

IN BRIEF


Hanoi chef introduces the novel 'coronaburger'

HANOI
You've got to eat it, to beat it. That's the philosophy of one Hanoi chef who is attempting to boost morale in the Vietnamese capital by selling green, coronavirus-themed burgers. Chef Hoang Tung and his team now spend their days moulding dozens of green-tea stained burger buns complete with little "crowns" made of dough to resemble the virus. **REUTERS**


Russia's satellite launch programme interrupted

MOSCOW
Russia's space agency Roscosmos said on Friday it would have to adjust its 2020 launch programme because of a halt in satellite production in Europe, amid the coronavirus outbreak. The head of Roscosmos, Dmitry Rogozin, will hold video conferences to discuss the new arrangements. **REUTERS**

Arunachal Pradesh tribes revive indigenous lockdown rituals

A priest said it was the first time in four decades that the ceremony was done

**RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI**

A tribal lockdown ritual has staged a comeback in Arunachal Pradesh, the State geographically closest to China's Hubei province where the COVID-19 outbreak began.

The border State's West Siang district ceremonially entered the *Arr-Rinam* phase at the stroke of 5 p.m. on Thursday. *Arr-Rinam* is the Galo equivalent of lockdown imposed by consensus for 48 hours whenever an epidemic strikes. The Galos, one of the 26 major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, dominate West Siang district.

"Coronavirus has not yet attacked us, but we cannot be complacent," said Kirba Sora, the president of Galo Welfare Society, an apex tribal body. "*Arr-Rinam*, which follows the *Ali-Ternam* ritual to ward off an epidemic, has been a part of our culture," he added.

Ali-Ternam - *Ali* means epidemic and *Ternam* forest - and *Arr-Rinam* were last performed almost four decades ago when a waterborne disease had affected



Getting prepared: Galo community elders performing *Ali-Ternam* ritual before the *Arr-Rinam* or lockdown ceremony in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

many members of the community.

"We have been performing these rituals periodically for livestock, primarily the semi-wild mithun, that are prone to contagious diseases," Mr. Sora said in a telephone interview from the district headquarters Aalo. "This is for the first time in 30-40 years that we performed the rituals for the safety of humans," he added.

An executive engineer in

the State's Public Health Engineering and Water Supply Department, Mr. Sora was one of the two *Bos* or deputy priests, who performed the *Ali-Ternam* under the guidance of a *Nyibo* (shaman) from Wednesday morning.

The ritual ended with the community leaders sealing five major entry points of the district.

"As in the past, all of us locked ourselves in and banned the entry of anyone

from outside. We did make a departure from tradition by adhering to the government's social distancing guidelines, ensuring only a few people participated," Mr. Sora said. The Adi community inhabiting East Siang and Lower Dibang Valley districts too performed a similar ritual called *Motor* that they believe lets shamans with legendary powers to locate wild herbs to combat an epidemic.

Indian scientists join the battle against COVID-19

One effort seeks to explain concepts in regional languages

**SHUBASHREE DESIKAN
CHENNAI**

Several Indian scientists have come together to form a Google group to address some of the concerns that the COVID-19 outbreak has thrown up.

Indian Scientists' Response to CoViD-19 (ISRC) is a voluntary group of scientists who regularly discuss the rapidly evolving situation with its dire need for science communication.

"The scientific community has a social and democratic responsibility in the current situation, both in terms of analysing the situation and reaching out to the public. While governmental bodies make their decisions and professional scientific academies take principled stands, there is a need for individuals in the scientific community to also help individually and collectively," says R. Ramanujam, the spokesperson of the group and a computer scientist with The Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai.

With nearly 200 members, the group has scientists from institutions such as the NCBS, the IISc, the TIFR, the IITs, the IISERs and many others.

The group aims to study existing and available data to bring out analyses that will support the Central, State and local governments in carrying out their tasks. Several working groups have been formed by the scientists. They include one on hoax busting to address disinformation spreading with respect to the coronavirus and one on science popularisation to develop material that explains concepts such as home quarantine. Other groups work on resources in



Scientists in India are working on analyses and apps in response to the coronavirus pandemic. **GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK**

Indian languages, mathematical models and apps.

"The group is not a forum for medical advice, and definitely no unverified claims. All analysis should be evidence-based," the group says. It is active on Twitter with the handle @IndSciCOVID, which is managed by Reeteka Sud, who works in genomics and stem cells at NIMHANS, Bengaluru.

Sutirth Dey, an evolutionary biologist based in Pune and editor of *Confluence*, an online forum provided by the Indian Academy of Sciences, has made available translations in 15 languages of the e-book, *The Pandemic Notebook*, which was originally published by *The Hindu* in English.

Mapping spaces

One of the ideas discussed by the group is to develop an app that can map spaces that can be used as shelters and share the data with the State government.

"We have got in touch with the Tamil Nadu State Health Systems Reforms Office and told them that we

are willing to develop any app that they feel the need for," says K.V. Subrahmanyam, a computer scientist with The Chennai Mathematical Institute.

Kameswari Chebrolu, a faculty member from the department of computer science at IIT Bombay, has helped adapt a platform she developed along with graduate students over the past two years to help in the present crisis.

This platform works through two channels - phone and WhatsApp to connect people in need with those who can provide help. In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, it can connect patients or people with symptoms to doctors. It may also connect elderly people with volunteers from NGOs to assist in chores such as grocery shopping. Currently, the group is in talks with King Edward Memorial Hospital in Mumbai towards developing this service for them. "We expect that the platform and apps will be functional by early next week," says Prof. Chebrolu.

Major news publishers unite to tackle misinformation

The BBC's Trusted News Initiative has global partners

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI**

The BBC's global Trusted News Initiative, in which *The Hindu* is a partner, will be extending its efforts to identifying false and potentially harmful information on the coronavirus pandemic.

The initiative will have in place a system in which partners will be able to alert each other to disinformation about COVID-19. This will enable partner platforms such as Facebook and Google to review promptly and the publishers in the network can ensure that the information is not republished.

The Trusted News Initiative, in which the BBC partners with other leading global

news and technology organisations, was announced in June last year.

COVID-19

Partners in the initiative will also flag content that undermines trust in partner news providers by identifying imposter content claiming to come from trusted brands. The partners within

the initiative are: the BBC, Facebook, Google/YouTube, Twitter, Microsoft, AFP, Reuters, European Broadcasting Union (EBU), *The Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Hindu*, CBC/Radio-Canada, First Draft and the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

"The BBC and all our partners feel an urgent sense of responsibility to give everybody the very best, most

accurate information, we can during this time of crisis. It's vital that we all have access to the facts so we know how to protect ourselves, our friends and families," said Tony Hall, Director-General of the BBC. "These are challenging times for each and every one of us. We'll do everything we can, working together, to stop disinformation about coronavirus in its tracks," Mr. Hall added.

Satish Gujral, master sculptor and veteran artist, dies at 94

His creativity spanned painting, murals and architecture

UMA NAIR

In the passing away of artist, architect, designer and sculptor Satish Gujral, India has lost a giant who had vision and energy and always remained relevant to his times.

Gujral died Thursday night at his home in New Delhi. He was 94.

Gujral's works traversed multiple modes and moorings and, over the decades, he drew inspiration from deities, the edifice of tribal forms, the gravitas of geometrical projections, animals as well as humans, to create a repertoire that entwined multiple references for his paintings as well as his sculptures. He beat all odds of hearing impairment to garner international recognition for his creativity that spanned painting, graphics, murals, sculpture and architecture.

Born in Jhelum in pre-Partition West Punjab in 1923, and trained at the Mayo School of Art and later (1944-47) at Sir J.J. School of Art in Bombay, Gujral overcame the turbulent early years, battling an illness that affected his hearing and the trauma of Partition, which left a deep impact on his artistic expression.

Rams, horses, bulls

One of his finest shows was *Metamorphosis* at the Lalit Kala Akademi in 2008. Other than his dulcet drawings done on a straw-coloured archival paper, his sculptures were an odyssey of their own making. Of particular grace and expressionist zeal were his rams, horses and bull sculptures. The horses and bulls were created with riding gear, meticulously moored. When asked to explain the symbolism, he said: "The animals are a symbol of energy, whereas the riding gear, the way it is



Fine lines: Satish Gujral in 2017. **SHANKER CHAKRAVARTY**

created to lie loose, is about energy in motion, something I need to reflect since I have been trapped into stillness."

Gujral's burnt wooden sculptures stand apart for their solidity of substance and the echoes of literature and folk accents and spirituality.

When asked about his burnt wood series that has references to Indian mythology even as it reflects an interplay of contemporary sensibility, Gujral had said: "One day, during Lohri, I saw sparks emerging from a burning log. The texture and colour attracted me, and immediately I knew that I wanted to work with burnt wood."

He was obsessed with the sooty blackness of burnt wood and, from it, created serpents and deities and forms, sprinkling a hint of crimson and coral beads and gold like glowing embers.

In his paintings, we could see subtleties of colour begin to play across through the surface like a mirage seen in the reaches of a dry desert. He gained international recognition for the "elusive quality that retreated into profundity as the viewer attempts to grasp it."

One of his best paintings is *Mourning En Masse* (1952) (casein on cardboard). His

brilliance lay not just in the textural facets but in the underlying solidity which seemed to melt into sliding planes of colour dispersing into an infinite horizon.

Belgian embassy design

One of his greatest design ventures was the Belgian Embassy in Delhi. It was picked out by the International Union of Architects as one of the 1,000 best buildings made in the 20th Century.

Gujral was also known for his generosity of spirit. In 2017, he donated a sculpture to Bikaner House because it supported his idea of public art. The idea of public art was experienced by him in its birthplace in Mexico. His tenure in Mexico brought him close to Frida Kahlo and Octavio Paz. Meeting Paz paved the way for his selection for a scholarship to study art in Mexico, and this changed his life.

The Mexican government conferred Gujral with "The Order of the Aztec Eagle", an honour given to foreigners rendering services to Mexico and humanity. The Belgian government honoured Gujral with the Order of the Crown for designing the Belgian Embassy in New Delhi in 1983.

(The writer is a noted art critic)

Doordarshan to re-telecast Ramayan

**SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI**

The *Ramayan* would be re-telecast by Doordarshan starting this Saturday, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said on Friday.

Sources said *Ramayan* was just one of the first in the series of old Doordarshan hits to make a reappearance.

The other programmes include B.R. Chopra's *Mahabharat*, *Chanakya*, *Upanishad Ganga*, Shahrukh Khan's iconic *Circus* and *Byomkesh Bakshi*. These will play on DD Bharati. The timings will be announced in the next few days.

"Happy to announce that on public demand, we are starting re-telecast of *Ramayan* from tomorrow, Saturday March 28 on DD National, One episode from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., another from 9 p.m. to 10 p.m.," Mr. Javadekar tweeted.

The announcement comes at a time when the country is going through a 21-day lockdown to contain the spread of COVID 19.

Original screening

The 74-episode *Ramayan* was telecast from January 25, 1987 to July 31, 1988 and the 90-episode *Mahabharat* from October 2, 1988 to June 24, 1990.

"DD was already in talks for reacquisition of iconic serials several weeks prior to this situation. That process will continue. Right now, the lockdown being the priority, the content has been shared in national interest," a senior Prasar Bharati official said. The rights to all these programmes continue to be held with the producers and it is only a one-time re-run. The re-telecast was made possible by the new content acquisition policy adopted by Doordarshan last November.

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