

Voda Idea puts AGR dues at ₹21K cr as Read calls on FM

Telco, seeking to make a new start, was advised to pay principal amount soon

MEGHA MANCHANDA
New Delhi, 6 March



FM Nirmala Sitharaman and Vodafone CEO Nick Read (centre) during a meeting in New Delhi on Friday. Read is visiting India at a time when the telecom industry is facing a crisis

Just a few hours before Vodafone Group CEO Nick Read's meeting with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and then Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Friday, the company announced that it had completed assessing its dues linked to adjusted gross revenue (AGR). At ₹21,533 crore, Vodafone Idea's calculation of the AGR liability turned out to be less than half of the government estimate.

While Read offered "no-comments" after his meetings with the ministers, sources in the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) indicated that the company was "positive" about India and that it wanted to make a "new and good beginning" in the country.

Read, who's maintained that it would be tough to continue as a going concern without relief from the government, was advised to pay up at least the principal amount of the AGR dues before March 17, the next date of the Supreme Court hearing. "We want Vodafone Idea to stay invested in India... With the digital push by the government of the day, there's enormous business opportunity in India. But there was need for the company to upgrade its technology," a top official said.

It is learnt that the Vodafone brass "acknowledged" not making provision for AGR dues in the books of accounts earlier.

"The company was in contempt of the Supreme Court, as it has not paid the entire amount assessed by the DoT. It

will at least have to pay the principal amount to avoid contempt from the apex court," the official added.

Earlier in the day, Vodafone Idea, the UK telco's joint venture with Kumar Mangalam Birla-led Idea, in a statement to the stock exchanges said, "The company has today filed its self-assessment of the AGR liabilities with the DoT. The self-assessment discloses the company's AGR liabilities to aggregate ₹21,533 crore, including a principal amount of ₹6,854 crore for the period from FY 2006-07 to FY 2018-19 and interest up to February 2020."

However, according to official calculations by the DoT, Vodafone Idea owes the government more than ₹53,000 crore as part of the AGR dues. Of

this, the company has paid ₹3,500 crore.

A few days ago, Vodafone had made a strong plea for setting off ₹8,000 crore of GST (goods and services tax) credits, a three-year moratorium along with 15-year staggered payment of AGR dues at a simple interest rate of 6 per cent, drastic cut in licence fee and fixing of a floor price for calls and data.

In December, Birla had said Vodafone Idea may have to shut if there was no relief on the statutory dues. "If we are not getting anything, then I think it is the end of the story for Vodafone Idea," Birla had said. "It does not make sense to put good money after bad... We will shut shop," Read in a post-earnings call a few months ago had made a similar point.

Last month, the apex court rejected a plea by companies such as Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea for extension in the payment schedule and asked them to deposit the full AGR dues, estimated at ₹1.47 trillion for the industry. It threatened to start contempt proceedings against top executives of these firms for non-payment.

Last October, the Supreme Court had upheld the government's definition of AGR, by which it calculates levies on telecom operators. The order dealt a blow to the telecom industry, which had for years argued that AGR should only include revenue from core telecom operations. Telecom operators now have to pay dues of the past 14 years along with interest and fines.

Promoters of IndusInd Bank to hike stake

ABHIJIT LELE
Mumbai, 6 March

IndusInd Bank's promoters will hike their stake in the private sector lender by buying extra shares from the market.

The promoters of the bank — IndusInd International Holdings (IIHL) and IndusInd — plan to acquire additional shares from open market in India. This will be within the overall regulatory cap prescribed for promoter holding in private banks, the bank informed the BSE on Friday.

Promoters held 14.38 per cent stake in the bank at the end of December 2019. IIHL had 10.59 per cent stake while IndusInd held 3.79 per cent.

On Friday, IndusInd stock closed 5.62 per cent lower at ₹1,014.3 per share on the BSE.

The bank will see a leadership change with Sumanth Kathpalia taking charge as managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) from March 24, for a three-year term.

Kathpalia will succeed current MD & CEO Romesh Sobti, who has been at the helm of affairs for over a decade now. Sobti's term as MD & CEO will end on March 23.



The stake hike will be within the overall regulatory cap prescribed for promoter holding in private banks

HDFC Bank in talks with Goldman Sachs' Talwar for CEO role

BLOOMBERG
New York/Mumbai, 6 March

Harit Talwar, the head of Goldman Sachs Group's consumer-banking business, is in the running for one of India's top banking jobs.

HDFC Bank, India's largest private-sector lender, has held talks with Talwar for the top role, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

The bank has been looking for a new leader to replace Aditya Puri, one of the longest-serving banking chiefs in India, whose term ends in October.

The Mumbai-based lender has a market capitalisation of about \$86 billion, giving it a bigger standing than major US banks like Goldman and Morgan Stanley. A spokesman for HDFC Bank declined to comment and Goldman representatives didn't immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

Talwar joined Goldman in 2015 and was the face of its push into consumer banking. The Wall Street giant had eschewed business with Main Street for most of its more than 150 years in existence. That has changed as it seeks new business lines to help boost growth.

Before joining Goldman, Talwar led the US cards division for Discover Financial Services. He also spent 15 years at Citigroup, with roles tied to cards, loans, and retail banking.

HDFC Bank has had a panel in place to find a successor to Puri, who has said his



Harit Talwar is now the head of Goldman Sachs Group's consumer-banking business

replacement should be better than him and shouldn't require 18 months of handholding for the job. The bank has largely skirted the crisis in India's shadow lending sector that fueled bad loans and weighed on the fortunes of some of its peers. However, it's vulnerable to weakening consumer demand as the nation's economic growth slows.

Puri, 69, has led HDFC Bank since 1994 when it was incorporated in Mumbai. It is India's largest private-sector bank both by assets and market value, and has more than 5,000 branches across almost 2,800 cities. The lender's profit rose 33 per cent to ₹7420 crore (\$1 billion) in the three months ended December 31.

BSNL loss widens over 2.5 times to ₹39K cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, 6 March

State-owned BSNL's loss swelled by over 2.5 times to ₹39,089 crore during the April-December 2019 period, Minister of State for Telecommunications Sanjay Dhotre has told the Rajya Sabha.

The public sector telecom firm had recorded a loss of ₹14,904 crore in the previous financial year 2018-19. "BSNL has informed that its total accumulated loss during the current financial year i.e. 2019-20 (upto December 31, 2019) is ₹39,089 crore," Dhotre said in a written reply to a query in the Rajya Sabha.

The government on October 23 last year approved a ₹68,751-crore revival package for loss-making BSNL and MTNL, including 4G spectrum allocation and voluntary retirement scheme (VRS).

The Union Cabinet also approved merger of the state-owned telecom firms and till the completion of the process, MTNL will operate as a subsidiary of BSNL, Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said here while sharing details of the revival package.

The package includes raising of ₹15,000 crore sovereign bonds to meet the immediate capital requirement of both the companies, 4G spectrum allocation worth ₹20,140 crore; Rs 29,937 crore for VRS covering 50 per cent of their employees; and ₹3,674 crore for goods and services tax that will be levied on allocation of radiowaves. Over 78,300 BSNL employees and 14,378 at MTNL have opted for VRS which is expected to significantly reduce financial burden from both the companies.

FinMin to Infosys: Make GSTN portal efficient

DILASHA SETH & DEBASIS MOHAPATRA
New Delhi/Bengaluru, 6 March

The finance ministry has asked Infosys to deliver on making the goods and services tax network (GSTN) portal efficient for tax payers, sources said.

The ministry told Infosys it was the company's responsibility to deliver satisfactory performance of the portal and it should meet expectations of the tax payers, the sources said.

The grievances of taxpayers are utmost priority and onus of its resolving lies on the Infosys, the IT major was told at a meeting on Friday, they said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman deliberated on the status of the portal to address grievances.

She also spoke to an Infosys representative for a short period. She told the representative that "Infosys has done so much for the country and we expect it to do much more for the smooth operations of GSTN".

According to sources, she also said the company could directly approach her if it was facing any problem.

Text messages sent to Revenue Secretary A B Pandey and GSTN Chief Executive Officer Prakash Kumar remained unanswered.

Kumar made a presentation on initiatives taken by GSTN to strengthen



Sitharaman said Infosys could directly approach her if it was facing any problem

and streamline the portal.

GSTN recently launched a new toll-free number for help desk, which will be operational 365 days for answering queries related to indirect tax.

The meeting discussed various measures for streamlining the GST return filing process, enhancing revenue and compliance management with a purpose to create synergy among central and state tax administrations.

Lincoln Pharma all set to foray into regulated markets

VINAY UMARJI
Ahmedabad, 6 March

Ahmedabad-based drugmaker Lincoln Pharmaceuticals plans to foray into regulated markets such as Europe, Australia, and Brazil, in line with its plan to grow overseas footprint.

The company has upgraded its manufacturing facility at Khatraj near Ahmedabad with ₹30-crore investment to meet regulatory standards of these countries. It is also planning a green field facility, which would be built as per regulated market standards to cater exclusively to these regions.

"Documents and dossiers are ready for products meant for regulated markets. Inspection by regulatory authorities from these markets is also in the process. We should be able to enter the countries with 5-6 products in the next six months," said Mahendra Patel, managing director, Lincoln Pharmaceuticals.

The company has developed 300-plus formulations in 15 therapeutic areas, with product/brand portfolio in anti-infective, respiratory system, gynaecology, cardio & CNS, anti-bacterial, anti-diabetic, anti-malaria among others. Of the 20 patent applications it has filed, the company has been awarded five patents.

More than 65 per cent of the company's revenues comes from exports, a share that could



go up further post Lincoln Pharma's foray into regulated markets.

With presence in more than 60 countries, the company has reported export sales of ₹174.7 crore for the nine months ended December 2019 and expect the same to cross ₹225 crore in FY20. However, with the company expanding portfolio in lifestyle and chronic, it is targeting sales of ₹500 crore in the next 2-3 years, said Patel.

"Going forward, we are building a strong portfolio in lifestyle and chronic segment, especially in women health care and dermatology, to complement our strong presence in acute segment," said Patel, adding that the company was also planning to apply for a global patent for this novel solution.

Meanwhile, the company recently approved amalgamation of Lincoln Parenteral (subsidiary) with Lincoln Pharmaceuticals. The restructuring aims to bring synergies for both companies.

Burmans of Dabur hold 9.26% in Eveready

AVISHEK RAKSHIT & ISHITA AVAN DUTT
Kolkata, 6 March

The Burmans of Dabur have increased their holding by another 3.34 per cent in Eveready Industries in the past two days. After the transaction, the Burman family's holding in India's largest battery maker stands at 9.26 per cent.

The investment in Eveready has been furthered via Guardian Advisors. This portfolio management firm, owned by Arjun Lamba and others, manages investment for the Burmans and other families. Sources said this investment in Eveready was on behalf of the Burman family.

In a regulatory filing with the BSE, Guardian Advisors, while disclosing the deal, said the acquisition of the stake was via open market and 2,429,068 shares accounting for 3.34 per cent of the total were acquired. Earlier, asked about the Burman family's interest in Eveready, Mohit Burman, vice-chairman at Dabur India, had stated the family believes Eveready is a strong brand and a market leader in its domain which is the primary factor behind increasing its stake.

"The group (Williamson Magor) is going through a tough time and this has even reflected on its stock price. But the company, brand and its core business remain intact," Burman had stated earlier.

Eveready is part of the Williamson Magor Group (WMG), which also owns firms such as McLeod Russel, McNally



The Burmans may consider further investments into Eveready depending on how the company performs, sources said

Bharat Engineering, and others.

Sources said the Burmans might consider further investments into Eveready depending on how the company performs. The source pointed out that the Burmans are yet to decide if the investment would be strategic in nature or will be long-term investment. The stock saw erosion from around ₹405 apiece during March 2018 to the current level of ₹61, mainly because of inter-corporate deposits to group companies and the uncertainty of repayments.

After the sale of its loss-making tea business to Madhu Jayanti International last year, Eveready, which has over 50 per cent

market share in the battery market in India, has been focusing on its core business, besides focus on other verticals like flashlights, luminaries, and appliances.

During the third quarter of the current financial year, Eveready registered a 16 per cent decline in its operating revenue at ₹317 crore, and its Ebitda margin for the core battery business stood at 23 per cent. The Ebitda margin for flashlights also stood at 14 per cent.

The company also sold land in Chennai and Hyderabad to raise money worth ₹200 crore primarily to pay off debts of around ₹400 crore.

NCLT asked to decide on Lakshmi Cotsyn liquidation within 10 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, 6 March

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has asked the Allahabad bench of the NCLT to decide within 10 days on the liquidation of Kanpur-based textile manufacturer Lakshmi Cotsyn.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Bansilal Bhat and Shresha Merla

observed that plea for liquidation of Lakshmi Cotsyn is pending before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on the pretext of one or the other miscellaneous application being filed in the matter.

"Such conduct on the part of different characters cannot be permitted to thwart the course of insolvency resolution proceedings under I&B Code," it said.

Boeing's current CEO blames predecessor for MAX mess

AFP/PTI
New York, 6 March

Boeing Chief Executive David Calhoun largely blamed his predecessor for the crisis over the 737 MAX, which remains grounded after two deadly crashes, in an interview published on Thursday.

Calhoun, a longstanding board member who took over as chief executive on January 13, told the New York Times that the problems at Boeing were even bigger than he anticipated.

"It's more than I imagined it would be, honestly," Calhoun said. "And it speaks to the weaknesses of our leadership." He said predecessor Dennis Muilenburg had ramped up Boeing's plane production too quickly.

"I'll never be able to judge what motivated Dennis, whether it was a stock price that was going to continue to go up and up, or whether it was just beating the other guy to the next rate increase," he said.

"If anybody ran over the rainbow for the pot of gold on stock, it would have been him." The MAX has been grounded since March 2019 following two crashes that killed 346 people. March 10 marks the one-year anniversary of the second crash on an Ethiopian Airlines plane.

A board member since 2009,



On Thursday, Boeing commercial plane chief Stan Deal told a Washington aviation conference that the company was still targeting mid-2020 to win regulatory approval for the MAX

Calhoun was named chairman in October when Boeing stripped Muilenburg of that role.

On December 23, Boeing named Calhoun as CEO, finally ousting Muilenburg entirely, and saying the company intended to "restore confidence" and "repair relationships with regulators, customers and all other

stakeholders." Calhoun remains on the board, but Lawrence Kellner was named as non-executive chairman as part of the December shakeup.

Calhoun, who had publicly praised Muilenburg prior to the ouster, appeared in the interview to downplay board responsibility for the crisis.

Calhoun told the newspaper that he and the rest of the board did not question Muilenburg after the first MAX crash in October 2018 of a Lion Air plane in Indonesia and that the board trusted Muilenburg's instincts as an engineer and longtime Boeing executive.

"If we were complacent in any way, maybe, maybe not, I don't know," Calhoun said. "We supported a CEO who was willing and whose history would suggest that he might be really good at taking a few more risks." The newspaper also reported that Calhoun implied that pilots were partly to blame for the crashes, saying in Indonesia and Ethiopia, "pilots don't have anywhere near the experience that they have here in the US." Pilots groups criticized Muilenburg for blaming pilots for the accidents. Investigations of the crashes have pointed at a flight handling system that malfunctioned and made the plane impossible to control.

Boeing has been developing new software and training in an effort to win regulatory approval to resume flights on the MAX.

On Thursday, Boeing commercial plane chief Stan Deal told a Washington aviation conference that the company was still targeting mid-2020 to win regulatory approval for the MAX.

Exxon CEO Woods calls rivals' climate goals a 'beauty competition'

BLOOMBERG
6 March

Exxon Mobil dismissed long-term pledges by some of its Big Oil rivals to reduce carbon dioxide emissions as nothing more than a "beauty competition" that would do little to halt climate change.

Energy companies need to focus on global, systemic efforts to reduce greenhouse gases, rather than just replacing their own emissions-heavy assets with cleaner ones to make themselves look good, Chief Executive Officer Darren Woods said in New York on Thursday.

"Individual companies setting targets and then selling assets to another company so that their portfolio has a different carbon intensity has not solved the problem for the world," Woods said at Exxon's analyst day. Exxon is focused on "taking steps to solve the problem for society as a whole and not try and get into a beauty competition."

Woods' remarks, which echo those made by Chevron Corp. CEO Mike Wirth earlier this week, underscore the divide between U.S. and European oil explorers in their approach to addressing climate change. Both American companies see oil and gas demand growing for decades and refuse to compete in a

crowded market for renewables where they have little expertise.

Much-derided plastic even came in for some praise, with Exxon Senior Vice President Jack Williams arguing that it's "a net benefit to society and to the environment."

By contrast Royal Dutch Shell Plc, Repsol SA and Eni SpA have pledged to make large reductions in carbon emissions over the long term, while last month BP Plc went a step further with a target to become carbon neutral by 2050.

Companies changing their production mix "doesn't change the demand" for oil and gas, Woods said. "If you don't have a viable alternative set, all you're doing is moving out from one company or one country to someplace else. It doesn't solve the problem."

Exxon sees world demand for oil and gas growing substantially out to 2040, even under the goals of the Paris Agreement, which seeks to limit temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-

industrial levels. Renewables such as wind and solar won't be enough to meet demand growth on their own, according to Exxon.

In any case, it remains to be seen whether oil giants can generate big profits by producing carbon-free energy. Solar, wind and battery storage projects haven't shown they can fund the huge dividends that underpins the industry's investment case.

To underscore his point, Woods said that global emissions have risen 4 per cent since the Paris Agreement was signed four years ago and energy demand is up 6 per cent.

For the energy industry to truly address climate change, Woods believes major technological breakthroughs are needed in the fields of carbon capture, alternative fuels in transport and re-thinking industrial processes. The company is investing in all of these fields but admits that progress will take time.

Exxon is also taking steps to reduce emissions from its own operations including reducing methane emissions and gas flaring.

Energy firms need to focus on global, systemic efforts to reduce greenhouse gases, rather than just replacing their own emissions-heavy assets with cleaner ones to make themselves look good, CEO Darren Woods said in New York on Thursday

ON A MISSION



Britain's PM Boris Johnson visits the Mologic Laboratory in London, on Friday. Mologic has won a funding to come up with a coronavirus testing kit that can be used by health workers in developing countries where there is sparse access to specialised laboratory facilities.

PHOTO: API/PTI

Gunmen kill 32 in Afghanistan

API/PTI
Kabul, 6 March

Gunmen opened fire on Friday at a ceremony in Afghanistan's capital attended by prominent political leaders, killing at least 32 people and wounding dozens before the two attackers were slain by police, officials said.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack on its website. Afghanistan's upstart IS affiliate has declared war on the country's minority Shiites. Many of those at the ceremony were Shiites because it was commemorating the 1995 slaying of Abdul Ali Mazari, the leader of Afghanistan's ethnic Hazaras, who are mostly Shiite.

The Taliban said they were not involved in the attack, which came less than a week after the US and the group signed an ambitious peace deal that lays out a path for the withdrawal of American forces from the country.

Interior Ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said 32 people were killed and 81 wounded in the attack in the Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood of Kabul. The Health Ministry also

reported 32 people were killed but said 58 were wounded. Opposition leader Abdullah Abdullah, who is the country's chief executive and was a top contender in last year's presidential election, was among several prominent political officials who attended the ceremony but left before the attack and were unhurt.

Several TV journalists were covering the ceremony inside a walled compound when the gunmen began shooting, and a reporter and a cameraman for a local broadcaster were among the wounded. Karim Khalili, the chief of Afghanistan's high peace council, was delivering a speech when the gunfire interrupted him. He was not hurt and later went on TV to denounce the violence.

Several witnesses said that, amid the panic, members of the security forces guarding the event had fired on civilians in the crowd.

"Individuals with military uniforms who were there targeted people, there were casualties, dead and wounded," said witness Ghulam Mohammad, according to Associated Press video.

Suicide attackers strike outside US embassy in Tunisian capital

A double suicide attack shook the Tunisian capital Tunis on Friday as assailants wounded six people including police guarding the US embassy, authorities said. An explosion rocked the Berges du Lac district where the embassy is located around midday, causing panic among pedestrians and motorists in the area.

Two assailants died in the attack, the first to hit the capital since June 2019, according to officials. Police said one attacker tried to enter the diplomatic mission but was prevented by police guarding it.

A policeman who witnessed the attack said a suicide bomber who was travelling on a motorcycle was also killed.

AFP/PTI

CEOs beware, shareholders want you to go green fast

BLOOMBERG
6 March

Most listed companies are duty bound to hold a general meeting for all shareholders at least once a year. They're typically dull gatherings at which the annual report gets signed off and the board gets reinstated. In recent years, disputes about executive pay have triggered some fireworks. This year's round of UK conferences could be spicier than usual, as asset managers press the companies they invest in to reveal more about the risks posed to their businesses by the climate crisis.

UK fund managers have been flexing their muscles more frequently in recent years. The Investment Association, which represents 250 UK asset managers overseeing 7.7 trillion pounds (\$10 trillion), keeps a scorecard of how many company resolutions meet objections from at least 20 per cent of shareholders, or which the board withdraws before a vote, adding them to what it calls its public register.

In the three years it's been compiling the data, the number of companies facing what's deemed "significant shareholder dissent" has increased by almost 10 per cent, while the number of individual resolutions facing opposition has grown by about 20 per cent. Last year, about a quarter of the 620 or so companies on the FTSE All-Share index made it onto the Investment Association's register.

Traditionally, the main battleground has been executive pay, with more than a third of last year's list comprised of companies falling foul of investors on remuneration. But this year, the Investment Association will start pressing UK companies to align with the Task Force for Climate-Related Financial Disclosures, an initiative set up by the Financial Stability Board and chaired by Michael Bloomberg, the founder and majority owner of Bloomberg LP, the parent company of Bloomberg News.



The association is asking British companies to detail how they assess climate-related risks, what steps they're taking to mitigate those impacts and what metrics they use to measure progress. Given that its members own about a third of the UK stock market, its views carry a lot of clout.

At least one major UK company already faces a hard-hitting resolution aimed at making it more green. Amundi SA, Europe's biggest fund manager with more than 1.6 trillion euros, and Jupiter Fund Management Plc are among investors in Barclays Plc planning to back a resolution in May asking the UK bank to halt loans to energy companies that aren't aligned with the Paris Agreement on climate goals. The move is being coordinated by the non-profit group ShareAction.

The increased focus on the desire for money to do well socially as well as financially is a global phenomenon. Earlier this week, three of the world's biggest pension funds — California State Teachers' Retirement System, Japan's Government Pension Fund and the UK's university steward USS Investment Management — issued a joint statement applauding efforts to

incorporate environmental, social and governance issues in portfolio construction. "Skeptics that continue to question the growing role of sustainability within the global investment community should realize that they are quickly becoming the minority," the trio said.

Adding to the drumbeat, Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the world's biggest with about \$1.1 trillion in assets, said earlier this week it wants the companies it invests in "to go from words to numbers in their sustainability reporting." For companies it deems to be falling short, it will consider backing what it called "a well-founded shareholder proposal calling for reasonable disclosure."

This shift in attitudes isn't because investors have signed up to the Extinction Rebellion movement and started worshipping teen climate icon Greta Thunberg. It's because the fund management community has come round to the view that what's happening to the environment poses a clear and present danger to the long-term viability of many of the companies it invests in. It's a capitalist response to a financial threat.

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK



The number of coronavirus cases in India have increased sharply from six to 31 this week

PHOTO:PTI

Global GDP may lose \$77-347 bn, says ADB

Virus could wipe more than \$200 bn off Asia Pacific economies this year: S&P

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, 6 March

The coronavirus outbreak has the potential to significantly harm the Asian economies, and the global economy may suffer losses of \$77-347 billion, Asian Development Bank said on Friday. In a separate report, S&P Global Ratings said the outbreak could wipe more than \$200 billion off Asia Pacific economies this year. ADB said the outbreak may impact developing Asian economies through numerous channels, including sharp declines in domestic demand, lower tourism and business travel, trade and production linkages, supply disruptions, and health effects. "The magnitude of the economic losses will depend on how the outbreak evolves. The range of scenarios explored in the analysis suggests a global impact in the range of \$77-347 billion, or 0.1-0.4 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP)."

"In a moderate scenario, where precautionary behaviours and restrictions such as travel bans start easing three months after the outbreak intensified and restrictions were imposed in late January, global losses could reach \$156 billion, or 0.2 per cent of global GDP," ADB said. China would account for \$103 billion of those losses, or 0.8 per cent of its GDP. The rest of developing Asia would lose \$22 billion, or 0.2 per cent of its GDP. S&P Global Ratings said, in a worst-case scenario, China could see growth of less than 3 per cent, while Japan, Australia, and Hong Kong could "flirt with recession".

ADB Chief Economist Yasuyuki Sawada said: "There are many uncertainties about COVID-19, including its economic impact. This requires the use of multiple scenarios to provide a clearer

picture of potential losses. We hope this analysis can support governments as they prepare clear and decisive responses to mitigate the human and economic impacts of this outbreak."

The Manila-headquartered multi-lateral funding agency had in February announced \$4 million assistance for Asian countries to fight the deadly virus, that has claimed over 3,000 lives globally. The ADB analysis takes into account various scenarios considered, estimated impact on individual developing Asian economies, the sectors within these economies including a hypothetical "worst case" scenario for a given economy in the event of a significant outbreak.

ADB said the analysis is meant to provide guidance for governments as they consider appropriate responses. On February 7, it had announced \$2 million support to enhance detection, prevention, and response in China and the Greater Mekong Subregion followed by another \$2 million on February 26 to support response in all its developing members.

Besides, a CNY130 million (\$18.6 million) private sector loan was signed on February 25, to Wuhan-based pharmaceutical distributor Jointown Pharmaceutical Group to support the continued supply of essential medicines and personal protective equipment. ADB also said it stands ready to provide further support to its developing members in their efforts to respond to the adverse impact of COVID-19. "ADB will use appropriate means to address the identified needs including through existing and new financial assistance, emergency assistance lending, policy-based lending, private sector investment, and knowledge and technical assistance."

THE INDIA ANGLE

The coronavirus outbreak in China will not have much impact on the Indian economy, except in the worst-case scenario, according to the estimates made by the staff of the Asian Development Bank. However, the worst-case scenario is only hypothetical in nature

INDIVIDUAL DHASMANA (As % of GDP)	INDIVIDUAL DHASMANA (As % of GDP)			
	Best case	Moderate case	Worse case	Hypothetical worst case
Agriculture, mining and quarrying	0	0	-0.01	-0.25
Business, trade, personnel and public savings	0	-0.01	-0.01	-0.58
Hotel, restaurants and other personal services	0	-0.01	-0.01	-0.07
Light/heavy manufacturing, utilities and construction	0	0	-0.01	-0.12
Transport services	0	0	0	-0.07

Note: Best case scenario is when travel ban and fall in domestic demand lasts for two months, in moderate case it lasts for three months, in worse case it is for Source: Asian Development Bank staff estimates

Foreign exchange reserves a cushion for India against virus impact: RBI governor

SUBRATA PANDA
Mumbai, 6 March

Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das (pictured) has asked the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to consider launching non-stigmatised currency swap lines to ease possible liquidity and financing constraints for countries that have been adversely affected by coronavirus (COVID-19). It will also preserve their access to international capital markets.

"The point is a coordinated swap line will act as a second line of defence to bolster national reserves across countries and strengthen their individual abilities to safeguard against risks that coronavirus may entail," Das said. He stressed that a swap

line was critical from the point of view of preserving global financial stability. The global economy has been hit hard by COVID-19. According to IMF projections, the outbreak's impact on the global economy will be 0.1 per cent and 0.4 per cent on the Chinese economy. As far as India is concerned, Das said, "India will be able to respond to whatever challenges emerge out of the coronavirus problem. We don't have a problem because our foreign exchange reserves are quite robust".

Although India is much more integrated with the global economy than it was 10-20 years ago, it is not as integrated in the global value chain as some other countries. So, to that extent, India remains insulated, he said. However, certain sectors will face challenges because they export to China.



Potential drug target against infection identified: Researchers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Berlin, 6 March

Researchers have identified a protein present in the human body which they claim is important for the entry of the novel coronavirus into lung cells, an advance that may lead to a novel drug target for preventing the deadly disease.

The researchers, including those from Deutsches Primatenzentrum in Germany, said the new coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, has spread worldwide, causing respiratory disease called COVID-19 in people — leading to over 3,000 deaths, and infecting more than 90,000 individuals.

According to the study, published in the journal Cell, the virus has been spreading since December 2019, and is closely related to the SARS coronavirus that caused the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome pandemic in 2002-2003.

It noted that currently no vaccines or drugs are available to combat these viruses. The scientists sought to find out how the new coronavirus entered host cells, and how this process can be blocked.

They identified a cellular protein that is important for the entry of the novel coronavirus into lung cells.



The scientists have identified a cellular protein that is important for the entry of the novel coronavirus into lung cells

"Our results show that SARS-CoV-2 requires the protease TMPRSS2, which is present in the human body, to enter cells," said Stefan Pohlmann, study co-author from the German Primate Center. "This protease is a potential target for therapeutic intervention," Pohlmann said. The researchers said a drug camostat mesilate — approved in Japan for use in pancreatic inflammation — is known to inhibit the protease TMPRSS2.

They investigated whether this drug can also prevent COVID-19.

"We have tested SARS-CoV-2 isolated from a patient and found that camostat mesilate blocks entry of the virus into lung cells," said Markus Hoffmann, another co-author of the study. "Our results suggest that camostat mesilate might also protect against COVID-19. This should be investigated in clinical trials," Hoffmann said.

INDIA CASES NOW AT 31, OVER 100,000 INFECTED GLOBALLY

INDIA

- India's total number of confirmed cases rose to 31, after a person from Delhi with a history of travel to Thailand and Malaysia tested positive
- 11 family members of the man have been home-quarantined
- Tourism ministry tracking whereabouts of 450 Iranian tourists who entered the country in Feb
- Army to expand quarantine facilities at multiple locations
- Coronavirus kits to be sold only on doctors' prescription: FDA
- Attari-Wagah border

ceremony to be conducted without public presence: BSF

- Delhi fashion week, Shooting World Cup postponed

WORLD

- China may soon lift quarantine on virus-hit Hubei
- Bhutan bars tourists after first case; Cameroon, the occupied West Bank, Serbia, Togo and the Vatican announce first cases
- Iran reports 17 new coronavirus deaths, 124 in total
- Netherlands records first death
- Italy reports 49 more deaths; total at 197



Hotels not allowing tourists to check in despite prior bookings

ANESH PHADNIS

Mumbai, 6 March

Foreign tourists, particularly from Italy, South Korea, and Japan are being denied rooms in hotels as panic builds up over the rise of coronavirus cases in the country.

The issue was flagged by the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) in a meeting with the ministry of tourism on Thursday.

"We have received complaints from tour operators from Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. In Agra, hotels are refusing rooms to Italian tourists. In Rajasthan, Italian tourists are being asked by hotels to undergo medical examinations before check-in despite showing no symptoms of coronavirus," said IATO president Pronab Sarkar. Till now 31 cases have been detected in India. "The tourism ministry has assured that communication is being sent to states to see that tourists are not harassed. Also, the health ministry is being asked to issue a travel advisory for those not affected by the virus," Sarkar said.

"Hotels could get thermal scanners to screen their guests," said Subhash Goyal, chairman of STIC Travel Group.

IATO has also requested the tourism ministry to set up a 24x7 control room and an online mechanism to assist foreign visitors in case of an emergency.

"Due to the sharp drop in business, it will become difficult for travel agents to survive. Many jobs will be at stake. The government should provide tax rebates for travel agents and reduction and waiver in interest rates," said Jyoti Mayal of Travel Agents Association of India.

Gold shoots up ₹1,236 in a day

RAJESH BHAYANI
Mumbai, 6 March



The yellow metal witnessed a rally at Mumbai's physical market on Friday with standard gold (995) closing over 2.4 per cent at ₹44,237 per 10 gram, which is ₹1,236 higher than Thursday's rate. The yellow metal has seen a ₹2,000 jump this week and over ₹3,000 surge in the last two weeks.

After the 3 per cent goods and services tax (GST), price of the yellow metal crossed the ₹45,000-mark on Friday. Silver went up over 2 per cent to close at ₹47,125 per kg.

Gold has also been unshaken internationally by the coronavirus outbreak, with prices heading towards a multi-year high. Experts are looking at a price of \$1,700 in the near term, although last week the yellow metal fell sharply before moving to the \$1,680 level.

Gold in India is trading at a huge discount compared to import rates. In early hours, gold was trading at around 1 per cent discount. During the day, the discount was at 1.5 per cent or \$16-22 per ounce.

Jewellers said only forced demand for the precious metal has been seen. Otherwise, demand has almost evaporated. Their expectation is that once all central banks announce their stimulus packages, the market may see some profit booking. So, prices could fall a bit after customers enter the market again.

The international market has seen another jump of over \$1,690 per ounce on Friday, a \$100 rise in three days, after Fed's rate hike.

The price started moving up after California declared a state of emergency amid the outbreak that killed 11 Americans so far and infected 100 others.

Metal Focus, a London-based consultancy, said in its latest report on gold that apart from the virus spread and

Federal Reserve sharply cutting interest rates, "impact of political turmoil and geopolitical tensions also proved positive for the metal. Among various problems, some that stand out include uncertainties ahead of the US presidential election, uncertainties surrounding the Brexit negotiations and ongoing tension across the Middle East."

The World Gold Council data released on Thursday night also shows that global gold exchange-traded funds (gold ETFs) and similar products added \$4.5 billion, or net inflows of \$4.9 billion, across all regions in February.

This boosted holdings to new all-time highs of 3,033 tonnes.

With the higher gold price, ETFs gave 4.4 per cent returns in a month, breaching the previous record high in September 2012.

The council also stated that in 2012, gold price was 10 per cent higher than the current levels and US investors have not yet increased their gold allocations as much as they did that year.

Metal Focus said that, political and economic conditions suggest that, "institutional investors' appetite for gold will go up further. Investor positions are high in both tonnage and value terms at present."

They are far lower than during previous peaks. This will leave considerable room for further rotation by mainstream investors in gold from stock and bond markets."

Markets extend slump; oil down 10% intra-day

World stock markets tumbled on Friday as fears of economic damage intensified with the global tally of coronavirus cases crossing 100,000. Brent crude, too, fell as much as 10 per cent intra-day, before recording a minor recovery.

In the US, the Dow Jones shed more than 500 points and the S&P500 fell for the tenth time in the past 12 sessions as the virus crippled supply chains and prompted a sharp cut to

global economic growth forecasts for 2020.

At 11.30 pm IST, the Dow Jones was down 513 points or 1.96 per cent, and the S&P500 was down 75 points or 2.50 per cent. The Nasdaq Composite was down 240 points or 2.72 per cent. The 10-year US treasury yield, too, fell to a new all-time low under 0.7 per cent, as flight to bonds continued.

The FTSE, DAX and European stocks continued their

slide (most of them fell over 3 per cent) after the Japanese market dropped to a six-month low, with 97 per cent of shares on the Tokyo exchange's main board in the red. Airline and travel stocks have been among the worst affected as people cancelled non-essential travel.

Meanwhile, a three-year pact between Opec and Russia ended in acrimony after Moscow refused to support deeper oil cuts to cope with the

outbreak of coronavirus and Opec responded by removing all limits on its own production.

Oil prices plunged 10 per cent as the development revived fears of a 2014 price crash, when Saudi Arabia and Russia fought for market share with US shale oil producers, which have never participated in output limiting pacts.

Brent crude was trading at \$46.36/barrel (down 7.84 per cent) at 11.46 pm IST. AGENCIES

7 MARCH 2020

Business Standard



VIRAL TROUBLE

Panic looms large, perspective is in short supply. Devangshu Datta makes sense of Covid-19

The coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, which causes the disease Covid-19, is much less lethal than earlier scourges like Nipah or Ebola. But it is lethal nonetheless, and has dealt a hard knock to the global economy. It has also infected global mind-space in appropriately viral fashion: websites dealing in the hardcore now feature videos of people making out in quarantine, wearing hazard suits and masks!

China, where the first cases emerged, is the world's industrial hub and home to one-sixth of its population. Excellent transport linkages led to a quick spread and once China took emergency measures to self-quarantine, global supply chains started breaking down. China's lockdown has hit electronics, automobiles and, ironically, pharmaceuticals, since Hubei is a major global hub for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, or APIs.

Three months down the line, there have been deaths in Iran, Italy (which normally has open borders with the rest of the EU) and in other First World countries like Japan, South Korea and USA. The count of the infected (probably understated) is around 95,000 and the number of deaths crossed 3,000 in early March.

The World Health Organisation guesses that the mortality rate is around 3.4 per cent. This number is subject to change. Mortality may spike as the disease hits countries with poor public health systems but we may also discover that far more people are infected, and the mortality rate is actually lower.

Epidemiological studies suggest the infection rate (RO or "R nought" in the jargon) may be about 2.8, meaning 10 infected persons will infect 28 more. (Flu has an RO of 1.3). The RO is also subject to change as we get better stats. The best guess is an RO of somewhere between 2 and 3. Worryingly, it seems that somebody who survives one bout of Covid-19 doesn't develop immunity — people can be re-infected.

The virus is zoonotic. It started in an animal and mutated to attack humans. It's likely to have originated in bats, since it shares a large proportion of DNA with the SARS virus, which originated in bats and caused many deaths between 2002 and 2004. But we don't know which animal transmitted it to humans, and how.

We don't know how the infection propagates (is it aerial, or waterborne, for example)

and there may be a long period when carriers have no symptoms. Infected persons can go for 14 days without symptoms. There are no medicines that work effectively, though candidate drugs like remdesivir are being tested. As the disease runs its course, somebody who's in poor health, or elderly, is at greater risk of dying.

India is just waking up to the possibility of a Covid-19 epidemic. Dealing with an epidemic, or ideally preventing one, requires coordinated actions by multiple authorities. It can only be done where there's a good public health system, including sufficient quarantine capacity, enough labs, skilled testers and robust detection mechanisms.

On paper, India has such systems. In practice, systems vary hugely in terms of efficiency between states. Kerala has an excellent public health system, which draws comparison with First World countries; but kids die in large numbers routinely in Uttar Pradesh.

So what are India's institutional systems for handling epidemics? The legal justifications for imposing emergency measures like shutting down schools, retracting visas for travellers, screening and quarantining populations en masse, importing medicines, protective gear, scanners, reagents, et cetera, are based on the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897.

The nodal agency for studying epidemic diseases is the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), which issues advice. The National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune is a key player when it comes to research.

Various labs around the country have the requisite certification of BSL-2, or better, where samples of a disease such as this can be tested. According to a briefing by the health minister, India can test up to 25,000 samples a day and it is importing gear to protect about 350,000 healthcare professionals.

Right now, 11 labs have the requisite capacity and BSL-2 certification to test for SARS-CoV-2. Another eight will be ramped up to test samples. Unfortunately, there is no easy one-shot blood test. Sputum testing requires PCR machines (also called thermal cyclers) to check for chemical reactions called PCR (Polymerase Chain Reactions) and RTPCR (Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reactions), when reagents are introduced to samples. PCR

machines, reagents and test kits are being imported. The test takes around four hours and the technician has to be well-trained.

So, a potential victim must be quarantined, "just in case", until a sample can be tested. Testing could be one bottleneck because there's likely to be a global shortage of supplies, and technicians must be trained. Quarantine facilities across the country could be another bottleneck, for obvious reasons.

Tracking points of contact for a confirmed case and screening people at risk will be a monstrous task. Even China, with its utter disregard for fundamental rights and huge surveillance network, has struggled to do this.

Developing a vaccine for a virus can take several years. While a lot of resources are being thrown into vaccine development, and tools for genomic studies have improved, there are no guarantees that there will be a vaccine this year, or the next, for that matter. India missed the bus in terms of genomic research capacities because it did not participate in the human genome project. So we will depend on global R&D in this regard.

The disease could go down several paths. One possibility, the least likely, is that it will just disappear. The most likely is that, like other coronaviruses, it will have seasonal impact. Many coronaviruses can't handle high temperatures well, though some can — flu is more likely to occur in winter. In that case, infections will ease off once summer arrives and spiral up again next winter.

Misinformation and panic are dangerous things. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Ayush seems to have endorsed some homeopathic pills, which are useless. As social media jokes go, eating onion and garlic to keep people away will actually work better! One thing you can do is wash your hands a lot, and thoroughly, with soap. The virus is protected by a layer of protein which is removed by soap. This is about the best protective measure at the moment.

Let's hope that summer helps burn the virus out.

The panic, it's catching

TE NARASIMHAN, ANEESH PHADNIS, SOHINI DAS, RAGHAVENDRA KAMATH, ADITI DIVEKAR & NIKITA PURI

Inside the offices of a global investment bank in Mumbai, panic stalks the floors. Teams are being split up and separated into colour-coded zones, travel plans are on hold and conferences are being cancelled. "We serve our global offices on a number of functions and cannot afford to let work stall. As a precaution, key teams have been segregated so that if one person is infected, we don't have to quarantine the entire lot," says a senior executive at the organisation. Of a team of five, for instance, three are now working in one building and two in another.

The bank's Hong Kong office is locked down, throwing planned projects and timelines out of whack. And where there were at least 50 trips a month to and from offices around the world, travel has dwindled to barely five flights.

Inside the India offices of another multinational company, employees are tagged by numbers: L0, L1 and L2. L0 is a confirmed infection; L1 are those who have been in contact with L0; and L2 are those who were in contact with L1. People who have travelled anywhere in Asia in the past few months have been asked to work from home and submit their travel itineraries, if any, for the months ahead.

While businesses have taken a hit, the crisis has also uncovered a human side to the cold and abstract face of globalisation.

T Thirukumaran, a mid-sized garment exporter, runs a firm called Estee Exports Factory in Tirupur that buys buttons and zips from small suppliers in Guangzhou in southern China. He is having to charter his supplies out by special flights, spending three to four times more on freight. "How can I ask my Chinese supplier to bear this cost? He is already suffering so much," he says. So he will take the hit, because he is too small to negotiate a better deal with his buyers too.

Like him, a number of exporters, big and small, are absorbing the huge costs of using charter flights. In the last 10 days, a leading courier company is believed to have moved 142 tonnes of cargo from China to Mumbai.

Small and medium logistics companies have their own stories of risk and run. But big companies such as DHL and Fedex say that the international protocol for containment of Covid-19 lays down clear rules on health and safety of pilots, team members and customers. It is slowing down business, but is important to curb the spread of the virus, they reason.

Small and mid-sized real estate firms in Mumbai have also defined strict protocols. At Vatika Business Centre in a Mumbai suburb, the office is dotted with precautionary signs and sanitisers. At another, M3M Group, there have been awareness programmes for construction workers. Almost every office is putting visitors through a preliminary screening about their recent travels and asking employees to declare their health status.

Across cities, parties are being rescheduled and holidays postponed. The CEO of a mid-sized pharmaceutical firm says his nephew and niece have had to back out of a ski trip to Switzerland and there is no word on getting a refund on the bookings yet. He is planning to cancel an upcoming employee meet in Mumbai. In another drug firm, one of the sectors worst affected by the crisis, the CEO has been quarantined because he has just returned from a holiday in Egypt, considered to be a safe destination but the company's taking no chances.

At airports, the gateways to the virus, inbound passengers are being delayed by two to four hours between landing and leaving the premises. The delays are likely to get longer with the airport authorities instructing that all passengers on incoming international flights be screened. And the ground staff, including catering, cleaning and security, will enter an aircraft only after all arriving passengers have been screened and cleared by the airport health organisation.

At Mumbai airport, screening counters have been set up in the pre-immigration space. Doctors and paramedics, 65 of them for now, are on duty in three shifts round the clock. Any suspected case is taken out of the airport to the ambulance through a separate corridor and ferried straight to hospital for testing.

The demand for face masks has, meanwhile, skyrocketed across India. In a busy neighbourhood in Bengaluru, a chemist sells a long-time customer four N95 masks for ₹180 each, while declaring: "They cost ₹150, I am getting them for ₹160. You're lucky because I'm selling this to others for ₹400; they are really in short supply."

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

COVID-19 IN NUMBERS



3,000 Estimated deaths, globally
25,000 Samples India can test every day

3.4% Mortality rate, according to WHO

PREVENTION PROTOCOL



- ▶ Wash your hands often, and thoroughly, with soap.
- ▶ Avoid public spaces if you are unwell and work from home if you display any symptoms.
- ▶ Only patients and caregivers need protective gear such as masks.
- ▶ Parents, try not to panic. A WHO report says people under 19 experience a 'relatively low attack rate'



PHOTOS: KAMLESH PEDNEKAR



Turning point

An Israeli-American ballet teacher is helping popularise the classical dance among the young and restless of Mumbai, writes Ranjita Ganesan

Yehuda Maor's jaw drops. He is reliving a moment from his childhood in the 1950s when, aged six or seven, he had just seen the film version of a Bolshoi Ballet recital of *Swan Lake*. "It was just 'Wow'. I can't explain," says the Israeli-American, still wide-eyed some 70 years later. He grew up in the culturally rich, mostly unreligious atmosphere of a *kibbutz* (commune) near Haifa in Israel, where Brahms would play at home, the opera and theatre were weekly fixtures, and children took piano and singing lessons. But nothing caught his imagination quite like the light, graceful movements of ballet. His parents did not entirely understand his fascination but they were supportive of his ensuing resolve to learn the classical European dance. The *kibbutzniks* would give him a few lira for the bus ride to the city, where he studied ballet twice a week. By his late

teens, he was taking full-time lessons by day, and dancing for a Tel Aviv production of *Fiddler on the Roof* by night. He pirouetted his way into the famous Bat-Dor Dance Company, owned by the Baroness Batsheva de Rothschild, coming into contact with stalwarts such as Jeannette Ordman and Alvin Ailey. He remembers vividly two other performances he had seen growing up: the Indian classical dancers Ram Gopal and Shanta Rao. Perhaps that had been an early sign. The subcontinent beckoned decades later. For six years now, Maor has been introducing ballet to young dancers in the suburbs of Mumbai. His initial experience of India was not idyllic. He landed in New Delhi well past midnight, and was put up in a place where he had to step over sleeping bodies to reach his room, and there was no water or food. "I woke up and everybody was speaking Hebrew," he recalls. "It was an Israeli backpackers' hostel." Maor had been invited

by choreographer Ashley Lobo to join The Danceworx, his academy for international dance. Although Delhi didn't agree with him, Maor took Lobo's offer to move to his school in Mumbai, a city he loves except for its reckless autorickshaws. There, he took on the task of preparing economically weak but exceptionally gifted dancers for programmes in major international schools. The story of how he discovered and trained Amiruddin Shah and Manish Chauhan, both young dancers from impoverished neighbourhoods of Mumbai, inspired the plot of a recent film, *Yeh Ballet*, written and directed by Sooni Taraporevala who had earlier made a short documentary on the subject. Somehow in its expansion from Europe to the Americas and South East Asia, ballet "skipped India", says the instructor. Back in San Francisco, where he had taught for twenty years before this, the fact he had trained with Natalia Makarova impressed one and all. In Mumbai, facing

his class of first-time learners, the names of some of history's best-known ballet composers, Tchaikovsky and Mozart, were received with blank looks. Their parents would sometimes mistake "ballet" for "belly" dancing. Now, the children have developed recognition for even less obvious references and terms. Maor leaves them with names of dancers and compositions to look up on Google.

Ballet is fundamental to Western dancing, Maor observes. Training in this form is built into curriculums elsewhere in the world, and it prepares one for picking up other styles. He believes his classes at The Danceworx now match any international school. Students pay ₹3,000 a month for eight sessions or, if they have the talent but lack the money, are funded by the academy. Chauhan has returned after a year in Portland's Oregon Ballet Theatre on scholarship, and Shah is on a full-ride scholarship to the Royal Ballet School. Two more students, Dipesh Verma and Bobby Roy from West Bengal, are attending the Paris Marais Dance School in France. Of his students, Maor says, "They get into the schools on merit, not because they are poor." The ballet master's connections to global theatre circles do allow him to make appeals for any balance funding for flights or housing.

Maor's chosen dance form is all about "excellence". In his experience, ballet dancers have to be athletes, gymnasts, contortionists, and actors, and have a sense of music. It needs nuance: in performing one type of *plie*, dancers must act as if sinking under the weight of a brick, and in another type, they must appear like flying birds. He describes his role as that of a "sculptor" who shapes the bodies of students into "instruments". His eye — developed over fifty years of teaching — is able to spot a potential "ballet body" from the arch of the foot, the contours of the leg, and the silhouette of the muscles. A good teacher, he reckons, must know whom to nurture and whom to push. Those who have the potential are rigorously coached.

Cultural differences were a challenge for him at first. In his earlier career, Maor was used to seeing dancers privileging professional needs over personal ones. But in India, family comes first. Boys tend to outnumber girls here. Sons are more often given permission over daughters in India to dance for long hours in tight costumes, he shrugs. Still, demand has only risen, with the academy considering making batches of 60 students instead of 40. At The Danceworx's Andheri rehearsal studio, limber boys and girls in their teens and tweens arrive for classes through the day. A hip replacement two years ago has slowed him a bit so that Maor presides from atop a red stool and walks around the class now and then to manage the playlist and correct the dancers' postures.

After an hour of warming up on the barre, a whole 40 minutes more generous than in international schools, the ballerinas and ballerinos push them away to make room for centre work. They take to the floor in batches of four, performing short choreography that includes well-oiled spin cycles and feather-light *soubresaut* jumps. "There is a photographer here," Maor informs the room, and adds half-jokingly: "Careful not to kick him." Throughout the hour-and-a-half duration, he sings instructions that remind them to move upwards or outwards, and execute *promenades* and *arabesques*. Sweat slowly begins to soak their t-shirts, and the dancers use their brief breaks to stretch in corners or snack on nuts, seeds, and sensible sandwiches. Maurice, a slender 14-year-old of modest means who has trained for a few years now, has the potential to go professional, Maor points out. He separates him from the class for a quick solo. Maor

doesn't hold back from being partial. "It creates some competition."

Ballet dancers are at their peak relatively briefly: from the teens to mid-30s. Around the age of 30, Maor transitioned from dancing to teaching dance because his body could not compete with younger contemporaries. Because Indian dancers tend to discover ballet rather late, he has introduced a method here which he calls the "Maor Placement Technique". It uses belts to exert muscles and "maximise one's training time". Now that his stock of custom made belts has run out, some resourceful students have been using the inner tube of bicycles instead.

The Danceworx's Lobo is upbeat about the potential for creating a stronger dance culture with ballet at the core. In his view, dancers who have emerged from poverty and excelled at street dancing must fortify their talent with classical knowledge. "If you don't know the rules, how will you break them?" Where ballet dancers tend to move upwards and off the floor in controlled ways, contemporary styles are danced more into the floor. With Maor leading classical training, Lobo's ultimate vision is to put Indian dancers in international schools, theatres, and dance companies. For this, the school which has bankrolled students on its own hopes for corporate funding.

While Maor enjoyed Taraporevala's film, he notes he is not as grumpy nor as emotional as the teacher played by Julian Sands. Remembering how the protagonist gifts his students vintage ballet dolls towards the end, he rolls his eyes and says, "I would never do that." But the struggles of students here did remind him of his own childhood. In other ways, things were more

difficult than in the movie. His first rehearsal studio in Bandra was dingy with no mats or ventilation. Still, him and his star students would train for hours there and leave totally exhausted. "On the way back," the teacher says, sounding nostalgic and ever-so-slightly paternal, "we would stop at a Starbucks and I would feed them."

“THEY GET INTO THE SCHOOLS ON MERIT, NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE POOR”

“IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE RULES, HOW WILL YOU BREAK THEM?”



▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The panic, it's catching

Since the news of a confirmed coronavirus case in India, 80 per cent of their business orders from around the country has been for N95 masks and toilet seat sanitisers, says Vikas Bagaria, founder of Gurugram-based PeeSafe. "Many offices are ordering masks for their employees and these orders go up to 2,000," he says. The company had stocked up on its masks inventory after reports of Delhi's failing air quality. "Unfortunately, no one saw coronavirus coming and we're bound to run out of stock," Bagaria says. "Protective gear is precious now and we shouldn't allow it to be misused. It should only be used by caregivers of patients. It doesn't make much sense for the general public to wear masks," adds Sudarshan Ballal, nephrologist and chairman of Bengaluru-headquartered Manipal Hospitals. This was

one of the private hospitals that the Karnataka government roped in when news of India's first positive case of coronavirus came in from Kerala (the patient has since recovered). Some places, like the Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad, have earmarked lifts for patients and coronavirus caregivers. Karnataka had its first brush with the global scare when a techie from Telangana visited Bengaluru on February 20. He fell sick and tested positive only after leaving the city. It's believed that he picked up the virus while meeting colleagues from Hong Kong while on a trip to Dubai. Though the techie's flatmate, an Intel employee, has not tested positive, there's widespread fear after news of the techie staying there broke out. Health officials have been busy counselling residents of the society and



monitoring those exhibiting flu-like symptoms. Children from the area have reportedly been asked to stop attending schools, even if they aren't showing any symptoms. The Karnataka chief minister has, meanwhile, confirmed that no one in the state has tested positive for coronavirus.

Multinational companies are, however, putting their own measures in place. "We have panels of doctors on standby across all locations. They are educating the employees," says Harshvendra Soin, chief people officer, Tech Mahindra. Like other multinationals, Tech Mahindra has also put off all internal meetings and gather-

ings and instructed employees to avoid in-person meetings with outside partners, and instead leverage video-conferencing technologies. Besides an emergency desk to help with medical queries, the company has stocked up on soap and food items across its offices. Similarly, all incoming vendors and visitors are being screened at Intel's Bengaluru office. While companies such as Wipro have set up in-house monitoring teams to assess the crisis, Amazon India, Flipkart, TCS, Godrej Enterprises and Titan have put restrictions on international travel for work. Work-from-home advisories have also been issued to offices at city-based Manyata Tech Park after an employee of a US-based software company returned to Bengaluru from an affected country and had flu-like symptoms. Though doctors declared the employee asymptomatic for coronavirus, the campus is being disinfected and employers being told to work from

home in the meantime. Flight and hotel booking platform ixigo has, meanwhile, announced full refunds on flight bookings to 10 affected countries, including China, France, Germany, Iran and Italy. "We will continue monitoring the situation and extend the waiver if the need arises," says Alok Bajpai, co-founder and CEO, ixigo. The best way to contain this highly infectious disease, says Ballal, is to ensure self-assessment by patients. This includes avoiding public spaces if one is unwell and sticking to proper cough etiquette: using handkerchiefs, or elbows to cough into in the absence of one. "Only the very sick should be admitted to hospital," he says. Meanwhile, ignorance and disinformation isn't helping matters. According to a survey conducted by fitness gear company GoQii, 32 per cent of people in India believe coronavirus is bioengineered in a lab in China.

While companies such as Wipro have set up in-house monitoring teams to assess the crisis, Amazon India, Flipkart, TCS, Godrej Enterprises and Titan have put restrictions on international travel for work

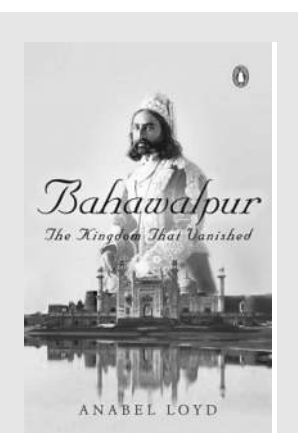
ISTOCK



YESTERDAY'S GLORY: The Darbar Mahal in Bahawalpur

Vanishing pasts

An account of a kingdom that acceded to Pakistan offers a useful way to understand tensions within Pakistani society in shaping its history, writes **Chintan Girish Modi**



BAHAWALPUR
THE KINGDOM
THAT VANISHED

Author:
Anabel Loyd

Publisher:
Penguin/Vintage

Pages: 285

Price: ₹599

I read books about Pakistan with great interest. As an Indian, they help me cut through the jingoism of the present moment and connect with a shared historical, cultural and geographical landscape going back thousands of years. While the act of reading cannot heal old wounds between countries, it can certainly soothe people like myself who thrive on the hope that things will get better one day.

Bahawalpur: The Kingdom that Vanished, written by a British woman named Anabel Loyd, promises to nourish the curiosity of readers interested in a part of Pakistan that is rarely celebrated in the way Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Quetta and Chitral are. However, this book is not a people's history. It is based on the author's conversations with Salahuddin Abbasi, grandson of Sadiq Muhammad Khan V — the last ruler of Bahawalpur — a princely state that chose to merge with Pakistan rather than India after the Partition of 1947.

Abbasi was born on 29 July 1946, just a year before, in the western Himalayas at Al-Hilal, the summer house among the tea gardens of Palampur built by his grandfather in the 1930s. Loyd interviewed him over several weeks in 2016 to learn about the history of his state and his family against the backdrop of political upheaval in Pakistan. "He hoped, by telling his story to a foreigner who started with an open mind and scant knowledge of Pakistan, let alone of the Abbasi family, to avoid the whole spectrum of shades of truth and points of view that colour and reinterpret any Pakistani tale," she writes.

Abbasi holds the mullahs and the military equally responsible for the corruption and decay that has seeped into Pakistani society, and also led to the destruction of his family heritage. Loyd is surprised to find that the sprawling family in Bahawalpur that used to exist 100 years ago has now been reduced to "a handful of aunts, uncles, warring cousins of closer or more distant kinship, all claiming some part of the broken Bahawalpur estate." When Bahawalpur acceded to Pakistan, the latter gained not only an operational welfare state but also a well-resourced army,

agricultural wealth and a large amount of funds. However, if this book is anything to go by, Bahawalpur did not receive much in return.

Though Loyd digs out stories of Bahawalpur's princes from old records, letters and the accounts of British travellers and civil servants, her narrative lens is largely shaped by her sympathy for Abbasi. She feels sorry "that Bahawalpur had vanished from the map so far as at least as foreigners were concerned, behind the borders of an unexplored and potentially perilous Pakistan". However, her concern is difficult to relate to because it focuses only on the faded glory of the Bahawalpuri elite "as the state was absorbed into the Punjab", and not on the hardships faced by the subjects in the kingdom. I wish she had moved beyond talking about "glamorous nawabs, fleets of Rolls-Royces and remarkable palaces lost to view".

Abbasi, we are told, is the 62nd in a lineage that can be tracked back through the Abbasid caliphs of Cairo and Baghdad to Al Abbas Ibn Abdul al Muttalib, uncle of Prophet Muhammad. Why does this matter? Claiming Arab ancestry became a way to legitimise one's stature among fellow Muslims, and indicate closeness to the roots of Islam. Abbasi's grandfather renamed his capital Baghdad-ul-Jadid, and also adopted a "courtly headgear to express his family loyalty to the Ottoman caliphate". The grandson continues to wear it to this day.

Instead of dismissing this as trivia, the reader can use this information to understand how the theory of the divine right of kings was incorporated within an Islamic framework. It also points to the ongoing tension within Pakistani society. On the one hand are people who believe that "the foundations of Pakistan go back to the earlier history of Arab Muslim arrival in India, first through trade into Sindh and then through the conquest in 712 CE, by Muhammad bin Qasim". On the other side are the more secular-minded whose origin story is pinned on Muhammad Ali Jinnah's speech

from August 14, 1947 when he spoke of religious freedom, rule of law, equality for all and an inclusive and impartial government.

Loyd writes, "Pakistan has turned its face increasingly towards a medieval religious ideal. It attempts to destroy or envelop the diverse culture, individualism, liberality, education and colour of this part of the subcontinent in the burka of religious conformity according to the most puritanical interpretations of sharia." The burka metaphor is troubling because it harks back to the trope of the white Christian woman trying to save the brown Muslim woman without fully understanding how the latter negotiates her everyday existence.

I do not think the author is being Islamophobic, however. There is tremendous

political backing within Pakistan for scripting an Islamic history that wipes out the Hindu and Buddhist past of the country. Indians do not have much to gloat over in this respect because the project of scripting a Hindu history for India that deprives Muslims, Christians, Dalits and adivasis a rightful place is well underway. "In 2017, Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government amended the Enemy Property Act to include Pakistani citizens and their legal heirs even if they are Indian

citizens," writes Loyd.

This review would be incomplete without taking a moment to call out the author's orientalist gaze, however unconscious it may be. Speaking of her plans to visit the region she wanted to write about, Loyd says, "Now I imagined a desert quest. An expedition, possibly involving camels, in search of Derawar and the further crumbling links of fortifications once intended to protect India's wealth." Instead of thinking about the place in terms of the people who live there, she reduces it to a tourist destination. Sample this: "The vast panoply of cultures, religions and unvisited treasures to be rediscovered... Baluchistan and Kalat, names of wild imaginings in Edwardian diaries." Ugh!

WHEN BAHAWALPUR ACCEDDED TO PAKISTAN, THE LATTER GAINED A WELL-RESOURCED STATE BUT DID NOT RECEIVE MUCH IN RETURN

Cromwell's hubris

PARUL SEHGAL

How suitably some writers come named. Muriel Spark, of the scorching short fiction. Judy Blume, of stories of young girls coming of age. Ann Patchett, in whose work families desperately try to repair their tattered ties.

Then there is Hilary Mantel, the author of several books, including an acclaimed suite of novels set in Tudor England, in whose own name can be discerned her themes — of cloaking and secrecy, the weight of responsibility — and, as it happens, the particular pleasure of submitting to her lavish and gory imagination.

When a hawk makes a kill, it drapes its wings over its prey, concealing it from other predators. This gesture is called "mantling," and it's a fine description of reading Mantel's work. The world is blotted out as you are enveloped in the sweep of a story rich with conquest, conspiracy and mazy human psychology.

The Mirror and the Light is the triumphant capstone to Mantel's trilogy on Thomas Cromwell, the son of a blacksmith who rose to become the consigliere of Henry VIII and architect of the English Reformation. It's a story that could be the stuff of venerable and dusty historical fiction, but Mantel clears away the cobwebs.

The curtain here rises on Cromwell in 1536. He is 50 years old, rich beyond all his imagining and very much alone. A sickness carried off his wife and two daughters years ago. He is the king's chief confidant and fixer, although his primary duty is now "to get the king new wives and dispose of the old". He admits: "I am running out of ladies."

Henry is desperate for a male heir. He divorced his first wife, Katherine of Aragon — forcing a split between Rome and the Church of England. His second wife, Anne Boleyn, mother of Elizabeth and the charismatic antagonist of the first two novels, has been beheaded for adultery. Cromwell was instrumental in bringing Anne to trial, which we saw in the second volume, *Bring Up the Bodies*. He rounded up her alleged lovers (including her brother) and squeezed out confessions. Whether they were true or trumped up is never known.

When *The Mirror and the Light* begins, Cromwell has never been more beloved to the king, who is now free to marry the docile Jane

Seymour. It is the beginning of Cromwell's undoing. A man who has worked in the shadows is now too visible, envied and feared. Tax rebellions spring up in the north. There's a movement to advance Henry's first child, Mary, as his heir. Seymour dies, after procuring a son, and another wife must be sought. Cromwell chooses one for the king, and chooses badly. Anne of Cleves, selected to broker an alliance with Germany, cannot hide her distaste for

Henry. Worry and guilt begin to gnaw at Cromwell. "Dead queens blink at him, from behind their broken mirrors." Wolves gather outside his door.

This is the longest book in the series, the most mournful — and the slackest. It lacks the formal play (and humour) of *Wolf Hall* and the ruthless compression of *Bring Up the Bodies*, which tracked the events of just one year, culminating in Boleyn's beheading.

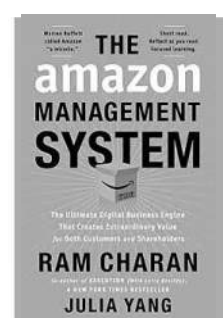
The startling, bony style of the first two books has been abandoned. The prose is plush, the sentences longer and more adorned, tricked out with little tassels and extended metaphors. Even as certain pages proved a slog, certain scenes repetitive, even as I entertained heretical thoughts about pruning certain sections, or striking them entirely, these choices follow a certain logic.

For more than a decade, Mantel has immersed her readers in the life of Cromwell, writing very close to the historical record and correcting the record where she has deemed necessary. It is too facile to regard the man as a Machiavellian monster of self-interest, she has argued. In his road-building projects that employed the poor lie the foundations of the welfare state. The son of a blacksmith broke with the orthodoxy of the time to insist that poverty was the product of circumstance, not character. But the magnetism of these books derives not from its mountain of facts but from its elisions — all those gaps in our knowledge and understanding. How do we square Cromwell's cruelty with his intense, almost disabling desire to protect the vulnerable, all the lost, "roaring boys" he gave quarter and instruction? Has any character seen women, *liked* women, enjoyed their conversation and stratagems quite so much as he? Has anyone used them with such cold efficiency?

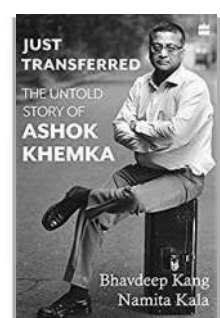
When we praise characters, we often say they "feel real". But the enduring characters are always elusive. No more so than with Cromwell, one of literature's great ambiguous characters. Till the end, he is full of surprises. When the wolves finally catch up to him and haul him off to the Tower of London on charges of treason, the plot and arrest are handled so smoothly, he can't help but marvel: "You would think he had done it himself."

© 2020 The New York Times

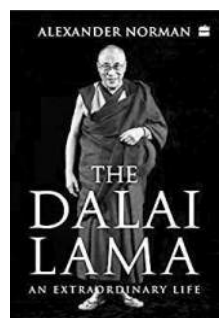
OUT NOW



THE AMAZON MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
The guru of strategy execution and a management consultant explain what it takes to make the world's largest online delivery company a trillion-dollar behemoth.
Ram Charan & Julia Yang
Wiley
₹999, 162 pages



JUST TRANSFERRED: THE UNTOLD STORY OF ASHOK KHEMKA
Two journalists trace the tumultuous and controversial career of a man who came to be known as the forever-in-transit bureaucrat.
Bhavdeep Kang & Namita Kala
HarperCollins
₹599, 276 pages



THE DALAI LAMA: AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE
A well-known Tibetan scholar, who collaborated with the Dalai Lama on several books, offers the first authoritative biography of this popular if controversial spiritual leader.
Alexander Norman
HarperCollins
₹799, 411 pages

COCONUT: HOW THE SHY FRUIT SHAPED OUR WORLD
A writer and photographer relates the long and often unexpected role of this common fruit in influencing world history.
Robin Laurance Niyogi
₹450, 240 pages

SMART ART



KISHORE SINGH

Creative problem

Amidst concerns that this week's Armory Show in New York would not proceed as planned, the popular art fair on the Hudson river's piers 90 and 94 opened to what is being described as a relieved success. Well-known collectors arrived without the fanfare of masks despite Manhattan reporting its tryst with coronavirus. Other fairs globally are being more cautious and have cancelled or postponed indefinitely their annual outings, among them Art Basel Hong Kong and Art Dubai, both earlier scheduled for this month. The 15th edition of Art Tokyo, also this month, too, stands annulled. Amidst global jitters, more fairs, biennales and art events perched amidst the chasm of hope and despair are trying to read the tea leaves of what the immediate future holds for them. The possibility of millions — billions? — of dollars of tradeable wealth has evaporated in a wisp of smoke.

Nor are fairs the only casualties of the art world, though clarity on what is shutting, or for how long, remains unclear. Among the consequences is arguably the most famous — or popular — museum in the world, the Louvre in Paris, where its staff forced a shutdown. Italy saw the temporary closure of some of its popular museums that have reopened with advisory limiting numbers and increasing space between visitors to a metre between them. They needn't worry — the queues have diminished to a trickle anyway.



Art Basel Hong Kong, 2019

The impact on auctions will bear out later this month, but they are expected to fare somewhat better since bidders have for some time shifted outside the auction room to bid over telephones or online

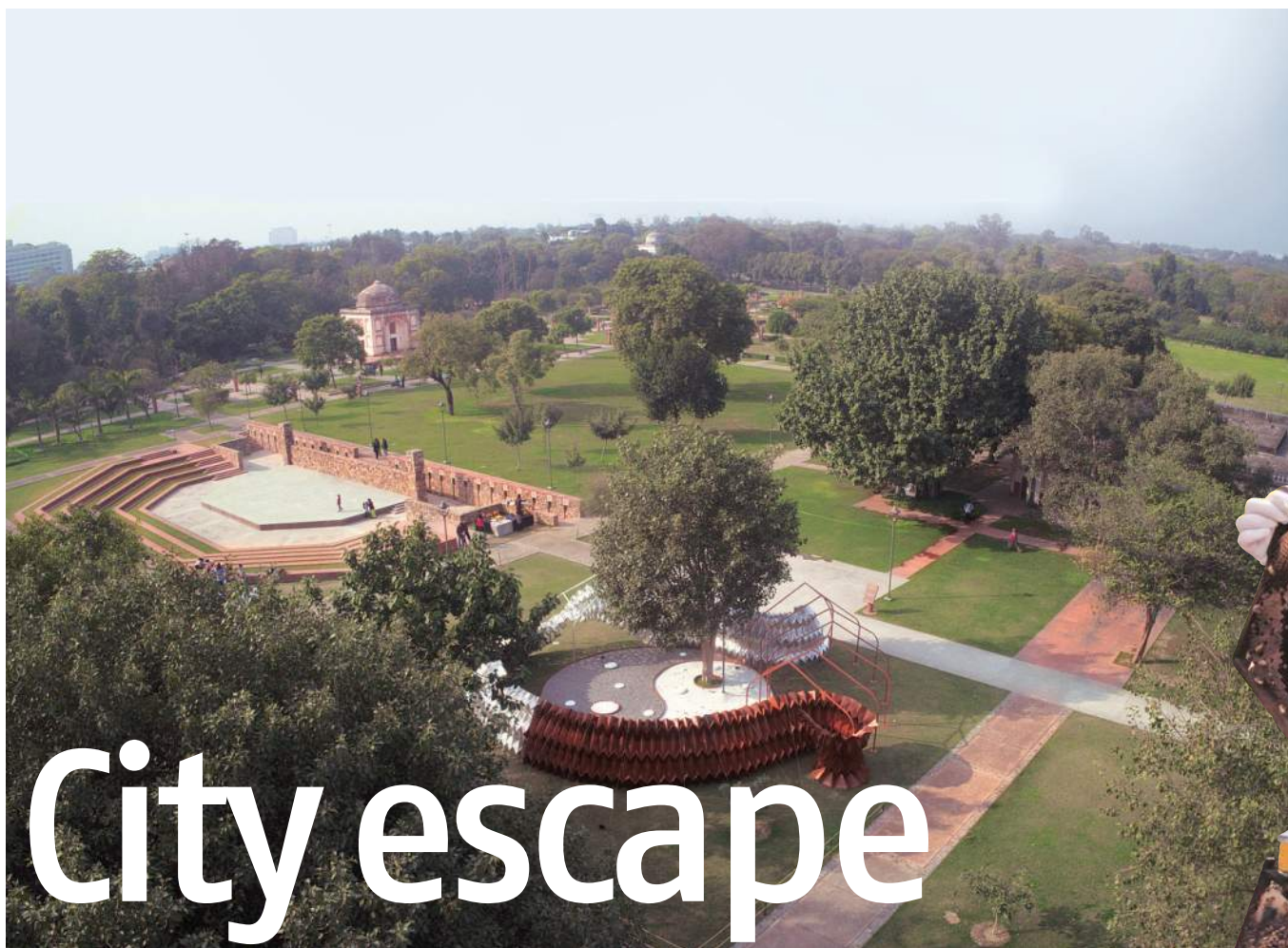
The wait-and-watch tenterhooks of the art world is sending shivers down its collective spine. Whatever shape the pandemic takes, organisers are loath to wish away months and years of planning and potential sales when the virus might

slow or cease with the approach of summer. But there is little doubt the industry is nervous. Private shows, gallery exhibits and artist programmes are easier to "postpone", but large events that require collaborative planning are seeing management heads locked in boardrooms as Plan A is exchanged for Plans B and C — a rare occurrence in the rarefied world of artists, art exhibitors, collectors, promoters and investors.

The most impacted are events where thousands of visitors are expected to concentrate at any given time. This does not include galleries where footfalls remain low. The impact on auctions will bear out later this month, but they are expected to fare somewhat better since bidders have for some time shifted outside the auction room to bid over telephones or online. Different markets may post different results, and that for the Indian market will be up for grabs with the New York sales later this month. How they fare — and the Christie's sale will be an important pointer — will reveal how Indian collectors are reacting to the medical emergency.

What of India itself? The current period before the onset of the summer hiatus is important for the trade. As of now, no museums have been shut, though some openings have been pushed ahead. Internationally, private sales are a lucrative segment of the business, but in India this constituency is underreported. It's anyone's guess how things will play out, but speculation is that private sales are likely to see a push. As for the market itself, the recent successful auction of fugitive Nirav Modi's seized art and personal effects should be a pointer to the availability of money and the propensity to spend. Isn't it what the doctor prescribes when times look bad?

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



City escape

Delhi has a trendy new cultural space in the Mughal-era Sunder Nursery, writes Veenu Sandhu

The verandahs have disappeared. As have the ledges. And so the house sparrow, which was once commonly seen hopping on them, is fleeing our cities for the countryside where it can still find nesting places of its choice in the nooks and crannies of traditional homes. Now if we don't want this little bird to turn its back on our homes for good, we need to give it, well, a home.

Sparrows like to nest in holes stuffed with vegetation and made snug and comfortable with feathers, paper and other such warm, soft material. You can buy such a nest online — what's the fun in that, though? — or if you are in Delhi, you can head to Sunder Nursery adjacent to Humayun's Tomb this Sunday morning and build one at a special workshop that teaches you how to.

And while you are there, you can also check out the organic market for fresh farm produce, microgreens, groceries, jams, beverages, natural fertilisers, essential oils and a lot more. The market has been organised by the Earth Collective every Sunday, and starting today every Saturday too (8 am to 1 pm).

A 16th century heritage park complex sprinkled with protected Mughal-era monuments, Sunder Nursery is an idyllic getaway from the city within the city. It's a place where yesterday walks hand in hand with today, and where the wilderness and immaculately landscaped gardens lie side by side. In the last year or so, it has also emerged as Delhi's hippest new cultural space.

The winter months gone by have been particularly

busy in this city garden, which has two amphitheatres: one with a capacity of 500 and the other, a more intimate one, that can seat about 50 people.

Besides heritage walks, farming demonstrations for city-born and -bred children and workshops on birds and bees (literally), the sprawling 90-acre complex has hosted fashion shows, qawwali evenings, textile fairs and dance performances such as kutiyattam and most recently an interpretation of the feminine form in sculptures through Odissi.

In October last year, Kathakar, an international storytellers' festival, chose this open space as the venue for its 12th edition. Some of its earlier editions were held at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, the India Habitat Centre and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi. "The amphitheatre was packed with 1,400 people," says Ratish Nanda, the CEO of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture that is behind the restoration and revitalisation of the garden, along with the Archaeological Survey of India and the Central Public Works Department. The rambling space, earlier called Azim Bagh, made it possible to accommodate the crowds that turned up for Kathakar.

The space is let out to artists and schools for annual functions as well. Also hosted here are silent reading sessions, wherein you can sit by, say, one of the many waterbodies in the garden alongside strangers with your book. It's a kind of an invitation to soak in a sense of community and companionship even while you are lost in your own private world.

The organic market has been organised by the Earth Collective every Sunday, and starting today every Saturday too (8 am to 1 pm)



Saraswati centers with Sapporo, Humayun & Lokshikama



Let there be love

The 15th edition of the Jahan-e-Khusrau Sufi festival reiterates the core message of the syncretic faith, says Veenu Sandhu



The ruins of Arab ki Sarai in the Humayun's Tomb complex, across the road from Sunder Nursery, are once again reverberating with the sound of Sufi music. The sarai (hostelry, or inn) built in the 1560s by Humayun's widow Hamida Banu Begum for the 300 Arabs she had brought with her from Mecca, has often been the chosen venue for Jahan-e-Khusrau since 2001, when the three-day annual Sufi music festival first began.

Held to commemorate the death anniversary of one of medieval India's most celebrated poet-musician-scholars, Amir Khusrau, whose resting place in the Nizamuddin dargah is not far

from here, this edition (the 15th) of the festival comes with a fitting message for a riot-torn Delhi: "Let Love Reign". "Each year, it is the same concern for the human predicament seen in the changing light of circumstances," says filmmaker Muzaffar Ali, the man behind the festival. "With new talent and new verse, we express the oneness of humanity."

Many of the voices at the festival this year are from Punjab: Gurdas Maan, the Nooran Sisters, Kanwar Grewal, Jasleen Kaur, Mamta Joshi. "Punjab is the strongest pocket of Sufi culture and talent," says Ali. "Poets like Baba Farid, Bulleh Shah, Waris Shah have illumined the world with their message of love."

Sufism, which is about looking

inward, has no one language, no one definition. It transcends sects, disciplines, forms and expressions. "An Ode to Khusrau", in which Kaushalya Reddy's disciple, Prakriti Prashant, will translate the expressions of Sufism to Kuchipudi, celebrates this all-encompassing essence. The festival opened yesterday with an "Ode to Rumi", the 13th century poet and Sufi mystic, presented by Kathak dancer Manjari Chaturvedi and musician Murad Ali.

Each edition, says Muzaffar Ali, is born out of the earlier edition. "There is a continuity of verses and voices. Each time different, yet with a resonance of the earlier one."

The jagged walls of Arab ki

Sarai have witnessed artists from different parts of the world at this celebration, recreation and interpretation of Khusrau's world: Iran, Sudan, Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt, Japan, Israel, USA and, of course, Pakistan. In the last two years, however, the event described as a "world Sufi music festival" has had artists from India alone. Ali describes this as "the growing up process" of Jahan-e-Khusrau. "It was discovering its global resonance and finding our own. Today, it has come of age, and enormous talent is emerging on the horizon."

Jahan-e-Khusrau is on till March 8 at the Arab Ki Sarai in the Humayun's Tomb complex in New Delhi. For details, jahan-e-khusrau.com



(Left to right) Prakriti Prashant will translate the expressions of Sufism to Kuchipudi; Muzaffar Ali, the man behind Jahan-e-Khusrau; Gurdas Maan will be the showstopper this year



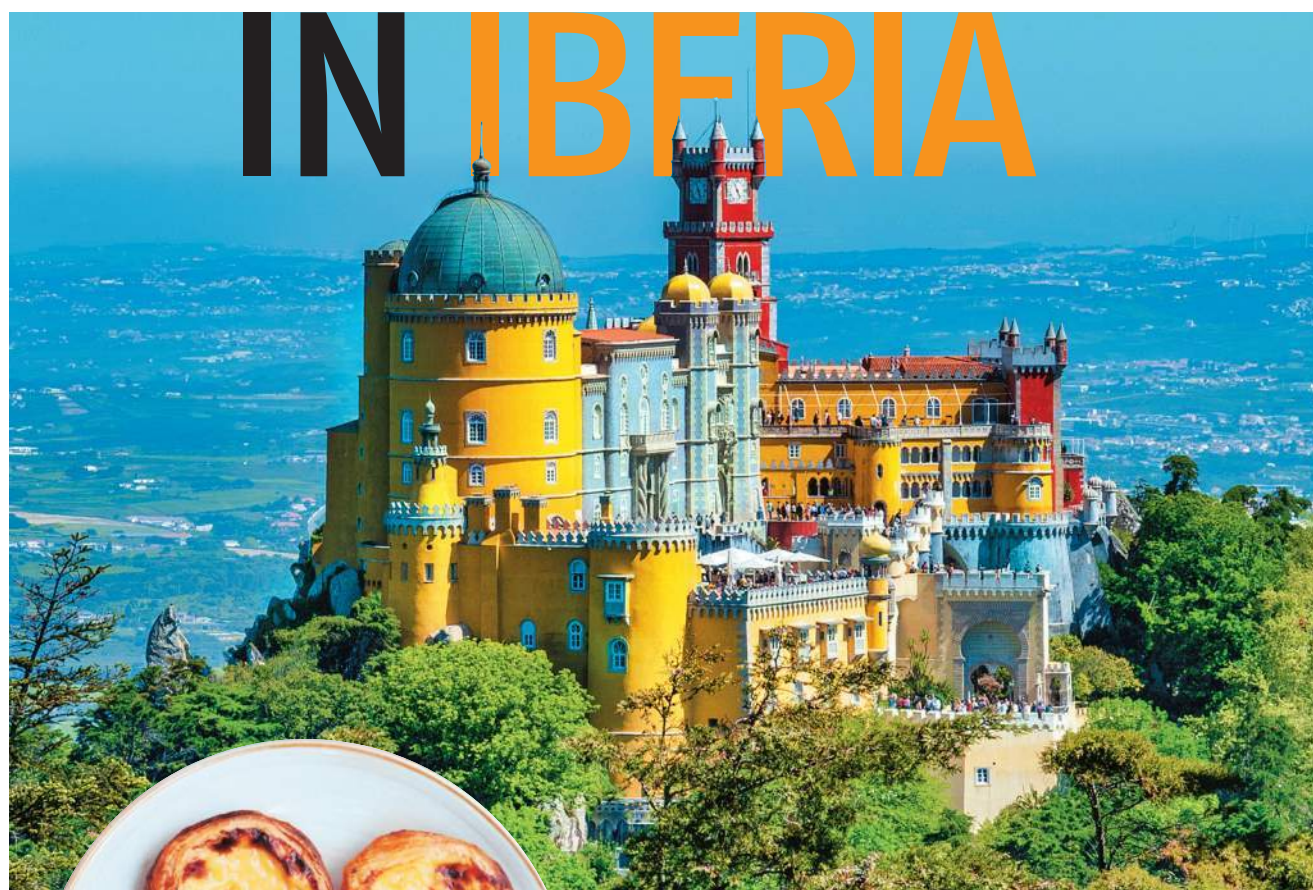
(Clockwise from left) The Song of the Earth and Sky, a pleated pavilion commissioned by the Gujral Foundation; 'Know the Bee' workshop by Golden Hive Foundation; sparrow nest building workshop; silent book reading; school heritage walk; Kutiyattam performance organised by Unesco

PHOTOS: COURTESY AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE





With architectural gems, colourful nightlife and laidback vibe, Lisbon in February is a thing of beauty, says Dhruv Munjal



RIDING A BIKE IN LISBON IS FUN; THE CYCLING LANES ARE ALMOST AS WIDE AS THE ROADS, THE TRAFFIC IS SELDOM HEAVY AND YOU CAN TAKE YOUR BIKE PRETTY MUCH ANYWHERE YOU WANT

introduce us to a cultural past like no other in perhaps all of Europe. Even as metropolises around it have succumbed to rapid modernisation in recent decades, Lisbon, with its famous yellow trams, cobbled streets and infectious laid-back vibe, continues to retain a gorgeous old-world charm.

Riding a bike in Lisbon is fun: the cycling lanes are almost as wide as the roads, the traffic is seldom heavy and you can take your bike pretty much anywhere you want. Our first stop is the Praça do Comércio, the city's main square. It once housed the Royal Palace, before the great earthquake of 1755 wiped out almost all of the city, including the imperial residence. Now, of course, the square is a defining symbol of Lisbon, home to shops, cafes and government offices. Youngsters perform kickflips on their skateboards in one corner as photo hunters queue up to get clicked alongside the statue of King José I.

When I tell Miguel where I'm from, he's quick to point out that the pastel blue government structure down the street overlooking the Tagus was once used to build ships for Portuguese explorers — the *São Gabriel*, which was commanded by Vasco da Gama on his maiden voyage to India in 1497, was put together in one of the bays of this very building.

Vasco da Gama is, in fact, immortalised in a monument — Padrão dos Descobrimentos (Monument of the Discoveries) — along the banks of the Tagus. The boat-shaped memorial also features Ferdinand Magellan, as well as Afonso de Albuquerque, the general who went on to become the second viceroy of Portuguese India.

But the most popular landmark along the river is the Belém Tower, a ceremonial gateway of sorts to Lisbon that serves as a sterling example of Portuguese renaissance architecture. One of the sides of the tower is adorned by a sculpture of the Indian rhinoceros — the story goes that when a rhino arrived on the shores of Lisbon as a diplomatic gift in 1515, thousands lined up to catch a glimpse of a specimen that had not been seen in Europe since Roman times. The Belém Tower is also where the Tagus merges with the Atlantic Ocean.

Its monuments and museums aside, Belém is perhaps most famous for something entirely unrelated: pastel de nata, a traditional Portuguese tart made with egg and custard, and then dusted with cinnamon. Originally invented by Catholic monks, the tarts have been made famous around the world by Pastéis de Belém, the shop serving them for the last 183 years. Miguel suggests that some 10,000 tarts are sold by the café every day. I take back a pack of six for home, hoping they won't spoil before I reach Delhi. We finish our somewhat exhausting but extremely rewarding tour with a dash through LX Factory, once the setting for a sugar mill but now a fashionable nightlife haunt that teems with revellers post dusk.

In the evening, I hop on to the famous Number 28 yellow tram, a quintessentially touristy experience that is too hard to resist



▲ (From top) The Praça do Comércio, the city's main square; the Palácio da Pena in Sintra, located just outside Lisbon; traditional Portuguese egg custard tarts; Pastéis de Belém sells almost 10,000 of them every day; one of Lisbon's iconic yellow trams; the Belém Tower

if you're, well, a tourist. The creaky tram, complete with wooden interiors from a bygone era, is a wonderful homage to the city, passing through the bustling tourist hubs of Graça, Alfama, Chiado and Bairro Alto. Alfama, a quiet neighbourhood located atop a hill, offers a stunning panoramic view of Lisbon. Its up-and-down streets, multi-storey homes — their exteriors often painted yellow and blue — and relaxed feel is everything Lisbon in a nutshell.

Later that night, I trudge off to Bairro Alto, the scene of Lisbon's dynamic nightlife. The narrow alleys play host to a number of bars, all booming to loud international music even as some musicians on the street entertain the crowd with fado, a form of Portuguese music characterised by melancholic tunes. After searching for the best places online, I step into Majong, a cosy, dimly lit restaurant with cabbage-shaped lights on the ceiling. I'm a beer person but Hugo, the bartender, coaxes me into trying a gin cocktail with ginger, which, to my surprise, I enjoy immensely.

Two days later, as I head to the airport, I run into Miguel again — he's leading a new group of cyclists out to see the marvel that is Lisbon. I wave out to him from the backseat of my Uber; he looks up and blows a kiss in my direction, wishing me a safe flight. That's when I realise that Miguel and Lisbon will both be missed.



The world's best fondues

KATE KRADER & RICHARD VINES

At a time when small plates rule the table, fondue stands proudly as the ultimate large-format sharing dish, the European alternative to a steaming hot pot in Asia. Fondue's long, cheesy strands reach back to Homer's *The Iliad*, when the fromage of choice was made from goat milk. The dish, at its most basic just cheese and wine, gained international prominence in Switzerland in the 1930s when the Swiss Cheese Union promoted it from obscurity to push a glut of Gruyère and Emmenthal. The country continues to take fondue seriously, with more than one word to describe its various components. The delectable, crispy crust at the bottom of the pot is *la religieuse* (or "the nun") for reasons that aren't entirely clear.

Following is a tour of the finest fondues around the globe.

La Bonne Soupe, New York: Tucked away in midtown Manhattan, with the feel of a Parisian bistro, the restaurant has been specialising in melted cheese since the 1970s. Fondue au fromage, which comes with the option of garnishes such as spicy merguez sausage or a shot of kirsch, a requirement if you're from Switzerland.

Stable DC, Washington: Stable pays homage to the cuisine of Switzerland with such dishes as crispy potato rösti and landjäger air-cured, smoked sausage. The restaurant's fondues are based on an unconventional blend that includes old and young Schlossberger, a buttery, raw cow's milk cheese, accompanied by house-baked bread.

Geja's Cafe, Chicago: Two words are associated with Geja's: "romantic" and "fondue". The candle-lit dining room features a bubbling wine-spiked Gruyère version in classic enameled pots, with platters of bread cubes, grapes, apples.



Palace Kitchen, Seattle: Palace's goat cheese lavender fondue has been a bestseller since chef Tom Douglas opened his seminal Pac Northwest restaurant in 1996. He took advantage of one of the era's hot ingredients, tangy goat cheese, and lightly scents it with the floral herb. Alongside are sweet and juicy D'Anjou pears and, for a slightly smoky bite, wood-grilled bread.

Le Chalet Savoyard, Paris: This restaurant specialises in the cuisine of Savoy on the border with Switzerland. It offers a variety of fondues, including farmer-style, made with four cheeses and smoked bacon. The house speciality is fondue's show-stopping cousin, a slow-melting raclette scraped from a wheel of Morbier, a semi-soft cow's milk cheese with a distinctive dark line running through it.

St Moritz, London: This Soho establishment is London's oldest Swiss restaurant, dating to 1974, which is pretty ancient in terms of the city's fast-moving dining scene. Even Swiss customers are impressed by its authenticity and the choice of Swiss wines. The owner and chef, Armin Loelscher, says his bestseller is Fondue Motie-Motie, featuring imported Gruyère and Vacherin cheese and served with new potatoes and bread.

Swiss Chuchi, Zurich: Naturally, Switzerland is full of restaurants serving fine fondues, with Swiss Chuchi, at the Hotel Adler, as one of the most popular. With seating indoors and outdoors, you can choose from a wide range of local dishes, some of them rather unusual. The Lady Fondue features prosecco, pears, cherry liquor, and garlic.

Le Dézaley, Zurich: This traditional restaurant in the Old Town specialises in the cuisine of the Vaud region. It's cosy, with simple wooden furniture and friendly service. The signature fondue is manufactured from ripe cheeses of the region and has been a draw for diners for a century.

Warashibe Gyoza, Tokyo: Under the category of unconventional fondues is Warashibe, an izakaya where diners use dumplings as the dipping agent. Tabletop teppanyaki griddles are loaded down with shredded mozzarella and cheddar, then heated until it's all an oozy puddle. The cheese is surrounded by an army of gyoza for dunking; varieties include unconventional, cheese-filled ones as well as classic pork.

Wine Universe, Singapore: Red cloths decorate the tables at this sleek spot, which features an international wine list and a menu that leans on the cuisine of Switzerland. Cheeses are carefully sourced from master fromager Marc-Henri Horner. Among the five kinds of fondue is La Singaporienne, spiked with chopped fresh chilli to add a blast of heat to the pot.

@ 2020 The New York Times

Sweet talk

Veer Arjun Singh on why shorter, sharper nutrition labels — the kind that skip a few ingredients such as sugar by many other names — are starting to make business sense



There's apple juice concentrate in muesli, malt extracts in whole wheat cereal, and maltitol and maltodextrin in digestive ragi biscuits. The problem is not that sneaky sugar has found its way into daily consumables through obfuscation again. It's the fact that these products scream "zero added sugar" from supermarket shelves to be then picked up by health-conscious idealists who have bought into the illusion of a sugar-free diet.

Identifying the sugar and artificial sweeteners hiding behind chemical names is a long-standing battle around the world. But what we are dealing with here is of a more primitive nature. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has finally expressed concern about why Indian *namkeen* and *mithai* don't have nutrition labels. The food safety body is holding discussions with sweet-makers about a new logo for products that have less sugar, salt and saturated fat and are made with natural ingredients. What has been reluctantly agreed upon so far is that these packaged Indian treats will display a manufacturing date and a best before date on their products from June 1. It's a far cry from finally knowing how much sugar goes into that *gulab jamun* that you send so blithely down the chute. But it's a healthy start.

The lack of transparency in labelling is not unique to *desi* Indian sweet-makers or American multinationals. Chef Sanjeev Kapoor tells me about a popular bakery in Australia whose "freshly baked bread" sold like hot cakes, until it was discovered that the frozen dough was being imported from Germany. Legally, the company wasn't obliged to mention it. But the new improved customer awareness rightly turned it into a scandal.

"Well, 97 per cent fat free means three per cent fat. Many products that say 'zero cholesterol' on their packets were not supposed to have cholesterol in the first place," says Kapoor. Now that the world has latched on to a few bad words, the hard-won awareness about salt, sugar, cholesterol and saturated fat in packaged food is often being used against customers.

It's an unsavoury cocktail of misleading claims and lack of understanding of nutrition. The people who abstain from added table sug-

ar often consume it unintentionally or turn to chemically produced sugar-free alternatives. And there's a conflicting body of evidence about the risks of drinking "zero sugar" beverages, which are loaded with acesulfame potassium and aspartame disguised as "sweeteners 951 and 950", respectively.

As Kapoor says, in the hierarchy of preference, buying decisions have always been led by taste, followed by value and then health. Perhaps it is the reason why people rarely question "100 per cent" fruit juice that costs a modest ₹20 and tastes consistently sweet. The juice is made from concentrate, is pasteurised and often topped up with sweeteners and flavour enhancers, such as malic acid.

American nutritionist, fitness coach and author J J Virgin has made a business of identifying these sneaky sugars. Her verbose, officious but useful book, *The Sugar Impact Diet*, lists these sugars and sweeteners in lengthy tables. She argues that the secret behind shedding weight and inches — and keeping them off — is nothing but a game of avoiding the empty calories called refined sugar.



'HEALTH IS NOT ABOUT ONE INGREDIENT. SOMETHING FREE OF SUGAR MAY BE HIGH IN FAT OR SODIUM'

SANJEEV KAPOOR
Chef and author

Amid the confusion caused by the rise of lifestyle diseases, some solutions are being offered in the form of more widely understood labels. Raw Pressery from Rakyen Beverages is leading the cold-pressed juice revolution in India. The labels on their juices claim that they have no added sugar, salt or preservatives and are not made from concentrate. The transparent packaging helps too. The ingredient of Valencia Orange juice, for instance, is "100 per cent Valencia orange". It's not the same as juice squeezed freshly at home, but compared with the sugar-laced fruit juices in tetra packs, it's refreshingly honest.

"High pressure bottling reduces the microbial load and does not require us to use preservatives," says Sreejit Nair, a former PepsiCo employee who is now the chief growth officer at Raw Pressery. He says that while "no sugar" is one of the key selling points, the company relies on honest labelling and packaging to attract customers who are willing to pay a premium for a good product. Their range of almond milk, for instance, uses maple syrup, which is often used as a sneaky sugar in liquids, but mentions it on the front of the package. "It's not like adding apple juice to the very bitter cranberry juice. We are upfront about our



ingredients," says Nair. Raw Pressery juices are sold in supermarkets, airports and flights and also Subway outlets and Cult gyms.

Health drinks are such big business that even the century-old Baidyanath Group, makers of chyawanprash and ayurvedic medicines, have dived into it. Their new venture, Shunya, makes a range of "no sugar, artificial sweeteners or preservatives" drinks, with herbal infusions such as *ashwagandha*, *brahmi*, *khus* and *kokum*.

Bread spreads are also helping lead the push for cleaner labels. Since "good fats" are now a widely accepted fact, peanut and almond butter are in vogue. New brands, such as Pintola, have eliminated sugar, salt and preservatives from the butters.

"Was it always possible to make juices and spreads without sugar, salt and food additives? Of course it was. Brands are now responding to a market trend that followed awareness," says nutritionist and diabetes educator Sheryl Salis, who is also a part of FSSAI's Eat Right Campaign, which is about educating people to make healthier food choices.

"Even without added sugar, juices are generally high in natural sugar. The problem is that when they are marketed as healthy, people consume them in excess. And that's bad," says Salis. The 250ml Valencia Orange juice from Raw Pressery, priced at ₹100, has 27 gm of naturally occurring sugar.



Big brands are responding to the trend, too. But there's little headway. The headlines that followed Coca-Cola CEO James Quincey's India visit was around how India will soon be the global beverage giant's third-largest market. But, T Krishnakumar, president, Coca-Cola India, also said that the company is looking to reduce the sugar in their drinks to "below six grams in the next 3-4 years". A 330ml coke can currently has about 36 grams of sugar.

Nestlé, too, is committed to reduce sugar, sodium and saturated fat in its products. But its valiant effort in the form of Milkybar Wowsomes, which cuts the sugar in the chocolate by a third, was axed in less than two years of its launch in the UK owing to poor demand.

We have a few sugar-free alternatives, but maybe it's not the time for chocolates to rid themselves of sugar. "Health is not about one ingredient. Something free of sugar may be high in fat or sodium," points out chef Kapoor.

Sometimes it's just about reading the label right. Read the ingredients and not just the nutrition table. The word "added" should set off alarm bells. Remember that 20gm of sugar is five tablespoons of it. Ingredients are listed in order of their decreasing quantity, and sugar and sweeteners have many monikers. When you know your sugars, you'll know what to do when you spot high-fructose corn syrup in ingredients despite what the packet says.

CHESS #1391

By DEVANGSHU DATTA

The Aeroflot Open in Moscow ended with a surprise winner. There was a four-way tie at 6.5 points from 9 rounds. A 14-year-old IM, Aydin Suleymanli of Azerbaijan, had the best tiebreak score, edging out Rinat Jumabayev, Rauf Mamedov, and Aravindh Chithambaram. Suleymanli won the title, and first prize worth €13,875 (approx ₹11 Lakh) as well as a GM norm.

Among the Indians, Aravindh had the best result of course. The 14-year-old M Pranesh (5.5) scored his final IM norm, while 12-year-old Bharath Subramaniam (5.5) scored his first GM norm, with a round to spare. In the B section, two 14-year-olds, Rucha Pujari and Pranav Anand made WGM and IM norms respectively.

"The Candidates will launch on March 15. Teimour Radjabov has dropped out for personal reasons and will be replaced by Maxime Vachier Lagrave. Alexander Grischuk (36) is the oldest player, in a field with an average age of 28. Fabiano Caruana and Ding Liren are favourites, but coronavirus may have derailed Ding's prep (and Wang Hao's prep as well), at least to some extent. Ding's reached Yekaterinburg this week to undergo quarantine prior to the event."



The Third Grand Prix tournament for women is in play at Lausanne, Switzerland. The top seeds are World Champion Ju Wenjun and the last challenger, Aleksandra Goryachkina. The overall winner and runner-up will qualify for the Women's Candidates Tournament, in early 2021. Koneru Humpy leads the series with a win in the first GP in Skolkovo, and joint first with Alexandra Kosteniuk in the second GP in Monaco.

Humpy's not playing Lausanne and Goryachkina or Kosteniuk could overtake her if either of them wins Lausanne. Zhao Xue had to be replaced by Zhansaya Abdumalik due to quarantine. After Round 3, five players share the lead. This group includes Dronavalli Harika (2) who upset Ju Wenjun (1) in the third round.

The Diagram, White to Play (White: Parham Maghsoodloo Vs Black: Aydin Suleymanli, Aeroflot 2020) leads into an interesting illustration of Aydin's talent. Normal is 13. a3 but White played the new and inferior 13. f3?! Nxc3 14. bxc3 g5! 15. Bg3 a5!

Very deep positional sense. White is returning material to free his position via 15. —Nxa2 16. Ra1 Nxc3 17. Ba6! With Ne2/Kf2 to come. But black's 15th move causes a traffic jam by stopping Ba6. He doesn't want to recover material.

Play continued 16. a4 Na2 17. Ra1 Nxc3 18. Ne2 Bb4 19. Kf2 Bc2 20. Nxc3 Bxc3 21. Ra2 Bb1! 22. Re2 Rc4 23. Rc2!? Be1! Black avoids a cute trap. [If 23. —Bxc2 24. Bxc4 dxc4 25. Rc1 Bxa4 26. Rxc3 Bb3 27. Bd6 and it's a draw after Ba3]. Now it's an easy win after 24. Kxe1 Rxc2 25. h4 Rac8 26. Bd6 R8c3 27. hxg5 Rb2 (0-1).

Devangshu Datta is an internationally rated chess and correspondence chess player



PHOTOS: DALIP KUMAR

Legal angels

A group of young lawyers is educating protesters about their rights, assisting detainees, and now helping Delhi's riot victims rebuild their lives, all services pro bono, writes Ritwik Sharma

Help desks manned by lawyers from the Delhi Waqf Board as well as those from the Supreme Court Bar Association are visible at a government relief camp in the Eidgah and along the main road in Mustafabad. However, it's an informal group of lawyers, which calls itself Lawyers for Detainees, that has been leading the rebuilding efforts.

The riots that ravaged Northeast Delhi early last week left over 50 people dead, a majority of them Muslims. Lawyers for Detainees has so far set up three legal aid camps in Mustafabad. Many Muslims who fled from Shiv Vihar, one of the worst hit places, sought refuge in the nearby Chaman Park locality. Inside a galli, a medical and legal camp attend to people all day.

Mishika Singh, a lawyer who set up a WhatsApp group to bring together lawyers nearly three months ago, says some of them were in Northeast Delhi when the riots took place. They were tackling emergency calls, helping register police complaints and FIRs, following up on medico-legal cases, making sure post-mortems were done in accordance with the law, bodies are released in a timely manner, and arranging ambulances. For the past week, they have started legal work for more than 500 people, guiding them in processing compensation forms, filing complaints, recording injury to property and individuals, tracking missing person reports, etc.

Delhi's Aam Aadmi Party government had announced immediate relief of ₹25,000 each for those whose houses were burnt in the riots. Singh says the response of the state administration has shown a lack of will. Initially, she adds, there was no clarity over the compensation forms. "We had compensation forms with us. But earlier this week, the government began accepting forms. So we are asking the claimants to go to the sub-divisional magistrate."

Mohammad Tanveer, a tailor who rented a room

in Shiv Vihar, left with his wife and 10-day-old son when paramilitary police were called in. They first took refuge along with many others at a stranger's house in Chaman Park and later shifted to the relief camp at the Eidgah. "We hid in the dark for three days. We survived because we were locked in. The sounds of iron rods, blasts and abusive slogans of the rioters still ring in my ears," says the 39-year-old in a quivering voice. Many like him are too afraid to return to Shiv Vihar and have been queuing up at the legal camp.

While the maze of lanes in the neighbourhoods appear like emptied war zones, the main road also bears the odd scars of damaged property that include businesses and schools. Workers at a plundered and singed sweet shop say the riots have left a sourness between Hindus and Muslims that will take time to heal. They are unable to understand why the violence occurred, they say. "Everything was fine here on February 24. People were protesting (against the amended citizenship law) in Brijpuri Puliyia. There was stone pelting at 7pm. An hour later, we all went home. Our shop was looted in front of our eyes. Police didn't come till February 26. We now fear going to Muslim homes," says Johnny Pal, a worker.

The lawyers' group, which offers services pro bono, has yet to collate its data, but all the complainants from Shiv Vihar are Muslims, says Singh. "People also fear there are bodies inside burnt houses. A couple of days back we were told bodies were thrown in a drain," she adds.

Lawyers associated with NGOs such as activist Harsh Mander's Karwan-e-Mohabbat and



"THE RESPONSE OF THE STATE ADMINISTRATION HAS SHOWN A LACK OF WILL"

MISHIKA SINGH
Lawyers for Detainees

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, students and civil society members have also collaborated with Lawyers for Detainees under the banner of Citizens' Collective for Peace.

Nilesh Jain, a lawyer who works with activist-politician Yogendra Yadav's Swaraj Abhiyan, was in the thick of things when detentions over anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) protests became routine in Delhi. A proposed march, under the umbrella of "We the People of India", from Red Fort to Bhagat Singh Park in ITO was denied permission by the police on December 18, 2019. A day later, before the march could begin, protesters were detained.

"People called us from various places including police stations in Mandir Marg, Chanakyapuri and Parliament Street. We responded by organising lawyers and forming a group," he says on the genesis of Lawyers for Detainees. Initially, more than 250 lawyers were mobilised in the national capital. A majority were aged below 30. Calls soon came from Uttar Pradesh, where people were detained in places like Gorakhpur, Raebareilly and Meerut. Jain also worked on a petition filed by the People's Union of Civil Liberties in the Allahabad High Court, alleging police brutality on protesters.

More cases followed in Delhi. "It became an everyday situation. Some were serial detainees," Jain says, adding that at police stations in Northeast Delhi such as Seelampur, Nand Nagri and Shastri Park, the cases were more serious. Many were detained for 24 hours or longer. Police would also forcibly check the phones of detainees, call up their families, harass and in many instances release them only after they wrote a note promising they would not take part in protests against the CAA and the update of the National Register of Citizens, he claims. "At Shastri Park police station, people were detained because they went to Jama Masjid to protest during (Bhim Army chief) Chandrashekhar Azad's rally in December. Photos of them standing peacefully with placards were cited as evidence against them."

Lawyers for Detainees points out that detainees in Central Delhi, in areas such as Mandir Marg police station where they were allowed to "play badminton and sing", were treated very well — although they comprised a large section of young protesters, just as in Northeast Delhi. The implication is that the working class is worse off than the privileged, even when the state clamps down on all protesters.

The lawyers' group drew members and point persons beyond Delhi as the anti-citizenship movement gathered steam across India.

Ishita Yadu, along with other lawyers based in Lucknow, has been educating protesters about their rights. Only this week, there was trouble at Ghantaghar where women have been leading an agitation. She alleges that the police attacked the protesters instead of taking action against the troublemakers who were produced before them. "The state machinery is able to exploit people because they are not aware of their rights."

When asked about being in the line of fire, she argues, "Every writ that we file is supposed to be against the state. So fighting against the state is something that lawyers should not be afraid to do. Also, lawyers should not be afraid of the state response to something that is illegal. If something is illegal, it is illegal irrespective of who is perpetuating it."

At a time when the police is being seen as prejudiced and state compliant in responding to anti-CAA protests, these young lawyers are offering hope to veterans too. But, as senior advocate Rebecca John says, "It shouldn't surprise us. Access to justice for all sections is a part of the duty of lawyers, both under the Advocates Act and the Constitution."

The women's movement in India, she adds, has a long history of legal association with survivors of sexual abuse. "But this kind of configuration where many young lawyers are functioning pretty seamlessly is a moment to celebrate."

The other virus

It's still stalking riot-affected Northeast Delhi, writes Anjali Puri, after recent visits to destroyed neighbourhoods and fearful camps. Let's not forget it

Much was made of the "two Delhis" on view last month — the Delhi of ceremonial welcomes and grand state banquets during the Trump visit, and the Delhi of mob violence taking place in poor neighbourhoods less than an hour's drive away. The visitors have gone but the contrast holds. The well-ordered and affluent parts of the city remain largely sealed off from what is still unfolding in areas that are, ironically, closer than ever before, because of the nearly 60-km-long Pink Line of the Delhi Metro. It's the mental journey, requiring sustained empathy, that is hard. Which is why, after a brief period of engagement with the virus of hate that convulsed Northeast Delhi, the conversation — in the media and in living rooms — is now shifting to the prospect of another virus, Covid-19, stalking the land.

The horrors unleashed by the riots are still with us, however, even if the helmet-wearing mobs have retreated into the shadows. Nothing prepares you for Phase 7 Shiv Vihar. Even the media's dismal description of this neighbourhood as a "ghost town" seems pallid when you come face to face with the new architecture created by vicious hands in one constricted lane after another. There are rows upon rows of narrow homes,

which were now unusable.

The camp, located in the Eidgah grounds at Mustafabad, is run by the Waqf Board in association with the Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi government which, after failing to be on the ground during the riots, came inexcusably late to the rescue and relief story. This camp is where many of the newly homeless can be found, after huddling for days in the homes of kind strangers.

In a large crowded tent, a friend and I show a group of women, all petrified at the prospect of returning to the places they fled, pictures of gutted homes we took on our mobile phones. They watch transfixed. "No, none of these, but it's very close," exclaims one finally. "I heard it was burnt, I haven't seen it," she adds helplessly. (Later, I read a report that a man died of a stroke at the camp shortly after making the short journey to his burnt down house in Shiv Vihar.)

After visiting the camp two days in a row, I feel I am looking at a shattered version of Shaheen Bagh, the women no longer up there on a stage, leading the sit-in, but confined to a tent with their children while their next moves are being decided by other people. The atmosphere, too, is far removed from the heady, carnival-like celebration of national



DALIP KUMAR

The horrors unleashed by the riots are still with us, however, even if the helmet-wearing mobs have retreated into the shadows

of which some are so untouched by violence that the decorations from last Diwali still hang gracefully over their doorways, while an occasional saffron flag perched on a rooftop flutters in the March breeze.

Every now and then, among them, is a blackened travesty of a house, its gaping doorway inviting you in to survey mangled fans, fridges that look like battered trunks, smashed tiny kitchens, a TV that, having melted in extreme heat, reminds you of Salvador Dalí's melting clocks. The floors are a carpet of glass shards, the pages of a child's notebook or a rubber slipper among them. And — there is no other way to say this — these are mostly Muslim homes, the horror of the arson attacks on them accentuated by the sight of the unharmed houses on either side, or by the little embellishments that the owner of the ill-fated home had splurged on, like a granite doorway with engraved Urdu inscriptions.

Obviously, the riots were a complex affair, the details still being pieced together, and it is painfully clear they took their toll on Hindus too. But the blighted gallis of Shiv Vihar, and indeed many other gallis in Northeast Delhi, show what sometimes seems to be lost in generic, overly careful "both sides lost" arguments: the frequency of menacingly well-informed, indeed forensic, acts of savagery against Muslim homes and livelihoods.

The first time you see a home where the landlord is Hindu and tenants Muslims, and only the possessions of the tenants have been destroyed, you don't suspect a pattern. But claims of such a trend came up more than once during the half day I spent with a group of volunteers helping people fill in compensation forms at a relief camp. In one case, a couple renting from a Muslim landlord said their home had been devastated, but their shop, rented from a Hindu, had been spared — except for its contents,

AFTER VISITING THE CAMP TWO DAYS IN A ROW, I FEEL I AM LOOKING AT A SHATTERED VERSION OF SHAHEEN BAGH

symbols that the anti-CAA-NRC protests have been. Yet, as with Shaheen Bagh, what you mostly see around you at this camp is Muslims supporting each other in a common struggle — aided by a sprinkling of liberals and other minorities. As at Shaheen Bagh, their spirited presence

highlights the appalling indifference of the state.

While the BJP's Kapil Mishra has been crowdfunding for the "underprivileged Hindu families" afflicted by the riots, "echo chambers" of the non-bigoted on Facebook and WhatsApp are full of posts asking for clothes, grains, medical supplies, rubber chappals even, for all victims of the riots. The Sikhs, who enriched the life of Shaheen Bagh with their langars (community kitchens), are at the Eidgah grounds too, an immaculately dressed posse of them arriving with dinner on the very evening the camp is being set up. The next afternoon, crowds line up to receive the contents of Shiromani Akali Dal's truck that has arrived with relief materials. I notice two medical clinics, one manned by medical personnel from St Stephen's Hospital, the other from Holy Family Hospital. In a nearby lane, doctors from Alshifa Hospital are handing out medicines.

By contrast, a doctor friend who approached a big corporate hospital suggesting it send doctors to the riot-affected areas was told it was not undertaking any CSR (corporate social responsibility) work at present. Nor it appears are others from the corporate world in Northeast Delhi. The prime minister and home minister announce on Twitter that they will not attend Holi milans — out of deference to the rampant coronavirus. But in Parliament, the government wants to discuss the riots only after Holi and the Speaker insists on parliamentary etiquette being followed to the letter. Should one be surprised? This is, after all, the "other Delhi", and its show must go on.



(From top) People outside the camps at Chaman Park; the Supreme Court Bar Association has also set up help desks at the Eidgah grounds in Mustafabad; and inside the legal camp at Chaman Park

AND ANOTHER THING

Virus in the works



AAKAR PATEL

Suddenly, from nowhere, the world is worried about and even obsessed with a new disease.

There are about 100,000 total global cases of people infected with the coronavirus (Covid-19) and 3,000 people have died of it. This fatality rate of 3 per cent is about one third that of SARS, which was also a coronavirus. It was also zoonotic, meaning it could be transmitted from animal to human. The SARS outbreak of 2003 infected 8,098 people of whom 774 died. Meaning it was less infectious, or at least better contained, though more fatal when one actually got it.

The symptoms were high fever, headache and a dry cough (SARS stands for severe acute respiratory syndrome). The disease spread when an infected person coughed and the droplets carried to the mouth, nose and eyes of another person.

Coronaviruses do not kill people of themselves. It is usually the aggravation of a pre-existing condition, or a weak body, that tends to respond more poorly to an infestation of the virus. The disease kills usually people aged over 40 and rarely gets some-

one young because their bodies are healthier generally.

Viruses don't reproduce themselves but require a host and then hijack it, forcing it to make copies of the virus. It also evolves through mutation and that is what explains the new varieties. A bacteria on the other hand reproduces by cell division. Bacteria respond to antibiotics but viruses do not, which makes them difficult to treat. We let the cold, which is also caused by a virus, to run itself out. This is not possible with other, more deadly viruses like AIDS.

Much is being made of the fact that people abroad are doing *namaste* instead of shaking hands as a means of avoiding the coronavirus. But skin to skin is not the only way in which it is transmitted and just washing one's hands is a good means of keeping safe.

For some reason China seems to be the point of origin of a lot of diseases that affect us globally. The Black Death was the name of a plague that wiped out millions of people around 1350. It was borne by rodents, which were hosts to fleas that were the actual carriers of the disease. Of course, people did not know how the disease was spread and till it was discovered that it was the rodents, the epidemic flared freely in the absence of countermeasures.

One contemporary account from Italy described the effect of the plague on people:

"In men and women alike, it first betrayed itself by the emergence of certain tumours in the groin or armpits, some of which grew as large as a common apple, others as an egg...



Our instinct even in this modern age is still to panic and act irrationally in the face of words like virus and plague

REUTERS

From the two said parts of the body this deadly gavocciolo (a tender swelling, a bubo) soon began to propagate and spread itself in all directions indifferently; after which the form of the malady began to change, black spots or livid making their appearance in many cases on the arm or the thigh or elsewhere, now few and large, now minute and numerous. As the gavocciolo had been and still was an infallible token of approaching death, such also were

these spots on whomsoever they showed themselves."

I was in Surat in 1994 when the city was affected by the plague. There was little or no information on what this was and how it was to be countered. It was assumed that one reason was that it was because Surat was a dirty city. It was, there is no denying that, but it wasn't any more or less dirty than other Indian cities at the time. And also other Indian cities now, for that matter. I remember that

the city was deserted in the day and a lot of the migrant workers who make up the city's population fled, going back to their villages in the north of India. Surat's plague was pneumonic and not bubonic, meaning it affected the lungs.

That disease had 1,000 recorded cases and 50 deaths. It was followed by a clean-up of Surat under a dynamic municipal commissioner named S R Rao who became a civic hero for transforming the city's cleanliness culture.

The thing about disease and the human body is that we still don't really understand a lot of it. Till only about 250 years or so ago, even the most advanced European medicine was based on Aristotelian principles of the four humours: black bile, phlegm, blood and yellow bile. This was mostly nonsense and cures were based on balancing these through blood-letting, vomiting, sweating or diet. Greek medicine came into the Islamic world after the conquest of Egypt and the most revered name in that space is that of Ibn Sina. Today when we have Rook Afza, made by the company Hamdard, we are having Ibn Sina's formulation of a thousand years ago.

In that sense, medicine, even modern medicine, is not a science like mathematics or chemistry is a science but more like economics and the weather. There are no fixed conditions and there is a great deal of turbulence in the field. This is getting better as we better understand things like the genetic code but real and full knowledge is still not near, so far as I have understood it.

That is probably why our instinct even in this modern age is still to panic and act irrationally in the face of information or words like virus and plague. Surat emptied out that year but only 50 died in all. Many times more died in the same period also of avoidable causes.

The prime minister has cancelled his visit to Brussels as a result of the confusion and the fear of the spread of the disease and estimates from the OECD say that India will lose more than 1 per cent of its GDP growth to the coronavirus epidemic this year and also be affected the next.

One hopes that this is not the case, and also that like SARS, this disease having come now goes away as soon as possible.

GEAR

Adidas SL20 ₹10,999

Get fast



The SL20 is a simple tradeoff between cushion and speed. But not everyone can go the distance, writes Veer Arjun Singh

I prefer speed over distance. That's because I trained in school to be a competitive middle-distance runner. Barefoot training was commonplace in those days. It helped me improve my running form and also taught me how to better handle the impact on landing. Racing flats, if not spikes, were the norm and clunky cushioned shoes were frowned upon.

The Adidas SL20 reminds me of those undernourished training days. My training shoes back then were competitive for the time, but clunky compared to what we get today. The SL20 weighs under 230 grams a piece. It's easily 100 grams lighter than my shoes then and still better cushioned. The elite marathoners' favorite Nike Vaporfly Next% astonishingly weighs a mere 200 grams.

It's true that a lighter shoe tends to help you run faster. But it's not that simple over distances. Reduced cushioning can also have you spend more energy on absorbing the impact, which defeats the purpose. It can also increase the chances of injury. A good shoe is carefully designed to have a

form and fit that works with less cushioning. But it also takes some training to get used to the extra impact.

The Adidas SL20 fits true to size with no extra room. The pair has a narrow base but accommodates my broad feet without a problem.

It completely does away with the Boost midsole for a new, firmer compound called "lightstike". The upper is a single layer of engineered mesh dotted with visible ventilation outlets. The tongue and the heel collar do not get any cushioning either. Despite being barebones in design, there's an extra layer of reinforcement around the midfoot and heel area. The laces are competitively thicker and give the narrow shoe a great fit.

The shoes feel quite airy for warm weather and barely heat up over long distances. The "lightstike" midsole gives it a firm underfoot feel. The pair almost feels like a racing flat, which lets you feel the surface, but has a little bit of cushioning.

Apart from the weight, I feel the best thing about the shoe is its flexible mesh upper. It allows for a quick toe off followed by easy bends with each stride. It's especially helpful when you're running short bursts on elevated roads to improve strength and stamina or trying to increase your cadence (strides per minute). The torsion spring also helps in shifting

the weight from the rearfoot to the forefoot comfortably.

However, the thin Continental outsole, which is good for tracks, roads and pavements, gets a little slippery on grass.

Verdict 4/5
The Adidas SL20 is quite responsive despite being almost a flat racer. It helps in improving speed and agility as a marathon trainer and is a great shoe for short and middle distances. Spend ₹10,999 on this feather-light pair when you can handle some impact and your next goal is to get to the finish line faster.

Scorecard

Design

★★★★★

Performance

★★★★★

Comfort

★★★★★

Reebok Zig Kinetica ₹11,999

Comfort is everything

The most comfortable pair of sneakers Veer Arjun Singh has ever worn can handle a bit of performance too

Reebok played it cool this time. Its biggest drop this season, the Zig Kinetica, does not fit any one category. It's neither a trainer nor a running shoe. There's Conor McGregor, the blue-eyed boy of mixed martial arts, promoting the pair and celebrities walking the ramp in it. It must be one of those sneakers that look dope with athleisure wear and can handle a little bit of exercise. With that assumption, I took it to the gym and wore it on the roads. And here's what I found.

Design 5/5

The silhouette of the shoe takes after the ZigTech brand of performance shoes that Reebok introduced about a decade ago. Back then, they flew off the shelves more for their edgy, zigzag midsoles than for performance metrics. The new Zig Kinetica tones down the midsole disfiguration a bit and fuses it with the sneaker culture of the time. The result is a chunky "daddy sneaker" but one that is extremely well-cushioned and airy.

The Zig Kinetica is easily one of the best-looking sneakers to have launched in India this year. It's a chic basic, like the Nike Air Max 270, that will be sculpted by designers in myriad iterations and has the potential of gaining cult status if Reebok builds on it. The Zig Kinetica Concept_Type 1 in its four colourways is already making waves worldwide.

The reinforced upper is a mix of mesh and synthetic with layered detailing. The one that I am talking about is the Radiant Red colourway. Although the poster pair of the launch is the Sunbaked Orange with a full black upper, I prefer the full red with its orange hued midsole. The pair is bold, chic and versatile.

Performance 3/5

One of the most sort-after sneakers of recent times is not just a pretty pair of shoes. That's not to say that you should buy it for a specific athletic vocation, but despite its weight — almost obese at 350 grams a piece — it does an impressive job of moving feet, and fast.



Scorecard

Design

★★★★★

Performance

★★★★★

Comfort

★★★★★

The feature that truly elevates it is a mix of three underlying technologies in its midsole and some delightfully cushiony tibbits. Used as trainers when weightlifting, you can rely on the pair's stability. It inspires a lot of confidence to go heavy. The thick neoprene tongue and a fluffy heel collar almost insulate

the feet from abrasion even when you wear it with shoe liners. The midfoot locks in well and despite its standard heel drop, the shoe is good for low-to-medium intensity conditioning drills and light treadmill runs.

With serious running, the shoe does better than expected. Its Floatride Fuel midsole wrapped between two cushioning technologies — the ZIG Energy shells and the ZIG Energy bands — absorbs a lot of impact and protects the heel as well as the shin. While it's great for casual running, the shoe feels too heavy and too warm beyond a few kilometres.

Verdict 4/5

Shoes rarely look this good in the gym and the "daddy sneakers" can handle a bit of running, too. Even so, the Zig Kinetica is not a performance shoe. It's simply the most comfortable and well-cushioned sneaker I have ever worn. And I wear a new pair every week. A sum of ₹11,999 is for comfort and style. Consider performance a bonus.

