



THE ACTUAL SHAFI SHAUQ

The India we now live in has prompted a new short story by Amit Chaudhuri. Is it fiction or some other kind of truth?



IDEA EXCHANGE PAGE 10

'WE ADMIRE THE POLITICAL DEBATE IN INDIA... VIOLENCE WORRYING... BUT CAN BE RESOLVED'

EMMANUEL LENAIN, Ambassador of France to India

BIG PICTURE PAGES 12-13

Inside Fort Scindia

Journey through Jyotiraditya's MP bastion shows divided Cong footsoldiers, but also uncertainty among BJP men



GOVT SAYS COVID-19 A 'NOTIFIED DISASTER', UNLOCKS MORE FUNDS

Pak on board, SAARC leaders will talk today to plan joint virus fight

Countries welcome PM's move to seek meet; 2 new cases in Jaipur, Hyderabad

SHUBHAJIT ROY & ABANTIKA GHOSH  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

SAARC LEADERS are set to hold a summit via video-conference on coronavirus on Sunday, 5 pm, after Pakistan late Friday night accepted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposal for such a meeting.

Islamabad, however, specified that the engagement would be at the level of the Special Assistant to the Pakistan PM on Health. In a tweet, Pakistan Foreign Office Spokesperson



51 people reached Kolkata from Bangladesh by Maitree Express on Saturday. Services have now been suspended. Partha Paul

Aisha Farooqui said, "We have communicated that SAPM (Special Assistant to Pakistani Prime Minister) on Health (Zafar Mirza) will be available to participate in the video conference

of SAARC member countries on the issue."

Two more positive cases were reported across the country on Saturday, taking the official

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EXPLAINED Why disaster tag matters

DECLARING SOMETHING as a disaster means funds from state and national disaster management funds can be accessed. It also empowers a committee constituted under The Disaster Management Act, 2005, to take all measures for containment. In this case, powers have been delegated to the Union Home Secretary. The Act defines "disaster" as a calamity resulting in substantial suffering.

Wife faces FIR in Agra, hospitalised man says she didn't know

AMIL BHATNAGAR & AVANEESH MISHRA  
NEW DELHI, LUCKNOW, MARCH 14

AS HIS wife and her family faced an FIR by the Agra district administration for allegedly interfering with medical officials, a coronavirus patient hospitalised in Bengaluru denied reports that she had deliberately dodged testing or isolation. The woman had travelled to her parents' home in Agra via Delhi by the time she was tested. While she has been found to be carrying a heavy viral load, results of her samples sent to the NIV are awaited.

Employed with an IT firm in Bengaluru, the husband said his wife and he had gone on honeymoon to Europe, and that she had gone to Agra via Delhi to be with her parents before he tested positive, and had been fully cooperating with the authorities since. "All her travels in India were between 8th and 9th. My test was carried out on 10th, which was only confirmed by 12th. It is untrue that she purposely travelled outside the city despite knowing about my condition," he told The Sunday Express from isolation in Bengaluru, adding that they had the tickets to prove this.

Agra District Magistrate Prabhu Narain Singh said he had ordered the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) to file an FIR

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INDIAN IMMUNITY WON'T WARD OFF VIRUS: AIIMS PROF

DELHI: ANGANWADIS STOP NUTRITION PROGRAMME  
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New J&K party meets Modi, says he has assured no demographic change

BASHAARAT MASOOD  
SRINAGAR, MARCH 14

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi has assured that there will be "no demographic change" in Kashmir and that elections in the state would only be held after delimitation of constituencies, a political outfit floated in the Valley days ago said on Saturday, after a meeting with him.

One of the founders of the Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party, Ghulam Hassan Mir, said, "The Prime Minister was categorical that people should not think about demographic change. He called it propaganda. We sought statehood and domicile rights



PM with J&K Apni Party delegation at his home Saturday. ANI

for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. It was a wonderful meeting."

The Apni Party delegation, including its leader Altaf Bukhari and 23 other members, met the

PM for around two hours Saturday evening. They will be meeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday.

The outfit, including political

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On empty streets of northern Italy, gloom and some rainbows of hope

DAMINI RALLEIGH  
BRA (ITALY), MARCH 14

LAST SATURDAY, a week ago, when talk of a lockdown suddenly overwhelmed conversation in this provincial town in Italy's northwest, the virus had still seemed far away. Then, a little after 2 am on Sunday, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced a lockdown of much of the country's north — Italy, he said, was facing a national emergency.

In the week that followed, every day brought new horrors. By Saturday evening India time, the number of confirmed coronavirus infections had reached 17,660, hospitals across the country were overflowing with patients, and 1,441 people had



In Bra, in heart of Italy's coronavirus outbreak. Damini Ralleigh

died — the biggest toll from the pandemic anywhere outside China. Piedmont, along with neighbouring Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna, as well as Veneto, are the worst affected.

In Bra, a town of 30,000-odd inhabitants to the south of Turin,

the capital of the Piedmont region, it is not difficult to feel disconnected from the rest of the world. Life moves slowly, and revolves largely around epicurean endeavours — this, after all, is where the Slow Food Movement

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Lutyens Delhi to clubs in US, ED on trail of 40 assets of Rana Kapoor

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

YES BANK promoter Rana Kapoor and his family not only opened 78 companies to receive "kickbacks" from firms the bank gave loans to, but invested this money in as many as 40 real estate and hospitality assets across India and abroad, investigations by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) have reportedly found.

The central agency has traced documents related to these assets and properties and is currently verifying them, sources said.

According to ED sources, of the 40 properties that the Kapoors bought with the alleged kickbacks, around 28 are in India — mostly in Delhi, particularly the VIP Lutyens zone — and 12 in the UK and US.

"The Delhi properties are spread across Jor Bagh, Lodhi

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SBI heartless, inefficient, FM tells its chairman

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MUMBAI, GUWAHATI, KOLKATA, MAR 14

IN AN outburst against the State Bank of India and its top brass, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman referred to the largest government-owned bank as "heartless" and "inefficient" because some 2.5 lakh bank accounts of tea garden workers in Assam were not functional.

She was speaking at a financial inclusion outreach programme in Guwahati on February 27, which was organised by the Department of Financial Services along with the concerned State Level Bankers' Committees (SLBCs).

In an audio clip of the event, Sitharaman asks how soon the accounts could be made functional, and an SBI officer is heard

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THE CORONA FIGHTERS AN EXPRESS SERIES FROM TESTING SAMPLES TO TRACKING CONTACTS AND TREATING PATIENTS, MEET THE MEN AND WOMEN, UNSEEN AND UNHEARD, ON THE FRONTLINES OF INDIA'S FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

24/7, a CMO and his team track the virus: making endless calls, visiting many homes

PRABHA RAGHAVAN  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

THE SCENE that unfolded in the room of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar district on Friday afternoon would have spooked almost anyone. Except perhaps, CMO Anurag Bhargava himself.

A worried young man approached the 59-year-old chief who was fielding endless phone calls from citizens at his desk. The man's sister stood in a corner at the other end of the room,



Dr Anurag Bhargava, Chief Medical Officer of Gautam Buddha Nagar, in his office on Friday. Prabha Raghavan

coughing into a thin disposable mask that did not cover her nose. "Right now, those coming in from outside the country are at the greatest risk. Has she travelled abroad lately?" Dr Bhargava asked the man.

"Yes," he replied. "Okay, then here is what you have to do," the CMO said, noting down the contact details of the suspected patient while directing the man and the woman to the designated hospital to give samples.

As the woman turned to leave, Bhargava stopped her.

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Village cuts events, pools in aid money to give itself 'school like big city'

IRAM SIDDIQUE  
MUMBAI, MARCH 14

A TWO-ACRE plot dotted with pomegranate trees in the village of Pokhari, 50 km from Aurangabad in Maharashtra, will soon be the site of a unique community initiative. Villagers have pooled resources, including money received as drought relief, to buy the land to upgrade their sole zilla parishad school to the level of "international schools".

The school is currently till Class 8, and students in higher classes must walk an hour to

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Garaj, the nearest town, causing many to drop out. Those seeking any professional course have to go further, to Aurangabad district headquarters.

In September last year, villagers took up this issue with the education officer of the Aurangabad zilla parishad,

Surajprasad Jaiswal, who had come on a personal visit. They also urged him to get vacant teachers' posts filled at the school, that barely sustained itself on an yearly grant of Rs 15,000.

Says Jaiswal, "I told them the state would help, but if they wanted a better future for their children, they needed to be more proactive. I told them about Bable Wadi in Pune, where villagers had started own school." The Pune school has emerged as a role model for alternative education using innovative teaching methods.

In the first week of October,



One of the classrooms at the revamped zilla parishad school in Pokhari village in Maharashtra. Amit Chakravarty

even as the state elections were approaching, the NCP's taluka head, Balsaheb Bhosle, and local Shiv Sena leader Babasaheb Thube put politics aside to jointly lead a visit of villagers and leaders to Bable Wadi.

Pokhari sarpanch Dilip Jadhav says they were astounded by what they saw at the Bable Wadi school. "Students there were studying robotics and electric cars. Those in Class 6 were learning foundation courses for engineering entrance. For those interested in languages, there were modules to teach at least five foreign languages. They also prepared students for competi-

tive exams," he says.

Soon after their return, the villagers formed a WhatsApp group, 'Aamche Swapnachi Shala (School of our Dreams)', where videos were shared of Bable Wadi students experimenting with technology and speaking fluently in other languages.

On October 21, soon after voting for the state polls had ended, the village held a meeting. "Every farmer had received a minimum of Rs 8,000 in drought relief... At least Rs 5,000 was contributed towards the school," says the NCP's Bhosle, one of the main forces behind the initiative.

Residents who are in government service gave between Rs 50,000 and Rs 1 lakh, while others "as much as they could". Saheb Rao Malavde, 35, contributed Rs 8,000, the equivalent of what he earns in a month as a driver. "I have two daughters. My family did not buy new clothes last Diwali and cut down on expenses to manage," he says. Alaka Bai gave Rs 5,000, her year's savings from grazing cattle for others.

As the first step, urgent repairs were carried out at the school, including a fresh coat of paint, new sliding windows and a

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