries about climate change amid student protests following calls by activist Greta Thunberg.

In Austria’s September polls, the Greens got 13.9% while the OeVP got 37.5% of votes.

Abu Dhabi Prince visits Islamabad to boost ties

It comes after Pak. skipped Malaysia event

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD**

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Thursday arrived here on a day-long visit, amidst criticism of the UAE for siding with Saudi Arabia to put pressure on Pakistan to skip a key conference of Muslim nations in Malaysia.

Prime Minister Imran Khan received the Crown Prince at the Nur Khan Airbase and personally drove him from the airport. It was for the second time that Mr. Khan drove his vehicle as he did during the Prince’s last visit in January 2019.

The visit comes in the wake of the controversy

created over Pakistan skipping the Kuala Lumpur summit to apparently appease Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Prime Minister Khan had confirmed Pakistan’s participation in the summit hosted by Malaysia, but skipped the event at the eleventh hour due to pressure exerted by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – key financial backers of the cash-stripped country.

The Summit from December 19-21 was seen by Saudis as an attempt to create a new bloc in the Muslim world that could become an alternative to the dysfunctional Organisation of Islamic Cooperation led by the Gulf Kingdom.

ELSEWHERE

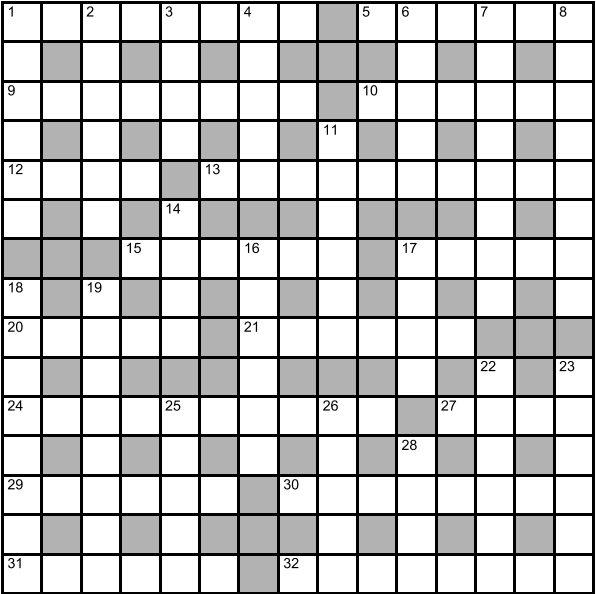
Castro drops out of 2020 presidential race

WASHINGTON

Julian Castro, the grandson of a Mexican immigrant who became San Antonio Mayor and a U.S. Housing Secretary, suspended his 2020 Democratic presidential run on Thursday after a candidacy overshadowed by more famous liberals. His departure from the campaign, a month or so ahead of early nominating contests in Iowa and New Hampshire, leaves 14 Democratic candidates in a still crowded field seeking the party’s nomination to take on Republican President Donald Trump in November election. REUTERS

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12823

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles

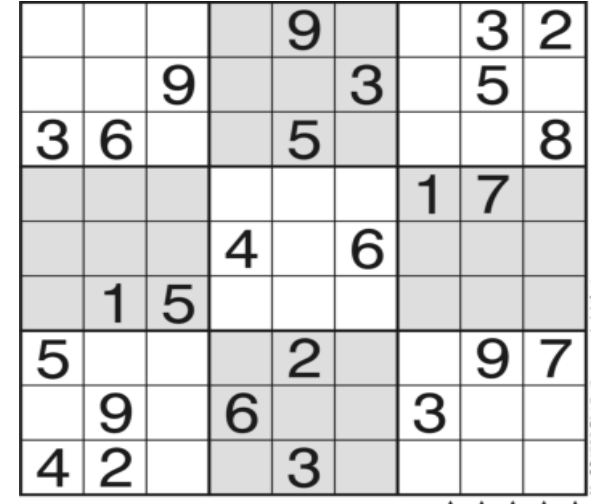


To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code

- **ACROSS**
- 1 Training in notebook? (8)
- 5 Periodical, socially acceptable, figures in history (6)
- 9 Official record on substance used by engineer (8)
- 10 Judge heading for animal in pad (6)
- 12 A negligible amount for a book of interest to a vocalist (4)
- **DOWN**
- 1 For example, fancy limited exit (6)
- 2 Being noncommittal, Henry leaves, inching forward (6)
- 3 Pursue, without a bit of hope, the suit (4)

- (set by Gridman)
- 13 In restaurant dish is not fine (10)
- 15 Classifying some secretarial work (6)
- 17 Apply force on part of media (5)
- 20 Not beginning to clash with head of opposition in meeting (5)
- 21 Rex gets into aspect of kind of book useful to traveller (6)
- 24 View American booklet (10)
- 27 Exhort son to avoid sudden swell (4)
- 29 Wind player is wearing modern boot (6)
- 30 Master put out core of veda and moved steadily (8)
- 31 Girl gets a learner’s prayer book (6)
- 32 Wife with double hesitation is an unsettling type (8)
- 4 The woman has a measure of radiance (5)
- 6 Unnaw missed including name (5)
- 7 Vehicle collapsed in shifting dune remains to be found (8)
- 8 Big contract renter’s endless generosity (8)
- 11 Went ahead with good, easy rules at first for the business book (6)
- 14 Poem that that man heard (4)
- 16 Effect of mischievous child’s move (6)
- 17 “Concession withdrawn” – tribals’ head gets mail (4)
- 18 Question anchor back in drinking chamber (4,4)
- 19 Go, Sir! Our turn is harsh (8)
- 22 Simple text for Victorian queen (6)
- 23 One walking has no time for university lecturer (6)
- 25 Father’s beginning to try a foreign course (5)
- 26 Extreme in foul traces (5)
- 28 First part of motel closure? Correct! (4)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12822												
C	H	A	S	T	I	T	Y	N	A	N	T	E
H	A	M	H	A	O	T	W	I	T			
A	V	A	T	A	R	S	A	I	R	L	I	N
N	Z	I	T	K	Y	O	S	A				
G	L	I	T	C	H	E	D					
I	N	H	S	R	I	E	Y					
N	A	G	A	S	T	R	E	T	A	R	A	B
G	A	T	H	E	R	A	A	S				
F	A	T	H	E	R	I	M	E	B	E	V	E
A	R	L	I	S	L	I	X	E				
S	K	I	L	L	I	O	N					
H	P	L	O	N	S	S	L	I				
I	M	P	L	O	R	E						
O	E	N	D	O	E	I	N					
N	O	D	D	E	R							

FAITH

True jnana

Nammazhvar speaks of Lord Narayana as the One who imparted knowledge. The Lord was the Acharya to all the Azhvars, and it is the Acharya who gives us knowledge. So, it was only logical that Nammazhvar should refer to the Supreme One as the giver of knowledge, said Kidambi Narayan in a discourse. And the knowledge that the Lord gave to the Azhvars was complete. Incomplete knowledge is what most of us have. We mistake a rope for a snake, and this kind of knowledge is vipareeta jnana. The Lord, who has infinite auspicious qualities does not resort to half measures. He ensures that those who have the benefit of being conferred knowledge by Him have it in full measure.

Jnana is that which helps us understand what we do not know. We can all claim to have some knowledge about a lot of things. But how relevant is this to us at all times? For instance, if we see a light burning in a neighbour’s house, we can easily tell that a light is indeed burning there. But of what use is such knowledge? How is a light in a neighbour’s house going to help us? True jnana is that which benefits us. We may argue that worldly knowledge benefits us, in which case why would that not be enough? Certainly, worldly knowledge is of use in life. But is the same knowledge useful at all times? Jnana about something which is in tune with our swarupa is what is important to us, because it is not limited by time or space.

Sage Parasara, in Vishnu Purana, says that jnana should show us something superior, something without flaws. And who else but the Lord is superior to everyone and is also without blemish? Nammazhvar lauds his lofty qualities, and says that He is the only One who can give us knowledge that we need, knowledge that enlightens us about Him.

MARKET WATCH

	02-01-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	41,627	-0.78
US Dollar	71.38	-0.22
Gold	39,892	0.10
Brent oil	66.21	0.23

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	383.15	5.50
Asian Paints	1790.65	-2.55
Axis Bank	756.95	8.25
Bajaj Auto	3121.00	-29.10
Bajaj Finserv	9505.60	127.15
Bajaj Finance	4246.05	14.75
Bharti Airtel	455.20	1.90
BPCL	487.55	-4.10
Britannia Ind	3053.40	13.75
Cipla	473.50	-2.40
Coal India	211.10	-0.85
Dr Reddys Lab	2864.90	-14.50
Eicher Motors	21600.85	-474.95
GAII (India)	123.55	2.35
Grasim Ind	766.35	23.85
HCL Tech	573.55	1.60
HDFC	2466.40	32.45
HDFC Bank	1286.75	8.15
Hero MotoCorp	2429.45	-3.10
Hindalco	220.15	5.85
Hind Unilever	1938.05	1.50
ICICI Bank	540.60	3.85
IndusInd Bank	1529.00	44.70
Bharti Infratel	253.65	-0.80
Infosys	734.70	-2.15
Indian OilCorp	127.00	1.05
ITC	239.85	1.75
JSW Steel	276.45	8.35
Kotak Bank	1671.55	-2.50
L&T	1345.30	35.35
M&M	539.85	3.25
Maruti Suzuki	7329.85	18.15
Nestle India Ltd.	14729.35	-49.70
NTPC	121.40	-0.15
ONGC	128.05	0.60
PowerGrid Corp	195.10	-0.40
Reliance Ind	1535.30	25.70
State Bank	339.30	4.85
Sun Pharma	434.95	0.65
Tata Motors	193.75	9.30
Tata Steel	484.85	17.10
TCS	2157.65	-9.95
Tech Mahindra	766.05	3.95
Titan	1155.60	0.85
UltraTech Cement	4244.80	179.80
UPL	595.45	7.20
Vedanta	159.45	4.85
Wipro	248.30	0.60
YES Bank	47.35	0.70
Zee Entertainment	289.60	0.95

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on January 02

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	71.17	71.49
Euro	79.61	79.97
British Pound	93.92	94.38
Japanese Yen (100)	65.43	65.72
Chinese Yuan	10.22	10.27
Swiss Franc	73.29	73.63
Singapore Dollar	52.80	53.04
Canadian Dollar	54.72	54.97
Malaysian Ringgit	17.40	17.49

BULLION RATES CHENNAI

January 02 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses

Retail Silver (1g)	50.4	(50.9)
22 ct gold (1 g)	3736	(3742)

Committee of Creditors extends Jet’s EoI deadline ‘Final extension before liquidation’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The Committee of Creditors (CoC) of Jet Airways (India) Ltd., at their seventh meeting held in Mumbai, approved a proposal to extend the deadline for accepting Expression of Interest (EoI) from interested parties to January 15, 2020 from the earlier January 6, 2020.

They have also decided that this would be the last extension of deadline, failing which liquidation proceedings will kick in.

Recently, the NCLT, Mumbai, had granted 90 days’ extension for the resolution of Jet Airways case.

A few more players other than the Synergy Group of Brazil are in the fray.

These include the Hinduja Group, Hyderabad-based ground handling company Turbo Aviation, and a Dubai-based fund.



In anticipation of a favourable news, Jet Airways stock on Tuesday closed with a gain of 4.99% at ₹32.60. The CoC also decided to get some of Jet Airways assets released and may have to make payment.

A member of the CoC said they discussed about the contours of releasing such assets. A European cargo service provider seized a Boeing 777-300 plane of Jet Airways at Amsterdam on account of non payment of dues and this aircraft may be released.

India’s Arabica output at all-time low Rains, floods, landslides hit a chunk of plantations last year

MINI TEJASWI BENGALURU

India’s Arabica production has hit an all-time low this coffee-picking season, which commenced a fortnight ago.

Coffee Board chairman M.S. Boje Gowda said this year’s Arabica yield would fall more than 50% after the torrential rains, floods and landslides during August-September last year washed away a sizeable chunk of plantations and destroyed coffee plants in Chikkamagaluru, Hassan, Kodagu and Wayanad districts.

“Plantations were hit by heavy rains, floods and landslides. The entire top soil got washed away. Farmers didn’t have funds to maintain their gardens or buy manure. [So], the crop is poor



From 1.5 lakh tonnes five years ago, India’s Arabica production fell to 80,000 tonnes last year. — GP SAMPATH KUMAR

and the quantity too low this season,” he said.

Most Arabica farmers are reporting a production decline of 50%, while the exact size of the output for this year will be known by end of January. Five years ago, India’s Arabica production was 1.5 lakh tonnes. It fell to 80,000 tonnes last year, he

Nifty closes at a record high amid global rally PBC easing reserves norm brings cheer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Buoyed by a strong surge in the global markets, the Indian benchmark indices registered significant gains on Thursday, with the broader Nifty closing at a new all-time high.

The 50-share Nifty gained 99.70 points, or 0.82%, to close at a record high of 12,282.20. Meanwhile, the Sensex ended the day at 41,626.64, up 320.62 points, or 0.78%.

Market participants attributed the rally to the announcement by the Chinese central bank – People’s Bank of China (PBC) – that it would take steps, including lowering the reserve requirement ratio, to boost economic growth. “Global markets cheered the news that China’s central bank has cut the amount of cash that all banks must hold as

reserves, releasing around 800 billion yuan (\$114.91 billion) in funds to shore up the slowing economy,” said Siddhartha Khemka, Head – Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

U.S.-China deal

“Sentiments also got boosted by U.S. President Donald Trump’s announcement on Tuesday that the Phase 1 trade deal with China will be signed on January 15,” he added.

The announcement led to a global rally with the Hang Seng gaining over 1%.

Most of the European markets were also trading strong with some of the benchmarks gaining over 1% during the trading session.

Back in India, the market breadth was quite strong with more than 1,700 gainers on BSE, as against less than 800 declines.

IRDAI norms for standard health cover

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

Regulator IRDAI on Thursday issued guidelines on standard individual health insurance, asking general and health insurers to offer a product that can take care of basic health needs of customers with a maximum sum insured of ₹5 lakh and a minimum of ₹1 lakh.

The product will be named Arogya Sanjeevani Policy, succeeded by the name of the insurance company. No other name is allowed in any of the documents, according to the guidelines issued by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

Sugar output drops by close to a third

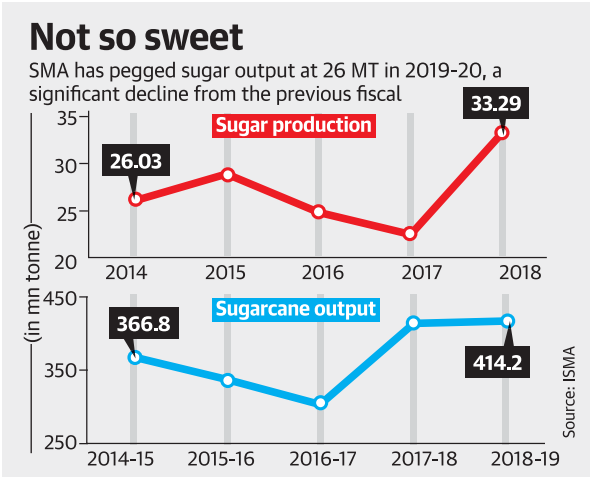
Production in first 3 months of marketing year at 7.79 MT, prices remain stable, exports at good pace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

The country’s sugar production has fallen sharply by 30.22% to 7.79 million tonne (MT) in the first three months of current marketing year ending September, but ex-mill prices have remained stable so far, helping mills clear cane payment to farmers on time, ISMA said.

However, sugar exports are happening at a good pace, Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), quoting market data, said, adding mills have so far contracted for shipment of over 2.5 MT of sugar under the government’s MAEQ (Maximum Admissible Export Quantity Quota).

Ex-mill sugar prices have remained steady in the range of ₹3,250-3,350 per quintal



in north India and at ₹3,100-3,250 per quintal in south India, ISMA added.

“Since the Centre has not increased the fair and remunerative price (FRP) for 2019-20 as also State govern-

ments like Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab have not hiked the state advised price (SAP), ex-mill prices remain stable and mills are in a better position to be able to pay cane prices to the farm-

ers on time,” ISMA said.

Releasing the latest production data, it said the country’s total sugar production has dropped to 7.79 MT till December 2019 from 11.17 million tonne in the same period of the 2018-19 marketing year (October-September).

In its first estimate, ISMA had pegged sugar production lower at 26 MT this year from 33.16 MT in 2018-19.

Sugar production in Maharashtra – the country’s largest sugar producing State – dropped to 1.65 MT till December 2019 against 4.45 MT in the same period last year, the data showed.

Sugar recovery

The average sugar recovery in Maharashtra has declined to 10% from 10.5% achieved in the year-ago period due to

loss of sucrose content in the flood-affected sugarcane crop.

About 137 sugar mills were in operation till December 2019 against 189 mills in the same period last year.

Production in U.P. rises

Production in Uttar Pradesh, the country’s second largest producing State, rose to 3.31 MT so far compared to 3.10 MT a year ago.

On exports, ISMA said the government is in the process of reviewing actual exports made by mills against MAEQ during October–December 2019 quarter, and has already announced in the policy to reallocate unexported quota to the sugar mills that have exported and are willing to take additional quota beyond their MAEQ.

ONGC wins all 7 oil, gas blocks

Potential estimated at 33 billion barrels of oil, oil-equivalent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) on Thursday walked away with all the seven oil and gas blocks on offer in the latest bid round that saw just eight bids coming in.

ONGC signed contracts for the seven blocks at an event where Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and other Ministry officials were also present.

“These seven blocks are adding exploration acreage of 18,510 sq. km spread over three sedimentary basins of India and have a resource potential of approximately 33 billion barrels of oil and oil equivalent gas,” he said.

The latest licensing round for allowing companies to explore for oil and natural gas was held on revamped terms but saw only ONGC



Dharmendra Pradhan

and Oil India Ltd. participating. ONGC put in bids for all seven blocks on offer, while Oil India put in an offer for one block at the close of bidding on October 31, 2019.

ONGC was the sole bidder for five blocks in Madhya Pradesh and one in West Bengal and it was locked in competition with Oil India for one block in Rajasthan.

ONGC walked away with all the seven blocks on superior bids. According to the Directorate General of Hy-

Divestments in Air India, BPCL unlikely this fiscal

Process is facing delays, says official

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA MUMBAI

In what can potentially hurt the math for the ongoing fiscal, a senior government official said strategic divestments in Air India, BPCL and Container Corporation are ‘unlikely’ to be completed in FY20. Work on all these companies is on and the process is facing delays due to “surprises” encountered once the wheels began moving, the official from the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam) said.

The Ministry had budgeted to garner ₹1.05 lakh crore from divestments during the fiscal. When asked if the strategic divestment in BPCL, which alone can fetch the government over

₹60,000 crore if it were to sell its entire 53% stake, will be completed this fiscal, the official said, ‘unlikely’.

On Container Corporation (Concor) and Air India as well, the official said the sale would not go through in the current fiscal ending March 31. The official said the government is preparing the financial statements and getting the data room ready for the sale.

Till now, the industry has shown ‘excitement’ over the companies which are being floated, the official said, adding that there are additional details which may be sought by potential bidders.

The strategic sale in Shipping Corporation of India is at a certain stage and going strong, the official said.

Bharat Bond debuts on bourses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) made its debut on the bourses on Thursday with the units closing marginally above the issue price of ₹1,000.

While the units of Bharat Bond ETF maturing in 2023 closed at ₹1,000.75, those with a 10-year maturity in 2030 settled the day at ₹1,002.

Further, about 45,000 units of the ETF were traded on Thursday.

Earlier in the day, Anuradha Thakur, Joint Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) said the strong response that the offering received has given the government confidence for similar issuances in the future.



JANUARY
Doodh jalebi
Makhan Lal Tika Ram, Bara Bazar, Kashmiri Gate
This is an age-old tradition of Delhi and its neighbouring states. A delicious concoction best enjoyed in winter. You will find milk being thickened in a huge kadhai. One of the assistants in the shop will place a juicy jalebi in a tall glass, and then fill it with the creamy, unsweetened milk. A long spoon will help you negotiate the jalebi. Spoon it out with the milk and slurp it down, to keep warm on a cold day.



FEBRUARY
Bedmi sabzi and nagori halwa
Shyam Sweets, Barshah Bulla, Chawri Bazar
When the weather is still cold, savour some hot bedmi served with a dish of spicy potatoes and chholey and a piece of tart pickle. On Sundays, it comes with a special pumpkin dish. Bedmi is a crispy and deep-fried, puffed bread, stuffed with a lentil paste. Nagori halwa is another great breakfast dish, comprising a small disc, like a puri, with a helping of rich halwa placed within it. Pop it into your mouth, and you will taste ambrosia.



MARCH
Seekh Kabab
Ghalib Kabab Corner, Nizamuddin Basti
A plate of tender mutton seekh kebabs, just off the grill and dripping with juices, with chutney and some rings of an onion (irrespective of how much it may cost!) will be placed in front of you. You may ask for a roomali roti, which is as soft as a petal. Roll your kebab in the roti, and take a big bite.



APRIL
Chicken sandwiches
Novelty Dairy and Stores, Birbal Road, Jangpura
Some of the best sandwiches - with chicken, ham, tuna or vegetables - can be found in this Pop Tate's-like store in central-south Delhi. The bread is soft and white, and the stuffing comes with a light mayo dressing that adds to its taste. There is also green chutney on the side, if you like to add some zing to your sandwiches.

SRAVASTI DATTA
Anpu Varkey's silent comic, *Summer's Children*, comprises only visuals and no text and comes at a time when we are being bombarded with information. Each panel is detailed and brings alive a rubber plantation in Kerala, where the book is set. Anpu, who has painted public art murals across the country, says of her self-published book, "It took me two years to draw for the book and a year to look around for publishers. The whole process took around three years." Her first silent comic was *Jaba*, in 2014, but she says *Summer's Children* is larger. "Summer's Children is a story of my childhood in Pala, Kottayam, where I spent the first three years of my childhood, and then subsequent summer vacations. The place does not exist any more, so the book is about memory and loss," she says. The story is a visual narration from the perspective of two siblings, and their explorations over a day. "This book is mainly for adults because you would reminisce in some ways. So it is a memoir of some sort," says Anpu, who completed her Master of Fine Arts at Maharaja Sayajirao University,



The visuals say it all

Artist Anpu Varkey describes her silent comic *Summer's Children* as a sepia-tinted memory

Baroda, and received a diploma in Fine Arts at Central St Martins Byam Shaw School of Art, London. The power of the silent comic, says Anpu, is that the reader can interpret the story in their own way. Initially, the drawings were made on A3 pages, but later made on A5 pages. "I wanted to make it a pillow book, one that you could keep under your pillow."

Anpu is well-known for her public art, such as of a 158-foot mural of Mahatma Gandhi in the Delhi Police Headquarters in ITO, Delhi, made in collaboration with German artist Hendrick Beikirch, and of a giant harvest moon near Hala-suru metro station in Bengaluru.

ple at Khirki Extension, Delhi. My first wall was 20 by 40 feet. It was a realisation that this is something I can do." Of public art being seeing as an act of reclaiming the streets, she says, "I don't think I am above anything when I am on the streets; this is when I am totally humble. On the street, I am accountable to everyone, unlike in the studio where you are only accountable to yourself. For me a public space is not an arrogant space. What is there to reclaim?"



Going back in time Anpu Varkey says it took her three years to put the book together •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

She agrees that public art is not always an easy space to work in. "But it is not as if I know how to inhabit it; it is a learning process. I don't revisit my work. I think of it as a learning process. And that has allowed me to try a new medium. All of this happened because I broke out of my studio practice, expanded my skills, and not think I am precious." Unlike murals, Anpu says, comics take a much longer time to make. "Graffiti is faster, it takes me about three to five days. But the comic took me days to do." Anpu's next project is a mural for Daksh, a Bengaluru-based civil society organisation focused on solving the problem of pendency of cases in the Indian legal system. To celebrate 70 years of the Constitution and our Republic, Daksh is organising several events between Constitution Day (November 26, 2019) and Republic Day (January 26, 2020). The campaign, called Republic@70 seeks to deepen our engagement with the Constitution and make it more relatable to ordinary Indians.

Available on Anpuvarkey.com, ₹750

PRODUCT

Milk moustache



Bhagyalaxmi Dairy, Pune, has a brand called Pride of Cows that delivers milk daily, within 8-10 hours of the milking process. They say they use technology to feed the cows, milk them, process the milk, and package it into bottles. The milk is transported under temperature-controlled conditions. The brand claims there are no additives or preservatives, and that the 2,000 cows they have are fed with a balanced diet of all-natural foods and treated by Ayurvedic and naturopathy doctors.

Register at Prideofcows.com, ₹120 per litre in Delhi/NCR

Contact us at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



FESTIVAL
Video art
Kiran Nadar Museum of Art is hosting the second chapter of the Festival of Video Art by Indian Contemporary Artists. Curated by Bharati Kapadia and Chandita Mukherjee, the four-day festival, which begins today, offers an opportunity for viewers experience video art and to create space for a discussion around them.
VENUE: DLF South Court Mall, Saket
TIME: 5:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.



FILM
English comedy
The American Center is screening *The Descendants*, an American comedy-drama, directed by Alexander Payne. Starring George Clooney as a father, the film tells the story of his attempts to reconnect and repair the relationship with his two daughters, after his wife is seriously injured in a boating accident.
VENUE: 24, Kasturba Gandhi Marg
TIME: 6 p.m.



F&B
Winter cocktails
TCK by The China Kitchen, a restaurant which specialises in Chinese food, has introduced an all-new winter cocktail menu. The menu will have diverse offerings, from regular spirits: sparkling, red, and white wine, beer, dark rum, and vodka, to cocktails like Gingerbread Egg Nogg and Fireball Hot Toddy.
VENUE: DLF Cyber City, Gurugram
TIME: 12 noon-4 p.m.; 6-11:30 p.m.



FILM
Japanese crime-drama
India Habitat Centre's Film Club will screen *Shoplifters*, a Japanese movie this evening. Directed by Hirokazu Koreeda, the film follows the lives of a family of small-scale thieves living on the outskirts of an unnamed Japanese city. In the cold, they survive by engaging in casual labour and petty crime.
VENUE: Gulmohar Hall, IHC
TIME: 7 p.m.



RETAIL
Kashmiri shawls
The Splendor of Kashmir is back with its new collection of Pashmina shawls in a two-day show. Aimed at promoting the state's shawl-making heritage, the show will have a wide range of shawls such as hand-embroidered and Kalamkari on both the border and palla. There are also Jamavar shawls.
VENUE: The Imperial Hotel, Janpath
TIME: 10:30 a.m. - 7 p.m.

From Dharavi in Mumbai to Nizamuddin Basti in Delhi, India's slums are teeming with enterprising people from across the country. What better way to document this melting pot, than cookbooks?

Food that tells a story



CHITRA BALASUBRAMANIAM

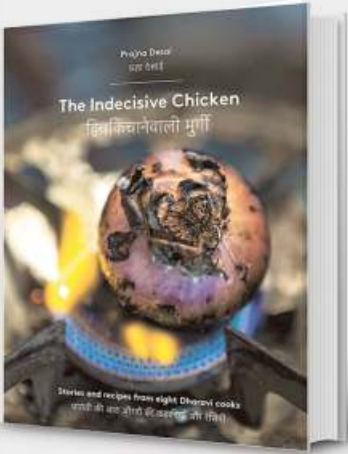
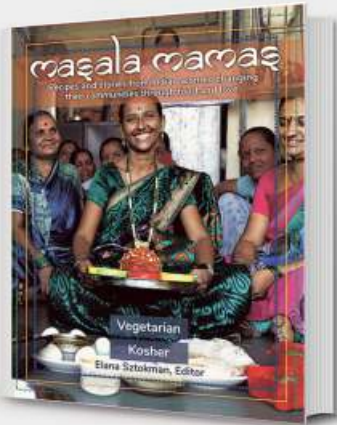
At the recent German Christmas Market in Delhi, a cookbook titled *Recipes from an Urban Village* by Charmaine O'Brien caught my eye at The Hope Project's stall. It had recipes from the Nizamuddin Basti in Delhi. The recipes are interesting, and the *garam masala* turned out to be a gem. Intrigued as to why someone would record recipes from the slums and less-privileged areas when food recipes from royalty, privileged communities and nobility are the toast, I did some digging. There are several such publications: Amanda Clegg and Victoria Byrne's *Hope & Spice* (recipes collected from the recipients of Asha Society's work in Delhi as well as some of the staff), Anna Kochan's *Rice and Spice: A Bengali Food Adventure* (recipes cooked at Future Hope, a small charity working with street children) in Kolkata. The recipes of the women from slums in Dharavi find a place in Prajna Desai's

The Indecisive Chicken; those of Mumbai's Kalwa slum find a place in *Masala Mamas*. The proceeds of the book invariably support the organisation that helped document it. In my search for more information on the Nizamuddin Basti book, I reach Dargah Hazrat Inayat Khan, The Hope Project office. A few of the women remember Charmaine, an Australian who had diligently set about the book, proceeds from which go to the project. There is Asha, who works with the vocational training section: her kebab using *kala chana* (black gram) has made it into the book. I meet Anwari, a pro cook much sought-after for dinners in the expat circles, whose biryani recipe is in the book. Anwari's cooking

Hope & Spice records recipes from 12 slums in Delhi, from over 60 cooks



Recipes galore Dishes from Anna Kochan's *Rice and Spice: A Bengali Food Adventure* ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



skills seem legendary at the office; she can cook for a party or take orders for the range of pulao, biryani, curries etc. Gulabshahi coordinated Charmaine's visits to various homes to try the recipes. Asha recalls how they did not have a building then, and cooked in makeshift kitchens to demonstrate recipes.

Anna Kochan, a journalist from London who had come to Kolkata as a volunteer for Future Hope, tells me, "The charity does wonderful work looking after the street children, educating them and providing them shelter. We have many Indian restaurants in London and I am very fond of Indian vegetarian food, but what was cooked at Future Hope's school for the children was very different to what I had eaten. That is when the idea to record these recipes and bring it out as a cookbook to be sold in England, with the proceeds going to the charity, came to mind." For Anna, a passionate cook and recorder of family recipes, this was the perfect place to start. "The women who came to cook wore saris and were simply very hard-working. They had probably

never seen a cookbook and had been taught the recipes by their mothers or grandmothers. Yet, the food was different each day. They would go to the markets and choose in-season vegetables, and then prepare the food. There was no pre-decided menu. Also, at the Future Hope homes where the children stayed, the older ones took turns to cook during weekends. Many had a signature recipe which was recorded." The cookbook evolved after each recipe was tested in London and pronounced good by friends and family. Measurements were added, and the quintessential mustard oil was replaced with vegetable oil, but otherwise the traditional recipe stayed.

From the UK, Amanda Clegg and

Victoria Byrne recorded authentic recipes and stories of transformation from the slums of Delhi, the proceeds of which go to Asha Society. Victoria says, "Amanda has been a volunteer for over 10 years. I joined the project recently. It was a very different experience from the kind of things visitors to Delhi usually see. Members would open their homes and offer the best of what they had. We had to tell them, 'please tell us what you eat regularly'. Thus, we came across a wealth of dishes."

Learning process

For Victoria, understanding the techniques of cooking was the high point. "Like frying the onions and tomatoes till the oil separates. Here, we simply put it all together. Also, for someone like me, who looks for gluten-free flour, *bajra roti* was an excellent option." She adds, "There is a recipe for *masala chai* from a person who works with the Society. His mother is a fifth-generation *chaiwala* and this is the family recipe. We not only learnt about food but also how it brought women closer. How, when eating together, recipes and cooking tips would be exchanged."

The cookbook records recipes from 12 slums, from over 60 cooks. One forgets all this when browsing the book: it has an amazing range of dishes from the Nizamuddin area. The Urs of the various Sufi saints, their powers, and then the offering made. There is Baba Sahib *khichri* (a sweetened version), *siwani*, *tosha*, *kheer*, *sherbet*, *sewaiyyan*. Since Delhi is home to migrants from all parts of the country, there is an amalgam of cooking styles as well. Apart from the winner of a *garam masala*, there is a *shakargandhi halwa*, *banana halwa*, *mooli chutney*, *baingan ki talaji*, *aloo ka bharta*, *mongochhiyan*, *biryani*, *nihari* and kebabs.

Hope & Spice also has unusual recipes: there is a nice fizzy drink with lemons, orange, *masala* and topped with Sprite. There is a spiffy instant *papadam* with *besan*, which does not require drying in the sun; walnut chutney and *yakhni* from a staffer from Kashmir; a rarely-heard *paneer ki kheer* substituting rice with grated paneer, lemon rice, *thoran*, fish curries and banana fritters. In Anna's words, however, "The tomato chutney is a winner."



POOCH CAFE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



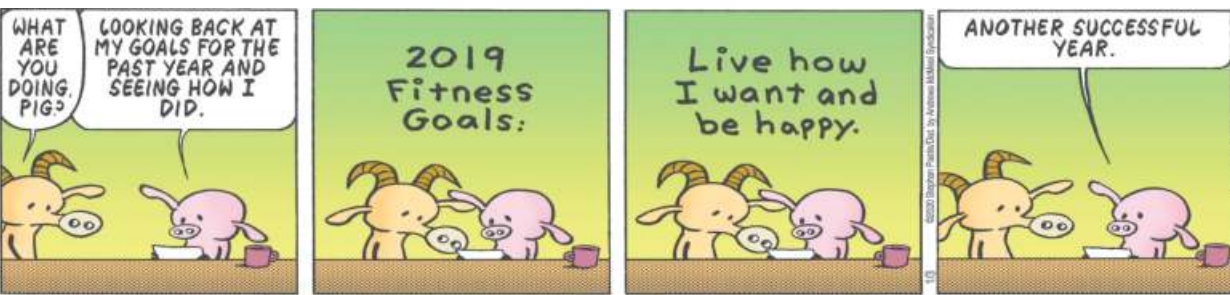
TIGER



WUMO



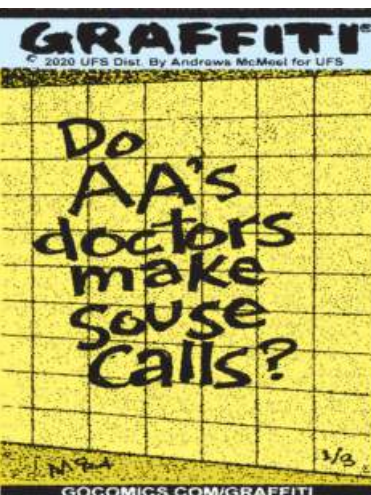
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



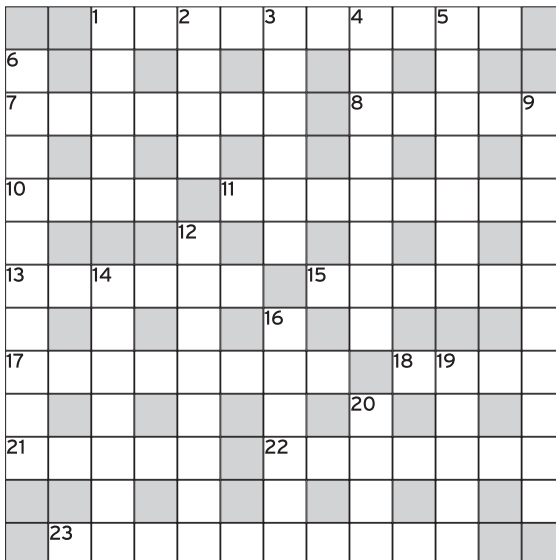
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13267



- Across
- 1 Large hard sweet (10)
- 7 Yield (7)
- 8 Mocking exclamation of laughter (2-3)
- 10 _ Novello, Welsh composer and songwriter, d. 1951 (4)
- 11 Bedspread (8)
- 13 Easily offended (6)
- 15 Incombustible matter left in the fireplace (6)
- 17 Hypothetical (8)
- 18 Pedestrian shopping area (4)
- 21 Down on a map (5)
- 22 Rotary engine (7)
- 23 Discarded (6,4)
- Down
- 1 Nocturnal lizard (5)

P	I	G	E	O	N	H	O	L	E
A	A	R	A	A	A	S			
O	V	E	R	C	A	S	T	P	I
E	M	L	T	S	T	R			
D	E	E	P	F	R	E	E	D	O
N	P	I	N						
G	E	T	C	R	A	C	K	I	N
R	O	K	N						
B	O	R	S	C	H	T	S	H	U
W	W	I	M	U	W				
P	U	M	A	B	R	U	M	M	I
P	Z	I	L	A	E				
T	I	E	T	H	E	K	I	N	O

The solution will appear on January 4, 2020.

Solution No. 13266

Arsenal guns down a lacklustre Manchester United

The win offers hope for a brighter future under new manager Arteta; Jesus' brace gives Manchester City a 2-1 victory over Everton

PREMIER LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Arsenal rang in the new year by giving boss Mikel Arteta his first victory as lacklustre Manchester United crashed to a 2-0 defeat.

Arteta had watched Arsenal take only one point from his first two matches, with last weekend's 2-1 defeat against Chelsea especially painful after the Blues scored twice in the final minutes.

But Arsenal had played well for long periods in that London derby and it produced an even more sparkling display to put United to the sword at the Emirates Stadium.

Close range

The Gunners took the lead in the eighth minute when Sead Kolasinac's cross ran through to Nicolas Pepe at the far post and the Ivory

Coast winger beat David de Gea from close-range.

Arsenal, which last won in the league at West Ham on December 9, got a deserved second goal in the 43rd minute when de Gea kept out Alexandre Lacazette's flick and Sokratis reacted quickest to lash home.

Nine adrift

Arteta's team is nine points adrift of the top four, but its second win in 16 matches in all competitions offers hope of a brighter future under the former Arsenal midfielder's management.

"It feels great, incredible. I'm so happy and proud of the players," Arteta said. "Physically the level dropped in the second half but the commitment and desire was terrific. The performances are getting better so I was desperate for the win."

United is fifth, five points behind fourth-placed Chel-

sea, after the latest in a long list of underwhelming performances in a troubled campaign.

Meanwhile, Manchester City remained third, a point behind Leicester, after its home win against Everton.

Gabriel Jesus scored twice in the second half at the Etihad before Richarlison pulled a goal back for Everton but City held on despite some nervy moments.

"This period is so tough. When you are far away from the first position sometimes people give up, but we never give up," City boss Pep Guardiola said.

The results:

Arsenal 2 (Pepe 8, Sokratis 43) bt Manchester United 0; Manchester City 2 (Jesus 51, 58) bt Everton 1 (Richarlison 71).

Norwich 1 (Cantwell 4) drew with Crystal Palace 1 (Wickham 85); West Ham 4 (Noble 17, 35-pen, Haller 25, Anderson 66) bt Bournemouth 0.



Clinical: Nicolas Pepe's early strike set the tone for Arsenal's dominant display against Manchester United. •GETTY IMAGES

Paul Pogba's new injury setback

Ankle surgery can keep the midfielder out for a month

AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Paul Pogba will undergo surgery on a recurring ankle injury and is expected to spend another month on the sidelines, Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer confirmed after his side's 2-0 defeat to Arsenal on Wednesday.

The French World Cup winner made his comeback after nearly three months out in a 2-0 defeat at Watford 10 days ago and also made an appearance off the bench in a 4-1 thrashing of Newcastle four days later.

"We've had scans and it's



Down and out: Pogba's influence in midfield has been badly missed with United sitting fifth in the Premier League. •AFP

nothing major, it's something that has to be sorted and dealt with. He's been advised to it as soon as," said

Solskjaer. Pogba has made just six starts in all competitions for United this season and his influence in midfield

has been badly missed with United sitting fifth in the Premier League.

His latest setback comes at a bad time for Solskjaer with Scott McTominay also sidelined for two months leaving the Norwegian extremely short on midfield options. "It's a big blow that Paul is out now that Scott's out, he'll be out for a few months. Paul will be back within a month."

Solskjaer denied suggestions it is Pogba's own medical team rather than the club's which has suggested to undergo surgery at this time.

Sodhi back at Royals, with twin roles

IPL

SPORTS BUREAU
JAIPUR

Ish Sodhi will have a dual role with the Rajasthan Royals this season. The 27-year-old leg-spinner from New Zealand will work as a spin consultant besides being an operations executive. It is a different kind of homecoming for the Ludhiana-born Sodhi, who played for the Royals the last two seasons.

"I am delighted to be taking on this new challenge at Rajasthan Royals with this dual role," he said. "I have formed a great level of understanding with all the people involved with the franchise, and they have always been very supportive of me."

"I did not have to think twice when this opportunity was offered to me by the Royals' management. I love this franchise and want to help us win the IPL this year."

Sodhi, who played 17 Tests, 31 ODIs and 40 T20Is, said it was a fascinating opportunity to be involved in a coaching role at such a young age. "I am looking forward to developing my coaching skills alongside Sairaj and learning from Jake on business operations," he said.



Ish Sodhi. •FILE PHOTO

Three football fans arrested for racist, homophobic abuse

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON

A Brighton fan was arrested for racially abusing Chelsea players during a Premier League match, and two other soccer fans were arrested in separate incidents during the same game for hurling homophobic abuse at rival supporters.

Brighton chief executive Paul Barber called the abuse "disgusting" and urged supporters to report

wrongdoing at the stadium.

"If the prospect of a life ban from watching their clubs play football isn't a strong enough deterrent, we have to ask the question as to whether the courts should be given the power to hand out more severe punishments?" Barber said in a statement on Thursday.

"Football can only do so much, and we are sick and tired of the game's reputation being

tarnished by these people.

"I find it impossible to comprehend how and why some individuals think it's acceptable to behave in this way."

During a second division game on New Year's Day, an announcement was made in Huddersfield warning fans to stop offensive behaviour after sectarian abuse was allegedly aimed at Stoke player James McClean.

Sri Lankan team arrives for T20I series

Indian players expected to reach the city in batches on Friday



Here we come... The Sri Lankan team in Colombo before its departure to India. •COURTESY: SRI LANKA CRICKET

SL IN INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI

The Sri Lankan cricket team, led by veteran pacer Lasith Malinga, arrived here on Thursday for the three-match T20I series against India amid tight security. The team headed straight to the hotel.

The members of the Indian team are expected to arrive in batches on Friday for the series opener on Sunday.

"Both the teams have optional training sessions, Sri Lanka followed by India in

the evening," an official of the Assam Cricket Association (ACA) said.

"The situation is absolutely normal now and tourism is back in the state. We are hosting Khelo India Games from January 10 and about 7000 will participate," ACA secretary Devajit Saikia said. "It's now safe as any other place in the country. The state government is looking after the security arrangement and there's no issue at all."

About 27,000 tickets of the 39,500-capacity Barasra Stadium have already

been sold out.

"We are expecting a last minute ticket rush now," he said.

The second T20I will be played in Indore on Jan. 7 while Pune will host the final match of the series on Jan. 10.

The short series will mark the T20 World Cup countdown for the two neighbouring countries.

Busy schedule

India will play eight T20Is, including five in New Zealand, ahead of its T20 World Cup opener against South

Africa in Perth on October 24.

Former skipper Angelo Mathews and Dhananjaya de Silva have been recalled to the 16-member Sri Lankan squad. Mathews last played a T20I against South Africa in August 2018.

For India, the series will mark the return of pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who has recovered from a lower back surgery, while opener Shikhar Dhawan will also make a comeback.

Opener Rohit Sharma and pacer Mohammed Shami have been rested.

BCCI to set up medical panel at NCA

The Academy has been criticised for the way it has handled injury-related issues

BCCI-NCA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The National Cricket Academy (NCA), which has often been criticised for its handling of players' injuries, is set to get the help of a BCCI medical panel and a dedicated social media department as part of its revamp plan.

The need for a medical panel was discussed at NCA's recent meeting which was attended by all BCCI office-bearers, including president Sourav Ganguly and NCA cricket head Rahul Dravid.

The development comes after the criticism the NCA drew for the injury management of some leading India players, including Wriddhi Saha and more recently Bhuvneshwar Kumar.



Sourav Ganguly. •FILE PHOTO: VIVEK BENDRE

All-rounder Hardik Pandya and premium pacer Jasprit Bumrah added to the NCA's woes by choosing personal rehabilitation over recovering in Bengaluru.

"The BCCI will consult a London-based clinic, Fortius, for setting up its medical panel," said a top BCCI official.

The head of fast bowling,

a position which has been lying vacant for a long time, will also be filled soon.

That person will be in charge of setting up a fast bowling programme at the NCA.

The board will also hire a nutrition head for the Bengaluru-based facility.

Social media manager

A social media manager will come on board to provide regular updates on the happenings inside the NCA.

The move could also go a long way in repairing its reputation, admitted the Board official.

The NCA had failed to detect Bhuvneshwar's sports hernia and was also criticised when it came to light that Bumrah and Hardik were taking outside help for

their recovery rather than relying on the NCA staff.

Primary centre

Going forward, Ganguly has already made it clear that the NCA will be the primary centre for cricket development programmes in the country and all India players will have to go to Bengaluru for rehabilitation. He expects the new NCA facility to be ready in 18 months' time.

The other recruitment, which will be done soon, is the head of data analytics.

The NCA will also be conducting Level 2 and Level 3 coaching courses at its premises with the State associations paying the bill for their respective coaches.

"Coach development consultants" will also be hired on a need basis.

Kiwis look to salvage pride in final Test

With bushfires raging, smoke haze could come into play

NZ IN AUSTRALIA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Smoke haze could come into play as New Zealand looks to salvage some pride from its miserable tour of Australia in the third and final Test which begins on Friday.

With bushfires raging across New South Wales state, day two of the match on Saturday shapes up as the biggest challenge with temperatures forecast to soar and smoggy conditions expected.

The issue of smoke is a difficult one for officials, who currently rely on a mix of air quality guidelines from the International Cricket Council, State governments and the Australian Institute of Sport.

Inconsistencies

But there are inconsistencies on what is considered "unsafe", with Cricket Australia and the players' association currently working to deve-



Lone warrior: Tom Blundell, coming in as makeshift opener, played a gritty knock for New Zealand in Melbourne. •AP

lop better protocols around visibility and air quality.

With the first two Tests at Perth and Melbourne ending in heavy defeats inside four days, New Zealand will need all the help it can get. Coach Gary Stead admitted the

Black Caps were "beaten up by Australia again" in their 247-run Melbourne thrashing and they have had to go back to the drawing board.

"We've got to find some areas where we can keep chipping away, make im-

provements and put Australia under pressure for longer," he said.

"When you are under pressure for the periods Australia have put us under, then you have to question what we're doing."

"Australia have three bowlers at 145 kph and a spinner (Nathan Lyon) who's taken over 300 Test wickets so you're always up against it. You don't get a reprieve and that's the hard thing for us."

Only bright spot

The bright spot from Melbourne was makeshift opener Tom Blundell's gritty second innings century and he is set to retain the role alongside Tom Latham.

But there is doubt over skipper Kane Williamson, who has had a poor tour. He missed training on Wednesday with flu-like symptoms, with batsman Henry Nicholls suffering similar problems.

Jeet Raval is the only specialist batsman waiting in the wings, but he has been out of form.

Kohli-led India can win all ICC tournaments: Lara

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Batting legend Brian Lara believes the Indian cricket team, under Virat Kohli, is capable of winning all ICC tournaments it competes in.

"I think they are definitely capable of winning all tournaments that they play. I think what Virat Kohli and company and the Indian team has to appreciate the fact that everybody sort of target India," Lara was quoted as saying by India Today.

"Everybody knows that some point of time one team is going to play that important match against India. If it's a quarterfinal,

semifinal and final," he added.

Under Kohli's leadership, India has reached great heights in both Tests and ODIs but has failed to win an ICC tournament, fizzling out in crucial games.

The Men in Blue last won an ICC event in 2013 when Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led side lifted the ICC Champions Trophy.

Breaking the 400 score Lara feels Kohli, David Warner and Rohit Sharma have the potential to break his record Test score of 400.

"It would be difficult for Steve Smith to do it batting

I think what Virat Kohli and company and the Indian team has to appreciate the fact that everybody sort of target India

at No.4 for Australia. He is a great player but he doesn't dominate. You know a player like David Warner for sure," Lara said.

"A player like Virat Kohli, who gets in early and gets set. He is a very attacking player. Rohit Sharma on his day. So they have got quite a group of players who can do so," he added.



Lara is bullish on Kohli's India. •VIVEK BENDRE

TV PICKS

Australia v New Zealand: 3rd Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m.
NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m.
Ranji Trophy: Star Sports 2 (SD & DH), 9.30 a.m.
Big Bash League: Sony Ten 3 (SD & HD), 1.40 p.m.
South Africa v England: 2nd Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 2 p.m.
ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Swede Kulusevski set for Juventus move

MILAN
Promising Swedish teenager Dejan Kulusevski is poised to complete a move to Juventus from Atalanta after undergoing his medical, the Serie A champion confirmed. “The Swedish midfielder arrived at the medical centre located at the Allianz Stadium and began his tests,” the club said in a statement. The 19-year-old has had a breakthrough season since going on loan from Atalanta to Parma in June, scoring four goals and setting up another seven in 17 games. AFP

Orlando Magic ends four-game losing streak

LOS ANGELES
D.J. Augustin and Nikola Vucevic combined for 45 points as the Orlando Magic snapped a four-game losing skid with a 122-101 victory over the Washington Wizards on Wednesday.
The results: Lakers 117 bt Phoenix 107; New York 117 bt Portland 93; Milwaukee 106 bt Minnesota 104. Washington 101 lost to Orlando 122.



Dudamel steps down as Venezuela coach

CARACAS
Rafael Dudamel is stepping down as coach of Venezuela after nearly four years in charge, sources close to the case told AFP on Thursday. According to reports in the Brazilian press, the 46-year-old is likely to take over Atletico Mineiro, which has been on the hunt for a coach since the end of Vagner Mancini's brief tenure in December. His departure comes just three months before the start of South American qualifying for the 2022 World Cup. AFP

Dimitrov to ease his way back

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE SYDNEY

Former World No. 3 Grigor Dimitrov saw his ranking slump last year as he struggled with a shoulder injury, but the Bulgarian on Thursday said he won't push himself too hard, too fast to return to the top of tennis. The 28-year-old was laid low early in the season and was far from his best after he returned to action, although he did reach the US Open and Paris Masters semifinals. Dimitrov said 2019, where he failed to win a title, had been “quite a journey”. “It's going to be a year that I remember for the rest of my life,” he said. “Yeah, the body checks out pretty good right now. I'm still monitoring a lot of my work, a lot that I'm going through. I kind of pace myself in the right way. I'm not in a rush, which is also a good thing.” The shoulder problem was Dimitrov's first major injury and he said he plans to limit the number of tournaments he plays, particularly early in the season.

Punjab expected to steamroller Delhi

Visitors' lack of pace options not an impediment, says coach Bhaskar

RANJI TROPHY

RAKESH RAO MOHALI

Punjab's batting juggernaut is likely to continue when the host takes on a severely-depleted Delhi in the fourth round of the Ranji Trophy championship, beginning at the PCA Stadium here on Friday. Since Patiala hosts three of the four home games, Punjab would like to make its only appearance of the league here a fruitful one. Punjab's batting has come good in all three matches. With Delhi shorn of pacers Ishant Sharma, Navdeep Saini and Pawan Suyal, the host will eye a win similar to the 10-wicket triumph it posted last November. Outright wins over Rajasthan and Andhra, followed by three points against two-time defending champion Vidarbha, have placed Punjab atop the points table. With 17 points, Punjab is 10 ahead of Delhi. And the gulf between the performances of the two teams this season is aptly reflected on the points-table.

Batting juggernaut
The only time Punjab was bowled out this season, against Rajasthan, it scored 358. Thereafter, Punjab crossed 400 when it batted



Going full tilt: Punjab captain Mandeep Singh has been in phenomenal form with a double century, century and a half-century so far this campaign.

once against Andhra and Vidarbha. This was mainly due to skipper Mandeep Singh (385 runs including a double century, a century and a half-century), Gurkeerat Singh Mann (222, one century), Anmol Malhotra (156, two half-centuries) and Shubman Gill (148 runs, one century). Among the bowlers, leg-spinner Mayank Markande (11 wickets) is leading the charge. Medium pace of Sanvir Singh and Baltej Singh along with the off-spin of Gurkeerat Singh Mann have resulted in seven wickets for each

bowler. According to Delhi coach K.P. Bhaskar, the pitch did not appear to be in favour of the medium pacers. “So, at the moment, I don't think the absence of our main bowlers will hit us really badly. Yes, our bowling resources are not the same but we will fight. Three

points from this match will satisfy us.” With inadequacies galore, Delhi crossed 300 just once this season. Among the batsmen, with Shikhar Dhawan away on National duty, opener Kunal Chandel, skipper Dhruv Shorey and Nitish Rana are expected to shoulder the responsibility of playing long innings. Medium pacer Simarjeet Singh (10 wickets) and left-arm spinner Vikas Mishra will have to play a big role for Delhi to survive. Overall, Punjab expects more from this game than Delhi.

ROUND 4 SCHEDULE

GROUP A: Bengal v Gujarat (Kolkata); Hyderabad v Kerala (Hyderabad); Punjab v Delhi (Mohali); Rajasthan v Andhra (Jaipur). **GROUP B:** Baroda v Railways (Vadodra); Himachal v Madhya Pradesh (Dharamshala); Mumbai v Karnataka (Mumbai); Uttar Pradesh v Tamil Nadu (Kanpur). **Group C:** Chhattisgarh v Haryana (Raipur); Jharkhand v Jammu & Kashmir (Ranchi); Services v Maharashtra (New Delhi); Tripura v Odisha (Agartala); Uttarakhand v Assam (Dehradun). **Plate:** Bihar v Mizoram (Patna); Goa v Manipur (Porvorum); Meghalaya v Pondicherry (Mangaldoi); Nagaland v Chandigarh (Sovima); Sikkim v Arunachal Pradesh (Bhubaneswar).

Desert God well prepped for Chief Minister's Trophy

BENGALURU: Desert God, who is in fine fettle, may score an encore in the Chief Minister's Trophy (2,000m), the feature event of the races to be held here on Friday (Jan 3). False rails (width about 4.5m from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position. Jockey for Good Word (1st race) will be declared later. **1. MOODABIDRI PLATE** (1,400m), rated 00 to 20, 5y-o & over, 2:15 p.m.: 1. Brightside Of Life (2) Arvind Kumar 60, 2. Desert Gilt (7) K. Raghu 60, 3. Bravado (3) J.H. Arul 59.5, 4. Winx (12) R. Manjunath 59.5, 5. Only Prince (10) Naveen Kumar 59, 6. Good Word (5) (-) 57.5, 7. Indian Brahmos (8) M. Naveen 57.5, 8. Prime Star (11) Md. Aliyar 57.5, 9. Noble Splendor (6) S. Shareef 56.5, 10. Purity (1) Ankit Yadav 56, 11. South Bell (4) Shreyas Singh 55 and 12. Sultana (9) Chetan G 55. **1. NOBLE SPLENDOR, 2. DESERT GILT, 3. PRIME STAR** **2. AMBER REGENT PLATE** (1,600m), rated 15 to 35, 2-45: 1. Cosmic Feeling (9) A. Imran 60, 2. Custom Cut (2) Akshay Kumar 59.5, 3. Aferpi (10) Srinath 59, 4. Akasi (5) Trevor 58, 5. Heavenly Angel (6) Darshan 57.5, 6. Sir Lancelot (3) R. Marshall 57, 7. High Priestess (4) David Allan 56.5, 8. Iconic Princess (8) S. Shareef 56.5, 9. Scintilla (1) Donoghue 56.5, 10. Sun Splash (7) Vaibhav 56, 11. Sainthood (12) C. Umesh 55.5 and 12. Sky Moon (11) Jagadeesh 55.5. **1. AFERPI, 2. HIGH PRIESTESS, 3. CUSTOM CUT** **3. LAL BAGH PLATE** (1,400m), rated 60 & above, 3:15: 1. Torosso (6) S. Shareef 62.5, 2. Angelino (5) David Allan 56.5, 3. Peluche (1) Trevor 56.5, 4. Buscadero (7) Vinod Shinde 55, 5. Treasure Delight (4) Suraj 54, 6. Turf Magic (8) Donoghue 54, 7. Ashwa Raftar (2) I. Chisty 51.5 and 8. Star Cracker (3) Sai Kiran 51. **1. ANGELINO, 2. PELUCHE, 3. TREASURE DELIGHT** **4. G. KRISHNAPPA MEMORIAL TROPHY (DIV. 1)**, (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 3-45: 1. Indian

Empress (6) J.H. Arul 60, 2. Siyoumi (9) Nikhil Naidu 57.5, 3. Slice Of Heaven (4) A. Imran 57, 4. Winall (5) S. John 57, 5. Constanza (7) Trevor 56.5, 6. Habanero (3) Toufiq Khan 56, 7. Palm Reader (10) C. Umesh 55, 8. Big Boon (8) R. Anand 54.5, 9. Start Grad (1) A. Vishwanath 54.5 and 10. Indian Democrat (2) David Allan 54. **1. INDIAN DEMOCRAT, 2. INDIAN EMPRESS, 3. SLICE OF HEAVEN** **5. CHIEF MINISTER'S TROPHY** (2,000m), 4-y-o & over, (Terms), 4:15: 1. Desert God (5) David Allan 62, 2. Salazaar (4) Srinath 58.5, 3. Secretive Force (1) Suraj 57.5, 4. Point To Prove (6) Antony 55.5, 5. Velocidad (3) Darshan 55.5 and 6. Square The Circle (2) C. Umesh 51.5. **1. DESERT GOD, 2. SALAZAR** **6. JANUARY PLATE** (1,400m), maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms), 4-45: 1. Al Buraq (2) T.S. Jodha 55, 2. Cavallini (10) C. Umesh 55, 3. Fulgurant (4) I. Chisty 55, 4. Handsome (5) Suraj 55, 5. Mountain Lion (7) Trevor 55, 6. Pissarro (1) Akshay Kumar 55, 7. Redoubtable (3) Srinath 55, 8. Welcome Surprise (9) A. Imran 55, 9. Angel Heart (11) R. Marshall 53.5, 10. Classic Charm (8) Sandesh 53.5, 11. Glorious Logan (12) Darshan 53.5 and 12. Osibisa (6) Jagadeesh 53.5. **1. MOUNTAIN LION, 2. HANDSOME, 3. CLASSIC CHARM** **7. KRISHNAPPA MEMORIAL TROPHY (DIV. II)**, (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 5:15: 1. Tarini (5) M. Naveen 60, 2. Perfect Rendition (2) I. Chisty 59, 3. Schafenberg (8) Trevor 58.5, 4. Princess Holly (7) Sai Kiran 57, 5. Lightning Attack (4) Darshan 56, 6. Black Whizz (3) T.S. Jodha 56, 7. Silken Striker (1) R. Manish 56, 8. Amazonite (10) S. Shareef 55.5, 9. Desert Rose (11) B. Nayak 55.5, 10. Donna Bella (6) C. Umesh 55.5 and 11. Darahasini (9) P. Surya 54.5. **1. PERFECT RENDITION, 2. SCHAFFENBERG, 3. DONNA BELLA** Day's best: **DESERT GOD** Double: **AFERPI - MOUNTAIN LION** Jkt: 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7; Tr (i): 2, 3 and 4; (ii): 5, 6 and 7.

NBA mastermind Stern passes away

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE NEW YORK

David Stern, 77, who oversaw NBA's growth into a global sports powerhouse while serving as commissioner from 1984 to 2014, died on Wednesday after suffering a brain haemorrhage last month. The NBA, whose championship games were not televised live in the United States when Stern's 30-year tenure began, announced his passing. Stern, who underwent emergency surgery after he was stricken December 12, built the league into a global sporting empire by the time he retired in February 2014, and passed leadership to current commissioner Adam Silver. “David took over the NBA in 1984 with the league at a crossroads, but over the course of 30 years as commissioner he ushered in the modern global NBA,” Silver said in a statement. “He launched groundbreaking media and marketing partnerships, digital assets and social responsibility programs that have brought the game to billions of people around the world. “Without David Stern, the



Path-breaker: David Stern, seen with Michael Jordan in 1996, made the NBA one of the most-watched leagues in the world.

NBA would not be what it is today,” six-time NBA champion Michael Jordan said in a statement. “He guided the league through turbulent times and grew the league into an international phenomenon, creating opportunities that few could have imagined before. “RIP Mr David Stern The best commissioner to ever do it,” four-time NBA champion Shaquille O'Neal O'Neal tweeted. Stern oversaw expansion of the league from 23 to 30 clubs, the debut of active NBA talent in the Olympics and the sport's expansion to a popular worldwide television phenomenon. Stern also helped establish the Women's NBA and a development league for NBA talent, ensuring a next man was ready whenever an injury struck.

Love to find the perfect pass: Fernandes

The 25-year-old has emerged as an integral part of FC Goa and the Indian team

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA BENGALURU

This has been a breakthrough season for Brandon Fernandes. The 25-year-old midfielder is enjoying arguably his best ISL campaign, while also cementing his place in the Indian team. Fernandes is the sort of creative, technically-gifted, passing midfielder the national side has long craved; over the last few months he has steadily emerged as one of the country's finest. Ten games into this ISL season, Fernandes leads the assists charts (5); he has now provided more assists than any other Indian player in the history of the league (13) which, considering he's only featured in 45 matches, is saying a lot. In India's 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifying campaign, all three of the team's goals have been assisted by Fernandes, his set-piece delivery a real asset. “I love to provide assists,” Fernandes tells *The Hindu*. “I've got better and better every season. I also want to score goals but we (FC Goa) have goal-scorers so I have to provide good passes for



A real asset: Brandon Fernandes is the sort of creative, technically-gifted, passing midfielder the national side has long craved for.

them to score. I just focus on putting the ball in the right place.” **Some regret** For all the rewards this season has brought Fernandes, 2019 will remain a year tinged with some regret. When Stephen Constantine named the Indian probabilities for the AFC Asian Cup, the Margao midfielder did not find a place in it. The omis-

sion must have been disappointing, but Fernandes does not wish to dwell on it. “It's not good to speak about that,” he says. “I expected a call-up and it didn't happen. But I don't want to say anything about that. That was 2019. And 2020 is a new year.” Constantine quit after the Asian Cup, though, and Igor Stimac was appointed India's new head coach. The Croat

called Fernandes up at once, handing him his first India cap against Curacao in June. “Igor Stimac told me that he saw my ISL matches and he said I was a very important player for him,” says Fernandes. “He told me that if I work hard I'm going to get my place in the team.” Stimac has deployed Fernandes as a deep-lying playmaker; at FC Goa, he plays mainly as a left-sided attacking midfielder but is also sometimes used as a 10. “As long as I am playing, I'm happy,” he says. “Different coaches see me in different ways. I try to adapt and give them whatever they ask for.” FC Goa's first game of 2020 is against Bengaluru FC, at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Friday. Matches between the two sides have always tended to be close and Fernandes expects another tense encounter. He is hopeful, though, of beginning the new year just like he ended the old one. “It has been a very good season for me so far,” he says. “There were a lot of ups and downs but I kept going. I will continue doing that.”

TN claims men's title after six years

Kerala retains the women's crown

NATL. VOLLEYBALL

SPORTS BUREAU BHUBANESWAR

Tamil Nadu bagged the men's crown in the senior National volleyball championships with a 25-18, 25-21, 25-25 victory over Railways in the final here on Thursday. This was Tamil Nadu's ninth title overall in the men's event and the first after six years. Kerala defeated Railways 25-18, 25-14, 25-13 and retained the women's title. Head coach G. Dhinakaran praised the seniors for putting up a wonderful show. “G.R. Vaishnav, Ukrapandian and Naveen Ra-

ja Jacob were really effective while the juniors did what was expected of them,” he said. Dhinakaran said the team's first objective in the final was to stop the Railways' central blocker Ashwal and it was done successfully. “Our attacker Ashwin and central blocker Manoj did really well,” he said. **The results:** Men's final: TN bt Railways 25-18, 25-21, 21-25, 25-23; Third place play-off: Kerala bt Karnataka 25-21, 26-24, 25-19. Women's final: Kerala bt Railways 25-18, 25-14, 25-13; Third place play-off: Maharashtra bt West Bengal 25-18, 25-20, 25-12.



Winning smiles: The victorious Tamil Nadu men's team.

ITF junior circuit begins on Jan. 6

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The ITF junior circuit in India will start with the grade-3 tournament to be staged in Chandigarh from January 6. It will be followed by the grade-2 tournament in Delhi, and another similar tournament in Kolkata, in subsequent weeks. The fourth tournament will be held at Indore, the grade-5 event to be played from January 27. Dev Javia, ranked 98th, is

the best among the Indian juniors, and is expected to compete in the Australian Open junior event. Mann Shah (265), Kabir Hans (340), Uddayvir Singh (383), Madhwin Kamath (451) and Aryaan Bhatia (462) are some of the other leading Indian boys in the rankings' list. Among the girls, Vipasha Mehra has the best rank of 158. She is followed by Nikita Vishwase (216), Sandeep Singh Rao (396), Sarah Dev

(461) and Sanjana Sirimalla (475). Meanwhile, a \$25,000 ITF women's tournament is scheduled to be held in Jodhpur from February 17. It is the only ITF tournament for Indian men or women, to be staged at home, in the first three months of the season. The men do have the \$610,010 ATP Tour event, the Maharashtra Open in Pune from February 3, followed by the \$162,480 Challenger in Bengaluru from Fe-

Zverev says no concerns over curtailed off-season

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BRISBANE

Germany's Alexander Zverev on Thursday said he felt in top shape for 2020 despite only starting to hit balls a week ago after an off-season curtailed by a lucrative exhibition tour. The 22-year-old only won one title last year, in Geneva, not quite taking the step up that many had predicted, slipping from fourth to seventh in the men's tennis rankings. But Zverev remains a big drawcard and he finished 2019 playing a five-stop exhibition tour of South America

and China with Roger Federer. Although the tour meant a shorter off-season than normal, Zverev insisted it made little difference. “I mean, still I think I had a good off-season. It was a little bit different. It was shorter this year, for sure,” he said at the ATP Cup team event in Brisbane. “I only started playing tennis a week ago, pretty much, so I don't have a lot of tennis practice yet, which I will build up. “But I feel good. I feel pretty fit again. My physical (condition) was never really

my problem. It was in the beginning of my career, but in the last one, two years it's never been a problem. “I know I can last matches, I know I can play longer than most guys.” **Confident** While Zverev is confident about his on-court stamina, he admitted he could have played better last year and wants to put that right this season. “For me, I need to get my tennis back a little bit and kind of have a fresh start as well,” he said. “Obviously, the last year I finished number seven in the

world. I had good tournaments, but it was still not the year that I wanted to have and I hope I can kind of improve this year.” Zverev is playing the inaugural ATP Cup under the captaincy of German great Boris Becker and he is confident they will do well, despite being in a tough group with the Nick Kyrgios-led Australia. Under the tournament format, 24 nations are split into six round-robin groups across Brisbane, Perth and Sydney with only eight teams qualifying for the knockout phase.

Narendra's meet record



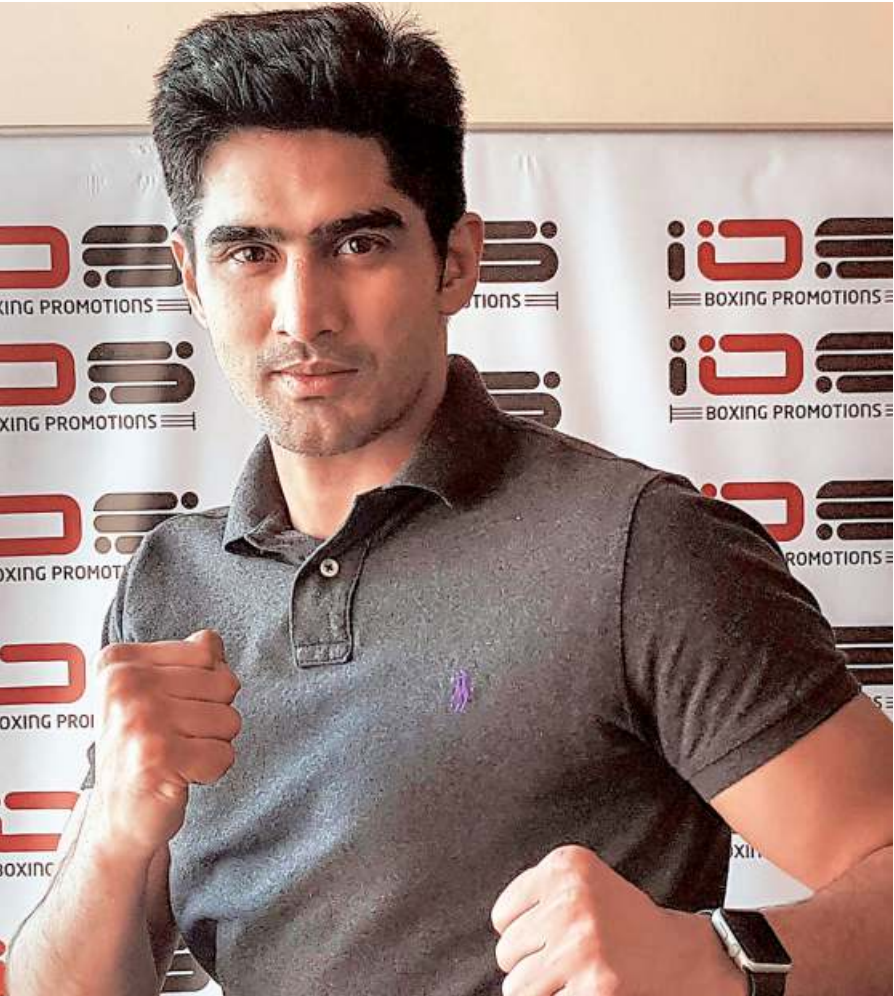
Narendra Prathap Singh (Mangalore). ■ H. VIBHU

SPORTS BUREAU MOODBIDRI

Mangalore University's Narendra Prathap Singh broke the men's 10,000m meet record on the opening day of the 80th National inter-university athletics championships here on Thursday. The 22-year-old clocked 29:42.19s, bettering the old record of Mangalore's R. Kumar Patel (29:45.81) set in 2018. **The results: Men, 10,000m:** 1. Narendra Prathap Singh (Mangalore) 29:42:19s MR, OR 29:45.81; 2. Kisan Tadvli (SSP Pune) 30:57.12; 3. Yadav Santosh (Calcutta) 30:57.29. **Women, 10,000m:** 1. Sonune Poonam (SSP Pune) 36:00.32s; 2. K.M. Amrita Patel (MG Kashi Vidyaapeeth) 36:01.98; 3. Sonika (Maharshi Dayananda, Rohtak) 36:02.04.

‘You win sometimes, other times you learn’

Vijender expects to compete in three-four fights this year, with World title being the big one



Unbeatable: Vijender has not lost a bout in nearly five years and hopes to continue in the same vein in 2020. • FILE PHOTO

BOXING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

He hasn't lost a bout in close to five years and Vijender Singh is determined to keep the record with a world title to boot as he enters the new decade donning multiple hats, including the one of an active politician "with strong opinions".

The 34-year-old trailblazing boxer, who delivered India's first Olympic and men's World championship medals in boxing back in 2008 and 2009, has logged an enviable 12-0 record in the professional circuit, which he entered in 2015.

"All the talk with my promoters is focused on the world title. In all, I expect to compete in three-four fights this year with the world title being the big one. We are trying to ensure that this marquee fight happens in India," Vijender said.

Vijender is handled by Hall of Famer Bob Arum's Top Rank Promotions in the USA and has Infinity Optimal Solution (IOS) Boxing Promotions to handle him in India. He last fought in November 2019, beating Ghana's former Commonwealth champion Charles Adamu in a lopsided bout.

Trains with Beard

"I will continue to train with Lee Beard and move to Manchester in a next few weeks to begin my training there. While I am here, I train at a gym in Gurugram," he said.

Beard, who has trained professional stars like Ricky Hatton, has been Vijender's trainer since 2015. Under his tutelage, the Haryana-lad clinched the WBO Asia Pacific and Oriental super middle-weight titles.

The only time Vijender tasted defeat in the last five years was when he decided to take the political plunge ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

He lost the election from South Delhi while contesting on a Congress ticket.

Does he regret the move? "Not one bit. I fully stand by it and I intend to be an active politician. I have strong opinions on issues and I like to be vocal. Being a politician gives you a platform to be the change," he asserted.

"*Kai baar aap seekhte hain, kai baar aap jitate*

hain (sometimes you learn, other times you win). That's how I would describe my decision to join politics. It is a wonderful way to stay connected with realities of life. Why should I have regrets just because I lost one election?" he asked.

Vijender said there is nothing wrong if people demand their heroes to voice opinion in public.

Voices matter

"I believe athletes should speak. At one level, we are also representatives and our voices matter. It shouldn't be that we are saying stuff only when being paid to do so. Views *rakhne chahiye*, generally (we should present our views).

Speaking about going forward, the strapping six-footer welcomed his second son in May last year and he says he has lost track of time ever since.

Daddy duty

"I don't know when the day starts and when it ends. Right now, I am on daddy duty as well. I am a boxer, father, and politician. I hope I am at least decent in all these roles," he laughed.

To me, five days is special: McGrath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY

Australian pace legend Glenn McGrath on Thursday called himself a traditionalist and said he was against the idea of shortening the five-day game to a four-day affair as proposed by the ICC.

The ICC is considering the introduction of four-day Tests as part of the World Championships from 2023, an idea which was supported by Cricket Australia CEO Kevin Roberts.

McGrath, however, said he is completely against the idea of tinkering with the longer format.

Traditionalist

"I'm very much a traditionalist. I like the game the way it is," McGrath, who has taken 563 wickets in 124 Tests, told reporters ahead of the Sydney Test between Australia and New Zealand beginning here on Friday.

"To me, five days is very special and I'd hate to see it get any shorter. The introduction of pink Tests, day-night Tests is a great way to continue keeping our game fresh and moving forward. In respect to changing how



McGrath. • FILE PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI

many days it's played, I'm actually against it. I like the way it is."

ICC's proposal to introduce four-day Tests received stiff opposition from leading Australia spinner Nathan Lyon on Wednesday, who termed it "ridiculous". Australia chief coach Justin Langer is also not in favour of tinkering with the traditional format.

England batsman Jos Buttler, however, feels cricket must be open to change and four-day Tests must be looked at as it could be a way to keep the longer format alive.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly said it was too early to make any comment.

Kyrgios inspires fund-raisers to help fire victims

The tennis star calls for an exhibition tournament to raise money

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Australia's tennis chief announced a series of fund raisers for victims of raging bush fires on Thursday after an appeal from bad boy Nick Kyrgios.

Kyrgios, often a controversial figure in the sport, called for an exhibition tournament before the Australian Open Grand Slam, after blazes that have claimed 18 lives and forced mass evacuations.

"C'mon @TennisAustralia surely we can do a pre @AustralianOpen exho to raise funds for those affected by the fires?" tweeted the 24-year-old, who has handed a 16-week suspended ban in September after a series of outbursts.

Tennis Australia CEO Craig Tiley responded by



Let's do it: Nick Kyrgios is keen to help bush fire victims, saying the tennis world can do something special. • REUTERS

saying fund-raisers would be held during tournaments including the Australian Open and the ATP Cup team event, telling fans to "stay tuned" for details.

"For weeks we've been watching the devastation caused by bush fires across

Cup, Australian Open and our other events over the coming weeks."

Kyrgios, in Brisbane for the inaugural ATP Cup team competition, said the tennis world now had the chance to do "something special".

"Tennis Australia, obviously, has been pretty proactive about it," Kyrgios said Thursday. "I'm sure something will happen. I'm sure all of us will be involved in some way," he added.

The bush fires are the major talking point ahead of the 24-team ATP Cup, which is being held in Brisbane, Perth and Sydney.

World No. 2 Novak Djokovic, who is based in Brisbane with Serbia, visited a koala sanctuary and said it brought home to him the devastation wrought by the fires.

No Sushil, but trials to go ahead

The injured wrestler had asked for a postponement

WRESTLING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) will go ahead with trials in the men's freestyle 74kg category despite a postponement request from the injured Sushil Kumar.

However, the celebrated grappler may get a chance to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics in March.

Hand injury

Sushil, who has been struggling to revive his career, has pulled out of Friday's trials citing a hand injury and had requested trials in his category to be postponed.

The winners of the trials will be part of the Indian team for the season's first ranking series tournament in Rome (January 15-18),



Sushil. • FILE PHOTO

not be postponed. We will have wrestlers competing in the 74kg. What can we do if Sushil is injured," said Sharan.

"We will see the performance of the winner in the 74kg in the ranking series event. Then we will decide what step we need to take," said Sharan when asked if Sushil will be given a chance to compete at the Asian qualifiers.

India had secured Olympic quotas in three men's freestyle categories through Ravi Dahiya (57kg), Bajrang (65kg) and Deepak Punia (86kg) while Vinesh Phogat (53kg) was the lone woman grappler to grab a Tokyo Games quota at the World Championships in Nur Sultan.

While Ravi, Deepak and Vinesh have been asked to

compete in the trials, competition in their categories will be held only for the Rome and New Delhi events.

"If the WFI feels that we do not have a strong candidate for the Asian qualifier (for Tokyo Games) in March, the federation may ask Sushil to appear in a trial," said WFI assistant-secretary Vinod Tomar.

Will be back

Sushil has been training vigorously with Russian coach Kamal Malikov. "I will be fit in two weeks' time. Don't worry, I will be back. I had sustained this hand injury after the Worlds while training. The WFI knew about it. It's ok if they are going ahead with the trials," said Sushil.

The women's trials will be held in Lucknow on Saturday.

Chanu still in eighth spot



Mirabai Chanu. • FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Former World champion Mirabai Chanu, on course to seal a berth for the Tokyo Games, maintained her eighth spot in the Olympic qualifiers' ranking list released by the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) on Thursday.

In the race for qualification, the 25-year-old, who competes in the 49kg category, has gathered 2966.6406 ranking points till now.

To qualify for Tokyo, a weightlifter must compete in at least one event in each of the three periods of six months (spread over November 2018 to April 2020), at least six events overall and in at least one gold-and silver-level event.

"Being eighth now is not a problem as after the final rankings' list is made in April, the best results will be taken into account," said National coach Vijay Sharma.

In the men's 67kg category, Jeremy Lalrinnunga is placed 32nd with 2,310.9653 points.

Aussie-A coach lavishes praise on Shafali

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Australia women's A-team coach Leah Poulton has lavished praise on young Indian opener Shafali Verma for her powerful batting, and said the teenager is "one to watch over" in the future.

Playing for India-A women's team, the 15-year-old smashed a 78-ball 124 in a one-day match against Australia-A last month in Brisbane leaving behind a lasting impression on Poulton.

Full of power

"She's just an amazing talent, she's only 15-years-old and she's got so much power. She just had so much composure at the crease, she didn't looked fussed at all. She's definitely going to be one to watch over the next few years," Poulton told *cricket.com.au*.

"We'd seen a bit of footage leading in, she's played a bit of cricket for India. But when you watch footage of a player like that, it probably doesn't do it justice because she's actually got a really

good presence at the crease," she added.

Shafali, who made her debut in September, has represented India in nine T20Is amassing 222 runs. The Rohitak-born player hit two back-to-back half-centuries against the West Indies.

In November, she became the youngest Indian cricketer to score a half-century in international cricket when she hit a 49-ball 73 in a T20I against the West Indies.

Not typical Indian

"Even though she's 15, she's a tall girl and strong as well. When she walked out to bat, I thought, 'that can't be the 15-year-old.' She's not your typical Indian opening bat," Poulton said.

"Over the years they've produced these opening bats with these amazing techniques and they're really crafty, whereas she walked out there and she was just pure power.

"It was really good to watch, I did get into fan mode for a while."



Talented youngster: Shafali Verma, just 15 years old, has already shown what she is capable of. • GETTY IMAGES

Sunita retires due to injury breakdown

She was in the side that claimed the 2014 Asiad bronze

HOCKEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Indian women's hockey team defender Sunita Lakra, who was part of the 2018 Asian Games silver-winning side, announced her international retirement on Thursday, citing a knee injury which would require another surgery.

The 28-year-old said the nagging injury has come in the way of her dream to be a part of India's Tokyo Olympics campaign this year.

"Today is a very emotional day for me as I have decided to retire from International Hockey," she said in a statement issued by Hockey India.

In the team since 2008, Sunita captained India during the 2018 Asian Champions Trophy, leading the side to a second-place finish in the event. She played 139 matches for India. She was a member of the side that claimed the 2014 Asian Games bronze medal.

"I was very fortunate to have played at the Rio Olympics in 2016, India's first appearance in over three decades. As much as I wish to be part of the Indian team as they prepare for the Tokyo Olympics, my knee injuries have cut short my dream.

"I have been told by the doctors that I would be requiring another knee surgery in the coming days and I am unsure how long it would take before I fully recover," she said.

Sunita said she would continue to play in domestic



Curtains: Sunita says a nagging injury has come in the way of her dream to be a part of India's Tokyo campaign. • FILE PHOTO

hockey after recovering.

"Pursuant to my treatment, I will play domestic hockey and play for NALCO who have supported my career by providing me a job," she said. "I have come a long way and I carry with me some great memories with the Indian team who have stood strong by my side and the girls were always my family away from home."

Sunita thanked her teammates and chief coach Sjoerd Marjine for their support.

"My heartfelt thanks to Hockey India who ensured I

Vinesh Phogat says 2020 will be special

FIANS
NEW DELHI

Grappler Vinesh Phogat said 2019 was a year filled with all kinds of emotions where she learned a lot and believes that 2020 – a year in which she will be making her second Olympics appearance – will be special.

"2019 was a year filled with emotions – some bitter, some sweet! Started off the year with a lot of anger, frustration and fear inside of me. I had a new full-time coach, a whole new practice regimen, and most importantly a completely new weight category!" Vinesh tweeted on Wednesday.

At the 2016 Summer Olympics in Brazil, Vinesh reached the quarterfinals and lost to Sun Yanan of China owing to a knee injury.

Vinesh, who was stretched off the mat midway during her quarterfinal bout in Rio, changed her weight category twice since 2016, and in March 2019, she decided to move up to the 53kg category with an eye on avoiding injuries.

Huge changes

"Now that I think of it, this new weight category made the biggest difference and finally helped me achieve something that I had pursued for a long time, a World Championship medal! Chasing that medal brought in huge changes," she said.

"I changed the way I trained, the way I ate, and how I recovered!!! I explored new countries, wandered round new cities and had a



Vinesh Phogat... looking ahead. • PTI

tonne of fabulous new experiences. Looking back, 2019 turned out pretty great!

"2020 comes with a lot of promise with the fact that I am competing at my second Olympic Games taking it to a whole new level! Thank you 2019 for all the wonderful and not so wonderful moments that taught me so much! Wishing all of you a very happy new year!!!

"2020 is gonna be special," she added.

Potential

The 25-year-old underlined her potential with a bronze medal in the World Wrestling Championships after she registered an emphatic 4-1 victory over Greece's Maria Prevolaraki in Russia. That made her the first Indian wrestler to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

She also became the first Indian woman wrestler to make the cut through Worlds, a feat which only strengthens her stakes at the Tokyo Olympics. With Sakshi Malik struggling, Vinesh will be India's best hope for glory in Tokyo.

CHITRA SWAMINATHAN

Draped in a bright red handloom sari, a big red bindi on the forehead, hair neatly tied into a bun and a joyous smile lighting up her face, Bijayini Satpathy walked into Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chennai, for the ‘Dance For Dance Festival’ without Surupa Sen, her partner in creativity. It was unusual, for people have only seen them dance in unison for the past 25 years, mirroring and complementing moods and movements like no other performing duo. Surupa as artistic director and Bijayini as the principal dancer created incredible choreographic works in Odissi. They worked hard to nurture Protima Bedi’s vision Nrityagram, making it one of the

most recognised dance institutions in the world. But a year ago, Bijayini decided to step out of this creative zone and embark on a solo journey.

Moving away from the foyer of the auditorium that was teeming with dancers and dance lovers at the Kalavaahini Festival, where she performed to a packed house, she spoke about stepping back from a long collaboration and rediscovering herself.

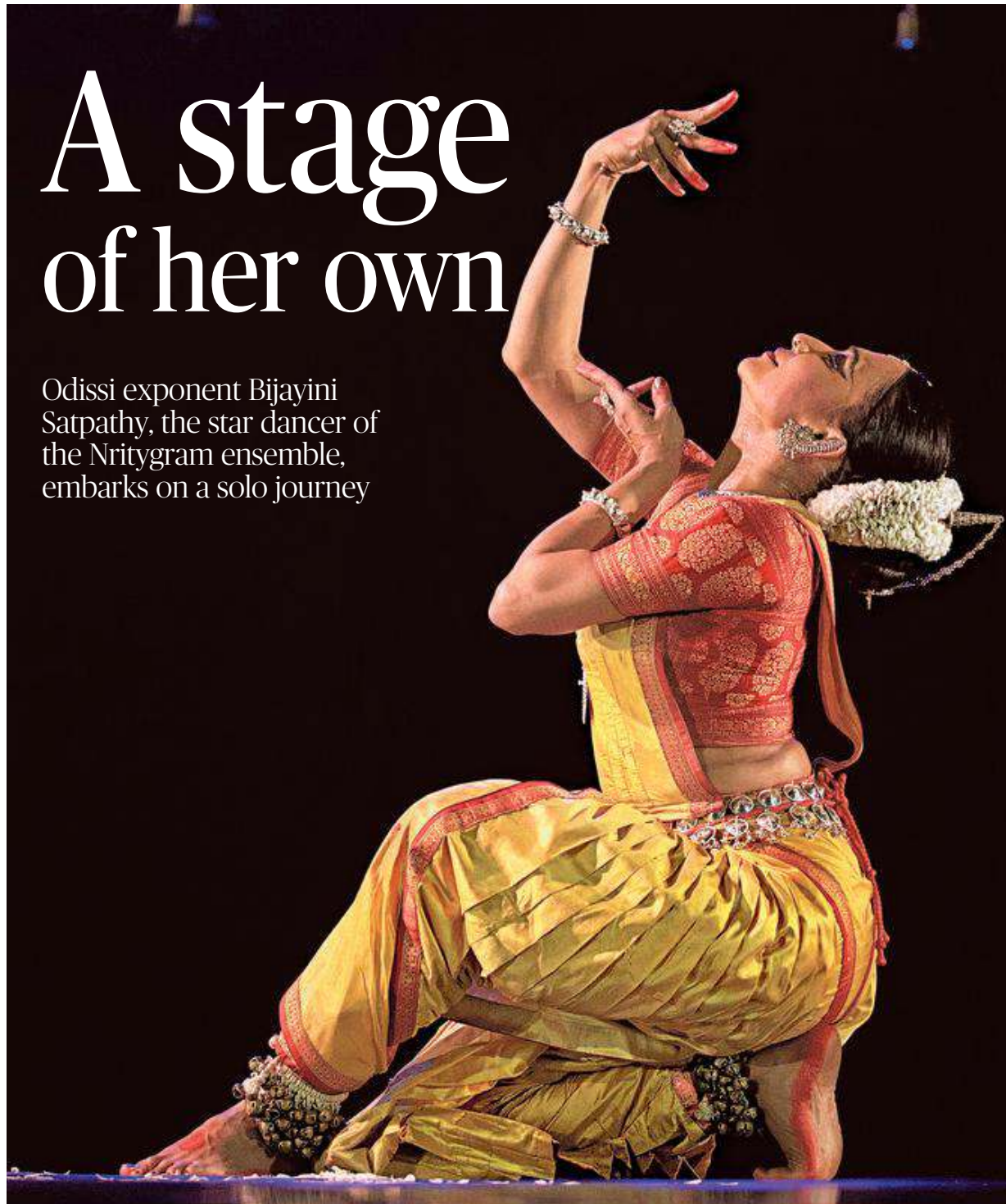
“The decision wasn’t easy. I had to push myself hard to make it since I was yearning to find the dancer in me on my terms. I wanted to explore the untouched dimensions of my artistry. It was not external validation I was seeking; I needed internal validation.

“I view my decision as both a spiritual and artistic pilgrimage and one has to do the *parikrama* alone. Nrityagram is home. Its doors will never close for me, I can go back anytime,” she says, her large, expressive eyes conveying the emotion impeccably.

Bijayini had been mulling the move for over 10 years. Every time the thought crossed her mind, the responsibility of the institution that shaped her into the magnificent dancer that she is today would deter her from going ahead. “I owe so much to Gaurima (Protima Bedi) and wondered if I would ever be able to isolate myself from Nrityagram. At the same time, I realised that if I didn’t do it now, it would be too late. I will be 50 in a few years. Dancers’ life on stage is determined by their body, their singular vehicle of communication. At some point, they have to come to terms with ageing and aches. I panicked that someday when my body gives in, I shouldn’t be traumatised by unfulfilled creative desires. So I have set out with passion, hope and dreams for company,” says Bijayini.

After a six-month tour of the U.S., where her performances came in for rave reviews, accompanied by extensive interviews, she is back in India to participate in Chennai’s Margazhi festival. She will be performing solo for the first time at the Music Academy Dance Festival (January 8, 2020), which has often featured the Nrityagram ensemble.

“I am gradually coming to terms with my solo being,



Odissi exponent Bijayini Satpathy, the star dancer of the Nrityagram ensemble, embarks on a solo journey

practising on the rooftop studio at my house near Nrityagram that I share with my husband.”

Bijayini is also learning to handle every little detail, from availability of the musicians to checking if tickets have arrived and arranging meals to looking into accommodation.

“At the institution I was cocooned in every way. Somebody was taking care of all these tedious jobs while Surupa designed productions into which I had to fit myself in. I am even writing to organisers of festivals to be invited to perform. It is a lot of work, yes, but I am happy I have the energy to deal with it,” says Bi-

jayini, who will be conducting workshops in Odissi in Chennai after spending the New Year with her family in Bhubaneswar.

As Nrityagram’s director of training and outreach, Bijayini developed an integrated physical conditioning for practitioners of Indian classical dance, particularly Odissi. It blends her knowledge of yoga, *kalaripayattu*, Western fitness techniques and kinesiology. “I continue to research and work on this aspect since it is important for dancers to prepare and preserve their body. At my workshops and training sessions I insist on looking at dance beyond movement

and mime. The strengthening routine should be made part of the training vocabulary,” she points out.

As a soloist, Bijayini feels her perspective of the artform has also changed. She has begun to draw differently from all that she has imbibed as a dancer and



I have undertaken an artistic pilgrimage and I am gearing up to do the *parikrama* alone

Distinct style

Bijayini wants her repertoire to combine the spirit of the tradition and contemporary sensibilities. ‘aStree’ breaks the myth that Odissi is a feminine form with just soft movements and sensual *abhinaya*. She chose to portray characters that brought to the fore masculine experiences and expressions. ‘Kalpana - A world of imagination’, which she will present at The Music Academy on January 8 with an amazing set of musicians, includes pieces choreographed by Guru Kelucharan and Surupa Sen.



teacher. She is relooking at tradition for newer interpretations, exploring ancient texts, revisiting the timeless works of the legendary Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra.

“Of course, Surupa’s pieces will also be part of my repertoire. I have grown artistically with them. All her choreographic works were first mounted on my body. We have shared every moment of the creative process. So the connect and resonance will remain always,” says Bijayini.

After her early training at the Orissa Dance Academy in Bhubaneswar, when she decided to join Nrityagram in 1993 after being selected in an audition by Protima Bedi, her parents refused to let her go.

“They wondered why should I leave Bhubaneswar to train in Odissi at a residential school near Bangalore. But I persisted because I was looking at the holistic training and perfect ambience that Nrityagram offered.

“It was as difficult a move as the one I have made now. Sometimes, in life, one needs to stand and stare, of course at the sky, stars and trees, but also within to bring out one’s best,” she says.

When art’s passion met layman’s anger

Artists and workers gathered at Jhandapur to remember Safdar Hashmi on the anniversary of his murder and to pledge to fight injustice of all kinds

ANJANA RAJAN

This Wednesday marked the 31st Shahaadat Divas (martyrdom day) of theatre activist Safdar Hashmi, and the crowd gathered at Jhandapur in the Sahibabad Industrial Area to celebrate his memory, as on every January 1, showed that neither the theatre world nor those politically affiliated to the Communist Party of India and the workers’ organisation CITU have forgotten him.

January days in the Delhi-NCR offer a brief spell of sunlight soon to be snuffed out by the early onset of evening. But

more than sunlight was snuffed out on January 1, 1989, the day Safdar Hashmi came with his group Jana Natya Manch (JANAM) to perform the street play “Halla Bol” in Jhandapur village, as part of their efforts to educate the factory workers and make them aware of their rights and powers. The group was attacked by goons owing allegiance to the Congress party (of the 10 attackers later convicted of the murder, one was the party’s mayoral candidate), and Hashmi succumbed to his injuries the following day. A factory worker Ram Bahadur was shot dead.

Stunned as Hashmi’s supporters

were by his tragic end, the flame he ignited refused to go out. Not only did JANAM, led by Safdar’s wife Moloyashree, return to complete “Halla Bol” at the very same spot two days after his death, they also turned it into a pilgrimage of sorts. Every January 1, it is here in Jhandapur that artists and workers come together to celebrate the sacrifice and the unbreakable pledge made by Safdar Hashmi.

This year, apart from artists of JANAM, those gathered at the site included other theatre practitioners, young people from different walks of life, factory workers and their families, plus three special guests: Shabana Azmi and Javed Akhtar, known for their pro-people activism that is as strong as their art practice, and CPI (M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechuri.

The noon air was festive with the “circus” as the crowds referred it, watching the seasoned nat performing acrobatic skills on a tightrope rigged up on a precarious looking set of poles dug into the ground. Crossing the rope on foot and while balancing on a steel wheel (with no protective net or mattress on the ground), and jumping through a flaming hoop, the nat and his two young companions, a tiny boy and girl, earned the applause of the onlookers. The audience then turned to the other side of the courtyard where a stage was set up.

The JANAM group led by stalwarts



Incisive comment Moloyashree Hashmi with a JANAM member during the performance at Jhandapur in Ghaziabad, Safdar Hashmi during a street play ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT, SAFDAR HASHMI TRUST

like Kajal Ghosh and Sudhanva Deshpande sang rousing songs including the poignant “Lal jhanda leke comrade aage badhte jayenge” which contains the line “Tum nahin rahe, iska gham hai par aage badhte jaayenge (Though it saddens us that you are no longer with us, still we will carry on)”.

Eloquent address

Aside from JANAM’s play on the plight of workers burdened by a lack of freedom to protest and denied just working conditions, it was in the eloquent address of Javed Akhtar that the torch of poetic anguish met the fire of the commoner’s anger at circumstances. Injustice is like the climate, said the celebrated poet and lyricist, drawing attention to the prevailing situation where workers and the poor have never had it easy, regardless of the ruling dispensation. But sometimes, he added, it’s colder than at others. These days, he said,

it’s very cold.

Like other speakers, he drew parallels between the daily fight for justice waged by the oppressed and the current countrywide protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the National Population Register (NPR) and



the National Register of Citizens (NRC). He pointed out that these moves were not against the minority but against the poor of every community, and that the move was but a stepping stone to controlling the majority. He also recited two of his more recent pieces of poetry, including the ghazal “Likh”. The ghazal exhorts poets to write the words that others are afraid to utter, to throw away the pen they used for sycophancy, and fearlessly write the truth, for never before has the night been as dark as this night.

His impassioned words brought out the truth of Yechuri’s statement that artists give inspiration to the foot soldiers of a movement.

Inspirational poetry

Shabana, speaking fondly of the days when her father, poet Kaifi Azmi, used to take her to such meetings of workers, and reciting lines from both Azmi’s and Akhtar’s inspirational poetry, also released an important publication on the occasion. This was Sudhanva Deshpande’s “Halla Bol: The Death and Life of Safdar Hashmi” (LeftWord). The book has been published in both English and Hindi versions.

It seemed just the right time for this biography. While Hashmi has always been a symbol of non-violent resistance and resilience in the face of heavy odds, the outpouring of public wrath through non-violent protests across India this winter has brought his example even more into the limelight. The book will be a reminder that art and politics are indeed inseparable, that culture is of the people and by them.

Injustice is like the climate, said Javed Akhtar, drawing attention to the prevailing situation where workers and the poor have never had it easy, regardless of the ruling dispensation. But sometimes, he added, it’s colder than at others. These days, he said, it’s very cold.



READ INSIDE

L. Subramaniam on how music binds different cultures **P2**

Tribal and folk arts at the Azamgarh Mahotsav **P3**

Actor Akshaye Khanna on his craft and role in politics **P4**

‘Music has a healing quality’

Ahead of the Lakshminarayana Global Music Festival 2020, maestro L Subramaniam says music is like an ocean and he wants to explore as much as possible

ANURADHA VELLAT

To be born amidst a family of artistes is truly a blessing. It comes with great privilege that needs to be checked responsibly. To use that privilege in ways that would bind different traditions and cultures, to further the arts and make it accessible to a larger audience is the task of any true artiste. L Subramaniam’s musical genius needs no introduction. As an artiste, he has relentlessly pursued his own music as well as World music in many ways. Entering into its 29th edition is the Lakshminarayana Global Music Festival (LGMF), organised in the memory of his father, mentor, guru and the legendary violinist Prof. V. Lakshminarayana. Through the years, the festival has brought in artistes from all continents, consistently experimenting and never restricting itself to what is traditional.

Says Subramaniam, “Music in itself is an extremely powerful medium to communicate, without the barrier of language. It also projects our culture, our philosophies, our ways of thinking, rituals while interacting with different people and artistes. It brings in peace and harmony in a different way. But I think involving other global players in this takes it to the other side of the coin. To collaborate with your own people is one thing, but global collaborations bring in brilliant inputs, expressions and emotions. The total impact leads to understanding of different cultures from our side, because from our side, unless someone is extraordinarily artistic or is financially capable, she/he cannot go to different countries. We try to bring them to the doorstep, so that they are exposed to international arts, including instruments which have never been brought to India before.”



Kavita had never done any fusion work at that time, when I approached her. She came and did the first piece, some time in 1999. It was a huge success musically



An excellent communicator (Clockwise from above)L. Subramaniam; Prof. V. Lakshminarayana; Kavita Krishnamoorthy

It is his father who largely left an imprint on the young boy. “After his passing in 1990, my sister Viji and I wanted to do something in his memory,” says Subramaniam. Lakshminarayana was not simply a violinist. His grandeur also lies in the fact that he put the violin on the global stage as a solo instrument. The festival began in Chennai’s Madras Music Academy, where TT Vasu, a close friend of Subramaniam’s was the President. It was only a matter of time before Subramaniam’s music, along with the festival met legendary artistes. His collaborations and recordings with icons like Stephane Grapelli, Yehudi Menuhin, Herbie Hancock, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Joe Sample, Staneley Clarke, George Duke, Larry Coryell, Tony Williams and Maynard Fergusson only added to the opulence of the festival. The festival does not stop with concerts and performances, but foundation courses with Subramaniam Foundation and the Subramaniam Academy of Performing Arts (SaPa) wherein the students are introduced to different schools and the artistes who conduct workshops. “We focus a lot on practice. You cannot read 200 books on how to sing a raga, you have to sing it and then go deeper. It is important in our theory to learn other cultures as well, learn about Western music, which is very strong in harmony. It is also important to be familiar with forms like Latin American music, African and Indonesian music. The structure in itself is very interdisciplinary,” adds Subramaniam.

Ace singer and his wife Kavita Krishnamurthy has played a pivotal role in inspiring his music and creative faculties. He remembers when they first met for a project called Global Fusion Album for Warner Brothers in Bangalore. “For the album, I had representation from five different continents. I was living in the US at that time, which is when a friend suggested that I listen to the tapes of a few singers whom I could use for the recording. I heard her voice; it had a bigger range, different emotions and a kind of depth. Kavita had never done any fusion work at that time, when I approached her. She came and did the first piece, some time in 1999. It was a huge success musically.”

Musical tribute

For its 29th edition LGMF is also celebrating the 150th birth year of Mahatma Gandhi. The festival starts in Delhi with a musical tribute by Subramaniam and Kavita featuring Symphony Orchestra of Castile and Leon from Spain, followed by Hyderabad and Pune. The concert at Hyderabad will also see performances by his children’s band ‘SubraMania’ and his granddaughter Mahati. The performances will feature ‘Spring Rhapsody’, one of Subramaniam’s own compositions published some time back alongside the bhajans ‘Raghupati Raghav’and ‘Vaishnav Jan Toh’ followed by a composition which is a tribute to Purandara Dasa. “We have grown so much as a family of artistes. Ever since, we have been trying and experimenting with

many things. Most of the compositions I do for orchestras are raga based contemporary compositions. They have branded it as fusion whereas what I was doing for orchestra was based on Western harmony and raga harmony. Music is like an ocean and I want to explore as much as possible. It makes me travel both literally and virtually. It has a healing quality wherein everyone finds something,” he says.

The LGMF book was just released, too, recording and documenting up to 25 years of the festival. The LGMF awards this year will be conferred upon violinist TN Krishnan and mridangist Chandramouli. As to his winter concert in Delhi, Subramaniam chuckles, “I am looking forward to the concert but not to the cold.”

The Lakshminarayana Global Music Festival 2020 will be held on 4th January at 6 p.m. at Siri Fort Auditorium, New Delhi.



Hindi Belt

A complex relationship

Mukesh Garg’s “Sahitya aur Sangeet” is a veritable treasure trove that covers the evolution of Hindustani music and tells us about the way music has shaped up the country’s cultural life

Literature and music share a complex relationship although both deal with sounds and turn them into meaningful expression. However, their treatment is very dissimilar as literature deals with ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions while music deals with only feelings and emotions. When they interact with each other, the interaction often results in the expansion and enrichment of both the art forms. Many tomes have been written on Hindustani music dealing with various forms like classical, semi-classical, folk and film music but there is hardly any book that focuses on the complexity of the relationship between literature and music.

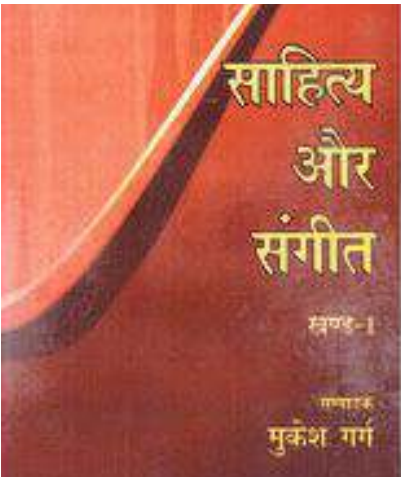
This gap was filled when Mukesh Garg, who retired from Delhi University’s Hindi Department as Associate Professor, selected and edited articles that dealt with the literature-music tango and produced two volumes of “Sahitya aur Sangeet” (Literature and Music). It speaks volumes about the state of intellectual curiosity in the worlds of both Hindi and Hindustani music that, although Vani Prakashan brought them out more than five years ago in 2014, they have not received adequate attention.

Mukesh Garg and his family are living examples of the way literature can gainfully combine with music. He trained in violin and one of his gurus happened to be N. Rajam, the foremost exponent of violin in Hindustani classical music who honed her musical skills under the guidance of the legendary Omkar Nath Thakur. He also edited the monthly magazine “Sangeet” for more than twenty years. And, herein lies a tale that many may not be familiar with.

Sharp message

The wider world of Hindi literature has not forgotten Kaka Hathrasi (September 18, 1906 - September 18, 1995) who was the uncrowned king of Kavi Sammelans because of his extraordinary wit and a rare ability to compose funny poems on the spot. Although his poetry was satirical and comic in nature, it also contained sharp social and political messages. His real name was Prabhulal Garg and he was Mukesh Garg’s uncle. While the world knew him as hasya-kavi Kaka, he had another persona that was as much, if not more, important as his public one. He was an expert in Hindustani classical music and his services to the cause of its promotion remain unsung.

In 1932, Prabhulal Garg established Sangeet Karyalaya in his home town Hathras in western Uttar Pradesh and collected, edited and published old treatises on classical and other forms of music. He himself wrote many books and launched a monthly Hindi magazine titled “Sangeet” in 1935. It was the only magazine of its kind and there was a time when musicians such as Ravi Shankar wrote for it. It carried informative articles on gharanas, history of music, forms of vocal and instrumental music and introductory books about various musical instruments and the technique of their playing. Later, Kaka’s nephews Lakshmi Narayan Garg and Mukesh Garg helped



him in editing the magazine which, though past its prime, survives to this day.

Little wonder that Mukesh Garg emerged as a highly regarded musicologist in addition to being an authority on that period of medieval Brajbhasha poetry that is known as Reetikaal in Hindi academic circles. He also established a pan-Indian organisation Sangeet Sankalp towards the end of 1980 to provide platform for struggling young musicians and to promote and propagate Hindustani music. Now, it has nearly 125 chapters in various cities and towns all over India.

The two-volume “Sahitya aur Sangeet” is a veritable treasure trove and contains 71 articles penned by the likes of Acharya Brihaspati and Prabhudayal Meetal. They cover the entire history of the evolution of Hindustani music, right from the Vedic age to the present day and offer informative as well as analytical articles that tell us about the way music has shaped up the country’s cultural life. One finds articles on music in Buddhist Pali literature and orchestra in Buddhist art, music in our epics, The Ramayana and The Mahabharata, Kalidasa’s works as well as Shudrak’s plays, music in the Sikh tradition as well as in the Vaishnavite Haveli sangeet, the relationship between music and the works of Surdas and other Ashtachhaap poets, Sufi music and the evolution of qawwali and other forms.

They also discuss the contribution of Panditraj Jagannath - the last great aesthetic theorist in the long tradition of Sanskrit poetics- to Brajbhasha poetry and the region’s music, musical compositions of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah ‘Rangeela’, musicality in Hindi poets like Prasad and Nirala, the element of thumri in Rajasthani folk songs, and indifference to the words of the bandish in khayali singing.

Mukesh Garg has written an introduction that raises many questions - some of them methodological - about the complex nature of the relationship between literature and music. Only scholarship based on rigorous research can find answers to them.



KULDEEP KUMAR is a senior literary critic

‘Medea’ in the round

Theatre director Anuradha Marwah on taking classical works to spaces that are accessible to general public

SHRINKHLA SAHAI

The stage is ready, instead of a set it is packed with chairs for the audience, while the house lights are on. The performers are neither in the wings nor on stage. In their simple Greek costumes, they break into dialogue from among the audience in the hall as they begin their performance. In Pandies’ Theatre group’s adaptation of the Greek classic, “Medea”, theatre director Anuradha Marwah explores a democratic performance dynamic that brings actors and audience on the same level, setting aside the idea of the stage.

Performed in the round, the concept attempts to bring classical drama into everyday arena by merging spaces and challenging conventional



Reaching out Director Anuradha Marwah; a scene from “Medea”

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

theatre strategies. The production has been featured in diverse settings across Delhi, ranging from intimate performance venues like the basement theatre at India Habitat Centre and Studio Safdar to colleges and women’s shelter homes.

Levelling the stage

“This is the concept of Samtal,” she explains. “Mostly, classical works are performed on the proscenium stage, in ways that are inaccessible to the general public. With Samtal, we take nuanced and profound themes to everybody, focusing on the human element that often gets overlooked when the productions are extremely intellectualised.” The term ‘samtal’ literally means a level field. Seeking to bring world theatre classics to new audiences, the concept also involves opportunities for discussions between the audience, cast and crew of the production.

Marwah reflects on the evolution of the idea that inspired her to direct the play, “I was inspired by the work of theatre group Ten Thousand Things’ and dreamed-up of ‘Samtal’ while in Minneapolis on a Fulbright-Nehru Academic and Professional Excellence (FNAPPE) Fellowship in 2017. It’s a door that opened up a whole new area of creativity for me.

I am essentially a writer, and never actually thought of myself as a director. When I started to think of Samtal, it was something very new for me and I was like a child wanting to explore new things.” The community theatre work of Ten Thousand Things involved taking iconic plays to non-traditional venues. Performing in the round, with all the lights on, attracted her because the audience would also become a part of the performance in this way.

Finally, in 2019, Michelle Hensley, founder of Ten Thousand Things along with playwright Kira Obolensky, came to Delhi and trained the creative team of Samtal for performance in the round.

Adapting ‘Medea’

“Finding the play that would begin this programme was really challenging,” recalls Marwah. “The script is very strong and I was apprehensive whether a radical work like Medea would work in the kind of rendering we were planning.” When she presented the first draft of the adaptation to her performers at the reading, they found it challenging and amusing. “It seemed too grandiose to be performed in the round. I realised it had to be much more conversational and spent another month reworking the script!”



Though the play is distant in time and space, Marwah was confident that it would resonate with contemporary contexts and spark discussion and debate with the audience. “We premiered the play in Shakti Shalini shelter home for women in Nithari Basti. The audience had absolutely no familiarity with Greek drama yet they responded and wanted to talk.” The power of the play lies in bringing out the audience from the space of passive spectatorship into an active dialogue about their own lives. “In educational institutions, or studio spaces, it was intense, people wanted to talk about their lives - relationships, sexuality. Topics that are conventionally taboo

could be broached because we are looking at them through the play, it was somebody else’s story, so it becomes easy to voice opinions.”

Democratic forum

The shows extended much beyond the performance with deeper conversations with each group. While the text and theme of Medea opened up insights into the audience’s own lives, the discussions delved into different points of view. In the shelter home, for instance, women opened up about their own experiences of abuse and abandonment. Urban audience in studio settings were enamoured with the dynamic aesthetics of performance in the

round, while students expressed curiosity about politics and directorial choices.

For Marwah, exploring theatre as a levelled and democratic space stems from her own beliefs and feminist politics. “The beauty of performing in the round with classical texts is that a wide range of audience respond to it, cutting across class and socio-economic divide.” As the production gains momentum, there are more performances coming up in other cities, towns and villages. The theatre group is busy bracing up for unexpected questions from the audience, more intense dialogues to draw them in and their own conversation with a classic from the past.

In harmony with nature

The Azamgarh Mahotsav saw Bidesiya” in a Brechtian tone, enchanting flavours of tribal life in “Bastar Band”, and Mahatma Gandhi’s experiment with celibacy in “Maar Parajay”

DIWAN SINGH BAJELI

The 12-day Azamgarh Mahotsav featured different theatrical forms, music concerts, dance recitals and symposia in different parts of this sprawling district of eastern Uttar Pradesh. It evoked a sense of joie de vivre and camaraderie among theatre practitioners that will be remembered for long. Organised in collaboration with the civil society and district administration, the spectacular performances unfolded on an elaborate makeshift stage on a huge lawn popularly known as Jajee Ka Maidan which was equipped with advanced lighting devices. One of the visually and aurally enchanting experiences was offered by “Bastar Band” which was remarkable for presenting rhythmically graceful dance movements and soul-stirring musical tunes. The colourful costumes, the display of enviable skill by drummers, the enactment of daily chores of tribal people in harmony with nature created beautiful imagery.

Bow’s melody

We know bow and arrow are essential for tribals for hunting but here the women also created melodious tunes from the bow, celebrating harmonious community life. One of the tribal ritualistic performances, based on a traditional form, Dhankul Jaagar, was woven around the earth which produces grains



Visually appealing (Clockwise from top) Scenes from “Bastar band”; “Maar Parajay” and “Hansuli” ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

soul of tribal life whose self-reliant and simple lives are now under threat by attempts to curtail their forest rights. The show was directed and conceptualised by Padma Shri Anup Ranjan Pandey, who was trained in Habib Tan-

vir’s repertory and was initiated into music by his parents. He has been working with Bastar tribals, scattered across in the vast forest landscape. They are losing their cultural identity and their rare art forms which are now on the verge of extinction. Pandey is working with them for the last one-and-a-half decades, collecting musical instruments and musical tunes and bringing diverse groups under the umbrella of Bastar Band. He has revived a number of mythological stories and tribal ritualistic art forms and presents them on the modern stage. The works of Bhikhari Thakur, who is known as Shakespeare of Bhojpur, continue to be staged by contemporary theatre practitioners of Bihar. One of his plays “Bidesiya” is frequently staged. Satish Anand, a veteran theatre director now based in Delhi, has evolved his own technique of staging “Bidesiya”, incorporating elements of Brechtian theatre. At the Azamgarh Mahotsav, this play was presented under the direction of Sanjay Upadhyay in an innovative style. In the original form, it is staged by ac-

tors who remain in standing posture thought out the show. The strong chorus also sings songs while remaining standing. The Naach which reveals the earthy vigour is a vital element of “Bidesiya” and is mostly performed by men in female dress. Upadhyay, a leading stage music practitioner, director, and Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee, has transformed the play into a musical. The actor-singer remain sitting on the stage while singing. There are no dance sequences. The presentation has sophistication and elements of classical music have been incorporated into the musical score. Agonised bride The production reveals the agony of a young bride whose husband has left home just after their marriage is solemnised and remained in Bidesh - foreign land - only to return after years of separation to tell the eternally waiting wife that he has a family in Bidesh. Upadhyay’s production is innovative which will appeal to a sophisticated urban audience.

At Rahul auditorium, named after Mahapandit Rahul Sanskritayan, a great scholar and prolific writer who was born in Azamgarh, the Repertory Company of Bhartendu Natya Akademi, Lucknow presented “Maar Parajay”. Written by Raj Kumar, the play is directed by Manoj Sharma with panache, creating an ambiance that enables performers to reveal their dilemma with dramatic force. This is one of the few plays about Gandhi, seen in recent months, that explores with intensity only one aspect of Gandhi’s life rather than presenting the vast canvas of his eventful life. “Maar Parajay” is structurally taut which explores Gandhi’s experiment with celibacy while he was in South Africa, championing the cause of the South African Indians. The entire action takes place in the house of Gandhi with a focus on his intense interactions with Kasturba and his sons.

Bapu’s restrictions

One day Gandhi reveals to Kasturba his resolve to maintain celibacy, declaring that the sexual relations between husband and wife should be restricted only to give birth to children and after that, they should maintain absolute celibacy. Gandhi’s experiments are not only restricted to observe celibacy, but he also stopped taking salts and sugar. He imposed these restrictions on his family members also. This was a kind of torture for his family. There are painfully touching sequences like children demanding sugar which is denied to them by Kasturba, torn between her tender motherly feeling for the children and her sense of moral duty towards Gandhi. There is another sequence full of anguish where Gandhi orders her to clean

There are painfully touching sequences like children demanding sugar which is denied to them by Kasturba, torn between her tender motherly feeling for the children and her sense of moral duty towards Gandhi.

pot of human feces, which she refuses. Enraged, Gandhi orders her to leave the house and pushes her towards the exit door. Weeping children rush towards their mother and cling to her. Later, Gandhi repents his inhuman act. There is another poignant scene when girls living in the Ashram complain to Gandhi that his son tried to molest them, Gandhi commands his son to leave home at once and takes scissors to cut the long, black and beautiful hair of the girls considering them as the source of sexual lust. Kasturba intervenes.

Som Ganguli as Gandhi gives a creditable performance. His Gandhi struggles hard to free himself from sexual lust. Pawani Gupta as Kasturba reveals the inner strength of her character.

Adapted from Dr. Akhilesh Kumar Chandra’s short story by Raj Kumar Shah, “Hansuli” (silver ornament)depicted the conflict between two brothers over the division of ancestral landed property and the lone silver ornament of the mother. Directed by Shah and presented by Sammohan Kala Sansthan, Azamgarh, in this bitter conflict, the brothers, as well as members of Panchayat, forget the future of the aging parents. From beginning to climax, however, there are little variations in tone and pace.



A rib-tickling fare

Nayana Sagar’s Hindi adaptation of Joseph Kesserling’s “Arsenic & Old Lace” was a fine presentation marked by some persuasive performances and great comic timing

S. RAVI

There are some plays that continue to enthral audience despite their repeated staging. One such is the ever popular American playwright Joseph Kesserling’s “Arsenic & Old Lace”. Its Hindi adaptation attracted a sizeable audience despite the prevailing cold conditions when put on board last week at the Panna Bharat Ram Theatre Festival, Shri Ram Centre for Performing Arts’ annual event. With an excellent content in hand - a farcical black comedy - director Nayana Sagar made watching this play an enjoyable experience. The acting, innovative lighting, set design, timing, music, props and pithy lines elicited repeated applause from the audience. It was laugh-a-minute show that didn’t allow a boring moment in the two-hour long play. Homicidal maniacs The plot revolves around the Vasai-based D’Silva family, whose members include insane homicidal maniacs. Martha (Aarti Nayyar) and Rosa (Sohaila Kapur), the two old aunts, believe they are doing “social work” by killing elderly, lonely men, when they turn up looking for accommodation in their house. The victims are offered home-made elderberry wine, ironically made from the fruit growing in adjacent graveyard, laced with arsenic, strychnine and a pinch of cyanide. Their nephew, Jonathan (Ashutosh Kumar Keshav) is a psychopath killer with a plastic surgeon, Dr. Talwar (Manish Panwar), as companion, who chang-



Engrossing narrative A scene from “Arsenic & Old Lace” ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

es the former’s appearance after every murder. Jonathan’s present makeover prompts everyone to compare him to Amrish Puri, much to his annoyance and the surgeon’s discomfort. Alfie (Kirti Kaushik) is the schizophrenic nephew, who thinks he is Hitler, dressed up in a uniform, complete with a swastika arm band. He helps the aunts to bury the old men, thinking they are Jews, exterminated in the concentration camp. The sane nephew Bobby (Utkarsh Sharma), a theatre critic, in love with neighbour Julie (Shreya Pokhriyal), is left to handle this bizarre and berserk crowd. Off to a slow start, the play warms up with two sisters taking the centre-stage. Their acting, timing and synchronisation reminded one of a high-scoring partnership in cricket,

with both complementing and supplementing the other, in terms of emoting, actions and dialogues. Dressed in long skirts or black mourning dresses, with a cross dangling from their chains and their Anglo Indian accent, slow movements and slight stoop, made them look genuine aunts. Perfect foil Bobby proved a perfect foil for them. He excelled by displaying his bewilderment, amazement and inability to make sense of the actions of his aunts and brother, Jonathan, in a perfect measure. Ashutosh made Jonathan’s portrayal as a psychopath look real with the frenzied and quick actions and words. The scar across his face, made him look menacing. Alfie’s “Heil Hitler” salute, blowing the bu-

gle at crucial points and talking about invasion of Poland, added to the humour. Other supporting actors contributed in equal measure, rendering the performance seamless. While the sudden movements by actors gave a momentum to the proceedings and kept the audience engaged, its repeated use seemed at times jarring. The well-designed set by Nayana, with minimal props adequately gave one the feel of the living room, the basement where the dead were buried and the adjoining kitchen. The stage lighting played a crucial role in heightening the drama as did Sayam Raj Sagar’s music. The dramatic twist at the end as the aunts try to better Jonathan’s tally of victims, had the audience in splits.

IN SHORTS

Second world harmonium summit

Held by Bijapure Harmonium Foundation, it begins on January 3 in Bengaluru

Bijapure Harmonium Foundation presents the second World Harmonium Summit from January 3-5 at Malleswaram Seva Sadana, Bengaluru, and at JN Tata Auditorium, Indian Institute of Science. Musicians, musicologists, instrument makers, connoisseurs from across the country and abroad will be attending the marquee event. The summit is aimed at creating a platform for musical, intellectual and creative dialogue regarding harmonium and its recitals. During the three-day extravaganza this year, harmonium solos, duets, trio, ensembles, video shows and group interactions will be presented. Close to 100 artistes, harmonium enthusiasts and subject experts are expected to participate in the deliberations.



The first World Harmonium Summit was organised last January to commemorate the birth centenary of legendary harmonium maestro Pandit Rambhau Bijapure. The event is open to all. On January 3 and 4, the event begins at 9 am and on January 5, it opens at 3 pm. Contact: 9845793012

On an emotional journey

Shafali R. Anand’s oil paintings exist in the twilight zone between realistic rendering and abstract thought



A month-long solo exhibition of oil paintings by Shafali R. Anand opens at All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society on Rafi Marg beginning January 3. Titled Truth, the exhibition is a collection of 26 paintings that exist in the twilight zone existing between realistic rendering and abstract thought. Speaking on the works, Shafali says her paintings are about the emotional journeys that people make during their lives. “For each of us, these journeys are different and yet the emotions that they churn are same. They range from the lively bright yellows and greens that make us leap with joy to the dark sombre browns and deep purples that weigh us down.” Ajit Ninan, noted cartoonist, will inaugurate the exhibition at 5 p.m. that includes oil paintings with titles like Spine, Pearls and Shields.

