

MONEY 6
JET SUSPENDS SERVICES TO 13
INT'L ROUTES TILL APRIL END

WORLD 7
SYRIA FORCE TAKES ISIS
BASTION, 'CALIPHATE' WIPED OUT

SPORT 8
AUSTRALIA BEAT
PAKISTAN IN 1ST ODI

Established 1864
Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL
BHUBANESWAR RANCHI
RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN

BHUBANESWAR, SUNDAY MARCH 24, 2019; PAGES 8-8 ₹3



sunday pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



USUALSUSPECTS
SWAPAN DASGUPTA

Modi biopic fuss non-issue for EC

An unintended consequence of the staggering popularity of social media in the world is the mushrooming of completely useless controversies that have a life-span of a few hours. One such erupted last week over the countrywide release of the film *PM Narendra Modi* starring Vivek Oberoi on April 12.

The announcement of its release got some people very hot under the collar. One person who was particularly agitated was the writer Ramachandra Guha. He tweeted: "That such a film will be shown and promoted during the elections demonstrates the joke and farce that the 'model code of conduct' is; how can the Election Commission allow it?"

Guha's objection seems grounded in his fierce dislike of real Prime Minister Modi, although to be fair he also objected to a lesser-known biopic on Rahul Gandhi that will also be launched this election season. As a political concern of those campaigning on the single plank of Modi hatao, Guha's worry is warranted. However, it will not enhance the democratic credentials of India's liberal community if it seeks an outright ban on a film that dares to hero worship Modi or, for that matter, Rahul Gandhi. Consequently, a temporary restriction, at least people have voted, seems a second best but contrived solution.

Of course, there are ominous implications of this demand for the EC to intervene and put the film in cold storage till counting day. If a film can be put on hold on the ground that it seeks to influence public opinion, then it follows that similar restrictions should accompany other creative projects that also seek to mould voter behaviour. This includes books — both fiction and non-fiction, poetry, theatre, works of art and even opinionated columns (such as this one) in print and online, in fact almost anything that can be construed to have a direct or tangential political dimension.

Of course, there are ominous implications of this demand for the EC to intervene and put the film in cold storage. If a film can be put on hold on the ground that it seeks to influence public opinion, then it follows that similar restrictions should accompany other creative projects that also seek to mould voter behaviour

The whole idea of sanitising India from political influences seem absolutely preposterous, especially when the avowed objective is to ensure the exercise of political choice. That eminent individuals should be lending their names to such a strange initiative is sad. However, sadder still is the belief the distortion of what the Code of Conduct (CC) is all about.

When it was evolved, the CC wasn't aimed at preventing any articulation of politics. It merely sought to first, negate any unfair advantage accruing to the incumbent Government through the improper and partisan use of official machinery; second, to monitor and often regulate the use of financial resources by parties and candidates; thirdly, to insulate the ordinary citizen from any significant inconvenience to their lives; and, finally, to ensure free and fair polling. In time, often with the benefit of hindsight, the EC has extended the CC to extend to opinion polls and the use of media. Regulating and monitoring "paid news", however, remains work in progress.

Despite its imperfections and lax implementation by individual officers with a bias towards a party or candidate, the CC has made a big difference to the culture of political campaigning. Some of the changes are visible and felt by the ordinary citizen.

Till the 1991 general election at least, the use of loudspeakers was totally unregulated. One of the noisiest campaigns I witnessed was the 'Ayodhya election' of 1991 in Uttar Pradesh when loudspeakers blaring rival political messages and campaign songs drowned each other at market venues and bus stops, and went on all day and night. It was also customary for political meetings to extend late into the night and the early hours of the morning. In fact in the Hindi heartland, the political worth of a leader was often judged from how many hours late he was running from his original schedule.

This pattern of electioneering is now history. The ban on public meetings and use of the public address system after 10 pm is now an accepted facet of life and often gleefully imposed by the administration. Another area where the CC has made a big difference is in the use of Government facilities and public buildings. One of the first campaigns I covered as a journalist was the 1991 general election when the Congress under Rajiv Gandhi was still at the helm. One of the features of that election, in North India at least, was that the Congress candidates routinely requisitioned the Circuit House for the use of the candidate. This doesn't happen today.

These, however, are the easier facets of the CC. The more daunting challenge before the EC is to ensure an environment free from harassment and intimidation of voters. Today, apart from the Maoist belt in Chhattisgarh, West Bengal poses a challenge. EC has staggered voting in the State to include all seven phases and contingents of paramilitary forces have started patrolling sensitive areas, sometimes with the cooperation of the local police and often independently of them.

Another big step is to ensure that the media is in synch with the larger objectives of democratic functioning. But this is a more problematic area where the media's right to be partisan has to be balanced with some do's and don'ts, without inviting charges of compromising the rights of expression. The more blatant cases of 'paid news' are easy to handle — by adding a notional charge to a candidate's expenses — but how is the touchy area of a campaign freeze in the 48-hours before polling in a seven-phase election to be achieved? And how will the dissemination through WhatsApp groups be effectively monitored? Today's technology makes a mockery of regulation and control.

These are just some of the issues that will test the EC's effectiveness. Diverting its attention to non-issues is hardly helpful. But then, this is also an election where some groups of people are also fighting to ensure their own future relevance in a changing India.

Diggy vs Pragya likely

Cong picks Digvijay from Bhopal; Sadhvi: 'I'm eager to defeat nation's enemy'

PNS ■ BHOPAL/LUCKNOW

With the candidature of former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh being finalised from Bhopal, the fight in the Madhya Pradesh capital is likely to be interesting as Pragya Thakur, aka Sadhvi Pragya Bharti, may be pitted against him. Digvijay is contesting election after 2003 in the State.

Digvijay's candidature was made public by Chief Minister Kamal Nath during his interaction with mediapersons at a programme here on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Congress has changed the seat allotted to its Uttar Pradesh unit chief Raj Babbar from Moradabad to Fatehpur Sikri, in an apparent bid to make the Lok Sabha contest easier for the actor-turned-politician. Imran Pratapgarhiya will now be the party's candidate from Moradabad.

Party sources said that Babbar was not keen on contesting from Moradabad, where the BJP has fielded its sitting MP Kunwar Sarvesh Kumar.

After having served as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh for 10 years from 1993 to 2003, Digvijay had left the State saying that he would not contest any election. At present, he is a Rajya Sabha member.

Digvijay took active part in MP in the run up to the last Assembly elections.

The way the MP CM announced the candidature of Digvijay was quite dramatic. Generally, the CEC of AICC declares the list. Nath said, "I

have a list of party candidates in my pocket but I can't disclose. However, I can make an announcement. (Congress) Election Committee yesterday (Friday) finalised the name of Digvijay Singhji from Bhopal."

When asked whether Digvijay was happy with the decision, Nath said, "I do not know, whether he is happy, but I am happy." To a query, whether he has "dealt" with Digvijay with this decision, Nath parried the question on Digvijay's winnability.

Sadhvi Pragya Bharti, who has been acquitted in the Malegaon blast case, is ready to take on Digvijay. Talking to mediapersons in Bhopal, she said, "Digvijay Singh is 'desh ka dushman' and I openly challenge country's enemies."

Pragya was discharged from an ayurvedic hospital in the city months ago after being treated for critical illnesses.

Though Pragya did not



confirm whether she has been contacted by the BJP to fight poll, she did say the BJP was a party which matched her ideology. However, Pragya hinted she wasn't much eager to contest election, but said she was contacted by someone to fight election. Pragya, who had taken sanyas at 14, said it was an opportune moment to enter politics. She slammed the



Congress for attacking and Hindutva by calling them terror forces. Pragya was given clean chit in the murder of RSS pracharak Sunil Joshi as well.

State BJP spokesman Rajneesh Agrawal told *The Pioneer* that the voters are waiting for Digvijay to contest from Bhopal. They want to teach him a lesson.

Rahul may contest from Wayanad

PTI ■ PATHANAMTHITTA/KOTTAYAM

The Congress in Kerala has proposed AICC president Rahul Gandhi's name for the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat, a party bastion in the State, but he has yet to respond to the request, senior leaders said on Saturday.

Talking to reporters in Pathanamthitta district, AICC general secretary Oommen Chandy said the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) has requested Rahul to contest from Wayanad.

There is a demand from party leaders that Rahul should contest from any of the South Indian Lok Sabha seat. "We

have requested Gandhi to contest from Wayanad seat. He has not commented on the request so far. But we expect that there would be a positive response," Chandy said.

The party, which is contesting 16 out of 20 Lok Sabha seats in Kerala, has announced the names of 14 candidates but has not declared its candidates from Wayanad and Vadakara.

"I once again request Gandhi to contest from Wayanad. Congress president contesting from Lok Sabha seats in South India and North India will strengthen national unity and integration," Chennithala said.

Morning classes in schools from April 2

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR:

The State Government on Saturday directed all educational institutions to begin morning classes from April 2 as a preventive measure against a possible heat wave situation.

The School and Mass Education Department, in a letter to all educational boards, asked them to take precautionary and preparatory measures in all educational insti-

tutions including public schools and privately-managed schools to reschedule timing of classes between 6.30 am and 10.30 am.

The school authorities were asked to serve midday meals at 10 am and close the schools by 11 am. Instruction was issued to complete all assessments and examinations by March 30.

While the new academic session 2019-20 will begin from April 3, summer vacation will start from May 6.

2nd senior most Vice Admiral to be Navy chief

Karambir Singh jumps queue to pip Vice Admiral Verma to post

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

Setting aside the seniority Snorm in appointing a Service chief for the second time, the Government on Saturday selected Vice Admiral Karambir Singh as the new Navy chief after the incumbent Admiral Sunil Lanba retires on May 31 this year. Singh super-

cedes the senior most aspirant Vice Admiral Bimal Verma. In 2016, the present Army chief Rawat was selected for the top job superseding the then senior



most officer Pravin Bakshi. The incoming chief, who is at present serving as the Flag Officer Commanding in Chief (FOC-in-C) of the Eastern Naval Command in Visakhapatnam, will be the first helicopter pilot to become Chief of Naval Staff.

Modi out of scene, BJD may retain Puri LS seat

BJP's Sambit Patra not familiar in the area

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR:

The BJP State leadership is disappointed that despite its repeated request Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not prefer to contest elections from the Puri Parliamentary constituency and, instead, decided to stick to his old Varanasi seat.

Party leaders in Odisha had hoped that if Modi had been a candidate here, it would have had a highly favourable impact on winning prospects of other party contestants for both Lok Sabha and Assembly seats in the State so that the party could achieve its much-touted claim of "120+" Assembly seats and a commensurate number of Parliamentary constituencies.

Now that Dr Sambit Patra, BJP national spokesperson, has been declared as the party's Puri Lok Sabha nominee, the



BJD is quite relieved and is expected to retain the seat without much difficulty. Incumbent Puri BJD MP Pinaki Misra, who is sure to be re-nominated as party candidate, can look forward to winning for a third straight term. He had been elected as the Puri MP one more time in 1999 as a Congress candidate.

It is difficult to fathom why the BJP national leadership decided to field Sambit Patra from Puri. Originally belonging to Jajpur district and having his MBBS from the SCB Medical College in Cuttack and PG from the Medical College in Burla, Patra has no activities to reckon



with in Puri. He says he will be contesting the polls in Puri with the blessings of Lord Jagannath and of PM Modi.

As for his electoral records, he had earlier contested as a BJP ward candidate in the Delhi municipal area and was defeated.

The Congress is yet to name its Puri Lok Sabha nominee, but the party is too weak in the area to give a challenge to the BJD's Pinaki Misra.

Twin city top cop regrets arrest of wrong man

PNS ■ CUTTACK

In a case of mistaken identity, the Commissionerate police here on Saturday apologised for arresting a wrong man and forwarding him to court from where he was remanded to jail custody. Family members of the victim, however, demanded compensation for causing trauma to them and stringent action against the erring policeman.

Executing a six-year-old NBW, the Lalbag police of the city had arrested one Chandan Moharana of Chandini Chowk

here on the night of March 11. He was forwarded to a local court, which in turn remanded him to jail custody on the next day.

Despite the family members' appeal that Chandan was innocent; he is behind the bars for over 12 days now. "After inquiry, it was revealed that the arrested person was in no way involved in the 2013 March criminal case. Since his name and address matched with that of the name and address mentioned in the arrest warrant, he was arrested," said the Police commissioner Satyajit Mohanty and regretted for the trauma

and inconvenience caused to the family of Chandan.

Mohanty assured the family of adequate cooperation from the police to ensure that Chandan is released from the jail as soon as possible with his dignity intact. "We will appeal to the court pleading that the arrested person was not guilty and his arrest was a case of mistaken identity," the Police Commissioner said.

Mohanty assured the family of adequate cooperation from the police

Grahak ki Seva Din Raat
LIC Har Pal Aapke Saath

Call Centre Services
(022) 6827 6827

SMS Helpline

LIC e-Services

My LIC App

Customer Zones

SMS LICHELP<POLICY NO> and send to 9222492224

Download LIC Mobile App "MyLIC" Visit www.licindia.in

Follow us: LIC India Forever

BWARE OF SPURIOUS / FRAUD PHONE CALLS!
IRDAI is not involved in activities like selling insurance policies, announcing bonus or investment of premiums. Public receiving such phone calls are requested to lodge a police complaint.

LIC INDIA FOREVER

SHOW TIME

Period drama arrives with extreme action



KESARI
*ing: Akshay Kumar, Parineeti Chopra
Rated: 7.5/10

Every film ever made on patriotism evokes pride in every Indian — that we get to walk on the land that has produced India's finest. Soldiers who have laid down their lives to protect Mother India — defend her boundaries from the enemy — at the cost of putting not just their lives but their families as well.

We all always talk about the sacrifice a soldier makes when he is at our borders, we forget that the only reason he is able to do so fearlessly is due to a strong family backing. A family that has taught him to take a bullet on the chest.

Therefore, everything is *Kesari* makes you proud — that 21 Sikhs of the 36 Sikh Regiment preferred to fight for their honour and not because they were being paid for it. That they preferred to face the enemy and defend the border when they had the order to run. That they preferred to face death rather than be slaves to the British.

The film directed by Anurag Singh is a taut war drama that has been executed brilliantly and the

reason why it weaves its magic is because it has been so well scripted. The wit, sarcasm, action, humour and tragedy has been beautifully woven into the narrative. Being given a sneak peek into history that one gets to see between the Sikhs and Islam adds value. Or the significance of *kesari rang* — *Kesari rang ka matlab samjhte ho... shaheedi ka rang hai... bahaduri ka.*

Akshay Kumar as Havaldar Ishar Singh is brilliant. Off late, the actor has chosen to be part of films that make the audience sit and think and may be just may be a better human being. One can say that as Singh, this is best performance till day. His acting gives you goosebumps because of the way he has executed his character and carried the role on his shoulders.

Not that the other characters are there for show. Each has played their role to a T. The dialogues, the action and the climax will leave you teary-eyed as will the sheer violence and barbarism that unfolds make you shudder.

This is a must see epic — how 21 Sikhs fought 10,000 Afghans, were martyred and made the enemy run for their lives. — Shalini Saksena

Dragons come of age delightfully

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON: THE HIDDEN WORLD
*ing (voicing): Jay Baruchel, America Ferrera, Cate Blanchett, Craig Ferguson, F Murray Abraham
Rated: 7/10

We have already established that Hollywood makes the best animation films. The latest from DreamWorks reiterates the point. Those who have not been following the franchise since the time it began back in 2010 — *How to Train Your Dragon*, the film was loosely based on a 2003 book by British author Cressida Cowell. It would be somewhat sad to see the series come to an end. Some of the dragons are really cute and not to forget Toothless — and also a dragon with only half a tail.

While the last part may not have the fire that the prequels had, it will thaw even people with a cold heart — it is after all a story about how a species (read dragons) despite being brutally hunted by man still befriends a human knowing that this particular boy means well.

Though the original was the best of the lot, part 3 is all about some brilliant visuals in the hidden world which take away your breath. The burst of colours is amazing. What is more amazing is that it tells a story — that with love comes a great responsibility — that of sacrifice.

The first movie was released on March 26, 2010 and it comes to an end on March 24, 2019 (technically not end but release). It has been a full circle — for Toothless to grow up and be the alpha that he is and for Hiccup who finally grows up to be a man who leads his people and making the ultimate sacrifice that love demands.

A movie that will take the kiddies into a wonder land and melt the hearts of the adults. — Shalini Saksena



TELLYTALE



LIL' CHAMP GETS A MUSICAL BREAK

Zee TV's *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Li'l Champs* has been entertaining the audience's week-on-week with magical performances and unique musical prowess of the contestants. In the upcoming episode, the viewers will witness ace singer and music sensation Himesh Reshamiya gracing the show as the guest judge this weekend.

After listening to a bunch of sweet and talented voices, Himesh was completely blown away by Anushka Patra's performance on *Parda Parda* from *Once Upon A Time in Mumbai*. The judges applauded and lauded Anushka for exceptional singing but what Himesh said changed her life forever. He decided to offer Anushka her first musical break for his next film *Xpose Returns!* Completely smitten by her performance, Himesh had something sweet to say, "Anushka, you are ready for playback singing. You have the perfect confidence, the perfect voice for a Bollywood playback, the right attitude and you are completely prepared. I would like you to do the playback singing for my next film *Xpose Returns*."

The 12-year-old singing dynamite couldn't contain her happiness and was left speechless after she was offered this golden opportunity. Well, kudos to Anushka for giving such a magical performance and our handsome guest judge Himesh Reshamiya for honouring her talent.

ANUSHKA TO BE SEEN AS MAHAKAALI

Committed to championing and propagating content highlighting tenacious women, Colors' *Khoob Ladi Mardani... Jhansi Ki Rani* traces the journey of Manikarnika, whose heroic saga continues to be an inspiration to many. In the recent episodes, the show depicts a sequence of Manikarnika's metamorphosis into Mahakali, a fierce shakti who is known to banish all evil.

Currently, in the show, viewers witnessed how Manikarnika is disheartened as her defense for her brothers Bhema & Shiva in the trial goes in vain. Gangadhar

(Vikas Manaktala) takes a strong decision and announces the death penalty for both. His decision saddens her, and she goes to the Kali temple, where she meets Gangadas (Ankur Nayyar), who is her spiritual guide. He advised her to channel her emotions for her advantage and gives the example of Mahakali. He tells her to "awaken the *devi* within her" and with his guidance she envisages herself as the powerful Mahakali. With Ganga Das' guidance she visualises herself as Goddess Mahakali destroying atrocious Ross (Jason Shah), as he is leaving no stone unturned to create destruction in Jhansi. Manikarnika feels further strengthen, when she reckons on the battle of Mahakali and Raktabej. She sees herself winning over the odds and being victorious over Ross. This occurrence instills the faith in herself, and she believes that good will win over all evil. This episode will also re-emphasise Manikarnika's character as she will come



GUDDAN BATTLES AQUAPHOBIA

Zee TV's *Guddan... Tumse Na Ho Paega* lead protagonist Guddan is always up for challenges and believes in pushing boundaries and trying out new things. She suffers from aquaphobia and fears every time she is near a water body, but she mustered all the courage to dive inside for one of the sequences. Recently, the entire cast of the show visited Goa to shoot for a special Holi special episode wherein Guddan gets caught in the water current and starts drowning when Akshat comes in nick of time and saves her.

Shooting for the water sequence was nothing short of a nightmare for Kanika. She recalls that she had to step inside deep water to make the sequence look more authentic. She said: "When I was told that I have to shoot a water sequence, I got jitters and I was extremely sceptical about it. But the crew members spoke to me and convinced me to give it a shot. I chanted prayers and jumped into the water. My biggest motivation was my own character Guddan and I told myself, tumse bhi ho paega. I am glad that I opted to do it as it helped me overcome my fear and of course the appreciation I received from everyone was worth it."



SONU NIGAM ON KAPIL SHOW

This week Sonu Nigam along with his wife Madhurima will be part of the *The Kapil Sharma Show*. They will share some really interesting incidents and secrets of each other.

In a chat with Nigam, Kapil asks will ask questions about his calm and soft-spoken nature. He will hilariously tell the audience that how Sonu's even while scolding might scold so softly that nobody would understand if its his scoldings or his love.

The reason that Sonu has: "People manage to get an attitude when they become famous or settle down but I have always remembered a few things that I do not have to do. I know that I never have to speak bad about anybody in front or behind the back of people. I have also learned that no matter what, one has to find happiness

'I don't want to repeat myself'

MUSBA HASHMI chats up actor PARESH GANATRA, famous for his roles in Baa, Bahu and Baby and Chidiya Ghar, about his new show

Tell us about your character.

I play Mahendra Thakkar, a successful businessman (has a shop selling Bhakarwadi). He is a man of values and principles and can't compromise with them. But believes in changing with time. He is not rudiment in his thoughts and is ready to accept changes both in his business and life. He respects his customers a lot and keeps in mind their choices.

Do you share any similarities with your character?

Yes. Just like my character I am also a man of values and can't compromise on them. I can't do anything just for the sake of impressing people and creating a good image for myself. I am very real and a very straight-forward person. The difference in me and my character is that I am not businessman. I can't sit at one place. I want to be in the field and be creative.

How difficult was it for you to explore the genre of comedy?

It is difficult to get into the skin of the character — be it comic or intense or serious. You can't say *ki yeh toh maine aaram se kar liya. Jis din actor yeh bolney lag jayega ki arey ye toh mere liye kafee asaam thha* that shows arrogance and overconfidence. It means you don't want to grow as an actor.

Whenever I am given a character to play I try to understand his situation — mental and emotional. Then I try to get hold on his background, family, body-language, accent, education and understand his struggle story if any. I feel if someone has faced struggles in his life and then rose to name and fame, he will always be grounded and *jinke paas baap-dada ka paisa hota hai unmey thoda arrogance dikhta hai*. After observing the smallest events of a character's life then I proceed towards the story. I believe in doing my homework and keep experimenting. If you will not research and experiment with your characters then all your performances will become monotonous and I feel that is the end of an actor. I don't want to repeat myself and that is what makes all the difference in one's performance.

Was it difficult for you to make a place for yourself in the industry?

No, it wasn't that difficult. Whatever work and projects I took up worked out well. The struggle of an actor comes in when he does a project which doesn't work or when he doesn't get work. I had my own struggles. I did a film *Mann* which



didn't work. But then I did *Aankhein* and it worked and then there was *No Entry*, *Welcome*, *Delhi Belly*, *Rowdy Rathore*, *Bol Bachchan* and all of them worked out well. I started getting work and people started recognising me. Fortunately, on TV also whatever work I did turned out to be a success so now I don't feel worried about getting work. I get work. I have faced a lot of struggle in my theatre days and so I understand how to value my work.

Who is the ustaad of comedy?

Kishore Kumar, Mehmood and Johnny Lever. They did and do comedy effortlessly. Nowadays, if you mock someone people will laugh on it but I think this not the true essence of comedy. I believe in doing situational comedy and these people were masters at it. They never made jokes on people that is why still people enjoy watching their work. They are very expressive. And also the evergreen Charlie Chaplin. If someone can make you cry or laugh without uttering a word then no one can match him ever.

There is a lot of competition in the industry. Does that affect senior artists like you?

The scenario has changed in the comedy genre. There are a lot of formats that have come up. It is a never ending process. An actor or a comedian will never be out of place. Everyone has a USP and they know what they are good at or what they lack in themselves. As far as I am concerned, I know that I am not good at doing mimicry so I will never do it. Not am I comfortable in with under the belt kind of comedy so I won't get into it. I always love doing situational comedy rather and that is my forte.

Was there a moment when you thought of quitting?

Yes, definitely. There were two projects where I thought of leaving them because for me the work environment matters a lot. If I am not comfortable working in the environment I do feel like quitting but I have learnt *ki aap jo bhi kaam lo ussey pura karo, beech mein mat choro kyunki show aap se nahi apney naseeb se chal raha hai*. I always put aside those feelings and remember how much efforts I have put into it and walking away is not the solution.

What are your upcoming projects?

I have offers for a few films but for that I have to leave TV and I am not willing to do it. So, right now I am only focusing on *Bhakarwadi* and once it will be done, I will do other projects for sure.

Food nostalgia

Popular TV actors tell you the traditional food they used to eat on Holi.

Jasmin Bhasin: For me, Holi celebration is incomplete without *gujiya*. I remember my mom used to make *gujiya* at home for me on Holi. That is the traditional food that we have on the festival and I love and miss those *gujiyas*. Nothing can match the taste of my mother's cooked *gujiyas*.

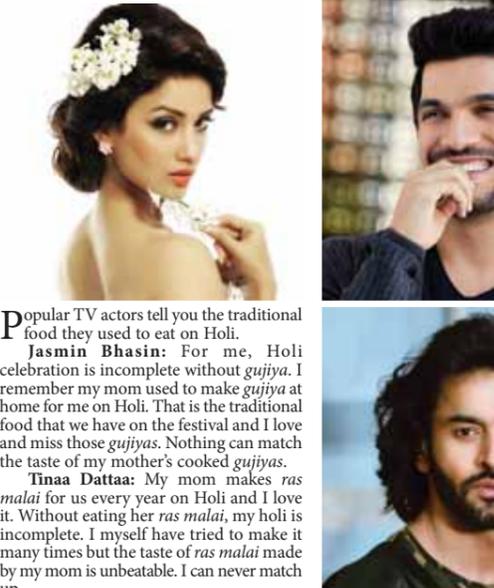
Tinaa Datta: My mom makes *ras malai* for us every year on Holi and I love it. Without eating her *ras malai*, my holi is incomplete. I myself have tried to make it many times but the taste of *ras malai* made by my mom is unbeatable. I can never match up.

Adaa Khan: My neighbour was a Bengali and she used to make these yummy *ras malais* every year on Holi. I remember on every Holi, she used to get *ras malai* for us and it used to taste delicious. I do eat *Ras malai* at times but the *ras malai* which she used to make had a different taste. I used to love it, I miss eating it.

Arjun Bijlani: As a kid, I remember playing Holi with all my neighbours and on the occasion of Holi, my dad used to make this yummy *chana masala* for all of us. So, while playing I used to come in between, munch it and go back to play.

Ssharad Malhotra: As I am a Punjabi and for me, Holi without *lassi* is incomplete. Every year, we have *lassi* made at my place. From childhood, till now, I have never missed having *lassi* on Holi. So, I am sure I will have *lassi* this year as well.

Shashank Vyas: *Kachori* is something which my mom makes on Holi. I love eating *kachori* with *achaar*. My mom makes yummy *kachori*'s every year on Holi. So if I am not shooting and I am in my hometown on the occasion of Holi, I definitely have *kachori* and *achaar* made by my mom.



Shahi awarded

Producer Rajan Shahi's *Ye Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai* is one of the longest running show on Indian television and for the same it won the award for maximum number of episodes 2875 and best continuity show 2019 at the Indian Telly Awards at Sahara Star on Wednesday evening. Rajan Shahi who attends events rarely was seen receiving the award for *Ye Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai* as a team. He says, "Look styling doesn't matter once your unit says we are a team in true sense of the word." *Ye Rishta* has got 102 awards till now and has a loyal audience and now spni off of *Ye Risthe Hai Pyar Ke* is also a talking point and generating good word of mouth." We wish Rajan Shahi and Director's Kut all the very best for producing heart touching shows.



IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS
(Ordinary Original Civil Jurisdiction)
Application No.7641 of 2018
In the matter of Arbitration & Conciliation Act, 1996
In the matter of Disputes between M/s. Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd and Mr. Bhawani Shakti Kumbhar Arising under Loan Agreement No.XVFPBPA0001049410 Dated 30.09.2013

M/s. Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited, "Dare House", No.2, N.S.C. Bose Road, Parrys, Chennai-600 001. Represented by its Authorised Signatory : Applicant

Vs.

Mr. Bhawani Shakti Kumbhar S/o. Gobinda Kumbhar AT - Ward No. 5, PO/PS- Bolangir, Balangir, Odisha - 767002 : Respondent

To

Mr. Bhawani Shakti Kumbhar S/o. Gobinda Kumbhar AT - Ward No. 5, PO/PS- Bolangir, Balangir, Odisha - 767002

The above application is posted on 26.04.2019 at 10.30 A.M. before the Hon'ble High Court, Madras for your appearance. Please take notice and appear on that date either in person or through your counsel failing which you will be set ex-parte and the matter will be decided in your absence.

M/s. D. PRADEEP KUMAR Counsel for Applicant

Kalahandi Lok Sabha seat

Cong, BJD happy as Panda BJP candidate



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Kalahandi Lok Sabha seat will witness a keen contest with three strong candidates set to fight for it. The encounter is particularly an issue of prestige for the BJP as its State president Basant Kumar Panda has been declared as party candidate here.



Congress veteran and two-time Kalahandi MP, Bhakta Charan Das, is the party nominee this time too. Besides, his son, Sagar Charan Das, is the Congress candidate for the Bhawanipatna Assembly seat, a segment of this Parliamentary constituency.

The BJD has fielded Puspendra Singh Deo, a sitting MLA under the Lok Sabha jurisdiction, as its nominee for the Parliamentary seat dislodging its incumbent MP



Arka Keshari Deo.

The Congress and the BJD seem to be happy over the BJP's decision to make Basant Panda as its candidate since he, though being the State party chief, is considered to be a weak contender against them.

The leadership of Panda, the incumbent MLA of Nuapada under this Lok Sabha constituency, had miserably failed in the last panchayat elections in his Assembly area.

Balangir Parliamentary seat

Aunt-nephew fight this time too

Narasingha's son to add more importance



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Balangir Parliamentary constituency will also this time see a fight between BJP candidate Sangita Singh Deo and her nephew and sitting MP Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo of the BJD.

An added importance of the hustings here will be the candidature of a new entrant, Samarendra Mishra, of the Congress, who is the son of Leader of Opposition in the



State Assembly Narasingha Mishra.

Interestingly, Narasingha Mishra is also again the Congress candidate for the Balangir Assembly seat, which is a part of this Lok Sabha constituency, while Sangita Singh Deo's husband and Leader of the BJP Legislature Party Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo will seek reelection from Patnagarh, a constituent of the Parliamentary seat.

If the BJD allots ticket to Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo's younger brother Arkesh Narayan Singh Deo for the Balangir Assembly seat, the Lok Sabha fight will assume further interesting proportions.



Interestingly, Narasingha Mishra is also again the Congress candidate for the Balangir Assembly seat, which is a part of this Lok Sabha constituency, while Sangita Singh Deo's husband and Leader of the BJP Legislature Party Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo will seek reelection from Patnagarh, a constituent of the Parliamentary seat

Pratyusha may be K'mal BJD candidate



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Kandhamal MP Pratyusha Rajeshwari Singh finally came out of bewilderment and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) here today.

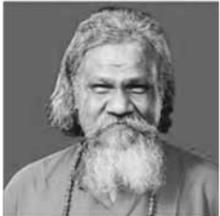
The former BJD leader joined the BJP in the presence of Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, BJP national vice-president Baijayant Panda and State president Basant Panda at senior party leader KV Singh Deo's residence.

Pratyusha was scheduled to be inducted into the Congress on the day as was earlier announced by Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Niranjan Patnaik. However, she finally preferred to join the BJP with an aspiration to be its candidate for the Kandhamal Lok Sabha seat for the upcoming elections.

Pratyusha recently resigned from the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) after being denied party ticket to seek reelection.

The former BJD leader joined the BJP in the presence of Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, BJP national vice-president Baijayant Panda and State president Basant Panda at senior party leader KV Singh Deo's residence

Patsani better choice against Sarangi!



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Incumbent MP Dr Prasanna Patsani still looks to be a frontrunner in the BJD for the Bhubaneswar Parliamentary seat in view of voluntarily-retired bureaucrat Aparajita Sarangi fielded by the BJP, according to some political observers.

While many names of the BJD are doing rounds for the prestigious LS seat, five-time MP Patsani, in view of his popularity and experience, could be the last hope for the



ruling party to retain the seat, feel observers.

"None but Patsani can match the waxing popularity and the preparedness of Sarangi in the ensuing election fray," opined they.

Tea stall vendors, auto-rickshaw pullers and common people are also of the view that the Baba with his magic wand in hand can give a tough fight to the BJP nominee, Sarangi. Otherwise, the bureaucrat with the winsome personality might have a cakewalk to the victory post.

BJP faces dissidents' ire after ticket allocation

Protests held in various parts of State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

After the BJD and the Congress were on the line of fire of dissidents after distribution of party tickets, now it's the BJP's turn to face the music across the State.

On Friday, the supporters of an aspirant Amiya Das locked the gate of the party headquarters protesting allocation of ticket to Babu Singh for Bhubaneswar Ekamra Assembly seat. The supporters of Das also staged a dharna in front of the party office on Saturday but later withdrew it after being pacified by senior party leaders.

The party activists opposing the candidature of Dola Gobind Nayak and Alekh Jena for Rajanagar Assembly constituencies respectively also held a demonstration before the party headquarters and shouted slogans against the party leaders.

Similarly, BJP leader



Subash Chouhan's supporters staged protest against Padampur MLA Pradip Purohit and Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in Bargarh after Suresh Pujari was nominated to contest the Lok Sabha polls from Bargarh.

Resentment also brewed among BJP workers over distribution of tickets in Bhadrak district.

Irate workers locked up the

party office opposing ticket to BJP candidate Madhabananda Mallick for Basudevpur Assembly constituency demanding candidature for Dinabandhu Pati.

The tension also gripped the BJP party office at Laxmipur in Koraput district where the party workers ransacked the office after Kumud Saunta got the party ticket. They burnt the effigies of Dharmendra Pradhan and Koraput BJP president

Jayram Pangi as mark of protest.

The protestors raised question on the State BJP's leadership over distribution of ticket terming it as 'injustice' to six aspirants in Laxmipur Assembly seat.

They alleged that Pradhan along with Pangi gave ticket to former BJD leader Kumud, who joined the party two months ago. They threatened mass resignation if the party does not withdraw its decision.

Cong 2nd list for 2 LS, 54 Assembly candidates

Hemananda's daughter, Bhakta's son, Sabyasachi's wife included

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Congress on Friday night announced its second list of candidates for two Lok Sabha and 54 Assembly seats for upcoming polls in the State.

The two Lok Sabha candidates are Samarendra Mishra for Balangir and Saptagiri Ulka for Koraput seat.

The candidates named for Assembly seats include Ripunath Seth (Bijepur), Saroj Mohapatra (Bhatli), Mahendra Nayak (Jharsuguda), Dr Prafulla Majhi (Talsara), Amita Biswal (Sundargarh), Prasant Sethy (Raghunathpali), Mukhtikant Biswal (Rourkela), Shovaram Pradhan (Kuchinda), Bala Krishna Rohidass (Rengali), Ashwini Kumar (Sambalpur), Assaf Ali Khan (Redhakhole), Uma Shankar Sahoo (Deogarh), Jaydev Jena (Anandpur), Bidyadhar Dehury (Keonjhar), Jadumani Barik (Champua), Sudam Charan Naik (Karanjia), Sudarshan Das (Jaleswar), Manojmanjari Debi (Nilagiri), Bandita Parida (Korei), Nabin Nanda (Dhenkanal), Subrat Garnik (Pallahara), Suresh Chandra Behera (Talcher), Biplab Jena (Angul), Sasmita Behera

(Chhendipada), Bijayanand Choliya (Athamallik), Chitranjan Mishra (Sonepur), Naba Kishore Nayak (Loisingha), Surendra Singh Bhoi (Titlagarh), Santosh Singh Saluja (Kantabanji), Jasoda Rani Gond (Umerkote), Anil Singh Deo (Junagarh), Sagar Charan Das (Bhawanipatna), Chitaranjan Mandal (Narla), Debasis Patnaik (Banki), Uma Ballav Rath (Athagarh), Mohammed Muquim (Barabati-Cuttack), Ratnakar Behera (Cuttack Sadar), Ganeswar Behera (Kendrapada), Devendra Sharma (Ali), Anshuman Mohanty (Rajanagar), Chiranjib Biswal (Jagatsinghpur), Biswa Bhushan Das (Kakatpur), Umakant Baral (Brahmagiri), Prasad Harichandan (Satyabadi), Rasmirekha Mohapatra (Ekamra-Bhubaneswar), Suresh Kumar Routray (Jatni), Subhashree Panda (Ranpur), Bhokali Setty (Khalikote), Sangram Mohanty (Surada), Prafulla Panda (Digapahandi), K Surya Rao (Paralakhemundi), Appalswamy Kadarka (Rayagada), Kailash Chandra Kulesika (Laxmipur) and Chandrasekhar Majhi (Kotpad).

With the second list, the Congress has so far announced candidates for 90 Assembly seats and eight Parliamentary seats.

BJP 2nd list: 5 LS, 22 Assembly candidates

Sambit for Puri, Suresh for Bargarh, Basant for K'handi LS seats

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJP on Friday night announced its second list with names of candidates for

five Lok Sabha and 22 Assembly seats in Odisha for the upcoming elections.

While party's national spokesperson Sambit Patra has been chosen for Puri LS seat, State president Basant Kumar Panda would fight from Kalahandi seat. Other three

candidates are Suresh Pujari for Bargarh, Nitesh Ganga Deb for Sambalpur and Jayaram Pangi for Koraput seat.

With Patra's name figured in the list, all speculations over fielding of Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the Puri seat have come to an end.

The Assembly candidates are: Bhatli-Irasis Acharya, Deogarh- Subash Panigrahi, Biramaharajapur- Raghunath Jagadala, Sonepur-Ashok Pujari, Balingir- Ananta Das, Nuapada-Homesingh Majhi, Jhargam- Parshuram Majhi, Dabugaon- Padman Nayak,

Bhawanipatna- Pradeep Nayak, Dasapalla- Purna Chandra Nayak, Kabisuryanagar- Ranjan Polai, Chhatrapur- Prashant Kar, Aska- Debraj Mohanty, Sorada- Nilamani Bisoi, Berhampur- Kanhu Pati, Digapahandi- Pinky Pradhan,

Mohana-Prashant Mallik, Gunpur-Shisir Gomang, Rayagada-Basant Ulaka and Jeypore- Goutam Samantray. With this, the BJP has so far announced candidates for a total of 119 Assembly seats and 15 Parliamentary constituencies.

Pinky lone woman in BJP 2nd list

Party fields 10 women in Assembly seats so far

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as all the political parties claim to field more women candidates for the ensuing elections, interestingly Pinky Pradhan was found to be the lone woman named in the BJP's second list of 22 Assembly candidates.

Pinky, an actor-turned politician, would be contesting polls from the Digapahandi constituency against senior BJD leader Surjya Narayan Patro and Congress' Prafulla Panda.

"The ticket is not given to me, rather I will be representing Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Digapahandi. I will contest the polls as the daugh-



ter-in-law of the constituency," said Pinky.

With Pinky Pradhan, a total of 10 women have been named in the two lists of 119 Assembly candidates announced so far by the saffron party.

The other nine women candidates are Radharani Panda (Brajarajagar), Kusum Tete (Sundargarh), Babita Mallick (Binjharpur), Ritarani Bagarti (Khariar), Archana Pradhan (G Udayagiri), Pravati Parida (Nimapara), Surama Padhy (Ranpur), Irani Roy (Nayagarh) and Bharati Behera (Khalikote).

Pujari nomination protested in B'garh

BJP workers burn Dharmendra's photo

PNS ■ BARGARH



The BJP workers of Bargarh and supporters of MP aspirant Subash Chauhan protested the choice of Suresh Pujari for Bargarh LS seat.

They burnt Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's photo on Saturday at Padmapur expressing their dissatisfaction over the selection of various nominees for MLA seats of Bargarh district.

They alleged that there is a conspiracy to defeat Pujari in Bargarh.

They said Chauhan is a great organizer and has been working for the party organization work in Bargarh since long.

The selection of nominee in the Bhatli Assembly constituency was also protested by the BJP workers.

They alleged that there is a conspiracy to defeat Pujari in Bargarh

BJD workers for new face in Anandapur

Resentment against sitting MLA grows

PNS ■ CHAMPUA

Although the name of candidate for Anandpur Assembly (SC) constituency is going to be declared very soon by the BJD but there is no end to the public resentment against the sitting MLA Mayadhar Jena of the BJD.

This has come to light some days back recently when a group of people from Anandpur constituency had gone to Naveen Niwas to express their displeasure with the present MLA.

Their argument was that the public rapport of sitting MLA has dwindled while on the other hand, he has been keeping more contact with the contractors and supporters of other party. Whenever common people approach him for any problem, they find him absent in the locality.

Under the circumstances, if he is once again given the chance, the BJD might face defeat. They demanded for a new face preferably a woman-candidate keeping in view the candidates of both BJP and Congress.

Their argument was that the public rapport of sitting MLA has dwindled

BJD alleges violation of poll code by BJP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJD on Saturday met the State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) here and levelled allegations of violation of the election model code of conduct by the BJP.

Questioning whether the model code is different for the

BJD and the BJP, BJD spokesperson Sambit Patra alleged that BJP leader Baijayant Panda's video campaign vehicle was engaged in Kendrapada without any permission from the CEO.

Besides, no action is being taken by the CEO over the BJP's fake intelligence report



which was shown at a Press meet to tarnish the image of the BJD, Patra further alleged.

He said the hoardings of Centre's Ujjwala scheme have been put up illegally in various locations.

Those hoardings are not being removed despite repeated complaints.

Choudwar-Cuttack Assembly seat

Deepak Barik in race for BJD ticket

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Social activist and 'Save SOTM Movement' leader Deepak Kumar Barik has offered his candidature to the BJD for the Choudwar-Cuttack Assembly constituency.

Barik, who had fought as an Independent candidate from the seat in the 2009 elections and emerged second with 25, 718 votes, has submitted his bio-data to BJD supreme Naveen Patnaik.

Having been in politics since his student days as president of the Paradip College Union, he has always played a vital role in forming Students' Unions in the Choudwar College for 13 times.

He has also been spearheading the 'Save OTM Movement' for the last 13 years.

Barik too has played a pivotal role in elections to the



Choudwar Municipality. Twelve out of 19 councillors were elected as independent candidates in 2008.

Similarly, five independent candidates were elected under his leadership in 2013.

In his profile submitted to the BJD supreme, Barik assured that he is committed to serving the society with utmost sincerity and enthusiasm and to fight to empower the BJD against all odds.

Cong holds youth rally in A'garh



PNS ■ ATHAGARH

OPCC general secretary and aspirant for Athagarh Assembly seat Uma Ballav Rath organised a grand Yuba Garjan Samabesh here on Thursday.

Cuttack Lok Sabha ticket aspirant from Congress Panchanan Kanungo attended the programme, among others. Hundreds of youth workers of Congress along

their leaders came in a grand rally from Nuapata of Tigriria block and reached at the meeting place at Athagarh old Bus Stand where they lashed out at ruling BJD and local MLA Ranendra Pratap Swain for corruption and lack of growth in the locality.

They remembered former CM JB Patnaik who represented the seat bringing fast development in the area.

Marine PS ransacked by mob in Bhadrak

Forces deployed; 50 detained

PNS ■ BHADRAK

Tension prevailed in Basudevpur of the district on Saturday after a group of Bibinagar villagers ransacked the Kasia Marine police station alleging inaction of the cops in connection with a feud between two families.

Sources said a scuffle ensued between two families after a newly-wed woman, who had gone to her parental house at Barapokhari, did not return to her in-law's house at Bibinagar on. On receiving information, police reached

the spot and took both the families members to custody to settle the issue amicably. Later, the cops released them.

In the morning, a group clash again erupted between people of the two villages. Later, a group of Bibinagar villagers vandalised the police station damaging several assets, including, computers and a police van. They alleged that the cops are delaying in taking action over the matter.

The police later took control over the situation. Three platoons of police force were deployed in the locality to avoid any untoward incident and more than 50 persons were rounded up for vandalising the police station.

Body of contractor found in Baleswar

Had extramarital affair!

PNS ■ BALESWAR

A dead body of a contractor of the Jaleswar area was found with multiple injuries under mysterious circumstances in Rajnagar under the Dantun police station on Thursday night.

The deceased was identified as Abhishek Bhuyan (Bapun) of Balarampur village under the Jaleswar police station.

While the body was spotted in a farmland near the border of Odisha and West Bengal, the Jaleswar and West Bengal police began a joint investigation into the incident.

Bapun's family members alleged that he was murdered and demanded action against the accused. The reason behind the murder was yet to be ascertained, but sources said he was murdered due to his extramarital relationship.

According to sources, Bapun had illicit relationship with a married woman of his village; and a few days ago, he was also caught in the woman's house by her husband. He was warned of dire consequences and asked to refrain from such a relationship.

Although source said that the husband of the woman was also apprehended by the Dantun police, no official confirmation could be obtained about it.

Contractor shot at in JSpur

Unfortunate incident

PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

A contractor was hurt in a firing incident at Kania village under Alavara Panchayat in Balikuda block on Wednesday night.

He was identified as Kulamani Das, a resident of Alavara village and is presently undergoing treatment at Balikuda hospital.

Reports said Kulamani was attacked by four anti-socials over extortion money. Villagers rescued him from the spot and sent him to hospital.

One miscreant Rakesh Das alias Raja was overpowered and caught hold of by the villagers.

They also handed him over him to the Balikuda police.

Gond re-nominated: BJD workers excited



MONOHAR MOHANTY ■ UMARKOTE

The BJD party workers of Umakote are excited as sitting two-time MLA Subash Gond has been re-nominated for the upcoming polls.

After the announcement of his name by party supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the local BJD workers in thousand went to Gond's resident and greeted his family members. Gond, a close associate of slain MLA Jagabandhu Majhi, was handpicked by the BJD and fielded as its nominee during the by-election to the Umakote Assembly constituency. He was the vice-president of the Dalit Samaj headed by former MLA Jagabandhu before he merged it with the BJD. Besides having good network of workers because of his close proximity to Jagabandhu, Gond had his own sphere of influence as the vice-president of the Dalit Samaj. He has got great applause for his various public friendly initiatives which made him the MLA of Umakote twice, said local leader of BJD Parsuram Patro. The party supremo has reposed faith on him and nominated him once again to serve the people of the constituency, Patro added. There was a speculation of BJD fielding a new face as in the last panchayat election, the performance of the BJD in Umakote constituency under the leadership of Gond was found dismal. Sanraj Gond who is presently a Sarpanch in Raigarh block was also in the race for a BJD ticket from the seat. However, BJD leaders raised sloganeering protesting Sanraj in a party meeting held at Sirliguda headed by Sanjay Das Burma, the district observer of BJD.

They warned that a change of nominee would be a dangerous move. Pramod Padhy, a senior BJD leader of the district, said, "The general elections are different from the Panchayat election. Due to the influence of the BJD led Chhattisgarh Government then, the BJD performed well in the Panchayats adjacent to the Chhattisgarh border."

But now the situation is different in Chhattisgarh. So this time, the BJD will perform well in the bordering areas."

144 clamped in Koraput after group clash

The Koraput district administration on Saturday clamped prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC following a group clash between two villages under Sadar police station in the district on Friday.

Sources said four platoons of BSF personnel and three platoons of Odisha police have been deployed in the area to prevent any untoward incident.

Besides, Koraput SP KV Singh, SDPO Sagarika Nath and four IICs have also been engaged in the locality. A flag march was also conducted in the sensitive area to defuse the tension.

On Friday, a clash broke out between two groups of Dhepaguda and Kundariguda villages over past enmity while they had gone to a nearby canal to take bath after celebrating Holi.

Several persons from both the groups were injured due to stone pelting during the clash. When the situation went out of control, police reached the spot and opened blank fire to disperse the mob.

Besides, vehicular traffic on National Highway-26 was disrupted for over two hours due to the clash.

Several persons from both the groups were injured due to stone pelting during the clash

Several persons from both the groups were injured due to stone pelting during the clash

Several persons from both the groups were injured due to stone pelting during the clash

Several persons from both the groups were injured due to stone pelting during the clash

Several persons from both the groups were injured due to stone pelting during the clash

Several persons from both the groups were injured due to stone pelting during the clash

Several persons from both the groups were injured due to stone pelting during the clash

IN BRIEF

POLL TICKETS TO LOCALS DEMANDED IN PALLAHARA

Pallahara: Senior leader Dr Santosh Dehury along with his supporters sat on a dharna at the Biju Patnaik statue here demanding that local aspirants be given tickets for the Pallahara Assembly seat. They alleged that all parties have ignored local leaders in the past. The Congress and the BJP have chosen candidates outside the Assembly segment, ignoring local aspirants, they alleged.

PALLAHARA BJP NOMINEE MEETS PARTY MEN

Pallahara: BJP nominee for Pallahara Assembly seat Ashok Mohanty had a darshan of Maa Kundiabira, the presiding deity of Pallahara, and sought Her blessing. He met party workers and expressed his gratitude to Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for his nomination by the party. Notably, in 2014, Mohanty, who contested election on BJP ticket, had secured second position by getting 38,682 votes. Mohanty also played a pivotal role during the 2017 panchayat election in the locality for which Kaniha and Pallahara block Chairmen posts have gone to the BJP.

PALLAHARA MAN INJURED IN GUNSHOT

Pallahara: A man was injured in a gunshot at Purunapani village of Parachhata panchayat under the Khamar police limits. The injured Bikash Nayak had hidden an illegal loaded gun under a straw heap and while bring it out he pulled the trigger. Bikash was first admitted in Khamar hospital and later was shifted to the SCB Medical College Hospital, Cuttack. It was alleged that Khamar hospital in-charge did not intimate police about the incident. Getting information, Khamar police station IC Jugal Kishore Dash and others went to the spot for a probe.

TRAINING ON USE OF EVM, VVPAT HELD AT PALLAHARA

Pallahara: To ensure free and fair election to the Pallahara Assembly seat, Sub-Collector-cum-Retiring Officer Ajit Kumar Pradhan conducted a training programme for Presiding and Polling Officers here on Saturday. They were taught on the functioning of EVM and VVPAT machines. Tehsildar Ansuman Satapathy, Additional Tehsildar Suman Minz and other officers were present.

YOUTH INJURED IN FATHERS' ATTACK AT PALLAHARA

Pallahara: In a gruesome incident, a 26-year-old youth was critically injured after being attacked with an axe by none other than his father in Solda village under Pallahara Sadar police limits in Angul district on Saturday. Injured Jena Tubid was first rushed to Pallahara hospital and then shifted to the Angul District Headquarters Hospital as his condition deteriorated. Accused father Bahadur Tubid has fled the village. Investigations are on, said IIC Gyana Ranjan Samal.

FAKE TOBACCO UNITS BUSTED; 1 HELD IN P'KHEMUNDI



Paralakhemundi: The Paralakhemundi police on Saturday busted fake tobacco manufacturing units at Ranipentha, Kumutisahi and Om Santi Colony here and arrested a person involved in the racket. The arrestee was identified as Reddy Ramababu (20) of Kumutisahi under the Paralakhemundi PS. Huge quantities of adulterated tobacco products, machins, tobacco packets, labels of several branded companies and other packaging materials were seized during the raid, said Gajapati SP Sarah Sharma at a Press meet on Saturday.

Inter-State looters held; ₹2.23 cr cash seized

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

A team of Railway Police Force (RPF) nabbed three inter-State looters and recovered a whopping amount of Rs 2.23 crore from them on Friday.

The accused were identified as Ranjan Sribastav (58), a native of Ranchi and Sanjay Gupta (42) and Sunil Gupta (39), both native of Patna, Bihar. They were forwarded to SDJM Court at Jharsuguda on Saturday.

Sources said their modus operandi was they followed passengers carrying valuables including cash from Howrah and committed the crime between Howrah and Jharsuguda.

The Government Railway Police meanwhile is investigating the case as the looters are suspected to be involved in a number of passenger loot cases.

Sources said a case was registered with the Jharsuguda GRP on March 20, following

transfer of one case from Howrah railway police. According to the details available in the FIR, one Gaurav Kumar, a businessman of Kolkata along with two of his employees had boarded a train No. 12906 from Howrah at about 10.50 pm on March 2 along with two big size trolley bags.

Kumar's staffs had noticed at Jharsuguda that one of their bags was missing, which reportedly contained about Rs 3.14 lakh cash and some cloths."The accused and cash were handed over to us on Friday and after completion of formalities, they have been forwarded to court at Jharsuguda on Saturday, since the case has been registered there," said SP, GRP, Rourkela, Ajay Pratap Swain. "We are further investigating the case, as we suspect the arrested persons are part of a gang that has been involved in train passengers' loot incidents," Swain added.

A'garh polling officials get 2nd training

PNS ■ ATHAGARH

The second round training programme of Presiding Officers and first polling officers for simultaneous general election was held on Saturday in all the four block headquarters of Athagarh Subdivision.

The BDOs and allied officers trained the officers regarding their duties on the poll day. The polling parties must check the EVM's control unit and balloting unit during receipt of the EVM. This apart, the POs must ensure that the battery level of the machines is high.

The polling parties have been instructed not to try the VVPAT during dispersal because it might affect sensors attached to it. Sector Officers, Returning Officer and police team will remain in touch with the polling parties during poll period, said Athagarh Sub-



Collector-cum-Retiring Officer for Athagarh and Badamba Assembly constituencies.

Khariar BJP MLA joins BJD

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A day after quitting the BJP, Khariar MLA and former Minister Duryodhan Majhi joined the BJD on Saturday.

The tribal leader joined the BJD in the presence of party supremo Naveen Patnaik.

The five-time MLA ended his stint with the BJP after the party fielded former BJP MLA

Hitesh Bagarti's wife Rita for the Khariar Assembly seat.

In his resignation letter to BJP State president Basant Panda, Majhi stated that despite repeated requests to the party leadership to contest from the Khariar Assembly seat, his plea fell on deaf ears.

It may be mentioned that Mahi had quit the BJD in 2014 after he was denied a ticket to contest the polls.

Punjab, Haryana CMs pay tributes to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh and his Haryana counterpart Manohar Lal on Saturday paid tributes to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev on their death anniversary observed as 'Shaheed Diwas' (Martyr's Day).

"My tributes to Shaheed-e-Azam and Shaheed Sukhdev & Rajguru on their Shaheed

Diwas. We remember the sacrifice of these brave sons of the soil, who continue to inspire generations, on this special day, which Punjab is observing as Youth Empowerment Day," Capt Amarinder tweeted.

Manohar Lal in his tweet wrote, "Homage to the fearless and revolutionary freedom fighters — Bhagat Singh, Rajguru & Sukhdev who sacrificed their lives for the

nation. Their sacrifice for the motherland will continue to inspire generations to come."

Meanwhile, in Ferozepur, on the occasion of 'Shaheed Diwas', Deputy Commissioner Chander Gaind accompanied people to the martyrs' memorial in a special train. The DC interacted with the people, listened to their grievances and directed officials concerned to resolve their problems in a time-bound manner.

RANJIT SINGH BRAHMPURA: Friend turned foe of the Akalis

MONIKA MALIK

RANJIT SINGH BRAHMPURA, the SAD (Taksali) president, and Khadoor Sahib MP, was once a friend of the Akalis, but now has turned into a bitter foe. After fighting and winning battles for them, Brahmpura is attacking his comrades for whom he once trained his guns. Leading the Badals-led Akali Dal's breakaway faction — Shiromani Akali Dal (Taksali), Brahmpura has decided against contesting 2019 LS elections and working for the party, while making it clear that he would again enter the electoral ring if needed be. A veteran, sitting Khadoor Sahib MP, believed that the people of the state would not forgive the Badals and the SAD for their paap (sins) and they would face sharamnaak haar (shameful defeat) in May 19 elections in Punjab. Excerpts from the interview:

major issue in Punjab. Employees are holding protests, there are no jobs.

What about panthic issues as other political parties are seeking votes on Kartarpur Sahib corridor, and other such issues?

Gurudwara Kartarpur Sahib is a religious place...leaders and political parties should not use it for political gains. Opening of Kartarpur Sahib corridor was a long pending demand of the Sikhs, not only in Punjab but all over the world. The corridor should open, and all should have open access to the Gurudwara sahib. But politics on this should be avoided. Everyone knows that no political party did it. It is a decision taken by the Governments of two countries. No doubt, (Navjot Singh) Sidhu and other leaders made efforts but there should be no politics.

What, according to you, would be the main issues during this election?

Unemployment is a major issue across the nation. India's farmers are also suffering due to Government's apathetic attitude. Then drugs menace is a

You parted ways with the SAD, and blamed the Badals for their failure to act in 2015 sacrilege cases and the related firing incidents where issue still relevant?

Everybody in Punjab, even

kids, know who is responsible for that. They did everything deliberately...they committed sins...and now, they should be punished for this. Even children are against the Badal family, they know that they did a wrong thing...In 2017 Punjab assembly election, SAD faced a sharamnaak haar (shameful defeat)...At that time too, people expressed their anger by not voting for SAD. And this time too, SAD would meet the same fate.

Initially you were part of Punjab Democratic Alliance (PDA), and then started talks with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Now Sukhpal Khaira has urged you to reconsider returning in PDA. What you have to say?

These young politicians, (Sukhpal) Khaira saab, and Bains (Simarjeet Singh Bains)...They don't have any experience of life. Their way of functioning and working style, I feel they are proud (read arrogant). They have started considering themselves as the chief minister, and would do this or that...There is still three years to go for the next election. They should go slow and work sincerely.

After fielding Bir Devinder Singh from Sri Anandpur Sahib and former Army chief General JJ Singh from Khadoor Sahib, can we expect more big faces as SAD Taksali candidates?

There is still two months for the elections. We are in talks with some parties, other than AAP, for alliance. It may be possible that we would field our candidates on some of the seats. We will see how to go about it. We still have time...will decide in a week or so!

What is your strategy against the Badals?

Electoral Commission of India. The Punjab CEO said that there is no difficulty in opening an account as per Election Commission instructions and every financial activities of already existed bank accounts of the family members of candidate is being closely monitored. He said that there is a

large proportion of buyers, who purchases goods through e-commerce companies. If a candidate or concerned person purchases large number of goods through online payment, he / she should also be supervised as these goods could be used to allure voters. PNS

Financial activities of candidates should be gauged minutely, says Punjab CEO

Chandigarh: Every Financial activity of any candidates should be gauged minutely to provide level playing field to all candidates, Punjab Chief Electoral Officer S. Karuna Raju on Saturday instructed officers and representatives of various banks working in Punjab.

Interacting with bank representatives, the CEO apprised that the Election Commission of India has framed rules to conduct fair, transparent and peaceful elections besides giving all candidates and parties level playing field. "As per the directions of ECI, Several monitoring teams have also been formed to execute such rules in letter and spirit, which were

continuously working on assigned tasks", he said. Raju said the election expenditure limit for the person interested to contest the elections has been fixed Rs.70 lac by the Election Commission of India and the candidate has to spend all this expenditure through the account to opened according to the directives of the

Electoral Commission of India. The Punjab CEO said that there is no difficulty in opening an account as per Election Commission instructions and every financial activities of already existed bank accounts of the family members of candidate is being closely monitored. He said that there is a

large proportion of buyers, who purchases goods through e-commerce companies. If a candidate or concerned person purchases large number of goods through online payment, he / she should also be supervised as these goods could be used to allure voters. PNS

Several persons from both the groups were injured due to stone pelting during the clash

Life Drop' to be screened at Global India Fest

Movie made by Abhishek Swain

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

City-based Abhishek Swain's silent short film "Life Drop" has been selected to be screened at Global India International Film Festival. The film was screened on Saturday at the National Film Achieve of India, Pune.

This film shows 'A child dies in every 30 second due to lack of unsafe water in rural areas.'

It was shot in tribal areas of Bonda hills, Malkanagiri. The narrative structure of this film is symbolic and experimental. The film has ear-

lier won Best film award in 'Human Rights Short Film Festival' Bangladesh, competing among 738 films from 82 countries.

It was declared finalist at 16th Frames Film Festival held in Navi Mumbai and also selected at Velcom Smart Film, Russia.

This is Swain's third short film which was produced by Chitta Ranjan Nanda.



Shah accuses Cong of insulting Pulwama martyrdom

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Continuing his attack on Congress president Rahul Gandhi's close aide Sam Pitroda for allegedly taking a dim view of Pulwama terror attack and surgical strike against Pakistan, BJP president Amit Shah on Saturday accused the Congress of "insulting" the martyrdom of soldiers killed in the Pulwama terror attack and claimed that only BJP can ensure the country's security.

In the continuing poll-campaign slugfest with the Congress, Shah asked Rahul to apologise to people and armed forces for the comments of his aide.

Speaking to media, Shah said Pitroda's statement conveyed that the Pulwama terror attack was a "routine" incident carried out by a few people for which Pakistan cannot be blamed, as the BJP chief asked Rahul to make his party's stand clear on the issue.

Pitroda, he said, also questioned surgical strikes and air strikes by the Indian armed forces.

"Does the Congress believe that terror incidents in the country have nothing to do with the Pakistan government or Pakistan Army?" Shah asked, seeking Congress President's response.

Pitroda is Indian Overseas Congress chief and is seen to be one of the key advisers to



BJP president Amit Shah addresses the media in New Delhi on Saturday PTI

Gandhi.

His comments, including that one cannot "jump on entire nation" (Pakistan) just because some people from there "came here and attacked" in reference to Pulwama terror attack, were Friday seized on by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to lead the BJP's all-out attack against the Congress on the issues of terrorism.

Keeping the heat on the opposition party on the issues of terrorism and nationalism in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls, Shah said the Congress is known for "vote bank" and "appeasement" politics during election and asked if such politics can be above national interest and the "blood of martyrs".

The BJP president then drew a comparison between the Congress-led UPA dispensation's "no strong action" against terrorism and the Modi

Government's "zero tolerance" against it to assert that only the saffron party is capable of securing India.

"I want to reassure people of this country that only the BJP can provide security to the country, can give a befitting response to terrorism and can foil Pakistan's conspiracy," he said. The Modi Government has succeeded in isolating Pakistan internationally and the morale of security forces is sky high, he said.

Shah said the Congress president on March 7 had said that questions raised on air strikes should be answered.

"But whose questions he wants to be answered and who raising questions on Indian Air Force. Who do you support? It is not proper for the national president of a party to raise such questions and doubt the IAF," he said.

"When anti-national slogans were raised in JNU you called it freedom of expression and you also went there in their support. This is an example of your abhorrent vote bank politics".

The BJP president also rejected the Congress distancing itself from Pitroda's comments by terming them as his personal views, as he wondered "what is personal view in politics".

The Congress president should tender an apology without any delay, he demanded.

Shah to launch poll campaign with rally in Agra

New Delhi: BJP president Amit Shah will launch the party's poll campaign after the Lok Sabha election schedule was announced with a rally in Agra in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday, and its top leaders will hold rallies in every constituency across the country till Tuesday. Asserting that national security plank will figure high on the party's 'Vijay Sankalp' (Pledge for Victory) rallies planned for Sunday and Tuesday, senior party leader Muliktar Abbas Naqvi said the BJP will launch "ground strike" against "abusers of security forces". PNS

PM Modi should stop sending love letters to Islamabad, Cong retaliates

New Delhi: Returning fire on BJP's tirade against Sam Pitroda for allegedly going soft on Pakistan, the Congress on Saturday took potshots at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for sending best wishes to his Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan on the eve of the neighbouring country's national day saying he should stop sending "love letters" to Islamabad.

Modi had sent a letter to Khan, greeting the people of Pakistan on the eve of its National Day and highlighting the importance of a terror-free South Asia. It was Khan who made Modi's gesture public.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala reminded Modi of his own words asking him to stop writing "love letters" to Pakistan and alleged that his "muscular politics" is aimed at only the people and the media.

The attack came after Modi sent his best wishes to Khan on the Pakistan National Day, which is celebrated to mark the Lahore Resolution on March 23 each year.

"Mr 56" of the Sari-Shawl-Improptu Pak visit for Birthday-ISI invite fame

diplomacy was feeling very shy yesterday.

"Guess? Chowkidar hid the fact that he had wished Pak PM on Pak National Day without a word on Pak terrorism."

"Muscular politics soap opera for people and media only," Surjewala said on Twitter.

The Congress leader also tweeted, "Modi ji, Stop writing this Love Letter to Pakistan".

He posted a video of Modi's interview to a channel where Modi during the UPA time is saying Pakistan needs to be talked to in the language it understands and that writing love letters to it should be stopped. He was referring to then prime minister Manmohan Singh's letter to then Pakistan President.

Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal too pitched in saying: "Remember Modiji... You embraced (then Pakistani premier) Nawaz Sharif, called him to your inauguration and showed what a change it would be. It was you who shared a birthday bash, gave him gifts. While our PM never visited Pakistan, you gave him gifts and then you are teaching us lessons on Pakistan?"

Ravi Shankar Prasad questions RaGa over rise in income



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

jump in income.

Claiming that Congress President Rahul Gandhi has no ostensible source of income, the BJP on Saturday questioned the substantial rise in his income between 2004 and 2014.

BJP leader and Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad told the media that Congress leader's income had risen from over ₹55 lakh in 2004 to ₹9 crore in 2014 as per his election affidavits, and asked how can a mere MP witness such a

"In his election affidavit in 2004, his income was ₹55,38,123 while in 2009, it rose to ₹2 crore and in 2014 it rose to ₹9 crore. We know how much an MP earns. We want to ask what is this Rahul Gandhi model of development without an ostensible source of income," he said.

He also questioned Rahul whether he had bought two properties from Unitech which was linked to the 2G spectrum allocation scam, PTI quoted BJP leader as saying.

BJP seems to be schizophrenic: Akhilesh on PM Modi's blog

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday termed the BJP "schizophrenic" and alleged that the party tries to co-opt icons like Mahatma Gandhi, BR Ambedkar and Ram Manohar Lohia but follows people who these leaders disagreed with.

The remarks by the SP chief came in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's blog in which he dubbed the efforts of regional parties to form a grand alliance with the Congress as "reprehensible", saying socialist ideologue Ram Manohar Lohia would be "horrorified" as most of these parties claim to be his followers.

Accusing the BJP of practising double standards, Yadav wrote on Twitter, "I wonder which principles are being spoken of. The BJP seems to be

schizophrenic." "On the one hand they try to co-opt Gandhi ji, Bhagat Singh, Sardar Patel, Dr Ambedkar and Dr Lohia and on the other hand they follow



people who these leaders opposed and disagreed with."

In a blog to mark the 109th birth anniversary of Lohia, Modi alleged, "Today those parties that falsely claim to be Dr Lohia's followers are desperate to form an opportunistic 'maha-milawat' or adulteration alliances with the same Congress (which Lohia opposed). It is both ironical and reprehensible."

Grand alliance with Cong 'reprehensible': PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday utilised the 109th birth anniversary of socialist ideologue Ram Manohar Lohia to hit out at socialist parties by dubbing as "reprehensible" their efforts to form a grand alliance with the Congress.

"Dr Lohia's thoughts inspire us. He wrote about modernising agriculture and empowering farmers, which the NDA Government is effectively doing through efforts such as PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, Krishi Sinchai Yojana, e-Nam, Soil Health Cards and more," he said in the blog shared on Twitter.

Referring to gender inequality, the Prime Minister said nothing pained Lohia more than the caste hierarchy and inequality between women and men. "But neck deep in vote bank politics, it was parties that dis-

honestly claim to be Dr Lohia's followers that opposed the NDA Government's move to abolish the inhuman practice of triple talaq," he alleged.

Hitting out at the Congress, Modi said whenever Lohia spoke, the Congress "trembled with fear". He said Lohia had once claimed that during the Congress regime neither agriculture and industry nor the Army improved.

"These words can accurately describe even subsequent Congress regimes, where farmers were harassed, industry was discouraged (except if they belonged to friends and relatives of Congress leaders) and national security was ignored," the PM wrote. Noting that anti-Congressism was Lohia's "heart and soul", Modi said, "Unfortunately, today Lohia would be horrified at the political developments taking place."

inspiration from Lohia have completely abandoned his principles. They are leaving no opportunity to insult him... Lohia always believed that dynastic politics was inimical to democracy. He would have been flabbergasted to see his followers' think about their own families first instead of the nation," he wrote.

Modi alleged that these parties are "experts at grabbing power, looting as much as possible and exploiting others. Poor people, tribals, Dalits, OBCs and women are not safe in their rule because these parties give a free run to criminals and anti-social elements." He said people should realise as to how can those who betrayed Lohia be expected to serve the nation. "Today they are betraying the principles of Dr Lohia, tomorrow they will also betray the people of India," Modi alleged.

Congress, NCP announce seat-sharing pact in Maha

Congress gets 24, NCP 20

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After weeks of close-door aconfabulations, the Congress and NCP on Saturday formalised the seat-sharing arrangement for the "Mahaghatbandhan" constituents in Maharashtra, with the two main parties, deciding to contest 24 and 20 seats respectively and leave the remaining four seats to smaller parties.

Under the seat-sharing arrangement hammered among the constituents of "Mahaghatbandhan", the Congress will contest 24 seats out of the total 48 Lok Sabha seats in the State, while the NCP will field candidates in 20 constituencies. Of the remaining four seats, the smaller parties — Raju Shetti-led

Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana (SSS) will contest two seats, while Hitendra Thakur-led Bahujan Vikas Aghadi (BVA) and Yuva Swabhimani Paksha (YSP) will fight one seat each.

Addressing a joint news conference with NCP's State president Jayant Patil and former Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) president Ashok Chavan said: "There are in all 56 political parties in Maharashtra's Mahaghatbandhan. Leaders of all political parties are present here".

Apart from the Congress, NCP and three other constituents, the other major constituents in the Opposition's umbrella coalition include: the People's Republic Party (Kavade), RPI (Democratic), Swabhimani Republican Paksha, Bhim Sena, United Republican Paksha, Maharashtra Muslim Sangh, All India Vimukta Bhatkya

Jaati Jamati Party, Ganrajya Sangh, Maharashtra Parivartan Sena, Swabhimani RPI and RPI (Kharat).

Launching a blistering attack against the ruling BJP, Chavan said: "We have formed Mahaghatbandhan by involving political parties representing all sections of the society including farmers, labourers, women, Dalits, minorities, youth and oppressed sections. The NDA Government is indulging in 'Jumle baji'. There is a lot of unhappiness among common people in the state. The BJP-Sena Government has wreaked havoc in the State. It has failed to deliver on all fronts. Our intention to throw out Governments at the Centre and in the State.

Chavan charged that the Amit Shah-led party was practising "Saam, dham, Dhand, Bhed" politics and said that many smaller parties were suffering because of the questionable politics indulged in by the principal ruling party.

Chavan junks speculation about his resignation

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

An embarrassed former Chief Minister Ashok Chavan on Saturday dismissed speculation about his impending resignation as the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee president, after an audio tape in which he is heard telling a party worker that "No one is listening to me. I am planning to resign" went viral in the State.

An audio tape of a conversation between Chavan and a party activist from Chandrapur, who identified himself as one Rajurkar, in which the former expressed desire from his post as the State Congress chief went viral on Saturday.

In the mobile conversation, the caller voiced resentment over the nomination of Vinayak Bangade as a Congress candidate for the Chandrapur Lok Sabha seat and said that the party cadres

were opposed to Bangade's candidature.

Chavan also suggested to the caller that he should speak to Mukul Wasik, who was "calling the shots" in the selection of candidates for the state. "But Mukul Wasnik is no one in front of you," the caller said.

At one stage, Chavan is heard saying: "I have also informed the party. Nobody is listening to me. I am planning to resign".

A former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Chavan was questioned about the audio tape in circulation at a news conference called to announce the formalisation of the seat-sharing arrangement among the "Mahaghatbandhan" constituents in the State.

Though he indirectly admitted that the tape was genuine one, Chavan said that a private conversation had no relevance in politics. He clarified that he had no plans to quit as the MPCC chief.

PM Modi a liar, Mamata an autocrat, says Rahul

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a bid to occupy the anti-BJP, anti-Trinamool Congress space in Bengal, Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Saturday attacked both Narendra Modi and Mamata Banerjee with matching ferocity, calling the former 'a vendor of lies' and the latter 'an autocrat of sorts' who does "whatever she likes".

Incidentally, Gandhi's attack comes weeks after Congress leader in Lok Sabha and his senior party colleague Mallikarjun Kharge joined Banerjee along with 21 other national leaders in a Mahaghatbandhan (grand alliance) rally in Kolkata. The rally was held on February 19 from where all the leaders vouched for a united India and united Opposition to fight down a "communal BJP".

Mendacity is the hallmark of the Prime Minister, Gandhi said in North Malda from where he commenced his electoral campaign in Bengal.

Launching a vitriolic attack on Modi for "peddling lies wherever he goes," he said adding the coming election will see a battle of ideologies. "On two sides of the political spectrum are: Congress which is fighting for the unity of the country and the BJP-RSS which want to drive a wedge between castes and communities."

Piercing the Prime Minister with the Chowkidar spike Gandhi said Modi is a person who not only "tells lies throughout the day," but also "functions as a chowkidar (watchman) of the rich people."

The common people like the unemployed, farmer workers do not need chowkidars, he said insisting only "the rich people like Anil Ambani" need them. Attacking Modi for "defending the corrupt and fugitives" like Mehul Chowkshi, Nirav Modi and Vijay Malloya who have defrauded the banks of thousands of crores of rupees Gandhi said the Prime Minister had "taken the common man's ₹30,000 crore to fill the pocket

of Anil Ambani" in Rafale (fighter craft) case.

Gandhi was campaigning in favour of Congress candidate Isha Khan Chowdhury who is contesting in place of his cousin sister and sitting MP Mausam Benazir Noor who is contesting on a Trinamool Congress ticket.

Attacking Noor for betraying the people as "you elected her on Congress ticket but she switched over to the TMC under pressure from that party," Gandhi said the people will take account of their betrayers. Noor however said she had turned coat inspired by the good works done by Mamata Banerjee.

Taking on Banerjee for giving Bengal an autocratic Government Gandhi said, "it is a one-man show going on in Bengal. The person who runs this Government never takes anyone's suggestions. She does whatever she likes," adding the present Government was "not better than the one run by the previous Left Front."



Major Surendra Poonia joins BJP in the presence of senior BJP leaders JP Nadda and Ram Lal in New Delhi on Saturday PTI

Mehbooba to contest from Anantnag

Faesar's party not to contest polls

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti has thrown her hat in the poll arena by deciding to contest Lok Sabha polls from Anantnag parliamentary seat.

She had earlier vacated the seat in June 2016 to become Chief Minister of the State after the demise of her father



Mufti Mohd Sayeed. She had defeated National Conference candidate Mehboob Beg by a margin of over 65,000 votes in 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

Addressing a press conference in Srinagar on Saturday, Mehbooba also announced her party's decision of not fielding any candidate from two Lok

Sabha seats of Jammu-Poonch and Udhampur-Doda. With this announcement she has come on the same page with the National Conference and the Congress party.

The former Chief Minister said the decision was taken to prevent division of 'secular' votes in the Jammu region.

She also announced that Agha Mohsin would be the party's candidate for Srinagar parliamentary seat.

The party had given mandate to Qayoom Wani from Baramulla constituency.

With the entry of Mehbooba Mufti in the fray the Anantnag Parliamentary seat is set to witness quadangular contest.

National Conference has fielded Justice (Retd) Hasnain Masoodi, while BJP has given mandate to Sofi Yousof while Congress is yet to announce name of its candidate.

Due to security concerns, LS bypolls weren't conducted in Anantnag since April 2017.

In view of the prevailing security situation the Election Commission of India has decided to conduct polls in three

phases to ensure fool proof security arrangements.

Meanwhile, in another significant development former IAS officer Shah Faesar on Saturday said that his party won't contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Addressing a press conference at Press Club in Srinagar, Faesar said that they will strengthen the party first before taking the poll plunge. Faesar launched his 'Jammu & Kashmir Peoples Movement' party during a function in Srinagar on last Sunday.

Syria force takes ISIS bastion, 'caliphate' wiped out



AFP ■ BAGHOUZ

Kurdish-led forces pronounced the death of the Islamic State group's nearly five-year-old "caliphate" Saturday after flushing out diehard jihadists from their very last bastion in eastern Syria.

Fighters of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces raised their yellow flag in Baghouz, the remote riverside village where diehard jihadists of a variety of nationalities made a desperate, dramatic last stand. The SDF's victory capped a deadly six-month operation against the final remnants of the caliphate which once stretched across a vast swathe of Iraq and Syria, and held seven million people in its sway.

Saturday's announcement will go down as a symbolic date in a war that changed the face of the region and spurred a spate of global terror attacks. "Syrian Democratic Forces declare total elimination of so-called caliphate and 100 percent territorial defeat of ISIS," spokesman Mustafa Bali said in a statement, using another acronym for IS.

In Al-Omar, an oil field used as the main SDF staging base for the final phase of the

assault, fighters in their best fatigues laid down their weapons and broke into song and dance.

A military band played anthems, including the Star Spangled Banner, as a ceremony attended by Kurdish top brass and officials got underway. The state proclaimed in mid-2014 by fugitive IS supremo Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi started collapsing in 2017 when parallel offensives in Iraq and Syria wrested back its main hubs Mosul and Raqqa.

The nearly five years of fighting against the most brutal jihadist group in modern history has left thousand-year-old cities in ruins and populations homeless. Early US estimates put the numbers of IS fighters at around 40,000, many of them foreigners.

But the territory administered by the remnants of IS continued to shrink month after month and in September 2018 the SDF launched a final offensive on the last dregs of the "caliphate" in its Euphrates Valley strongholds.

US President Donald Trump, whose country has led an international military coalition against IS since September 2014, jumped the gun on announcing the end of jihadist territorial rule on multiple



An Islamic State militant flag, foreground, lies in a tent encampment after US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighters took control of Baghouz, Syria on Saturday

occasions.

SDF fighters last week expelled the last IS fighters who refused to surrender from an encampment on the edge of Baghouz and have since been hunting down a few survivors hiding on the reedy banks of the Euphrates. "Those who lasted the longest were mostly foreigners... Tunisians, Moroccans, Egyptians,"

Hisham Harun, a 21-year-old Kurdish fighter, told AFP shortly after the SDF's yellow flag was raised.

Around him, the former jihadist encampment was littered with bullet-riddled truck carcasses, discarded suicide belts and the torn tents where the caliphate's last families sheltered for weeks.

The bodies of suspected IS

fighters could be seen but it was unclear what happened to the few jihadists who were still putting up a fight as late as Friday afternoon.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, more than 750 SDF fighters and around twice as many jihadists were killed in the last few months of the Euphrates offensive.

Kurdish officers and aid groups were flummoxed by the number of people who had remained holed up in the last IS redoubt of Baghouz, a small village even few Syrians had ever heard of until this year.

As SDF forces pummeled IS positions and US warplanes dropped huge payloads on the riverside village, tens of thousands of people fled over a rocky hill and trudged through the plains in biblical scenes.

For weeks, the ghostly figures of the caliphate's last denizens hobbled out of the besieged village, famished, often wounded but sometimes still defiantly proclaiming their support for IS.

The Kurdish-led force and foreign intelligence have screened more than 60,000 people since January, around 10 percent of them jihadists turning themselves in.

Most of the people evacuated from the smouldering ruins of Baghouz in recent days were relatives of IS members who now fill overcrowded camps further north in Syria's Kurdish-controlled region. The biggest of them, Al-Hol, is struggling to host 74,000 people, including at least 25,000 school-aged children.

Among them are thou-

sands of foreigners from France, Russia, Belgium and 40-plus countries that are in most cases unwilling to take them back. "The needs are huge and the camp is overwhelmed," Peter Maurer, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross said Friday upon returning from a five-day visit to Syria.

French President Emmanuel Macron hailed the fall of Baghouz saying "a significant threat to our country" has been "eliminated".

But while the SDF taking Baghouz marks the end of the IS "caliphate", the jihadists still retain a presence in eastern Syria's vast Badia desert. They also have hideouts in parts of Iraq as well as sleeper cells capable of carrying out the kind of deadly guerrilla insurgency that accompanied the rise of the Islamic State group.

IS fighters who escaped the shrinking rump of the "caliphate" in time and reorganised their group are already re-establishing their former sanctuaries in Iraq.

Even the Pentagon has warned in a recent report that the absence of sustained counterterrorism pressure on IS would allow the jihadists to reclaim some territorial control within months.

US SLAPS SANCTIONS ON VENEZUELAN BANK

Washington: The United States on Friday slapped sanctions on a key Venezuelan bank, BANDES and four affiliates over their support for President Nicolas Maduro.

2 MEN ARRESTED OVER MOSQUE ATTACKS IN UK

London: Two men were arrested Friday on suspicion of "racially aggravated criminal damage" after a series of attacks on mosques in the British city of Birmingham this week.

6 CHILDREN AMONG SEVEN KILLED IN PAK

Lahore: At least six children and a teacher were killed on Saturday after the roof of a school building collapsed during a Pakistan Day function in Gujranwala city of Punjab province.

ITALY, CHINA SIGN MOU TO BOOST ECONOMIC TIES

Rome: Italy has signed a memorandum of understanding with China in support of Beijing's "Belt and Road" initiative, which aims to weave a network of ports, bridges and power plants linking China with Africa, Europe and beyond.

ISIS defeat on the ground is 'critical milestone': US envoy

Omar Oil Field (Syria): An American envoy to the US-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group hailed the demise of the extremist group's self-declared "caliphate" in eastern Syria on Saturday as a "critical milestone".

"This critical milestone in the fight against ISIS delivers a crushing strategic blow and underscores the unwavering commitment of our local partners and the global coalition to defeat ISIS," William Roebuck said, using an alternative acronym for IS. But the coalition envoy warned that the fight against the jihadists was not yet over.

"While we have completed the territorial defeat of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, we still have much work to do to achieve an enduring defeat of ISIS," he said

at a main staging base for the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces whose Kurdish-led fighters defeated IS.

"The campaign is not over. ISIS... Remains a significant threat," Roebuck said at the Omar oil field in eastern Syria.

IS's loss on Saturday of its last redoubt in the village of Baghouz signalled the demise of the "caliphate" that the extremist group declared over a large swathe of Syria and neighbouring Iraq in 2014.

But the jihadists still retain a presence in eastern Syria's vast desert and have claimed deadly attacks in areas controlled by US-backed forces.

"We will continue to support the coalition's operations in Syria to ensure... This enduring defeat," Roebuck said.

British PM says ISIS territorial defeat 'historic milestone'

AFP ■ LONDON

Prime Minister Theresa May said Saturday the fall of the last bastion held by Islamic State (IS) jihadists in Syria marked "a historic milestone", paying tribute to British and coalition forces.

"The liberation of the last Daesh-held territory is a historic milestone that would not have been possible without their commitment, professionalism and courage," she said in a statement, using an Arabic acronym for IS.

"I commend the tireless work and extraordinary courage of the British forces and our global coalition partners that have fought Daesh in Syria and Iraq,"

the 79 international partners pronounced the death of the nearly five-year-old "caliphate" Saturday after flushing out IS jihadists from their last redoubt in Baghouz, eastern Syria.

Britain, which has suffered from multiple terrorist attacks in recent years by perpetrators said to have been inspired by IS, has vowed to remain focused on fighting the group and securing the region.

"We must not lose sight of the threat Daesh poses and the government remains committed to eradicating their poisonous ideology," May added.

"We will continue to do what is necessary to protect the British people and our allies." Britain has committed nearly 1,400 military personnel to the region to support local

forces, while the Royal Air Force has conducted more than 1,600 air strikes in Iraq and Syria, according to government figures.

Western allies in the US-led coalition are negotiating with Washington on the residual force that will remain after most of the American soldiers are brought home.

"We cannot be complacent," British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt warned Saturday.

"Even without territory, Daesh and its poisonous ideology will continue to pose a threat to the people of Iraq and Syria, as well as to the wider world. "The international community must remain firm in its determination to counter and defeat it."

26 charred to death in China as tour bus catches fire

PTI ■ BEIJING

A tour bus with 56 people on board caught fire in China's central Hunan province, killing 26 people and injuring 28 others, officials said Saturday.

The accident occurred on Friday when the 59-seater bus from the neighbouring Henan province suddenly caught fire on a highway in Hanshou county in Changde city.

The 28 injured were rushed to three local hospitals.

Five of the injured are in a critical condition, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted local officials as saying.

Syria Kurds urge Damascus to choose dialogue: Commander

AFP ■ OMAR OIL FIELD (SYRIA)

The top military commander in Syria's autonomous Kurdish region urged Damascus on Saturday to choose the path of dialogue after his forces sealed a key victory over the Islamic State group.

"We call on the central government in Damascus to prefer the process of dialogue," Mazloum Kobane, the overall commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces, said in a statement.

He read part of the statement at a ceremony to pay homage to his fallen comrades and celebrate the capture of Baghouz, the very last pocket

of territory held by IS, which SDF forces took after weeks of fighting.

The statement urged the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to "start practical steps to reach a political solution based on the recognition" of autonomous institutions and of the SDF's special status.

Syria's eight-year conflict has seen the country's Kurds carve out a large de facto autonomous region in the oil-rich northeast. The Kurdish-dominated SDF has acted as the ground force of the US-led military coalition that intervened in Syria and Iraq in September 2014 to counter the expansion of IS.

UK Prime Minister may not seek vote on Brexit deal this week

AP ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Theresa May has told lawmakers she may not seek passage of her troubled Brexit withdrawal plan in Parliament next week.

The embattled leader, who faces a major protest march in central London on Saturday, wrote to lawmakers Friday night saying she would bring the European Union withdrawal back to Parliament if there seems to be enough backing for it to pass.

"If it appears that there is not sufficient support to bring the deal back next week, or the House rejects it again, we can ask for another extension before 12 April, but that will

involve holding European Parliament elections," she said.

May's changing stance reflects the plan's dismal chances in the House of Commons after two prior defeats.

She also says she would need the approval of House Speaker John Bercow to bring the plan back for a third time despite his objections. Bercow has said a third vote would violate parliamentary rules unless the plan is altered.

May said in her letter to lawmakers that if the deal is approved, Britain will leave the EU on May 22, a date agreed with EU officials.

Lawmakers have twice rejected the deal and haven't shown any clear swing toward

endorsing it in recent days. Britain is scheduled to leave the European Union on April 12 if no deal is approved.

Pro-Brexit forces are also girding for the possible political impact of a planned march in central London in support of holding a second referendum that would give British voters the option of remaining in the EU despite the 2016 vote in favor of leaving.

The organisers of the "People's Vote March" predict that one of Britain's largest-ever protest marches will grip central London. More than 4 million people endorsed an electronic petition this week in favor of revoking Article 50, the act that formally triggered the Brexit process.

French police out in force to prevent 'yellow vest' violence

AFP ■ PARIS

Thousands of police fanned out across central Paris and other French cities Saturday for the 19th consecutive week of "yellow vest" protests, with officials vowing to prevent a repeat of the rioting and looting that marred last week's rally in the capital.

Several hundreds of demonstrators began marching shortly after midday from a square in the south of Paris towards the Sacre-Coeur basilica at Montmartre in the north, with banners calling for President Emmanuel Macron to "Get Lost!"

Authorities banned demonstrations in a large area

in the west of the city, including the Champs-Elysees, the scene of last Saturday's rampage by hundreds of black-clad agitators.

Dozens of police vehicles, including armoured trucks and water cannons, encircled the Arc de Triomphe at the top of the iconic avenue, with officers searching people's bags and patrolling in front of boarded-up storefronts.

At the opposite end of the avenue access was completely blocked to the Place de la Concorde, near the presidential palace and the National Assembly, and two drones were flying over the capital to track any protesters' movements.

Twin bombing at Afghan ceremony kills four, including official

AP ■ KABUL

A twin bombing at a public ceremony in southern Afghanistan on Saturday killed at least four people, including a provincial official, and wounded more than 30, officials said.

Omar Zwak, spokesman for the governor of Helmand province, said the bombings targeted a celebration of Farmer's Day in a sports stadium in the provincial capital, Lashkar Gah. Mohammad Khan Nasrat, the economic director of Helmand, was among those killed in the attack, the government said in a statement.

Zwak said 31 other people were wounded in the blasts, including provincial council members and provincial secu-

rity officials, but he said none were in critical condition.

The Taliban, who effectively control half the country, including large parts of Helmand province, claimed the attack. The insurgents have kept up their daily attacks on Afghan security forces and government targets even as they have held several rounds of talks with the United States in recent months aimed at ending the 17-year war.

Elsewhere in Afghanistan, dozens of people protested against a military operation in the northern Kunduz province while carrying the remains of their loved ones. Photos from the protest showed what appeared to be the bodies of 12 people, including five or six small children.

Shabaab raid kills 11 in Somalia, including Deputy Minister

AFP ■ MOGADISHU

An attack involving gunmen and bomb blasts on a complex housing government ministries in Somalia's capital killed at least 11 people on Saturday, including the deputy labour minister, officials said.

Claimed by the Al-Shabaab Islamist group, the assault was a sign of the insurgency's continued ability to strike at the heart of Somalia's government, despite years of foreign military support for Mogadishu.

The fighting began with two blasts at the gates of the complex housing the labour and works ministries.

Police say at least four gunmen then stormed the buildings, leading to a shootout as officers rushed to confront the attackers.

"The death toll reached eleven, three of them women,

and the number of wounded is 15," said Abdulkadir Abdurahman Adan, director of Mogadishu's Aamin ambulance service.

Senator Ilyas Ali Hassan confirmed that Saqar Ibrahim Abdalla, the deputy minister for labour and social affairs, was also killed.

"I cannot elaborate on how he died but I can confirm that he was killed inside the ministry building," Hassan said.

Police official Ibrahim Mohamed said all the gunmen were killed.

"There were some other casualties including members of the police," he said, without elaborating.

and foreign influence in Somalia.

The group emerged from Islamic Courts that once controlled central and southern Somalia and are variously estimated to number between 5,000 and 9,000 men.

In 2010 the Shabaab declared their allegiance to Al-Qaeda. The following year, the group were chased out of Mogadishu by the 22,000-strong African Union peace-enforcement mission, AMISOM.

They have since lost many of their strongholds but retain control of large rural swathes of the country and continue to wage a guerrilla war, frequently hitting Mogadishu.

In October 2017 a truck bombing in a busy neighbourhood of the capital killed over 500 people, the deadliest attack in Somalia to date.

PARTIAL CANCELLATION / DIVERSION OF TRAINS DUE TO RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION WORK

As a part of Electrification works on Indian Railways, Ahmedabad & Rajkot Divisions of Western Railway will undertake the electrification related work on its Rajkot-Hapa & Chandlodiya-Sanand Sections. To execute this work Traffic Blocks of different suitable durations will be taken by Western Railway up to 31.03.2019. As a result a number of trains will be cancelled/partially cancelled/ Short Terminated/ Short Originated/ Diverted & Regulated for smooth working on their sites. Out of total affected trains, some of the following trains passing/terminating/originating its journey over Northern Railway's system will also be affected. List of the same is as under :-

PARTIAL CANCELLATION OF TRAINS		
Train No. & Train Name	Train Partially Cancelled Between Stations	Date from Originating Station
12478 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Jamnagar Express	Ahmedabad Jn - Jamnagar	24.03.2019
12476 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Hapa Express	Ahmedabad Jn - Hapa	25.03.2019
12477 Jamnagar-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Express	Jamnagar - Ahmedabad Jn	26.03.2019
12475 Hapa-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Express	Hapa - Ahmedabad Jn	27.03.2019

DIVERSION OF TRAINS ON RAJKOT - HAPA SECTION		
Train No. & Name	Diverted Route	Date(s) (from originating stn.)
19566 Dehradun - Okha Uttaranchal Exp	via Rajkot Jn - Bhakti Nagar - Jetalsar Jn - Wansjaliya - Kanalus South Cabin	24.03.2019
19264 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Porbandar Express	via Rajkot Jn - Bhakti Nagar - Jetalsar Jn - Wansjaliya	25.03.2019 & 28.03.2019
19263 Porbandar -Delhi Sarai Rohilla Express	via Wansjaliya - Jetalsar Jn - Bhakti Nagar - Rajkot	26.03.2019 & 30.03.2019
19565 Okha - Dehradun Uttaranchal Exp	via Kanalus South Cabin - Wansjaliya - Jetalsar Jn - Bhakti Nagar - Rajkot Jn	29.03.2019

DIVERSION OF TRAINS ON CHANDLODIYA - SANAND SECTION		
Train No. & Name	Diverted Route	Date(s) (from originating stn.)
19264 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Porbandar Express	via Mahesana - Viramgam	25.03.2019 & 28.03.2019
19263 Porbandar -Delhi Sarai Rohilla Express	via Viramgam - Mahesana	26.03.2019 & 30.03.2019
14311 Bareilly - Bhuj Ala Hazrat Express	via Mahesana - Viramgam	26.03.2019 & 28.03.2019
14312 Bhuj - Bareilly Ala Hazrat Express	via Viramgam - Mahesana	25.03.2019, 26.03.2019 & 28.03.2019

Note:- For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Please join us on **NORTHERN RAILWAY** visit us at: www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

908/2019 **SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

Sterling sweeps Czechs aside

Raheem scores hat-trick in England's five goal triumph; France beat Moldova 4-1; Ukraine hold Portugal for goalless draw

AFP ■ PARIS

Raheem Sterling showed that he is coming of age on the international stage as his hat-trick saw England start their Euro 2020 qualifying campaign by hammering the Czech Republic 5-0, while Antoine Griezmann inspired France to a battering of Moldova.

Manchester City attacker Sterling had scored just two goals in his first 45 caps, but he now has five in his last three international appearances following Friday's treble, which helped England storm to the top of Group A ahead of Monday's trip to Montenegro, who drew 1-1 at Bulgaria.

Sterling opened the scoring in the 24th minute when he tapped home Jadon Sancho's cross, and struck twice more in the second half to put the result beyond doubt after Harry Kane fired home his 21st England goal from the penalty spot.

"It was a beautiful team performance and I was happy to help the team get the win," Sterling said.

Sterling has 24 goals for club and country this term and his impressive form is a fry cry from the dark days when he was vilified as England crashed out of Euro 2016.

"I'm just being confident in myself. I'm trying to get in areas and take shots, not to worry about anything," he added.

England carried the momentum from a run to the World Cup semi-finals and qualification for the last four of the Nations League into the Euro qualifiers and blooded young hopeful Sancho, who impressed on his full England debut.



Antoine Griezmann celebrates after scoring; Cristiano Ronaldo returns after goalless draw

The 18-year-old who has shone in the Bundesliga for Borussia Dortmund, gave England fans further cause for excitement, with his potential adding to that of Sterling and Kane coming into their prime.

"I thought Raheem was electric. He has looked like that all week in training. I'm pleased for him, it is a special night for him," coach Gareth Southgate said. "I think he's really matured as a person and a footballer. He's hungry for goals and hitting things instinctively without thinking too much."



Raheem Sterling celebrates after completing his hat-trick against Czech Republic during England's first Euro 2020 qualifier match at Wembley Stadium in London on Friday

France also got off to a perfect start after an older head in Antoine Griezmann spurred the team champions on to a comfortable 4-1 victory at Moldova.

GRIEZMANN SHINES

Griezmann opened the scoring with his 27th France goal in the 24th minute of their Group H encounter before crossing for Raphael Varane to double the scores three minutes later.

Olivier Giroud equalled David Trezeguet as Les Bleus' third highest scorer of all time with his 34th international goal nine minutes before the break and Kylian Mbappe completed the rout with three minutes left, before Vladimir Ambros claimed a late consolation for Moldova.

Griezmann would have had two more assists had Giroud and Paul Pogba been more clinical in front of goal, but France's display was easily enough for the three points and top spot in the group ahead of Iceland and Turkey, 2-0 winners against Albania and Andorra respectively.

"We played a very consummate first half in terms of control and attacking organisation. The second half was less fulfilling due to substitutions," said coach Didier Deschamps.

"We've opened our campaign well and the second game comes around quickly. In three days we have to do again."

Cristiano Ronaldo drew a blank on his return to international football after nine months away, as Ukraine battled to a goalless draw in Lisbon.

The draw was the first time Santos' side have failed to score at home in 19 matches and leaves them second in the group behind Luxembourg, who beat Lithuania 2-1.

William Carvalho had a fine header ruled out for offside in the 16th minute and Ronaldo, Pepe and Andre Silva all went close to opening the scoring, but Ukraine stopper Andriy Pyatov was on fine form to deny them.

In the end the away side could have snatched the three points through Junior Moraes, only for the debutant to fluff a golden chance to grab a shock win.

"We didn't play as we wanted to. We started slowly, not pressing the way we wanted," said Manchester City midfielder Bernardo Silva.

"The second half we tried to create chances to go after the game but unfortunately we didn't score."

Venezuela spoil Messi's return

AP ■ MADRID

Lionel Messi's international return didn't do much to help Argentina regain top form.

Messi was back on Friday for the first time since the 2018 World Cup but couldn't stop his team losing 3-1 to Venezuela in a friendly.

Salomon Rondon, John Murillo and Josef Martinez scored for Venezuela at the Wanda Metropolitano Stadium, while Lautaro Martinez replied for Argentina.

Messi hadn't played an international since the 4-3 loss to France in the round of 16 at the World Cup in Russia.

"He played a good game" Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "The chances we created were thanks to him."

Messi showed his usual deft skills and his long-range shot in the 38th minute was headed for the top corner until Venezuela goalkeeper Wuilker Farinez Aray tipped the ball over the crossbar.

Messi helped set up Argentina's 58th-minute goal with a pass to Giovanni Lo Celso, who eventually fed Martinez inside the area.

Venezuela had opened the scoring in the fifth minute when Rondon ran on to a long pass into the penalty area and sent a right-footed shot beyond goalkeeper Franco Armani.

Murillo made it 2-0 just before halftime by curling the ball away from Armani just inside the far post.

Venezuela's fast counterattacks were a nightmare for Argentina throughout and Martinez sealed victory by converting a 75th-minute penalty.

"It's satisfying to earn a victory against a team like Argentina," Venezuela coach Rafael Dudamel said.

Dudamel surprisingly offered his resignation after the match. He told a news conference he was not happy about the political use of a visit by a government official before Friday's game in Madrid, and said his future would be decided in talks with federation officials in the coming days.

The last time Argentina played at the Metropolitano it lost 6-1 to Spain in a World Cup warmup in 2018.

Argentina will play another friendly on Tuesday against Morocco in Tangier. Scaloni said he hadn't decided whether Messi would play in that game.

Argentina has not won a trophy since the 1993 Copa America. It lost the last two finals of the tournament to Chile, in 2015 and 2016. It also lost the 2014 World Cup final to Germany.

The Copa America will be held in Brazil in June. Venezuela on Monday plays a Catalunya team that is expected to include former Spain players Gerard Pique and Xavi Hernandez.

Proteas seal series despite Udana heroics



AFP ■ CENTURION

I suru Udana's astonishing 84 for Sri Lanka wasn't enough to stop South Africa from clinching their Twenty20 international series with a 16-run win in the second match at SuperSport Park on Friday.

Udana thrashed his not out score off 48 balls to take Sri Lanka from a seemingly hopeless position to one where they had an outside chance of winning.

It initially looked easy for South Africa, who scored 180 for three after being sent in, with Reeza Hendricks hitting a fluent 65 and Rassie van der Dussen a powerfully-struck 64.

Sri Lanka lost their first four wickets in the first four overs and were floundering at 62 for six when Udana walked in to bat in the 10th over.

But, as he did in the fourth one-day international, Udana overshadowed the recognised batsmen with a superb display of clean hitting, although he had a let-off when he was caught on the long-on boundary off JP Duminy when on 31, only for Duminy to be no-balled for overstepping. Udana hit eight fours and six sixes.

"He's the kind of player we need. He showed his character," said Sri Lanka captain Lasith Malinga, who was disappointed with yet another top-order batting failure.

Duminy praised a "really good team performance" and the way Dale Steyn and Chris Morris had struck twice each with the new ball.

"There are a few things we can improve in the middle and end overs. Udana played a fantastic innings but we gave him a few lifelines," he said.

Hendricks and Van der Dussen put on 116 off 78 balls for South Africa's second wicket.

While man of the match Van der

MALINGA TO RETIRE AFTER T20 WC

CENTURION: Sri Lanka limited overs captain Lasith Malinga will retire from international cricket after next year's Twenty20 World Cup, he has revealed.

Malinga said that he would quit one-day internationals after the World Cup in England and Wales this summer before calling time on his career following the Twenty20 tournament, being played in Australia over October-November 2020.

"After the World Cup, my cricketing career is ending," the 35-year-old said on Friday after his side were beaten by 16 runs by South Africa in the second Twenty20 international at SuperSport Park.

"I want to play in the T20 World Cup and then end my career." Malinga dismissed South African top-scorer Reeza Hendricks for 65 on Friday, his 97th T20 international wicket. He is one short of the world record of 98 held by Pakistan's Shahid Afridi. **AFP**

Dussen's innings was marked by power hitting, which brought him four fours and three sixes, Hendricks oozed class as he struck nine fours in a 46-ball innings marked by fluent off-side drives.

Finch fires Aus to 8 wicket win

AFP ■ SHARJAH

Aaron Finch's fine century drove Australia to a convincing eight-wicket win over a new-look Pakistan in the first one-day international on Friday.

The Australian skipper scored 116 off 135 balls for his 12th one-day international century that helped his team overhaul the 281-run target in 49 overs on a flat Sharjah stadium pitch.

The win gives Australia the lead in the five-match series and comes on the back of their 3-2 series win in India earlier this month.

"To be able to chase down the target for the loss of two wickets is nice. It's nice to keep the momentum with a fourth win in a row," Finch said.

Finch's match-winning knock overshadowed Haris Sohail's maiden one-day hundred (101 not out) which helped Pakistan to 280-5 in their 50 overs.

"We needed wickets at the top which did not come our way because Finch and Marsh handled the chase very well," stand-in captain Shoaib Malik said.

"Congrats to Haris for getting a hundred but we did not push Australia hard," he added.

The 32-year-old Australia smashed Malik for a huge six towards deep mid-wicket to complete his century — his first since June last year against England at Chester-Le-Street — off 120 balls.

Finch, who knocked four sixes and eight boundaries, added an innings-building 172 runs for the second wicket with Shaun Marsh who scored an unbeaten 91 off 102 balls with four boundaries and two sixes.



With 46 needed Finch became Mohammad Abbas's maiden wicket but Peter Handscomb hit 30 not out to help Marsh cross the line.

Finch and Marsh came together after opener Usman Khawaja fell for 24.

Earlier, the young and inexperienced Pakistan led by Malik proved no match for Australia, who are on a roll after their win in India earlier this month.

Left-hander Sohail, who reached 1,000 runs in his 27th one-day international when on 40, anchored Pakistan's innings, adding 98 for the third wicket with Umar Akmal who made a 50-ball 48 in his first international match for two years.

Sohail took a single to complete his hundred in the last over, finishing with six boundaries and a six.

DJOKOVIC, OSAKA WIN MIAMI OPENERS AS THIEM TUMBLES



AFP ■ MIAMI

Novak Djokovic put his Indian Wells disappointment behind him on Friday at the ATP and WTA Miami Open with a ruthless 7-6 (7/2) 6-2 destruction of Australian Bernard Tomic to move into the third round.

The Serbian world number one endured a meek exit at the hands of German Philipp Kohlschreiber in the

California desert but arrived desperate to land what would be a record seventh title in South Florida.

Tomic, the current world No 81, gave the 31-year-old a few problems yet the Australian struggles to consistently challenge the best players and this was evident once again as Djokovic eased through the gears at Hard Rock Stadium with just one hour and 13 minutes on the



On a day that saw Djokovic, top-ranked woman Naomi Osaka and 23-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams advance, the shock of the day was the departure of Indian Wells Masters winner Dominic Thiem, who was beaten 6-4, 6-4 by highly rated Polish 22-year-old Hubert Hurkacz.

Elsewhere, there was disappointment for Kei Nishikori. The fifth seed lost to Serbian Dusan Lajovic 2-6, 6-2, 6-3 but reigning champion

on John Isner outlasted Italian qualifier Lorenzo Sonego 7-6 (7/2), 7-6, (9/7).

Japanese star Osaka had to keep her emotions in check as she opened her campaign by outlasting Yanina Wickmayer 6-0, 6-7 (3/7), 6-1.

Since winning her second consecutive Grand Slam title in January at the Australian Open, Osaka has failed to go deep in Dubai or Indian Wells.

Next up in the third round is Taiwan's Hsieh Su-Wei, who defeated American Alison Riske 6-2, 7-5.

The pair had a rollercoaster clash in the Australian Open at the start of 2019 with Hsieh a set and 4-1 up in Melbourne only to lose a dramatic third-round encounter.

Serena Williams survived a second-set lull to beat Sweden's Rebecca Peterson 6-3, 1-6, 6-1, and elder sister Venus also advanced with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 win over Spain's Carla Suarez Navarro.

There will be a repeat of last week's WTA final in Indian Wells between Bianca Andreescu and Angelique Kerber.

Canadian 18-year-old Andreescu, who brilliantly won her maiden WTA title in California, beat American Sofia Kenin 6-3, 6-3 to book a third-round meeting with three-time Grand Slam winner Kerber, who saw off Russia's Karolina Muchova 3-6, 6-3, 6-3.

India off to winning start

PTI ■ IPOH

India defeated Asian Games champion Japan 2-0 to start its campaign at the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup hockey tournament on a positive note on Saturday.

Varun Kumar converted a penalty corner in the 24th minute to hand India the lead before Simranjeet Singh (55th) scored a diving field goal from skipper Manpreet Singh's brilliant pass to secure full three points for the five-time champions.

After a goalless first quarter, India slowly took control of the proceedings. Eight minutes into the second quarter, India won a penalty corner and Varun made no mistake in finding the back of the Japanese goal with a powerful dragkick.

The Indian midfield manned by skipper Manpreet and Kothajit Singh stole the limelight by creating numerous scoring chances but the forwardline was guilty of wasting opportunities.

With four minutes remaining for the second hooter, Mandeep Singh missed the target by a



whisker after being set up by a good pass from Sumit Kumar (Junior).

In the third quarter, Japan secured their first penalty corner in the 33rd minute but India custodian PR Sreejesh did well to thwart the danger.

The following minutes saw both India and Japan create scoring opportunities but in vain.

With two minutes remaining for the third hooter, Japanese striker

er Kenji Kitazato took a brave shot on goal but missed the post by a big margin.

Playing in overcast conditions with temperature hovering around 28 degrees, India continued its hunt for a second goal and earned a penalty corner within minutes of the fourth quarter.

But this time Varun missed the mark, allowing Japan to launch a quick counter attack, which was kept at bay by Birendra Lakra's alertness.

Japan tried different ways to dislodge India, used full-press to gain ball-possession but did not succeed.

Japan removed their goalkeeper to add an extra man in the 55th minute but the tactic backfired with India making use of the opportunity to double their lead. It was a diving effort by Simranjeet that put India ahead.

With just two minutes remaining, Japan secured another penalty corner but the attempt was well-defended by Suresh Kumar, backed by goalkeeper Krishan Pathak, who replaced Sreejesh after half-time.

the pioneer agenda

Ah...romance to me is spontaneity. It's not diamond earrings; it is a bunch of daffodils that's freshly picked from the field
— Kate Winslet



3 **The idea of a nation**
Harsh Mander's *Partitions of the Heart* is a worthy intervention at a time when most public protests are being deemed anti-national



6 **Visibility of disability**
Only a few designers, such as the late Alexander McQueen, recognised fashion's immense potential to challenge perception of disability



7 **Data, data everywhere**
Bombarded with data, all kinds of data on all types of subjects, the human mind is gradually slipping into an oblivion of its own making

FROM THE INSIDE



WINTER VICISSITUDES

REMINISCENCES ON THE WANING OF A SEASON

The lure of white extends far beyond hills, and subconsciously, we hope that the picturesqueness of snow-clad highlands somehow permeates the surfaces of flatlands as well — as witnessed in Delhi after a recent hailstorm



SIDDHARTH PANDEY

Iss baar sardi lambi pad gayi... *Mausam ka kuchh pata hi nahi chal raha hai...* ("Winter this time has lengthened... The weather has been behaving so indecisively"). For someone who has just shifted from the hills of Shimla to the plains of Delhi, the inherent perplexity of this and similar statements being uttered by the Capital's residents comes with a charm of its own, for winteriness remains in the blood and the mind. In fact, if there is something that has quietly yet most efficaciously helped me and my family during the settling-in process over the last few months, it is the continuation of winter in the plains, for what has allegedly been "a long time, this time". While the mountains have now been replaced by high-rises and the fresh, silvery mists have made way for (sadly) the haze of smoke and the coughs of smog, the chill of winter has nonetheless retained, injecting a cool that is otherwise desperately sought in the harsh of Indian summers.

In the middle and upper highlands of the country, it isn't uncommon to witness a spell of snow well into March, a period that otherwise coincides with the youthful "warmth" of spring and Holi. Just as seasons behave differently in different places, directions and directionality also assume distinctive currencies in dissimilar settings. There was a time when weather reports at the end of television news invariably began with a nod towards the four metropolises — Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Calcutta — with Delhi automatically becoming a synonym for the 'North'. And yet for me, with a childhood spent entirely in the foothills, valleys and ridges of the Himalayas, 'North' was uncontestedly something much higher and distant from the country's Capital. And if the curious relationship between directions and seasons is anything to go by, then season-wise, Himachal directly relates to winters first and summers

second, and Delhi, vice-versa. Of course, Delhi winters, too, get celebrated just as the Himalayan spring and summer, but essentialism about a particular ambience of a place continues to hold its sway in the popular consciousness: "Delhi heat" (*Dilli ki garmi*), "Shimla chill" (*Shimla ki thand*). Consequently, temporality itself assumes a different tenor for people habituated to varying vistas and weathers, the lengthiness of summer holidays in plains finding an equivalent counterpart in the protracted winter breaks of hills and mountains for school children.

One key reason for the 'automatic' link that people draw between Shimla (and many other hill stations) and winters is the shape that the season takes as a result of natural topography and architecture. Some months ago, I had reflected in this space on how a typical hill house exerts a strong claim to intimacy and coziness because of its picturesque shapeliness: Gabled and pitched roofs, symmetrical and stylised facades. Add to this and the surroundings a cover of snow, and the already romanticised setting gets further intensified in charm and appeal. It is remarkable that a number of features that we tend to associate with a typically generalised understanding of a scenery — rivers, clouds, mists, sunsets, and snow — depend on the penchant of water for various forms, because water by itself is transparent and shapeless. Snow bears testimony to countless visual profiles as evinced by the intricate lure of geometrical snowflakes (for the keen eyed), and more pervasively, by the layering it congeals into over buildings and natural terrains (for the common eyed). Shape further evinces prolonged tactility, and it never ceases to amuse me how visitors to plains regularly exult in the discovery of the thinnest layer of white on hill-sides during their travels, instantly stopping their cars to touch and hold a bit in animated, expansive gestures, to be further immortalised by photography. If in the plains, it is the moon atop the Taj Mahal that must be customarily palmed or fingerpicked for a photograph, then in the hills, it is the pristine snow that has to be handled to experience and



AS THE DELHI WINTER SLIPS INTO SPRING ONLY TO QUICKLY FADE INTO SUMMER, I KNOW THAT MY EYES AND EARS WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE LOOKING FORWARD TO ALL ADVERTISEMENTS PROMOTING THANDAI, FROM DERM COOL TALCUM POWDER TO ASSORTED SQUASHES AND DRINKS, THAT HABITUALLY WORK WITH CLOSE-UPS OF ICE AND SNOW

demonstrate the feeling of being alive in a *thandi jagah* (cold place). Snow embodies the quality of being faraway just like the distant moon, and once you touch it, you bring yourself closer to a fantasy world. No wonder then, that across the country, temporary amusement parks under the rubric of "Winter Wonderlands" routinely spring during the season, and snow — even if artificially created — gets excitedly sought after by one and all.

Snow is the silent cousin of sonorous rain. Extravagantly celebrated in culture, from rituals to poetry and cinema, rains in India dictate a season of their own (the monsoon), the land after all bearing an overwhelmingly hot, tropical topography. Unlike many European nations whose de rigueur damp atmospheres generate around persistent but diffident precipitation, Indian rains are ever confident in their might and music. But whereas rains occasion song and dance, snow primarily harkens meditation and contemplation, because its entry indexes a wholesome silence, a quintessential quietness. In the hills, it is often the case that only after a prolonged, resounding spell of rain will snow gather the dignity and gravity to chart a way for itself. Once the drama begins, all differences begin to recede, the unity of a colourless colour resiliently seeping surfaces and sensibilities. It is not always easy to make sense of this inherently contradictory hue, and I still remember my childhood classes where drawing snow invariably posed a difficulty, so that we usually left patches of white sheet uncoloured whenever we had to depict frozen mountain peaks.

But the lure of white extends far beyond the hills, and subconsciously, we fervently hope that the picturesqueness of snow-clad highlands somehow permeates the surfaces of flatlands as well. When some weeks ago, a strong hailstorm took over Delhi and left it soaked in a sheet of white, the question that immediately propped up alongside the images was: "Is this Delhi or Shimla?" Another such speculative query also mentioned "Switzerland", the dream of inhabiting a distinguished destination in a distant land once again infiltrating human desire via the bait of white.

If snow naturally embodies an ambience of otherness through the magic of movement, texture, and transformation, then one of the ways of relating to that otherness (in addition to posing and photographing) is by wearing something warm and woolen. There is a joke amongst Himalayan folks that people from the plains, even while visiting the hills in the thick of summer, automatically don layers of woolens, because for them, it is enough that they are in the hills. But there is another joke to do with the woolens amongst the Himalayan folk regarding themselves. Once, when someone from the upper reaches of the Kullu valley (other versions say Lahaul-Spiti) was visiting Delhi during a hot summer, a perplexed local enquired: "Don't you feel hot in this dress?", referring to the layers of woven cloth traditionally worn by Himachalis of the higher areas. To which the visitor promptly replied: "*Jab garmi andar jaayegi hi nahi toh lagegi kaise?*" ("When the heat won't pass through the thick layers of my clothing, how would it affect me?"). In the first joke, wool becomes the way of relating to the hills by staving off the cold (existing or not) when you don't originally belong to the landscape; in the second, wool strangely transforms into a ruse for staving off heat by making one feel entirely at home. On similar lines, I too have occasionally wondered why do we drape a snowman in a woolen cap and a woolen scarf when he himself is made of snow? Shouldn't their warmth be considered a threat to his snowy, frozen identity?

Recently, the ever-versatile social commentator Santosh Desai observed that "the idea of warmth as a defining human condition gets re-affirmed only when it is cold. It is then that the idea of being alive becomes synonymous with the idea of being warm". This remarkable insight is perhaps most potentially illustrated by the persistent cultural image of a working fireplace, with people huddled around together and snow falling outside.



OF THE KIDS ENTERING PRIMARY SCHOOL TODAY, 65 PER CENT WILL END UP WORKING IN JOB CATEGORIES THAT DO NOT YET EXIST, SAYS RESEARCH

PREPARING DIGITAL WORKFORCES

Educational institutions need to combine frontier technologies with skill-based teaching and learning in the new-age classrooms, writes ATUL TEMURNIKAR



The concepts of 'digital skills' and 'digital competencies' have broken through the confines of the information technology (IT) industry in recent years. They have become highly relevant yardsticks against which organisations across industries measure the most-valued resource: Their human capital. All eyes are on the upcoming generation of workers — known as the most digitally adept generation yet — to see how they can apply critical thinking skills and technology knowledge to achieve new levels of human progress in the highly technologically advanced workplace of tomorrow.

The new workplace expectations poses an important challenge to India's education sector to prioritise skills building as the nation (ranked 80th) continues to trail behind other economies in the latest Global Talent Competitive Index. As a result, being prepared for the future workforce weighs heavily on the minds of parents and students. There is then no choice but for educational institutes to combine frontier technologies with skill-based teaching and learning in the classrooms, to equip upcoming generations of workers with the necessary proficiencies for tomorrow's digital economy.

DIGITAL SKILLS SHORTAGE AFFECTS ORGANISATIONS WORLDWIDE

Business leaders are turning to the education sector for digital talents who have innovative thinking as they find themselves caught in an increasingly technology-driven and disruptive economic. Unfortunately, traditionally the education system was designed to produce academic excellence rather than to answer the question "how can we equip students with

the necessary skills to accelerate innovation and drive economic growth?" This creates a gap between what is needed and what is available. The sharp rise in demand for data-driven capabilities, such as analytics and digital marketing, is creating a severe skill gap in the labour market. It is estimated that over half of the businesses worldwide are being affected by digital talent shortage, according to a report by Caggemini and LinkedIn. The threat of labour shortage is becoming very real for local Indian organisations.

Whilst the Government is placing an urgent focus on implementing training programmes and skills-building initiatives — notably with the launch of Skills India — these measures only alleviate but do not address the root of the problem: The lack of continuous exposure to technology and digital through the education journey.

Digital literacy should instead be developed from an early age, through the introduction of innovative ways of thinking and digital learning tools in classrooms, with the aim to foster young digital-first mindsets and develop the critical skills needed for the process of lifelong learning and constant reinvention. In this aspect, the education system holds the key to nurturing competent future workforces.

DIGITAL EDUCATION HOLDS THE KEY TO FUTURE DIGITAL WORKFORCES

Digital is quickly becoming the foundation to everything we do in today's information age. This includes educating young minds, who will in a few short years determine India's economic growth and place on the global stage. It is then crucial to enrich every level of education with 21st century knowledge and its applications — through skill-based learning —

OUR CHILDREN ARE OFF TO A PROMISING START AS THEY CONTINUE TO BENEFIT FROM AN INCREASINGLY DIGITAL UPBRINGING THAT HELPS SHAPE THEIR TECHNOLOGY EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS

to ensure that students today who will be tomorrow's workforce can navigate and thrive in a fast-moving economic climate.

Our children are off to a promising start as they continue to benefit from an increasingly digital upbringing that helps shape their technology experiences and expectations from an early age. Schools and educators need to rise to the technology-driven characteristics of students to provide them with the right digital tools and channels to develop the necessary skills for the 21st century workplace.

We recognise the necessity of such skills and all our teachers as well as campuses are equipped with training, facilities and systems to inculcate these skills to our students. These skills include:

Collaboration: Mimicking the rising trend of workforce mobility, schools can explore the use of virtual technology and high-speed connectivity to promote

knowledge-exchange and collaboration amongst students in different locations.

Digital competency: With automation and artificial intelligence poised to replace resource-heavy and repetitive tasks within organisations, schools can help their students improve future employability by preparing them for the human-machine partnership from today. The provision of student access to digital learning tools and robotics/AI labs can have far-reaching impacts in terms of shaping the next generation of digital workforce.

Innovation: It is important to help young curious minds understand that technology is not only a means to better productivity — it also holds the key to creating new values and breaking down boundaries of what is possible. Entrepreneur bootcamps and innovation competitions are an excellent way to encourage out-of-the-box thinking and applications of technology amongst students. Amidst calls for urgent actions to develop a future-ready workforce capable of powering new levels of innovation, the words of the renowned developmental psychologist Jean Piaget are more relevant than ever: "The principal goal of education is to create individuals who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done". By having a clear grasp of new workplace requirements and applying a digital-first approach to its skills-based education, India can take strong steps in the right direction to equipping our children with the necessary skills to thrive in tomorrow.

The writer is Co-Founder and Chairman at Global Schools Foundation



Lifestyle disorders find a solution in stem cell therapy

Urban lifestyle can be a bane as much as a boon. The diseases and health disorders that one becomes prone to in cities appear to become more widespread due to the rapid industrialisation of the country. Human health is a result of the contact of genetic, nutritional, socio-cultural, economic factors and physical infrastructure. All these factors are influenced by the environment they are embedded in and by changes in this environment.

Around the country, lifestyle disorders like diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular diseases are already affecting the health and well-being of thousands of people everyday. Stem cell therapies carry an immense potential in treating the incurable and irreversible lifestyle diseases like diabetes, heart disease, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, bringing this therapy at the centre stage of medical evolution. However, there are certain other lifestyle disorders that are taking a toll on the human health like hair fall, ageing, blindness and infertility (vitiligo is also quite prominent these days). Here again, Stem Cell Therapy acts as a regenerative medicine to promote the reparative reaction of dysfunctional or injured tissue. Let's scan through the battle between stem cells and the following lifestyle disorders and problems:

HAIR LOSS

Hair loss is a frustrating and embarrassing experience for every man and woman with increasing age. Voluminous hair is associated with vitality and youth. No wonder, people are always on the lookout for some solution that truly works and doesn't simply belt out false promises that numerous advertisements offer. Finally, there is good news for them! The key to bringing back those lost strands lies in stem cells wherein they are turned into hair follicle cells and transplanted onto denuded parts of the scalp or body. Compared to the invasive method of hair replacement surgery, researchers have genetically modified adult human skin cells to form an epithelial stemcell. This cell is one of the building blocks for functioning hair follicles and produces structurally recognisable hair shafts.

FERTILITY TREATMENT

Infertility problems have been a major source of concern for Indian couples lately due to changes in lifestyle, stress and the recent trend of late marriages contributing to this occurrence. While poor sperm count plays a major role in male infertility, female infertility is an outcome of health disorders like polycystic ovarian disorder or PCOD. Stem cells are being considered as potential new therapeutic agents

for the treatment of infertility by the doctors wherein the cells could be stimulated in vitro to develop various numbers of specialised cells including male and female gametes, given their potential use in reproductive medicine. Primordial germ cells (PGCs) are some of the first cells to be developed when an egg cell is fertilised by a sperm. While some cells remain inside eventually developing into the fetus, other cells on the outside become the placenta. Most of the inner cells become stem cells, capable of turning into any kind of specialised cell, and a small number of them become PGCs, carrying the genetic information that will one day be passed down as sperm or egg. Researchers have been able to create these PGCs. However, they are yet to determine whether a PGC can be turned into a sperm or egg cell.

ANTI-AGING TREATMENT

As people grow old, a large number of cells in their bodies get replaced and with age, their body's ability to reproduce new cells decreases immensely. Body fat is the richest source of adult stem cells in the human body. They carry the incredible capacity to not only divide to form more stem cells, but also to differentiate into specialised cells to regenerate dying or damaged tissues. Stem cell treatments help in reloading the supply of stem cells, allowing the body to repair and rejuvenate with younger looking skin. By inserting these stem cells combined with some fat tissue into the areas of the face with wrinkles, the face is softly altered without letting it lose its distinctiveness.

BLINDNESS

For people who are blind, the thought of retaining their eyesight seems like an impossible dream. The tables have finally turned, made possible by a few scientists. Macular degeneration is a leading cause of vision loss in older adults and when it strikes, it affects the area of the eye that is important to see fine details. Through stem cell therapy, stem cells are injected into the rear of the eye in order to replace the damaged photoreceptors, which are small but crucial cells found in the retina. These photoreceptors are sensitive to light and are vital to a person's ability to see things.

Lifestyle disorders are witnessing a steady increase day by day and they can have debilitating effects on the human body, its functions and appearance. However, the advent of clinical research on stem cell therapies with one's own stem cells has raised a ray of hope in the constant effort to reverse the effects of these disorders. This is good news as it can open the gateway to treating life-threatening disorders in the long run.

FROM PAGE 1

Winter vicissitudes: Reminiscences on the waning of a season

For, to follow Desai, fire makes special sense when it is cold outside. Warmth is a crucial human emotion and affect that takes root in our desire to connect and continue the art of living. AR Rahman and Gulzar's gorgeously composed title song for Shaad Ali's 2002 romance-drama *Saathiyaa* evocatively brings out this desire by sewing the presence of snow with the intimacy of wool: "Baraf giri ho waadi mein/ aur hansee teri goonjey/oon mein lipsti simti hui/baat karey dhuuan nikley" ("The valley be clad in snow/and your laughter echoes/cuddled within the weave of wool/your voice condenses into fog"). While the film is set in Mumbai, the song itself is shot in Kullu and Manali. But there are a number of films based in the plains that do not have to rely on hill stations to conjure the idea of winteriness. One can think of *Aankhon Dekhi* (2013) and *Delhi 6* (2009) among others, both set in Delhi, that seek to construct the visual aesthetic of warmth by choosing the season of winter, as visualised by the accoutrements of shawls and sweaters.

And yet for all their charm, wool, winter and their various wonders need to be contextualised, not generalised, because cold places themselves differ in patterns and persistence. My younger brother, a social anthropologist who working in the Trans-Himalayas for the past few years, tells me of the extraordinarily tough life that the people of Lahaul-Spiti (which form the cold deserts of Himachal Pradesh) lead when winter arrives. The old saying that holds spring nearer when winter comes needs tweaking here, because spring is certainly far behind in such areas. Here, societies wage a back-breaking battle of arduous labour to remove the massively thick layers of snow from their houses and establishments, day in and day out (for months in and months out), in addition to finding means to survive within temperatures of minus 10 to minus 35 degrees. Snow isn't benign here, and even its pervasive whiteness becomes a source of blindness under the sun, such that people must necessarily wear goggles to protect their vision. In



the months that have gone by, such extremes have also been reported from Western cities and metropolises, but their technologically advanced materiality of daily life still makes it easier to

alleviate the inhuman conditions as compared to the traditional and rudimentary methods involved in the Trans-Himalayas. Simultaneously, however, the evil of snow and ice incessantly

springs up in Western fantasy literature, whether it is the reign of the White Witch in the CS Lewis' *Narnia* books, or the regime of icy 'darkness' in Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* series, or, most

popularly, the White Walkers of George RR Martin's *A Game of Thrones* books, whose fear lends an incomparable negative chill to the words "Winter is coming".

Perhaps, it is futile to reconcile the two sides of the season. Nature destroys, but as George Eliot put it at the end of her masterpiece, *The Mill on the Floss*, it also "repairs its ravages". I am biased in using the phrase since the full quotation actually stands as: "Nature repairs her ravages, but not all." As climate change swells in its reach and impact, the truth of Eliot's prescient words becomes even more loud, more threatening than ever before. And again, the most recognisable symbol of its destruction is to do with snow and ice, their melting and disappearance. It appears that to keep the earth stable, ice in the upper regions of the planet must retain its iciness. As a human quality, however, 'iciness' rings with an undesirable undertone, as does the word 'coldness' ("He gave me a cold shoulder"). And yet in Hindi, we routinely use the phrase "thand rakho" ("Keep your cool") to assuage someone

seething with anger that is aligned with *garmaahat* (aggressiveness that is invariably 'heated'). Nature continuously provides us a palette of objects and occurrences that can be used to entirely different effects in different situations. With a major part of my life spent in the Himalayas, I remain more attuned towards cold places (not cold dispositions!) that constantly sing with a warmth and intimacy of their own, notwithstanding the hardships involved. As the Delhi winter slips into spring only to quickly fade into summer, I know that my eyes and ears will automatically be looking forward to all the advertisements promoting *thandai*, from *Dermi Cool* talcum powder (with its alliterative "thanda thanda cool cool" jingle) to assorted squashes and drinks, that habitually work with close-ups of ice and snow. For winteriness firmly remains in the blood and the mind.

The writer recently completed his PhD in English and Materiality Studies at the University of Cambridge, and will soon join the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, Germany, as a Research Fellow in Global History

Primo Levi, in *The Reawakening*, sequel to his classic memoir *Survival in Auschwitz*, writes: "Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions." It is an important lesson. It is a reminder that genocides aren't a result of one bad straw-man's evil actions; they are a result of public acquiescence to crumbling institutions, apathy towards discrimination and dehumanisation of large segments of people, and indifference to politics as long as it doesn't personally affect us. Harsh Mander's *Partitions of the Heart* is a worthy and timely intervention at a time when most public protests are being deemed anti-national, and when independent administrative institutions are slowly being stripped of their autonomy.

Mander's book is a scathing indictment of the ruling party in power, who he sees as culprits as well as catalysts behind the contemporary climate of communal hate, and minority discrimination within the country. He dubs this phenomenon 'command bigotry' which has emboldened ordinary and less powerful everyday hate-mongers to exercise their worst instincts in public without fear of Governmental censure. The narrative begins in the Gulberg Society during 2002 Gujarat riots where the callousness of the Gujarat Model towards the rights of its Muslim minority, even in the face of their persecution and death, was first put on display. Mander carefully details the apathy of police forces even as Lok Sabha MP Ehsan Jafri made repeated phone calls to local police stations as well as people in the uppermost echelons of the State Government, allegedly including the then Chief Minister Narendra Modi, to no avail. The next chapter, "The Ethics of Collective Vengeance" takes a closer look at the fall-out of this Government sanctioned bigotry. The segregation of Muslim communities in villages of Gujarat post 2002, as well as their unofficial economic boycott is juxtaposed with the uninterested Government machinery which

THE IDEA OF INDIA

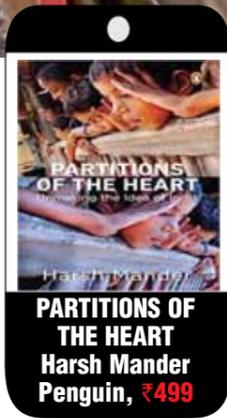
Harsh Mander's *Partitions of the Heart* is a worthy intervention at a time when most public protests are being deemed anti-national, writes HIMANSHI SHARMA



failed to do the absolute minimum to maintain refugee camps, or ensure communal reconciliation or social integration.

Divided into 12 chapters, the book takes care to focus on various interrelated issues like increased public lynching of minorities, cow vigilantism, love-jihad politics, religious conversions, and profiling of young Muslim men as terrorists. He also dedicates an entire chapter to the 'betrayal' of 'secular' political parties which led to the rise of such a tendency. The culpability of the Left parties, Congress, Samajwadi Party et al

in deepening religious divide for their own short-term political gains is discussed and thoroughly criticised in the text. He proposes that these circumstances have reduced minority groups to second class citizenship within their own country. He terms this perpetual feeling of insecurity and their manufactured outsider-status as a "bloodless phase of genocide". "They make a desolation and call it peace", Agha Shahid Ali had written in *A Country Without a Post Office*, a slight rephrasing of Tacitus' "solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant". In *Partitions of the*



Heart we are made to confront a jarring reality where this desolation of Kashmir has come to haunt the minorities of the rest of the country too. It lifts the curtain on the ugly side of aggressive, masculinist Hindutva fascism that has taken large parts of the country in its grip. Mander's book is part journalistic, part academic and meticulously researched in keeping with the requirements of both these fields. The author tries to include as many examples of news-reports, eye witness accounts, and documentary evidences as part of his argument

in true journalistic style. His academic rigour ensures that these individual events and issues don't sit in vacuum but are linked to larger social patterns of social and political complacency. One of the primary weaknesses of the book, in my opinion, is Mander's 'all was well' syndrome. Time and again, he describes each post-riot affected area as an erstwhile model of communal harmony. India of pre-2002 years might have had problems, but in Mander's worldview it was a tolerant, harmonious country where people

of all faiths co-existed in peace. The truth is more complex than that. While the role of certain political forces cannot be ignored in stoking communal tensions over the past few years, it is historically inaccurate to claim that the subliminal anti-Muslim rhetoric isn't deeply coded in the very fabric of the social and cultural idea of India. The battle for a secular Constitution was hard fought and hard won; to ignore that is to ignore the tremendous courage that Nehru and Ambedkar displayed when they persisted in countering the Hindutva forces that wanted India to be a Hindu nation in opposition to our newly divided Islamic neighbour. One dangerous consequence of this is that it completely frees 'us', who are tolerant, from all responsibility for the actions of 'them' who engage in bigotry. This inability to make ourselves accountable for perpetuating the very structures we claim to be fighting against cannot but be a band-aid solution. The book shies away from engaging in a nuanced understanding of the legacy of Partition on the citizenry of India despite mentioning it in its title. I also felt that Mander could have spent a little more time in exploring the economic conditions that may have led to the radicalisation of so many people in Hindutva ideology. Finally, the book takes for granted the reader's knowledge of the workings of the RSS, and its ideological influence in BJP. This limits its readership to people who already agree with Mander in their perception of the organisation. Perhaps that was intended by the author, but I do believe that this book could have made a case for newer converts to Hindutva ideology to reconsider their affiliations in light of the information presented here.

The above critique notwithstanding, this book serves as a poignant archive of the times we live in. In the tradition of faithful truth-keeping of writers before him, Mander bears witness to the systemic erosion of inter-community ties through this book. It should be recommended to everyone who wishes to understand contemporary India.

NEW ARRIVALS

DIDDA
Ashish Kaul
Rupa, ₹295

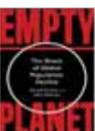


A girl abandoned by her parents. A disabled princess who fights all odds to become the most feared warrior queen. A woman almost forced into Sati by her trusted prime Minister. A mother whose son brands her as a witch. This is the story of Rani Didda, the forgotten Hindu queen of undivided Kashmir. History is often unkind and cruel to women, especially women who wield power. Trampled by Wars and religious crusades, lies hidden the story of a glorious woman.

THE SECRETS TO RAISING A SMARTER CHILD
Inderbir Sandhu
Rupa, ₹350

Do you have a small child? Or are you planning to have one? Are you worried about how to unleash the full potential of the child? Do you think you have an Einstein, Mozart, Ramanujan, Hawking or Marilyn vos Savant in the making? Do you want to understand your child better to make him or her smarter and happier? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then this book is definitely for you! It will give you with the tools to make the best of your child's natural abilities.

EMPTY PLANET
Darrell Bricker and John Ibbotson, ₹599

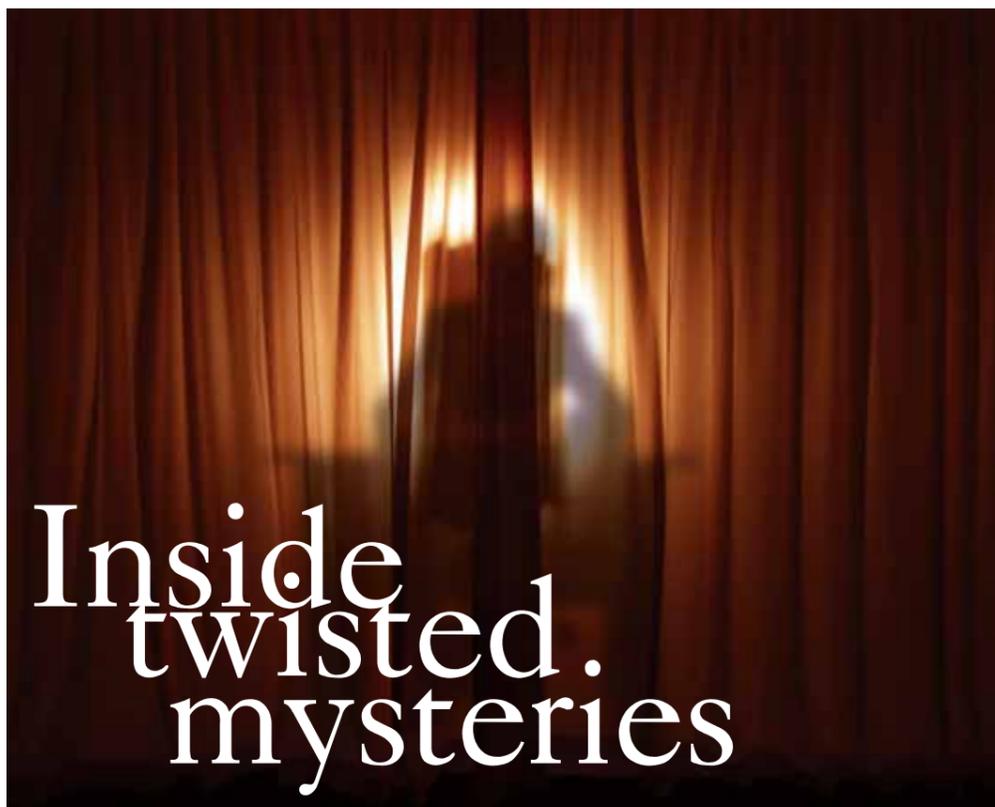


For half a century, pundits and politicians have warned that a burgeoning planetary population will soon overwhelm the earth's resources. But a growing number of experts are sounding a different kind of alarm. Rather than growing exponentially, they argue, the global population is headed for a steep decline. Throughout history, depopulation was the product of catastrophe: ice ages, plagues, the collapse of civilisations. This time, however, we're thinning ourselves deliberately, by choosing to have fewer babies than we need to replace ourselves.

Murder in the Monastery is a traditional, gripping whodunit, which makes for a breezy read that is perfect for a long journey, says KALYANEE RAJAN

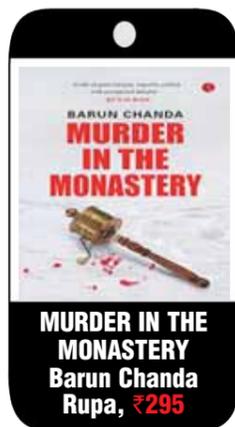
A sleepy hill station, a quiet, faraway monastery surrounded by mountains and nestled in breath-taking scenic beauty, a decent-looking couple trying to reawaken their passion away from the bustle of a hectic city, surrounded by several people with intriguing lives and obscure motives, and a sensitive document with an acute incendiary potential — if knit together seamlessly, these would make a perfect recipe for a Bollywood pot-boiler. An urbane, new-age reader is denied precisely that feeling of fulfilment or a fitting denouement in this extremely good looking novel that aspires in vain to be a pacy adult thriller. The second book by actor Barun Chanda who dons the hats of an advertising guru, acting and writing by turns, *Murder in the Monastery* offers a well-executed narrative.

Placing Kolkata old hound Avinash Roy at the centre of story, Chanda seems to have drawn upon one inspiration too many: A detective who wants some moments of peace and solitude à la a Sherlock Holmes, who is surrounded by a motley group of tourists with hidden pasts put together by circumstances like Agatha Christie's ten little soldiers, a document pertaining to the mysteries of Jesus Christ's life which is dished out in a man-



Inside twisted mysteries

ner not entirely unlike Dan Brown, to name a few. Roy holidays with his beautiful but oft-neglected wife Sharmila, romping in the wilderness and recovering his lost libido, puts up at the out-of-the-way Dengziang Monastery and is rudely interrupted when he is about to make out with his wife once more, summoned by the head Lama, Lama Phunsok to help recover the missing Issah document. What follows is the sulking wife, neglected once more as duty beckons, packed off to home through her angry outbursts in chaste Bangla: "Let it ruin him... Taatetomarki?", "Dhurchhai! You are impossible" to never reappear in the plot, having spiced up the story in the beginning with



some legitimate lovemaking sequences to justify the adult tag. The ace detective Roy of course stays back in the Sikkim monastery to clean up the matter. In a poor imitation of James Bond-esque manner, Roy proceeds to make friends with the "rather attractive" Coorgi girl staying at the monastery, Miriam de Gonzales, who seems to know everything that Roy thought to be a private conversation between him and the head Lama. Miriam's disturbing know-it-all chatter and obviously flirtatious attentions put Roy on alert, and together they narrowly escape being crushed to death by a stray boulder rolling down the hill. The episode reminds one of

Sherlock missing a similar attempt on his life after Moriarty's death, retold in the first story of "The Return of Sherlock Holmes". The reader is given samples of Roy's clinical observation skills throughout, as he goes about making deductions about random happenings and individuals. What plunges Roy finally into action in proper, however, are the twin murders of Miriam and Tenzing, her secret lover, within the monastery. Aided by his colleague and Assistant Pradyot, Roy and Inspector Thapa launch on a wild goose chase for the mysterious nun who slept with Miriam on her last night. That our hero is an ageing detective, at times utterly unimaginative and clumsy,

becomes difficult to get to grips with, especially in the light of Pradyot's swashbuckling, more hands-on approach towards his work. He is not only adept at physically impressing himself upon the people he seeks to question, reminding one of CID's theatrical and burly officer Daya, but also displays a keener sense of observation as compared to his boss. Roy's rounding up and sizing up of the suspects is also Poirot-like: He analyses the characters and motives of all the significant characters, yoked together by fluke or by design, talking in first person, "Let us take William 'Billy' Ford first..." The character of the French documentary film maker Pierre Duval is somewhat lazily sketched, with lingering loose ends. Thrown into this jumble carelessly are Billy's nymphomaniac wife who pursues him literally across the seven seas; the mousy, secretive but ultimately harmless couple; a Lama seeking revenge having been a victim of sexual abuse as a child, a Christian organisation which operates in dubious ways, and the tale of Miriam's failed suicide attempt. The sparsely injected humour feels deliberate and lame by turns, failing to lighten up the tenor of the narrative. The character of Inspector Thapa however, offers some respite by his sheer ingenuity and typical police hound doggedness. The last quarter of the novel is the weakest link, with rough jumps and farfetched solutions cooked up rather like instant noodles, sadly, sans the magic masala. The logical what's and wherefore's are made frustratingly redundant as the reader is pushed into a hastily put together chase for unravelling mistaken identities, hazy motives, and the mystery of the missing document tests all the 'incredible' powers of deduction of the ace detective Avinash Roy. *Murder in the Monastery* should be read on a long journey, putting a traditional, gripping whodunit aside, befitting only a straight, breezy read.



In this file photo released on April 25, 2015, by a militant website, which has been verified and is consistent with other AP reporting, young boys known as the "caliphate cubs" hold their rifles as they parade after graduating from a religious school, in Tal Afar, near Mosul city, north Iraq

AP

Endgame in Syria

Syria resonates in the regional and global fulcrum as another conflict centre and a twilight zone. The fact has been that terrorism is the spectacular attention gathering device of a resource and fund challenged non-state actor.

In West Asia regionally and in the Syrian quagmire particularly, the issue of insurgency and the spectacularity of the ministrations of the Kurdish forces aligned with United States against the ISIS are present, which are somewhere pitted against the Bashar-Al-Assad regime of Damascus.

Once upon a time Syria used to be a progressive and modernist population centre, but, with the internecine entry of Iran into Lebanon through Syria and Hezbollah, the regional scenario has become tricky going beyond the pale of the quintessential BOP (balance of power) system in the larger international system and the West Asian region. Now, the Syrian nation has turned into a region, facing one of the worst humanitarian disasters whose sinews now reach out to Europe as part of a larger migration across the European mountains and icy lands.

The US, too, gets embroiled in this regional fracas. The December 2018 decision of President Trump to withdraw the last contingent of 2,000 soldiers has been a part of his larger "sequestration and isolationist streak" in the context of the US foreign policy. The US we perceive today is much different from the times of President Bush where—in the superpower nowadays intends to withdraw from global responsibilities, including that of conflict resolution and related reconstruction efforts in destroyed principalities.

The power vacuum left by the American withdrawal from a post-Saddam Iraq led to the spawning of a Phoenix like Islamic State (ISIS). In a way, if the Bashar-Al-Assad regime does not survive, which appears highly unlikely then a strong and capacities-laden nation-state actor such as the US will be required to set the unstable stables in order in Syria.

The American interventionist streak has been on view in places which have faced humanitarian catastrophes. Syria is one such instance, wherein, the NATO ally, Turkey too has reservations about the Washington's policy of taking the help of the Syrian Kurd groups and the attendant militia, in order to counter the ISIS, as the flock of

YPG and others are categorically Turkey's insurgents and law breakers. Still, akin to other places and in the context of American homeland security, the White House has to adequately pre-empt the incurable and destabilising insurgents in the Syrian context and the larger West Asian region. This leads us on to the American R2P as the Americans need to stay much longer in Syria to oversee the establishment of peace and stability in the conflict ravaged nation. According to the 2012 Global Leadership Report, 29 per cent of the Syrians approve of the American leadership, with 41 per cent disapproving and 31 per cent people expressing indecision about the American leadership in Syria.

The scenario of diplomatic exchanges was never so bad between the doctored Damascus and Washington as in the first Persian Gulf War of 1990-91. President Bush Sr was part of the American-led coalition to counteract the dictatorial act of Saddam Hussein, and later in the decade of the nineties, the Americans successes in bringing Hafiz Al Assad of Syria to mediate with the state of Israel with the larger objective of peace in West Asia. By the time in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Syria participated in the US-led Global War on Terror (GWOT) in order to support the American striving in West Asia.

In fact, the Syrians were the first state to intimate the Americans about a terror attack on the US Fifth fleet in line with the USS Cole bombing in 1998. Despite, the Syrian-American cooperation in the context of the GWOT, Syria has always remained on the American list of terror sponsoring safe havens, since the US enumeration of the same in 1979. The US is of the opinion that the Damascus regime supports terror and separatist actors in Israel and the Palestinian territories, which place the West Asian peace and stodgy stolidity at a grave risk.

As an adjunct, the US Embassy was attacked in 2006 for which the Syrian Government placed the blame on the American policy in Iraq. These little flies in the ointment tended to sour the relations between the twin nations which were partially at different footings, since the last 30-40 odd years. So no supine surprises here over the growing of thaws between Damascus and Washington!

The Americans clearly parted

ways when President Obama sponsored the UNSC resolution laying the blame for all violence on Bashar-Al-Assad and demanded that he steps down from the perilous pedestal of power. The American Ambassador, Robert Stephen Ford, was too withdrawn from Syria under duress at threats to his personal safety and well-being paving the way for the branding of state of Syria as a recalcitrant nation state. Still, in the Trump Administration, the US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, opined that the longer term pedestal of Bashar-Al-Assad would be decided by the local Syrian populace and on several occasions the US President has supported idea of "safe zones" in Syria which Syria finds unacceptable and beyond the pallor of realism.

Also, in the aftermath of the Douma chemical attacks, the Trump regime with Paris initiated missile attacks on the Syrian denomination, thus, paving the way for a confrontation between the US and its allies on side of the fencing ring and Iran and Russia being on the antagonist side of the fighting ring.

Very accurate Tom Hawk missiles have been deftly utilised from USS Philippine Sea and USS Ariegh Burke at the ISIS targets in Raqqa. Thus, Syria is akin to a rogue nation state tumbling on with Iraq and others, in the contemporary US understanding of the conflict, thus, ushering in a twilight zone scenario. As a result in 2014, the nations of the order of Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates along with the American F-22 Raptor Stealth Fighters were unleashed on the Syrian air space.

Harking back to American history, the American intervention in Cuban war and the incidents in Philippines have served as initiator elements in the rise of American power according to Howard K Beale in 1956 work titled as, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power."

President Theodore Roosevelt at the turn of the century had gone on to contend that the United States ought to have warships equal in number to the aspirations and the popular will of the great American people. The niceties of riding a horse, dining with the elites and deliberating on world politics and literature happen to be the enumerated characteristics of a true blue American gentleman, paving the way for the larger over-

ISIS challenge is not over. US President Theodore Roosevelt at the turn of the century had gone on to contend that the United States ought to have warships equal in number to the aspirations and the popular will of the great American people



MANAN DWIVEDI

arch of the American nation.

Thus, America has always been on a kind of Oregon trail which includes incursions of the military genre inside states hobbled with humanitarian disasters as a consequence of political violence, terrorism and attendant mayhem. Regulating the international system has somehow been a lynchpin of the US foreign policy to rescue the challenged and turmoil nations their populations.

(The writer teaches International Relations at Indian Institute of Public Administration, Delhi)

Can ISIS' caliphate resurrect?

The announcement of victory over the Islamic State (ISIS) group in Syria marks the end of the extremists' self-styled caliphate, a proto-state in which they held millions hostage to their dark and brutal vision. But ISIS, which traces its roots back to the bloody emergence of al-Qaida in Iraq after the 2003 US-led invasion, has survived past defeats and is already waging a low-level insurgency in areas it was driven from months or even years ago.

The grueling four-and-a-half-year campaign to drive ISIS from the territories it once held has left entire towns and neighborhoods in ruins, in both war-torn Syria and Iraq. If the long-standing grievances of Sunni Muslims in both countries continue to fester, the extremists could rise again.

What has ended exactly?

What is over is the ISIS' physical "caliphate," after the Syrian Democratic Forces, a Kurdish-led group supported by the United States, declared on March 23 the capture of the last tiny patch of territory controlled by the militants, in the eastern Syrian village of Baghouz.

That domain once stretched over large parts of Syria and Iraq, which the group conquered in a blitz in the summer of 2014, capturing towns and cities, including Mosul, Iraq's second-largest.

The fighters bulldozed berms along the border and proclaimed a contiguous caliphate stretching across a third of both countries. At its height, the territory was the size of Britain, stretching from near the northern Syrian town of Aleppo to the outskirts of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, and home to 8 million people.

The extremists governed under a harsh and violent interpretation of Islam. They massacred those who resisted their rule and beheaded hostages, including Western journalists and foreign aid workers, in gruesome videos circulated online. Alleged adulterers were stoned to death, those believed to be gay were thrown from the tops of buildings, and children were made to watch the atrocities as part of their brainwashing. The group captured thousands of women from Iraq's Yazidi minority, forcing them into sexual slavery.

ISIS also carried out the more mundane actions of a state — collecting taxes, printing school textbooks, minting its own currency and restoring public infrastructure. It was an experiment in statehood that not even al-Qaida ever tried on a significant scale.

From its de facto capital of Raqqa, in northern Syria, its leaders plotted spectacular attacks abroad, including the 2015 Paris attacks that killed 130 people. As ISIS began to hemorrhage

territory, it began opportunistically claiming attacks without any evidence of its involvement.

The self-proclaimed caliphate attracted tens of thousands of people from around the world, lured by the group's online activism and slickly produced propaganda videos. Young, troubled men were eager to wage war against those branded enemies of Islam, while others were drawn to the promise of life in an Islamic state governed by God's law.

That physical "caliphate" was declared dead, for now.

What is the cost of liberation?

The grueling four-year air and ground campaign against ISIS has killed or wounded tens of thousands of people, driven hundreds of thousands from their homes and left a swath of destruction stretching from the suburbs of Damascus to central Iraq.

The major cities ISIS once held — Mosul, Raqqa, Fallujah and Ramadi — have all seen major devastation.

The group put up fierce resistance nearly everywhere, using civilians as human shields and launching waves of car bomb and suicide attacks. As it slowly retreated, it left behind booby traps and explosives that in many areas have yet to be cleared.

The US-led coalition dropped tens of thousands of bombs over Syria and Iraq to help its allies on the ground advance, sometimes pulverizing entire city blocks. Syrian Government forces backed by Russian air power battled ISIS in some areas, as did Iraq's state-sanctioned militias, with help from Iran.

The death toll from the campaign remains uncounted. In a report released last year, the coalition confirmed the deaths of 1,139 civilians in airstrikes conducted between August 2014 and November 2018. Rights groups say the number is much higher.

An Associated Press investigation found at least 9,000 civilians died in the assault to retake Mosul alone. In Raqqa, the US-backed campaign killed hundreds of civilians and caused destruction on a massive scale. Syria is still mired in civil war, and Iraq estimates it will need \$100 billion to rebuild. Local leaders in Mosul say they need that much for their city alone. No one has offered to foot the bill, and hard-hit areas remain empty, even years later.

What's next

The official declaration of victory is of mostly symbolic value. Thousands of ISIS militants have dispersed and gone to ground, and US defense officials have warned that IS could stage a comeback in Syria within a year if military and counterterrorism pressure is eased.

"They've cut the trunk of this

malignant tree, but they haven't pulled up its roots, which are still capable of growing and spreading," Hisham al-Hashemi, a researcher in extremism and expert on ISIS, wrote in a Twitter post.

Activists who closely follow the conflict in Syria already point to signs of a growing insurgency and sleeper cells carrying out assassinations, setting up flying checkpoints and claiming roadside bombs in liberated areas across Syria and Iraq.

That insurgency could gain strength as President Donald Trump presses ahead with his planned US withdrawal from Syria. The American commander overseeing the fight against ISIS, General Joseph Votel, has warned that the group is far from being defeated, saying its leaders have dispersed and gone underground.

"What we are seeing now is not the surrender of ISIS as an organisation but a calculated decision to preserve the safety of their families and preservation of their capabilities," he said earlier this month, adding that the insurgents are "waiting for the right time to resurge."

The withdrawal of American forces from eastern Syria would open the door for major turmoil as various actors — including the Syrian government, allied with Russia and Iran — race to fill the vacuum.

ISIS was all but defeated once before, when US forces withdrew from Iraq in 2011; experts warn it could stage another devastating comeback.

And ISIS has established affiliates across Asia and Africa, and continues to be active in places like Afghanistan, Libya, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, Yemen and the Philippines.

Future of detained fighters and their families

Another major concern is jihadist finding their way back to Europe. Around 1,000 foreign fighters are currently being held in Kurdish-run prisons in northern Syria. Their wives — many of them from Western countries — and their children are in camps in northern Syria.

Syrian Kurdish authorities are calling on countries to take back their nationals, saying they cannot afford to keep shouldering the burden. Trump has weighed in, calling on Britain, France, Germany and other European allies to repatriate their nationals and put them on trial.

"The US does not want to watch as these ISIS fighters permeate Europe, which is where they are expected to go," he tweeted in February.

But few countries are willing to bring back people they view as a security threat, posing a dilemma for the Kurdish-led forces as the US prepares to withdraw.

AP

Analysing elections in India

Jaishri Jethwaney and Dr Samir Kapur's book looks at the theoretical underpinnings of the relationship between democracy, mass media, and election campaigning in India. An excerpt:

Understand democracy as something that gives the weak the same chance as the strong," said Mahatma Gandhi. "Vox populi vox dei," an oft-quoted axiom in democracies, was coined by the Greeks and conveyed that the voice of the people was indeed the voice of God. Democracy is the manifestation of people's will to be governed by those they elect. It is a different matter that the very same people as voters may not necessarily be happy with the elected representatives they choose to govern them. Democracy, also, is not necessarily the voice of the majority. Many people do not vote, and those who do may not see their candidates win.

Society has a history spanning millions of years, and the media, especially the mass media, is a little over a century old. Yet it is ironic that the media, over the years, has accumulated immense power to influence society in more ways than one. The media's power comes from its capacity to influence public opinion. Media critics believe that it is not a knowledge-based profession, but depends on events and happenings interpreted from both the supply side of information — through press releases, backgrounders, press conferences, events, etc — and the demand side of information, from the perspective of reporters who interpret events and information according to their understanding and mental capability. The media, therefore, can be seen as a social institution, which is not and cannot be very different from the nature of the society it exists in.

The relationship between the media and society is symbiotic. In fact, any debate on the mass media and society oscillates between two extremes, depending on who is saying it. Some swear by the media's unbridled power, while others feel that the media does not affect lives at all. Whatever may be the cliché in these views, there is no gainsaying the fact that the media has become part of the everyday life of an average person, who makes sense of the world around him/her through media stimuli.

In this chapter, an effort has been made to provide a theoretical construct to the interrelation of democracy, the media and its impact on elections. The last century or so has seen the development of many theories and models around the subject, which have also been tested in many elections in the West, especially in the United States (US). Over the years, elections in other democracies, especially in the developing world, have copied campaign styles and media usage from their Western counterparts, again the US in particu-



lar. Critics have often called this the 'Americanisation' of elections. There may not have been many scholarly research studies on the Indian elections with a theoretical construct in the past, but the current crop of scholars — from not only India but also the West — has evinced great interest in the Indian elections, and one does find references in contemporary literature on the subject. The later chapters have cited a number of such studies. British communication theorist Denis McQuail ascribes four important attributes to the mass media that lend it significance.

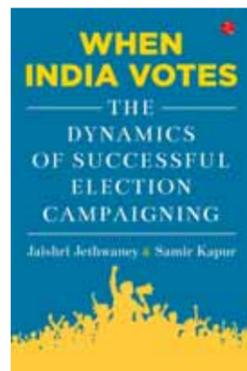
A power source: The media is the primary means of transmission and source of information in society. The media is in the area of public affairs: Government organisations and the corporate sector, because of various regulations, are often in the media glare.

A definition of social reality: The media is a forum where the changing

culture and values of society and groups are 'constructed, stored and visibly expressed'.

A primary key to fame and celebrity status: First, it was people from the entertainment industry, then sportspersons, and now even corporate honchos, who have acquired celebrity status in the media. The power of the media, however, is not intrinsic but acquired. This power comes from the people, as consumers and audiences of news and various other programmes. The political institutions that are accountable to the people in a democracy through periodic elections obviously face the worst of a vocal and negative media, and that is what lends power to the media.

Harwood L Childs, author of *An Introduction to Public Opinion*, in his thesis on the subject, strongly advocates the preserving of public opinion, because many forces in his view seem



to be at work, curtailing and undermining its role. These, according to Childs, include the tremendous growth in executive power, the growing complexity and speed of social change, the emergence of pressure groups and higher stakes among political parties, the mass media and other channels.

Representative bodies are becoming less representative, and elections, though they indicate the preferred candidates, often give only a slight indication of public attitude. A section of analysts feels that the decision of the voters is more often shaped by the mass media stimuli around election time. Excessive visibility of certain candidates in comparison to others, cunning campaigns by parties and the 'public face' as presented have the capability to swing public opinion in favour of or against a candidate, which may have nothing to do with the 'real' choice of the electorate, as it should have been. To what

extent an average person depends on media messages or to what extent the media shapes our minds, attitudes and opinions is, however, a moot point.

MEDIA AND POLITICS

There have been numerous debates leading to concern and anxiety about the increasing role and influence of the media, which, it is alleged, has changed the very fabric of politics. A fascinating, and at times intriguing, interplay of the mass media and politics has been the subject matter of much empirical research.

Politics as an institution has a long history. Many things have influenced politics over the years. Similarly, the media has undergone changes and entered various phases. Political institutions have taken centuries to be what they are today. The media as an institution has progressed in a much shorter period, as said earlier. Thanks to the ingenuity of the human mind, coupled with science and technology, the media has acquired such a formidable position and influence from being a watchdog that it questions institutions and practices that are as old as the human civilisation itself. While the news media has historically been viewed as aggressive and overenthusiastic for the latest and hottest information, its watchdog function in a democratic society posits that people know what their Governments and public-funded institutions are doing. The media has the power to hold the Government and public-funded institutions accountable, forcing them to explain actions and decisions, all of which affect the people they represent.

The assumption is that the press speaks for the people, thus the freedom of speech and freedom of the press acts are widely prevalent in some democracies. The need for freedom of the media is to ensure that it articulates the voice of the people and their concerns by bringing them in the public domain. The argument supports that the news media must question the Government, thereby contributing in making democracy function. Therefore, it is important to understand that the freedom of speech and expression is in the interest of the public, and such legislation does not only protect the functions of the press, but also lets it function without fear or favour. Today, in the era of globalisation, this role has undergone a sea change. It is often alleged that the media today has become a commodity. There is also growing criticism against the media for projecting unabashed violence.

Excerpted with permission from *When India Votes: The Dynamics of Successful Election Campaigning*, Jaishri Jethwaney and Samir Kapur, Rupa, ₹295

'Hate to see Brexit being ripped apart'

Donald Trump said he "hates" seeing Brexit being "ripped apart," indicated he believes there should be no second referendum, and said that Theresa May "didn't listen" to his advice. Trump's intervention came as he also promised that a "large scale" trade deal with "unlimited potential" was waiting to be done between the UK and US after Brexit.

Speaking in the Oval Office, while meeting Leo Varadkar, the Irish Taoiseach, the US president said he had been watching the "very sad" developments in the UK, and his approach to negotiations would have worked better. He said: "I will tell you, I'm surprised at how badly it's all gone from the standpoint of a negotiation. But I gave the prime minister my ideas on how to negotiate it, and I think you would have been successful. She didn't listen to that, and that's fine."

"I mean, she's gotta do what she's gotta do, but I think it could have been negotiated in a different manner, frankly. I hate to see it, everything being ripped apart right now." Trump has previously said his advice on how to secure Brexit may have been "too brutal" for May.

Addressing the question of a second referendum the president indicated it should not happen because it was "very unfair". He said: "I don't think another vote would be possible because it would be very unfair to the people that won, that say 'What do

While discussing Brexit in the Oval Office recently, US President Donald Trump said he was 'very sad' about the state of trade negotiations with the UK, writes NICK ALLEN

you mean you're going to take another vote?'. So that'd be tough.

"I thought it [the 2016 referendum result] would happen, it did happen, but both sides are very, very, you know, they're cemented in. It's a tough situation. It's a shame. Frankly, it's a shame. There was no reason for that to happen. They could have had the vote and it should have gone smoothly. Unfortunately, it didn't. It's a very complicated issue, and actually the issue on the border of Ireland is one of the most complex points."

Trump said an extension seemed inevitable but he would like to see Brexit "work out". He said: "I think they're going to have to do something because right now they're in the midst of a short period of time, and they're not going to be able to do that. "I would like to see that whole situation with Brexit work out. You know, we're talking to them about trade, and we can do a very big trade deal with the UK. But it's very sad to see what's happening there, and there was no reason."

Trump recalled how he had predicted the 2016 referendum result. He said: "It wasn't that I was a supporter. I predicted that it was going to happen. I was right and people laughed when I predicted it. "I can tell you it's a

"I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THAT WHOLE SITUATION WITH BREXIT WORK OUT. YOU KNOW, WE'RE TALKING TO THEM ABOUT TRADE, AND WE CAN DO A VERY BIG TRADE DEAL WITH THE UK. BUT IT'S VERY SAD TO SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING THERE, AND THERE WAS NO REASON" — DONALD TRUMP



very complex thing that's going on right now. It's tearing a lot of countries apart. And it's a shame it has to be that way." He added: "We're also renegotiating our trade deal with the European groups. We're talking to the EU about trade, they're willing to talk to us. "And if they don't talk to us we're going to do something that's going to be pretty severe economically, tariff a lot of their products coming in, because the EU treats us very, very unfairly. It'll probably work out. Otherwise, we're going to do something that's good for the United States."

Varadkar told Trump: "I think it'll be a few years until the UK sorts itself out, but in the meantime the EU is available to talk trade with the US..." The president said he would be going to Ireland this year. He said: "I'll be coming at some point during the year. It's just a great place." He tweeted, "My Administration looks forward to negotiating a large scale Trade Deal with the UK. The potential is unlimited!"

Earlier, Trump had warned that Britain "may not be able to trade with the US" because of Theresa May's Brexit deal in comments that could torpedo her hopes of winning Parliament's backing. He said the agreement

May reached with Brussels "sounds like a great deal for the EU" as he urged the Prime Minister to think again. The President's intervention seemed to fly in the face of May's claims that Britain would be able to strike free trade deals around the world after Brexit despite her concessions to the EU.

Also, Trump and Nigel Farage discussed the merits of a no deal Brexit during a face-to-face meeting earlier this month. The US president was urged to support walking away from the table if a bad agreement is on offer — just like he had done during North Korea talks in Vietnam. The conversation took place at the Conservative Political Action Conference [Cpac] in Washington DC, a gathering of right-leaning politicians where both men gave speeches. Moreover, the US President's former chief strategist had said that Margaret Thatcher is the inspiration for Donald Trump's policies in the White House. Steve Bannon also said now is the "the moment" for Boris Johnson, who quit as Foreign secretary over Theresa May's proposed Brexit deal, to challenge the Prime Minister to lead the country. Bannon, who ran Trump's successful campaign to become President in 2016, said that Trump's policies were based on "pure Thatcherism". Bannon had also said: "What we are trying to do is get a piece of action for the little guy."

The Daily Telegraph



A FOOTBALL-MAD COUPLE IN FRANCE HAS BEEN BARRED FROM NAMING THEIR SON 'GRIEZMANN MBAPPE' AFTER TWO SOCCER STARS



Only a handful of designers, such as late Alexander McQueen, recognised fashion's huge potential to challenge our perception of disability, writes LOTTIE JACKSON

My earliest recollection of my personal style was far from complimentary; instead, it started with retorts of "Well, you're going to look very silly!" And indeed I did: Utterly silly. But still I threw aside the pristine twin-set neatly laid out for my sister's party in favour of a garish pyjama top, Dalmatian-print leggings, stuck-on earrings and a conservative flourish of patent Mary Janes, an outfit I thought was the height of sophistication. The whole ensemble was set off by a pink beaded purse puckered with jelly tots, an ill-tempered Tamagotchi and other five-year-old-child essentials. Let's just say it was hard to distinguish me from the clown booked for post-lunch entertainment.

In this moment, fashion became about more than clothes for me. It was an act of defiance, self-assertion and a declaration of who I was — which certainly wasn't going to be imposed by anyone but myself. In the years following, this sense that style is intimately connected to our identity has strengthened. Although I've had a muscle weakness disability since birth, in recent years, additional illness, such as severe pneumonia, has significantly impacted my mobility, stamina and the physical strength of my voice. As a fashion journalist with a disability, I recognise how style can empower people to express themselves regardless of ability, race, age, gender or size.

In recent years, the concept of "diversity" has come into focus in the fashion industry, catapulted from the abyss to assume centre-stage in fashion campaigns, glossy magazine covers and post-catwalk commentary. In fact, we've just witnessed a record year in terms of inclusion in fashion.

Diversity has become not only a buzzword but also a measure of a brand's relevance in an intensely competitive digital marketplace. The fashion we

see today is an optimistic celebration of a spectrum of identities.

This may be true with regard to the models we're seeing in front of the camera. Take for instance Halima Aden, Charli Howard, or Adut Akech, who are all redefining traditional supermodel stereotypes. But these faces are the harbingers of change that conceal the endemic lack of representation in the wider fashion industry. Diversity doesn't begin and end with who we see in front of the camera, we need more minority voices leading from behind the lens. Recent accusations of racism facing establishment brands — such as Prada, Gucci, and Burberry, which were recently called out for their racially offensive imagery — are a testament to this fact. The solution is simple, and urgent: We must address this disconnect between the diversity of the models on the catwalk and those packed into the front row — the editors, buyers, and ultimately, the voices of power.

However, one minority group is severely under-represented. Although 20 per cent of people have disabilities, this demographic is largely non-existent in the fashion sphere, with only a handful of designers, such as Teatum Jones and the late Alexander McQueen, recognising fashion's potential to challenge our perception of disability. McQueen's legacy is defined by his ability to subvert prescriptive ideas of beauty; his spring/summer 1999 show featuring the Paralympian Aimee Mullins in a pair of handcrafted prosthetic legs is a defining example of how McQueen's work deconstructed social taboos regarding disabled bodies. Historical prejudices have made disability synonymous with victimhood or failure, and consequently it is often hidden from public view.

Actress Selma Blair's first appearance on the red carpet following her multiple sclerosis diagnosis last year saw her pose defiantly with a mono-

MCQUEEN'S LEGACY IS DEFINED BY HIS ABILITY TO SUBVERT PRESCRIPTIVE IDEAS OF BEAUTY; HIS SPRING/SUMMER 1999 SHOW FEATURING THE PARALYMPIAN AIMEE MULLINS IN A PAIR OF HANDCRAFTED PROSTHETIC LEGS IS A DEFINING EXAMPLE OF HOW MCQUEEN'S WORK DECONSTRUCTED SOCIAL TABOOS REGARDING DISABLED BODIES

grammed walking cane. As a former muse for luxury brands like Stella McCartney and Chanel, this image was a powerful symbol of how fashion enables disability to transcend the stigma that surrounds it. Her presence was also a glaring reminder that people with disabilities are often unseen on platforms like the red carpet, the epitome of spectacle and visibility. So although it represented a victory for disability representation, primarily it was an intimation of how far there is to go before it's accepted as the norm. In a later interview with *Vanity Fair*, Blair laments the lack of stylish clothing available to disabled individuals. She wants designers to focus on improving adaptive fashion, which is designed to meet the needs of those with disabilities and chronic conditions: "It can still be chic. You shouldn't have to sacrifice style."

At last designers are beginning to acknowledge the disabled consumer

market, which represents £249 billion of untapped spending power. Recently, the Cornish-lifestyle brand Seasalt (as worn by the Duchess of Sussex) launched its first adaptive clothing line, Easy On. The collection, only available online, includes discreet additions to existing signature styles such as magnetic fastenings on their popular Beachcombing Coat, loops on sleeve cuffs to make pulling them on and off hassle-free, and soft elasticated waistbands which are pinch-free when seated. "We wanted to help women who can find dressing difficult," explains Seasalt's design director Sue Simpson. The collection was inspired by customer focus groups, so it's designed to "fit into their lives and make [them] feel confident".

However, when I point out their designs are exclusively shown on able-bodied models, they state the photography is "a blank canvas" but would take in my feedback. But this exposes the long-standing myth that disability isn't marketable. More than ever, consumers want to align themselves with brands that have a positive, inclusive ethos.

Seasalt follows in the footsteps of other forward-thinking brands, such as Marks & Spencer and Tommy Hilfger, which have already released adaptive clothing lines. Their designs featured everything from adjustable hem-lengths to accommodate prosthetic limbs and soft Velcro fastenings, to sleep-suits specifically tailored for babies with hip dysplasia. With a new report revealing the adaptive clothing market could reach \$288.7 billion globally this year, they are right to be expanding their offerings.

The fashion industry's fascination with diversity not only fulfils an ethical responsibility, but it's incredibly lucrative. While I've always believed fashion can foster an inclusive spirit, finally the industry is poised to reflect this.

The Daily Telegraph

CULTURE LANE

James Bond to drive an electric car

Long-haul flights, tons of guns and a bagpipe flamethrower: Such are the special demands of his career that James Bond has never been considered a poster boy for an eco-friendly lifestyle. But next year's 25th Bond film looks set to have Ian Fleming's hero make his first concession to climate change, by driving an electric Aston Martin — albeit one which retails at £250,000. According to reports, the film — whose working title of *Shatterhand* was recently debunked — will see Daniel Craig's 007 behind the wheel of an Aston Martin Rapide E, one of only 155 electric cars being built by the British manufacturer.

The *Sun* reports that director Cary Joji Fukunaga has spearheaded the change, with their source describing him as "a total tree-hugger". "This is something Cary pushed for and Daniel and the producers are going along with. Everybody is afraid of Bond getting labelled 'too PC' but they all felt the time was right to put him in a zero-emission vehicle."

Aston Martin's relationship with



the spy franchise began in 1964, when Sean Connery drove a DB5 sports car in *Goldfinger*. Shooting on the new film is expected to start in April, after a series of delays involving the replacement of Danny Boyle as director following reported "creative differences" between he and producers Barbara Broccoli and Michael G Wilson.

Many suggested Boyle and his co-writer John Hodge were eager to bring Bond up to date with a plot including nods to the #MeToo movement — and, potentially, 007's own death.

MJ fan groups to sue his accusers

Three Michael Jackson fan groups are suing his alleged victims in France for "sully[ing] his memory" by taking part in the *Leaving Neverland* documentary, the fans' lawyer told Agence France-Presse. The Michael Jackson Community — which claims to be the "official fan club forum" — and the MJ Street and On The Line groups accuse Wade Robson and James Safechuck of "lynching" Jackson. The case, which will be heard by a court in Orleans in northern France in July, follows reports that Jackson's children were also considering taking legal action against the men, who say that Jackson sexually abused them when they were children.

Lawyer Emmanuel Ludot, who has previously successfully sued Jackson's doctor for causing distress to his fans by giving him the drugs that killed him, said the groups "want to discredit the accusations of paedophilia" against Jackson.

Ludot said the "indignity of the extremely grave accusations" made by



Robson and Safechuck in *Leaving Neverland* had sullied the memory of the singer, who died in 2009.

Jackson's image had been affected by the allegations as well as "the whole community of his fans", the lawyer said. *Leaving Neverland* was first broadcast in the US on HBO earlier this month and has since broken streaming records in Britain.

The film has outraged some of Jackson's fans, who have waged an often vicious social media campaign against his accusers.

Real disaster scene out of Bird Box



Four months after it first appeared on Netflix, footage of a real-life rail disaster will be removed from the movie *Bird Box*, the post-apocalyptic thriller starring Sandra Bullock. The stock footage used concerns a 2013 tragedy in the Québec town of Lac-Mégantic when an unattended train carrying crude oil rolled down an incline, came off the tracks and exploded, killing 47 people.

Earlier this year, the streaming giant said it would not remove the clip, which in *Bird Box* is used to illustrate mass deaths in the wake of an

invasion of spectral beasts who cause a person's worst fears to materialise, leading them to kill themselves.

But in a statement to *TheWrap* recently, Netflix confirmed that both it and the makers of *Bird Box* have decided to replace the clip. They also apologised, saying: "We're sorry for any pain caused to the Lac-Mégantic community." In response, Québec's Minister of Culture and Communications, Nathalie Roy, praised the decision, saying it shows that "by uniting and pooling our efforts, everything is possible".

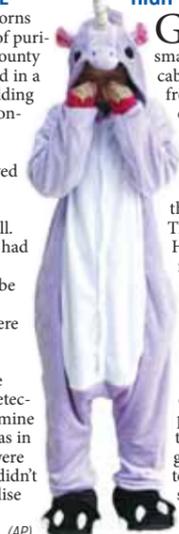
ODDLY ENOUGH

PERSON IN UNICORN COSTUME TRIES TO ROB A STORE

Apparently not all unicorns are the embodiment of purity and grace. Baltimore County Police say a person dressed in a unicorn costume and wielding a crowbar tried to rob a convenience store Saturday morning in the Baldwin community. Officers arrived just after the High's store opening time of 5 am to respond to the robbery call.

Police say the suspect had fled in a silver car. They located what appeared to be the same car after it had wrecked. No other cars were involved in the wreck.

Police say two people involved in the crash were taken to a hospital, and detectives are working to determine what their involvement was in the robbery. No charges were immediately filed. Police didn't say if money or merchandise was taken in the robbery.



DRUNK PASSENGER DEMANDS HIGH-SPEED TRAIN SLOW DOWN

German police say a drunken man with a fire extinguisher smashed his way into the driver's cab of a high-speed train running from Frankfurt to Paris and demanded that the driver slow down. Federal police said the ICE train operated by Germany's Deutsche Bahn stopped near Frankfurt after the incident Sunday morning. The 30-year-old man from Heideberg, who wasn't identified, was arrested and faces an investigation into dangerous interference in rail traffic, among other things.

Police say passengers said the man took a fire extinguisher off the wall, smashed a glass door separating the cab from the passenger compartment, and told the shocked driver the train was going much too fast and he had to save the passengers. No passengers were hurt but the train was taken out of service.

MAN FINDS IGUANA IN TOILET, CALLS 911

A Florida man called 911 after going to the bathroom and finding a bright green iguana swimming in his toilet. Fort Lauderdale Battalion Chief Stephan Gollan tells the Miami Herald the man "freaked out and didn't know what to do." He says firefighter Jeff Kurus put on a sterile glove, reached in and grabbed the iguana. He took it outside and released it into the wild. Gollan says the department "is the end-all-be-all" when it comes to unique calls. The department tweeted pictures of the iguana, adding "can you imagine lifting the toilet lid and finding this?"



HIP HOP BEST BET FOR A CHEESE THAT WILL PLEASE: SWISS STUDY

Exposing cheese to round-the-clock music could give it more flavor and hip hop might be better than Mozart, Swiss researchers said on Thursday. Nine wheels of Emmentaler cheese weighing 10 kilos each were placed in separate wooden crates last September to test the impact of music on flavor and aroma. The cheese was exposed 24

hours a day to A Tribe Called Quest's hip hop track "We Got It From Here", Mozart's "Magic Flute" opera or Led Zeppelin's rock classic "Stairway to Heaven". One wheel was played the throbbing techno of Vril's "UV" and another Yello's dark ambient piece "Monolith".

Soundwaves at low, medium and high frequencies were played for three others while one wheel was left in peace. "The most obvious differences were observed in strength of flavor, smell and taste," Bern University of Arts researchers said in reporting the findings of a culinary jury which did blind tasting. "The hip hop sample topped the list of all cheese exposed to music in terms of fruitiness... (it) was the strongest of these in terms of smell and taste."

Benjamin Luzuy, a Swiss TV chef and jury member, told Reuters TV: "The differences were very clear, in terms of texture, taste, the appearance, there was really something very different." The experiment, instead of using loudspeakers, used mini transmitters to conduct the energy of the music into the cheese. "All the energy is directly

resonating inside of the cheese," Michael Harenberg of Bern University of Arts told Reuters. Beat Wampfler, the cheese-maker behind the project, said the cheeses were tested twice by the jury and both times the results were more or less the same. He said the experiment would now focus on hip hop. "The idea is now to take 5 or 10 cheeses and put hip hop on them and then compare."

(Reuters)

NOW, 'ZOMBIE LIGHTS' FOR MOBILE-OBSSESSED WALKERS

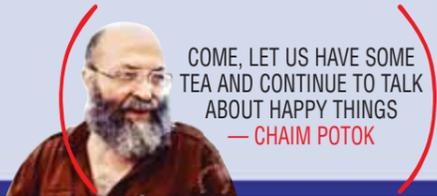
Toward protecting the lives of "smartphone zombies," the municipality has installed special LED sidewalk lights at a busy crosswalk to alert distracted pedestrians staring at their phones when they can walk and when they should stop. Tomer Dror, head of the traffic management division at the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality, said the "zombie traffic lights" aim to minimize accidents between vehicles and inattentive pedestrians at crosswalks. "We can-

not force them to take their eyes out of the smartphone and into the road. We need to find ways to put the road into their eyes," he said. The striped lights turn green when it is safe to walk, and red when pedestrians should halt. For now, the pilot program is limited to a single intersection in central Tel Aviv, but the municipality says it will expand the zombie lights if they prove effective.

Similar systems have already been used in Australia, Singapore and the Netherlands. So far, smartphone-addicted residents seem to be welcoming the lights. "It's something amazing," said Tel Aviv resident Shai Levi. "As someone who is addicted to his phone and is all day long with his head glued on the screen, I think that it can without any hesitation, reduce the number of accidents."



(AP)



Briefly Speaking



EGG INTAKE AND HEART DISEASE RISK

Here's a sombre news for all the egg lovers out there. A recent study found that egg yolk contains higher level of cholesterol, which ultimately increases the chances of heart disease and early death. Egg yolks are one of the richest source of dietary cholesterol among all commonly consumed foods. One large egg has 186 milligrams of dietary cholesterol in the yolk. The researchers pooled data of 29,615 US racially and ethnically diverse people to understand if eating dietary cholesterol or eggs were linked to cardiovascular disease and death, which has been a point of debate for decades. The study was published in the journal *JAMA*. The message is about cholesterol, which happens to be high in eggs and especially yolks, and as a part of healthy diet, people need to reduce their daily intake of cholesterol. The reduced intake of cholesterol will result in decreased risk of heart diseases.

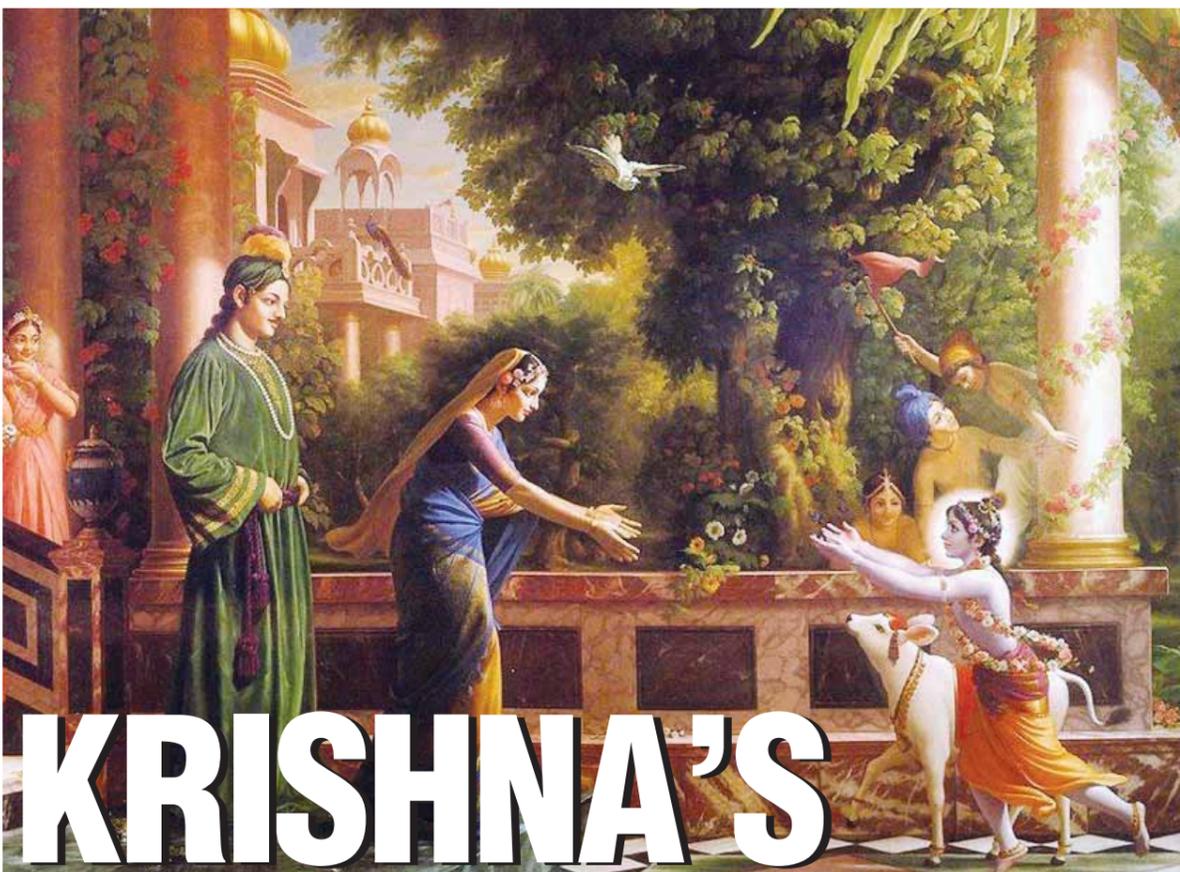
HEALTHY LIVER WITH STRENGTH TRAINING

Besides being beneficial for heart, strength training can also reduce accumulation of fat in liver and improve blood glucose regulation, says a study on mice. The study, led by a team from the University of Campinas in Brazil, showed strength training can reduce fat stored in liver and improve blood glucose control in obese mice, even without overall loss of body weight. The findings suggest strength training may be a fast and effective strategy for reducing the risk of fatty liver disease and diabetes in obese people. "That these improvements in metabolism occurred over a short time even though the overall amount of body fat was unchanged, it suggests strength training can directly affect liver's function and metabolism," said Pereira de Moura from the varsity.

IMPROVE GUT HEALTH WITH GREEN TEA



Green tea has once again been found as the Hail Mary for not just obesity, but various other inflammatory biomarkers linked with poor health, finds a recent study. The study was done on mice to find out what other benefits can green tea provide. Researchers found that the mice who were fed a diet of 2 per cent green tea extract fared far better than those that ate a diet without it, a finding that has prompted an upcoming study of green tea's potential benefits in people at high risk of diabetes and heart disease. The benefits appear to stem from improved gut health, including more beneficial microbes in the intestines of the mice and less permeability in the intestinal wall which is commonly called as the leaky gut. "The results of studies looking at obesity management so far had been a real mixed bag. Our goal was to figure out how it prevents weight gain," said Richard Bruno, the study's lead author.



KRISHNA'S PASTORAL ASSOCIATES

Krishna's foster parents, Nanda and Yashoda, symbolically represent eternal bliss and the ultimate knowledge respectively, explains Dr ASHA GOSWAMI

With the set of mystical and spiritual concepts having synthesised with Krishna during the later phase of the saga, the same built an aura of dreamland with spiritual overtones around Krishna's personae by providing him with pastoral associates and scenario in the form of his foster parents Nanda-Yashoda; elder brother and sister Balarama-Ekanamsha or Subhadra Gopas and Gopis, including Radha, and Vrindavana. Mostly, the narratives of the *Puranas*, which refer to Shri Krishna's activities with these pastoral associates, are held to have been framed and construed and specifically designed to teach symbolic and spiritual ideals through those *lilas* which Krishna enacted in the company with his pastoral associates on earth. Besides, Krishna's all Vrindavana *lilas*, which he enacts in their company wherein he mostly plays the role of love and friendship, are similarly held to be happenings on the non-physical plane and in non-physical bodies, as Vrindavana is also looked upon as representing the inner consciousness of every individual.

Hence, the whole Vrindavana *lila* of Krishna is held symbolic along with his partners, who are also assigned with spiritual overtones. Since, his Vrindavana *lila* on the whole represents Krishna's playful activities during which he behaves the way he likes. For, at Vrindavana, his encounters with Putana, cart, Trina varta, Aghasura, Bakasura, Dhenuk, Keshi and Kaliya, fighting with whom, Krishna had not to exert his strength but in place he just toys with them for achieving his victory. This very well

explains why Krishna's such easygoing encounters at Vrindavana or Gokula are termed *lilas* signifying that these were mere sports and diversions on the part of Krishna at Vrindavana. In the same context, Harivamsha seems to add "that all the associates of Krishna during his Vrindavana *lilas* were the parts of the Gods themselves, and hence spiritual". Similarly, Krishna's enemies at Vrindavana are held by some representing all types of vices such as lust, pride, hatred, egotism, pride, envy, greed etc. According to others, Vrindavana metaphorically stands for the garden like holy and pure heart of every devotee of Krishna where he teaches the love of devotion to all alike who lend their hearts to him. Krishna's activities at Vrindavana also are held to delineate him as a symbol of a spiritual *saadhak* with ultimate realisation of his true individual state. In the same strain, Krishna's foster parents Nanda and Yashoda are held symbolically representing the super most eternal bliss and the ultimate knowledge respectively.

While their resort Vrindavana itself represents the region of highest spiritual delight and the field of spiritual growth and devotional love as its lord Nanda himself is spiritual bliss incarnate. The *Puranas*, in the same regard, also dictate us that we must not treat Krishna's Vrindavana *lilas* with his pastoral associates as having occurred at one place or time but rather treat them as recurrent modality with the purpose of conveying inspiration and guidance to devotees of every type having either of these feelings towards Krishna such as affection of parents; of friends; or of loved and beloved etc. Krishna at

Vrindavana denotes the universal self and his foster father Nanda implying bliss guides all these in their relations to the universe and themselves. Nanda as supreme joy is located in Vrindavana like the brain of every enlightened person. Krishna in Vrindavana as Nanda's son represents a devotee who is set on his devotional path with various distractions like personal desires which are termed as demons like Putana, cart and others. Next, among pastoral associates of Krishna, his elder brother Balarama is dealt with. He was also known as Baladeva and Samkarshana. According to *Mahabharata*, he was an incarnation of God Vishnu's white hair as Krishna was incarnation of God Vishnu's black hair. That is why they are stated to have fair and dark complexion respectively. It is also stated that God Vishnu divided Himself into two parts who are later known as Krishna and Balarama. He is also stated to be the incarnation of primeval serpent Ananta-Naga.

According to Kautilya, Balarama had his special devotees with shaven head independent of Krishna. According to Kautilya, Krishna's brother Balarama was later identified with such a deity whose worship was in vogue during Kautilya's times on the analogy of Krishna's later identification with God Vishnu. Similarly, as an incarnation of Sheeshnaga, Krishna's elder brother Balarama might have been identified with some tribal god of the Nagas and because of which the Kaliya-Naga's episode was introduced in the Krishna saga to propagate the ideal that Shri Krishna had also won over the prevailing tribal cult of the Nagas who are held to rule over the

Mathura region for a long time. Likewise, in the later stage of Krishna cult, if Krishna's elder brother is treated as symbol of the individual soul and is named Nara, he is forever proclaimed the eternal accomplice of Krishna, Narayana, performing the role of his elder brother. The other pastoral associates of Krishna include his sister called Subhadra or Ekanamsha who is stated to be Yashoda's daughter who was exchanged with Krishna, but did not die at the hands of Kamsa, and was saved and secretly reared by a Gopa at Vrindavana and later worshipped by the cowherds as mother Goddess Katyayani, since she was the one who had saved Krishna's life. The *Puranas* also state that it was on her advice that Krishna succeeded in killing Kamsa. It is also known that those days, the worship of Katyayani was prevalent among the Gopis, for they along with Radha are stated to worship Goddess Katyayani to beget Shri Krishna as their husband. Thus, it be ascertained that she was introduced as Krishna's pastoral associate and sister to meet the requirement of the devotional aspirations of the people who looked forward to the impress of Shakti in the Krishna Cult. Next, the chief of pastoral associates associated with Krishna seems to be the cowherdess Radha. These two types of Gopis, associated with Krishna in later stage of his saga, represent two variant distinct traditions of Krishnabhakti with main focus on the *Rasa-dance*. Radha and other Gopis are also considered to be the outcome of the prevalent poetic tradition of love sentiment during the 16th century.

The writer is a noted Indologist and authority on Krishnaitic Studies



HIDDEN SOULS PRAMOD PATHAK

Data, data everywhere



These are the times of information revolution, more fashionably called information age. When was information nor crucial is still not clear. But let us not debate that. So the new jargon is 'big data', 'cloud computing' and many more fancy coinages. So there are companies into the manufacture of so-called intelligent machines, claiming that these provide insights without limits. Well, for a student of Abnormal Psychology, that is more of a problem than a solution. Yes, insights without limits are reasons for fantasising and causing delusions, of both persecution as well as grandeur. And, of course, they also convert bounded rationality into unfounded assumptions. Anyway, we are in an era where people use stylish phrases like 'data is the next oil' for this world. Whatever that means may not be easily inferred but the fact remains that mankind can survive without data or oil but not without water, which is the real impending threat lurking round the corner. As city after city go waterless, clues are hardly discernable. Nevertheless, as this craze for data grows to maddening levels, there is a need to exercise some caution. While we are slowly but surely getting submerged in the ocean of information, nay data, an old poetry comes to mind. It was Samuel Taylor Coleridge who wrote this sometime around the end of the 18th Century in his *Lyrical Ballads*. It was the 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', a sailor's plight on board a ship surrounded by water all over in a vast ocean, forcing him to recite the famous rhyme: "Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink." The modern-day human's plight can be summed up with just a little modification: "Data, data everywhere, not a byte to think." Yes, that is what is happening, and rather fast. Bombarded with data, all kinds of data on all types of subjects, the human mind is gradually slipping into an oblivion of its own making. It is losing its ability to think and analyse, thus increasingly developing a dependence on gadgets to aid the mind to think. What is worse is that these gadgets are systematically being made a substitute for the mind. Look what is happening: Machine is learning and human mind is losing the ability to learn. That it may lead to disastrous consequences is still a subject matter of huge global debate, but the fact is that our thinking is being outsourced to the so-called intelligent machines. Resultantly, human beings are likely to become what O'Henry, had he been around, would have termed as the Banana Public drawing an analogy from his famous expression "Banana Republic". Overdependence on these thinking devices is subjecting the brain muscles to a kind of disuse atrophy, which may lead to the same fate that strikes the other bodily muscles making them flaccid. This in all likelihood is going to affect the human mind and its thinking ability in the long run. Some glimpses can already be found with amnesia and ability to retain and recall information declining. There are people who do not even remember their mobile numbers. Even simple calculations need to be carried out with the help of mechanical devices. Such a data-induced dependence syndrome is not far off that will render the mind dysfunctional and blunt the thinking process. But it seems that in the cacophony of differing noises, no one is ready to believe that minds, if not used, can well become a vestige like the appendix.

Pathak is a professor of management, writer, and an acclaimed public speaker. He can be reached at ppathak.ism@gmail.com

WE MUST ENJOY

There are different types of enjoyments, but if we stick to the ones in the mode of goodness, we will reap all kinds of benefits, writes AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Why am I making such a statement? Because as souls this is our number one duty. Souls are *sat*, *chit*, and *ananda*. These are intrinsic to them. Souls are eternal. This is common knowledge. Souls are also conscious. This is also well known, because all souls are naturally so. However, there is a problem with the *ananda* part. Once in material bodies, we, souls, are no longer in the state of *ananda*. Rather most of us, except some very advanced devotees of God, are in more or less opposite state, ie disturbed, fearful, anxious, etc. Yes, people try to enjoy life but they do so in whimsical ways. This fact requires further explanation.

We, embodied souls, are governed by the three modes of the material nature. These are goodness, passion, and darkness. Unfortunately, the majority are under the influence of the lower two modes of passion and darkness. Their pleasures are mostly under the influence of these two modes. For example, a person under the influence of the mode of passion will eat rich food in excessive quantities. Such eating, though appealing to the palate and the stomach, will hurt his or her health in the long run. A person under the influence of the mode of darkness will be obstinate, crooked, badly behaved, lazy, etc. (The *Gita*

18.28) and his enjoyment will be governed by these emotions. People in goodness are wise in their choice of pleasures. These are stepping stones to the goal of getting to the *ananda* state, which requires a few lives to fully attain.

As everyone is different and have different circumstances, there will be many different types of enjoyments, but if one sticks to enjoyments mostly in the mode of goodness and, most importantly, which are according to *dharma*, not *dharma-aviruddhah*, he will gain all kinds of benefits and will not be harmed. As I am familiar with my own self, I will detail how I am going about enjoying my life. I have drawn a detailed list of all the activities which are enjoyable to me and are available to me. Eating is the first and the most regular enjoyment for me. I eat what is good for me healthwise. I take sufficient time to eat and eat in



small morsels. I eat mostly alone with no other activity like watching TV. In short, I enjoy my eating and hope to continue to do so for the rest of my life.

My other premier enjoyment is writ-

ing. In this, I must thank my Lord for helping me. He gives me realisations, which I jot down. I meditate a lot on spiritual truths revealed to me. I make notes and then sit down to give them shape of

an article. The same is true of all the books I have written. This is my very important enjoyment, which I hope to continue to get, God willing. Of course I watch my favourite programmes on television, which are mostly musical programmes. I am very particular about watching news on television. This must be balanced, fact-based. The last and the foremost enjoyment for me is spending time with my Lord in His photo forms. I feel sheltered and this is when I get most of my realisations. I do not think that I will ever be deprived of this enjoyment.

One of the reasons most people are mortally scared of diseases and major setbacks is that they have this impression that their enjoyments will dry up. This is not true. God has not made a creation where one is condemned to miseries only. Remember, we have many faculties which can and do give us enjoyment. We have senses — the most common means, then, we have minds. Intelligence is not far behind and, ultimately, we have ourselves, ie our own selves, souls. In conclusion, I must reiterate that enjoyments should never be given up. If not, we will be cheating ourselves; we must enjoy to make our lives meaningful. Life will go on but we must find ways to enjoy.

Bishnoi is a spiritual writer and can be reached at spiritual@ajitbishnoi.com



I'M ACTUALLY PRETTY SHY IN REAL LIFE. BUT I GUESS IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA, I FOCUS — **RANBIR KAPOOR**

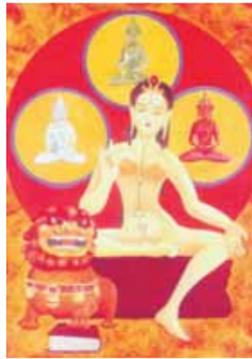
YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week you need to be attentive on the health front. Think on how to continue with good health. It will be a time of peace and prosperity for you. You are likely to deepen your spiritual growth. Celebrate these good feelings and share them with your near and dear ones in whatever way you can. You may find peace in charity. On the career front, you will have a new job/business opportunity and this will help your career to grow. Those looking for a job need to stay optimistic. Things are about to get even better at work for you than you would have hoped. There are promotion and recognition in whichever field you are working on. You might face opposition in your love life. Secret affairs or extramarital relations might put you in trouble.
Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Monday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week you will enjoy an increase in physical energy, vitality and general positivity. You will be full of enthusiasm, feeling revitalised and enjoy a wonderful sense of good health. In case you have been facing some health challenges, then take a deep breath as things will get a lot better. On the professional front, new opportunities will come knocking your door. At your current job, things are going extremely well. You are moving into a positive state of mind about what you are capable of achieving. Those seeking employment will find a job. In love, you need to become more reliable persons and take up responsibilities that come with any relationship. You need to convey your emotions to your partner. With your patience and maturity, you can strengthen those relations.
Lucky number 14
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Wednesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 19

You should listen to your body with care and compassion. Those who are having health issues, it is advisable not to stress about them. You need to focus on a healthy outlet to your emotions. Avoid work overload. Indulge in some kind of youth sports activities that will help you to stay active as well as connect you with your inner child. On the career front, some of you have achieved goals and attained materialistic gain. Even though you are financially sound, do not give too much of importance to wealth. Some of you may have a hard time at workplace due to your inflexible approach towards change. Those who are in a committed relationship may witness a positive change in your relationship. Single females may get attracted to the older male. Don't rule him out, he may help you.
Lucky number 12
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Monday



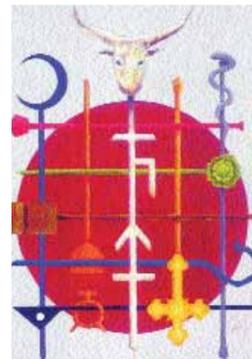
TAURUS April 20-May 20

You need to be very cautious about being overworked, overtired, and over-stressed. Bad addictions and obsession might harm you. So, stay away from all these. This week you are likely to lose your self-control. Avoid bad company as this is not favourable for you. Balance is the key to keeping good health. At the workplace, some negative forces are at play. Give your best and be organised and productive. Your honesty and integrity will pay you well. Those who want to invest, put your money in conservative stocks/bonds. In love life, a trip outside country is on the cards. Some quick happenings in your relationship will astonish you. You should distract yourself and your beloved may be back to you.
Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Saturday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week you will have good health, but you have to be careful while exercising as you might be prone to some injuries. If you are in a process of healing from an injury, then take care and do not stress yourself. Have a focused mind and follow your health regime religiously. At your workplace, you will be feeling content and will cultivate smooth interpersonal dynamics and harmonious communication patterns. Your words will carry more weight with others now; use that wisely to further your prospects. Those seeking jobs are likely to get one. On the relationship front, this is not a good week. You will find yourself indifferent and disengaged with your partner. You need to re-evaluate the situation and seek your inner voice for peace and tranquillity. Singles, have patience as you will take time to find your partner.
Lucky number 28
Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Tuesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week you if you feel something wrong with your body. You need to pay attention to your concerns. Do not panic and don't feel that you can't do anything about it. Trust your intuition and look for other ways to sort out the issues. Be patient while awaiting results. Ensure proper diet, rest and exercise. Career-wise, things will be as per your expectation. It is recommended that you take some time off from work and don't take any important decisions this week. You need to maintain your calm amidst the chaos around you. If you can't stay calm, then seek another position. Those who are committed need to focus on their relationship towards the future. Change your old perspective towards an ongoing issue. Try to talk to your partner openly about your dreams.
Lucky number 22
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week your health will enjoy an upswing. You will feel relieved by finding a healer who works with something besides traditional medication. The new method is not to replace medical therapy but to work in concert with it. Listen to your inner voice to decide what is best for your health. Taking advice from experts in meditation and yoga will work in favor of you. On the career front, you may face heady boss/superior and feel irritated this week. Avoid workplace gossip and certainly don't get involved in it. This is not a time to rely on your intuition and your inner knowledge, rather stick to your conscious mind or intellect. Pay attention to your dreams and pleasant surprise will come your way soon. You are likely to face a tough time in your relationship.
Lucky number 20
Lucky colour Sky blue
Lucky day Friday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week your health looks good, still, you need to be careful. If you are suffering from health issues, then it is likely that you will find a way to your recovery. Keep a positive attitude and things will surely turn in your favour. You might be prone to accident, so, don't take any chance and be safe. Taking tension for your job will keep you busy this week. But this is not going to help matters, rather focus on what you can control and leave behind your anxiety. If you are looking for new opportunities, then confidently make a move and do not hesitate to ask others for help. A positive approach will make all the difference. Those in a relationship should now consider the future. Open up to your partner and talk about your future goals.
Lucky number 21
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Tuesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

It is time to get up and take action to improve your health condition. Your laid back attitude will have a bad impact on your health. Evaluate your health scenario and decide what steps and efforts are required, it could be a physical exercise or a nutritional diet. You need to revive your positive energy. You have to tighten up your belt and get ready to do some hard work at the workplace. Some of you may experience a new beginning. Those seeking employment will be hired into a position that will test your skills. For those of you who are already working will be burdened with responsibilities. This is a great time for love. Committed couples will experience a deep sense of bonding. Some of you may enter the next stage of your relationship.
Lucky number 31
Lucky colour Red
Lucky day Wednesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

Your personal charm and aura will be impressive this week. You will be stronger to give up bad habits in the interest of your health. You are already well on your way with regard to health. You are energetic, full of stamina and vitality. But avoid aggression in your behaviour. Share happy moments with loved ones by looking after their needs. On the career front, you will find a new job opportunity coming your way. Your intelligence and hard-working nature will pay you rich dividends. You are likely to get busy in planning your life ahead and all your emotions and sentiments will take back seat. Those related to arts, music, fashion and media, will be benefitted. In personal relationships, you may feel contented. You may make a plan for an exotic dinner. Married couples will have good bonding.
Lucky number 30
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Thursday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week your health will suffer. You are likely to become a victim of a health condition may be due to genetic or environmental reasons. During this phase, you will be full of anxiety and negative thinking, but you need to connect your mind and body and meditate for positive vibes. Seek help from others as you have the power to rise above such negative emotions. Work wise, things will flow smoothly. You are planning and progressing to get your idea implemented. All your efforts will prove promising and will assert a place at work. You will find yourself in conflict and disengaging with others which will lead to tension and hostility. Take time out to think of what you can do to stabilize your relations with others. Be careful as someone you trust might betray you.
Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Camel shade
Lucky day Sunday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

News related to your health will be positive and your efforts are likely to bear fruit. You have full control of the situations around you, thus, you must take advantage of this and look for alternative ways to deal with health challenge issues. How you speak your mind and conduct yourself will matter the most at your workplace. Conflict and disagreement with peers are indicated. This will create tension. Unfairness at play in your workplace are likely to happen. But ensure that you are not the creator of problems. You need to choose your battles wisely rather than picking upon disagreement. This week, you will feel that your relationship has come full circle. As a result, it may culminate into a marriage and for some, there will be a sense of closure. Singles, have bright chances to meet someone special.
Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Turquoise
Lucky day Friday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot & Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331



ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

"Having understood, what you explained in the last issue, I have been trying to self-reflect upon myself, but in vain. I am not able to remain focused. My mind gets bombarded with uncontrolled volume of random thoughts, something like a monkey continuously hopping from one branch of the tree to the other. I keep flirting with those thoughts. There doesn't appear to be any scope to figure out my true nature, not to say anything about correcting the thought process. Tell me, how do I go about?" Asked a reader. "How do you expect to contain a fragile mind so fast, which is habituated to move unrestrained. Have patience, sustained practice may bear fruit." I responded. Better look for a Guru and pursue the process regularly under his guidance. As you proceed, many such questions may keep arising. Guru will lead you through.

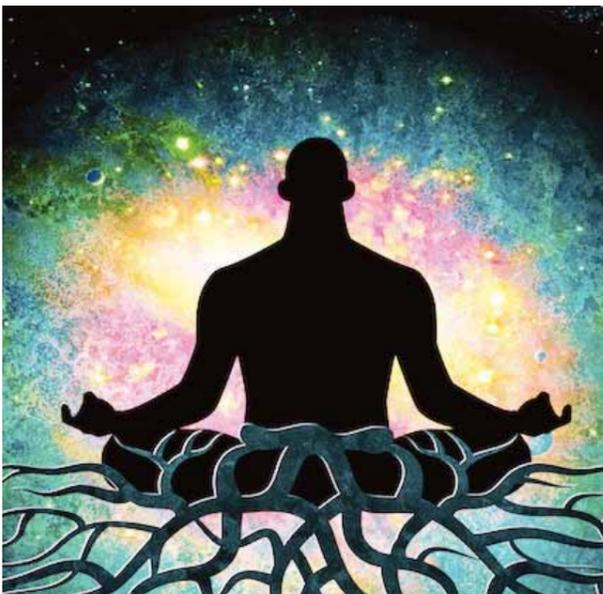
Meanwhile, for the convenience of our valued readers, I am suggesting a tried and tested simple process. Just lie down on your back on a flat surface. Close your eyes and let loose your mind. Let thoughts naturally flow in and flow out. You will be flooded with thoughts. Don't worry, it is all happening as a part of the process. But don't pay any atten-

tion to them. Pursue the process for at least 20 minutes every day. Having regularly pursued the process for a while, mind will settle down as all such thoughts as would be unnerving you from within will go out of reckoning. You may feel relaxed. Following which, unlike earlier, you may now be able to see a pattern in the thoughts flowing through the mind. Watch them closely, they will reveal your true nature. Following which you could take corrective initiatives through fresh educative inputs.

The paradox, however, is that often practitioner's ego plays spoil sport in the process. It doesn't let you dispassionately identify and acknowledge your fault-lines. In that case, you may seek the guidance of a Guru. He may be able to intuitively figure out your true nature and show you its mirror image. Alternately, you could seek astrological guidance for your personality reading. Astrology looks at energy map of the heaven at the time of one's birth, which reflects upon personality frame up of a being with a fair amount of precision, as energy knows no bias.

A case in point is that of a highly religious person, who has been offering

Meditation and mind genesis



his prayers at least for an hour every morning and evening. Yet, his habit tendencies won't spare him. And his family life is in a mess. Let us look at his astrological pointers. Personality indicator, the Sun is locked in adverse formation with Mars, Uranus, and Saturn. That, in the first place, makes out an impulsive, argumentative and quarrelsome person. Second, he is eccentric and erratic. Third, he carries seeds of fear and insecurity because of which he has a negative mindset. He is self-pitying and pessimist. He is a cynic who is in the habit of finding fault with others. He is jealous and over critical of others. Put to an adverse situation, instead of facing it head on, he may try to somehow find an escape route. A sense of inertia deeply ingrained in his psyche, his initiatives will be delayed. Habitually, he shuns taking challenges. So, he may miss opportunities. And when left behind in the run of time, he may fall into depression. What further compounds his problems is that even the mind-signifying Moon is clouded by Saturn's negative aspect.

Fiery Mars is ill-disposed off its dire enemy Saturn as well as Uranus. That makes him temperamental, intolerant, impatient, habitually suspicious of

everybody and anybody, and even revengeful by nature. Uranus and mischievous Neptune play spoil sport with intelligence signifying Mercury. That makes him unconventional, eccentric and opinionated. He remains stuck to his self-delusory perceptions, distanced from ground realities. He won't acknowledge truth on its first appearance. Driven by sense of hope against hope, he will continue blindly pursuing his perception till pushed to the wall. It also accounts for his impaired reasoning and judgment. For the above stated reasons, his inter-personal relationship stands compromised and so he is not able to relate to those around with ease and comfort. And the result is there to see. Just academic awareness of his fault lines would not help him get over his habit tendencies. For, they are deeply embedded in the inner realms of his mind in seed form. To get over, continued reflection over fresh educative inputs is required.

The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Write to him at G-102, Bharat Nagar, New Friends Colony, New Delhi - 110 025
Tel: 91-11-49848475/9818037273
Email: pioneerqueries@bharatastro.com
Website: www.bharatastro.com