

DSPMU YOUTH FEST

'Avaahan' to spread colours of creativity, joy

PNS ■ RANCHI

Coined up on the theme -- for the students, by the students, of the students, the first youth fest -- Avaahan of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University (DSPMU) is all set to spread the colours of creativity and joy. The two day fest will be inaugurated by DSPMU VC - Satya Narayan Munda on April 2.

"Amidst much fanfare, the event will be inaugurated enfolded the fascination of different creative genres at the newly constituted university. A mix blend of cultural affairs will mark the beginning of the tantalizing show which will be presented by a handful of budding talents from different departments," said Secretary -- Student Union (DSPMU) and managing committee member, Bhagwat Kumar.

The participants will enter the arena to set a benchmark for their counterparts



Students perform during rehearsals for Youth fest 'Avaahan' of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University (DSPMU) in Ranchi on Monday. Vinay Murnu

painting, mehendi designing, folk/tribal dance, classical dance, quiz, elocution, debate, poster-making, clay-modeling, collage making, cartoon sketching, monologue, skits including mime have also been planned for the students.

The event is being organised to motivate the students to give equal importance to academics as well as extra-curricular activities.

"This is an attempt of the university to nurture their aspirations and ensure overall development of students. The event will not just recognise their hobby but will further polish their talents ensuring holistic development. Such gatherings are an opportunity for all creative enthusiasts to share a common plat-

form with each other and promote cultural amalgamations," said Bhagwat.

"The cultural extravaganza holds a distinct place in a youth's life who wants to carve a niche for themselves in different creative sectors," he further added. In the first of its kind effort, the student union leaders of the varsity have taken the responsibility of organising the fest, adding the essence of tribal culture while mingling several other art forms.

DSPMU is the first university of the State to hand over the entire responsibility of the youth fest to the student union leaders. "The university has not just given us the privilege but this is a form of appreciation to recognise our potential. No university has done this before," the Secretary -- Student Union DSPMU further added. The programme will be initiated from 10 AM onwards on the campus premises while the valedictory session will be held on April 6.

U'khand: Priyanka to campaign for candidates on April 7



Programme not finalised yet but Priyanka likely to hold road shows in Dehradun & Nainital

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

To boost the prospects of the Congress candidates in Uttarakhand, the national general secretary and in-charge Congress in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Priyanka Gandhi is expected to hit the campaign trail on April 7.

Though the programme of Priyanka is not confirmed yet, it is learnt that she can hold road shows in Dehradun and Nainital. The Vice President of the state Congress, Surya Kant Dhasmana said Congress president Rahul Gandhi would hold rallies at three places in Uttarakhand on April 6.

Congress president's rally in Dehradun on March 16, demand to hold his rallies came from different parts of the state. Rahul Gandhi will address first rally on April 6 in Srinagar at 12 noon then we would address a public meeting in Almora at 2 pm while at 4 pm he would in Haridwar. The programme of the Priyankaji is not final yet but she would be in Uttarakhand on April 7, he said.

Like in other parts of the country the demand of Priyanka Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi is very high among the Congress party candidates in Uttarakhand also. It is learnt that the All India Congress Committee (AICC) General Secretary Harish Rawat is working hard to bring Priyanka for campaigning in Uttarakhand.

After successful rally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Rudrapur in Udham Singh Nagar district on March 28,

All five constituencies of U'khand on focus of Congress leadership

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

All Lok Sabha constituencies of Uttarakhand are included in the list of 150 seats in the country which the Congress leadership has prepared for special attention.

The list includes those seats where the Congress party is in direct contest with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

It is learnt that the Congress President, Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi would hold road shows and rallies in these constituencies to boost the prospects of congress candidates.

It is believed that the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson, Sonia Gandhi could also campaign in these areas.

The strategists of Congress believe that with special focus on these constituencies, the twin purpose of restricting the tally of BJP and boosting the

The strategists of Congress believe that with special focus on these constituencies, the twin purpose of restricting the tally of BJP and boosting the electoral fortunes of Congress can be achieved

electoral fortunes of Congress can be achieved.

In Uttarakhand which has the tradition of contest which is mainly between the BJP and Congress, all five Lok Sabha seats are on the focus of the Congress leaders.

It is worth mentioning here that the Congress party had swept all five seats in Uttarakhand in the Lok Sabha elections of 2009. Things however were reversed in the year 2014 when riding high on a

strong Modi wave the BJP candidates won from all the seats here.

The co-in charge of Uttarakhand Congress, Rajesh Dharmani told The Pioneer that all the five seats of the state are on the special focus of Congress leadership. He said that apart from rallies of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, the state unit of Congress has requested the party to send UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi to Uttarakhand.

Rawat, who is pitted in a close contest with the state president of BJP, Ajay Bhatt in Nainital-Udham Singh Nagar parliamentary constituency, wants a rally or road show of Priyanka

Gandhi to negate the effect of the Prime Minister's rally. Similarly the Pradesh Congress President Pritam Singh also wants that Priyanka should hold road show in his support in the urban

areas of Dehradun. The Congress strategists are of the view that since BJP is on stronger wicket in Dehradun city, the road show of Priyanka could turn the tide in favour of Singh.

Bisht: BJP projecting NaMo in every constituency is democracy's murder

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Senior Congress leader and former minister Hira Singh Bisht has said that it is very unfortunate that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is projecting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in every parliamentary constituency instead of its candidates.

Addressing media persons

at Rajiv Bhawan, the state party office of the Congress party here on Monday, Bisht said that BJP is making such an environment wherein it appears as if Modi is party's candidate from all the parliamentary seats. Terming this as murder of democracy, he said that since the members of the parliament (MP) are the public representatives and projecting

Modi is insult of democracy.

Taking a dig at the 'Main Bhi Chowkidar' campaign of BJP, he said that many corrupt persons too have become part of the campaign and are terming them as Chowkidars.

Bisht said that the Narendra Modi has not fulfilled any promise it made to the people in the Lok Sabha elections of 2014.

Advertisement for JAWAHAR NAVODAYA VIDYALAYA, CHATRA, Jharkhand. Includes details about the school, its location, and contact information.



Firefighter works to douse in a building at Kantia Toli in Ranchi on Monday. No one was reported to be hurt in the incident, according to locals



Ratan Lal

HC quashes GO staying reservation in SCST promotion

Nainital: The high court of Uttarakhand has quashed the government order of September 2012 that had stayed reservation in promotion under SC-ST quota in the state.

The court has stated that it wants, the government can bring in a law under article 16 (A) of the constitution. The division bench of chief justice Ramesh Ranganathan and justice NS Dhanik also stated that the government order regarding reser-

vation in promotion under SC-ST quota whether issued by the Uttarakhand government or received from the Uttar Pradesh government, would be applicable. Rudrapur resident Gyan Chandra had filed a petition in the high court stating that on September 5, 2012, the state government had issued a government order discontinuing reservation in promotion under the quota for scheduled caste and scheduled tribes.

BSP all set for Mayawati's rallies

BSP chief to address 2 rallies on April 6

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

As the date of polling in Uttarakhand for the Lok Sabha elections approaches near, election campaigns in state have picked up speed. With star campaigners of the Bharatiya Janata Party already starting campaign and those of Congress lined up to start shortly, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is also gearing up for its chief Mayawati's rallies in Roorkee and Rudrapur. The BSP in alliance with Samajwadi Party (SP) is contesting on four Lok Sabha seats in Uttarakhand. BSP Mahanagar chief and candidate from Tehri Lok

Sabha constituency, Satyapal told The Pioneer on Monday that BSP chief Mayawati is scheduled to address public rallies in Roorkee and Rudrapur on April 6. He said, "Locals no longer have faith in BJP and Congress. Though they still view our party as an outsider, they also know that Garhwal and Kumaon regions were more prosperous when the BSP government was in office during the time of undivided Uttar Pradesh. In fact during her tenure as chief minister of UP, Behenji made four new districts and 14 blocks in what we presently call Uttarakhand."

Regarding the rallies he said, "Our rallies will not be filled with people who have been bribed to be there, just to show numbers. Our rally will have people who are fed up with these so called national parties, their leaders and their hollow promises. We are expecting crowds of about 1.5 lakh."

About the main issue BSP chief is likely to speak on during the rallies, he said, "I cannot be sure about what issues she is going to raise. However, our party has always been vocal about the betterment of minorities and also about the equality of followers of various religions. Look at the education sector- the state lost the only NIT we had to Rajasthan. In places like Tehri constituency, one should ask the MP Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah, what she has done in the past five years and you'll know about state's current situation. In Uttarakhand, unemployment, inflation and migration are the key problems and they will surely be discussed."

It is pertinent to mention that in 2007 state assembly elections BSP won eight seats, in 2012 three and in 2017 none. Haridwar and Udham Singh Nagar have traditionally been areas from where the BSP has received support of the voters.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION No. : E/TC/5 Part (III) Date : 29.03.2019. Notified that the following manned level crossings (LC) in Ranchi Division will be closed due to construction of Normal Height Subways and Limited Height Subways.

Advertisement for JAWAHAR NAVODAYA VIDYALAYA, CHATRA, Jharkhand. Includes details about the school, its location, and contact information.



GUILTY OR NOT?

Actor VIKRANT MASSEY, who plays a rape and murder accused in *Criminal Justice*, tells AYUSHI SHARMA that a discussion on the Indian Judicial System is a never-ending one

Trend Blazer

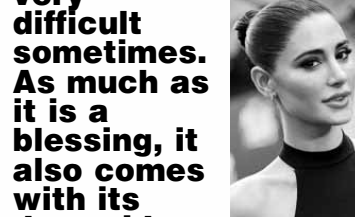
I am interested in politics: Pankaj

Actor PANKAJ TRIPATHI, who will be seen in the forthcoming web series *Criminal Justice*, says though he has an interest in politics, he still has time before he pursues it.



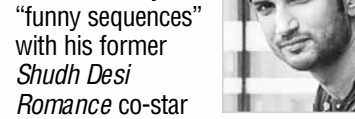
Pankaj said, "I have an interest in politics but I am not going to explore that interest now. I have time for that. I believe that only a well-read, well-aware individual can make a great leader and build a progressive nation. I tend to read a lot of books and believe in a certain ideology. I think reading and travelling not only make us good artistes but also broaden our horizons and open our mind. It really helps us to become a good human being."

Living life in the public eye can be very difficult sometimes. As much as it is a blessing, it also comes with its downside. Over the last two years, I've gained weight. I'm going to bring you on the journey of becoming the best version of myself again, and I want you to join me on this journey too.



—Nargis Fakhri

Actor SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT will have many "funny sequences" with his former *Shudh Desi*



Romance co-star Nalnees Neel in the forthcoming film *Chhichhore*. "The film will focus on an engineering college where different types of students study. My character's name is Pandu who is a cook. He is very interesting. He is a bit comical and also helps people win games," Nalnees said.

"I enjoyed working with Sushant in *Shudh Desi Romance* too, he said. Nalnees will also be seen in *Bhor*, directed by Kamakhya Narayan Singh, and will be playing a lead role for the first time.

Kim anxious about her baby

Reality TV star KIM KARDASHIAN WEST is anxious about baby number four.



During an episode of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, the 38-year-old shared that she and husband Kanye West are expecting their fourth child via surrogate. "We have an announcement to make," Kim told her family. "We're having a baby. We're having a boy." Kim later admitted to sister Kylie Jenner that she's "low-key freaking out" about the pregnancy. "I didn't think it was going to happen. I thought like 'Oh, it probably won't even take,'" she said.

India or rather Indians do not cover themselves in glory when it comes to sexual assault and crimes against women. Despite formulating numerous women-friendly laws and doing away with outdated ones, the country still has a long way to go in delivering justice to many rape victims.

Criminal Justice, a crime drama captures Aditya Sharma's (played by Vikrant Massey) journey, as one fateful incident completely turns his life around. He is ambitious but is aware of his middle-class roots, a boy who drives his father's cab to add to the family income. But his life turns upside down when during his last trip for the night, he ends up being accused of rape and brutal murder of his passenger. As skeletons tumble out of his closet, one begins to wonder whether Aditya is innocent or guilty of the terrible crime?

Vikrant apprises us that playing the character of someone who has been accused of rape and murder took a mental toll on him. He says that he had to prepare "quite a lot" in comparison to what he has done earlier. The character required a lot of intensity as well as a huge amount of research. From the nuances of Indian prisons to the life of criminals locked inside, "every little detail was important." He says, "It was torturing, be it physically, emotionally or mentally."

The actor feels that one can never even imagine being in that position or envision what it is like to be an accused.



"Hence, it becomes even more difficult to put yourself in that person's shoes and be in that mindset. I have never been to jail and have always lead a very happy and protected life." (Touches wood). He goes on to add, "System *jaise Aditya ko toda hai, main vaise kabhi nahi toota* (I have never been as broken as the way the system breaks Aditya). There were days when it made me emotionally drained, but that is what all powerful stories do," says the actor who is going to star opposite Deepika Padukone in the forthcoming film *Chhapaak*.

As an artist, to be in the mental state of the character is important for him to live it "as when you are mentally ready for something, your body, gestures and everything else follows you automatical-

'ONE CAN NEVER EVEN ENVISION WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE ACCUSED OF RAPE. HENCE, IT BECOMES EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO PLAY THE CHARACTER AND PUT YOURSELF IN THAT PERSON'S SHOES'

ly." The show is the Indian adaptation of the renowned BBC's eponymously-named series, which was later adapted into the Emmy Award-winning HBO show *The Night of*. Vikrant says that the show is relevant and has been moulded to Indian preferences. "We obviously knew the sensibilities of Indian audience and that they differ in many ways — culturally as well as in terms of traditions. I wanted Aditya to be that one boy which every family has. The whole structure of the show is based on the Indian Judicial System."

When asked about what he thinks of the judicial procedures of India, Vikrant laughed and said that the topic was very lengthy and no amount of time would be sufficient to discuss it. "I don't think *main iska jawab aadhe ghante me bhi de paunga*. There are pros and cons of everything. It is up to us how we contribute towards any kind of change," he says.

Rather than feeling apprehensive while working with veteran actors like Pankaj Tripathi and Jackie Shroff, Vikrant feels that it's an opportunity for him. "There is a sense of motivation. I had a fan boy moment with Jackie Shroff ji. It was incredible seeing him in person, almost like a dream come true. I still remember when I was a kid and he was shooting and I was one of the hundreds of people standing there and trying to get a glimpse. I never thought I'll work with him," says the *Mirzapur* actor.

(It will air on Hotstar from April 5.)

Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder

Acid attack survivor LAXMI AGARWAL says that she's happy to see Bollywood coming up with real stories

Laxmi Agarwal, whose life as an acid attack survivor has inspired an forthcoming Bollywood film *Chhapaak*, said she found it amazing how people were finding beauty in the 'burns' that actress Deepika Padukone sported for the movie.

Laxmi was attacked when she was all of 15. Over the years, she has been vocal about her experience and actively campaigns against acid attacks.

Last week, Deepika unveiled her first look from Meghna Gulzar's *Chhapaak*, and it was widely lauded by the film fraternity.

What was Laxmi's first reaction on seeing Deepika's look? "I was happy to see Deepika's first look from the film. The response and the messages I got on social media was overwhelming. In fact, it was my daughter's birthday, and more than messages for her, I got congratulatory messages about the film."

"I was feeling good that a celebrity has come in that look. A lot of make-up artistes changed a natural face to acid distorted face after that (on social media). And I felt, 'see, they are finding beauty in an acid-burnt face,'" said Laxmi,



who was a showstopper at the just concluded India Runway Week.

Laxmi was on her way back home from music class when a man, twice her age, threw acid on her for rejecting his advances. Her face and other body parts got disfigured in the attack.

With *Chhapaak*, she feels happy that Bollywood is coming out with real stories. "People are intrigued by Bollywood. A long time ago, a film named *Tezaab* came out. It spoke about beauty. Today, beauty through films is shown in a different manner and the youth will see and learn," she said.

Asked about her involvement with the film, Laxmi who has remained largely tight-lipped about it said, "I was involved with the film," and was happy to share the story of her struggle and survival with the makers of the film.

"I am always open about my life because I have seen several people in my journey who are doing a lot in front, but are suffering behind. I feel if you are an inspiration for someone, then you should come out and talk about these things. Laxmi is an open book," she said.

—IANS



Marvel universe to get LGBTQ superhero

Avengers: Endgame co-director Joe Russo says the Marvel universe will introduce a LGBTQ superhero very soon.

When asked whether it is time for a LGBTQ superhero in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Joe said, "One hundred per cent and you will see one very soon."

There has been talk that a LGBTQ superhero may find space in the Marvel world after Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige spoke about the possibility. He had said it's "percolating".

Rumour mills are also abuzz that Angelina Jolie is in talks to star in Marvel Studios' *The Eternals* in what would be the actress first venture into the superhero realm.

Created by Jack Kirby in 1976, the story of *The Eternals*

is set millions of years ago when the cosmic beings — known as the celestials — genetically experimented on humans to create super-powered individuals — known as the eternals — along with the villainous Deviants.

For now, the studio is set to release *Avengers: Endgame*, starring Robert Downey Jr., Chris Hemsworth, Chris Evans and Scarlett Johansson. It will release in India on April 26 in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

The film, directed by Joe and Anthony Russo, is a continuation of *Avengers: Infinity War*, which left Marvel fans in shock with the failure of the superheroes against the supervillain Thanos.

Joe is in India to promote the film.

—IANS

AN AWARD FOR CREATIVITY

After creating a platform to acknowledge short films, critics now unite for feature films

After the success of the short film awards, critics unite for the first Feature Film Awards as a pan-India category to celebrate the diversity of the Indian cinema.

The awards will be a celebration of the best of Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam cinema.

Anupama Chopra, chairperson, FCG said, "The FCG is the first registered body of film critics in India. We are a pan-Indian, pan-language, pan-platform body. We have critics from print, television, radio and digital and our opinions reach millions of people including 32 lakh on Twitter alone. It gives us great pleasure to announce the first Critics Choice Film Awards to honour and celebrate the finest talent in the Indian cinema. We hope that these awards will contribute to setting and raising standards for films in the country."

With entries coming in from all parts of the country, a panel comprising India's top film critics have first curated and shortlisted the nominees. The Guild as a whole then voted for and felicitated the best short films



from across the country with the aim of acknowledging and appreciating the rising growth of the industry as a whole.

While the short film awards were decided based on entries by filmmakers, the Critics' Choice Film Awards will decide on nominees and winners based on theatrical releases from the year 2018. With the participation of credible film critics from all over India, the awards aim to honour films based on the art of filmmaking as opposed to mere popularity.

"We bring credibility and the team has worked creative elements around this property which will truly give it a premium feel. We believe CCFCA can become a benchmark in the years to come, through which quality films will be recognised and the masters of this craft can be given their due honour."

The nominations will be announced in the first week of the month, while the ceremony will take place on April 21.

Filmmaker Zoya Akhtar will grace the announcement.



THE PAINTER'S DILEMMA

History, legend and a tale about RAJA RAVI VARMA come together in this 1881 oil on canvas which came up for sale recently. By UMA NAIR

Amidst a range of artworks at the Saffron Sale, one painting, which was the cynosure of all viewers and art aficionados, was from the Income Tax department, Lot 13 — Nirav Modi's Raja Ravi Varma. The 1881 oil on canvas represented history, legend and the royal lineage of the Maharaja of Travancore.

Replete with tropical elements, royal bodyguards standing in knee-deep water with a houseboat, the scene was epic. The rare oil painting illustrated the welcoming of the third Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, Richard Temple-Grenville, on his official visit to Trivandrum, a Princely state in southern India in 1880.

Temple-Grenville was the Governor General of Madras (1875-1880). In the artwork, Visakhram Thirunal, the younger brother of the Maharaja Ayilyom Thirunal of Travancore, is welcoming the Duke, who is accompanied by his aide-de-camp and a few British army officers. Raja Ravi Varma was invited to document this historical event, and to paint "the moment when Buckingham alighted from the splendid barge, which must have undoubtedly brought him through the waterways of Kerala," noted the sale.

The Maharaja is seen standing behind his brother in the building which bears the image of a conch shell, the symbol of the state of Travancore, as well as a welcoming banner for the Duke. It is likely that the ceremony depicted in the present lot took place at the Vallakadavu Boathouse, which was built in the 1820s and served as an important waterway hub for travel and cargo activity during the Travancore era. "Historical records reveal that the *boattupura*, as it is known to the locales, was used by the state barges of the Travancore kings. The royal parties which went picnicking in the Veli Lake used to set sail from the boathouse. The priests, scholars and nobility who used to come to Thiruvananthapuram from far and near, used to alight here," wrote T Nandkumar in 2004.

According to Erwin Neumayer and Christine Schelberger, during the Duke's visit to Travancore, he was eager to meet Raja Ravi Varma, a fact that made the Maharaja jealous. This visit ultimately turned out to be disastrous for the painter. "When the Duke met Raja Ravi Varma in the presence of the king, he asked him to sit with them, which, according to the custom of the land was unthinkable. Raja Ravi Varma declined to sit in the presence of the king and the three, the governor, the king, and the painter, remained standing while talking. Raja Ravi Varma knew that he was now out of favour with the king and left Trivandrum never to come back



REPLETE WITH TROPICAL ELEMENTS, ROYAL BODYGUARDS STANDING IN KNEE-DEEP WATER WITH A HOUSEBOAT, THE SCENE IN THE PAINTING ILLUSTRATED THE WELCOMING OF THE THIRD DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM AND CHANDOS, RICHARD TEMPLE-GRENVILLE, ON HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO TRIVANDRUM

during the lifetime of the king." (Erwin Neumayer and Christine Schelberger eds., Raja Ravi Varma, Portrait of an Artist: The Diary of C Raja Raja Varma, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 300)

Upon completion, the present lot was gifted to the Duke as a token of appreciation. After his death, the painting passed on to his eldest daughter Baroness Kinloss. In the 1920s, it changed hands and became a part of Castle House, Buckingham, the offices of Buckinghamshire County Council and remained there until 1974, when a private collector acquired it. The scene in all its perfection its intricate details and the allure of the cultural fabric of those times created a once in a lifetime panorama of panache and royal regalia.

In search of oneself

Australian soprano DEBORAH CHEETHAM tells AYUSHI SHARMA that she found similarities with her Aboriginal roots

She visited India for the first time in 2017 and ever since she has loved the country and its people. "I knew that I will return," said Australian Soprano Deborah Cheetham, as she marked the closing ceremony of the six-month long Australia Fest in India recently.

The lyric soprano said that even though her visits to the country have been limited, "Indian music and art have been an important part of music and fashion for most of my life. Now that I have visited the source, I understand better why Indians know and love their culture and are attentive to their craft."

There are always certain stories and narratives etched deep in the songs that opera singers perform. Talking about the one that Cheetham narrated at the festival, she said that it is *Songs of Belonging*, which narrated "my journey of discovering my

identity as a Yorta Yorta or Jotijota (indigenous Australian people who have traditionally inhabited the area surrounding the junction of the Goulburn and Murray Rivers in present-day north-eastern Victoria and southern New South Wales) woman."

She believes that such events initiate a cultural dialogue between two nations as "they help us understand each other on a much deeper level."

Recalling one of her past experiences in India, she said that she plans to expand the art in the country. "Whilst in Mumbai, we visited a school at the Darvai Transition Camp. Although we have no plans to open a school here, I plan to stay in touch with the children who we met in order to mentor them," said she.

Having performed across the world, she talked about how she has explored different kinds of audience and music practices. "There are fundamental truths which bind humanity together. The desire to understand and realise that you belong to the world is a universal theme and so I find this recital has resonated well with the audience. Also there is so much about Australia which is not fully understood especially the shared history since colonisation and the effect it had on the Aboriginal Nations."

Talking about the evolution of the industry, she said, "It is true to say that the digital age has changed the way people connect to music thus opening up many new pathways. There is instant gratification everywhere. However I know there is still a place when you are seated in a theatre and the house lights are switched off and you wait in breathless anticipation for the music to be played live."



The fire within

Percussionist ANURADHA PAL tells CHAHAK MITTAL that when music is universal, its creators cannot be specific to one gender. She further discusses her struggle to become the biggest female tabla player of all time

Recently a daily quoted: 'If there's a female equivalent of Ustad Zakir Hussain, it's Anuradha Pal.' While the percussionist feels that the two can never be compared as he is "my guru", she is much more — an inspiration, a fighter, a writer as well as a trend-setter.

Even though her journey of more than 40 years in the industry has been rewarding, she says, it has been challenging as well. Coming from a non-musical and male-dominated background, Pal struggled to find her way through the restrictions and challenges the society imposes on a woman, to become the first professional female tabla virtuoso in the world. "I had to be really at the top of the game to prove my niche and have a unique set of offerings that would make an impact. I had to train myself very hard and practice for eight to 10 hours each day to reach the level of the best musicians. I had to make sure that my work does the talking since I didn't have any Godfather. Neither did I take any external help," she says.

She explains why she has never chosen to stop. From being featured in the

Limca Book of Records, to receiving a number of national and international accolades like the Excellence Award from the government of Canada, First Ladies award from the President of India, Women Achiever's Award and many more. She says, "I started receiving awards when I was 10-years-old. With every award that I brought home, my parents told me 'Very good, but you have to work harder.' Honestly, their attitude helped me reach out for more. I needed to do more for excellence in the field."

The legend, who has performed in the biggest international music festivals as both the youngest and the most senior musician, had begun the *Anuradha Pal in Tabla Jugalbandi with Herself*, a series of live events across the country, where she played solo and narrated interactive stories through innovative rhythmic dialogues.

The world of classical instruments, especially that of tabla, has been dominated by men from the beginning. This was one thing she has aimed at changing ever since she began playing the percussion instrument. She formed the all-



woman ensemble *Stree Shakti*, the first-of-its-kind in an era when there were hardly any women's music groups. What also made it unique was that it combined both Hindustani and Carnatic styles. "When music is universal, its creators cannot be specific to one gender. When I started performing at the age of 10, I started encountering a lot of opposition, most of which was on account of my gender. I don't give up easily. I was studying science and until then I hadn't decided that I will dedicate myself to music and tabla," she says and adds that this was the time when she felt that there would be many other women who must have felt the same way.

Creating a platform for them was important. She says, "I formed *Stree Shakti* to give strength to women and change the society's perception that they can't do things other than what they are supposed to. I wanted the band to be different and develop as a community. It's also special since there is not even a band of men that has attempted to combine so many different styles of music — Hindustani, Carnatic, vocal and percus-

'With the Naari Shakti anthem, I wanted to document the journey of resilience and power that women have become over time. It's a fight against the numerous acts of monstrosity against them'

sion — together. It is a meeting of many different souls and streams."

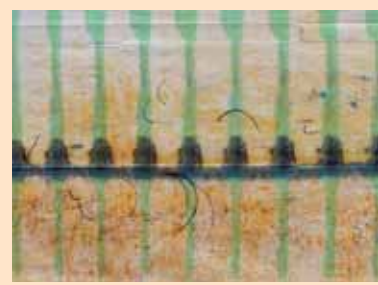
Pal says that she was determined to make it something different, rather than just women-centric. "It had to be something beyond a singular aspect. It had to be powerful and make a statement that inspires other women too. Even though many all-woman bands have come up today, this band created a revolution 23 years ago as it was a concept, completely unheard of. It was important to make people understand that women have a lot of potential that we don't realise," says the trend blazer.

The ambassador of the *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Yojana* recently launched and composed the *Anthem for Naari Shakti* campaign in India. "The idea of the lyrics for the anthem birthed when we (*Stree Shakti* team) were on our concept tour across Europe celebrating our 21st anniversary. I wanted to document this journey of resilience and power that women have become over time. I also wanted to give a voice to those who needed one," she says.

Pal has been exposed to writing as well since her mother was a writer. And it was one of her Hindi poems or prose that inspired the lyrics, which go like... "Khud ko tu pehchaan de khuddari ko choom ke! Padh kar apni pehchaan bana, stree shakti ki misaal de." (Give yourself an identity by becoming self reliant/Educate yourself and become a symbol for woman power.)

The anthem, she says, calls out the evils in the society against women, be it dowry, *sati*, or female foeticide and numerous other acts of monstrosity. "It's a fight against all the acts of injustice against women, and an initiative to show solidarity towards making India a superpower of women," she adds.

WATCH OUT



Gallery Espace presents artist Akshay Raj Singh Rathore's solo exhibition, *un-practised frugality*, showcasing his vision that "surpasses the present sense of contemporary contemplation." **WHEN:** Till April 13 **TIME:** 11 am to 6 pm **WHERE:** Gallery Espace, 16 Community Centre, New Friends Colony.

Art Tune of Spring is a group art exhibition by four painters and one sculpture, featuring works of Sekhar Kar, Subrata Das, Subrata Paul, Swarnali Pal and Jayanta Khan. **WHEN:** April 2 **TIME:** 10 am to 7 pm **Venue:** Lalit Kala Akademi, Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozeshah Road.



There are many stories hidden behind a veil in India, screaming to be told, revealed, expressed and staged. *Aaina*, the Indian Dance Theatre, brings a range of performances as a reflection of the human condition, mirroring up to give people a glimpse of their desires, anxieties, fears, and emotions. **TIME:** 7 pm onwards **WHEN:** April 4 and 5 **WHERE:** Kamani Auditorium.



The Needle Reverence, a story stitched by the thrift of Bengali women, is an exhibition of Kanthas from the late 19th century till pre-Independence, and contemporary Kantha created in the 1990s initiated by late sculptor Meera Mukherjee. **WHEN:** April 4 to 12 **TIME:** 11 am to 7 pm **WHERE:** Art Gallery, Kamaladevi Complex.

Art Spice and Art Magnum presents Eclectic Strokes, an art exhibition featuring a wide collection of art pieces by all the Indian senior masters like S H Raza, M F Husain, Ram Kumar, F N Souza, to name a few. **WHEN:** Till April 10 **TIME:** 11 am to 8 pm **WHERE:** Art Spice gallery at the Metropolitan Hotel & Spa.



