

PASSAGE OF BILLS WITHOUT SCRUTINY

Venkaiah dismisses Opp 'voice smothered' allegation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Monday rejected the allegations made by the Opposition in a letter written to him last week that their voice was being 'smothered' and the Government was rushing through the passage of bills without parliamentary scrutiny.

present Lok Sabha. "If their complaint is that Bills first introduced in these Lok Sabha sessions were not referred to parliamentary committees for scrutiny that is not certainly in my domain as the Chairman of Rajya Sabha. So, I am not in a position to respond to this complaint and I feel that this complaint, if any, has been addressed to the wrong person," Naidu said.

Standing Committee concerned and passage by the other House was again referred to the Select Committee of Rajya Sabha. "I hope that all of you would agree that such a record would not justify the allegation if it is so intended that Rajya Sabha is a party to hurried legislation," Naidu said.

RS chairman breaks down while reading out Reddy's obituary



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Monday became emotional and broke down as he read out an obituary reference for his old friend and former Union Minister S Jaipal Reddy, saying both shared a 40-year-long association.

on the same bench of Andhra Pradesh Assembly when the two were members. "Reddy was a friend, senior and guide because he was six years senior to me," he said.

National Medical Commission Bill OK'd

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Monday passed the National Medical Commission Bill for replacing the "den of corruption" Medical Council of India (MCI). Terming the Bill as historic, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said that new National Medical Commission will end the 60-year-old 'inspector raj' in the medical education and the Government has accommodated all the concerns of the doctors and other people in the medical field.

away from a system of repeated inspections of infrastructure and focuses on outcomes rather than processes, Vardhan said. Opposition members objected to provisions like exit exam and replacing elected members with nominated members in the proposed commission. They alleged that the legislation was against the spirit of federalism. It is like "throwing the baby with the bathwater... The cure seems to be worse than the disease," Congress' Manish Tewari said during the debate and claimed the Bill would end up legalising capitation fee.

"Once the NMC Bill is passed by both houses of Parliament, exit examination will be implemented in the next three years," the Minister said. "When history will be written... It (bill) will go down as one of the biggest reforms," he noted.

RS adjourned over Unnao

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha saw two adjournments in the pre-lunch session on Monday with the first one coming after smoke emanated from a microphone-cum-voting panel in front of some MPs' seats.

Ramgopal Yadav (SP), who said the woman along with her lawyer and relatives who were witnesses in the case were proceeding to the court on Sunday when the accident took place. He also alleged that the registration number plate of the truck was smeared with grease to avoid detection adding here security cover had gone on leave.

adjourned the proceedings for 15 minutes. Earlier, the house was adjourned for 15 minutes after some MPs including KJ Alphons and Shiv Pratap Shukla complained to the Chair that smoke was emanating from the microphone panel located in front of their seat on the treasury benches.

Microdots in vehicles to curb theft soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to curb vehicle thefts, the Centre has directed auto manufacturers to affix laser-oriented microdots in automotive parts, which can be read only by microscopes under ultra violet light sources.

parts of the vehicle or any other machine with microscopic dots, which give a unique identification. Use of this technology will help check theft of vehicles and also use of fake spare parts. The microdots and adhesive will become permanent fixtures/affixation which cannot be removed without damaging the asset that is the vehicle itself," said a Ministry official.

valuable parts before destroying the vehicles. An auto expert said that while the cost of microdots may be incurred by the buyers, but certainly the insurance rate of the vehicle will come down given the less risk factor involved due to upgradation of the technology.

Microdots are nano-size (0.5 mm) metal particles that will carry information including the personal identification number (PIN) or the vehicle identification number (VIN) so that these can be traced. South Africa has made it a legal requirement to have microdot fitted to all vehicles and there they require police clearance. The technology involves spraying thousands of small dots laser-etched with a PIN or VIN throughout the body, and it's almost impossible to remove these dots. These can only be detected using ultraviolet light.

ED attaches assets worth ₹246 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Monday said it has attached assets worth ₹246 crore in connection with a money laundering probe into the Gutkha scam.

Chennai High Court to conduct investigation into all aspects of the offence of illegal manufacture, import, supply, distribution and sale of Gutkha and other chewable tobacco products which were banned in the Tamil Nadu and Union Territory of Puducherry with effect from May 2013.

accused in the names of relatives / employees during the period to facilitate smooth running of their illegal Gutkha business. Further, out of the profits of Gutkha business, personal investments were made by accused persons for purchase of land in their name and in the name of family members / relatives.

Vietnam briefs India about Chinese action in South China Sea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi: Vietnam has briefed India about the escalating tension in the South China sea after China deployed a large number of survey vessels in Vietnamese waters including around areas where India's ONGC has oil exploration projects.

Telecom firms owe over ₹92K crore as licence fees till date, Centre tells SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi: Leading private telecom firms like Bharti Airtel, Vodafone and state-owned MTNL and BSNL have pending licence fee outstanding of over ₹92,000 crore till date, the Centre has told the Supreme Court.

In an affidavit filed in the top court, Department of Telecom (DoT) said that as per calculations, Airtel owes ₹21,682.13 crore as licence fee to the Government. Dues from Vodafone totalled ₹19,823.71 crore while Reliance Communications owed a total of ₹16,456.47 crore, DoT said.

As per the New Telecom Policy, telecom licensees are required to share a percentage of their Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) with the Government as annual License Fee (LF). PTI

10 monuments to stay open till 9 pm for public

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ten heritage sites including Rani-ki-Vav, (Patan in Gujarat), Safdarjung Tomb (Delhi) and Man Mahal (Varanasi in UP) in the country will remain open from sunrise to 9 pm for common public.

Table with 2 columns: Monument Name, State. Rajarani Temple Complex (Bhubaneswar) - Odisha, Dulhadeo Temple, (Khajurao) - Madhya Pradesh, Sheikh Chillai Tomb, (Kurukshetra) - Haryana, Safdarjung Tomb, Humayun's Tomb (Delhi) - Delhi, Group of Monuments (Pattadakal) Gol Gumbaz, (Vijayapura) - Karnataka, Group of Temples, (Gadchiroli) - Maharashtra, Man Mahal, (Varanasi) - Uttar Pradesh, Rani-ki-Vav, (Patan) - Gujarat.

Earlier these monuments used to open from 9 am to 5.30 pm for general public.

The Minister also informed that in the first phase, 10 monuments (see box) have been identified and soon some other historical monuments will also be considered for long opening hours for visitors.

ONE NATION ONE RATION CARD SCHEME

Trial in 4 States from August 1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

One Nation One Ration Card scheme will be launched as a pilot project in four States — Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh — from August 1. This means those having ration cards will be able to buy subsidised rice and wheat from any ration shop in these four States, so long as their ration cards are linked to Aadhaar.

from July 1, 2020. Under the scheme, the ration card holders would be able to buy subsidised foodgrains from ration shops in any part of the country. Delhi had also begun implementing portability, though it was later stopped for technical reasons.

had PoS machines in all the ration shops," said officials. Officials said that one of the agenda of the food ministers meeting is to roll out a pilot project in 15 districts to fortify rice grains with iron, folic acid, Vitamin A and Vitamin B12 to reduce nutritional deficiencies among beneficiaries.

The scheme will enable migrant workers obtain their monthly PDS entitlements from any ration shop. This will also reduce the dependency of beneficiaries on a single ration shop.

INSHORT

J&K LETTER: BUDGAM RPF OFFICIAL TRANSFERRED

New Delhi: RPF's Assistant Security Commissioner (Budgam) Sudesh Nuygal, who had issued a controversial letter about "deteriorating situation" in J&K, has been transferred, RPF DG Arun Kumar said on Monday. Sugyal had asked RPF employees to stock ration for at least four months, store drinking water for seven days and fill vehicles fully to deal with the issue of law and order for a long period.

INDIA, MYANMAR SIGN DEF COOPERATION PACT

New Delhi: India and Myanmar on Monday signed a defence co-operation agreement providing for boosting military engagement between the two countries. The pact was inked after Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar's Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing held extensive talks with MoS for Defence Shripad Yesso Naik.

'DRAFT EDU POLICY OVERLOOKS MINORITY'

New Delhi: Termining the draft National Education Policy a "fairy tale", the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India (CBCI) has told the HRD Ministry the proposed policy has "overlooked" minority rights and the facilities guaranteed to these communities to establish and administer educational institutes.

293 BIG DAMS OVER 100 YEARS OLD: MIN

New Delhi: As many as 293 big dams in the country are more than 100 years old, Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said on Monday as he introduced a Bill on dam safety in Lok Sabha. The bill seeks to set up the National Dam Safety Authority, Opposition members protested against its introduction alleging the Centre was appropriating powers of states.

ID OF SEXUAL OFFENDERS: SC AGREES TO HEAR PLEA

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear a plea seeking guidelines to protect the identity, reputation and integrity of persons who are accused of sexual offences, till the investigation into the truthfulness on its veracity.

JAISALMER: TEAMS ARRIVE FOR INT'L ARMY GAMES

New Delhi: Military teams from China and several other countries have arrived in the country to participate in the India leg of the International Army Games that will be held in culturally-rich golden city of Jaisalmer from August 6 to 14, officials said on Monday.

PAPER WITH PASSION

Tiger tales

Yes, the numbers of the big cat have doubled but so has the intensity of man-animal conflict. Let's address that too



In 2008, alarm bells had rung when the tiger census in the country threw up a dismally low number of 1411, despite years of initiatives under Project Tiger. Home to 70 per cent of the world's wild tiger population, India had no option but to turn the needle through aggressive pursuit of various conservation efforts. So it is indeed heartening that in little over a decade, we now have almost doubled that number, clocking 2,967 tigers and registering an increase of almost 33 per cent in the fourth cycle of the latest census.

Little wonder then that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who released the new figures, seized another moment of national pride that India has achieved by claiming that the target of doubling the tiger population has been met four years before the deadline. What makes the numbers remarkably reassuring is that they have come at a time when biodiversity is severely challenged. Yet the government and the community have persistently been in sync with their conservation efforts. Also the four-year counting exercise, the world's largest wildlife survey effort in terms of coverage and intensity, is a celebration of technology. Over 15,000 camera traps were installed for capturing tiger images and recording their unique stripe pattern with the help of a dedicated software, there were satellite mapping and GIS-based apps for in-depth tracking of the big cats and the data collection process. Madhya Pradesh saw the highest number of tigers at 526, followed by Karnataka at 524 and Uttarakhand with 442 tigers. So it is the healthy patches which have pushed up the total numbers rather than the doty ones.

This brings us to the most important aspect of tiger management in their habitats than just recording figures. While tiger numbers have increased, tiger habitats have been dwindling due to human encroachments, infrastructure projects and truncated wildlife transit corridors. The man-animal conflict has never been worse, therefore. Be it the killing of Avni or villagers beating up straying tigers, or the confused tiger hitting back with a counter-charge, the headlines point to a dangerous trend of overpopulation not being commensurate with increase in prey base-rich forest zones. The Wildlife Trust of India's conflict database for Uttar Pradesh records 63 cases of attacks on humans by tigers from 2014 to February 2019, an average of 10.8 cases per year. This marks a dramatic increase from an average of 5.6 attacks on humans per year between 2000 and 2013. The tiger will stray into human settlements when its food chain is frayed and villagers cannot be expected to prioritise conservation when the lives of their own and the livestock are at stake. It is now imperative to understand what's causing the conflict on the ground on a case by case basis and address it immediately before avenging kills start showing up in the numbers. Awareness of tigers should now also include equal awareness about its ecology and behaviour and the need to provide alternative ranges. Recent examples have shown how some railway underpasses to facilitate wildlife transit are working as animals, like the elephant and tiger, are adapting to changed migration routes. There are still viable tracts of pristine forests that can be turned into reserves by relocating animals from overpopulated stretches. But forests are a state subject and an inter-state agreement on shared corridors needs to be ironed out and coordinated if translocation is to succeed. Meanwhile relocation needs are mounting. The entire process cannot be fast-tracked but needs to be graded and spaced out to ensure tigers' acceptance of a new territory as their own household. Apart from peripheral villagers, a new tiger also has to deal with resident cats or in the total absence of its kind, reconcile to being a lone ranger and sync up with other relocated companions. And if forest dwellers have co-habited with tigers before, there is no reason why we cannot make them stakeholders in conservation efforts, keeping them invested as park patrollers and monitors, generating a subsidiary tiger economy that ensures them revenue, incentivising forest produce and enhancing the tiger gene pool that can promote "sighting tourism." Till this is done, our pride will continue to be their enemy. The tiger sits on top of the food chain in the forest and by saving it and giving it a home, we are protecting all sub-species and curating a biosphere that even includes grasslands and rivers.

Time for a green bonus

The Himalayan States have demanded that the Centre give them an environment grant, not really an unfair demand



India's extremely fertile plains are nourished with water and nutrients from its mountains, like a bloodstream disseminates life force across the human body. Without the Himalayas, there wouldn't be glaciers or the resultant rivers to water our vast plains. There wouldn't be rains if the peaks hadn't blocked the monsoon clouds and trapped them in the Valleys. It is important, therefore, for India as a whole to treat the Himalayas and the ecology of these mountains carefully to ensure that civilisational life as we know it can continue

as it has for five millennia. Ergo, it is not imprudent for the Himalayan states to demand a 'Green Bonus' so that they can preserve the ecology of the mountains and plan for sustainable development.

We have seen what rampant, unplanned development in the mountains can do. Shimla, the erstwhile colonial summer capital of this country, ran out of water last summer. Rampant development has seen the destruction of thousands of acres of primeval forests and wanton construction activity continues with nary a concern for the future or resource management. Satellite imagery shows that the rapid retreat of large Himalayan glaciers, through a combination of both local and global environmental contagion, is grave indeed. It is only fair then that the citizens in the plains do their bit to contribute for the health of the mountains and the economy of the states because in the long run, they are protecting themselves and their progeny. There has to be a stop on the race to develop huge projects and even too much industry in the mountains, but the population of the mountain states needs some sort of compensation for this denial, which seems like a small price to pay. Without any financial incentive, unrestricted development will continue, because the fear of penalties will be overridden by economic interests. We need to incentivise and not just penalise. Ten of India's 11 hill States met as part of a recently concluded campaign and made this demand to the Finance Minister. They also advocated for a separate Central ministry to explore concerns specific to them and for better efficacy of ecological programmes targeted for the mountains. This is something that should be explored, maybe not as a ministry but definitely as a department of the government that looks at some of these critical issues. In the end, these would not just impact residents of these States but every other Indian. The Himalayas might be one of the world's youngest mountain ranges but they have suffered from the ravages of civilisation. This must be controlled now, if we, as a nation, are to continue.

Karnataka impasse

A few MLAs going back to the people for a fresh mandate on another party's ticket is far better than dissolution of the House and fresh Assembly election



A SURYA PRAKASH

The ugly political drama in Karnataka has finally ended with the defeat of the HD Kumaraswamy Government on the floor of the State Assembly and the appointment of a new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government headed by BS Yediyurappa.

But the story is not over yet because of the Constitutional issues that have sprung up *vis-a-vis* the decision of the Speaker of the Karnataka Assembly, KR Ramesh Kumar, to disqualify 17 MLAs, who had earlier sent in their resignations. The MLAs wanted their resignations to be accepted and 10 of them even appeared before the Speaker to assert their right to resign from the House. The Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) wanted them disqualified because they did not turn up when the HD Kumaraswamy Government faced a trust vote in the Assembly. The Speaker has also barred these MLAs from contesting elections afresh during the life of the present Assembly. This will now completely upset the plans of these MLAs and the new Chief Minister, who had planned to give them BJP tickets in the by-elections. The matter is already before the Supreme Court and it is likely that these MLAs will challenge the Speaker's decision to disqualify them. Whatever the eventual outcome, there can be little doubt that this has done considerable damage to the democratic traditions in the country.

The drama began with the Congress and Janata Dal(S) rebels going to the office of the Speaker and submitting their resignations. As the resignations were tendered in his absence, the Speaker insisted that the MLAs present themselves before him because he was duty-bound to ascertain whether they were under any duress or if they were resigning from the Assembly on their own volition. Rules of the Assembly state that when the resignation letter is handed over personally and the MLA says his action is "voluntary and genuine" (and if the Speaker is satisfied), he has to accept the resignation "immediately." If the letter of resignation is not handed over personally, the rules give the Speaker scope to begin an inquiry into whether the resignation is voluntary and genuine. He also has the right to reject such a letter. Ten MLAs met the Speaker after the apex court directed them to do so. They complied with the directive and informed the Speaker in person that they wished to resign from their seats.

Days later, when the Kumaraswamy Government had to face a trust vote, the two parties in the ruling coalition issued whips, directing their members to be present in the State Assembly and to vote for the trust motion. The rebel MLAs, having tendered their resignations, stayed back in Mumbai. Given this chronology



of events and the rules regarding the resignation of MLAs, the Speaker ought to have accepted the resignations. Since the resignations were tendered before the trust vote was taken up by the House, the rebels contended that the whips issued by the two parties were infructuous.

There was something repulsive about the fortnight long drama in the State with the leaders of the Congress and the JD(S) trying every trick to win back the dissidents. A police complaint was lodged alleging wrongful confinement of MLAs in Mumbai. On one occasion, DK Shivakumar, an influential leader of the Congress in the State and a senior Minister in the Kumaraswamy Government, who tried to enter the hotel, was "escorted out" of the hotel after the rebel legislators wrote to the Mumbai police and sought "protection" from the visiting politicians from Karnataka.

The conduct of the Karnataka Speaker is in contrast to the approach of Venkaiah Naidu, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, in regard to resignations.

Naidu received a letter of resignation from Neeraj Shekhar, a member of the House belonging to the Samajwadi Party, on July 15. The following day, he informed the Rajya Sabha that he had accepted Shekhar's resignation. The Chairman called the member and asked him if his resignation letter was genuine and whether he had taken the decision voluntarily. He also asked him if he would like to reconsider his decision.

When the member insisted on resigning from the House, the Chairman accepted the same "with immediate effect" and asked his secretariat to complete the formalities. He also made a formal announcement about the MP's resignation on July 16 in the House.

Coming back to the drama in the Karnataka Assembly, it is indeed unfortunate that the people of the State failed to give a clear mandate to one political party or a pre-poll coalition in the last Assembly election in 2018. The final verdict left the BJP high and dry with 104 seats and the State ended up having a Chief Minister from the

third largest party — the JD(S) — which had 37 seats and which had the support of the Congress, the second largest party with 78 seats. In the Assembly election held in 2008, the electorate gave the BJP 110 seats in the 224-member House. Yediyurappa had to entice some Independents and form the Government, which survived precariously for some time. But this was neither here nor there, and there were no easy solutions to the problem.

Following the Constitution 91 Amendment Act, it has become difficult for poachers to get MLAs to cross the floor. Therefore, if a party falls short of a majority by a few seats, the only option available for the ruling party is to entice Opposition legislators to vacate their seats and contest the elections afresh on the ruling party's ticket. This is what Yediyurappa did in 2008 and succeeded in bolstering his numbers in the State legislature.

It also speaks of the maturity of the electorate that some constituencies, which had never voted the BJP before,

electorates put up by this party and, thus, voted to provide stability to the Government. This entire operation was code-named "Operation Kamala" and came in for a lot of criticism. But this writer is of the view that a few MLAs going back to the people for a fresh mandate on another party's ticket is far better than dissolution of the House and fresh Assembly election. This is also a much better option than the shameless defection of MPs and MLAs from one party to another, which was the case until the anti-defection law came into being.

Yediyurappa was hoping to undertake a similar exercise this time, too, and get the defecting MLAs to contest afresh on a BJP ticket. This is stymied by the Speaker's order. We will now have to await a judicial decision. Until then, a fresh round of instability is on the cards and the people will watch helplessly as another Government will hobble along.

(The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. Views expressed are personal)

SOUNDBITE

That they selected the team for West Indies brings up the question whether Virat Kohli is the captain of the team at his or the selection committee's pleasure.

Former cricketer
—Sunil Gavaskar



I've requested Dr Farooq Abdullah sahab to convene an all-party meeting. Need of the hour is to come together & forge a united response.

PDP President,
— Mehbooba Mufti



Why is the BJP MLA still in the BJP? Why the lack in security to the victim and witnesses? Is it possible to get justice from BJP?

Samajwadi Party leader
—Akhilesh Yadav



No civilisation or society under the rule of law would ever allow acts of violence to take place. We call on the general public of Hong Kong to be aware.

Hong Kong Affairs spokesman
—Yang Guang



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Safety comes first

Sir — The fines proposed under the new Motor Vehicles Bill, 2019, will serve as an effective deterrent to violations such as over speeding of vehicles, riding triplets on two-wheelers, jumping traffic signals and not wearing a helmet among others, all of which endanger the lives of not only the offenders but others as well.

Neither are traffic rules strictly followed nor are they toughly enforced even as the roads are perennially ridden with pot-holes. Talking of airbags, which the Indian Government recently made mandatory in automobiles, one cannot but recall the pioneering efforts of the internationally renowned American lawyer-turned consumer activist, Ralph Nader, who for the first time in the automobile history, got airbags and similar safeguards against accidents such as seat belts, shatterproof windshields and padded dashboards to be made compulsory in American cars in 1966. This effectively saved thousands of lives over there.

Well, it is said of Rama Nama that it protects us whether we chant it with or without attention.

So are traffic rules. We may find them irksome, but they save our lives, whether we follow them dutifully or perfunctorily.
CV Krishna Manoj
Hyderabad

Accident or cold-blooded murder?

It was sad that the Unnao rape survivor was 'critically injured' when a truck hit the car in which she was travelling. At this juncture, she is battling for her life. The disfigurement of the number plate of the truck involved in the head-on collision and the withdrawal of the police personnel despite the court order to provide security cover to the young woman and her family round-the-clock raise the suspicion that it could have been a premeditated attempt to murder the rape survivor.

Her family alleges that the accident was purely the handiwork of BJP MLA Kuldeep Sengar. A 'car crash' is a common and time-tested method used to eliminate inconvenient truths and witnesses. The rape accused has a lot of clout with the State Government, something that explains the ill-disguised collusion between the police and the perpetrators of the crime of attempted murder. The contention by the cops that the crash happened during heavy rains was a feeble attempt to establish that it was just a road mishap and an indication of how the investigation would proceed. Notwithstanding its zero tolerance for violence against women, the BJP is appearing to be extremely protective of the accused in this case. It was possible that the teenage rape survivor's attempted self-immolation in front of the house of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath incensed the ruling dispensation and pro-



voked it to take revenge on her. If those who seek justice are weak and vulnerable, they are targeted in ruthless ways. Remember the death of the victim's father in police custody obviously due to torture. The latest incident smelling of conspiracy and foul play is one more example of lawlessness in Uttar Pradesh belying the claim of "Ram Rajya." We urge the Supreme Court, the protector of the right to life, to take suo motu cognisance of the incident, monitor the CBI probe and see to it that the culprits, however powerful or influential they are, do not go unpunished.

G. David Milton
Maruthancode

A true statesman

Sir — Veteran leader S Jaipal Reddy was known for his exceptional oratorical skills, political ac-

men and outspokenness. He always spoke his mind. Despite limited physical mobility due to childhood polio, he did not fail in reaching a higher role in politics. He became a Union Minister, was

five-time member of the Lok Sabha and two-time member Rajya Sabha. He was a multi-talented person, prolific writer, honest and upright and was bestowed with the best Parliamentary award. His speeches were always forceful and inspiring. He was a true statesman.
Ramesh G Jethwani
Bengaluru

Train rescue

Sir — The heroic rescue of the passengers on board the Mahalaxmi Express, which was caught in flood waters about 65 km from Mumbai, is much appreciated. The Railways should now be proactive and cancel train services in flood-affected regions in the best interest of passenger safety. The incident should lead to better facilities on board trains. A public announcement system to communicate information to passengers during an emergency/crisis is needed. Railway staff should also be equipped to handle any emergency.

Varun Dambal
Bengaluru

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Trend Blazer

Sara has a heart of gold: Kartik

It isn't an old news when it was announced that actors **KARTIK AARYAN** and **SARA ALI KHAN** were set to romance each other for director **Imtiaz Ali's** next, *Aaj Kal*, which is also a sequel to *Love Aaj Kal*.

Kartik has now opened up on working with the actress. He said, "Sara is a person with a heart of gold. She is a star. I thoroughly enjoyed working with her. She has a certain positive energy that she brings to the screen and I would love to work with her again and again."

Recently, a video had gone viral in which the Sara was seen sharing her experience of working on Imtiaz's film and her camaraderie with Kartik.



'I am not a party person. I don't go to parties at all but my friends help me write my party numbers. I frequently take inspiration from social media posts I come across, which are shared by my friends and acquaintances. I usually use the posts as a case study to write songs. At times, when I meet my friends, we openly discuss details such as body postures and gestures of people in the clubs.'

—**Badshah**

Telugu actor **MAHESH BABU** revealed that he is all set to launch his clothing brand called **Humbi** on August 7.

"Our Humbi endeavor unveils today. Thank you all for the astounding response. For us, The Humbi Co, is not just clothing, it's a way of life. We welcome you all to the HumbiCo family. Stay tuned for the launch on August 7," Mahesh tweeted. The brand comes with the tagline: 'Dress like a Dream, Live Real.'

Mahesh Babu becomes the second south Indian actor after Vijay Deverakonda to launch his own clothing brand.



Evangeline vacays in India



Actress **EVANGELINE LILLY**, who is popular as the 'wasp' from the *Avengers* series, is in India and is currently enjoying her stay in New Delhi.

Lilly has already visited the Humayun's Tomb, Agrasen ki Baoli and other locales, as is evident from a number of posts on her Instagram. The actress took to her Instagram and shared a string of photographs.

In the first post, Lilly is as at the Agrasen ki Baoli. She is seen sitting on the flight of stairs leading down into the step well and captioned it, "Who are you solitary woman? Delhi, New Delhi."

Express yourself

Designer **TARUN TAHILIANI** says that there was no showstopper for his collection so that people could focus more on the craftsmanship than glitter. By **TEAM VIVA**

It took one of the old guards of Indian fashion to attempt something new. In the process, designer **Tarun Tahiliani** broke the stranglehold that the concept of showstopper has had on the Indian ramp where the audience is lining up the seats to see Bollywood A-listers sashaying down rather than focussing on what the show is all about, clothes.

Tahiliani brought in the first ever 'non-show-stopper-show-stopper' concept at India Couture Week. For those who are yet to see the photographs, the designer achieved this by closing his collection with an anonymous model who donned a simple yet stunning white tulle gown which was paired with a dainty net mask. It covered the entire face with the intent of emphasising on the outfit and making a statement about its own identity, the craft and workmanship that had gone into its making. Said Tahiliani, "There was no showstopper this time because people are more interested in the muse than the clothes. They don't care about the collection as much as they care about who wore your garment. So I didn't want it to be like that."

There were more than 80 pieces spanning bridal couture, occasion and festive wear which heralded the coming together of technique, craftsmanship and innovation. Lightweight *lehengas*, *shararas*, peplum blouses, concept saris, structured drapes, *anarkalis* and fusion-style jumpsuits exuded pure celebration. There was contemporary occasion wear for pre-wedding functions with *chikankaari*, *mukaishi* embroidery and *kanjeevaram*. When it came to couture, contoured construction, patterns and unique fabrics merged to make the garment feel like second skin, sensually moulding to the shape of every curve, and yet, allowing the freedom and comfort to dance the night away.

The collection placed the new Indian bride at the centre who envisioned her wedding as a special extension of her personality rather than an occasion where she looks like a shadow of herself. So lush colours, lightweight *lehengas* and structured drapes which can be treasured for life could be seen in designer Tahiliani's, *Bloom* collection.

"It captured the metamorphosis of the Indian bride with a synthesis of different cultures, a reflection of today's generation. It represented the delicate confluence of artistic traditions and the pragmatism of

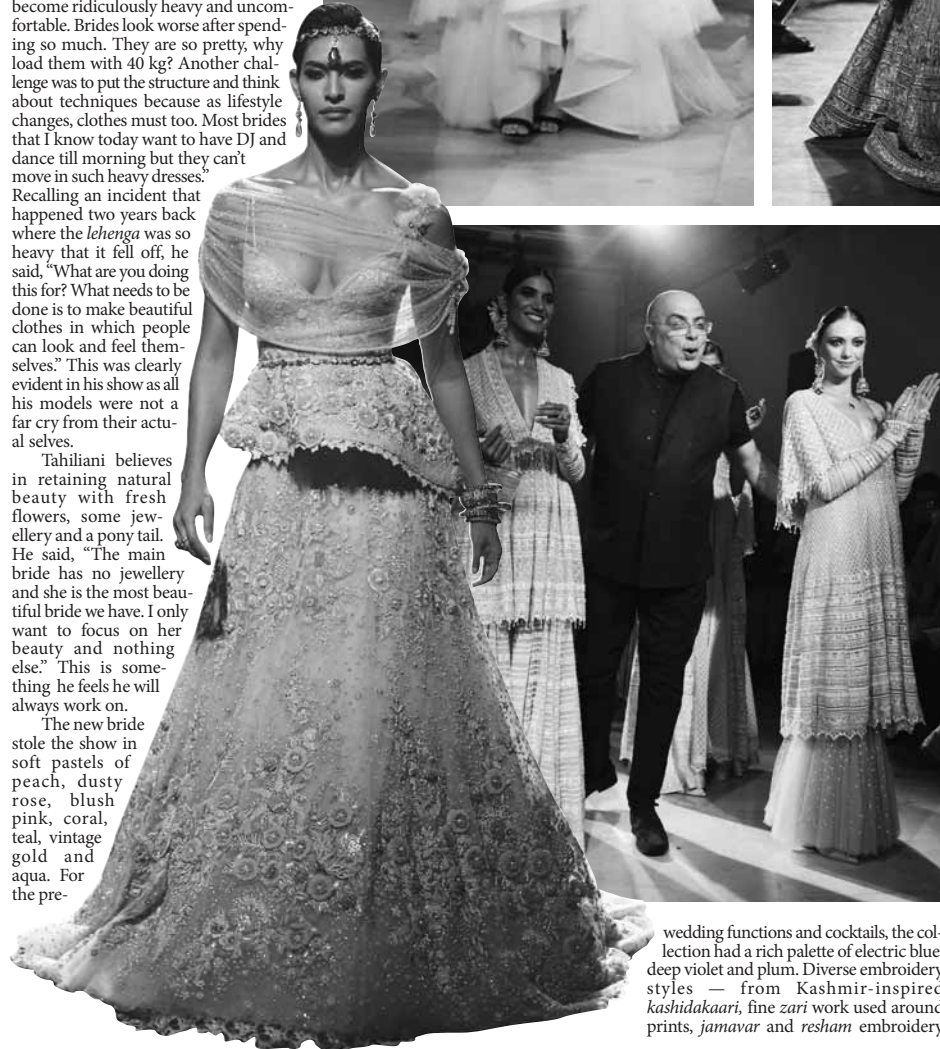
the times we live in," said Tahiliani.

Addressing the overall theme so swiftly was not easy. The biggest challenge Tahiliani said was, "A lot of bridal has become ridiculously heavy and uncomfortable. Brides look worse after spending so much. They are so pretty, why load them with 40 kg? Another challenge was to put the structure and think about techniques because as lifestyle changes, clothes must too. Most brides that I know today want to have DJ and dance till morning but they can't move in such heavy dresses."

Recalling an incident that happened two years back where the *lehenga* was so heavy that it fell off, he said, "What are you doing this for? What needs to be done is to make beautiful clothes in which people can look and feel themselves." This was clearly evident in his show as all his models were not a far cry from their actual selves.

Tahiliani believes in retaining natural beauty with fresh flowers, some jewellery and a pony tail. He said, "The main bride has no jewellery and she is the most beautiful bride we have. I only want to focus on her beauty and nothing else." This is something he feels he will always work on.

The new bride stole the show in soft pastels of peach, dusty rose, bluish pink, coral, teal, vintage gold and aqua. For the pre-



wedding functions and cocktails, the collection had a rich palette of electric blue, deep violet and plum. Diverse embroidery styles — from Kashmir-inspired *kashidakaari*, fine *zari* work used around prints, *jamavar* and *resham* embroidery

were used to make sure that the bride was not weighed down by her outfit. Floral motifs combined with French knots, tulle, *jaali* burned in the fabric, lace, and ombre beading to bring glamorous exquisiteness and drama to each piece. Fluffs of whimsical *resham-crystal-baadla*, sparkling Swarovski crystals adorned the crinolines of each *lehenga*.

But Tahiliani had more up his sleeve. One of the models who was sitting behind him during the interview was wearing a saree which was rolled up as a jumpsuit. "I love combining Indian clothes in a modern way. See, this is so light and beautiful," said he.

The menswear collection at the show focussed on fitted tone-on-tone ensembles including *sherwanis*, Mughal-inspired *kurtas* with multiple fabric layers of different lengths, pre-constructed *kamabandhs* and period-inspired stoles. Emphasis was on fine fabrics and tailoring. But the collection stuck to basic shades. When questioned about the same, Tahiliani agreed saying, it was all taken over by my models rather than the clothes.

The designer has been working with Swarovski crystals since the 90s. Even this year's collection is lush with them. He said, "This association has witnessed some of the most iconic, luxurious and memorable creations made with crystals. We love the winking light, the luminescence and sparkle of a diamond, especially for weddings. It helps in creating magical garments using traditional Indian techniques."

As for endnotes, he gave us a takeaway: "I watch my models walk and sit 10 times in a dress. It's not about making a pretty thing, it's something to live life in," he added.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar

'Diamond jewellery flatters Indian skin tones'

To mark 15 years of couture, **GAURAV GUPTA** debuts with his jewellery collection. By **TEAM VIVA**

Designer **Gaurav Gupta** has been merging indigenous Indian construction and embellishment techniques with his idea of the future for the past 15 years. To celebrate the milestone, he interpreted the artistry and details of his couture language through creating and launching a fine jewellery brand under the name **Gaurav Gupta Occasions Fine Jewellery** at the **FDCl's Indian Couture Week 2019**. It had capsuled themes that captured the distinct elements like the feather, forest and infinity collections.

The debut line consisted of 50 pieces, all of which were hand-made and created with precious stones and diamonds and set in white gold. What made the jewellery couture unique was the collaborative approach wherein each diamond was individually cut according to the design sculpting that Gaurav had imagined. The collection included necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings and ear-cuffs which will be introduced as an extension of the brand's 2019 couture collection and will be available exclusively through the **Gaurav Gupta** flagship couture store in **Mehrauli**.

On the ramp was global influencer and founder of **Post for Change**, **Diipa Khosla**, who was seen in an unending ethereal *lehenga* layered in ombre hues of champagne. The perfect accent for this was a special *Liberation* necklace, designed in the shape of wings, interwoven together, stylised to project the movement of a bird gracefully taking flight. Each piece of this necklace was set under a microscope, a delicate combination of rose cut and full cut diamonds — 8,000 pieces in all, created over the period of eight months. Its highlight was that every feather was scooped from the back to keep the necklace



light. Actor **Diana Penty** strutted out in a sculpted mermaid-esque gown, fashioned in light organza in green-gray. She was accessorised with statement ear cuffs which had three woven and specially shaped diamonds.

Gupta talks about the jewellery collection and the idea behind these designs.

What made you decide to venture in the jewellery space? I have always loved jewellery and this

was something which was always on the cards for the brand as a next step in direction of growth. Ornamentation of a look is what inspired me to finally pursue this. I would always see brides wearing my creations, looking extremely beautiful and yet, it would somehow seem incomplete to me. I think that's what ultimately made me delve into designing my maiden collection.

What are the points of convergence, in terms of design, in jew-

ellery and clothes?

Designing for me is a very personal process. I begin with some abstract thoughts and ideas and let my mind take the visionary wheel and conceive the whole thing. For jewellery, the starting point was my sartorial creations. I looked at them and ideated how best can I complement my own garments with diamond couture jewellery — this was the only difference. Apart from this, everything else was remarkably same.

What was the inspiration for these designs?

The inspiration for the jewellery designs came from my obsession with elements and infinity of nature — birds of flight and freedom and the mysterious, endless depths of forests.

Who are the women that the jewellery is aimed at?

The jewellery is for confident, fearless and strong women who revel in the sense of elation and liberation. It is for the Indian contemporary global bride who enjoys finer details in her jewellery with respect to the cuts and design.

How often do you aim to bring out collections?

Well, our collections will be unveiled annually during the couture season. But, having to move along with the dynamics of time and to keep the momentum going, we will be adding jewellery suites throughout the year to our main collection — just something to offer more to our clients.

Coloured jewellery is a huge trend. What according to you are the ones that work for the skin tones of Indian woman?

I think, diamond jewellery looks very flattering on Indian skin tones. It not only brings out our rich complexion but also complements it really well. In diamond jewellery only, the use of coloured stones like rubies, emeralds, tanzanites and opals further accentuate the whole look.

Is the jewellery more for Indian or Western culture?

My jewellery can be paired very well with both Indian and Western culture.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar

Bachchan reveals how he got his surname

Amitabh Bachchan has shared anecdotes about his last name and said that "Bachchan" was his father and legendary poet **Harivansh Rai Bachchan's** poetic *nom de plume*.

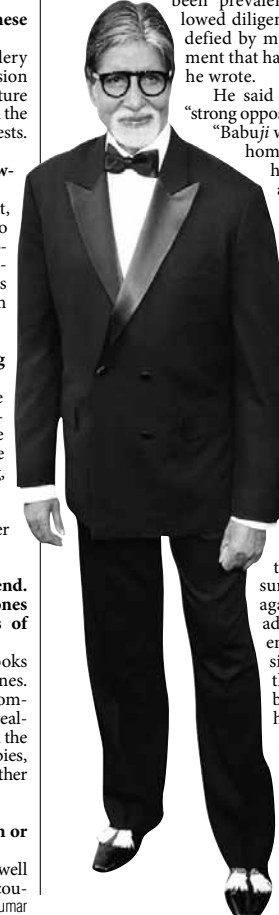
The 76-year-old cine icon took to his blog and discuss about the caste system prevalent in ancient India. "The caste system in the land has been prevalent for centuries, followed diligently by many and now defied by many too, (it is) an ailment that has plagued our society," he wrote.

He said that his father was a "strong opposer" of the caste system.

"Babuji was born in a **Kavastha** home and a **Srivastava**. But his temperament was always against the ailment of caste, his *nom de plume*, his *takhalus* his pen name he designed as 'Bachchan'. Eminent poets and writers often designed their names with a *nom de plume*. So 'Bachchan' became my Father's pen name, his poetic name, but it lent credence of its concept later when I was born, on being admitted to my first school. It was when I was asked by the teachers about what surname was to be filled against my name in the admission form. My parents had a quick discussion and it was decided that 'Bachchan' would be the family surname," he wrote.

The actor said he became the first bearer of the surname. "And it has remained so and shall also remain. My father and I are the proud bearers of this surname," he added.

—IANS





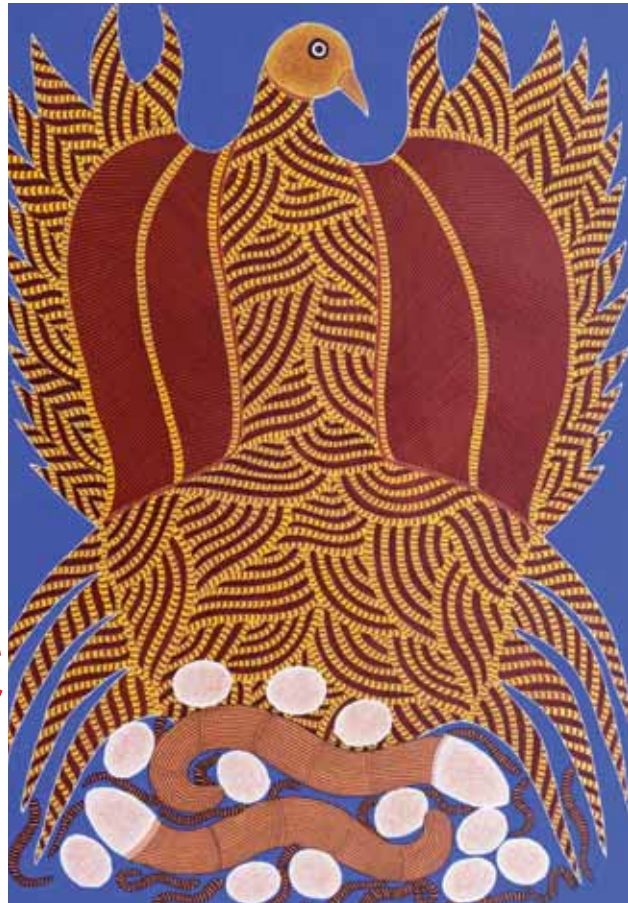
Every tree has a tale

Artist BAJJU SHYAM's works tread the path of surreal and divine stories from the forests of the Gond tribe. By UMA NAIR

I had been keen on looking at Padma Shri artist Bajju Shyam's artworks because I consider him to be the finest artist after his uncle, late Jangarh Singh Shyam. And his series of artworks, titled *Message From Trees*, currently exhibited at the Ojas Art Gallery, are indeed a delight to behold. Bajju used to assist his uncle and now has inherited a finer and subtler sense of detail. His works tread the path of surreal stories in the forests of the Gond tribes.

The term *Gond* comes from the Dravidian expression *kond*, meaning 'the green mountain', which quite aptly depicts the close kinship with nature that the tribals maintain in all aspects of their existence. The forest and its many beings become an integral part of their visual representations — a cultural entity, visible through the variety of vibrant depictions painted on the walls of their homes.

While the Gond artists earlier used vegetable and mineral dyes, charcoal, coloured soil and other traditional things, their modern mode of painting has seen the use of acrylics and canvases and large-sized sheets of watercolour paper. Bajju's four compositions involve the local flora, fauna and the hidden tales of gods.



Mitrata (friendship) is a painting of the gorgeous plumed eagle-like bird, with snakes and its eggs at the foot of the composition. It is a versatile and emotive tale that takes us back to many legends. One of the many tales that Bajju had shared in the past was of Lord Shankar. "When Shankar *bhagwan*, the creator, made the first man, there wasn't a single

leaf on earth. The man said, 'Lord, what will I eat? How will I survive?' The creator pulled three hair from his own body and through them, made three great trees. Then the man said, 'But Lord, there are no fruits on these trees. Three will remain three, and they must die one day.' Then Lord Shankar took the ash, coated his hair and sprinkled the trees with it. And flowers and fruits began to blossom on the trees. So during the time before we knew how to cultivate grains and crops, fruits on trees helped fill our stomachs. Here, I am just telling one of those stories," says Bajju, who has created six eggs, which symbolise the co-existence of Neel Raja, and the entire world.

The artwork also echoes the beauty of birds. We don't have to be told that birds are one of the most exquisite creatures on our planet. With a rich array of colours, a widely varying display of plumage and an unmatched ability to compose a symphony of songs and birds of all species, the work collectively captures our attention at once. One of the many ways that we appreciate our birds is by looking at paintings or photographs of them in the wild. Bajju recreates a magnificent bird in a composition that speaks of awe. However, the symbolism of birds has differed in different eras and regions. For Egyptians, a bird symbolises the soul, which is threatened in everyday idioms of life and nature's mortality. Inspired from that, Bajju's birds talk to us about harmony in living.

Tendu tree

Trees are central to the Gond tribal imagination. In addition to the stories that surround them, they are important in an everyday sense. There is a belief among the community that trees are busy during the day in giving shade and food to humans and animals. It is only during the night that their real spirit emerges.

Bajju's drawing of the *tendu* tree and a bat has a tensile and tactile intricate beauty. "According to the ancient mythology of the tribe, during the day, trees nourish and protect and at night, they have a life of their own," states Bajju. The spirits of these trees, with whimsical tales and beliefs, are brought out through this delicate illustration by Bajju. It's uncanny how he poetically illustrates a particular aspect of Gond tradition related to the tree.

Mriga

Equally elegant is his deer painting, *Mriga*. Its intricate details can entice an art-lover — the leaf-like ear, the distinctly feminine slender-striped legs. In his weaving of the modern, fashionable elements, he gives us an image that is rare and unique. His use of fluorescent colours are at once subtle and the manner in which he creates its position and intensity is one of great poise. "I love the deer, I consider it the most beautiful animal," says Bajju. "I find its whole body one of great grace. Its eyes are so beautiful. I have always felt that among all animals, it is a class apart because not only does it personify extraordinary beauty, it is the majesty and royal signature of the forests that make it an inspiration. After all, deer has been a part of literature and songs and poetry since time immemorial."

(*Message from Trees opens on August 2 and runs till September 1 at Ojas Art.*)

A visual diary of memories

Artist NANDITA RICHIE names her exhibition of artworks in Urdu as she thinks that the language beautifully describes every frame. With her new series, *Khwabeeda*, she brings forth her idea of dreams. By TEAM VIVA



What specific term would you use to describe yourself as an avid dreamer? Artist Nandita Richie calls herself a *Khwabeeda*, which is also the title of her latest solo exhibition. She says that she's not very familiar with Urdu but is fond of giving titles to her paintings and exhibitions in different languages. "I have named one of the paintings as *Gurub-e-Aaftab*, which means setting sun. It just sounds so beautiful in Urdu," she says.

Art is something that liberates the soul, provokes the imagination and encourages people to go further. And if this imagination is the result of childhood memories, then, it grows into many ideas that are endearing. For Nandita, her foray into art began with the memories of her grandfather's garden and matured when, as a young teenager, she attempted to turn away from the canvas to experimenting on wearable fabrics.

At the age of 14, Nandita painted a few sarees for her mother with fabric dye paints to try new ways of expressing her art form. Today, she has diversified her art into 'wearables' and owns her signature line of ties, scarves and pocket squares. She has started her own line of digitally printed limited edition sarees too. "I believe art should not be limited to galleries and only for those who can afford to buy original art. Bringing out my line of designer sarees, silk wear seemed one of the best options. These products are limited edition prints of my canvas art and they are affordable," she says.

But her art continues to be rooted in her childhood. "My work is a visual diary of my memories of the garden where I grew up as a child watching my grandfather and father, who had green thumbs, working to create the most beautiful garden full of exotic flowers and lush trees for us to play, enjoy and respect nature in my hometown of Jaipur. Today, a large multi-storeyed building stands where my grandpa's garden used to be. I not only miss watering his plants and tending to the saplings but also sitting in that open space surrounded by nature's beauty," Nandita says and goes on to add, "I am very much inspired by nature especially waterscapes and lotuses. The lotus is more than just a flower. It conveys a very strong message to humans. Even though it is rooted in mud, it continues to float on water without becoming wet or muddy. This aspect of the flower dictates how humans ought to live in this world."

The architecture, fabrics, handicrafts and gemstones provide Jaipur with a myriad of colours labelling it famously as the Pink City of India, she says, adding that it is one of her favourite colours, therefore. "I paint lotuses and lilies. The latter are captivating blooms, both in the garden and on the canvas. If only I could capture their subtle fragrance. None of my water paintings feel complete without the lotus. The one that is close to my heart is the *Blue Tranquil*, which is a water body with floating lotus leaves and flowers. I have created a special light effect using bold strokes and layers of paint to depict how the water shines during the early morning hours."

Although impressionist and post-impressionist styles have greatly influ-



'I WORK WITH PALETTE KNIFE AND ACRYLIC COLOURS ON CANVAS USING THE IMPASTO WET-ON-WET TECHNIQUE. I HAVE CREATED A SPECIAL LIGHT EFFECT USING BOLD STROKES AND LAYERS OF PAINT TO DEPICT HOW THE WATER SHINES IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS'



enced her work, she is also moved by modern and contemporary art and is not shy of experimenting with abstract styles and mixed mediums. Her work is a result of her vivid imagination, love of nature and years of experience with the palette knife. Her paintings depict joy, romance and beauty and are highly textured giving a three-dimensional effect.

She says, "I am a die-hard nature lover which is evident from my paintings. I paint using my imagination and memories. My formal training during my college years and the critique provided by my talented teachers keep me disciplined about form and dimensions while the appreciation of art lovers lends me new wings to experiment further with textures. I work with a palette knife and acrylic colours on canvas using the impasto wet-on-wet technique."

Bharatnatyam tuned with technology

Dance guru JAYALAKSHMI ESHWAR is using electronic music and animated visuals of the Tamil culture to enhance the classical art tradition



Months ago, Bharatnatyam guru Jayalakshmi Eshwar wowed her audience with a dance production that was much more than a regular classical piece.

Fused with electronic music and animated visuals of the Tamil culture, it spoke to viewers about her openness to merge technology, her dance practice and even, her dance lessons. For viewers who saw Eshwar's production *Antariksha Sanchar* — literally meaning transmission in space — it was a mesmerising tale of ancient aeroplanes, complete with technological elements that attract the youth today.

It featured many of her own students but the performance stage is not the only place where the dancer shares a relationship of technology with her pupils, many of who often juggle dance practice with other activities. As classrooms change from the *guru-shishya parampara*, where disciples learnt under their

teachers almost everyday, modern-day classrooms become another place where the strict classical often merges with everyday tech. "The students have so fast moving lives that they don't even have time to write their notes and make sketch drawings of every movement — that we needed to make because there were no photographs or tape in our times," Eshwar said.

Even dancing for them is a great thing, she said, adding that some of her students who are as young as six years, use mobile phones to record the movements and practice it later. "Technology as a teacher helps a lot. When I am teaching my professional-level students, who are all abroad, and they want to learn a new item, I just tape in it my class bit-by-bit, and upload it. I send the lyrics, meaning, everything and they ask questions and seek clarifications as per the usual practice," added she.

Many factions of the artist

community are still sticking to pure classical but Eshwar sees no harm in mixing it up a little.

"The lives of our generation, our parents, our grandparents was so in tune with arts. My grandfather used to tell mythological stories to children in the evening. That link is not there for children now."

"*Antariksha Sanchar* was an eye-opener for me. I've found that little bit of electronic music gives interest in the classical idiom for the youth. If I just have classical, many youth find it 'boring,' said the prolific author and Bharatnatyam guru at the Triveni Kala Sangam. On the fusion, she said, "Without deviating from that classical tradition, keeping it intact, we're using technology only for enhancement. We're not losing the grammar. It depends from dancer how you can merge and keep moving forward."

(*The Bharatnatyam opera will be staged at the India Habitat Centre on July 31.*)

—IANS

WATCH OUT



India International Centre (IIC), in collaboration with Prabhat Education Foundation, presents *Like Us*, an exhibition of photographs by Bindi Sheth on children with special needs. The show will be inaugurated by Poonam Natarajan, founder and chairperson, Vidya Sagar, Chennai, on August 1. **TIME:** 11 am to 7 pm **WHERE:** August 2 to 11 **WHERE:** Art Gallery, Kamaladevi Complex.

Threshold Art Gallery presents *Skin: The Finer Nuance*, an art exhibition, featuring the artworks of nine artists that reference several aspects of skin. **WHEN:** Till August 20 **WHERE:** Threshold Art Gallery, Sarvodaya Enclave.



Art Konsult presents *Iconic Forces*, a solo exhibition by artist Suman Sen Gupta that brings the portraits of the icons of the world with the duality of the surroundings. **WHEN:** August 4 to 11 **TIME:** 11 am to 7 pm **WHERE:** Art Konsult Gallery, Hauz Khas Village.

Triveni Gallery presents Parul Golchha Rankha's solo exhibition of paintings, which features a range of paintings on the Buddha and his divine light. **WHEN:** August 1 **TIME:** 11 am to 8 pm **WHERE:** Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, near Mandi House Metro Station.



India Habitat Centre presents *Liminal Spaces*, a solo exhibition of paintings by artist Kanwal Singh, which aims to explain that such threshold spaces are those where transformation begins. **WHEN:** August 2 to 5 **WHERE:** Open Palm Court, IHC.

