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BOOKED, HOOKED
A file photo of the library at Amity University, Noida

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Be prepared

The Chinese cannot be ever trusted. We should not take their promise of troop reduction seriously. We should constantly step up vigil across the border ('Ready to rumble', July 12).

India should continue to put economic and diplomatic pressure on the Chinese, like how Japan, Australia and the US are doing. That works well with the Chinese and it will put them in a spot.

The Chinese may have moved back now. But, at any moment, they can come back hard at us. So, we need to be always prepared. The problem with China is that their political leadership is laden with mischief-makers. One learns that the Chinese government has told families of the Chinese soldiers, who died in the Galwan Valley, to forgo traditional burial ceremonies so that no outside agency knows about it. This is such a shame.

The military option is always there for India, and we need to explore multiple options for a limited conflict with China anytime this year. The government should continue to tighten the noose around Chinese tech giants till the Chinese government and army mend their ways.

K.V. Prasad,
On email.

The near-war-like situation with China has suddenly brought to limelight the issue of Tibet. I understand that the government of India is planning to raise Tibet in international forums, and this is the right thing to do.

It appears to me that the present conflict with China is nothing but the Dalai Lama's prayers ultimately reaching the Lord's feet. If there is military action against China, supported by smart diplomacy, I see no reason why Tibet cannot be liberated.

Iqbal Singh,
On email.

India should raise the issue of Tibet everywhere. Ideally, PM Narendra Modi should have gone and met the Dalai Lama on the latter's birthday earlier this month. That would have made the Chinese shiver.

I feel that Modi has a soft corner for China. He goes all out, in his words, against Pakistan, but he does not talk like that about China. Modi should shun Xi Jinping in future summits.

Kuldeep Tyagi,
On email.

Only truth matters

Arvind Kejriwal likes to work in synchronisation with the Centre, and this resembles the approach of an earnest bureaucrat who is out there to perform. Understandable, given Kejriwal's background as an IRS officer ('Shah's showtime', July 12). Of late, one notices that Kejriwal is eager to show results, even if it meant meeting and discussing matters with those people who do not like him or his party.

By letting the Centre rush into the Covid scene in Delhi, the AAP is, perhaps, in for a shock. Kejriwal should have a rethink on what his line of action should be. The best course of action could be to let it be. What matters and gets votes is how the public perceives the truth, if the elections are not rigged.

Ansh Chahal,
On email.

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Some luck for Satnam

The story of Satnam Singh Bhamara shows the manner in which athletes are neglected in India ('Going for the rebound', July 12). It shows the hollowness of the physical education system of the country, which is totally outdated.

Good physical education teachers can make a difference at the grassroots level. What Satnam lacks is speed, according to basketball analysts. One must remember that basketball is a game that has more to do with intelligence, than with height. It is wrong to assume that only tall people perform well in basketball.

One thing that will work for Satnam is his age, and hopefully luck.

Satnam has shown us one thing for sure, that being an athlete in India is not a bed of roses.

Rajyavardhan Shetty,
Mangaluru, Karnataka.

It was heart-wrenching to know about Satnam. A banned substance, taken inadvertently, has spoiled his career. More pathetic is the fact that his case has landed in the lap of the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), where decision making process is slow, and it takes years to come to a verdict.

It is sad to know that Satnam's ban came in November 2019 and till date not a single hearing has been held. How long should he wait for a judgement? A precious career is getting wasted in this manner. Somebody should sensitise NADA that for a player the span of an active career is not too long.

Satnam's days of youth and prime will be spent in fighting court battles instead of bringing India a name in international basketball.

Chanpreet K.C.,
On email.

Smart Mukesh

Reliance Industries Limited is doing everything right and is showing other business groups on how to survive smartly during the time of a crisis ('Well-oiled machine', July 12). Mukesh Ambani reads the trends well, and he knows where to score at the right time. Recently, he became the sixth richest person in the world. There is so much that Mukesh can do to put India's economy on its tracks and create so many jobs here.

Tigin Thomas,
On email.

Strong message

I liked the photo-feature by Bhanu Prakash Chandra on priests from different religions wearing masks in Bengaluru ('The Lord is my shield', July 5). Even they have admitted that in such a situation one has to move on and don't expect any instant divine intervention.

Gaurav Trivedi,
On email.

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ASTRO-NUTS!

Brazilian couple Tercio and Alicea Galdino walk the streets of Rio in protective suits inspired from space gear. Tercio, who has a chronic lung disease, fashioned the suits himself. An astronomy nut, he says the suits not only give him extra protection, but are also fun to wear.

PHOTO BY AFP

POINT BLANK

BHANU PRAKASH CHANDRA

I have spoken of Narendra Modi as being Indira Gandhi on steroids. By this I mean that he is both more subtle as well as more ruthless. Indira used, as it were, a blunt *khurpi* [trowel] to undermine institutions; Modi uses a sharp sword.

Ramachandra Guha,
historian

As a highly disorganised person, I wish I had a proper schedule. There are days when I'm 'on,' and days when I'm definitely 'off.' On the 'on' days, I set a word count goal between 2,000 and 4,000 words a day, sometimes 1,000, sometimes 5,000.

Meenakshi Reddy Madhavan,
author

Rahul Gandhi is trying to present himself as a wise man, but people have refused to accept him. If we accept his arguments, we will also be rejected.

Murlidhar Rao,
BJP leader

The lesson is, leave diplomacy to diplomats. They may be ponderous and slow, but they will pick up signals which novices will fail to detect.

P. Chidambaram,
Congress leader, on the India-China conflict

Power should be used with humility. Priyanka Gandhi is the daughter of a former prime minister who was assassinated. You may have political differences. But there is no wisdom in using the power in hand to harass opponents.

Sharad Pawar,
NCP chief, on the Congress's general secretary being asked by the Centre to vacate the bungalow allotted to her in Delhi

AFP

The entire lockdown has been a huge learning curve in human relationships. It has given people an assessment of their personal misery and happiness levels, and made them incredibly aware of how much love, sex and great companionship matter.

Pooja Bedi,
actor and columnist

WORD PLAY

A **cottagecore** lifestyle has been embraced by many during this pandemic. Cottagecore is a way of life based on traditional rural activities, adopted by those from cities; one has to adopt an attire, too, that suggests such a lifestyle. Cottagecore activities include baking, gardening and making one's own clothes. It became an Instagram trend after celebrities like David Beckham and Kaia Jordan Gerber embraced it.

MILESTONES

VIRTUAL JUSTICE
On July 11, Chhattisgarh became the first Indian state to organise an e-Lok Adalat. About 195 benches were constituted via video-conferencing, and 2,270 cases were settled in a day.

RELIANCE'S RUN
Reliance Industries Limited became the first Indian company to cross ₹12 lakh crore market capitalisation on July 13. The share price of RIL has doubled since mid-March.

REUTERS

CHEAP SOLUTION
Researchers at the University of Missouri invented a medical wearable device using a combination of pencils and paper. The invention could significantly reduce the price of health monitors that track body variables like temperature and glucose level.

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POWER POINT

SACHIDANANDA MURTHY

Jail, bail and the frail

As Covid-19 spread its tentacles, several high courts gave liberal bail orders to reduce congestion in prisons. The Delhi High Court, for instance, extended the interim bail of 2,961 undertrial prisoners by 45 days. This action came after the Supreme Court asked high courts to form committees to consider applications fit for bail.

While high courts granted bail to undertrials who faced simple charges, opposition parties and civil liberties organisations demanded similar concessions to high-profile political prisoners, including those held under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act or in preventive detention in states like Jammu and Kashmir. But the Central government and several state governments are against releasing them, even the elderly and the ill who are more vulnerable to the virus.

There is a high-voltage campaign in Maharashtra for bail to naxal activists and sympathisers who were arrested for supporting the Elgar Parishad rally near Pune. But, the National Investigation Agency has stoutly opposed their bail applications moved on medical grounds.

The octogenarian poet Varavara Rao has become a symbol of the political prisoners. His family says his life is in danger as he is very ill, but the Central government is firm that people facing serious charges that can attract seven years imprisonment should not get bail.

The laws enacted in India do not recognise anyone as a "political prisoner". This phrase was last accepted by the Indian state when lakhs of people were imprisoned under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act during the Emergency.

Seven of the leaders who had opposed the Emergency—Morarji Desai, Charan Singh, Chandrashekhar, A.B. Vajpayee, H.D. Deve Gowda, I.K. Gujral and Narendra Modi—became prime ministers, but the tough laws against political activities deemed as unlawful have remained in the statute book. In fact, violent agitations in Punjab, the northeast and Kashmir provoked enactment of harsher laws like the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The UAPA, enacted in 1967, was strengthened last year. Its critics say this law has been invoked against political dissenters who oppose the class or caste system or state oppression. But, governments argue that these dissenters and intellectuals are promoting violence and encouraging Maoists and separatists who are trying to break up the country. Pro-government voices have described many academics as "urban naxals". One of them, the Delhi University professor G.N. Saibaba, is a lifer in wheelchair.

The police say incarceration of these intellectuals breaks the Maoists' command and control chain, and so Rao and his dozen friends should not get bail.

Home ministries note that high courts' bail review committees have not released non-political undertrials charged with murder, rioting and money laundering. They insist that even political workers who take part in public demonstrations should be slapped with serious charges like attempt to murder, rioting, destruction of public property or obstruction of public offices from functioning.

But, when the party of these "offenders" comes to power, the charges are waived routinely as vindictive actions of the previous government. Rao and his fellow prisoners, however, have little chance of getting bail unless the higher judiciary intervenes.

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INSTANT REWARD

Madhya Pradesh MLA Pradyumna Singh Lodhi, who joined the BJP on July 12—five months after 22 of his former Congress mates did—has emerged the luckiest of the lot. Fourteen of the 22 had to wait nearly five months to get ministerships; eight are still awaiting their piece of the pie. But, Lodhi got his reward within five hours of joining the saffron fold. He was made chairman of Madhya Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation, with cabinet minister rank. Also, unlike the ministers, he does not even need to win a byelection to keep his lucrative post.

CONFIDENT START

For several months, Lav Agarwal, joint secretary in the Union health ministry, had been in the spotlight at the daily Covid-19 briefings. On July 9, however, the focus shifted to Rajesh Bhushan, officer on special duty (OSD) at the health ministry. The successor to Union Health Secretary Preeti Sudan addressed his first news conference since he became OSD in late April. Bhushan is son-in-law of former Uttarakhand chief minister B.C. Khanduri. His wife, Ritu, is a BJP MLA from Uttarakhand. Bhushan, a 1987-batch IAS officer from the Bihar cadre, was also rural development secretary. And in his first briefing, Bhushan fielded tough questions about the government's handling of the pandemic with characteristic composure.

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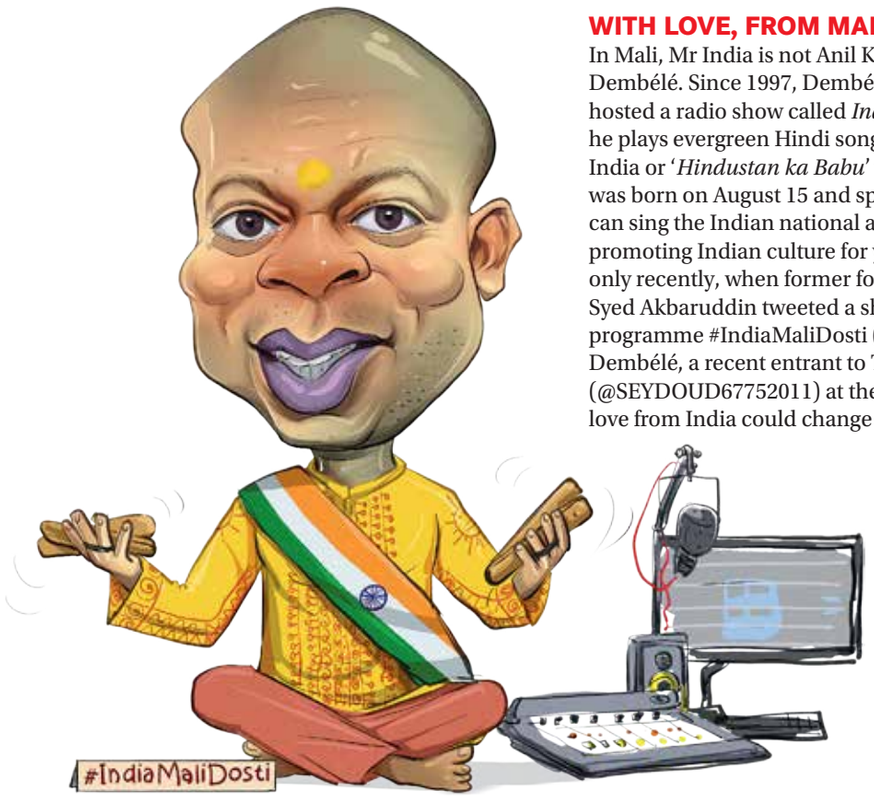

WITH LOVE, FROM MALI

In Mali, Mr India is not Anil Kapoor. It is Seydou Dembélé. Since 1997, Dembélé, an Indophile, has hosted a radio show called *Indian Frequency*, in which he plays evergreen Hindi songs. Better known as Mr India or '*Hindustan ka Babu*' to his friends, Dembélé was born on August 15 and speaks Hindi; his children can sing the Indian national anthem. While he has been promoting Indian culture for years, Indians found him only recently, when former foreign ministry spokesperson Syed Akbaruddin tweeted a short clip from Dembélé's programme #IndiaMaliDosti (India-Mali friendship). Dembélé, a recent entrant to Twitter, has only 12 followers (@SEYDOUD67752011) at the moment. Perhaps some love from India could change that.

DOING A SHAH

Some people feel that the Covid-19 situation in Delhi has improved after Union Home Minister Amit Shah intervened. Now, at a time when the Telangana government is being panned for its handling of the pandemic, G. Kishan Reddy, the Union minister of state for home, has emulated his senior. Reddy went to Hyderabad, visited Gandhi Hospital, the city's largest Covid-19 facility, and spoke to patients there. He urged the state government to ramp up testing and assured it of the Centre's support. He also said that the Centre would send 1,200 ventilators to the state.

With the visit, Reddy wanted to create the impression that he had taken stock of the situation. His concern did register with the people, but not as forcefully as Shah's did in Delhi.

FOREIGN HAND

When Jammu and Kashmir Police officer Davinder Singh was arrested in January, while ferrying two terrorists, there was speculation that he was acting at the behest of the Research and Analysis Wing. There was also talk that the arrest could have been a result of the factional feud in the Jammu and Kashmir Police or the internecine war between intelligence agencies working at cross-purposes. However, the genie has been put back in the bottle after the National Investigation Agency, on July 6, filed its charge-sheet in the case, stating that Davinder was a rogue cop groomed by Pakistani officials.

MASKED LOTUS

With masks becoming mandatory, fashion-forward Indians have started matching them with their outfits. Even political workers, especially BJP members, have started getting the lotus symbol printed or embroidered on reusable masks. The masks could even join the saffron scarves and jackets as part of the official party attire if seniors like Narendra Modi, Amit Shah or party president J.P. Nadda were to use them at any BJP event.

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Departure lounge

Pilot-Gehlot tussle is an all too familiar story in the Congress

BY SONI MISHRA

AT THE CONGRESS Working Committee meeting held shortly after the party's humiliating defeat in the Lok Sabha elections last year, Rahul Gandhi hit out at three senior leaders for putting their children before the party's interests in the polls. While he did not name them, it was clear that one of them was Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, in whose state the party's tally was an embarrassing zero and he had failed to ensure even his son Vaibhav's victory from home turf Jodhpur.

In the aftermath of the Lok Sabha debacle, this was exactly the line adopted by the camp of Gehlot's bete noire Sachin Pilot, a young leader belonging to the Rahul brigade which has been at odds with the party's old guard. Leaders close to Pilot raised questions about Gehlot's leadership and demanded a change of guard.

The Lok Sabha disaster was an opportunity for Pilot to hit back at Gehlot, who he believed had snatched the chief minister's post from him. Pilot, who was state Congress president from 2013, had worked hard for the party's victory in the assembly elections and was hoping to get the top post, but had to be content with that of the deputy.

The campaign against Gehlot, however, fizzled out as the same CWC meeting marked a major change in the power dynamics in the party. At the meeting on May 25, 2019, Rahul announced that he was stepping down as party president, and this led to Sonia Gandhi taking over as interim president a few months down the line. Thus began the process of the old guard, sidelined during Rahul's tenure, making a comeback and consolidating its hold over the party.

The ripples of the changed dynamics were felt in Jaipur. Gehlot went on to systematically establish his position and simultaneously clip Pilot's wings. "Not just for the Congress workers, even in the eyes of the public, Pilot was instrumental in taking the Congress from just 21 seats to being a party in power. But he was treated unfairly and pushed to the wall," said Congress leader Rajendra Chaudhary.

Ministers from the Pilot camp often complained about the high-handedness of the bureaucracy, an apparent reference to officials dominating the affairs of the government at Gehlot's instance. Pilot himself is learnt to have been aggrieved about Gehlot not allowing him to have officials of his own choice in the departments under his charge. The chief minister took major policy decisions without taking his deputy into confidence.

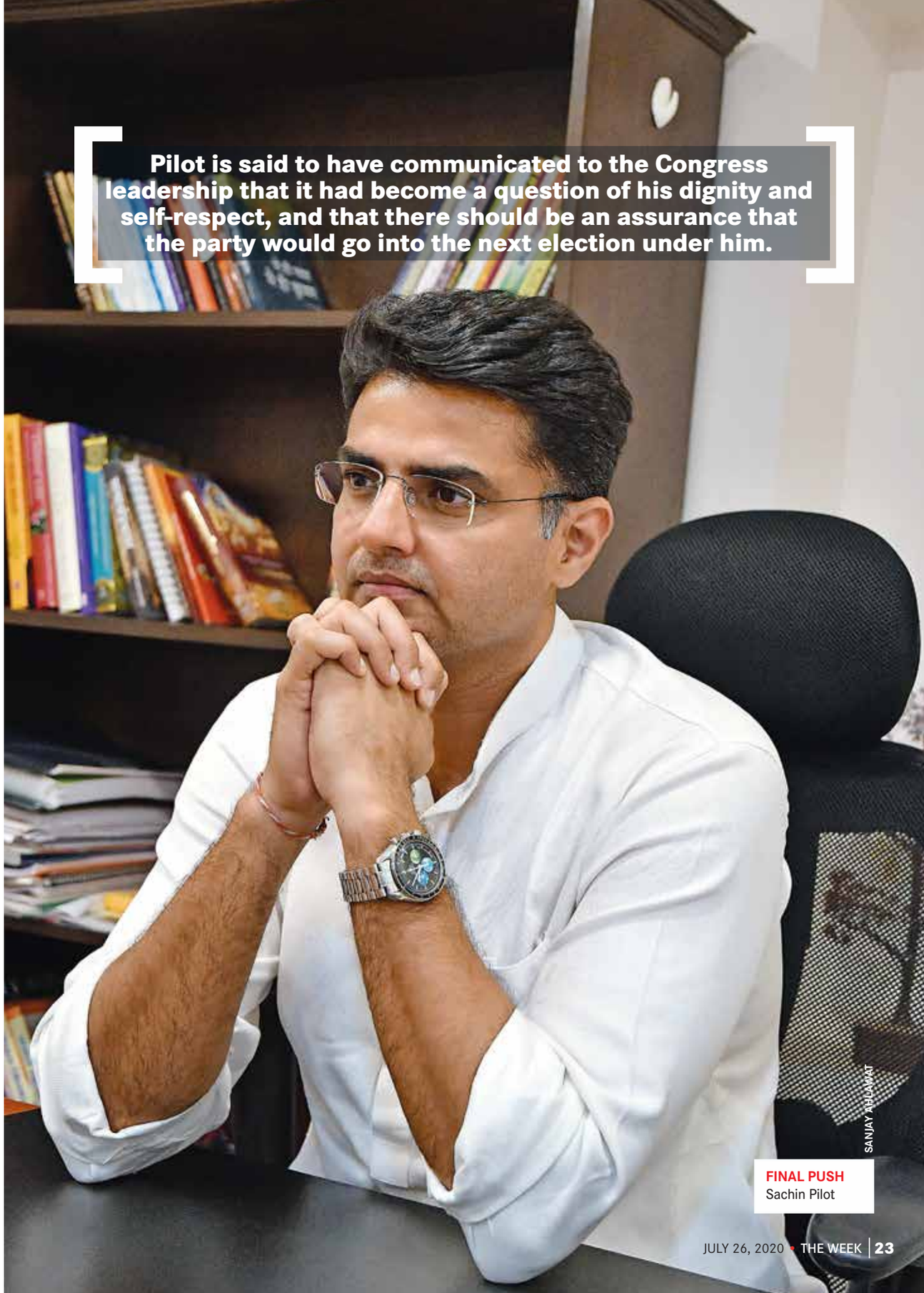
Gehlot also brought six BSP legislators into the party fold, which increased the Congress tally in the 200-member house to 106. And, the support of 12 independent MLAs, who were Congress rebels, provided him with the crucial buffer. The party had won 99 seats in the elections and one later in a byelection.

Pilot's grouse was that Gehlot had cornered all the important portfolios, leaving him with the charge of PWD, rural development, Panchayati Raj and statistics. He was also upset that Gehlot was not willing to share the limelight. While ₹25 crore was spent on publicity and advertising for the chief minister, the expenditure for the deputy chief minister was zero.

The Pilot camp says Gehlot was also preparing the ground for removing him as state party president by pushing for the 'one man-one post' formula. The last straw was the notice sent to him by the Special Operations Group of the Rajasthan Police for recording his statement in connection with the allegations of the BJP trying to bribe MLAs supporting the government.

Pilot is said to have communicated to the Congress leadership that it had become a question of his dignity and self-respect, and that there should be an assurance from the high command that the party would go into the next elections under his leadership. The high command's message for him was that time was on his side, and soon he could have the state to himself.

The Gehlot side, however, claims that Pilot had been talking to the BJP for several months. The chief minister, they said, averted a mishap in the run-up to the Rajya Sabha elections by sealing the state borders and sequestering the MLAs of the ruling side. "We have evidence to prove that horse trading was being done in Jaipur. If we had not kept our MLAs in a hotel for ten days, the same thing that is happening in Manesar now would have happened then (at the



SANJAY AHLAWAT

FINAL PUSH
Sachin Pilot

PTI

IN THE BATTLE
Ashok Gehlot with Randeep Surjewala, K.C. Venugopal, Avinash Pandey and Ajay Maken during a meeting with party MLAs at his residence in Jaipur

The restlessness within the Congress is exacerbated by the spectacle of a seemingly stable government tottering on the edge, and yet another young leader going public with his ire about being side-lined.

time of Rajya Sabha polls in June)," said Gehlot, after the Congress sacked Pilot as deputy chief minister and state Congress president. Pilot, however, has denied talking to the BJP.

The developments come as a major blow to the Congress, especially at a time when Rahul appears to be on a comeback trail and is increasingly engaging with issues of importance. Also, demands have been raised by many leaders to clinch the leadership issue. Sonia completes one year as interim chief in August.

The restlessness within the party is exacerbated by the spectacle of a seemingly stable government tottering on the edge, and yet another young leader going public with his ire about being side-lined. It is being asked if the leadership vacuum is harming the party as it is not responding in time to internal issues. In the case of the Gehlot-Pilot clash, it is felt that the high command let the differences fester. It had set up a coordination committee in Rajasthan in January in a bid to reduce friction amongst the state leaders, but it met only once.

"These are all cliches, to say that no individual is larger than the party or that the party does not cease to exist with the exit of one person," said Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam. "Every individual worker and leader contributes to building a party, and hence every such individual should be given importance."

Pilot's rebellion and the action against him, coming just months after Jyotiraditya Scindia defected to the BJP and pulled down the Kamal Nath government in Madhya Pradesh, brings into focus the gen-next leaders being sidelined in the power matrix of the party. "Many other young leaders are likely to follow suit," said a young leader who quit as PCC chief a few months ago. "A fine balance had been put in place by Rahul between the young leaders and the veterans, which has been disrupted."

There has been a steady stream of such leaders leaving the party, including Pradyot Deb Barman, who was party president in Tripura, and Ashok Tanwar, who was president in Haryana. Since Scindia's exit, there has been intense speculation about the plans of the other young leaders who have been restive and have struck discordant notes at regular intervals. A widespread feeling is that Rahul was not responsive to their concerns, and the senior leaders were able to convince the high command that their demands were disproportionate to their achievements and that they could not cause much damage to the party.

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh, however, said the young leaders needed to show patience. "I fail to understand why he was upset," he said about Pilot. "He was deputy chief minister. He was president of the state Congress. If there were any issues, he could have spoken to the central leadership and a way out could have been found. The Congress gives opportunity to everyone. Opportunities were given to both Sachin Pilot and Jyotiraditya Scindia." Singh was identified by Scindia as the villain of the piece when he quit the party.

By now it is an all too familiar story in the Congress—restive youth, the old guard unwilling to yield and a central leadership failing to bridge the gap.

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EFLU EXCELS IN THE TEACHING OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

The English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU), a Central University under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, has a national presence with a global outlook, with a focus on teaching and researching languages and literatures along with select humanities. The University, headquartered at Hyderabad, has Regional Campuses in Shillong (Est. 1973) and Lucknow (Est. 1979).

The EFLU, which is at the apex of teaching languages and literatures in India, celebrated its Diamond Jubilee recently having grown from strength to strength beginning 1958 as a fledgling concept housed in a borrowed building; it evolved into the Central Institute of English (CIE). The CIE achieved a dominating presence in language teaching, becoming the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, popularly known as CIEFL, after the inclusion of three foreign languagesin 1972. In recognition of its outstanding performance, the University Grants Commission (UGC) upgraded it to a Deemed University in 1973. In 2007, the CIEFL was accorded its present status of a Central University by an Act of Parliament. The mandate of the English and Foreign Languages University is "to disseminate knowledge by providing instructional, research, and extension facilities in the teaching of English and Foreign Languages and Literatures in India and to develop critical intercultural understanding of civilizations". In the year 2000, EFLU was awarded a five-star accreditation and an 'A' grade in 2016 by NAAC.

The achievements of the EFLU were once again recognized when it became one of the five Central Universities in the entire country being granted Graded Autonomy in 2018 by the UGC, and only one of the two Central Universities in South India. Under Graded Autonomy, the University is empowered to start new Courses/Programmes, Departments/Schools/Centres in disciplines of its existing academic framework, and also hire faculty from the top-500 international institutions.

Prof. E. Suresh Kumar
Vice Chancellor, EFLU

The EFLU is distinguished by its commitment to ensuring quality education with learner autonomy through learner-centred approaches. The rich Ramesh Mohan Library, the state-of-the-art classrooms and teaching practices using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) help in sustaining this aim of innovative education. With seven Schools and twenty-six Departments, staffed by experienced, highly qualified and well-trained faculty, the University has been a nodal agency for training teachers of English from 85 countries through its short-term need-based proficiency-cum-professional development programmes.

Pioneering Initiatives for a Pervasive Presence

After Prof. E. Suresh Kumar assumed office as the Vice-Chancellor in 2017, several academic, co-curricular, and extracurricular initiatives have been initiated. A novel programme called Meet A Leading Light (MALL) has been introduced to inspire students to shape their personality through informal interactions with eminent people. A Music Club nurtures hidden talents, and widens horizons; an English Club encourages debates and discussions broadening intellectual horizons; a Placement Club facilitates direct student interaction with potential employers/companies and industries; and a Finishing School hones the students' social skills and business etiquette in addition to soft skills and life skills. A University-Industry Hub has been set up to establish an interface between the University and industry. Meet Your Vice Chancellor (MYVC), another initiative, provides an opportunity for Indian and foreign students to interact with the Vice Chancellor for a democratic and responsive University. Separate gymnasia for Indian men and women; with similar exclusive gymnasia for international students have been started for a rounded development of all.

The University has a strong commitment to society. As a first in India, the University Social Responsibility (USR), was introduced by Prof. Suresh Kumar at EFLU in 2017. Under this unique programme, Open Educational Resources (OERs) in English, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Russian, along with Sanskrit and Hindi will be available to the public free of cost. Among many other offerings under the USR is a Mobile App, EnglishPro, designed to deliver English pronunciation lessons in the 'Bharatiya way'.

The University has established a Research Acceleration Centre for augmenting a cross-pollination of ideas and promoting interdisciplinary research. The EFLU's Centre for Consultancy and Language Training (CCLT) serves various agencies in matters related to the teaching and learning of English. The Centre will conceptualize and offer need-based, tailor-made training programmes to various organizations and institutions.

Prof. E. Suresh Kumar with Vice President of India Shri Venkaiah Naidu on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of EFLU

Under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) projects of the Government of India, EFLU will revisit the Centres for English and Foreign Languages Training (CEFLTS) in Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. The University is proud to contribute to India's soft power.

The EFLU has introduced student-friendly Entrance Tests to various UG and PG courses and PhD programmes (English Stream). Candidates applying for any two courses and/or programmes do not have to appear twice for the test. With English Proficiency as a common component they only need to write their test/s in the domain-specific area.

EFLU during the COVID-19 pandemic

The University took farsighted and measured steps supplementing the precautionary measures adopted by the Government of India and the State Government of Telangana to contain the novel Coronavirus. Replacing face-to-face teaching sessions from 16 March 2020 and starting online teaching from 19 March 2020, the EFLU is probably the first university in the country to also have online viva voce examinations of PhD Scholars beginning as early as 19 March 2020, and ensuring that the lockdown did not delay their careers. Twenty-nine PhD viva voce examinations have been conducted

Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan, Governor of Telangana, at EFLU with VC, staff and students

so far with more already scheduled.

Under the proactive, visionary, and dynamic leadership of Prof. E. Suresh Kumar, EFLU became the first Central University in the country to have successfully conducted end-semester examinations online during the Coronavirus lockdown. Students pursuing various undergraduate, postgraduate, teacher education courses and PhD in all the three Campuses appeared for their end-semester examinations online. The exam results have been announced already.

The University followed up its academic achievements with successes in social responsibility and service. Under the aegis of the USR, the EFLU-University Social Responsibility Endowment Fund (EFLU-USREF) was created. Generating an initial fund from contributions by the staff, the University strengthened the hands of the Government in a humble way in spreading awareness on COVID-19 through jingles broadcast on FM Radio, Hyderabad.

On 23 April, 2020, Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank", Hon'ble Union Minister of HRD, launched the short-films produced by EFLU as a part of an awareness campaign against the Coronavirus. These films were brought out in Hindi, English, Telugu, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish languages on the themes 'Washing Hands' and 'Maintaining Social Distance.'

The University has been organising EFL University Lecture Series, a live interactive lecture series through Facebook Live from April 2020. Eminent professors from various fields give lectures with an objective of helping not only the students and teachers of EFLU but also anyone interested in those areas. This will ensure that the students and faculty benefit through interactions and exchange of ideas.

University Rankings

The EFL University proudly notes its first position in India Today-MDRA Survey, 2018, among Government universities for teacher-student ratio. The University is at the 8th rank in The Week-Hansa Best University Survey 2019, in the category of All India Central Multi-Disciplinary Universities.

The University was able to achieve these milestones under the dynamic leadership of Prof. E. Suresh Kumar, Vice Chancellor, EFLU, whose decisive measures steered the University in times of unprecedented challenges towards modernisation and optimisation of the University's resources—human and material, resulting in saving the academic year, and the careers of the students, which have actually become richer, and more relevant to society.

Prof. E. Suresh Kumar, VC of EFLU, speaking on the Independence Day

COURSES & PROGRAMMES OFFERED:

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES
B.A. (Hons.) English
B.A. (Hons.) Arabic
B.A. (Hons.) French
B.A. (Hons.) German
B.A. (Hons.) Japanese
B.A. (Hons.) Spanish
B.A. (Hons.) Russian
B.A. (Hons.) Korean
B.A. Journalism and Mass Com.

POSTGRADUATE COURSES
M.A. English (Cafeteria)
M.A. English Language Teaching
M.A. English Literature
M.A. Literatures in English
M.A. Comparative Literature
M.A. Linguistics
M.A. Computational Linguistics
M.A. Journalism and Mass Com.
M.A. Hindi
M.A. Hispanic Language and Literature
M.A. Russian Language and Literature
M.A. German Language and Literature
M.A. French Language and Literature
M.A. Arabic Language and Literature

TEACHER EDUCATION COURSES
Postgraduate Diploma in the Teaching of English (PGDTE)
Post Graduate Diploma in the Teaching of Arabic (PGDTA)
Bachelor of Education (BEd)
Postgraduate Diploma in Translation

PhD PROGRAMMES
PhD English Language Education
PhD Education
PhD Translation Studies
PhD Indian and World Literatures
PhD English Literature
PhD Comparative Literature
PhD Cultural Studies
PhD Aesthetics and Philosophy
PhD Film Studies and Visual Culture
PhD Linguistics and Phonetics
PhD Spanish Language and Literature
PhD Russian Language and Literature
PhD German Language and Literature
PhD French Language and Literature
PhD Arabic Language and Literature

The English and Foreign Languages University, Tarnaka, Hyderabad, Telangana, 500 007, +91-40-27689733, www.efluniversity.ac.in

FORTHWRITE

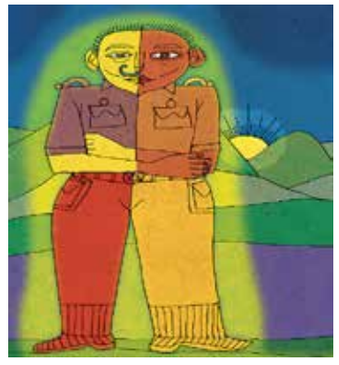
MEENAKSHI LEKHI

Transgenders in uniform

In a major push for gender reform, the Union home ministry is set to allow transgender persons to join paramilitary forces like the CRPF, the BSF, the CISF and the ITBP. We have already received approvals from the BSF, the CISF and the ITBP.

The decision is in line with the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, notified by the Central government in December 2019, under which no establishment can discriminate against transgender persons in matters relating to employment, recruitment and promotion.

The transgender community has for long been the most neglected part of society. So much so that they are denied the basic human right to exist within the respectable confines of society, thereby pushing them to maintain their own secretive subculture in an almost parasitic way. They often support themselves by begging, through sex trade and petty businesses. The only times they are allowed into the 'respectable settings' are during child birth and wedding functions, where they earn their livelihood, and two minutes of limelight and respect.



Not all transgender persons are identified at birth; some realise their identity as they grow up and find themselves caught in a wrong body. They often face harassment for their choices of attire, demeanour and behaviour. With minimal support from families—who tend to disown them because of societal pressure—no medical facilities for sex-change surgeries and lack of means to earn a respectable income, they are forced to live under shackles of poverty, relying on pre-defined roles to earn a livelihood.

According to a study published in *The Diplomat*, 51 per cent of transgender persons in India have faced some sort of physical abuse at the hands of either their own families or in the form of mob-lynching. The widely believed stories about their magical abilities to curse or bless, their make-up smeared faces and gaudy clothing mask the stories of sex trade, exploitation, cruel and dangerous castrations, and constant humiliation. They lead a life of broken reality where they crave for respect and inclusion in society. Eleanor Roosevelt and her team drafted the most visionary document ever that was adopted at the UN General Assembly in Paris in 1948—the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNHR). It sensitised the world about conscience, kindness, and equality for all.

Japan was the first country to recognise the third gender, when it passed an act in 2003. Even though it was a controversial law, as it mentioned gender identity could be a disorder, it still put the issues of transgender persons in the forefront. Later, the UK, Spain, Uruguay, Argentina and other countries followed suit and introduced their own versions of recognition of the third gender by law.

In India, the Supreme Court gave a historic judgment in National Legal Services Authority vs Union of India case, declaring transgender persons to be the third gender that had the right to self identification, making them eligible for reservation in jobs and educational institutions, which later transcended to the passing of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in August 2019.

It is pertinent to mention that transgender persons enjoyed a special status in ancient Hindu society. Lord Ram brought transgender persons from the forest into the city symbolising their respectful inclusion. Lord Krishna let Shikhandi, a male born in a female's body, take part in the Kurukshetra war. With the decision to let transgender persons take up leadership roles in paramilitary forces, the government is returning to the community its right to command respect, transforming its broken dreams into reality.

ILLUSTRATION **BHASKARAN**

Lekhi is member of Parliament • forthwriteml@gmail.com

D Y PATIL
DEEMED TO BE
UNIVERSITY
NAVI MUMBAI

30 year of excellence

UGC Approved

NAAC: 'A' Grade with CGPA of 3.40

The time that I spend with my students motivates me immensely. I derive my energy from them and would like to give it back to them by providing Qualitative Higher Education and Training them adequately while developing their competencies for Global Arena. We instill the Right Values, Right Thoughts, and Right Ethics so the students can truly excel in their lives as I believe to create World Class Institution we have to raise the standard of Indian Education. It always fills me up with immense joy to see batch after batch of students head out into the world equipped with the power of knowledge and an as-piration to create real impact in the world.

- Dr. Vijay D Patil
Chancellor

WORLD CLASS EDUCATION FOR THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

OUR ASSOCIATES & RECOGNITIONS

COURSES OFFERED

- School of Pharmacy
- School of Allied Health Sciences
- School of Architecture
- School of Hospitality & Tourism Studies
- Medical & Dental Fellowship Programes
- Courses in Sports & Exercise Science
- Ramrao Adik Institute of Technology
- School of Law Studies
- School of Nursing
- School of Physiotherapy
- DnyanPushpa Vidyaniketan CBSE School
- School of Occupational Therapy
- School of Ayurveda Studies

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Association of Indian Universities (AIU)

Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)

International Association of Universities (IAU)

Student Support

Comfortable Hostels
24*7 Cafeteria
World Class Sports Facilities
Medical Facility
Loan Facility
WiFi Enabled Campus

Academic Excellence

138 Academic Programs
4000+ Research Publications
1,00,000 +Alumni in the World
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1400 Bed Hospital
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R. VIVEK

DIGGING DEEP: CBI additional superintendent V.K. Shukla takes over the Sathankulam custodial death case; (above) Jayaraj and Bennix

Capital punishment

The custodial death of the father-son duo in Sathankulam has brought to the fore flaws within the home department

BY LAKSHMI SUBRAMANIAN

ON MARCH 24, the day the nationwide lockdown was announced, a video shot near Chennai's Spencer Plaza went viral. The video showed a cop managing traffic appealing to commuters with folded hands to stay indoors even as reports came in from many parts of the country that policemen had to resort to force to enforce the lockdown.

A few months later, however, the image of the Tamil Nadu police lay in tatters. The custodial torture and the death of a father and son in Sathankulam, a small town in southern Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district, has brought to the fore the flaws within the home department, which is headed by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami.

On June 24, as massive protests broke out in Sathankulam demanding justice for 58-year-old Ponraj Jayaraj and his 31-year-old son, J. Bennix, Palaniswami was in Coimbatore, reviewing Covid relief work. "The father died of respiratory illness and the son died of heart attack," said the chief minister.

It all began on June 18 after Jayaraj kept his mobile phone store open beyond the permitted time during the Covid-19 lockdown. After he allegedly questioned the police, he was taken to the police station the next day. Bennix, who went to the station looking for his father, too, was taken into custody. Eyewitness accounts said Jayaraj and Bennix bled from their anuses after the police roughed them up. According to a handwritten statement from the Sathankulam government hospital accessed by THE WEEK, there were multiple marks of violence on Jayaraj's and Bennix's buttocks. The son had a sulcus (depression) on the right knee.

"On June 20, we were asked to bring lungis for them, as they were being taken to the magistrate. They were bleeding from their buttocks," said Rajkumar, a relative of the deceased. Jayaraj and Bennix succumbed to their injuries on June 22. The Madurai bench of the Madras High Court took suo motu cognisance of the incident and asked the revenue department to take over the Sathankulam police station. It ordered a magisterial inquiry into the deaths and instructed the Crime Branch Criminal Investigation Department (CBCID) to investigate. The CBCID arrested inspector Sridhar, sub inspectors Balakrishnan and Raghu Ganesh and eight policemen.

But the government subsequently handed over the case to the CBI, prompting senior DMK leader Kanimozhi, who represents Thoothukudi in the Lok Sabha, to say that the AIADMK was trying to help the police.

The People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL) has, meanwhile, written to the chief minister to cancel the order transferring the case to the CBI. "In earlier cases like the Thoothukudi Sterlite firing case and the suicide case of IIT student Fathima Latheef, the CBI probe did not go forward. Moreover, the CBI does not have the manpower and infrastructure compared with the CBCID. So, the investigation might not move forward and turn in favour of the accused," said PUCL state general secretary K. Saravanan in his letter. The CBI's performance in cases such as the 2009 Madras High Court attack case and the death of DSP Vishnupriya has invited a lot of criticism.

Human rights activist Henry Tiphagne said the Sathankulam case was unusual in the history of Tamil Nadu. "For the first time ever, a court ordered revenue officials to take control of a police station," said Tiphagne, founder of People's Watch, a Madurai-based human rights organisation. "The judges spoke to head constable Revathy, [who gave a statement about the custodial torture], as she feared for her life for telling the truth. The police in this case had to give protection to their own constable."

The alleged involvement of four members of a community policing programme, Friends of Police, came in as yet another embarrassment for the police. FoP state administrator G. Lourduswami, however, said the four men were not part of the initiative and were volunteers enlisted by the local police for Covid-19 relief work. There were also allegations that the FoP at the Sathankulam station had links with Seva Bharati, an RSS-affiliated organisation. B. Rabu Manohar, the state secretary of Seva Bharati, however, denied the charges. Following the controversy, the FoP programme was banned by the government on the basis of a report by the director general of police.

The Tamil Nadu police saw a major reshuffle after the deaths. All 24 police personnel serving at Sathankulam station were transferred out in a single order. More than 50 senior officers were transferred statewide. Thoothukudi superintendent of police Arun Balagopalan was replaced by Villupuram SP S. Jeyakumar. He will serve with S. Murugan, the new south zone inspector general. Jeyakumar was the subject of a CBI probe in the 2018 gutkha scam; Murugan is under investigation in a sexual harassment case filed by a female IPS officer.

Sources in the police department said senior officers were chosen according to the whims and fancies of the ruling dispensation. A senior IPS officer, who was transferred from a high-profile post in a southern district to a low-profile post, said he did not want any prominent post under this government. "It will only add black marks to my career," he said.

A senior officer who was shunted out of Chennai said there was no rationale behind his transfer. "There were many differences among the DGP, the intelligence and the chief minister regarding the final list," he said. "The transfer, I feel, was done just by rolling the dice." Sources said the transfer file was pending with the chief minister for a fortnight, and changes were made based on requests by AIADMK leaders.

"The transfers were a curious exercise," said former DGP R. Nataraj, the current Mylapore MLA. "A particular system is followed by the home department for transfers, unlike in any other state."

INTERVIEW

Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, *MP for Thoothukudi*

There is suspicion that AIADMK is trying to help the police

BY LAKSHMI SUBRAMANIAN

AFP

Q/ Do you think the Sathankulam case has been blown out of proportion?

A/ I think every case of custodial torture and death should get this kind of attention. In this case, the father and son were middle-class businessmen who had no disputes with the police or anyone else. There are several other cases, which have not received attention. For instance, tribal people living outside the villages are picked up by the police when there is a minor issue... or after a protest. But we don't get to know. At times, there are protests against such torture. Sometimes, we let it go and feel that it is justified. The brutality and the consequent actions show that this could happen to you and me, so (the Sathankulam deaths) struck a chord with a lot of people.

Q/ Do you think there is a growing sense of impunity among the police in south Tamil Nadu?

A/ I will not say that this happens just in Tamil Nadu and that the Tamil Nadu police is wrong. This is happening across the country, but Tamil Nadu is second in India when it comes to police excesses, according to data from the National Crime Records Bureau. The police have to be aggressive at some point, but they have to understand that they are not the ones to inflict punishment.

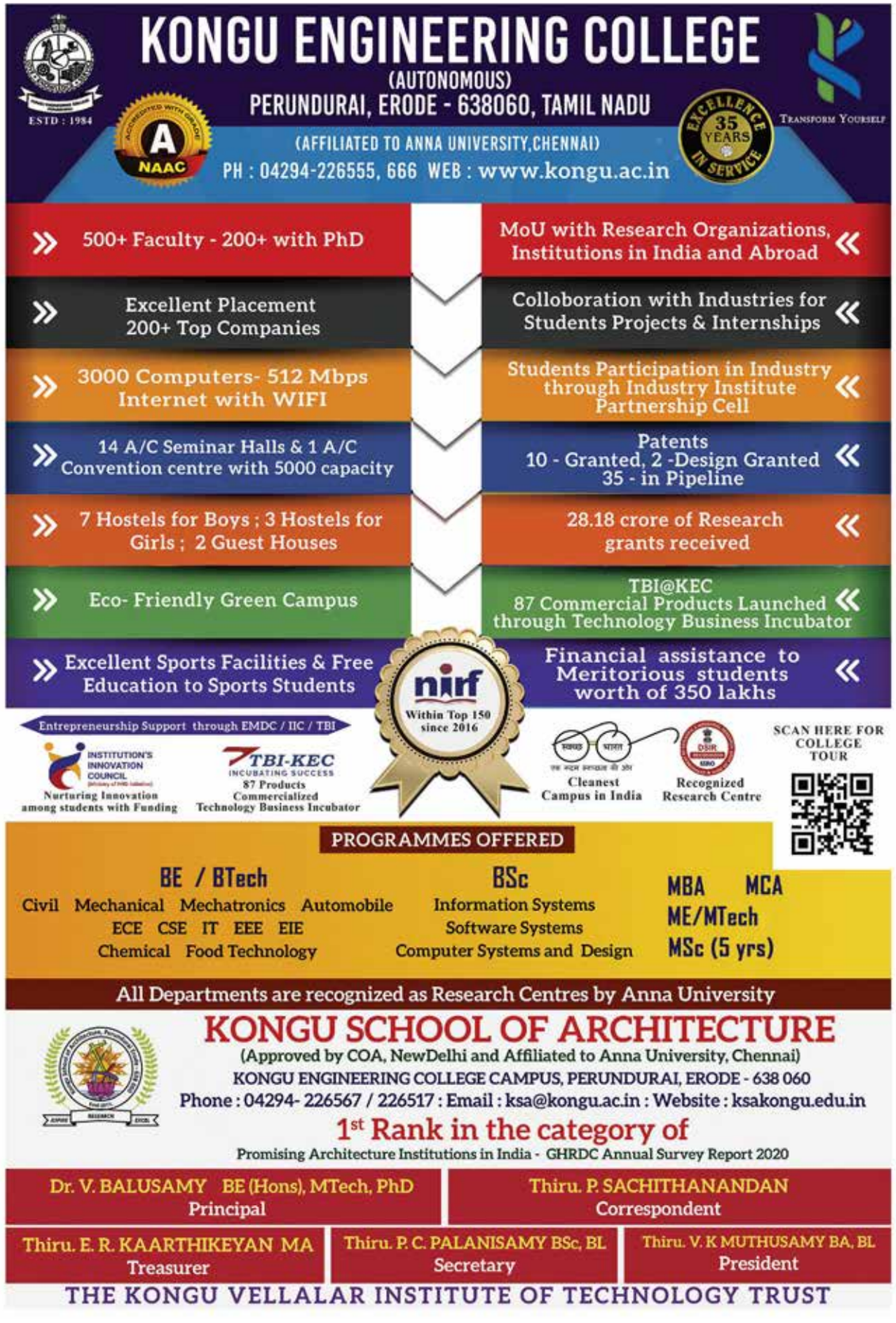
About the police in south Tamil Nadu, I will say that caste divisions in this region, particularly Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari, have been increasing because there are not many employment opportunities in this region. Despite getting a good education, the youth do not see an opportunity for a better life. This leads to caste clashes. To address this issue, [former chief minister] M. Karunanidhi appointed the Ratnavel Pandian Commission, which gave recommendations to bring down the caste clashes there. But successive governments did not take it forward.

Q/ The Sathankulam case has been handed over to the CBI. Many people, however, say the CBCID probe was progressing well.

A/ I want the investigating agency and the government to make sure that justice is done to the family. When the CBCID inquiry began, it was monitored by the court and there was pressure from the people on authorities which helped get some kind of justice.

Q/ There are allegations that the ruling AIADMK is protecting the police and that the case was transferred to the CBI only to save the accused policemen.

A/ The local minister from the Thoothukudi region spoke out in favour of the police and said it was not custodial death. There is strong suspicion that the ruling party is trying to help the police. But with the CBI taking over, I feel justice will be done.



LPU is now among the Top 10 institutes of India in NIRF 2020 Overall Ranking – (OI Parameter)

- *Scoring 67.68 points on 'Outreach & Inclusivity' parameter, LPU has surpassed most of the IITs, Central Universities, IIMs, NITs and many IISERs of the country.*
- *LPU has also been ranked among nation's top institutions for its various disciplines- 4th in Engineering; 13th in Management; and, 22nd in Pharmacy in OI parameter.*
- *More than 40,000 colleges and 1000+ Universities from across the country were eligible to apply for NIRF Ranking.*

Since its inception, Lovely Professional University (LPU) has been ranked among top institutions of the country in more than 20 prestigious overall researches and rankings. It has been consistently ranked as a top university in various areas including placements, quality education, industry interface, infrastructure, international relations and more. LPU's commitment to teaching excellence and providing the highest quality education to its students has once again brought laurels to it in 2020.

Now, Government of India's Human Resource Development Ministry has ranked LPU among nation's top 10 institutions on 'Outreach & Inclusivity (OI)' parameter in its latest NIRF 2020 ranking. Scoring 67.68 points on this parameter for HRD Ministry's annual NIRF Ranking of country's all Higher Education Institutions; LPU has surpassed most of the IITs, Central Universities, IIMs, NITs and IISERs of the country. Also, LPU has been counted among nation's top institutions for its various disciplines-4th in Engineering; 13th in Management; and, 22nd in Pharmacy in the OI parameter. The annual ranking list was released by HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal.

More than 40,000 colleges and 1000+ Universities from across the country were eligible to apply for this NIRF Ranking. LPU has earned this coveted ranking for its global, humane and social understanding while carrying forward global educational pursuits.

MR. ASHOK MITTAL
Chancellor, LPU

LPU has been overall ranked amongst the top 100 education institutes of the country; LPU Faculty of Pharmacy in top 30; Faculty of Management in top 50; and, Engineering in top 90. LPU has also got an overall university ranking of 78 among all the government and private universities of the country.

These ranking are a strong testimony to LPU's commitment to teaching excellence, strong placement, quality education and research. It's worth noting that this year on the placement front LPU has set the highest placement record in North India in terms of highest salary. Microsoft has selected its student at 42 lakhs annual package which is the highest in the region. Presently, from Google to Microsoft, LPU B Tech students are working with top brands at packages of over ₹ 1 Crore. Thousands of other LPU students are working with industry bigwigs like Google, Amazon, Capgemini and more. Cognizant, ranked 3rd among IT companies in the world, alone has hired 2226 students from LPU in just three years. Keeping up with its high standards, over 550 national and international companies visited the campus in 2019, including Hewlett Packard, Adobe, Xerox, Abbott, IBM, Cognizant, Microsoft and many more.

Congratulating LPU staff and students, Mr. Ashok Mittal, Chancellor LPU mentioned that these third-party ranking, especially NIRF which is the most prestigious and authentic ranking system in India, is a clear indication that LPU is growing in the right direction. There are so many universities and colleges who are much older than us but are not featured in the top 100 list. This clearly shows that LPU is a young and dynamic university which is following the latest trends in education and industry. Our strong placement records and repeatedly industry stalwarts coming to the University for the recruitment of our students shows that our students are industry-ready because of the rigours education system at LPU.

Amid COVID19 pandemic, there are a large number of students who are very worried about how to take the admission. LPU has decided to take the complete admission process online and now from application to admission, all processes can be completed through phone or laptop. University has also decided that students can attempt their entrance test LPUNEST through their home. The last date to apply for admission to LPU is closing soon.

*For more information on LPU's admission process please visit **www.lpu.in** or call at **1800 102 4057**. You can now also contact the university through WhatsApp on **09852569000***

Prestige Education Foundation: Application Orientation in Education

DR. DAVISH JAIN
Vice Chairman
Prestige Education Foundation

Those who forget the past get punished for suffering again. This is what has happened with the education system of our country. We adopted the educa-tion system of the British and we forgot the ancient Gurukul tradition of the country. In the era of slavery, we were constrained, but after independence, we could have switched to the Gurukul, which did not happen. The result today is that the graduate of today is rather low on employability.

Ancient Gurukul System focused on:

1) All round development of students
2) Interaction between student and teachers was more compared to present day
3) Class rooms inside forests, help students to be linked to nature, which keeps them healthy.
4) No pressure like test, exam, syllabus etc., which helps them to concentrate on concepts clearly.
5) No craving for ranks.
6) Last but not least, ancient Gurukul System was towards practicality rather than theory.

The Montisseri and the Kindergarten method introduced in the British era focused on strait jacketed education where one size fits all and the essence of practical wisdom went away.

A teacher is considered highly rated if he has done lots of research and has taught for long number of years. We never ask for the teacher's practical experience or any skill that he possesses.

Rankings become the objective of educational institutions.

Nevertheless we must learn to live with the rules of the road and obey them as well. The result is that whether it is a top of the line institute or lower ranked one the average student graduating has to be trained all over again in the place of employment: a colossal waste of time money and effort.

How then can we turn things around; What changes to the system are needed to make education relevant to industry to the nation and to life in general.

The first step is to identify what the end product should be, in other words define the parameters in the graduating student.

For instance BBA/MBA marketing and sales degree course teachers should first understand Sales Executive's responsibilities. They must know how to:

- Build business by identifying and selling to prospects; continuing relationships with clients.
- Identify business opportunities by identifying prospects and evaluating their position in the industry;
- Sell products by improving contact and

developing relationships with prospects; recommending solutions.

- Maintain relationships with clients by providing support, information, and guidance; research and recommending new opportunities;
- Identify product improvements or new products by remaining current on industry trends, market activities, and competitors.
- Prepare reports by collecting, analyzing, and summarizing information.
- Maintains professional and technical knowledge by attending educational workshops; reviewing professional publications; improving personal networks; benchmarking state-of-the-art practices; participating in professional societies.

For successfully achieving the above the skill set needed include the following:

- Presentation Skills
- Client Relationships
- Emphasizing Excellence
- Energy Level
- Negotiation
- Prospecting Skills
- Meeting Sales Goals
- Creativity
- Sales Planning
- Independence
- Motivation for Sales
- Patience
- Ability to handle rejection
- Maturity
- Numerical skills
- Perseverance
- Strategic leadership ability

Now let us take a hard look at what our institutions provide by way of training and skills to be able to discharge the function required. What our institutions lack is the imparting of skills, we impart knowledge only which unless practiced will never become a skill.

Further skills mature into attitudes and without the requisite skill and attitude we are just generating warm bodies at our institutions of higher education.

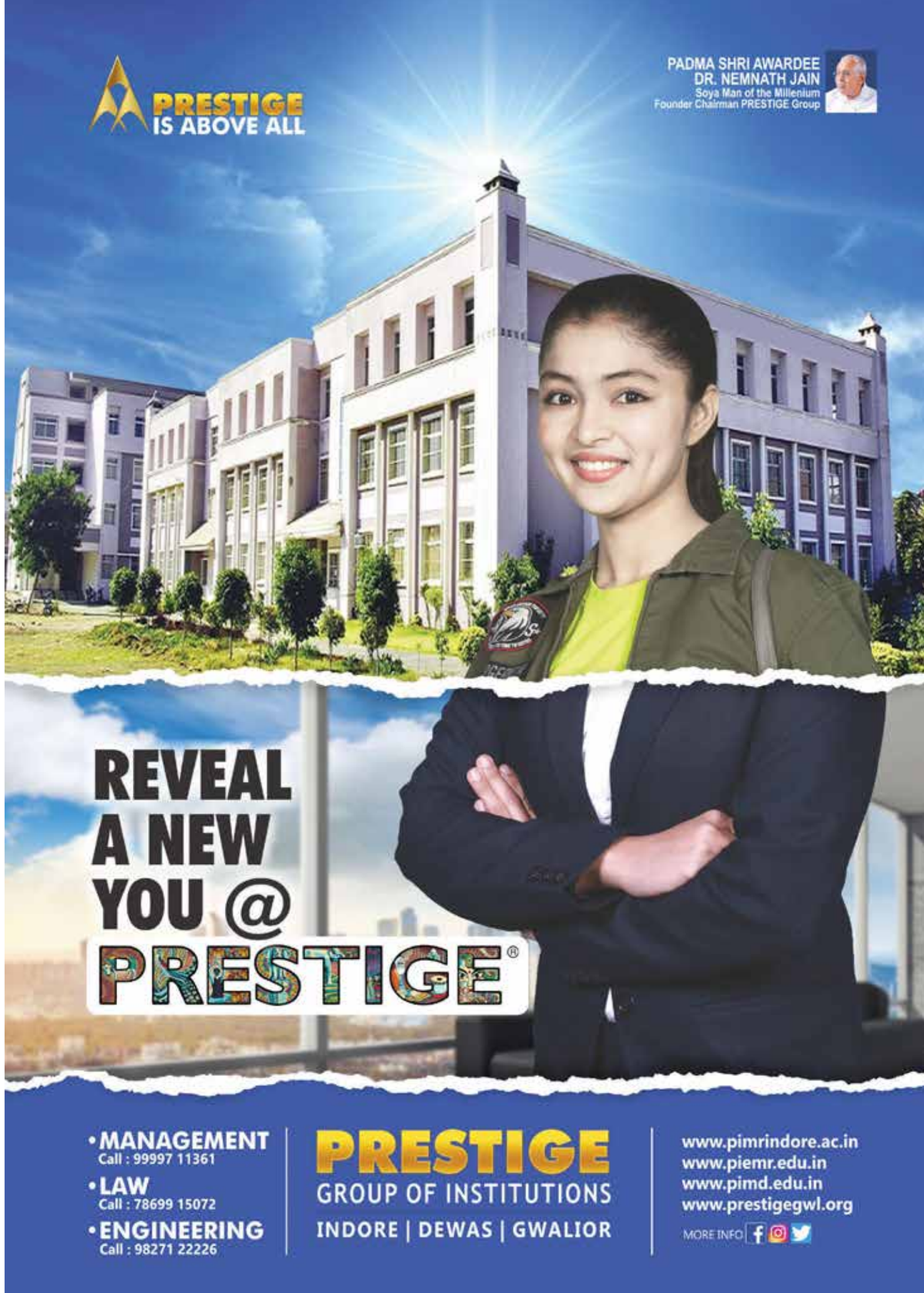
The Prestige Education foundation was created in 1994 The locations of Prestige Institutes of Management are Indore, Dewas, & Gwalior. In addition an Institute of Engineering and Secondary schools are operated by the group.

In its most recent announcement, the Prestige Education Foundation has embarked on a project to set up a university that shall be known as the Prestige University (PU).

In the Prestige Education Foundation we are focused on imparting relevant skills and adequate knowledge. We attempt to develop the attitude for positive performance.

Prestige University (PU), Indore will be a university with a difference. An institution of higher education PU will collaborate with the best in class university across the world to impart the most relevant knowledge. PU will also tie up with best in class corporates to create most relevant curricula and invite brilliant corporate leaders to augment the theoretical academic inputs.

We intend to provide techno commercial and industry relevant courses, imparting a blend of theory and practice within a state of the art infrastructure.



STRUCTURED VIRTUAL CLASSES COST MORE

MR. ADITYA BERLIA
Pro-Chancellor, Apeejay Stya University

Many stakeholders are under the misguided impression that "virtual" education is a boon for institutions-bringing down their costs-and therefore, they should consider passing those savings to students. Unfortunately, that is not the case for a vast majority of institutions.

First, they have had to pay a sudden and extraordinary amount to bolster their facilities and abilities to teach online. Starting from paying for expensive video conferencing systems and gears, to upgrading learning management systems and form processes, to even buying new laptops and hardware. With every company on the planet running towards digital, the cost of talent who can do this effectively has skyrocketed.

Second, their on-going expenses have not stopped, whether it is paying salaries to faculty, or rent or mortgage for the premises that allow them their regulatory approvals. Covid-19 planning has increased these expenses considerably as they have to upgrade their infrastructure to prepare for an eventual opening.

Third, many institutions are now discovering that even if they were technology-enabled and friendly, a 100% virtual environment requires a change in pedagogy which is often for the better. However, this change also increases faculty load and results in hiring. Studies have indicated that teaching loads could go up by as much as 2x to 3x as more effort will be needed to bridge the virtual gap.

The silver lining is that all this will hopefully result in new models of education, and a new regulatory framework to allow for it. Until then, please support your local institutions as they really need all the help.

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SGT University is well known for the wide variety of specializations it offers for the various undergraduate, postgraduate and professional programs. It imparts education in the interdisciplinary as well as conventional disciplines in the Faculties of Allied Science, Medical Sciences, Behavioral Sciences, Indian Medical System, Nursing, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Commerce and Management, and many more.

SGTU strongly believe that the rapidly changing world has no boundaries. Functioning on a large scale, SGT University inspires its students to see the big picture and help them identify their place in it. Our goal is to help our students harness their potential and transform themselves into exceptional individuals, so that they may elucidate their ideas and thus transform the world.

Also, SGT University is committed to the development of human capacities through the discovery & dissemination of knowledge and application through service. It endeavours to equip each student for effective and excellent leadership roles, and casting public and private policies, through strength in research and excellence in education, all dedicated to providing meaningful contributions to society. Talking about its vision, SGT University is an autonomous, international institution of distinction, primarily serving our country and developing the world in innovative and enduring ways.

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WHY SGTU?

SGT University is a fully-developed institutional place with modern infrastructure and academic aura. We offer a wide variety of programmes and our courses are designed to meet the needs of the market place. With ultra-modern facilities, its distinguished faculty, industry integrated programmes offer you the most suitable platform to help you achieve your goals. It not only offers academic regard but also provide opportunities for expanding the horizon. Festival and events are part of the bouquet of activities made available to every SGTians.

SGT University has established links with a number of Professional and Corporates and constantly review our portfolio to ensure that it meets both students' requirements and current sophisticated employer needs.

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SGT University has always endeavoured to work for the betterment of society by providing quality education and creating responsible citizens who are citizens of not just a country, but the citizens of the world.

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For more information, please visit our website at:
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THE INSTITUTE OF Company Secretaries of India
भारतीय कम्पनी सचिव संस्थान

SUPPORTIVE MEASURES TAKEN BY ICSI DURING LOCKDOWN

CS ASHISH GARG
President, ICSI

The Coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing lockdown has brought in one of the worst economic meltdowns in the world. No industry has been spared from the Covid-19 heat world over and so has been the education sector. Providing for a safe, healthy and technology driven learning environment has become more important than ever.

The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI), rising to the occasion, has demonstrated its preparedness in these trying times with a number of supportive measures for its stakeholders. From rolling out online short-term courses and free video lectures to providing revision classes and conducting mock tests for its students, ICSI has completely transformed its remote learning landscape to real-time.

Online self-assessment modules, a series of focused webinars, crash courses and online workshops are being conducted, to up skill it's members capabilities, enhance their knowledge base and unlock the professional opportunities during these challenging times.

The Institute of Company Secretaries of India-Registered Valuers Organisation (ICSI-RVO) also joined the bandwagon and introduced 50 hours Online Education Course on 'Valuation of Securities or financial Assets'.

Apart from making regular representations to various regulatory authorities to grant relief to stakeholders to combat the effect of Covid-19, as an extended arm of the regulatory authorities, ICSI has shown it's irrefutable support by deliberating on the various measures taken by the Government, clarifying matters with the help of MCA Officers and Company Secretaries.

Talking about the ICSI initiatives, CS Ashish Garg, President ICSI said "While the priority throughout has been of battling the pandemic through coordinated and concerted efforts, ICSI has been committed towards serving its stakeholders and supporting the Government of India in all its endeavours of building a stronger and self-reliant India".

Company Secretary Professionals have been working tirelessly with the MCA Officials for the specific objective of providing greater 'Ease of doing business' to all the stakeholders. This has resulted in faster processing of incorporation related applications, uniformity in application of rules and eradicating discretion.

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SOUND BITE | ANITA PRATAP

When Pax Americana wanes

An image sometimes captures an empire's decline. The iconic photograph of nurses wearing garbage bags as protection against Covid-19 illustrates America's waning. Decay is invisible in real time. Yet, the world watched as an unprepared and ill-equipped superpower was humbled by a tiny, invisible virus.

But the virus, like Donald Trump, is not the cause but the catalyst that accelerates existing problems. Trump shredded the US-led international order single-handedly, resulting in a disgraceful free-for-all. Instead of championing global efforts, the US became a Covid-19 medicine-grabbing buccaneer. When an imperium is no longer admired, respected or feared, it begins to unravel. Like a supernova, a superpower collapses when it runs out of fuel, when contradictory forces within collide.

To understand how empires end, one can study the last one that did—the Soviet Union. Empires implode because of "self-delusion", observed Soviet dissident Andrei Amalrik. Magnificent visions collide with contradictory, grim ground realities. Soviet grandeur fuelled spacecrafts to Venus, but ordinary people struggled for toilet paper.

Delusions of American exceptionalism is pervasive. Polls show 90 per cent of Americans believe egalitarianism is the top national ideal. Yet, studies confirm that the US is one of the most unequal societies in the world—stratified by racial injustice, rising poverty, declining mortality rate, plummeting industrial employment spanning five decades, collapsing infrastructure, failing schools, soaring deficits, staggering debt, unsafe cities, deteriorating health systems, outdated gun laws and popular pandemic beliefs that facemasks violate civil liberties and "Jesus is my vaccine". America still has the world's richest people, best universities, companies, entertainment and is the hub of excellence and innovation. But the cracks caused by these contradictory forces have widened to chasms, deep and structural. Is this damage repairable? Is there a moral or economic glue to fix this polarised nation?

It is difficult because ideology fails the US exactly as it did the Soviet Union. Once "sacred", capitalism has evidently gone rogue. It has spawned plutocrats who get richer by stymying scrutiny, blocking regulation and rigging democracy by engineering favourable laws. Communism had its proletariat, capitalism has its "precariat"—an underclass of the exploited—as described by author Martin Sandbu. Inhabiting this parallel universe are essential workers like drivers, cleaners and care workers who live precariously on temporary jobs, low wages and erratic shifts. The poor live on prayer. As Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev says, "The poor do not fear the end of time, they fear the end of the month." Even US allies agree that the "idea" of America as prosperous, powerful, free and fair has run out of fuel. Disillusioned with toxic American capitalism, they turn to Scandinavian socialism or as economist Thomas Piketty labels "participatory socialism".

Like massive stars, empires self-destruct, with peripheries breaking away, leaving behind a contracting core, what astronomers call "the white dwarf". The earlier empires have left behind their geographical dwarfs—Britain, Russia, Turkey, Italy and Austria. Pax Americana will end, but the United States will survive. But will it remain united or will it fragment like all previous empires? Liberal California on the periphery is the world's fifth biggest economy; already there is talk of "Calexit".

A supernova is a dying star's "last hurrah". But an empire's collapse is rarely marked by a thunderous explosion. The end meanders in drips and drabs, in everyday failures, in sad whimpers and pathetic sights, unheard, unnoticed, unremembered. Like bankruptcy, the decline of an empire happens gradually, then suddenly.

ILLUSTRATION **BHASKARAN**

Pratap is an author and journalist.

Modern Education: Elixir for India

By Dinesh Goyal - President, Federation of Educational Publishers in India and
M.D Goyal Group of Publishers

MR. DINESH GOYAL

President, Federation of Educational Publishers in India
with HRD Minister Honorable Shri. Ramesh Pokhriyal

Education is important for an individual and vital for a society, nation and the wider world. In a way, Education is the lifeline of human society. Without Education the existence of humans as a social being can-not even be imagined. Education is the medium through which the socialization of an individual begins right from the time of his or her birth. Today in India, education is on a cross-road. The government, the policy makers, the parents, the school administrators and the educationists, all are grappling with the problem of what should the right form and structure of Education be in India. Discussing the challenges of education in India **Rev. Fr. Antony, Director Education Punjab-based Jalandhar Diocese of Catholic Schools** says, *"Today's education system is heavily tilted towards a marks-oriented learning system and as such the minds of the learners get stifled at such a stage when they should be asking more and more questions and freely exploring to seek for the answers"*. So is the view of **Dr. Dharamveer Singh, Principal Director, Sri Guru Harkishan Public School, Amritsar,** as he says, *"Today, it is more important to lay emphasis on first building a highly creative, enquiry-based, empathetic and collaborative system of education for ultimately making it effective with the present techno-savvy and social media dependent generation of students"*. Advocating the same view, **Zubair Ahmed, Head of Operations, Springdales School, Dubai, UAE** puts forward his concept of *"Customization of Education"*, in which he elaborates 'the importance of the contextualization of the curricula which are followed in the schools in terms of the learner's need and limitations'. Following the same line of thought, **Wasim Yousuf Bhat, Dean Academics, Habitat Schools, UAE** says, *"The education system has to be responsive and geared towards intellectual, creative, psychological, emotional and social needs of the child. Curricular design need to be essentially altered to get realized such objectives"*. Throwing light on the same thought **Sanjay Sardana, Director, Manav Mangal Group of Schools** says, *"Gen Z group of learners, as we have them today in huge number, have their new demands and interests and this can be addressed only when we have an education system which acts as Sanjeevni Bootee (medicine) for all the stakeholders of education, the teachers, the students and the parents"*.

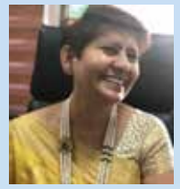
"The place of Education is both formal and informal in human life", says **Mrs. S Singh, MD, Goodley Public School, Delhi.** As she explains, *"Generally informal education happens within the family of an individual, significantly immediately after his or her birth. But the formal Education takes place in social institutions which are constituted by important social factors like schools, teachers, curriculum, policies, administrative structures and lastly the main target group, the students"*. **Anup Bowry, Chairman, Innocent Heart Group of Institutions, Jalandhar** extends upon this by saying, *"The combination of formal skills and the soft skills which often are sought to be infused and inculcated in the individuals, is the need of the hour"*.

Suggesting the possible avenues for educational advancement in India, **Gargi Manju, Founder Principal, Tender Heart School, Ranchi** says, *"Education always requires a conscious and specially-tried effort by the individuals and these individual acts are essentially social by nature"*. Similarly says **M Das, Principal, SDSM School, Sidhgora, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand,** *"Schooling is a subset of education because education is not merely what is learnt in school but the sum total of all the experiences, the child gains during his or her days of education"*. Talking about the judicious mix of formal and informal systems of Education, **Naveen Goswami, MD, St. Margaret Group of Institutions, New Delhi** says, *"There is indeed always an element of formality even in the informal or non-formal ways of education. Nevertheless it is always seen that informal inputs play very crucial roles in making the education system vibrant and highly effective"*. Elaborating further on this view **Farino Torcato, Senior English Teacher, St Xavier's Collegiate School, Kolkata,** says, *"In the modern life time, this aspect of education is termed as soft skills clearly differentiated from the basic skills and worldly knowledge which are generally the core objectives of any formal education system"*.

Rajesh Singh, Pro Vice Chairman, DPSNK, further enlightens on this by saying, *"If the education system lays emphasis on just the Cognitive Skills (which is the combination of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy and the HOTS) and is ignorant of the soft skills (which is largely constituted by SEL i.e. social and emotional learning), then the education system is ineffective and unsuitable for a country like India"*.

Zubair Ahmed Khan, Principal and HOI, International Indian School Dammam, Saudi Arab expresses his allegiance to this view and suggests that *"It can be realized only through public-private partnership"*.

Throwing light on the tenets of the Draft New Education Policy 2019, **Kiran Dalal, Principal, Bright Scholar School, Sonipat, Haryana** highlights that *"It lays emphasis, in its preamble, on the combination of formal skills which are heavily focused on knowledge systems and the soft skills which often are sought to be infused and inculcated in the individuals, naturally, rather informally"*.



Extending upon this idea of education, **Navita Puri, Principal Kundan Vidya Mandir, Ludhiana,** says *"India always had in its tradition an effective system of learning and skills development, mostly happening naturally and informally in the social setting of an individual, thus making the system highly self-sufficient"*. **Dr. Meenakshi Gupta, S D Public School, Patel Nagar, New Delhi** enlightens on the subject by her explanation that 'the fabric of traditional education system got destroyed when Britishers introduced formal system of schooling in India. With that, India lost not only the treasure of knowledge carried out in its rich tradition of high intellect and academics but also the great values and practices of formal-informal learning embedded in the tradition'. **Poonam Saxena, Principal, Scholar Global School, Haryana,** extends upon that by saying, "This was the reason why Mahatma Gandhi strongly objected the continuation of the education system set by the British government in the country and advocated his concept of basic education. An important aspect of his proposal was the introduction of local crafts and productive skills in the schools of India, with the declared aim of making the school itself a productive institution."

As **Ram Singh, Principal DPS, Ranchi** explains, *"The school education in India has various levels. It is vast and complex. What we do today and will do tomorrow depend largely on the status of education in our country"*. Broadly, there are three kinds of schools in India – Central, State and Local. The ratio of public-private ownership of schools is roughly 76:24. By a rough estimate there are 15 lakh schools and 26 Cr students at the K to 12 levels in India. By statistics, Education in India is largely under the states of the Union of India. Hence the governance system of the schools in India is largely federal. Each state has its own Education boards to which are affiliated thousands of schools. In addition to the State Boards there are central boards like CBSE with approx. 23 thousand schools, CSICE which has 22 hundred schools and International school boards like CIE, IB or Edexcel which have about 700 associated schools in India. In addition to this, local

units of the government like municipalities and councils too own a large number of schools. But across all these schools, there are some common aspects which are crucial for the education system of India.

The first important aspect of any Education system in India is that it should have enough strength to ensure a stable and strong socialization of the student. It is a fundamental and eternal aspect. **Vikram Seth, Director, Holy Hearts School, Amritsar** highlights the importance of education's role in ensuring a healthy socialization of an individual by saying, *"A child after his/her birth grows within the four-walls of his or her family and as such receives the first education from his/her mother and family surrounding. This happens completely at informal level and this stage is completely dependent on the family's culture, value and status"*. Extending on this view, **Pawan Vats, Director, Heera Public School, Samalkha, Delhi,** says, *'Every individual has the right, particularly now guaranteed by the Right to Education in India, to grow as a good citizen of the country. For this, after the early years of learning at home, the child goes to school for further education. From this stage the process of formal education begins. Academic knowledge is just a part of education from this stage onward. The student learns several other skills in the formal environment of the school which are very crucial for his or her personality building'.*

The second important aspect of Education is the issue of making every student a good citizen of India. In the school, the child gets exposure to both the scholastic and curricular as well as the co-scholastic or co-curricular skills and in this way the education ensures an all-round holistic development of his or her personality. For example, it will be a big mistake to consider any learning done by means of e-learning or distance learning as fulsome and pedagogically complete although the teaching and learning taking place through e-learning mode is definitely praise-worthy.

In terms of the issues and problems of Education in India, as talked about and highlighted by NitiAyog recently and also discussed in the office of Shiksha Vibhag, Shastri Bhawan with me in the role of a member secretary, the focus of school education must have 4 essential divisions. Instead of keeping 80 % of the education as academic as in general practice today, the scholastic part should occupy maximum 50 % of space in the education system. The second important area of education is Physical Activities and it should occupy 30 % of the space. As highlighted by Rev. Fr. Antony, "The subject of Physical Education needs to be given more importance in the school system. Good facilities are useless if there is lack of adequate time and qualified teachers of Physical Education in the schools". Another important area is that of social skills and it should have a space of 10 % in the education system. In the modern life time, when the pressure and challenges in human life have increased over the time, in leaps and bounds, 10 % space for development of emotional skills is also very important. As says, **P K Sahgal, Chairman, Adarsh Public Schools Group, New Delhi,** *"Today, in the fight for livelihood, Emotional Quotient (EQ) of a person is considered to be more important than the Intelligence Quotient (IQ). In job interviews, the employers check the EQ of a person before the IQ"*. **Samita Pincha, Headmistress, Ballygunge Senior Secondary School,** West Bengal further throws light on this idea by explaining, "That social and emotional learning helps in improving not only student's personality but also school's climate".

The third important aspect of Education is how much it is oriented to enable the students for having a secured livelihood. Throwing light on the importance of this aspect of education, says **Jyoti Arora, Principal Mt Abu School, Rohini, Delhi,** *"It is a welcome step that the Government of India has, in the recent past, introduced various vocational subjects as the subjects of study in the secondary and the senior secondary school system. But these subjects have been kept in the elective category by the policy makers. These are optional subjects unfortunately. Due to this reason, these have not become very popular among the students"*.

A big reason for the students keeping away from most of the optional subjects, in spite of their willingness to adopt it, is that they all suffer from the psychosis of scoring highest marks in all the subjects. Marks and not the content of study is the most important criteria of study and skills acquisition today. Highlighting this issue, **Harmeet Kaur Waraich, Principal, Nankana Sahib Public School, Ludhiana,** says, *"This competitiveness driven by our examination system is detrimental to the overall education of the children. It is harming the entire nation because it is depriving several potential individuals from achieving marvels in life on various other platforms which are genuinely matched with their likes, interest and personality traits. Often the possible potential winners of individual fields are turned out to be failures in their bid of scoring high marks in their core-subject based examinations"*. **Dipankar Gupta of Aditya Group of Schools, West Bengal** cautions us by saying, *"There is an urgent need of changing this pattern of "rat race for marks", inbuilt in our country's education system which has swelled and settled down terribly over our entire social set-up"*.

One way of putting a brake on this pattern is to make one vocational subject compulsory from grade 9 upwards. In fact, there is a need of revamping our learning system guided by school syllabus with the core objective of limiting the space of pure theoretical knowledge in it and increasing the scope of application-based skills development. Our education system must ensure that the students get semi-skilled at least in one vocation after passing Grade 10 Board examination and fully skilled after passing the Grade 12 Board examination.

Such arrangements will also help in the betterment of the serious drop-outs figures with which the education system of India seriously suffers today. The Government of India has spent several thousand crores of rupees over its flagship educational programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid Day Meal Programme, Rasthriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, etc. In spite of this, the drop out problem has not improved in the country. Over 3 Cr. children (by a rough estimate) get enrolled in Grade 1 of the schools across all over India and then, quite ironically, the enrolment in Grade 10 gets reduced to just 1 Cr.

Why do all the schemes of the government fail in retaining or improving the enrolment in schools? The reasons are varied. **Sonali Sen, Principal, Delhi Public School, New Town, Kolkata,** points out, *"Our faulty examination system, which is heavily focused on the testing of just empirical knowledge of the students, is centrally responsible for the inherent weakness of our education system. First of all, we urgently need to change the system of assessment in our schools"*. As commonly suggested by several experts, the weightage of pure text-based academic knowledge should not be more than 50 % in the education system, 30 % weightage should be on physical work involving sports, performing arts , fine arts etc, 10 %weightage should be on social work and the last 10 % weightage should be on emotional work .

The fourth and one of the important aspects of education, especially when there is widespread erosion of good values among the youngsters, is its valuable role in preparing the student towards nation-building and the humanity at large. For this, **Daljeet K Bhandari, Mata Gurjari School, G.K. New Delhi** says, *"The education system must have provisions of prompters which have the capacity to instill interest in the child in the history, geography, culture, and people of India"*.

Highlighting the value of this aspect, **Ashok K Jethy, Director, Mothers Global Education Society, Preet Vihar, Delhi** explains, *"The Draft New Education Policy talks about lessons based on the inculcation of constitutional values such as democratic outlook, commitment to liberty and freedom, equality, unity in diversity, etc . The knowledge which the schools impart is not the end in itself. But it is definitely an essential platform for a balanced growth of an individual. Without schools, a robust growth in terms of social and emotional skills of an individual is next to impossible"*. **Sukanta Ghosh of Delhi Public School, Siliguri** highlights the role of education in balancing and fulfilling the social life of individuals with elaborate detailing of the current trend of online learning accelerated by Covid 19 driven lock-down. He delineates with examples how education bridges the gaps created by circumstances and how it serves the significant purpose of ensuring a better and more meaningful and purposeful life in the future. Speaking on the same line of thought, **Bhawna Malik, Principal, Lovely Public School, East Delhi,** asserts that *"The classroom teaching must have a constant connect with the outer world –physical and social both. This is a lesson learnt by all the stakeholders of education during the Corona driven school closure"*. Hence, the education received in the school must have the intrinsic capacity to produce a knowledgeable and skillful citizen, a physically and health-wise strong individual, a socially well-integrated person and an emotionally balanced being.

A vital task for today's India is to weld out its vast population of 130 Cr into a progressive united whole in which all individuals feel more integrated to the whole than to his or her own self, thereby forming a strong social solidarity in the nation. At the end, in the words of **S L Jain, An Educationist and Former Chairman National Progressive School Conference,** let me reiterate that the *"Education reforms and an overhaul of the system are the most immediate requirements of the day. We hope that our policy makers will rise to the occasion and pave the way for building a solid ground for a system of progressive, wholesome, inclusive and equitable education in India"*. **Ashu Tiwary, Motilal Nehru Public School Jamshedpur, Jharkhand** sums up the whole matter beautifully by saying, "It is high time we focus on WALT (What I am learning/teaching) and WALF (What I am learning for)".

GETTY IMAGES

PAST PERFECT
Students at the 2019 convocation ceremony at Savitribai Phule Pune University

Degrees of change

In the age of online courses and webinars, the chalk-and-talk format must reform itself

BY REKHA DIXIT

There is an unprecedented quiet across university campuses. At a time when students would have been setting out with their parents to compare different campuses and been dreaming of dormitory living, they are cooped up at home. The Class 12 results have only just been declared, and as colleges announce cut-off percentages over the next week, the activities will all be online, the campuses remaining silent. Seniors, who would have been strutting around corridors, planning fresher parties and college society inductions, are listlessly playing PUBG or surfing through stale programming on Netflix, as they wait for their online semester to begin, maybe in August. Final year students of Central universities are still not sure whether they will have exams or not. While the University Grants Commission (UGC) said all final year exams should be done by September, state governments are protesting the need to conduct them.

Academic year 2019-20 will be remembered for the abrupt way it ended—for many, without even a farewell party, let alone a proper convocation ceremony; for some, midway between exams. Academic year 2020-21, on the other hand, will be another experiment entirely, what with the uncertainties around the pandemic forcing authorities to repeatedly change plans. By how much should the curriculum be reduced to fit into a shrunken semester? What component of instruction should be online, and would there be any offline classes at all this semester, or even this entire academic year? What about courses like hotel management, medicine or physiotherapy, where the bulk of learning is on the job and not in class?

This summer has been a learning experience for educators. When the pandemic forced institutions to shut abruptly in mid-March, universities were left in various stages of incompleteness. In the peninsula, where the academic session winds up in March, some courses were frozen midway through the examinations. Up north, classrooms were emptied halfway through the teaching session.

Education was one of the first sectors to immediately adapt to the new reality as institutions began exploring options of continuity online. Managements quickly rustled up modules to train faculty to become online educators, a specialisation with an entirely different skill set. They did such sessions for students, too. "Students did not need much initiation as the virtual world was already their comfort zone," said Sanjay Srivastava, vice chancellor, Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies. "Teachers were more resistant, but they finally got around to understanding the new medium. We incorporated different approaches like consultative classes, where more than one faculty member presides over a lecture, and flip lectures, for which students need to prepare for the topic of the day in advance, and anyone can be asked to speak on it. We finished the semester, conducted exams—mostly online, but in person for postgraduate courses—and declared results."

The response was quick and efficient in private universities, which have autonomy. Central and state-run institutions moved at a slower pace, facing resistance at each step from various unions, whether it was for conducting classes online or in assessing students, online or in person. Thus, while students of these universities are still awaiting a decision on end-term exams, the UGC's announcements have not impacted most private institutions; almost all of them have completed the academic year, declared results and made preparations for opening up the new term. They are now awaiting government directions on opening.

In the early months, teachers' unions in government institutions felt screen time cannot compensate for physical lectures as online

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BEST UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA

THE WEEK- Hansa Research survey 2020

2019	RANKING	2020	MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITIES	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	→	1	**JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY**, DELHI	830
2	→	2	**BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY**, VARANASI	802
3	→	3	**UNIVERSITY OF DELHI**, DELHI	779
4	→	4	**UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD**, HYDERABAD	667
5	→	5	**JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY**, KOLKATA	660
6	→	6	**ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY**, ALIGARH	654
7	↓	9	**SAVITRIBAI PHULE PUNE UNIVERSITY**, PUNE	586
8	↑	7	**UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA**, KOLKATA	595
9	↑	8	**JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA,** DELHI	590
10	→	10	**ANDHRA UNIVERSITY**, VISAKHAPATNAM	546

Continued on page 61

2019	RANKING	2020	TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	→	1	**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)**, MUMBAI	734
2	→	2	**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)**, CHENNAI	703
3	→	3	**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)**, DELHI	635
4	→	4	**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)**, KANPUR	606
5	→	5	**BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCES (BITS) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY),** PILANI	564
6	→	6	**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT),** ROORKEE	507
7	→	7	**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT),** GUWAHATI	484
8	↓	9	**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT BHU),** VARANASI	480
9	↑	8	**ANNA UNIVERSITY,** CHENNAI	472
10	→	10	**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT),** TIRUCHIRAPPALLI	469

Continued on page 62

GRAPHICS **SREEMANIKANDAN S.**

connectivity in India is patchy and many students would be left out of the loop. Given that students had returned to hometowns, and not every home has seamless internet connectivity, many objections were, to a point, justifiable. Massive glitches marked Delhi University's recent mock test with the website crashing repeatedly, giving the protest against a mandatory end-term exam a sound argument.

"Private institutions are more adaptable. They have autonomy. They also have more investments in modern learning aids," said Tej Pratap, president, Association of Indian Universities (AIU). However, as the new academic year rolls out, the writing on the screen is clear: Tech up or perish. "Internet is the new electricity," said Sanjay Sarma, vice president (open learning), Massachusetts Institute of Technology, at a webinar on the future of learning post Covid-19. "The 21st century didn't begin in 2000, it begins in 2020. We now enter the information age."

How geared is India towards the new requirements? "Data shows that only around 12 per cent of Indian households have proper systems at home like uninterrupted electricity and good internet coverage. These are challenges," said C. Raj Kumar, vice chancellor, O.P. Jindal University, Sonipat. "Even if universities have the capability of delivering education online, the fact is many will remain out of the net. These are issues that the government needs to address through public policy. We need a bandwidth revolution now on the lines of the mobile revolution 15 years ago."

India had already started taking steps towards the virtual future, the government's massive open online courses (MOOCs) like Swayam and ePathshala predate the pandemic. In 2019, the UGC had told universities they could begin registering online courses with it. Amity University was the early bird and already offers 24 degree and diploma programmes online, including an MBA. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her budget speech, when the lockdown had not been envisioned, said the top 100 universities of the country would soon roll out full-fledged online courses. A few weeks ago, IIT Madras announced the world's first online BSc degree in programming and data science. This course frees applicants from the straitjacketed prerequisites of age limit or clearing the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) or even a fixed subject combination in high school. It also allows exits with qualifications—after the first year, the student gets a diploma, after the second an advanced diploma, and a degree on clearing the third year. As an IIT official said, developing such a course took time and vision, and was not a knee-jerk response to the pandemic. The government has already cleared the decks to allow students to pursue two degree courses simultaneously, one online and one college-based.

It is becoming increasingly clear that at least the first semester of the new year might be entirely online. "If students return to the campus, it will be a bonus, but we are prepared for an entire semester online," said Rupamanjari Ghosh, vice chancellor, Shiv Nadar University, pointing out that even if governments give the green signal, students may not return due to travel issues or fear of infection. "It didn't take long to shift our teaching online," said Ghosh. "We even opened up library resources for students, but we noticed fatigue showing after a month and realised we need to make adjustments in the online mode of teaching." Their new curriculum, therefore, has considered such issues.

One major concern is the effect that such a shift in environment has had, or will have, on the mental health of those involved. "Numerous studies are pointing out the psychological impact of the lockdown and of adapting to the new setting where the home environment is undergoing a fundamental change," said Nissar Ahmed, chancellor, Presidency University. "New educational models and policies need to incorporate norms for the mental and emotional well-being of not only the students but also that of the teachers and the non-academic and support employees, developing strategies that benefit

Numerous studies are pointing out the psychological impact of the lockdown.... New educational models and policies need to incorporate norms for the mental and emotional well-being of [all concerned].

Nissar Ahmed, chancellor, Presidency University

AAYUSH GOEL

COMFORT ZONE
Students at Aligarh Muslim University (file photo)

the psychological well-being of the whole community."

A new reality awaits education on the other side of the pandemic. As Aditya Berlia, pro chancellor, Apeejay Stya University, noted, while the global experiment with online learning gave faith and confidence to regulators to move towards virtual systems, it has just as surely underscored the importance of physical classrooms and academic structures. Education is more than just attending lectures and writing exams, it is a 360-degree exposure for students, including social interactions, club activities and sports. But these brick-and-blackboard structures will have to transform now. "When proximity is returned to us, our classroom lectures should not be replicating what Zoom lectures are doing now," said Sarma. A monotonous lecture that the student can catch a recorded version of later is no incentive to sit through a period in the classroom.

Ishita Choudhary from Jaipur, who is seeking admission into the world of degrees, is clear about what she wants from her college. "I want an institution with a good reputation, and where I can focus on extracurriculars along with academics, as I am not very studious," she said. The pandemic has made no change in her choice of varsities. It is a temporary situation, she believes. "I would still prefer a residential campus as it gives better exposure," she said. Siddhant M., a history student in a Delhi University college, however, has now factored in the distance from home into his choice of institutions for a postgraduation.

While Covid-19 may have accelerated adoption of technology in education, both traditionalists and the avant-garde concur that the future is blended, or hybrid. "We have realised that one cannot be dependent on just one mode of education, and that there is a need to have alternatives ready to cope with any kind of challenge," said Atul Chauhan, chancellor, Amity University. "The pace at which we adapt and adopt will define our future goals."

So, in what way should education transform? "The focus should be more on coaching, not lecturing," said Sarma. The lockdown also put the spotlight on another education essential—examinations. With colleges having scrambled to grade students (of junior batches) on class performance and assignments, the examination might lose the top slot in the knowledge-assessing system. Even the resistant are having to accept that there can be alternative means of assessing students. "The UGC is encouraging students to collect credits through the Swayam MOOC. These are positive trends," noted Devinder Narain, director, Shobhit University.

"In India, we have all been eagerly

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NUMERO UNO
Jawaharlal Nehru University campus, Delhi

waiting for a new education reform policy due for more than a decade," said Berlia. "Hopefully, the lessons learnt from Covid-19 will be considered and become part of a transformative new eco-system."

Indian higher education could benefit in many ways from the pandemic. Not only could it accelerate policy changes and technology adoption, but it could also climb up a rung or two on the international scene. As it is, the uncertain global scenario has made many cancel international study plans or at least defer them. Can the desi varsities provide them with the alternative they seek?

Universities like Amity have programmes where students can study in part in India, and then transfer to a foreign university that Amity has tied up with. "Many students are joining this programme now," said Chauhan. The university also has a lateral entry programme for those who were studying abroad but do not want to return.

Beyond such programmes, however, should be the aim to make the Indian university the coveted choice, both for Indians and foreign students, said Raj Kumar. The government's Institutions of Eminence (IoE) scheme, launched in 2017, envisages this. The plan is to finally select 20 institutions, 10 public
and 10 private, and encourage them to develop into "world-class teaching and research institutions". These institutions, which include Banaras Hindu University, Delhi University, four IITs—Bombay, Delhi, Kharagpur, Madras—Indian Institute of Science and Hyderabad University, among the government institutions, will get a grant of up to ₹1,000 crore over a period of time to attain the goal. The private universities do not get the money, but all IoEs, public and private, will be given more autonomy in setting up curriculum, fee structure and international tie-ups.

The pandemic will also have a limited impact on course and career choices. The medical field—MBBS, nursing and physiotherapy—will be more in demand. With the acceleration of the technological revolution, many might seek futures in developing tech solution to emerging situations. Research options might also open up, what with the hunt for a vaccine and cure on the one hand, and economic and social studies of the impact of the pandemic on people on the other providing new avenues for study. Of course, this depends on the availability of research grants. These are, however, trends that will emerge over the next few years. For the immediate batches, the pandemic will not make much impact on course choices, feel experts.

"They say we are living in a VUC world—volatile, uncertain, complex," said Ghosh. "But I have my interpretation of VUC: virtual, understanding, clarity. The situation is as you make it, and I firmly believe that this is an opportunity with lots of learning."

MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITIES
ALL INDIA

RANK 2019	RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
12	11	MANIPAL ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MANIPAL	533
23	12	BANASTHALI VIDYAPITH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	BANASTHALI	530
11	13	UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS	CHENNAI	513
15	14	AMRITA VISHWA VIDYAPEETHAM (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	COIMBATORE	504
13	15	PANJAB UNIVERSITY	CHANDIGARH	495
14	16	GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY	AMRITSAR	491
16	17	AMITY UNIVERSITY	NOIDA	489
-	18	ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY	GUNTUR	488
17	19	BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY	COIMBATORE	477
18	20	SRM INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	474
19	21	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL (DEEMED UNIVERSITY)	PUNE	460
20	22	SVKM'S NARSEE MONJEE INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MUMBAI	437
22	23	MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY	KOTTAYAM	434
27	24	ALAGAPPA UNIVERSITY	KARAIKUDI	430
26	25	BHARATHIDASAN UNIVERSITY	TIRUCHIRAPPALLI	420
25	26	KURUKSHETRA UNIVERSITY	KURUKSHETRA	417
29	27	COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	ERNAKULAM	415
21	28	UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN	JAIPUR	410
35	29	SRI VENKATESWARA UNIVERSITY	TIRUPATI	394
28	30	UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU	JAMMU	392
-	31	NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY	SHILLONG	390
33	32	SNDT WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY	MUMBAI	389
30	33	UTKAL UNIVERSITY	BHUBANESWAR	385
-	34	UNIVERSITY OF MYSORE	MYSURU	384
32	35	DR. HARISINGH GOUR VISHWAVIDYALAYA	SAGAR	383
38	36	CHRIST (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	BENGALURU	382
39	37	SATHYABAMA INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	381
39	38	HINDUSTAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	377
31	39	MANGALORE UNIVERSITY	MANGALURU	374
37	40	THE MAHARAJA SAYAJIRAO UNIVERSITY OF BARODA	VADODARA	367
41	41	JSS ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION & RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MYSURU	365
36	42	GOA UNIVERSITY	GOA	364
33	43	GURU GOBIND SINGH INDRAPRASTHA UNIVERSITY	DELHI	363
45	44	THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY	HYDERABAD	358
44	44	DR. D. Y. PATIL VIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PUNE	358
46	46	NIRMA UNIVERSITY	AHMEDABAD	357
47	47	BHARATI VIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PUNE	356
47	48	DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY	AURANGABAD	355
54	49	GAUHATI UNIVERSITY	GUWAHATI	353
49	50	THE UNIVERSITY OF BURDWAN	BARDHAMAN	352
52	51	D Y PATIL (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MUMBAI	333
51	52	KAVAYITRI BAHINABAI CHAUDHARI NORTH MAHARASHTRA UNIVERSITY	JALGAON	332
55	53	KUMAUN UNIVERSITY	NAINITAL	330
58	54	AMITY UNIVERSITY	LUCKNOW	329
59	55	VEL TECH RANGARAJAN DR. SAGUNTHALA R&D INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	328
50	56	NITTE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MANGALURU	326

MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITIES
ALL INDIA

60	57	CHITKARA UNIVERSITY	RAJPURA	325
56	58	MANAV RACHNA INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH AND STUDIES (MRIIRS) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	FARIDABAD	321
64	59	MANIPAL UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	318
61	60	AMITY UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	317
61	61	SIKKIM MANIPAL UNIVERSITY	GANGTOK	291
68	62	UKA TARSADIA UNIVERSITY	TARSADI	276
73	63	THE NORTHCAP UNIVERSITY	GURUGRAM	268
70	64	RABINDRANATH TAGORE UNIVERSITY	BHOPAL	265
-	65	SHOBHIT INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MEERUT	254
71	66	REVA UNIVERSITY	BENGALURU	253
72	67	IIHMR UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	252
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74	70	APEEJAY STYA UNIVERSITY	GURUGRAM	237
-	71	PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY	BENGALURU	235
76	72	IMS UNISON UNIVERSITY	DEHRADUN	232
79	73	SANSKRITI UNIVERSITY	MATHURA	221
-	74	UTTARANCHAL UNIVERSITY	DEHRADUN	220
78	75	ICFAI UNIVERSITY	RANCHI	198
-	76	JIS UNIVERSITY	KOLKATA	187

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES
ALL INDIA

RANK 2019	RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
12	11	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT ISM)	DHANBAD	464
15	12	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	SURATHKAL	462
11	13	INSTITUTE OF CHEMICAL TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MUMBAI	458
14	14	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	WARANGAL	452
17	15	VELLORE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VIT) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	VELLORE	448
16	16	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (IIEST)	SHIBPUR	447
22	17	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	BHUBANESWAR	445
-	18	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IIIT-H) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	HYDERABAD	426
18	19	MALAVIYA NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MNIT)	JAIPUR	413
19	20	BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (BIT) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MESRA, RANCHI	412
23	21	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT), CALICUT	KOZHIKODE	411
24	22	VISVESVARAYA NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VNIT)	NAGPUR	409
21	23	MOTILAL NEHRU NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MNNIT), ALLAHABAD	PRAYAGRAJ	387
25	24	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	DURGAPUR	386
30	25	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	SILCHAR	385
31	26	INDRAPRASTHA INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	DELHI	383
32	27	SARDAR VALLABHBHAI NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (SVNIT)	SURAT	354
26	28	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IIIT-B) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	BENGALURU	351
27	29	MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MANIT)	BHOPAL	345
28	30	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, ALLAHABAD (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PRAYAGRAJ	331
33	31	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	HAMIRPUR	325
28	32	ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE - INDIAN INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & MANAGEMENT (ABV - IIITM)	GWALIOR	323
34	33	JAYPEE INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	NOIDA	274
35	34	THE LNM INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	JAIPUR	268
-	35	VIGNAN'S FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	GUNTUR	224

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We have to be pragmatic about opening campuses

BY REKHA DIXIT

Q/ The pandemic has changed the delivery system of education. How have Indian universities coped?
A/ The UGC is closely observing the situation, taking timely decisions and issuing guidelines to address the challenges. As India has institutions located in different parts of the country, from metros to tribal areas, universities and colleges are still evolving innovative delivery systems of education.
The UGC recognises the importance of... traditional face-to-face education. But keeping in view the benefits of information and communication technology (ICT) tools and also to prepare for meeting challenges like the present one, the UGC would like to promote a blended model of teaching and learning.

Q/ Exams, in particular, are turning out to be a challenge. Your comments?
A/ Examinations are needed to uphold the academic integrity and to ensure academic credibility, career opportunities and future prospects of students globally. On July 6, we revised our April guidelines on examinations and the academic year, extending the timeline for completing the terminal semester or final year exams to September end. The guidelines also offered the flexibility of offline, online and blended (online plus offline) mode of examinations. In case the student of a terminal semester or final year is unable to appear for the examination, the student will be given the opportunity to appear in special examinations for such papers.

Q/ Last academic year, the UGC announced universities could start online courses. What is the status?
A/ In January, the UGC recognised seven universities for 37 [online] programmes at various levels.
The UGC will put in a monitoring mechanism to ensure that the online programmes are of global standards. Many foreign students are also expected to register for them. The commission has decided to permit universities, based on NAAC or NIRF benchmarks, to offer online programmes. Shortly, we will notify new regulations to enable 100 top universities to start online programmes automatically, and many other universities to start online programmes with the UGC's permission.

Q/ How long do you foresee the effects of the ongoing pandemic impacting regular classes?
A/ It is difficult to foresee the impact of the ongoing pandemic on regular classes. We have to be pragmatic and flexible about reopening campuses. Perhaps, it may be prudent to plan reopening campuses in a phased manner, gradually increasing the number of students over time. At any given time, some students may attend classes physically, while others may join online. Alternatively, some students may attend class physically and others may be engaged in the labs at the same time.

Q/ How badly will an online-oriented approach to education impact students whose access to the internet is not smooth?
A/ The challenge is to ensure that equal opportunities are provided to the learners. The human resource development ministry is facilitating educational connectivity in remote areas. Swayam Prabha, a group of 32 DTH channels, is another initiative which [will help] students in remote areas with limited internet facilities.

Q/ With travel restrictions in countries like the US, will Indian universities benefit?
A/ The travel restrictions will surely impact the prospects of many. Our approach is not to look at the development as benefitting us, but with focus on quality upgradation, our universities are equipped to cater to the increase in students preferring to study here. But definitely, this gives an opportunity to tap these bright minds to study in India. ❶

For full interview, log on to www.theweek.in

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Chancellor

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Hurdles and heights

Certain gaps and challenges persist when it comes to language universities in India

BY SNEHA BHURA

One of the earliest Indian language institutions in India, Kolkata's Sanskrit College, was founded by Englishmen in 1824. Horace Hayman Wilson, one of the greatest Sanskrit scholars of the time, played a major role in setting up the college and its scientific-Orientalist pursuit of subjects like ancient literature, philosophy, Hindu law, grammar and Indian culture.

However, it was Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar—as a student and later principal—who turned out to be most associated with the college. He opened it out to Hindu students without caste distinctions in the 1850s, reduced tuition fees, composed manuals of Sanskrit grammar and made the college the most important centre for learning and interpreting the classical language and ancient Indian texts. But Sanskrit could not fight the "emancipatory potential" of English, effectively subjugating the linguistic plurality of the country in subsequent education policies. In 2016, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee transformed the institution into a university to revive the language. Udaya Narayana Singh, chair-professor and dean (arts), Amity University, says the Kolkata institution continues to deftly straddle traditional and modernist streams of Sanskrit teaching. "But some of the best Indian language teaching institutions are not even formally recognised as Central universities," says Singh. "The language universities scene in India is very complicated."

According to the 2018-19 report of the ministry of human resource development, there are 13 Sanskrit universities and nine language universities in India. Singh points out how the late 1960s saw progressive moves by the government of India with regard to language universities, especially in the context of anti-Hindi agitations in south India. Mysuru's Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) was established in 1969. "This was a world-class institution, but again, not a university," says Singh, who served as director for CIIL for nine years. "It was too precious for the government to let go of for various tactical reasons. A lot was happening there, including defence and border area research vis-a-vis languages. We could train the local military and the armed battalion in languages of the other side before engaging in armed conflict. Some of the biggest projects of the government are still being run by them. But it is not a university. Interestingly, it is recognised by 25 universities to be an advanced centre, so they can conduct research and the degrees can be granted by some other university."

When it comes to enrolment, the variations between language colleges and universities get more pronounced. The modern Indian languages departments of Central universities are extremely popular. For higher studies in Urdu, Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia are preferred outposts but they are not even language universities.

Singh points out that with respect to original research output, two language institutions are the current frontrunners: CIIL and English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) in Hyderabad. "Students from both English and foreign languages are mostly sought after for appointment as teachers, content writers, copy editors, editors, language interpreters, translators and language experts by premier institutions like Amazon, Paper True, Byju's, Oracle and TCS," says, E. Suresh Kumar, vice-chancellor, EFLU. "Every year about 85 per cent of EFLU students receive placements from these companies." While EFLU is generally considered a leading player in the instruction of foreign languages, their offerings in Indian languages are equally interesting.

Certain gaps and challenges persist when it comes to language universities in India, like the

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Indian Higher Education has to move towards being just an academic institution to becoming a more integral part of the Indian Economic system addressing the current and future challenges of the Indian Economy. The system has to ensure that it is providing world-class education on the latest technologies and contemporary thinkings, arts and sciences to the students. At the same time, the higher educational institutions have to become an inspirational source for new technologies, sciences, arts and thoughts.

In ancient times, the educational institutions like Takshshila and Nalanda Universities used to act as islands of knowledge where scholars from across the world used to visit and spend time in knowledge acquisition, learning and generating new knowledge. The knowledge developed would get spread across the world with the scholars either going back to their destination or moving to new destinations. These universities created an eco-system for acquisition, sharing, development and storage of knowledge. The books and manuscripts in the libraries in these institutions were methodically collected and maintained over the centuries.

In modern times, such educational institutions have been created over a period of past few centuries in North America and Europe. Majority of the present educational institutions in India have a history not spanning more than a century. As a result, these educational institutions have to acquire world-class status rapidly with the right mix of our ancient heritage and western influence. These educational institutions have to ensure that they translate the benefits of the latest technologies and thinkings to the development of underprivileged sections of the society. These institutions should be able to inculcate the spirit of innovation and incubation amongst the youth. The youth needs to be moved away from being complacent and stereotype thinking to be restless, progressive with futuristic outlook and out-of-box thinking. The right time is during the higher education phase, where a youth needs an eco-system which can guide them, sensitize them with latest technologies and thoughts and at the same time provoke their thoughts and feelings to experiment but within certain ethical and moral boundaries.

MIET Campus

Innovation and Incubation shall play a critical role in the country's movement towards becoming an economic powerhouse. These will come with an appreciation of issues and problems being faced by society at large and attempts to address them through innovative thoughts or solutions. Some of the solutions can make their way into incubation based on the commercial viability of the applications.

Research & Development at the educational institution is nothing but analysis and creation of the very facts and concepts, that the students have learnt. In this entire process, the academics go beyond the concept of learning to contribute to add to existing knowledge ranging from minuscule to substantial. Hence laboratories at institutions can be more than being instruments for showing the same outcomes of the traditional experiments to the students by creating an environment for inquisitiveness.

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(With inputs from Vishwas Gautam, Brand Head)

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E. Suresh Kumar *(in grey suit), vice chancellor, English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad*

difficulty for students to relate one language with the other. "Each of the big languages, whether it is Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindi or Tamil, really draw on many other Indian and western languages," says Singh. "There was a lot of give and take—like Urdu cannot be studied without Persian and Farsi—for cutting-edge research to take place, both for academic purpose and government work."

"If a Kannadiga wants to learn French and contribute to French-Kannada [relations], it is not encouraged in India," says Shashi Kumar, who is on a graduate research assistant fellowship in the English and film studies department, University of Alberta, Canada. "India has accorded classical status to six of its languages: Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam and Odia," says Kumar. "Some of the languages have a connection with [dialects] in Greek. The Greek have had trade contacts with India since the time of the Mauryans.... My point is, if researchers want to explore this connection further, basic training in classical Greek is required. Our Indian universities are not equipped to facilitate this. Whereas south Asian studies in the US and Europe have connections with Indian languages because they are taught in some of the major universities. Strangely, researchers who want to work on Indian languages, go to universities in these continents, and come back to India to work on it."

Even when it comes to Sanskrit instruction—what with the ruling government's strong pitch for promoting the language in the education system—senior academic administrators are torn between two types of focus: to work on ancient Indian knowledge systems like mathematics, geometry, science or medicine or to promote modern-day Sanskrit writing. "A lot of people are writing new texts, trying to keep Sanskrit afloat as a living literary language," says Singh. "This is a big challenge. Some people are focusing on the second type of teaching at the cost of the first."

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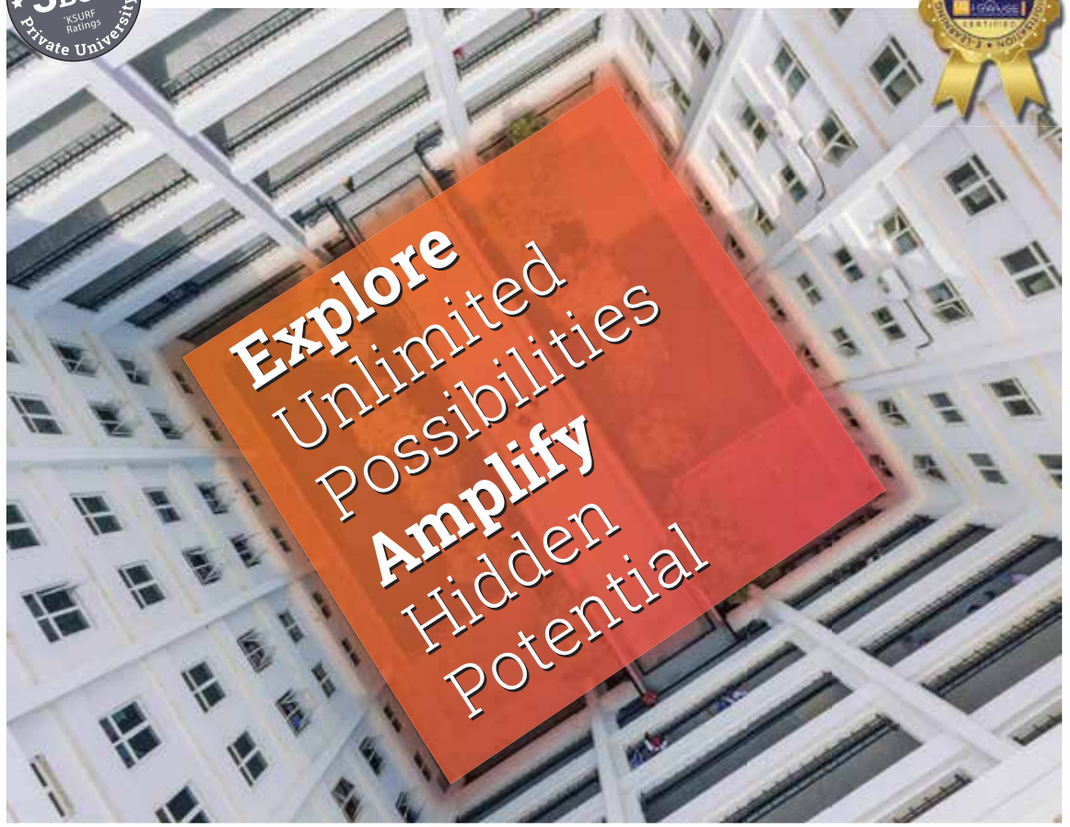

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4	AMITY UNIVERSITY	NOIDA	489
5	SRM INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	474
6	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL (DEEMED UNIVERSITY)	PUNE	460
7	SVKM'S NARSEE MONJEE INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MUMBAI	437
8	CHRIST (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	BENGALURU	382
9	SATHYABAMA INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	381
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12	DR. D. Y. PATIL VIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PUNE	358
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14	BHARATI VIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PUNE	356
15	D Y PATIL (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MUMBAI	333
16	AMITY UNIVERSITY	LUCKNOW	329
17	VEL TECH RANGARAJAN DR. SAGUNTHALA R&D INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	328
18	NITTE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MANGALURU	326
19	CHITKARA UNIVERSITY	RAJPURA	325
20	MANAV RACHNA INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH AND STUDIES (MRIIRS) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	FARIDABAD	321
21	MANIPAL UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	318
22	AMITY UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	317
23	SIKKIM MANIPAL UNIVERSITY	GANGTOK	291
24	UKA TARSADIA UNIVERSITY	TARSADI	276
25	THE NORTHCAP UNIVERSITY	GURUGRAM	268
26	RABINDRANATH TAGORE UNIVERSITY	BHOPAL	265
27	SHOBHIT INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MEERUT	254
28	REVA UNIVERSITY	BENGALURU	253
29	IIHMR UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	252
30	AMITY UNIVERSITY	GWALIOR	247
31	JECRC UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	246
32	APEEJAY STYA UNIVERSITY	GURUGRAM	237
33	PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY	BENGALURU	235
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36	UTTARANCHAL UNIVERSITY	DEHRADUN	220
37	ICFAI UNIVERSITY	RANCHI	198
38	JIS UNIVERSITY	KOLKATA	187

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3	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	DELHI	635
4	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	KANPUR	606
5	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	ROORKEE	507
6	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	GUWAHATI	484
7	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT BHU)	VARANASI	480
8	ANNA UNIVERSITY	CHENNAI	472
9	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	TIRUCHIRAPPALLI	469
10	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT ISM)	DHANBAD	464
11	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	SURATHKAL	462
12	INSTITUTE OF CHEMICAL TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MUMBAI	458
13	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	WARANGAL	452
14	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (IIEST)	SHIBPUR	447
15	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	BHUBANESWAR	445
16	MALAVIYA NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MNIT)	JAIPUR	413
17	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT), CALICUT	KOZHIKODE	411
18	VISVESVARAYA NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VNIT)	NAGPUR	409
19	MOTILAL NEHRU NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MNNIT), ALLAHABAD	PRAYAGRAJ	387
20	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	DURGAPUR	386
21	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	SILCHAR	385
22	INDRAPRASTHA INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	DELHI	383
23	SARDAR VALLABHBHAI NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (SVNIT)	SURAT	354
24	MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MANIT)	BHOPAL	345
25	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, ALLAHABAD (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PRAYAGRAJ	331
26	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	HAMIRPUR	325
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1	BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCES (BITS) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PILANI	564
2	VELLORE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VIT) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	VELLORE	448
3	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IIIT-H) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	HYDERABAD	426
4	BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (BIT) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MESRA, RANCHI	412
5	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IIIT-B) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	BENGALURU	351
6	JAYPEE INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	NOIDA	274
7	THE LNM INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	JAIPUR	268
8	VIGNAN'S FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	GUNTUR	224

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RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
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2	BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY	VARANASI	802
3	UNIVERSITY OF DELHI	DELHI	779
4	UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD	HYDERABAD	667
5	ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY	ALIGARH	654
6	JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA	DELHI	586
7	NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY	SHILLONG	390
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6	PANJAB UNIVERSITY	CHANDIGARH	495
7	GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY	AMRITSAR	491
8	ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY	GUNTUR	488
9	BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY	COIMBATORE	477
10	MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY	KOTTAYAM	434
11	ALAGAPPA UNIVERSITY	KARAIKUDI	430
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17	UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU	JAMMU	392
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4	ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY	ALIGARH	654
5	JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA	DELHI	586
6	BANASTHALI VIDYAPITH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	BANASTHALI	530
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22	IIHMR UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	252
23	JECRC UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	246
24	APEEJAY STYA UNIVERSITY	GURUGRAM	237
25	IMS UNISON UNIVERSITY	DEHRADUN	232
26	SANSKRITI UNIVERSITY	MATHURA	221
27	UTTARANCHAL UNIVERSITY	DEHRADUN	220

MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITIES
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4	UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS	CHENNAI	513
5	AMRITA VISHWA VIDYAPEETHAM (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	COIMBATORE	504
6	ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY	GUNTUR	488
7	BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY	COIMBATORE	477
8	SRM INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	474
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10	ALAGAPPA UNIVERSITY	KARAIKUDI	430
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20	THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY	HYDERABAD	358
21	VEL TECH RANGARAJAN DR. SAGUNTHALA R&D INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	328
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10	BHARATI VIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PUNE	356
11	DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY	AURANGABAD	355
12	D Y PATIL (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MUMBAI	333
13	KAVAYITRI BAHINABAI CHAUDHARI NORTH MAHARASHTRA UNIVERSITY	JALGAON	332
14	UKA TARSADIA UNIVERSITY	TARSADI	276
15	RABINDRANATH TAGORE UNIVERSITY	BHOPAL	265
16	AMITY UNIVERSITY	GWALIOR	247

MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITIES
EAST ZONE

RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY	KOLKATA	660
2	UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA	KOLKATA	590
3	NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY	SHILLONG	390
4	UTKAL UNIVERSITY	BHUBANESWAR	385
5	GAUHATI UNIVERSITY	GUWAHATI	353
6	THE UNIVERSITY OF BURDWAN	BARDHAMAN	352
7	SIKKIM MANIPAL UNIVERSITY	GANGTOK	291
8	ICFAI UNIVERSITY	RANCHI	198
9	JIS UNIVERSITY	KOLKATA	187

PRIVATE & DEEMED MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITIES
NORTH ZONE

RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	BANASTHALI VIDYAPITH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	BANASTHALI	530
2	AMITY UNIVERSITY	NOIDA	489
3	AMITY UNIVERSITY	LUCKNOW	329
4	CHITKARA UNIVERSITY	RAJPURA	325
5	MANAV RACHNA INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH AND STUDIES (MRIIRS) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	FARIDABAD	321
6	MANIPAL UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	318
7	AMITY UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	317
8	THE NORTHCAP UNIVERSITY	GURUGRAM	268
9	SHOBHIT INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MEERUT	254
10	IIHMR UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	252
11	JECRC UNIVERSITY	JAIPUR	246
12	APEEJAY STYA UNIVERSITY	GURUGRAM	237
13	IMS UNISON UNIVERSITY	DEHRADUN	232
14	SANSKRITI UNIVERSITY	MATHURA	221
15	UTTARANCHAL UNIVERSITY	DEHRADUN	220

PRIVATE & DEEMED MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITIES
SOUTH ZONE

RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	MANIPAL ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MANIPAL	533
2	AMRITA VISHWA VIDYAPEETHAM (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	COIMBATORE	504
3	SRM INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	474
4	CHRIST (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	BENGALURU	382
5	SATHYABAMA INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	381
6	HINDUSTAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	377
7	JSS ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION & RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MYSURU	365
8	VEL TECH RANGARAJAN DR. SAGUNTHALA R&D INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	CHENNAI	328
9	NITTE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MANGALURU	326
10	REVA UNIVERSITY	BENGALURU	253
11	PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY	BENGALURU	235

THE ONLINE OPTION

It is a feasible option, provided we help the students from remote areas get good internet connectivity. We should also train our faculty members on how to handle online education. Campuses have to become more technology oriented. After the pandemic is over, we can have a blended learning model with a healthy mix of campus learning and online learning, to get the best of both worlds.

Sekar Viswanathan,
vice president, VIT University

It is high time the dependence on online tools is done away with. Zoom, WA, Webex and Google [Meet] are mere tools. Universities must build their own learning management system platforms that create a total online campus feel, both in the short term and in the long term.

Sudhakar Rao,
director, branding, ICFAI Group

In a country like India, we do have a few challenges while resorting to online teaching especially in terms of infrastructure, uninterrupted power supply and internet connectivity and teacher-student readiness towards delivering and receiving practical sessions. Government and educational institutions should come forward to address these challenges.

Anand Jacob Verghese,
director and CEO, Hindustan Group of Institutions

The current scenario has generated a huge paranoia in young minds. Reassurance is the need of the hour. On the academic front, the university must be prepared to handle online classes and exams without a compromise in the curriculum. India being a country where the majority still believes in conventional teaching methods, it is time to revolutionise our teaching methods.

Dr Sindhu Ramesh,
dean of accreditation, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences

PRIVATE & DEEMED MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITIES
WEST ZONE

RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL (DEEMED UNIVERSITY)	PUNE	460
2	SVKM'S NARSEE MONJEE INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MUMBAI	437
3	DR. D. Y. PATIL VIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PUNE	358
4	NIRMA UNIVERSITY	AHMEDABAD	357
5	BHARATI VIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PUNE	356
6	D Y PATIL (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MUMBAI	333
7	UKA TARSADIA UNIVERSITY	TARSADI	276
8	RABINDRANATH TAGORE UNIVERSITY	BHOPAL	265
9	AMITY UNIVERSITY	GWALIOR	247

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES
NORTH ZONE

RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	DELHI	635
2	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	KANPUR	606
3	BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCES (BITS) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PILANI	564
4	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	ROORKEE	507
5	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT BHU)	VARANASI	480
6	MALAVIYA NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MNIT)	JAIPUR	413
7	MOTILAL NEHRU NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MNNIT), ALLAHABAD	PRAYAGRAJ	387
8	INDRAPRASTHA INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	DELHI	383
9	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, ALLAHABAD (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PRAYAGRAJ	331
10	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	HAMIRPUR	325
11	JAYPEE INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	NOIDA	274
12	THE LNM INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	JAIPUR	268

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES
SOUTH ZONE

RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	CHENNAI	703
2	ANNA UNIVERSITY	CHENNAI	472
3	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	TIRUCHIRAPPALLI	469
4	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	SURATHKAL	462
5	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	WARANGAL	452
6	VELLORE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VIT) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	VELLORE	448
7	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IIIT-H) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	HYDERABAD	426
8	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT), CALICUT	KOZHIKODE	411
9	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IIIT-B) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	BENGALURU	351
10	VIGNAN'S FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	GUNTUR	224

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES
EAST ZONE

RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	GUWAHATI	484
2	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT ISM)	DHANBAD	464
3	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (IIEST)	SHIBPUR	447
4	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	BHUBANESWAR	445
5	BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (BIT) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MESRA, RANCHI	412
6	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	DURGAPUR	386
7	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NIT)	SILCHAR	385

TEJ PRATAP
vice chancellor, G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, and president, Association of Indian Universities

Biggest transition is the need of the student

BY REKHA DIXIT

Q/ How would you rate the pandemic as a catalyst for change in the education system?
A/ It has given us the confidence that we can adapt quickly to technology. It took the teachers longer to adapt, but they did, ultimately. A lot of systems we have introduced right now are in response to the situation. Not everything will last. But it has made us relook at established beliefs in a new light. For instance, virtual learning aids show that physical attendance in the classroom is not that vital to learning. The classroom lecture should be stimulating enough for the student to want to attend it, instead of catching it online. Indian higher education is going through a bigger transition, the pandemic is only one event.

Q/ Please elaborate.
A/ The biggest transition is the need of the student. We rue that because of poor economic growth, campus recruitments are coming down. But getting a job at the end of the degree is no longer the outlook of many students. The idea that an MBBS graduate should go into the field of medicine or an agriculture graduate become a farmer or researcher is also passé. Today's graduates do not look at degrees as career limitations. They want the sky open to them. They want the choice to go into administration, research or entrepreneurship, irrespective of what degree they take. We need to understand this.

Another big transition in our education is the large number of female students in our colleges. Even in agricultural colleges, earlier a male domain, 70 per cent of the students are now female.

Q/ How would you rate the quality of Indian higher education?
A/ We have been able to meet the demand for colleges. There are nearly 1,000 universities and 40,000 colleges in India, almost on par with China. We, however, need to have good quality standards. China is doing this, integrating institutes and developing them to be top class.

Our private sector has all types of institutions. But to develop them, we need to put money into education, and yet, give institutions enough autonomy. If their research is tied to funding, how will they grow? I believe the growth will be more in private institutions. Most public institutions today are only running on past glory. We need to have a serious rethink on how to fund these colleges before they become sick. Look at JNU, where even hostels are subsidised on taxpayers' money. That is not how higher education should be funded.

Q/ What are your suggestions for becoming world-class?
A/ First, we need to change our idea of world-class. Getting a ranking from an international agency is no validation. That system of ranking is developed for western institutions, which cater to the needs of their society. Our institutions should first cater to the needs of our people. You become world-class not by replicating another world-class [institution]. You become one when you are so good in your area that there is no other like you. Be original. Why would anyone go to a place that is like Harvard, when they can go to Harvard?

I believe my university is the best in its class. It is producing high-quality seeds for the farmers in the country, even if it does not fit into a world ranking. We need to develop this pride in ourselves. Many of our technological institutions are better than foreign ones but are not projected that way.

Q/ Teachers need to change, what about students?
A/ Today's youth is much smarter and more intelligent. They are savvier than their teachers, perhaps the first such generation to be so. Of course, they are more comfortable with technology than the older generation, but even otherwise, they are a smarter lot. I have great admiration for today's generation.

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES
WEST ZONE

RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT)	MUMBAI	734
2	INSTITUTE OF CHEMICAL TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	MUMBAI	458
3	VISVESVARAYA NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VNIT)	NAGPUR	409
4	SARDAR VALLABHBHAI NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (SVNIT)	SURAT	354
5	MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MANIT)	BHOPAL	345
6	ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE - INDIAN INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & MANAGEMENT (ABV - IIITM)	GWALIOR	323

PRIVATE & DEEMED TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES
NORTH ZONE

RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCES (BITS) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	PILANI	564
2	JAYPEE INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	NOIDA	274
3	THE LNM INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	JAIPUR	268

PRIVATE & DEEMED TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES
SOUTH ZONE

RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY	CITY	SCORE (OUT OF 1,000)
1	VELLORE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VIT) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	VELLORE	448
2	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IIIT-H) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	HYDERABAD	426
3	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IIIT-B) (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	BENGALURU	351
4	VIGNAN'S FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)	GUNTUR	224

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

THE WEEK and Hansa Research conducted the Best University Survey 2020 to rank the best multidisciplinary and technical universities in the country. Universities recognised by the UGC, offering full-time postgraduate courses in at least two disciplines, and having graduated at least three postgraduate batches were eligible.

A primary survey was conducted with 255 academic experts, spread across 15 cities. They were asked to nominate and rank the top 20 universities in India.

Perceptual score for a university was calculated based on the number of nominations by experts and the actual ranks received.

For factual data collection, a dedicated website was created and the link was sent to more than 600 universities. Fifty-one universities responded within the stipulated time; two were rejected as they did not meet the eligibility criteria.

Factual score was calculated using the information collected from universities and other secondary sources on age and accreditation, infrastructure and other facilities, faculty, research and academics, student intake and exposure, and placements (only for technical universities).

Composite score = perceptual score (out of 400) + factual score (out of 600)

Some universities could not respond to the survey. For these universities, composite score was derived by combining the perceptual score for the university with an interpolated factual score based on their position in the perceptual score list.

Divide and earn

Asset allocator funds execute the triple 'right' strategy to create wealth over the long term

BY ABHIMANYU SHARMA

IMAGINE SWITCHING on the television to catch the exact moment your favourite batsman hits the century. What if you have a knack for accurately predicting how things shape up? Magical, isn't it? Like in cricket, successful investing is all about knowing which asset will perform and which will not. The key is allocating more money to the right asset, while lowering the exposure to others.

So, in order to maximise gains, one has to have the right allocation in the right asset at the right time. Investment products like asset allocator funds that successfully execute the triple 'right' strategy are able to create sizeable wealth over the long term. Also, they smoothen the investing experience by being less volatile.

Asset allocator fund

The typical reaction of investors when an asset class corrects is that of fear. Similarly, investors become euphoric when asset prices rise sharply. If Warren Buffett's golden words of 'be fearful when others are greedy and be greedy when others are fearful' are practised, then you would realise the typical investor reaction described above is exactly the opposite.

To practise disciplined investing across assets, one needs to have an efficient model that follows time-tested rules. This is exactly what an asset allocator fund does. It is easy to say buy low, sell high for equity allocation, but it is difficult to implement. What is low? What is high? When do you enter and exit? Should you allocate to equity or debt? Will you miss the rally if you redeem? All these questions are easily answered when you have an asset allocation fund in place, which also emerges as an all-weather solution for investors who are willing to stay invested for the long term.

Asset allocator funds predominantly invest in equity and debt. A good asset allocator fund tries to achieve the optimum allocation of debt and equity based on the relative attractiveness of the asset classes. In order to achieve an unbiased view on asset class allocation, several funds tend to use models based on which investment decisions are taken. Such model-based approach ensures that human emotion, which could play spoilsport, is always kept at bay.

Over the last decade, we have seen different events taking centre stage. When Indian markets corrected in 2008, most of the investors sold their equity holdings. By 2015, when markets rallied sharply, very few were ready to sell. And when markets reached peak valuation across market capitalisations in January 2018, investors expected the rally to continue and generate even more returns. This clearly shows that it is very difficult for a lay investor to take prudent decisions. This is where asset allocation funds come in handy. These funds are designed to remain objective in such situations.

When investing in an asset allocation fund, an investor gets the benefit of an actively managed portfolio with the investment corpus diversified across asset classes, constant monitoring and re-balancing, better risk adjusted returns and tax benefits.

Why invest now

Over the past three months, equity markets have moved over 36 per cent, creating one of the sharpest rallies ever. Now, it is time to take a prudent step when investing for the long term. Markets are no longer cheap as they were three months ago. So, it is time to go for a fund which will help an investor stay ahead of the curve. And one fund which helps an investor achieve this is the ICICI Prudential Asset Allocator Fund. Historically, this fund has proven that it has the capability to stay ahead of the curve.

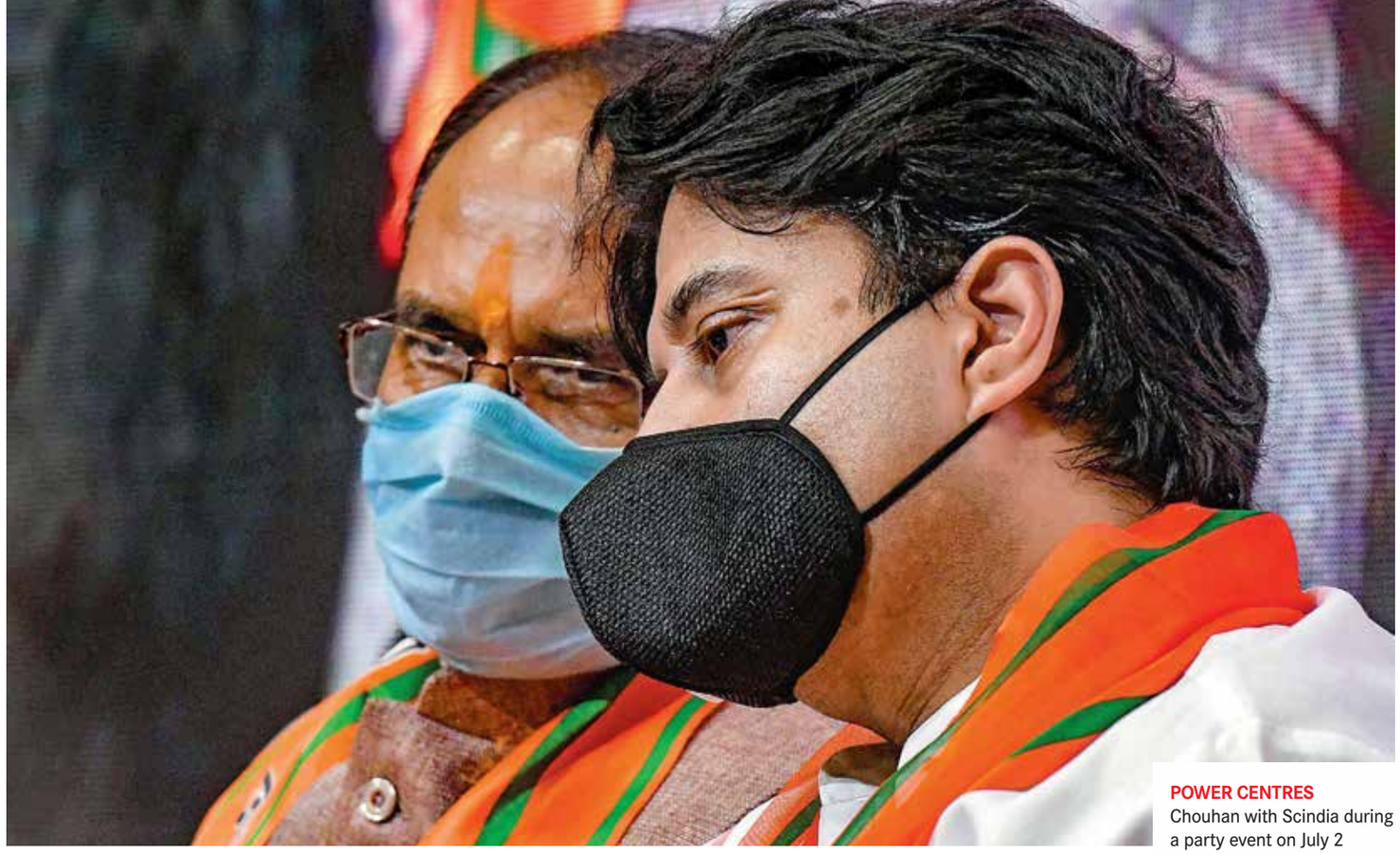
Helping the fund managers decide the optimal asset allocation is an in-house model which has been successfully put to use over the past several years. Between March 2020 and May 2020, an investment of ₹10 lakh would have become ₹28 lakh, about 27 per cent more than Nifty 50. This clearly shows that sticking to the right asset allocation and the right fund matters.

Author is founder, Swarn Wealth Management.

Thorny throne

With Scindia gaining ground and BJP loyalists upset at being overlooked, Shivraj Singh Chouhan's fourth term as chief minister could be his toughest

BY SRAVANI SARKAR



PTI

POWER CENTRES Chouhan with Scindia during a party event on July 2

WHEN SHIVRAJ SINGH Chouhan reached Delhi for the second time in a week on July 5, the rumour mills began churning. Though the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister was "officially" there to meet Union ministers about developmental work in his state, it was widely seen as a visit to get the BJP leadership's nod for the allocation of portfolios to his recently inducted cabinet ministers. The fact that he met with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda only bolstered the rumours.

Apparently, Jyotiraditya Scindia, who got 11 of his aides into the cabinet of 34, apart from three other former Congress MLAs, was pressuring Chouhan for portfolios of his choice. Knowing that his loyalist ministers would have to face byelections soon, Scindia wanted departments that had a direct connect with the people, said sources. Chouhan, too, wanted these departments, either for himself or for the original BJP members. However, wanting to avoid a tussle, Chouhan had once again deferred to the central leadership, said sources.

The portfolios were assigned on July 13, 11 days after the cabinet expansion. And though a balance was struck, the Scindia camp looks more dominant, having gotten the departments of its choice.

Congress leaders were quick to point out Chouhan's "helplessness" as a chief minister, and brought up rumours that he might be replaced, at the first opportunity, by someone like Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar or Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra.

Political watchers, too, said that Chouhan was no longer the BJP's supreme leader in Madhya Pradesh. The challenge for the mild-mannered Chouhan comes from within, they added. He would not only have to watch out for Scindia, but also mollify the party's old guard.

Chouhan would now have to prove his mettle by ensuring that the party wins enough seats in the byelections, not just to get a majority in the house, but also to get the public's approval on the political coup that the BJP staged in March, getting 22 Congress MLAs to jump ship.

Chouhan was somewhat of a nobody when he was made chief minister in 2005. The young leader, 46 then, clawed his way to the top strategically and confidently. He was called '*paaon paaon waale bhaiya*' because of his frequent foot marches in his parliamentary constituency of Vidisha, and later became the well-loved 'Mama' (maternal uncle) of the masses. He continued to be on the ground, mingling with voters and speaking their language.

Chouhan managed to win the 2008 and 2013 state elections, despite facing corruption charges in an alleged scam related to the purchase of four dumpers in 2007, and later the Vyapam recruitment scam, which got national attention.

Even though the BJP lost the 2018 assembly elections, it got 109 of the 230 seats and a higher vote share than the Congress, despite facing anti-incumbency of three terms. The credit for this went to Chouhan's lone campaign against the formidable Congress trio of Scindia, Kamal Nath and Digvijaya Singh.

> **With the latest developments, Chouhan cannot claim to be first among equals anymore.**
>
> —**Rasheed Kidwai,** political author

However, that slim margin of loss seemed to have changed everything. "A chief minister is usually the first among equals," said political author Rasheed Kidwai. "But with the latest developments, Chouhan cannot claim to be first among equals anymore. He had no direct role in the entire episode (the Scindia-led defection); that was scripted by central leaders and the chief ministership came to him as a favour. This is different from getting the post after leading from the front to win an election. And now, he is being made to pay a price for that. I believe that the [recent developments] might not be one-offs, but part of a list of big challenges that Chouhan will have to face."

He added that the byelections to 25 seats would be tricky as 14 ministers (former Congress MLAs) will be in the fray. "It is being said that the BJP might like four or five of these ministers to lose so that those left out in the party could be accommodated as ministers," said Kidwai. "Technically, the BJP requires just nine seats to get a majority in the house, but prestige is at stake and the party might look to win about 20. In my view, 18 is the benchmark. Anything less will reflect poorly on Chouhan and the party."

Said political analyst Manish Dixit: "If Chouhan has to rush to Delhi [for] even such things, the situation is tough. This is the first time this is happening to him. It looks like he wants to stick to his post at any cost, which is not a comfortable situation for a leader who has enjoyed unchallenged leadership for 13 years."

However, he added that Chouhan had an inherent capability to bounce back from tricky situations and to best his opponents, such as BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, former chief minister Uma Bharti, BJP national vice president Prabhat Jha, or even ministers Narottam Mishra and Gopal Bhargava. "It will be interesting to watch out for his moves in this context," he said.

Kidwai, however, said that Scindia would be a far tougher customer as he had a direct line with the central leadership, a clear national image of his own and was quite media savvy, too.

Looking ahead, political analyst Aman Namra said Chouhan would have to work hard to run a government made up, in part, of Congress rebels. "The rumours of Mishra or Tomar getting command making the rounds when Chouhan was in Delhi is an indicator that even if the tiger is alive, his roar does not have the same echo or his claws do not have the same power," he said. "This time, the crown of power has more thorns."

Chouhan's position, said former Congress minister Jitu Patwari, could be gauged from the fact that he did not have even a single minister of his choice in his cabinet. "This does not augur well for the state and its future looks dark if this government continues," said Patwari.

State BJP chief spokesperson Deepak Vijayvargiya, however, dismissed such readings. "The BJP is in no trouble," he said. "The Congress has still not been able to absorb the shock of having the rug pulled from under it. It should pay attention to finding some stability, rather than commenting on the BJP."

Dr Krishna Ella

chairman and managing director of Bharat Biotech

Too early to announce COVAXIN launch date

BY MINI P. THOMAS

He is of humble origins. The man on whom India has pinned its hopes for a Covid-19 vaccine. Dr Krishna Ella's parents were farmers in Thiruttani, Tamil Nadu; Ella learnt the basics of biotechnology from his family farm.

Young Ella wanted to become a farmer. However, he took up a job in Bayer to support his family economically. Scholarships enabled him to pursue his master's at the University of Hawai'i and his PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He also had a stint at the Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, as a teacher and researcher.

With well-equipped labs and funding opportunities, the US has been a dreamland for researchers. Yet, Ella chose to return to India.

In 1996, he founded Bharat Biotech in Hyderabad. The lab had a modest beginning. The biotech research and development park known as Genome Valley, one of his dream projects, was commissioned in 1999. Genome Valley is now home to more than 100 biotech companies including Bharat Biotech.

Ella is passionate about making the impossible possible. The vaccines developed by Bharat Biotech speak volumes about the man and his mission. The hepatitis-B vaccine is the cheapest in the world, costing just ₹4 per dose. ROTAVAC, the first indigenous vaccine against rotavirus infections, has also been a real game changer. Other vaccines being developed by Bharat Biotech include the ones against zika, chikungunya and malaria. The company is poised to become the world's largest supplier of rabies vaccine.

The first phase of human trials of Bharat Biotech's vaccine against Covid-19—COVAXIN—has begun. The sites for the trials include Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Patna, Rohtak and Vishakhapatnam. The results of the animal trials are quite promising.

COVAXIN is India's top contender in the Covid-19 vaccine race. It competes with around 100 other vaccine candidates from different countries at different stages of development. Russian scientists have claimed that they will launch the world's first Covid-19 vaccine in August, which has led to intensified competition among vaccine researchers. Excerpts from an interview:

When can we expect the launch of COVAXIN?

It is too early to remark on this, as we are in the beginning phase of human trials. Only after the safety data is established and upon receiving regulatory approvals will we be able to decide to move into the course of licensure.

What are the features of COVAXIN?

COVAXIN is an inactivated vaccine developed on a Vero-cell [a lineage of cells used in cell cultures] platform. Inactivated vaccines have a well-proven and accepted track record.

Conventionally, inactivated vaccines have been around for decades. Numerous vaccines such as those for seasonal influenza, polio, pertussis, rabies, and Japanese encephalitis use the same technology. Once the vaccine is injected into a human, the virus has no potential to infect or replicate. It just serves the immune system as a dead virus and mounts an antibody response towards the virus.

Will it be an oral vaccine?

It will be an injectable vaccine.

Tell us about your research journey.

The vaccine strain was first isolated from the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune. It was further developed into a vaccine candidate at Bharat Biotech.

Upon receipt of the virus strain from the NIV, Bharat Biotech was able to quickly lay out the good manufacturing practice (GMP) protocols for the manufacture of the vaccine candidate. Bharat Biotech developed the first set of GMP batches within 40 days, and upon completion, the pre-clinical trials commenced. COVAXIN was evaluated in animals following the Schedule Y guidelines [established under Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1945] and World Health Organization guidelines. COVAXIN was reported to be safe and immunogenic in all animal trials. We have now moved forward towards the clinical development of this vaccine.

How big is your study group? Is it difficult to find volunteers for the human trials?

Right now, we are also awaiting ethical committee approvals from various institutions. Some of them have already come.

Enrolment of the cohort for the phase-1 is underway. We will be following a statistically-derived number of subjects required for the human clinical trials. The trial will be a multi-centre study in multiple cities across India.

At what price will the vaccine be sold?

As a socially-inclined organisation, we endeavour to deliver world-class vaccines at affordable prices. We have done this earlier and we hope to achieve the same for COVAXIN. It is too early to make any statement regarding price.

Vaccine race

As on July 14, the WHO has listed 23 vaccine candidates in different phases of clinical evaluation stage (human trials)

PHASE III
Fully assess efficacy, effectiveness and safety; involves up to 3,000 participants
Candidates in phase III: 2
Developers: Sinovac (China), University of Oxford/AstraZeneca (United Kingdom)

PHASE II
Assess efficacy and side effects; several hundred participants
Candidates in phase II: 2
Developers: CanSino Biological Inc./Beijing Institute of Biotechnology (China), Moderna/NIAID (United States)

PHASE I
Tests on 20 to 80 healthy volunteers; assess safety
Candidates (phase I and II combined): 8 [Bharat Biotech belongs to this phase]
Candidates in phase I: 11

PRE-CLINICAL EVALUATION:
Evaluates test results in animal models
Candidates in pre-clinical evaluation stage: 140

*Russia's vaccine candidate that claims completion of human trials is still in phase 1

SOURCE **WHO**

Dr Ambrish Mithal
chairman and head of endocrinology, Max Healthcare, Delhi

Keeping your pre-lockdown schedule is important

One of India's best known diabetes care experts, Dr Ambrish Mithal gives quick tips to patients on staying safe and eating healthy

For both doctors and their patients, the past few months have been challenging, and stressful. "At the beginning of the pandemic, we asked patients to stay home and visit the hospital in case of an emergency only. We also instructed them to monitor their sugar levels, keep up their exercise regimens, maintain their diets, and be regular with their medication," says Dr Ambrish Mithal, chairman and head of endocrinology, Max Healthcare. Some struggled to cope, while others managed better, as they found more time for themselves amid the lockdown.

Time to go to OPD

In the past four weeks or so, though, things have begun to improve further, says Mithal, as he doffs his PPE gear at the end of a four-hour OPD. "More people are now comfortable with video-consults, and if, need be, they do come and see me. Especially if they are first-time patients, those with Type 1 diabetes and pregnant women."

Maintaining the routine

Despite the challenge of maintaining a diet-exercise-medication routine during a crisis, diabetics need to be extra cautious because in Covid-19, poorer outcomes have been reported for diabetics infected with Covid-19, says Mithal. People ought to keep testing their sugar levels at home. "Keeping your original schedule [pre-lockdown] is very important. Waking up at the same time, getting ready for work as you used to, and keeping to meal timings help," he says.

Mithal advises moderation and careful planning, especially in dietary indulgences. Mangoes are not banned, and one medium-size mango a day is fine. However, the fruit should be split into a couple of servings, and total carbohydrates from fruit intake in a day should not exceed 30gm. "If you have the entire fruit [mango] at one go, the carbohydrate load is too high. Have a slice at one time, and don't have it after meals as one has already had carbohydrates in the meal. Instead, have it as a snack, and have it with nuts or something with protein," he advises.

> **If you have the entire fruit [mango] at one go, the carbohydrate load is too high. Have a slice at one time, and don't have it after meals as one has already had carbohydrates in the meal.**

The "fear" of Covid-19 might have kept patients from seeking health care, but it has been an unlikely ally in helping motivate diabetics to take care of themselves, and stick to their schedules. "The threat of Covid-19 is more immediate for people, rather than, say, a heart attack a few years down the line," he says.

Coping with the testing times

For a doctor, too, life can be challenging—staying glued to a computer screen for hours during video consultations, squeezing time for meals in between, and finding time for exercise. "I spend my evenings on my terrace, taking pictures of the sunset every evening," says Mithal. "I also visit a biodiversity park and spend time with nature to beat the stress."

—As told to Namita Kohli

Reinvent Higher Education at
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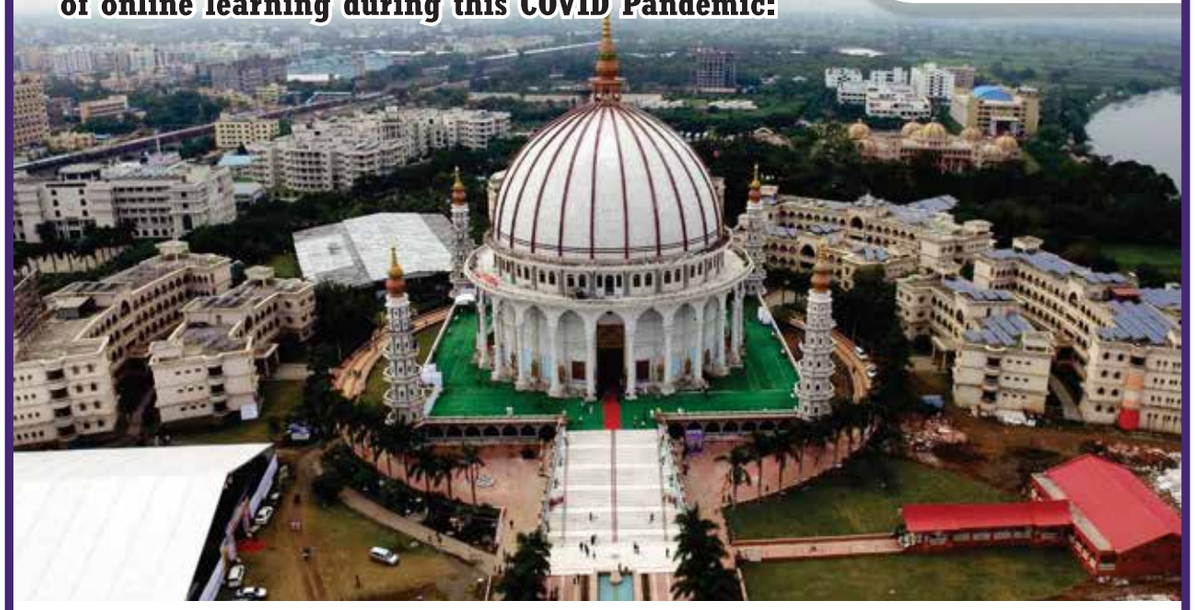

The COVID Pandemic has made entire university to rethink the way we impart education to our students. To ensure that our students begin the academic year without further delay. Notably, the Entire semester for undergraduate and post-graduate courses is scheduled to begin in July as per the regular University calendar schedule every year.

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AFP

SPOT OF BOTHER
Policemen stand guard next to the overturned vehicle that was ferrying gangster Vikas Dubey, who was killed in an encounter

Good cop, bad cop

Are the two bodies probing the police version of the Vikas Dubey encounter set up to fail?

BY PUJA AWASTHI

IN AUGUST 2008, an unexpected judicial pronouncement was made at a fast-track court in Sitapur. It announced rigorous life imprisonment for 14 policemen for killing three young people in Sarsai village of Sitapur district. But it was hardly fast, for it had taken 27 years and 200 hearings for the judgment to be reached at the special court. Six of the policemen and nine of the witnesses had died by the time the judgment came.

The Sarsai judgement is almost an aberration in a state where 6,126 encounters have taken place since March 2017, when the present government came to power, in which 122 criminals have been killed and 13,361 put behind bars. Magisterial inquiries are mandatory in all encounter cases, and only 74 have been completed so far. In all 74, the action of the involved police personnel has been held correct.

The Vikas Dubey encounter may be just another number, but it is proving to be a problematic one in a state where Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has announced that criminals who shoot at the police should expect bullets in return. In its crudest form, this is labelled the *thok do* (shoot them) policy.

The Dubey encounter has raised many questions—the most important of which is why he would have attempted to escape when he surrendered of his own will in Ujjain. His surrender in a different state could have been prompted by the swift police action in nabbing and killing his associates while also razing his house in Kanpur.

Those doubts will now be investigated by two bodies. The first is a three-member Special Investigative Team (SIT) that will, among other things, look into the larger networks that had ensconced Dubey despite the 60 criminal cases against him. The composition of this body, experts say, is legally unsound as section 155(2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure specifies: "Investigation includes all the proceedings under this Code for the collection of evidence conducted by a police officer or by any person (other than a magistrate) who is authorised by a magistrate in this behalf." The SIT instead is headed by a bureaucrat. Of the other two members who are police officers, one is J. Ravinder Goud, who was charge-sheeted in a suspected case of fake encounter in 2007.

A one-man judicial commission headed by retired judge Shashi Kant Agarwal will look into the ambush at Bikaru, which left eight policemen dead on July 3, and the encounter on July 10, in which Dubey was killed while being ferried from Ujjain to Kanpur. Agarwal served at the Allahabad High Court between 1999 and 2005, after which he was transferred to Jharkhand.

Judicial commissions in the state anyway have little impact. Take, for instance, the one-man Nimesh Commission set up to probe the police version of the arrest of two alleged terrorists Khalid Mujahid

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PTI

DREADED DUO
Vikas Dubey (right) with his aide Amar Dubey during an event. Amar was killed in an encounter at Maudaha village

and Tariq Qazmi responsible for the 2007 bomb blasts in Lucknow, Faizabad and Gorakhpur. The commission was formed in 2008 and its report tabled in the assembly in 2013. It called into question the police version of the arrests, but remained vague about pinning any responsibility.

Ram Das Nimesh, the author of that report told THE WEEK, "It is never in our hand to ensure what action the executive will take on a report". The report, without any concrete findings, is believed to have earned him the chance to head yet another commission to look into the violence in Tappal, Aligarh, in 2010. This one, too, gave a clean chit to the local administration for the flare-up that left five dead.

Kumar Askand Pandey, associate professor of law, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University, Lucknow, said that most inquiry commissions are set up to fail. "Commissions and more commissions seem to be the norm in almost all cases which point to possible wrongdoing on the part of the police," said Pandey. "All commissions work independently with no communication among them. Thus, larger issues always remain unaddressed. In the last three years, commissions in the state have been notorious for giving clean chits. The whole matter appears very murky."

Vikram Singh, former director general of UP Police, said there seemed to be an 'epidemic' of questioning any action by the police. "I have no reason to disbelieve the version given by the UP STF (Special Task Force) and the UP Police based on my real-time exchange of fire with hazardous criminals," said Singh. "Lame excuses are being given such as that he (Dubey) had a rod in his leg and thus could not have outrun the police.... The right to private defence by use of proportionate force is enshrined in the law and is established standard operation procedure."

In 2013, Mujahid died while being ferried from a court in Faizabad to a Lucknow jail. An FIR was lodged by Mujahid's uncle against 42 policemen and intelligence personnel, including Singh, who had by then retired and was more than 500km away in Haridwar when Mujahid died. "So many policemen languish in jails and die on such trumped up charges," said Singh. "Not one armchair activist or any member of the candle-light gang sides with them."

Another top cop, Brij Lal, who was then additional director general of police and later became the state's DGP, was also named in the same FIR. Now retired and a BJP member, Lal, who is credited with bringing down 19 criminals through encounters, said: "Encounters have happened even before independence. Dreaded criminals do not yield themselves to easy arrests. They will fire till the last bullet. The police fire in retaliation." Lal believes the police version but adds that the operation could have been better planned. "My first concern was always that the fewest number of people who needed to know about an operation should have knowledge of it," he said.

A group of lawyers have written to the chief justice of the Allahabad High Court on July 11, asking him to take suo motu cognisance of the alleged extrajudicial killing of Dubey and order a "court-monitored CBI enquiry of the entire incident". The letter raises 20 important queries related to the encounter.

Anurag Dixit, former vice president of the Central Bar Association, who co-wrote the letter, said that the state had sponsored a PIL against itself, a day later, to lend credence to its actions. "On July 12 (a Sunday) a hurriedly drafted PIL was filed before the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court," said Dixit. "This was immediately taken up on Monday and dismissed as it called for constituting a judicial commission headed by a former or sitting judge to probe the police encounter, a step which the government had already taken. The state thus has for itself a judicial nod for how it is going about to probe the matter. This also renders infructuous any other PILs in the matter till some fresh cause arises."

For now, however, there are enough old questions to answer in one of the state's most dramatic encounters.

THE WEEK
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Golden opportunity?

As the gold-smuggling case gets murkier, opposition parties in Kerala target Pinarayi Vijayan's throne

BY CITHARA PAUL

ON JULY 12, Kerala saw a car chase that would put Formula 1 races to shame. It started at 11.30am at the Walayar border in Palakkad and ended at 1pm in Aluva, Ernakulam. The route was the NH544; the distance covered was 138km. The participants were three police vehicles and a bevy of media cars.

Inside one of the police vehicles were Swapna Suresh and Sandeep Nair, the second and fourth accused in the gold-smuggling case that shook the state earlier this month. The NIA had nabbed the duo from Bengaluru the previous night; they were about to escape to the north-east. The chase ended in Kochi after they underwent Covid-19 tests in Aluva. Both were presented before the NIA court and were remanded to 14 days custody.

The duo has been booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and had been, according to the NIA, using the diplomatic channel to smuggle gold for the past one year. The luggage that was nabbed at the Thiruvananthapuram international airport on July 4 was addressed to Rashed Khamis Ali Musaiqri Al-shemeili, charge d'affaires at the UAE consulate in Kerala. The 30kg gold was "camouflaged" amid eatables. According to the customs department, Suresh had been using her contacts as a former UAE consulate official to run the smuggling network with Sarith Kumar, a former public relations officer at the UAE consulate. It is still unclear who paid for the gold and for whom it had been sent.

Apart from the diplomatic angle, the highlight of the case is the connection between Suresh and M. Sivasankar, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's principal secretary. Though the IAS officer was immediately removed from the post, the opposition alleged that Vijayan was trying to protect him. "The buck stops with the chief minister. Removing the secretary will not be enough," said opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala. "The chief minister is afraid that his office will be investigated, so he is trying to save face by removing the secretary."

Vijayan, on his part, maintained that the government had nothing to hide. "If someone has made a mistake, they will pay for it," he said. "We will not protect anyone." Vijayan had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting a coordinated investigation by all central agencies as the matter was "extremely serious", and had implications for the nation.

But the opposition was not ready to buy this, and there were protests across the state demanding Vijayan's resignation. The Congress-led United Democratic Front has announced that it would move a no-confidence motion against the state government.

The involvement of Sivasankar, whom Vijayan had handpicked as his principal secretary, is certainly a huge setback to the chief minister's image. It has also led to criticism of his centralised style of functioning.

"The issue is not Sivasankar, but the neoliberal capitalist policies being pursued by the left government," said political observer M.N. Pearson. "All these deviations are part of that." He added that the left government had lost its moral high ground.

A senior LDF leader, who did not want to be named to avoid "precipitating the matter further", said, "Sivasankar may have been a good officer, but ever since he was appointed as personal secretary to the chief minister, he had been acting in a high-handed manner. He has committed many mistakes in the past four years. But because of his proximity to the chief minister, others were hesitant to point them out."

PTI

IN THE DOCK
Swapna Suresh and Sandeep Nair (second from left) after the NIA arrested them

Other parties in the LDF are also critical of Vijayan for not suspending the IAS officer despite the customs questioning him.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) leaders, however, insisted that Vijayan was not someone who plays to the gallery. "The government has already appointed a committee headed by the chief secretary to look into the matter," said CPI(M) state committee member M.B. Rajesh. "Its report will be out and action will be taken accordingly. The left government has nothing to worry."

What it does have to worry about, some left leaders admit, is the new lease on life the Congress has received because of the case. The party had seemed listless of late, especially in the face of the goodwill the government had earned for its effective handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As for the left, Suresh's call records, gathered by the investigators, have further complicated matters. Among the people Suresh called was State Higher Education and Minority Welfare Minister K.T. Jaleel. The minister, however, said the calls took place when Suresh was executive secretary at the UAE consulate general office. "It was the consulate general who himself asked me to get in touch with Swapna in connection with Ramzan relief. I have nothing to hide," Jaleel said while releasing details of the WhatsApp conversation and calls.

On July 14, the customs department questioned Sivasankar for nearly seven hours. The agency is expected to question him again as Suresh's call records indicate close links between them. Customs seems to be certain that Sivasankar was also close to the other accused.

WHAT THE CPI(M) HAS TO WORRY ABOUT IS THE NEW LEASE ON LIFE THE CONGRESS HAS RECEIVED BECAUSE OF THE CASE.

Meanwhile, the customs department, which is also investigating the case, has arrested T. Rameez, a Malappuram-based businessman. According to the NIA, Rameez is the crucial link in the smuggling case and had been doing this for nearly a decade. His family ties with Indian Union Muslim League leaders has added fuel to the already raging political fire.

"The case has tarnished the image of the Pinarayi government, while also exposing the smuggling links of the Muslim League," said BJP leader Sandeep Warrier. "The BJP has no political agenda in this case. But we are sure that the people of Kerala, who are fed up with both the fronts, will come closer to us."

Pearson agreed. "The BJP will use this case to prove that the Muslim politics in the state is totally funded by the Gulf," he said. "Till now, all these were mere allegations, but now they will create the proof."

BJP president J.P. Nadda, while addressing a virtual gathering in Kasargod on the day Swapna was brought to Kochi, said, "We all know how the LDF and the UDF have joined hands to fight the idea of the BJP in Kerala, but our *karyakartas* are determined to see that, in times to come, there will be *kamalam*, *kamalam* and *kamalam* (lotus, lotus and lotus) not just in Kasargod, but throughout Kerala."

However, the BJP might also have some explaining to do. Customs has questioned Hariraj, a cargo clearing agency owner, on the suspicion that he had tried to get the baggage with the smuggled gold cleared at the airport. He has been linked to the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, an affiliate of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Hariraj, however, has denied the association.

ANUJA CHAUHAN

Shameful, disgusting forcefulness

This week one Shubham Mishra, who I have never heard of before—unleashed a vile diatribe against a stand-up comic called Agrima Joshua—who I had never heard of before either, for daring to poke fun at Shivaji—who, of course, we have all heard of.

Agrima's video, posted in 2019, is quite amusing, and anybody with even a modicum of intelligence and impartiality will grasp that she is not poking fun at Shivaji, but at the self-styled Shivaji *bhakts* on Quora. Anyway, such are the political and social realities on the ground today, that once her video caught the eye and the ire of the moral police, she took it down at once, and issued an unconditional apology.

But this was not enough to appease Shubham, who released a video describing graphically how he would rape Agrima, in language so violent and hate-filled that it has given me nightmares. Shubham has over three lakh followers on Instagram, and the video has over 25.4 K likes. Which means that over 25,000 people watched this man describing how he would violate this young woman anally with his c**k, which would ram through her body like a snake till it emerged from her mouth and shut her up forever, and when they had finished watching, they pressed the red little heart that on Instagram connotes 'like.' Essentially, they all said, ya Shubham, go for it, we're with you, *hum tumhare saath hain*.

Thankfully, the real police stepped in and arrested the moral policer, who deleted his post, and put up a more cowed video, muttering that he never said anything about raping anyone, and how he respects women. This filthy piece of doublespeak, in which he continues to heap subdued hate on Agrima, has more than five lakh likes on YouTube already.

I've no idea why people like Shubham zero in on people like Agrima—is it because she is attractive, and English speaking and earns a decent living, because she is on a stage with lipstick on, airing her political opinions, and not behind a kitchen counter swathed in a *ghoonghat*, silently rolling out *theplas*? Are they doing it to be popular? Or powerful? Do they really revere Shivaji so much? I am not clear, but the one thing that stands out quite clearly when you go through his feed is the desperate need to project forcefulness. This person thinks people respect that kind of macho, dominating figure, that adopting that persona is gonna make his life bloom with bright-red little hearts all the way.

Another incident of brute force unfolded horribly in Tamil Nadu recently. Father and son duo Jayaraj and Bennix were arrested by the police and beaten so savagely for an entire weekend for the crime of keeping their mobile spare parts shop open 15 minutes past the curfew deadline, that they died in lock-up. Their family were then ordered to take the bodies home, and instructed to bring 'dark lungis' with them—to hide the multiple fractures and the rectal bleeding the abuse had caused.

Apart from the sheer impunity on display, again, what stood out was the brutality overkill. And we are seeing it everywhere. Whether in the shooting down of Vikas Dubey, or in the tone of our popular TV news anchors, what we are increasingly seeing everywhere (except re: China) is a romancing and a fetishising of the tough, vigilante-ish, dominatrix persona.

Donald Trump summed up this thinking well when he told his governors how they should handle the #BLM protestors: 'You must dominate. You're gonna have to dominate, or you're gonna look like a bunch of jerks.'

In a world growing increasingly chaotic, with all systems compromised and all institutions crumbling, sometimes, people who project a superficial, toxic kind of toughness can appear to have all the answers. But here is the thing.

They never do.

ILLUSTRATION **BHASKARAN**

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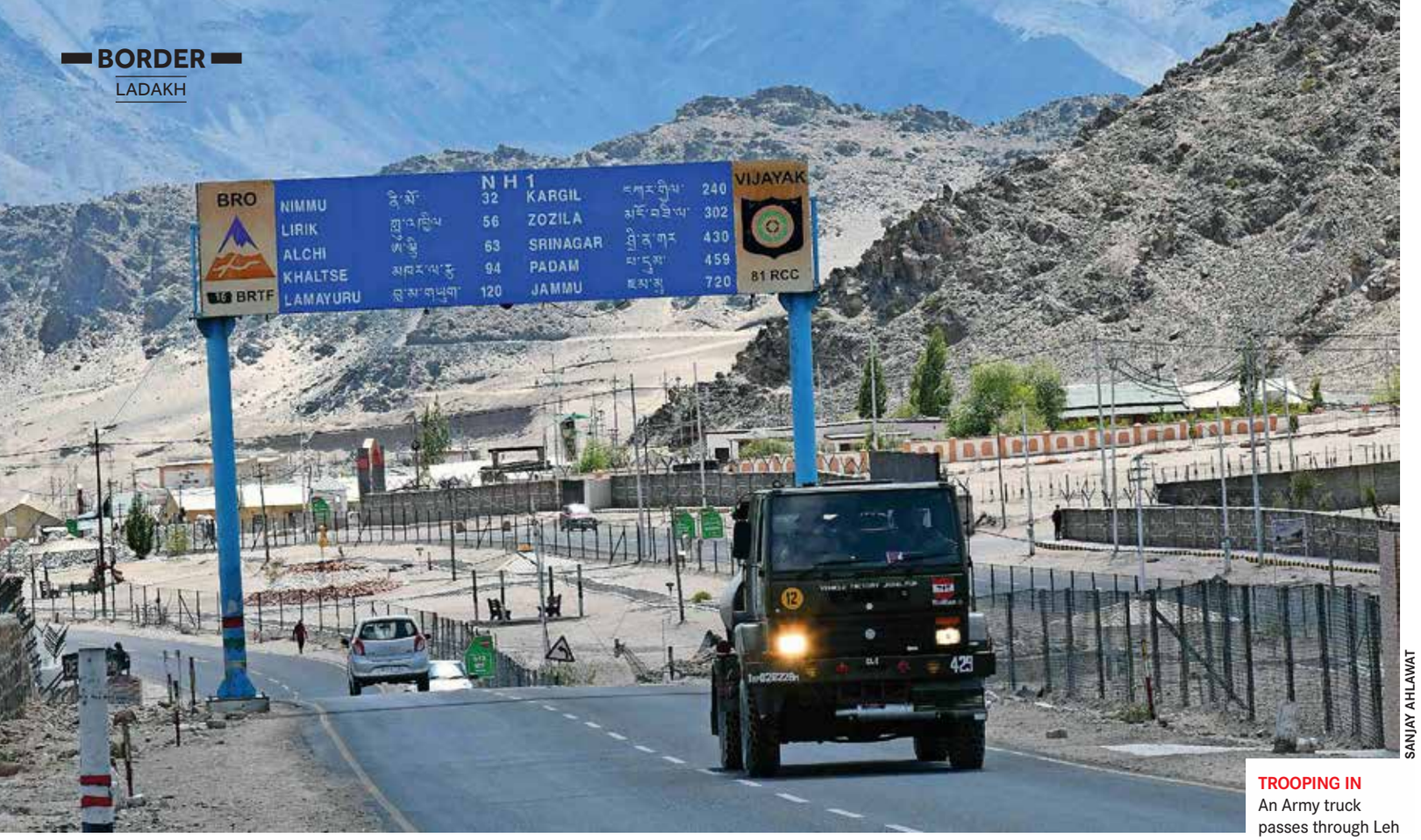

SANJAY AHLAWAT

TROOPING IN
An Army truck passes through Leh

Expensive bargain

With buffer zones cutting deep into Indian territory, China enjoys the upper hand in negotiations for border disengagement

BY PRADIP R. SAGAR/Leh

TUESDAY, JULY 14, brought with it a cloudy morning. Lieutenant General Harinder Singh, commanding officer of the Leh-based XIV Corps of the Army, boarded a military chopper to Chushul for disengagement talks with China. The meeting with Major General Liu Lin of the People's Liberation Army was the fourth in a series of negotiations between the two armies. Though the first meeting on June 6 resulted in a consensus for disengagement, it was breached with the Galwan valley clash on June 15.

The ongoing phase of negotiations is likely to have a significant and long-term impact on maintaining peace on the Sino-Indian border. Troops from both sides have reportedly begun stepping back from friction points in the Galwan valley, Hot Springs and Gogra by creating buffer zones. Military sources said the discussions were focused on reducing the number of troops, artillery and armour units. Both commanders also spoke about the tricky finger areas of Pangong lake and Patrolling Points 10 to 13 in the Depsang sector.

The PLA has deployed nearly 30,000 troops on multiple locations in eastern Ladakh by setting up permanent bunkers, pillboxes and observation posts. With the disengagement process progressing slowly, both sides are preparing for the upcoming winter deployment. The XIV Corps has already cancelled all leave till November and nearly a lakh soldiers have been deployed on the Ladakh border. In Galwan, Gogra and Hot Springs, troops are being pulled back only for about three kilometres, while the artillery and armoured units are staying put.

Both sides have agreed to create a buffer zone of nearly three kilometres at all friction points till the de-escalation process is over. A military officer based in Leh said the buffer zone was created only to prevent another Galwan type incident. "It is only for the next few weeks, till the complete pullback from in-depth areas. It will be out of bounds for both sides and no foot patrol is allowed."

Sources said the Indian side showed urgency to disengage after the death of 20 of its men in the Galwan valley. According to an officer privy to the ongoing developments, the negotiations for disengagement, at least to an extent, have gone in China's favour. For instance, on Patrolling Point 15 in Hot Springs and Patrolling Point 17 A in Gogra, China has intruded into the Indian perception of the Line of Actual Control by about three to four kilometres. "But major loss is in the Galwan valley, where the LAC has been shifted towards our side," said the officer. He cautioned that the buffer zone should not become the new normal as it would undermine India's presence and control in the area.

A military observer said the PLA followed the strategy of advancing 10km and retreating six kilometres. In places like Galwan, Gogra and Hot Springs, buffer zones are currently well within Indian territory. The Galwan valley, which was never contested and where India has been patrolling for decades, saw Chinese soldiers intruding more than three kilometres into the Indian side of the LAC. Now both countries have agreed to withdraw one and a half kilometres even as China claims the entire valley and the surrounding heights. Similarly, 1,500 PLA soldiers intruded nearly three kilometres inside Indian territory at Patrolling Point 17.

CHINA HAS MOVED NEARLY 40,000 TROOPS AND WEAPONS FROM 2,000KM AWAY TO POSITION THEM CLOSE TO THE LAC, SAID A MILITARY OBSERVER.

There is no reduction in the number of troops that the PLA has concentrated on its side of the LAC. "China has moved nearly 40,000 troops and weapons from 2,000km away to position them close to the LAC," said the observer. "So the PLA cutting back one and a half kilometres for the buffer zone has very little meaning. Intentions can change quickly as the capability is there."

China wants to go back to the 1959 version of the LAC, suggested by former premier Zhou Enlai. It will force India to withdraw up to 20km from the existing LAC.

The Indian Army has made it clear that it is monitoring the pullback by the Chinese with utmost caution. It plans to maintain additional troops on the border even during winter, like it did after the Kargil war. It has approached local monasteries for the use of their premises for housing additional troops during acclimatisation before deployment, while the Navy is being roped in to upgrade patrolling infrastructure in Pangong lake. "I am told that the Navy is sending a dozen high-powered, bigger capacity, top-of-the-line steel boats to match the heavier Chinese vessels," said Tsering Gyalpo, former senior superintendent of police.

The government has sanctioned ₹589 crore to enhance border infrastructure in the Ladakh sector as against ₹72 crore allocated last year. Authorities in Ladakh are reviving a 2014 proposal for allocating ₹650 crore for the development of border areas, aimed at supporting the nomadic tribes and preventing their migration from the region. The presence of locals in the border region is crucial in keeping the enemy out. For instance, it was a local resident who first flagged the latest round of Chinese incursion in Ladakh. On April 27, Urgain Chondon, chairperson of the Nyoma block development council, had uploaded photos and videos of PLA vehicles moving along the Chinese-occupied Tashi Gang area near Demchok. Hence, a multi-pronged military strategy, which also takes locals into confidence, could be the best way to maintain peace and security on the border.

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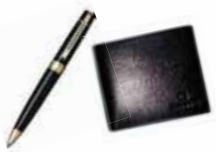

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THE PRESIDENTIAL PUZZLE

Pulitzer-winning author Mary Jordan on how she decoded the confounding first lady of the United States

BY WILL PAVIA

Melania Trump AP

Imagine that you have been invited to a state dinner with United States President Donald Trump. Not only that, the White House have put you next to first lady Melania Trump. "I have heard so many stories about people sitting next to her saying, 'Oh my God, I thought I would get the scoop,' " says Mary Jordan, author of *The Art of Her Deal: The Untold Story of Melania Trump*—the first close-up portrait of America's confounding first lady.

Traditionally, first ladies are fabulous hosts and raconteurs. Now here you are shoulder to shoulder with Melania, the daughter of a car mechanic/salesman and a factory worker, who grew up in a small town in Yugoslavia, who became a model, the third wife of a New York playboy and then the first lady. She must have some stories!

AT HOME US President Donald Trump with wife Melania and son Barron at the White House. Jordan says that in many ways the relationship between Trump and Melania is tight

GETTY IMAGES

The Art of Her Deal: The Untold Story of Melania Trump
By Mary Jordan
Published by Simon & Schuster
Pages **352,** *Price* **₹699**

Well, apparently, Melania can sit in perfect silence from the first sip of soup to the last draught of coffee. "There are some people, like the wife of [French] President Emmanuel Macron, she can chat with," says Jordan. But usually it is a total nightmare. She is known as "a tough one to sit next to". In this, as in so many other things, says Jordan, "she has broken the mould for expectations."

All of which tends to make her more interesting, if not at dinner. Jordan has wormed out extraordinary details, all very hard won. Before she interviewed Melania, in 2016, Trump insisted that he speak with her first. There is "a solidity" to Melania, he told Jordan. This seems right—the first lady can seem almost intransigent. At Trump's Florida resort, Mar-a-Lago, the president wanders about asking people if their club sandwich was any good, while Melania sits by the pool reading and no one dares to bother her, Jordan writes.

But when Jordan interviewed her, she found her "absolutely delightful, normal to talk to". She has also seen Melania more recently, at events. "I saw her backstage," she says. "Then I saw her go on stage. It is like two different people."

The director of a televised Slovenian fashion show Jordan spoke with recalled seeing a young Melania winning a career-making trip to Milan. She seemed "either emotionless, or, may be, a little disappointed", says Jordan. "You do not really see joy coming out of her face. I think that is another reason that people have said, 'Oh, she is trapped,' [and] the hashtag #FreeMelania."

There is a famous story, told by the gossip reporter Michael Wolff, that Melania wept tears of despair on election night, as she saw her pleasant life in New York vapourised by her husband's victory. Jordan does not believe it. "Nobody [that she talked to] has ever seen her cry." Melania almost never betrays what she is thinking, says Jordan. "She is not showing her hand."

Just after Trump was installed in the White House, Melania disappeared for about three weeks. "We were used to having a first lady's office that you would send a note in and say, 'What city will she be in? When is the next public event?'" says Jordan, a long-time correspondent for *The Washington Post*. "It was just blank, blank, blank. Nothing." This was when she got properly interested in the first lady, she adds.

Jordan interviewed all the president's men, more or less, for the biography, as well as everyone from Melania's childhood friends to the maid who cleaned her bathroom of smudges of the tanning spray Melania apparently applies whenever she goes outside. "So many people would say, 'The Trumps will kill me. I cannot talk," says Jordan. She once interviewed the boss of a drug cartel in a maximum-security prison in Mexico. That was a cakewalk in comparison. "This was just the hardest thing I have ever done," she says.

But Jordan had made some striking discoveries. At the start of the Trump presidency, Melania lingered at the Trump Tower, rebutting pleas from her husband's advisers that he was so much calmer when she was around. She claimed that was an arrangement for her son, Barron Trump, to finish his school year in New York.

Jordan says Melania was renegotiating their prenuptial agreement to give Barron a larger share in Trump's estate, using her absence as leverage. She cites three sources who say the moment that Melania began to seem happier in public, with her husband, in mid-2018, corresponded with the conclusion of "a new and improved financial agreement".

Around the same time, amid outrage over the separation of migrant children from their parents at the southern border, Melania took a trip to see one of the camps where kids were interned. She wore a jacket from Zara with big white letters on the back that read, "I REALLY DON'T CARE, DO U?"

"The fact that she put it on her back and wore it shows how weak the support around her is," says Jordan. Melania had issued a statement condemning the Trump administration's child separation policy; Jordan was told she got cross that her stepdaughter, Ivanka Trump, seemed to be trying to take credit for stopping it. Jordan was told that the jacket was partly a message to Ivanka.

MELANIA ALMOST NEVER BETRAYS WHAT SHE IS THINKING, SAYS AUTHOR MARY JORDAN. "SHE IS NOT SHOWING HER HAND," SHE SAYS.

In the White House, Melania's parents often stay. They also visit Trump's New Jersey golf club, where they summer. When Trump threw away a red cap he often wore, Melania's mother thought it might suit her husband, Viktor Knavs, unaware of an unwritten rule at the club that only Trump could wear a red cap on the grounds. Trump demanded that Viktor take it off.

Trump and Melania have a "strange marriage", according to the housekeeper. Jordan, however, thinks that in many ways the relationship is tight. Melania was the one who wanted Trump to get serious about a political run. Jordan says Trump picked Mike Pence as his vice-president on Melania's recommendation, reasoning that the other candidates would be vying for Trump's job.

Often, when it looks as if she is "trolling" her husband, she is actually working with him, to help him change direction on something, says Jordan. "Just like when you see her looking unhappy, it is not always what it appears," she says.

A family affair

While wishes for their speedy recovery have been pouring in, the Bachchans are facing some criticism, too

BY PRIYANKA BHADANI

PTI

SHOW OF SUPPORT Amitabh Bachchan with Abhishek, Aishwarya and Aaradhya clap as a gesture to show gratitude to frontline workers during Janata Curfew

IT COULD HAVE been a celebratory weekend for the Bachchan family, with Abhishek Bachchan's show *Breathe: Into the Shadows* debuting on Amazon Prime Video. Just a week before the show started streaming, Abhishek had completed 20 years as an actor. In a video interview with THE WEEK ahead of *Breathe*'s release, he had said that he was forever grateful to the audience for supporting his work. "That is a huge honour, which I take very seriously," he said.

He might have imbibed the idea of including his fans in his success from his father. Amitabh has often described his huge fan base as his "extended family". Perhaps that is the reason why, when the news of his infection began doing the rounds on July 11, he informed his fans on social media that he had tested positive for Covid-19. "Shifted to Hospital... hospital informing authorities... family and staff undergone tests, results awaited... All that have been in close proximity to me in the last 10 days are requested to please get themselves tested," he posted.

An hour later, Abhishek, too, informed that he had tested positive. A day later, wife Aishwarya and daughter Aaradhya tested positive as well. As father and son get treated at the Nanavati Hospital in Mumbai, and Aishwarya and Aaradhya quarantine themselves at home, there has been a deluge of prayers from their fans. Almost the entire film industry, as well as ministers like Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav and Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope, wished the family a speedy recovery. Currently, the hospital has announced that they are in a stable condition.

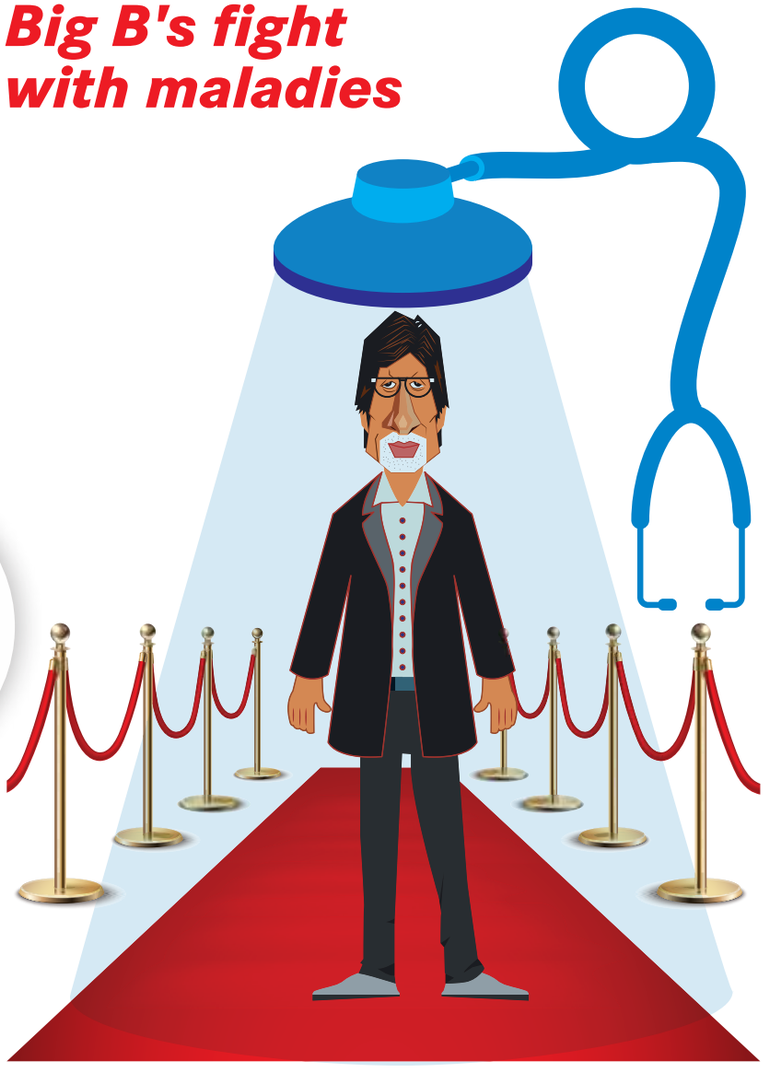
Pictures of *havans* and pujas, too, have emerged from places like the Hanuman temple in Kandivali West, Mumbai. "It shall not be possible for me to acknowledge and respond to all the prayers and wishes expressed by them that have shown concern towards Abhishek, Aishwarya, Aaradhya and me.... I put my hands together and say.... Thank you for your eternal love and affection," Amitabh responded on social media.

Both he and Abhishek have been busy with work in the past few months, even if remotely. Amitabh featured in one of the biggest and most talked-about films during this period, *Gulabo Sitabo*, which was the first film to be released on a streaming platform in the absence of a theatrical window. Though he did not give interviews, he kept himself busy with the film's promotions, coming out with several videos and social media activities.

Amitabh's upcoming films include the sports film *Jhund*, directed by Nagraj Manjule, the much-awaited *Brahmastra* directed by Ayan Mukherjee and co-starring Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt, and the mystery thriller *Chehre* directed by Rumi Jaffery, which was to release on April 20 but got postponed. Abhishek has a line-up of three films that include *The Big Bull*, directed by Kookie Gulati, about the life of stockbroker Harshad Mehta, the anthology comedy film *Ludo* by Anurag Basu and the crime thriller *Bob Biswas* by Diya Annapurna Ghosh.

Ad-man Piyush Pandey, who has often collaborated with Amitabh, vouches for his discipline. "He is very particular about his health," he says. "He has got no habits that [are

Big B's fight with maladies



Pain in lower back, spine, neck and shoulders as a result of past injuries from stunts

"Near-fatal" accident on the sets of *Coolie* in 1982; internal bleeding, requiring multiple surgeries

Got Hepatitis B from blood infusions after the accident; 60 bottles of blood from 200 donors

In 1984, he was diagnosed with myasthenia gravis—weakness and rapid fatigue of muscles under voluntary control; incurable, but treatment can help relieve symptoms

In 2000, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis of the spine

In 2005, he underwent a major surgery for inflammation and perforation of small and large intestines

In 2015, he said he is living "on 25 per cent of his liver", having lost the rest to Hepatitis B

SOURCE **MEDIA REPORTS** GRAPHICS **SREEMANIKANDAN S.**

HOME BASE Jalsa, the Bachchans' primary residence in Juhu, Mumbai

BACHCHAN WEALTH

JAYA AND AMITABH BACHCHAN

Deposits	~₹54 crore
Bonds, debentures, shares	~₹102 crore
Loans/advance given	~₹283 crore
Motor vehicles	~₹13 crore
Jewellery	~₹62 crore
Other movable assets	~₹22 crore
Agricultural land	~₹11 crore
Non-agricultural land	~₹114 crore
Commercial buildings	~₹50 crore
Residential buildings	~₹271 crore
Other immovable assets	~₹15 crore
Grand total of assets	~₹1,000 crore
Total liabilities	~₹105 crore

Source: MP Jaya Bachchan's affidavit (2018)

ABHISHEK AND AISHWARYA RAI BACHCHAN

Abhishek net worth **~$30 million** (Source: TheRichest)

Aishwarya net worth **~$35 million** (Source: TheRichest)

Abhishek owns Jaipur Pink Panthers in the Pro Kabbadi League and co-owns Chennaiyin FC in the Indian Super League

The couple owns at least three houses, including a **₹21 crore** flat in Mumbai and a villa in Dubai (Source: media reports)

SHWETA BACHCHAN-NANDA

Net worth **~$8 million** (Source: media reports)

not good for] his health or his body." Pandey adds that he is always ready for experimentation. During the lockdown, Pandey had called him for *#Family—A Made At Home Short Film* that was to be remotely directed by Pandey's brother, Prasoon. "He was on with the idea immediately. He wanted to do something for daily wage workers and he thought by combining both ideas, it would be a good way of helping the workers of the industry." The film was part of Bachchan's 'We are One' initiative to provide ration to one lakh daily wage labourers in the film industry.

Vinod Bhanushali, president of Global Marketing and Media Publishing for T-Series that is producing *Jhund* and *Ludo*, gushes about the family's work ethic. Their professionalism and discipline are unmatched, he says. "I have seen him on shoots many times," he says. "It is so amazing how everything is planned. He would tell you his in-time and out-time and in that given time, he would, with professionalism, finish everything perfectly. He would never give you an opportunity to complain. Everything is so meticulously calculated. We really need to learn a lot from him."

Although Amitabh has been called the "superstar of the millennium", "living legend" and "*shahenshah* of Bollywood", in the last few months, with the rising number of Covid-19 cases, his fans have not been too forgiving. An avid social media user with 43.5 million followers on Twitter, Bachchan has had to retract some of his recent posts. On March 22, he tweeted about the evil force of the virus being at "max potential" on Amavasya, the darkest day of the month. "Clapping *shankh* vibrations reduce/destroy virus potency....," he tweeted. "Cumulative vibrations better blood circulation." It would turn out to be a risky message in such critical times.

The stark criticism he faced for the tweet forced him to delete it within hours of posting it. A few days later, however, he would advocate homoeopathy treatment in another post and again receive flak for it. After the Bachchan family tested positive for Covid-19, these previous posts have come back to trouble them. While the outpouring of love is unparalleled, people have not forgotten the tweets that seemed to discount allopathic treatment.

Critics have read more into the situation than one might have imagined. Soon after he was admitted, a video of Bachchan wishing and congratulating the staff of Nanavati Hospital started doing the rounds, raising questions about how the actor could have made a video after getting diagnosed. To control the damage, the hospital had to issue a statement claiming that the video was shot in April 2020 to motivate the frontline nurses, doctors, and staff working in the Covid-19 ward.

Perhaps it is the price that the rich and famous have to pay. And while they may have to constantly fight the naysayers, they are also the ones who people look up to and follow. As we pray that they get well soon, it might not be wrong to hope that this will pave the way for a more empathetic society and reduce the stigma attached to Covid-19 patients and their families.

■ INTERVIEW

Abhishek Bachchan, *actor*

Basic concept of *Breathe* was very emotional and I was drawn to it

BY PRIYANKA BHADANI

ABHISHEK BACHCHAN made his debut on the big screen with *Refugee* (2000). Twenty years on, he has now made his digital debut with Amazon Prime Video's *Breathe: Into The Shadows* that sees him play a psychiatrist in search of his missing daughter. Around ten days before he tested positive for Covid-19, Abhishek spoke to THE WEEK about his journey in the film industry and his foray into the web world. Excerpts:

Q/How do you look back at these 20 years of being an actor?

A/I look back upon them with a great amount of regard, a lot of happiness but above all with gratitude and an immense amount of humility. Gratitude to the audiences which have patronised my work and because of that I get to celebrate 20 years in the film industry. That is a huge honour which I take very seriously. An actor is truly blessed to be a part of one film. It is very difficult. To be able to do it for 20 years is a blessing. I remember my friend Aditya Chopra told me at the very start of my career that very seldom does the audience decide to love somebody. 'If they decide to love you,' he said, 'they will keep you on cloud nine. Don't ever disrespect that love and work hard every day to keep earning it. Because, if they fall out of love with you, nothing is gonna help you out.'

Q/What drew you to *Breathe: Into The Shadows*?

A/I just really liked the story. When Vikram Malhotra (producer, Abundantia Entertainment) and Mayank Sharma (director) came in and narrated the story to me, I loved it. At that point, it wasn't a detailed script, it was just a story arc. I thought the basic concept of the show was very emotional and I was drawn to it.

Q/How do you think the advent of streaming services is changing the entertainment game?

A/I am not so sure. But to be honest, at the end of the day, it is about getting your product out to the audience and as long as you can do that successfully, you are fine; you should not complain. Here is another medium through which we can reach out to our audience. First, it was just the cinema hall, then came the television, and now you have streaming services and it is just nice. I don't think we should question it. One should just be thankful for it.

Q/In your interviews during *Manmarziyaan*, you spoke about the complacency creeping in and the break you took before that. How did the break help you? Did something change when you made a comeback?

A/You know what is really amazing about this? It is that it really doesn't matter how it changed me. It is whether I have been to work or not and whether you enjoy my work. At the end of the day, it is about the audience.... But I finally started acting upon things that I wanted to do, which previously I didn't. Maybe that is where the complacency was. Everything is hunky-dory, everything is good, don't fix something that isn't broken—that was the attitude. But after that, I guess, what changed was that I realised that this was how I wanted to work, this was the kind of work I wanted to do, and this was how [I could] go about it. So, maybe I started implementing what I was thinking.

The sweetest Bachchan

Bachchan Sr and Bachchan Jr checked into a suburban super-speciality hospital a few days ago after testing positive for Covid-19. As of now, father and son are in isolation wards, while the rest of the Bachchan *parivaar* is in self-isolation at their four luxurious bungalows in Juhu, a mere five minutes from the hospital. The family is being lauded for 'destigmatising' Covid-19, which is a pretty big thing, given the public's phobia surrounding the deadly virus.

Both the Bachchan men had gone back to work a few weeks prior to the hospitalisation, and urgent contact tracing is on. One school of thought believes that it is important for actors to support the film industry by showing confidence in the changed world of movie-making. Too true. It sends out a powerful signal to the industry, which is still figuring out a way to deal with the 'new normal.'

But this column is about the sweetest Bachchan—Abhishek. I have known him since he was a teenager. Having Amitabh and Jaya as parents was both a huge plus for him as an actor and a cross he had to bear. His father was not just numero uno, he was already a larger-than-life legend. His mother, Jaya, is an accomplished star in her own right. When Abhishek decided to get married, it was to actor Aishwarya Rai, often referred to as the 'most beautiful woman in the world.' Where was Abhishek in such a crowded celebrity field? I like to believe he was where he has always been—in a confident and loving zone of his own creation. He is one of the most well-mannered young men in showbiz, which says a lot about his upbringing. And what he projects, at least publicly, is a picture of an even-tempered, good-natured young man, who is not trying to prove anything to anybody. That is tough, given his circumstances and the non-stop comparisons with his father.

I have observed him closely during family functions at the Bachchan home and been struck by his unaffected and non-starry conduct with every single person around him. He comes across as a caring husband, doting father and a loving son. These are the qualities that have shielded him emotionally from the barrage of critical comments, mocking his 'failure.' What failure? Abhishek is an award-winning, bona fide talent—watch him in *Yuva* and *Guru*. He has a terrific flair for comedy (*Dostana*), and even in person, it is his gentle sense of humour that stands out. Compared to his egotistical and narcissistic contemporaries, Abhishek is a study in contrast. I have seen him at social events, when he walks in with his beautiful wife and graciously steps aside to allow photographers to shoot her solo pictures. Such an endearing absence of ego makes him a very special person. I have also seen him at gatherings where some of his more successful colleagues are mobbed and the crowd chases them, while he waits with a patient smile to move forward.

Today, the 44-year-old can be thought of as a middle-aged actor, even if actors in their mid-fifties are still chasing heroines half their age and playing romantic leads. There is a certain dignity about Abhishek that is absent in those others. I see them strutting around at events, surrounded by lackeys and bodyguards, and laugh at their self-importance. I see their carefully structured airport pictures and wonder who advises them. Abhishek demonstrates one admirable trait that is generally missing in the movie business—modesty. This makes him a far more attractive hero than those beefed up, haggard fellows hanging on desperately to their thrones.

Do watch Abhishek as he gamely goes along with his high-profile family members, emanating grace and goodness. Amitabh and Jaya have many glorious triumphs, awards and trophies to look back on, but the most precious gift is their son, Abhishek. As for Aishwarya, marrying Abhishek may just be the best decision she ever made!

Actor Abhishek Bachchan/PHOTO PTI

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Warrior QUEEN

What makes Charlize Theron invulnerable as an action hero is her vulnerability

BY ANJULY MATHAI

To watch Charlize Theron in action in her latest, *The Old Guard*, is a true pleasure. Her punches are poetry in motion, lithe without being clunky, strong without being heavy. It is hard to believe that not only does she not have a martial arts background but also that she trained to be a ballerina before she made it big in Hollywood.

But then again, maybe it is not so strange, given how many times Theron has shape-shifted for her roles. From the tortured woman plagued by visions in *The Devil's Advocate* (1997), widely considered to be her breakthrough role, to the doe-eyed beauty of *Mighty Joe Young* (1998), who does not know why people stare at her when she enters a ballroom, to the serial killer of *Monster* (2003), for which she won an Oscar for best actress, it would be an understatement to say that Theron's repertoire is diverse.

This has not been by accident. She has consciously and routinely pushed the envelope by transforming herself, both physically and emotionally, in each of her roles. "Unless it is something where I really feel like I am going to go scare myself—like I am standing on a ledge and if I fall, it might be brutal and not pretty at all—I don't really want to do it anymore," she once said about the parts she is interested in playing. And no, playing a blue-eyed bimbo does not fall in that category. When Oprah once told her that she fit into the pretty girl box, Theron categorically refuted it.

"What's a more interesting box for you?" Oprah asked her.

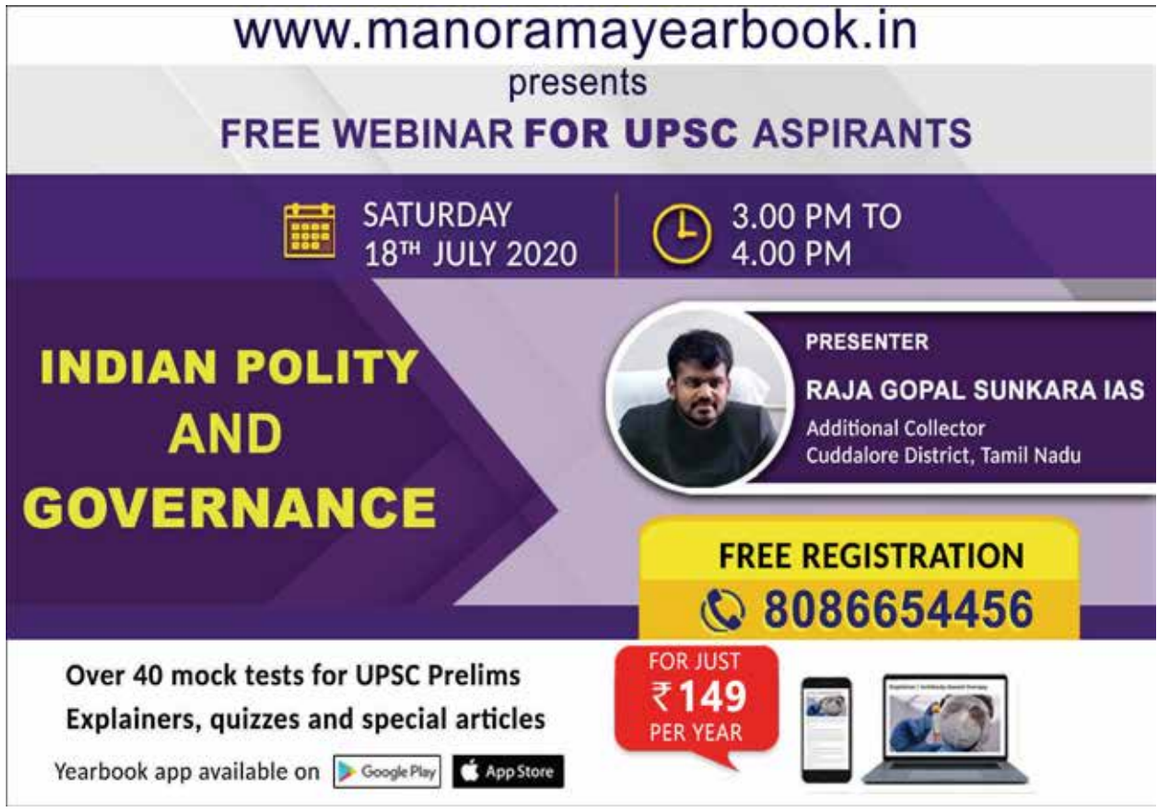
"Life," she replied. "Everything around the box."

This is not to say that she does not lethally deploy her sexuality when she needs to. Like in *Atomic Blonde* (2017), in which she plays an MI6 agent. "Women are always getting in the way of progress, aren't they?" asks James McAvoy's character, a misogynistic prick, in the film, a few scenes before Theron puts a bullet in him. "It's a double pleasure to deceive the deceiver," she says in her throaty contralto. The fact that she kills him in six-inch Manolo Blahniks feels like poetic justice for women all over the world. Not that Theron has to resort to her sex appeal to be sexy. In *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), for example, her character Furiosa, with her mud-caked face and nearly-shaved head, is more dangerously sexy than any starlet in spandex.

However, it has not been easy for her to make it as an action heroine, although she can kick butt as well as the best of them. After the failure of her first action film, *Aeon Flux* (2005), it took her 10 years to bag another action role in *Mad Max: Fury Road* as the fierce, one-armed Furiosa. "Unfortunately, the very sad truth of any film in the genre with a female lead, where they don't succeed, there is this mindset of, 'Well, if it doesn't work, you just don't touch it again'," she said in an interview. She never gave up, and followed *Fury Road* with *Atomic Blonde* and *The Fate of the Furious* in 2017.

THERON HAS CONSCIOUSLY AND ROUTINELY PUSHED THE ENVELOPE BY TRANSFORMING HERSELF, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY, IN EACH OF HER ROLES.

And then came *The Old Guard*, in which she plays the leader of a band of immortals. The movie, as such, follows a predictable route, peppered with rather maudlin dialogues and emotional scenes that seem a tad forced. But Theron is fantastic as Andy, weary, bone-tired and disillusioned with her existence. Her every posture and look conveys Andy's brokenness. Ironically, it is from this fragility that she draws her strength. This is vintage Theron. As she once said, "There is nothing more powerful than a vulnerable woman."



Done deal

Standup artist **Zakir Khan** has inked a deal with Amazon Prime Video, with three of his upcoming standup specials set to premiere on the platform. "It is humbling to receive so much love from viewers across the world," said Khan, who has already worked on the Amazon funnies, *Haq Se Single* (2017) that made him popular, *Kaksha Gyarvi* (2018) and *Chacha Vidhayak Hai Humare* (2018). "I am really excited to further deepen our association and expand the reach of Indian comedy right around the globe and reach over 200 countries with my next few specials," he said.

GETTY IMAGES

A sip of her Smile

Tomorrowland, one of the largest electronic music festivals globally, will be taking place digitally for the first time this year on July 25 and 26, and will be headlined by **Katy Perry**. "I've always wanted to be a part of the fun of Tomorrowland, and have been following the amazing innovation, technology and invention that this festival has always been about for a long time," said Perry, who is expecting her first child with fiancé Orlando Bloom. Fans will be able to get a taste of Perry's fifth album, *Smile*, which is releasing on August 14.

TÊTE-À-TÊTE

KARNESH SSHARMA, film producer

Man on a mission

Anvita Dutt, who directed the recent Netflix original, *Bulbbul*, became friends with Karnesh Ssharma, Anushka Sharma's elder brother and co-founder of their production house, Clean Slate Films, on the sets of a film almost a decade ago. When Dutt told him the story of *Bulbbul*, he told her that if he ever turned producer—he was in the merchant navy at the time—he would take it up. It took a long time, but he did keep his word. Starting with *NH10* (2015), Ssharma talks about his five-year journey as a producer and the stories the brother-sister duo choose to tell.

Since *Bulbbul* was one of the first scripts you heard, was it instrumental in you turning producer?

Well, part of it has to be it, yes. Anushka and I would always discuss while watching films from across the globe and about making similar cinema, which later happened to be *Bulbbul*, *NH10*, *Paatal Lok* (2020), *Pari* (2018) and *Phillauri* (2017). That was also our taste in cinema. It so happened that when Anushka decided that we should start producing films, I remember going back to Anvita and telling her that 'it would be great if we could produce it for you.'

There is a sociopolitical context to all the projects that you have taken up. Was that a conscious decision?

It is totally incidental. You cannot think that you would want to talk about a particular thing today. Most of our content does not have [the context] as the frontrunner. These are layers which are revealed or explored through characters in the story. They are not out there to make a statement. It is, I think, part of our personalities, Anushka's and mine. We are very laid-back, unsocial people. That is why our stories are laidback and layered with something interesting. This is going to be the mantra in future, too.

What about the negative feedback you got for choosing to tell stories with difficult themes, like in the case of *Paatal Lok*?

This is all we know. We feel we are sensible people and sensible citizens. We do not say anything just for the sake of saying it. Cinema is subject to opinions. When you welcome the good opinions, you should also welcome the bad ones and introspect. Introspection at every level, not just with respect to telling stories but individually also, is very important. That is why Anushka named the company Clean Slate, because after every project, we start with a fresh slate, without the baggage of the previous films.

— Priyanka Bhadani

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A suitable girl

The trailer for the six-part BBC adaptation of Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* is finally out and everybody's talking about the 22-year-old newbie **Tanya Maniktala**. A relatively unknown face, she was part of the The Viral Fever's web series *Flames* in 2018. Director Mira Nair described Maniktala as "a dewdrop, somebody so young and who hasn't seen the world.... Her lack of artifice is a very beautiful thing for me and yet she has such skill. I'm so delighted about her." Maniktala plays the 19-year-old daughter of Rupa Mehra, who wishes to find a suitable boy for her.

Soul tales

Actor ***Sonu Sood*** is all set to write a book on his experience of helping migrant workers return to their hometowns during the lockdown. He says the past three-and-a-half months have been life-changing for him. "While my heart beats in Mumbai, after this movement I feel a part of me lives in the villages of UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Uttarakhand and various other states, where I have now found new friends and made deep connections," he said. "I have decided to put these experiences, stories that are embedded in my soul forever, in a book." The book will be published by Penguin Random House.

GETTY IMAGES

*CONTRIBUTORS / **SNEHA BHURA AND PRIYANKA BHADANI***
*COMPILED BY **ANJULY MATHAI***

Constrain, not contain, China

In the wake of the brutal clash between Chinese and Indian soldiers in Galwan valley, some strategists have begun to ponder the previously unthinkable. Should India shed its habitual reserve about alliances and join those who, led by the US, are speaking openly about "containing China"?

Hitherto, the obvious answer has been "no". India, a founder of the non-aligned movement during the Cold War, has been allergic to alliances and feels no desire to put all its strategic eggs in one basket. India is still heavily dependent on Russian military equipment, though it has diversified its purchases to include American, French and Israeli armaments. And Donald Trump's United States has never struck India as a particularly reliable partner.

Also, trade with China had climbed up to $92.5 billion, and if not for Covid-19, was expected to touch $100 billion this year. Modi, who has visited China five times as prime minister, has met President Xi Jinping more often than any other world leader and just eight months ago hailed "a new era of cooperation between our two countries".

That cooperation has been jolted by the developments on the disputed 3,500km border, the Line of Actual Control. Shrill voices argue that India should embrace the US concept of Indo-Pacific region and upgrade the US-led Quad, deepening its strategic ties with Australia and Japan. China, the argument runs, must be curbed, and we cannot do it alone. No one wants war: containment should be the name of the game.

I am not sure. I am no fan of Xi's more assertive and coercive China, which seems to have abandoned its old reassuring talk of a "peaceful rise" to belligerently flex its muscles with its neighbours, including Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan, the Philippines, Hong Kong and now India. But I see merit in us continuing to engage China bilaterally and multilaterally, while trying to constrain, rather than contain, its assertiveness.

The difference between containing and constraining is not just two letters of the alphabet. A containment strategy refuses engagement and persuasion; it is a hostile policy. Constraining, on the other hand, engages with the adversary to restrict or limit the destabilising aspects of its behaviour. Australia's former foreign secretary Peter Varghese puts it well: "Containment seeks to thwart and weaken the PRC. Constraining seeks to manage a powerful PRC."

Constraining China would not involve turning the Quad into a military alliance. India is right to preserve its strategic autonomy by refusing to entangle itself in alliances. Rather, it is a means of China's neighbours using their diplomatic, geopolitical and military leverage to manage Beijing's ambitions in a manner that limits how much it can get away with.

Coordinating with the Quad countries—the US, Japan, India and Australia—is a way of maximising that leverage. I would go farther and expand the group to include countries like Indonesia, Singapore and South Korea, who have similar concerns about China's newfound assertiveness. Together we can, in Varghese's words, "collectively constrain coercive behaviour by the PRC and impose costs for such behaviour".

New Delhi should continue to keep all its lines of communication open to Beijing while working on a constraining strategy. We should continue to increase our trade (while diversifying our supply chains so that we are not overly dependent on a flow that can be turned off). We must continue to cooperate in regional and multilateral organisations like the UN. We must also engage with China in multiple forums like RIC, BRICS and the G20.

China should not feel that we are treating it as an enemy, despite its support for Pakistan. But we should recognise the divergence of strategic fundamentals. It is in our interest to "constrain" China, not to "contain" it.

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