

AIR INDIA MISHAP
TERROR ON THE TABLETOP

SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT
BJP TARGETS AADITYA THACKERAY

JOURNALISM WITH A HUMAN TOUCH

www.theweek.in

TheWeekMag

TheWeekLive

₹50

THE WEEK VIP
SACHIN PILOT: HAVE NOT
ASKED FOR ANY POSITION

DONALD TRUMP
THE PRESIDENT'S
INDIAN TARGETS

FILM ON 'KARGIL GIRL'
JANHVI KAPOOR TANGOES
WITH GUNJAN SAXENA

THE WEEK

AUGUST 23, 2020



**INDEPENDENCE DAY
SPECIAL**

THE MAN WHO LOOTED INDIA

As the world re-examines
injustices of the past,

ROBERT CLIVE
comes under the scanner

**Move his statue to
a museum**
WILLIAM DALRYMPLE, HISTORIAN

**He was greedy,
but brave, too**
ROBERT FOWKE, CLIVE'S
DESCENDANT



A big payout is good. A payout that keeps growing is better.

Presenting Freedom SWP - A feature that helps you maintain your lifestyle today & tomorrow.



ICICI Prudential
FREEDOMSWP

To invest, consult your Financial Advisor



Download
IPRUTOUCH App

Visit
www.iciciprurf.com

ICICI
PRUDENTIAL
MUTUAL FUND

TARAKKI KAREIN!

ICICI Prudential Freedom SWP enables investors to withdraw the investment corpus in systematic and timely manner. Investors can choose the Top Up % for withdrawals to meet their recurring and future expenses. SWP shall be processed till units are available in the scheme or till end date specified, whichever is earlier. This feature is available only under select schemes. Please read terms and conditions in the application form before investing or visit www.iciciprurf.com. This facility should not be associated or confused with Freedom SIP; the two are separate facilities provided by ICICI Prudential AMC Limited.

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.



HE WAS JUST 49 when he died by his own hand. The peer of the realm, knight companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, member of parliament for Shrewsbury and former governor of Bengal was quietly buried in an unmarked grave in the dead of night. His contemporaries called him Clive of India. Yet, if there is something that our country has been quite sure of, it is that Robert Clive is not of India. Not at all of India.

The best example is the fact that almost no one remembers him in Madras, where I spent a good part of my schooldays. The city was Clive's first port of call in India, as a writer in the East India Company. Reportedly, Clive's first residence in the city is falling apart. My school sits barely five kilometres away from this house, which stands on the grounds of the CSI St Paul's School, Vepery. Yet, we had never heard of this house. So much for Clive of India.

Clive's more popular residence in the city is, of course, the Clive House in Fort St George. The fort also houses the church, St Mary's, in which he was married to Margaret, whose descendant we have interviewed for this special issue. Both places are not open to the public, I gather.

Anyway, why this cover story? And, why now? The simple answer is that the Black Lives Matter movement has symbiotically strengthened voices against tyrants worldwide. The petition to unseat Clive from his pedestal outside the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Whitehall, London, has gathered strength and signatures. This Independence Day Special cover package is our attempt to prevent a forgetting and to highlight what Clive means to us as Indians.

Senior Special Correspondent Mandira Nayar has done a fine job of putting Clive in context by talking to as many stakeholders as possible. They include people like author and MP Shashi Tharoor, historian William Dalrymple and British politician Murad Qureshi who have strongly lobbied for moving Clive's Whitehall statue to a museum. The interview with Robert Fowke, Margaret's descendant, is another plus.

As a student of history, I know that it is dangerous to get into this game of binaries. Of seeing people in black and white. I felt that especially when we came to the part about the Jagat Seths, who bankrolled Clive to defeat Siraj-ud Daula at the Battle of Plassey. It is what it is and we have attempted to say it as it is.

While we are on the subject of Clive and Madras, I am reminded of another man who has passed under the radar, at a time when Cecil Rhodes is being 'beheaded'. An employee of the East India Company, this man was the first president of Fort St George. He profited from the trade that took place there and was, reportedly, fired by the company for striking deals under the table. Like Clive, he, too, was married at St Mary's. Today, we remember him for his generosity to a top university in the world.

In 1718, the Collegiate School in Connecticut was renamed to acknowledge the generous donation made by Elihu Yale. It became Yale College, and in 1887, Yale University.

Philip Mathew.



MORRIS GARAGES
Since 1924

INTRODUCING THE ALL NEW 6-SEATER **HECTOR** **PLUS**

WITH NEW EXTERIORS AND INTERIORS



Contact us @ 1800-100-6464

Book your **MG HECTOR PLUS** today across our 200+ safe and sanitized centres | Log on to www.mgmotor.co.in

IT'S A HUMAN THING TO RESPECT EACH OTHER'S PERSONAL SPACE

In a shared world, where we share moments and journeys with others, it's only human that sometimes we crave for our own space. Introducing **MG Hector Plus** that gives you the luxury of extra space, even if you are not in the driver's seat. So that while you may share the journey, you can celebrate your personal space too.

INTRODUCING



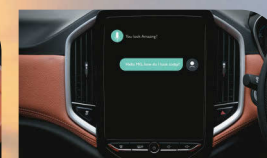
2nd ROW CAPTAIN SEATS



SMART SWIPE - FOOT
ACTIVATED AUTO TAILGATE



3rd ROW SEATING
FOR CHILDREN



LATEST i-SMART
INCLUDING CHIT-CHAT™

Starting at
₹13,48,800 (Petrol)* & ₹14,43,800 (Diesel)*

BOOK NOW



COMPLETE OWNERSHIP
ASSURANCE

5 Years/Unlimited km
Warranty^c

- Best In Segment Cost Of Ownership^o | @₹0.45/km: Petrol* | @₹0.60/km: Diesel^o
- Industry Best Maintenance Plans Starting at ₹8000 for 3 years^{oo}
- 3-60 Plan: Assured Buy Back value of 60% after 3 years at an attractive price^{ooo}

5 Years/Unlimited km
Road Side Assistance

5 Labour Free
Services[#]

Follow us on: www.mgmotor.co.in [f @mgmotorin](https://www.facebook.com/mgmotorin) [i @mgmotorin](https://www.instagram.com/mgmotorin) [in @mgmotorindia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/mgmotorindia) [y @mgmotorindia](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmgmotorin) [t @mgmotorin](https://www.twitter.com/mgmotorin)

*The vehicle only supports pre-defined and pre-fed commands and responses. ^cEx-showroom New Delhi; ^oFor commercial use cars, coverage upto 5 Years/1.5 Lakh km. The warranty coverage for 12V/48V battery, tyres is valid for 1 year, while for infotainment system is valid for 3 years. T&C apply [#]For first 5 scheduled services ^oSegment defined by comparable models [^]Above is calculated upto 1 Lakh km of preventive maintenance in Delhi-NCR and includes parts, consumables, labour, taxes ^{oo}Only for private vehicles ^{ooo}This is applicable only for private registered vehicles. Powered by [CarDekho](https://www.cardekho.com) Contact your nearest MG dealer for specific package details and T&C. Product shown is for representation purposes only and may vary from actual product due to print paper quality. All features and specifications as shown may not be standard across all variants. Prices shown are for base variants. Variants are subject to availability.



contents

FOR THE WEEK AUGUST 17-23

36



AIR INDIA MISHAP

The plane crash at Kozhikode airport shows that we are yet to learn from the past

48



VERY INFORMED PERSON

Finally, after all these weeks, I stand vindicated: Sachin Pilot, post his return to the Congress

87



@LEISURE

A bunch of civil servants are excelling in areas as diverse as music videos and mountaineering

52 COVER STORY



HEART OF THE DEBATE

The Clive statue in London

VILLAIN OF THE PIECE

World over, statues of heroes past are being toppled. As history is being reassessed, Robert Clive—the man who plundered India and led its corporate takeover—finds himself in the dock

Plus

- Indian historians are taking a relook at history, going beyond the binaries of good and evil
- Working on taking down Clive statue in London: William Dalrymple, historian
- Showing disrespect to someone like Clive does not help: Robert Fowke, Clive descendant
- It will take two or three years to remove Clive statue: Murad Qureshi, UK Labour politician
- Shropshire, Clive's hometown in England, struggles to come to terms with his imperial past

22 CURRENT EVENTS

Ally troubles for both coalitions as Bihar gears up for assembly elections

28 COVID-19

Herd immunity could slowly kick in across big cities, but vaccination will be the safer bet

- Ahmedabad is setting an example for treatment of Covid-19 at home

- Delhi government was more interested in being seen to be working than actually working: BJP leader Gautam Gambhir

- 46 POLITICS OF A PROBE**
Political controversies further muddy the

COLUMNS

- 18 POWER POINT**
Sachidananda Murthy
- 26 FORTHWRITE**
Meenakshi Lekhi
- 45 SCHIZO-NATION**
Anuja Chauhan
- 86 DETOUR**
Shobhaa De
- 98 LAST WORD**
Shashi Tharoor

probe into the death of Sushant Singh Rajput

- 82 INVESTMENT**
Indians are waking up to the advantages of systematically investing in equity markets

COVER PAINTING 'ROBERT CLIVE' BY BARA BHASKARAN

Printed at Malayala Manorama Press, Kottayam, Print House India Pvt Ltd, Mumbai, M P Printers, Noida, and Rajhans Enterprises, Bengaluru, and published from Manorama Buildings, Panampilly Nagar, Kochi-682 036, by **Jacob Mathew**, on behalf of the Malayala Manorama Co.Ltd., Kottayam-686 001. Editor **Philip Mathew**

• Focus/Infocus features are paid marketing/PR initiatives

MRF ZLX- FOR COMFORT AND LONG-LIFE

MRF ZLX

PREMIUM
LONG-LIFE
RADIALS



Available for: **DATSUN:** GO/GO+/REDI-GO | **FIAT:** LINEA CLASSIC/PUNTO | **FORD:** FIGO/FIGO ASPIRE/FIESTA CLASSIC | **GM CHEVY:** AVEO U-VA/BEAT/SAIL/SAIL U-VA/SPARK | **HONDA:** AMAZE/BRIO/CITY/JAZZ/MOBILIO | **HYUNDAI:** ACCENT VIVA/AURA/EON/GETZ/i10/GRAND i10/i20/SANTRO/VERNA/XCENT | **MARUTI:** A-STAR/ALTO/ALTO-K10/ALTO 800/BALENO/CELERIO/CIAZ/ESTEEM/ERTIGA/XL6/IGNIS/RITZ/SWIFT/SWIFT DZIRE/S-PRESSO/WAGON-R (O)/WAGON-R (NEW)/ZEN ESTILO | **NISSAN:** MICRA/SUNNY | **RENAULT:** KWID/LODGY/PULSE/TRIBER | **SKODA:** FABIA/RAPID | **TATA:** BOLT/INDIGO VISTA/INDIGO MARINA/INDICA/INDICA TURBO/MANZA/TIAGO/TIGOR/ZEST | **TOYOTA:** ETIOS/ETIOS LIVA/YARIS | **VOLKSWAGEN:** AMEO/POLO/VENTO.

AVAILABLE FOR
A RANGE OF
SEDANS AND HATCHBACKS.

MRF ZLX is available at all MRF T&S Outlets FRANCHISEE MRF TireTok Outlets MRF Exclusive Outlets and MRF Authorised Dealerships

www.mrf tyres.com
f /mrfcorporate | t /MRFWorldwide
For further assistance, email us at: write2us@mrfmail.com



All for good

People in Jammu and Kashmir have all the reasons to be unhappy. But, I believe, good things are in store for the UT, and people need to be patient ('365 since 370', August 9).

There are various investment possibilities in Jammu and Kashmir, across sectors. The lockdown necessitated by Covid-19 has caused some interruptions, or else sufficient investments would have already reached the region. Only rapid industrialisation and more jobs for the youth will pull out the region from the plight that it is in now.

All said, the issues affecting Jammu and Kashmir should be handled carefully, taking into consideration all factors. Nobody in Jammu and Kashmir should be made to feel that he or she has been humiliated over the last one year. Till now, the corrupt political leadership was ruling the roost, and the common man suffered. People there are yearning for good governance.

The political process in Jammu and Kashmir will not set off unless statehood is restored. Hope it happens sooner rather than later.

K.V. Prasad,
On email.

The genesis of problems in Jammu and Kashmir has always been a trust deficit between the Centre and the region since its accession to India. Now, the only solution is to gain the confidence and sympathy of the people of J&K.

S.K. Rajput,
On email.

Industrialists across the country can make rich contributions towards the overall development of Jammu and Kashmir. A section of the population there has gone astray because of lack of jobs. Unless development comes to Kashmir and there are plenty of jobs for the Kashmiri youth, the mainstreaming of Kashmir is not going to happen.

The onus is on the Central government to see to it that development is visible in Kashmir in the next one or two years, and that it touches the lives of every ordinary resident of Jammu and Kashmir. If that happens, Pakistan is

bound to quiver.
Tapesh Nagpal,
On email.

Focus on issues

I agree with Meenakshi Lekhi that the Congress has a leadership crisis, but one must not forget the BJP's attempt to poach Congress MLAs in Rajasthan ('Forthwrite', August 9). Sachin Pilot and the rebel MLAs should come forward and discuss their problems with the high command, rather than waste taxpayers' money by isolating themselves in resorts.

The BJP should focus on issues caused by Covid-19 and the falling economy, rather than woo members of other parties.

Rajyavardhan Shetty,
On email.

Big salute

Though more than seven decades have passed since the nation got its independence, it is unfortunate that people belonging to backward communities have not achieved their freedom

THE WEEK IN ASSOCIATION WITH ADITYA BIRLA SUN LIFE MUTUAL FUND

PRESENTS A **WEBINAR** ON

Road map to Retirement Planning

1. To-do- list of retirement planning
2. Retiring Early with a right planning
3. Mindful Retirement.

SPEAKERS



P. V. SUBRAMANYAM
Author & Expert
in personal finance



KIRAN TELANG
Author & Expert
in personal finance



AMIT TRIVEDI
Author & Expert
in personal finance



K. S. RAO
Head - Investor Education
& Distributor Development
- Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC Ltd.

Friday, Aug 21, 2020, 04:00PM to 06.00PM

For Registration, Visit
www.theweek.in

HOW TO REACH US

SUBSCRIPTIONS/CUSTOMER CARE

For all subscription related inquiries please write, email or fax to Senior Manager, Circulation, Manorama Buildings, PB No. 4278, Panampilly Nagar, Kochi - 682036, Kerala.
Email: subscribe@theweek.in
Toll free no.: 18001035981
Cochin: 0484-4447507
For advertising: +91 98953 95097
Email: magazineads@mm.co.in

CIRCULATION

Bengaluru: 080-22247735/22247736
Bhopal: 0755-2557937
Chandigarh: 0172-2724699
Chennai: 044-66918530/31
Coimbatore: 0422-2241911/2245470
Delhi: 011-23739740

Hyderabad:

040-23314168/23324692
Kolkata: 033-24198233
Kottayam: 0481-2563646
Lucknow: 0522-2341576
Mumbai: 022-24901331, 39495969
Patna: 0612-2233809
Jaipur: 0141-2368360/4005808
Thiruvananthapuram: 0471-2328198

BUREAU

Bengaluru: 080-22867345, 22867050
Kolkata: 033-24556995, 24198344, ext.216
Chennai: 044-66918500
Delhi: 011-23354920
Hyderabad: 040-23314168, 23324692
Mumbai: 022-22074604, 22004358
Bhopal: 0755-2431001
Lucknow: 0522-2701725

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Manorama Buildings, P.B. No. 26, Kottayam 686001, Kerala, India.
Tel: 0481-2563646
REGIONAL CO-ORDINATING OFFICE
Tej Building, 1st Floor, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110 002.
Tel: 011-23354920, 23354921, 23359541, 23355801, 23356537
Fax: 4354 1354

EDITORIAL

Manorama Buildings, P.B. No. 4278, Panampilly Nagar, Kochi 682036, Kerala, India.
✉ editor@theweek.in
🌐 http://www.theweek.in
☎ +91 484-4447888
📞 +91 484-2315745

An Investor Education and Awareness Initiative of Aditya Birla Sun Life Mutual Fund.

Disclaimer: Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

For further information on one-time KYC process, List of SEBI registered Mutual Funds and Redressal of Complaints; visit <https://mutualfund.adityabirlacapital.com/investor-education/education/kyc-and-redressal>

DIGITAL BHARAT AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT

*"Intent, Inclusion, Investment, Infrastructure and Innovation-
these five things are important to speed up India's development
and make it 'AatmaNirbhar'"*

- Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India



Digital India programme has immensely transformed the digital profile of the country, which was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in July, 2015. Over the past five years of its tremendous and progressive journey, the programme has become a mass movement and is successfully bridging the digital divide, gender divide, access divide and financial divide etc., resulting in acceleration of the socio-economic development of the country. Digital India has benefitted every section of the Indian society, ensuring digital access, digital delivery of services and digital inclusion of all based on technology that is sustainable, affordable and transformative.

Digital India programme has established
a resilient digital infrastructure



India- 2nd largest mobile
manufacturing nation in the world

Highlights of Digital India programme's success

126 Crore Aadhaar	115 Crore Mobile Connections
1.26 Crore taxpayers GSTN Network	72 Crore Internet Subscribers
46k Buyers & 43 lakh sellers Government eMarketplace	3.7 lakh Common Services Centres
₹ 2.9 lakh crore monthly transaction at UPI in July'20	1.08 crore Hospital Admissions Ayushman Bharat
126 lakh Users MyGov	8.5 Crore farmers given DBT PM-KISAN
1001 Mobile based Services UMANG	40.14 Crore Beneficiaries Jan Dhan Yojana
550 GIS based Applications National Centre for Geo-Informatics	Highspeed broadband at 1721 Institutions through NKN
379 Crore issued documents DigiLocker	1.42 Lakh Gram Panchayats connected - BharatNet
1100+ Govt applications & databases - GOI Cloud Meghraj	2 Units (2014) to 260+ Units (2020) - Mobile & Mobile Component Manufacturing

Various other citizen-centric and transformational services have been empowering and benefitting Indian citizens, such as several farmer-oriented initiatives (PM-Kisan, Soil Health Cards, M-Kisan, and Fasal Bima Yojana etc); crucial e-learning initiatives (Diksha, SWAYAM, SWAYAM Prabha, e-Pathshala, National Scholarship Schemes etc.); and Ayushman Bharat, which has become the largest health insurance scheme in the world within two years of its launch.

DIGITAL INDIA INITIATIVES FOR FIGHTING COVID-19

Aarogya Setu

- Helps citizens in health assessment, enables them to get Govt facilities & assists in containment of the spread of COVID-19
- Information available in 12 languages
- More than 13 crore users have downloaded app
- Helped in identification of over 3,500 COVID-19 hotspots
- The app has been developed for KaiOS platform to help feature phone users and is live across 3 crore phones



Sensitisation through Social Media Platforms- MyGov, Enabling Participative Governance



- Utilizing Social Media for feedback, engagement & grievances
- MyGov has connected and communicated healthcare initiatives of the Government directly to masses
- 9.3 Crore views of COVID-19 webpage



265 crore
reach on Facebook



15 crore
impression on Twitter



2.9 crore
users on WhatsApp



24 lakh
subscribers on Telegram MyGov
channels and their successful
mapping of 12,000 Food/ Night
Shelters from 743 Cities of 32
States/ UTs on Google Maps.

- Bi-lingual MyGov Corona Helpdesk chatbot- sensitizing users through Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger etc.
- Chatbots Integrated with chatbots of 13 States/UTs to provide information in region languages
- 2.7 Crore+ users interacted with WhatsApp based MyGov Corona Helpdesk



UMANG:

Over 1000 mobile enabled services, especially EPFO and Jan Aushadhi Kendras have made the lives of the citizens convenient during the pandemic.

e-Sanjeevani:

The platform's tele-consultation services proved beneficial for patients and eliminated the need to visit hospitals.



DigiLocker:

The platform ensured that the pandemic was no deterrence for students. It allowed students to download CBSE Digital Results Mark Sheets, Certificates and Migration Certificates to apply for colleges and universities in India or abroad online.



Capacity Building Programmes:

NeGD LMS facilitated approximately 65+ ministries and government departments with capacity building, e-learning, 450+ webinars and 750 hours of meetings for impact assessment of CoVID, including initiatives like Dekho Apna Desh (Tourism Ministry).

Integrated Government Online Training **IGOT** have been made operational to train frontline health workers.

Launch of SAMHAR-COVID 19:



National Supercomputing Mission Infrastructure has been providing R&D support in the fight against COVID-19. Expertise was shared with Researchers, Startups, and Industry.

Ayush Sanjeevani:

Ministry of Ayush has developed this mobile app to help citizens enhance immunity and to keep them healthy.



Public Financial Management System (PFMS):

The system has been ensuring smooth Direct Benefit Transfer for all government schemes facilitating transparency as payments are directly credited into bank accounts of beneficiaries.

Video Conference and e-Office:

Remote working and work from home are being supported through VC and e-Office solutions of NIC.



THE WAY FORWARD: BUILDING DIGITAL BHARAT AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT

The new movement of AatmaNirbhar Bharat or Self Reliant India announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister has added impetus to Digital India programme. The vision to build AatmaNirbhar Bharat is a forward-looking journey, where the Government aspires to make products and services in the country to meet our domestic demand and to serve the global need. To take Digital India programme to newer heights, i.e. building Digital Bharat AatmaNirbhar Bharat, the Government has targeted to enhance the following sectors, amongst others, where rigorous work has started already.

Emerging Technologies (AI, Machine Learning, Deep Learning, Internet of Things, Drones, Data Analytics, GIS based technologies, Satellite Technologies, Distributed Ledger, Augmented Reality / Virtual Reality etc.) will be the core of digital transformation for existing and new e-Governance initiatives.

National AI Portal (www.ai.gov.in) has been launched with the aim to provide all AI related information at a single place and to facilitate an AI ecosystem in the country.

Responsible AI for Youth: A National programme

(<https://responsibleai.foryouth.negd.in/home>) has been launched

for government school children, across the country, with an aim to empower them with appropriate New Age tech mind-set, relevant AI skill sets and provide access to required AI tool sets to make them digitally ready for future.



*"India must be a leading country in the
development of Artificial Intelligence
in the world, leveraging upon its vast
Internet-savvy population and data
it is creating."*

Ravi Shankar Prasad
Hon'ble Minister of Electronics & Information Technology,
Communications and Law & Justice, Government of India

Centres of Excellence (CoE) in partnership with Academia and Industry have established to promote adoption of emerging technologies in social and industrial sectors, such as, agriculture, education, healthcare, childcare, sports, etc.

MeitY's Start-up Hub has been initiated to promote technology start-up companies in the country.



The Government of India is now focused to build up **National Public Digital Platforms** in the areas of social and new sectors, such as Health, Agriculture, Education, Land, Integrated Criminal Justice System, Logistics etc., which will provide all sectoral services to stakeholders in a single sign-on and convenient manner through **federated India Enterprise Architecture**.

To establish India as an **Electronics Manufacturing Hub** globally, three new schemes have been launched: Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing; Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS); and Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0). These schemes are expected to attract an investment of about Rs. 10,00,000 crores by 2025 and generate around 5 lakh direct and 15 lakh indirect jobs.

Trillion Dollar Digital Economy:

- Digital India aims to achieve a Trillion Dollar Digital Economy and is a key contributor in the realization of 5 Trillion Dollar Economy by 2024-25
- 9 Specific areas of interventions have been identified: digital infrastructure, digital services, digital platforms, and emerging technologies led solutions etc.

To make India self-reliant, the idea is to go beyond Make-In-India. The Government of India, therefore, is focused on Make-in-India, Make-for-India, and Make-for-the-World to accomplish the dream of AatmaNirbhar Bharat. Digital India programme is a critical part of this journey, ensuring propagation of socio-economic benefits to every individual through digital technologies, thereby aiming towards creating a Digital Bharat AatmaNirbhar Bharat.

from the tyranny of the so-called upper-class clans, as evidenced from the statements made by the Covid-19 warrior Dr Ajoy Mistry, who belongs to a scheduled caste ('The good doctor', August 9).

Despite obstacles, Ajoy has now become a medical practitioner. It is remarkable that he is serving the same villagers who had earlier ostracised him for his caste. Without holding any animosity towards them for their mean acts, Ajoy is saving their lives from the clutches of the dreaded virus.

It also feels great to know that Subhasini, Ajoy's mother, who founded Humanity Hospital out of her meagre earnings as a poor vegetable vendor, was awarded the Padma Shri in 2018, for services rendered to poor and needy patients.

Tharcus S. Fernando,
On email.

Realistic target

Adar Poonawalla is being realistic when he said that his institute would need two years to administer the Covid-19 vaccine across India ('Very Informed Person', August 9). The aim should be to provide a safe and effective vaccine for all.

The government-appointed committee

on vaccine administration should engage with all stakeholders while considering the logistics and ethical aspects of administration of Covid-19 in a country as large as ours.

It is a matter of pride that India is one of the largest producers of vaccines in the world.

T.P. Nandagopal,
On email.

Timely report

The cover story by R. Prasannan (August 2) on the role played by Indian soldiers in World War II was fantastic.

I have been a reader of THE WEEK for over 25 years and you have always surprised me with your ability for research and balanced articles on varied subjects of public interest.

Mahatma Gandhi was right in supporting the British during the war, despite the hostility shown by Winston Churchill towards India.

The role of various battalions, who fought in the war with extraordinary courage, has been well documented in your report. It is the right time to remember these soldiers, especially when we are battling on two fronts.

K.V. Jayaram,
On email.

THEWEEK

Editor
Chief Associate Editor & Director
Editor-in-Charge
Senior News Editor
News Editor
Deputy News Editors
Resident Editor, Delhi
Chief of Bureau, Delhi
Chief of Bureau, Mumbai
Deputy Chief of Bureau, Delhi
Chief Subeditors
Senior Subeditors
Subeditors

SENIOR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS
Delhi: Rekha Dixit, Mandira Nayar,
Namrata Biji Ahuja, Soni Mishra,
K. Sunil Thomas
Srinagar: Tariq Ahmad Bhat
Lucknow: Puja Awasthi
Kolkata: Rabi Banerjee

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS
Delhi: Pratul Sharma, Namita Kohli,
Pradip R. Sagar
Bengaluru: Prathima Nandakumar
Thiruvananthapuram: Cithara Paul
Mumbai: Nachiket Kelkar
Chennai Lakshmi Subramanian
Bhopal: Sravani Sarkar
Ahmedabad: Nandini Gunavantrai Oza

Photo Editor: Sanjoy Ghosh
Deputy Photo Editors
Bhanu Prakash Chandra, Salil Bera
Chief Photographers
Delhi: Arvind Jain, Sanjay Ahlawat
Mumbai: Janak Bhat,
Amey Suhas Mansabdar
Photographer
Delhi: Aayush Goel
Chief Picture Coordinator
Bimal Nath C.
Research: Jomy M. Joseph
Photo Archivist: Deepak Joy T.

Philip Mathew
Riyad Mathew
V.S. Jayaschandran
Stanley Thomas
Lukose Mathew
Mathew T. George, Maijo Abraham,
Ajish P. Joy
K.S. Sachidananda Murthy
R. Prasannan
Dnyanesh V. Jathar
Neeru Bhatia
Susamma Kurian,
Navin J. Antony
Anirudha Karindalam,
Anirudh Madhavan
Diya Mathew, Karthik Ravindranath,
Reuben Joe Joseph, Nirmal Jovial

PRINCIPAL CORRESPONDENTS
Hyderabad: Rahul Devulapalli
Kochi: Anjuly Mathai

SENIOR CORRESPONDENTS
Bengaluru: Mini P. Thomas,
Abhinav Singh
Delhi: Sneha Bhura
Mumbai: Priyanka Bhadani,
Pooja Biraia Jaiswal

CHIEF REPORTER
UAE: Raju Mathew, Dubai

Art Editor: Jayakrishnan M.T.
Assistant Art Editor: Binesh Sreedharan
Senior Infographic Designer: Sreemanikandan S.
Illustrator: B. Bhaskaran
Layout Artist: B. Manojkumar
Designers: Deni Lal, Job P.K.
Graphic Designer: Syam Krishnan
Artists: Rajesh A.S., Sumesh C.N.,
Sujesh K., Ajeesh Kumar M., Jairaj T.G.
Senior Researcher: Rani G.S.

THEWEEK.IN

New Media Coordinator
Deputy New Media Coordinator
Senior Subeditors
Subeditors
Senior Researcher
Multimedia
Executive Director
Vice President, Marketing, Advertising Sales
Vice President, Circulation
Senior General Manager, Sales
MUMBAI
Resident Chief General Manager
CHENNAI
Regional Chief General Manager
BENGALURU
Regional Chief General Manager
NEW DELHI
Chief Marketing Officer (North) & Head, Special Projects

Neeraj Krishnan
Sarath Ramesh Kuniyl
Hazeeda Vijayakumar, Sumitra Nair,
Vaisakh E. Hari, Ancy K. Sunny,
Jose K. George, Justin Paul George
Vinod V.K., Anita Babu, Varun Ramesh
Balan
Saju C. Daniel
Rahul J. Mohan, Vipin Das P.
George Jacob
Varghese Chandu
M. Rajagopalan Nair
Hari M. Varrier
Shree Kumar Menon
K.C. Suresh
Ranjit Kurien
R. Rajmohan

Do COVID Lives matter more than the others?

The Covid pandemic and the subsequent response is something we haven't seen for a hundred years.



In a relatively short time, over 20 million people have been infected and 700,000 have died in the Covid-19 pandemic. This virus has captured the imagination of governments, scientists, the media, and most importantly the common man like no other viral infection I have seen in my five-decade-long medical career.

Covid-19 is undoubtedly a serious problem and the government and the medical community agreed that we needed to take drastic steps to try and contain the virus. Unfortunately, while the virus has taken centerstage, all the other illnesses have been relegated to the backburner and they are causing immeasurable suffering. Most of our healthcare budget and medical resources have been diverted to Corona care at the cost of other diseases which have a higher morbidity, mortality and affect more people.

Now let's look at some of statistics

Indian population	1.38 Billion (2020)
Death rate	10.5 Million/year
Deaths due to Covid	30000- in 7 months
Cancer	7.8 Lakh deaths/year
Cardiovascular disease	3.7 Million deaths/year
Kidney disease	2.0 Lakh deaths/year
Tuberculosis	2.2 Lakh deaths/year
Gastroenteritis	3.00 Lakh/year
Road traffic accident	1.5 Lakh deaths/year
Non-communicable disease	60%
Communicable disease	40%

From the data we can conclude that Covid accounts for a small fraction of deaths in our country and yet a disproportionate amount of our finite resources are being allocated to battle it at the expense of several other diseases that have higher mortality.

Even advanced countries were not able to effectively control Covid despite spending trillions of dollars. The question India has to answer is, can we afford to spend billions to com-

bat Covid when the true cost is measured not just in dollars, but also involves sacrificing the care of the patients with other illnesses?

India has faced numerous contagious epidemics. However, Covid is the only epidemic where hospital footfalls have decreased by 60-80% because patients with non-Covid illness fear going to or are unable to go to a hospital. Non-communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and obesity are deadly, especially if untreated.

Many children around the world are unable to follow their vaccination schedules, which leaves them, and society as a whole, vulnerable to many otherwise preventable communicable diseases.

We cannot let Covid run amok but since we don't know exactly how long it will be around, it may be time to modify our approach.

- Common sense precautions—social/physical distancing, wearing of masks, cough etiquette, repeated hand washing, keeping your surroundings hygienic and avoiding large gatherings
- Non-hospital care for asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic patients
- Reserving hospital beds for the moderately and severely ill patients
- Protecting healthcare workers by educating them on personal protective measures
- Reverse isolation of the vulnerable people like the elderly, diabetics, patients with cancer, people on immunosuppressants, CKD, etc.
- Enlisting the media to combat fear psychosis and stigmatisation

Many of us in the medical community have been struggling because the acute shortage of beds means turning away patients we could have saved. We can save so many lives by making sure the care of non-Covid patients is not interrupted. With the combined power of the government, technology, awareness programmes and personal responsibility, we can create a safe environment in hospitals for every patient.

The lives of Covid patients are precious, as are the lives of every other patient. No pandemic lasts forever and we will get through this one as well. Until then, let's make sure we adopt a balanced approach and take care of all patients as best as we can.

Dr. H. Sudarshan Ballal, Chairman - Manipal Hospitals



■ **APERITIF** ■
THE BIG PICTURE

RAINING ON THEIR PARADE

They were masked and armed to fight the wily coronavirus, but these Kolkata Police constables could not march past the rain. Sudden showers halted their practice, but they were soon in lockstep once again.

This year, because of the pandemic, their Independence Day programme will be cut short. Regardless, they march on.

PHOTO BY SALIL BERA

POINT BLANK



If the Central government is genuinely committed to both Hindi and English being the official languages of India, it must insist that all Central government employees are bilingual in Hindi and English.

P. Chidambaram, Congress leader

Some apologists of colonialism have sought to portray the British rule as beneficial to India. Nothing is farther from the truth. All the initiatives of the British were guided by their commercial and administrative interests.

M. Venkaiah Naidu, Vice President

I am pushing everybody. If you had another president other than me, you wouldn't be talking vaccines for two years. But I am not doing it for votes... I am doing it to save lives.

Donald Trump, US president, on the hunt for Covid-19 vaccine in the US

I came from a non-film background and I worked very hard in my life. If someone says that nepotism is bigger than fate, I would disagree. It can't be. We all come with our destiny.

Shilpa Shetty, actor

I love playing golf. I love the creativity and the way you go around the course.... It takes a lot of mental fortitude along with physical and technical abilities to score points in golf as well as in tennis. There was a time I used to play golf every single day.

Leander Paes, tennis player



Following news has been pretty painful these days. [There are] so many heartbreaking stories. Once I read them it takes me 15 minutes to absorb it, and I can't read anything further.

Smriti Mandhana, opener, Indian women's cricket team

WORD PLAY

Nakation had become the buzzword in the global tourism industry towards the end of 2019. Nakation is a type of holiday where people stay naked most of the time. Industry experts suggest that nakation would soon become a billion-dollar industry. Behavioural scientists have the view that the nakation trend emerged from people's need for a brief escape from a frenetic modern lifestyle (of pre-Covid era).

MILESTONES

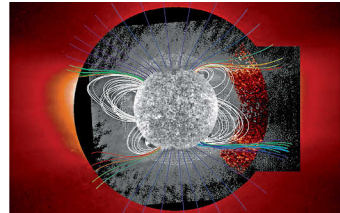
CONNECTIVITY ENSURED

The first ever undersea optical fibre cable project for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 10. The 2,312km-long submarine optical fibre cable will provide high-speed internet, at par with the mainland, to the islanders.



SOLAR SUCCESS

NASA's sounding rocket—launched in 2009—found helium structures in the Sun's atmosphere. Studying the amount of helium in the solar atmosphere will help in the study of the origin of solar wind—a stream of charged particles from the Sun.



CLOSE TO THE TOP

With a net worth of \$80.6 billion, Mukesh Ambani surpassed the wealthiest European—Bernard Arnault, chairman and chief executive of Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton—and became the fourth richest man in the world. Ambani amassed \$22 billion in 2020.



FOOD & COVID

What is the right food that helps in prevention and treatment of Covid-19?

The coronavirus cases as well as deaths in India are rising. With the lifting of lockdown, we are even more prone to getting infected now than when the lockdown was in place. The prospect of early availability of vaccine within the next 6 months is bleak. So apart from wearing masks, frequent hand washing and social distancing, is there anything else we can do to prevent or fight Covid-19? Specifically, can the food we eat help us in preventing and fighting the disease? I will try to answer this question in three parts: (1) How do we avoid getting infected via food; (2) Which foods boost our immunity; and (3) If infected, how food can help us recover fast.

1. Preventing infection transmission via food: Currently, there is no evidence that food is associated with spreading the coronavirus. However, this does not conclusively prove that food and packages containing food are completely safe. Coronavirus can survive on surfaces for up to 72 hours. So, if your local vegetable seller, the grocery store owner, or the person who delivers your vegetable and grocery to your home is infected, then the virus could end up on the surface of the vegetables or food packets. What should you do? To eliminate all risks of getting Covid-19 from food, adopt a few simple precautions: Wash your hands with soap and water once you come home from the food market. Rinse your vegetables, fruits and eggs under cold running tap water. Peel off the outermost layers of cabbage and onions. Use soap water to clean sealed plastic packets such as milk or chips packets. Discard the paper bags and store the food in home containers.



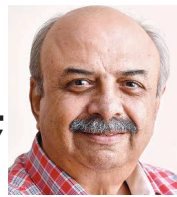
Dr Ashish Kumar

MBBS, MD, DM
Senior Consultant -
Gastroenterology
Sir Ganga Ram Hospital,
New Delhi
ashishk10@yahoo.com

2. Boosting immunity through food: The food you eat plays a key role in determining your overall health and immunity. Certain vitamins and minerals (e.g., Vitamins C and D, zinc) may have effects on how our immune system works to fight off infections. The best way to obtain these nutrients is through foods: Vitamin C from fruits and vegetables; Vitamin D from low-fat milk, fortified milk alternatives, and seafood; and zinc from legumes, nuts, seeds, seafood and lean meat. There are several vegetables, herbs and condiments that have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, which should be consumed regularly, such as broccoli, spinach, clove, cinnamon, bell peppers, mushrooms, tomato, ginger, garlic, Basil leaves, black cumin, gooseberries, and turmeric. Certain vegetables such as broccoli may also inhibit entry of the coronavirus into

the cells. Eating low carb protein-rich diets will help control high blood sugar and pressure. Probiotic foods such as yogurt and curd are also excellent sources to rejuvenate the gut bacteria, which is important for building up mucosal immunity.

3. Diet for the Covid-19 patients: Diet and nutrition are an important part of treatment for Covid-19 patients. For those patients who are being managed at home, it is advisable to pursue a healthy balanced home cooked diet, mainly consisting of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, plant oils and fish. Although inflammation is one of the body's first responses to infection, overactive inflammation increases the risk of complications. Hence specific foods, including simple sugars, trans fats, refined carbohydrates, and processed meat should be avoided as they increase systemic inflammation. The reason for emphasis on high fiber diet for Covid-19 patients is due to its efficacy in lowering the inflammatory substances (cytokines) of the body. In addition, high-fiber diet is associated with lower glucose levels. Since, elderly individuals or those with certain pre-existing illnesses like diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory diseases are at a higher risk of developing complications, these patients need utmost care in nutrition. Covid-19 patients with pre-existing diabetes with better regulated blood glucose control fare better than those with poor blood glucose control. Restriction of refined carbohydrates is a simple intervention which results in rapid improvements in sugar control and can be implemented alongside usual care in domestic setting. □



The damage-control portfolio

Political office holders across states often meet at conferences based on their designations or the subjects they handle. Chief ministers, assembly speakers, ministers of specific portfolios and even chief whips have conferences. The only political appointees who do not have a meeting club of their own are the deputy chief ministers.

With the dismissal of Sachin Pilot, the Congress lost its lone representative among deputy chief ministers, whose number has now dropped to 24. Among the 28 full-fledged states and two semi-states (Delhi and Puducherry), 16 have the deputy chief minister post—which does not find a mention in the Constitution.

The BJP has the maximum number of deputy chief ministers—including the one in Bihar where the party is the junior partner to Janata Dal (United). Interestingly, even small states with tiny legislatures have deputy chief ministers, showing the compulsions on chief ministers with regard to coalitions and factions within ruling parties. The National People's Party, a small regional outfit, has two deputy chief ministers—in Meghalaya and Manipur.

Pilot had a complaint that Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot did not care for him during the one-and-a-half years when they were cabinet colleagues. The ill-treatment of Pilot is one of the "grievances" which will be examined by a Congress committee headed by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

But Pilot's case is not in isolation. When Karnataka's B.S. Yediyurappa government celebrated the completion of its first year, Laxman Savadi, one of the three deputy chief ministers, skipped the celebrations and went to Delhi to complain to the BJP high command that he was being ignored by the state strongman. Apart from the trio, Yediyurappa has a former chief minister and two former deputy chief ministers in his cabinet, and has omitted all six from

his kitchen cabinet. Yediyurappa was shocked when the high command ignored his preferences last year and forced the trio on him.

Unlike Yediyurappa, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has had a smooth sailing with his two deputy chief ministers—Dinesh Sharma and Keshav Prasad Maurya. In the last three years, the chief minister has climbed high in the party hierarchy and expanded his popular base. If the most populous state in the country has two deputies, so does tiny Goa where the BJP is on a continuous poaching expedition to ensure that numbers are shored up to prevent a raid from the Congress.

Gujarat's deputy chief minister Nitin Patel had made his displeasure known when he did not get a politically big portfolio. But once his demand was accepted, his working relationship with Chief Minister Vijay Rupani improved.

Even though he has no challengers within the party and has a massive majority in the state assembly, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has created a national record for maximum number of deputies. Not two or three, there are five in the mid-sized state. Reddy has picked the five from five different castes and religions to show that he has a rainbow government.

Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister

Manish Sisodia has great clout as he handles major portfolios and enjoys a distinct number two status after Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

In neighbouring Haryana, all eyes are on young dynast Dushyant Chautala, whose great-grandfather Chaudhary Devi Lal was deputy prime minister in two short-lived governments. As deputy to the BJP Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Chautala is vying to build his Jannayak Janta Party at the expense of main opposition party, the Congress.

With peace returning to Rajasthan, the Congress, too, may soon have a representative among the country's deputy chief ministers.



CRACK ANY COMPETITIVE EXAM. WITH MANORAMA YEARBOOK PLUS YEARBOOK ONLINE.

Scan QR code



INDIA'S LARGEST SELLING GK UPDATE

SPECIAL ONE-YEAR ONLINE PACK*

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICES with discount coupon for Yearbook buyers, visit www.manoramayearbook.in Get Manorama Yearbook (online access only) at Rs 149.

Highlights of Yearbook: • Interview: Nobel Laureate Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee • Developmental Economics • The Spirit of New India - Speech by PM Narendra Modi • Youth and Nav Bharat Nirman- Venkaiah Naidu • My Dream of a New India- Dr Shashi Tharoor • 108 Calendar of Events • The Climate Change Agreements • Ethics: Practise, Not Preach! • 20 Exciting Careers of the Future • All that You Wanted to Know About Foreign Education • Quiztival • Who is Who India and the World.

Highlights of Yearbook Online: • Daily Current Affairs: Short takes and explainers on the important news stories of the day • Special Articles: Analysis of issues that shape India and the world • Daily Briefing: A daily roundup of news stories, policy decisions and newsmakers. • Quiz: MCQs with explainers based on current affairs and core subjects • Mock Tests: Tests based on civil services prelims exam with detailed explainers prepared by India's leading coaching institute Shankar IAS Academy. • Subject-wise Tests: Tests based on UPSC syllabus prepared by India's leading coaching institute Shankar IAS Academy • Video Lectures and News Analysis • Interviews • Blogs on Civil Services.

Manorama Yearbook copies are also available with Manorama agents & leading book stalls.

Download Manorama Yearbook app from



MANORAMA
YEARBOOK 2020



STAR ATTRACTION

When Somu Veerraju, the new BJP president of Andhra Pradesh, met popular actor Chiranjeevi at his residence soon after taking charge, people wondered whether the BJP was trying to rope in the former politician. Though the Chiranjeevi camp officially denies any political decisions, the meeting was not surprising as his younger brother, Pawan Kalyan, shares ties with the BJP. But Chiranjeevi's mind is tough to read—he has often praised Chief Minister Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy's decisions in Andhra and also is close to TRS leaders in Telangana.

ILLUSTRATIONS JAIRAJ T.G.

FOR THE PEOPLE

From one lieutenant governor to another, Puducherry's Kiran Bedi was quick to offer advice to Manoj Sinha, who recently got the job in Jammu and Kashmir. Reacting to his statement soon after taking oath that he would initiate direct dialogue with the people of J&K soon, Bedi said it should not be limited to the lieutenant governor alone. She said his entire team should be accessible, seen and should respond to the people at all times.

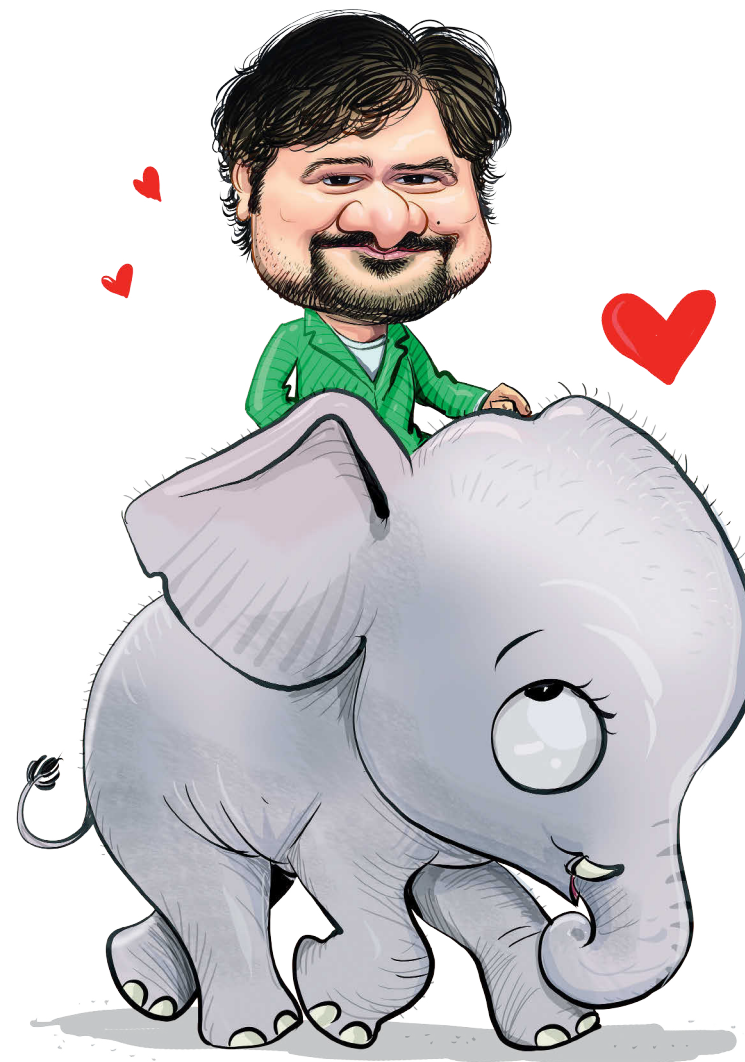
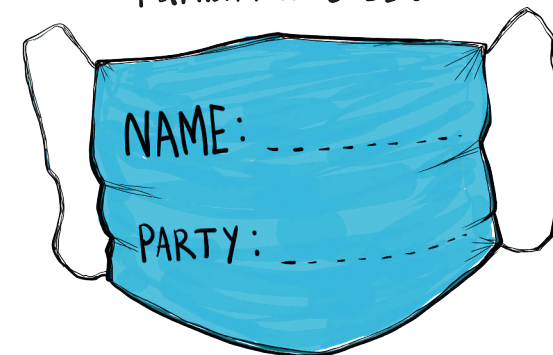
STORAGE AUDIT

Alarm bells are ringing in many Indian ports about the storage of chemicals after 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate blew up the Beirut port in Lebanon. An audit has been launched by the Union government to find out about the safety of hazardous chemicals stored in import points as well as in industrial areas across the country. The home ministry is worried especially after the recent leakage at a Visakhapatnam polymer plant caused fatalities. Union Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda, who was busy sourcing pharmaceuticals during the pandemic, is now prioritising the chemicals department that is also under him.

IDENTITY CRISIS

Efforts are being made to hold Parliament sessions amid the pandemic. As a precursor, parliamentary standing committee meetings were started, where MPs physically attended the proceedings. However, there were practical issues like security personnel finding it difficult to identify MPs wearing masks. It left them in a bind as asking them to remove the masks would be a violation of Covid-19 protocol. The secretariat has now asked MPs to carry their RFID cards. Responding to MPs' demands for more safeguards inside the premises, the in-house canteen introduced an immunity-building *kaadha* (decoction of herbs).

NEW MASK for parliament session



DIPLOMACY BY WHEELS

For years, the mode of transport of envoys has been more than just about conveyance; they have set the tone of the appointment. Last year, German Ambassador Walter J. Lindner drove down Rajpath in a bright-red Ambassador to present his credentials. It was an instant hit on Twitter. Mexican Ambassador Melba Priá's white autorickshaw, too, had won hearts. Indonesian Ambassador Sidharto Suryodipuro is the latest entrant to the wheel wooing. His choice is a beige Royal Enfield. Suryodipuro tweeted a picture of it on Rajpath, with the hashtags #MakeInIndia and #AtmanirbharBharat.

JUMBO LOVE

Babul Supriyo, minister of state for environment, forests and climate change, has a special place in his heart for elephants. At an event to mark World Elephant Day, Surpiyo said that one of his earliest appearances on stage was as an elephant when he was in Class 4. "With my endomorph body, the teachers saw me best suited for the role," he said with a chuckle.

Knotty ties

Ally trouble hits both coalitions as Bihar gears up for assembly polls

BY PRATUL SHARMA

IN THE RUN UP to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Hindustan Awam Morcha chief and former Bihar chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi played hardball with the opposition grand alliance, demanding five seats for his party. After weeks of suspense and repeated threats of crossing over to the National Democratic Alliance, he settled for three seats. The bitter infighting within the grand alliance was one of the reasons why the NDA swept the polls, winning 39 of 40 seats in the state. After a brief lull caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, political activity has picked up in Bihar, with assembly elections due later this year. And, the grand alliance is once again beset by internal woes.

Manjhi had set July 10 as the deadline for forming a coordination committee to sort out issues regarding seat-sharing and to decide on the alliance's chief ministerial face. It failed to work after Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav made it clear that anyone questioning his leadership was free to leave the grand alliance. Former Union minister Upendra Kushwaha, who heads the Rashtriya Lok Samata Party, is another alliance partner who is not getting along well with the young RJD leader. The Congress, meanwhile, is working overtime to keep the alliance intact.

"I have met all the allies in Patna," said Shaktisinh Gohil, former Union

minister and Congress's Bihar in-charge. "Bihar is a large state which is politically vibrant and diverse. Things take time. But I am hopeful that issues will be resolved soon."

Gohil has his task cut out. Manjhi has again sent overtures to the BJP, but when he broke ranks with Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United) and joined hands with the saffron party in 2015, he could win only his own seat, although his party had contested 21 seats. Sources close to Manjhi said he would make his decision in the next few weeks. Kushwaha said the delay was sending the wrong message. "These things, however, happen, when there is such an alliance. But even in the NDA, all is not well," he said.

The RJD demands a lion's share of the seats, banking on its support among the Yadavs, who constitute over 14 per cent of Bihar's population. The party had won 80 seats in 2015, when it was in alliance with the JD(U). The Kushwahas constitute seven per cent of the population and the Mushahars—to which Manjhi belongs—1.8 per cent. The Muslims, who constitute 17 per cent of the population, have often sided with the RJD in the past and occasionally with Nitish. The grand alliance is betting on the RJD's Yadav-Muslim combination, while the Congress can bring in the upper caste and dalit votes. Both alliances keep these calcula-

tions in mind while allotting seats and forging new partnerships. The BJP is expected to push for a hindutva-based campaign, along with Modi's appeal, so that caste loyalties get subdued. The strategy is crucial for the BJP because despite having a vote share of 24 per cent in 2015, it could win only 53 seats.

The grand alliance, meanwhile, is hampered by the RJD's unilateral decision to project Tejashwi as its chief ministerial candidate. Although he is recognised as the political heir of his father, former chief minister Lalu Prasad, the 30-year-old is the youngest among the alliance leaders. He is working hard to build on the perceived anger among the electorate by criticising the election campaign launched by the BJP and the JD(U) and wants the elections to be postponed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"People should stay away from the BJP and JD(U)] which are spreading the disease. Many of their state leaders have been infected," said



GETTY IMAGES

The grand alliance is hampered by the RJD's unilateral decision to project Tejashwi (in pic) as its chief ministerial candidate. The 30-year-old is the youngest among the alliance leaders.

Tejashwi. "This is not the time to hold elections." Several BJP leaders, including state president Sanjay Jaiswal and some MLAs, have tested positive for Covid-19. The sudden spurt in cases has again forced a lockdown in the state.

The immediate strategy of the RJD is to push for the postponement of the elections so that it can build on the sentiment that the state is beset with multiple problems like the return of the migrants, lost livelihoods and floods. The Election Commission agreed to the demand of various parties to do away with postal voting for people above 65 as it could have led to use of coercion in a state infamous for electoral malpractices. The EC has

created an additional 34,000 polling stations—45 per cent more than the usual number—which will increase the total number of polling stations to around 1.06 lakh. "This would entail formidable logistical challenges of mobilising an additional 1.8 lakh polling personnel and other resources including the requirement of a much larger number of vehicles," said EC officials.

But the allies are not with the RJD on the issue of postponing the polls. Kushwaha said it was better to vote out the NDA government at the earliest. "So long as this government is there, the state cannot control Covid-19. It is the responsibility of the government and the Election

Commission to ensure that the fight against Covid-19 continues and that fair elections are also held," he said. RJD sources said discussions were on with the alliance partners and something concrete might emerge in the next few weeks.

With a friendly government in the neighbouring state of Jharkhand, Lalu, who is lodged in a Ranchi hospital, is managing the negotiations and is also seeking to mollify miffed party members after senior leader and long-time associate Raghuvansh Prasad Singh quit the RJD. Lalu's aim is to convince allies to accept Tejashwi as their chief ministerial candidate.

While Tejashwi is fighting to keep his father's legacy alive, Lok Jan-shakti Party chief Chirag Paswan has the difficult task of filling his father Ram Vilas Paswan's shoes. Chirag has been vocal about the differences within the NDA, but BJP leaders believe that it is nothing more than an effort to get more seats for his party.

The grand alliance partners are trying to finalise a common agenda. "Apart from raising issues like the failure of the BJP and the JD(U) to fulfil their promises like the prime minister's special Bihar package, we will go to the people with a positive agenda. The 38 districts of the state are divided into nine divisions. For each of these divisions, we will raise separate issues," said Gohil.

Another issue before the opposition alliance is whether to bring the Left parties, which have their own pockets of influence and have three seats in the assembly, into its fold. CPI leader and former JNU students' union president Kanhaiya Kumar had been attracting large crowds in his rallies before the pandemic struck. Former Union finance minister Yashwant Sinha is also planning to contest elections. Unless the grand alliance can stay united and find a way to bring together such players, it will be advantage NDA in the polls. ●



SANJAY AHLAWAT

READY FOR THE LONG HAUL
An Army convoy in Ladakh

Winter is coming

If the Army has to keep the additional troops posted along the LAC in Ladakh, it has to stock supplies there before snowfall

BY PRADIP R. SAGAR

THE LINE BETWEEN disorder and order lies in logistics, wrote Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu. The observation is quite relevant for India today. With no immediate de-escalation between India and China in the Ladakh sector, the Indian military now faces the challenge of getting crucial supplies to the nearly two lakh soldiers and support staff deployed there.

On August 11, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat told a parliamentary committee that the military was ready for a long haul on the LAC and for deployment in harsh winter.

No other army deploys as many soldiers at such heights, and the Leh-based XIV Corps carries out the world's largest winter stocking exercise annually. The Army spends an estimated ₹15 lakh a year to keep

a soldier on heights ranging from 15,000ft to 18,000ft. The cost excludes weapon and ammunition, information on which is classified.

Retired Major General Amrit Pal Singh, former chief of operational logistics of the XIV Corps, said that, usually, about two lakh tonnes of supplies are transported and stored before the winter sets in October, cutting Ladakh off from the rest of the world. This is called Advanced Winter Stocking (ASW), which serves the forces for about six months. "But with additional deployment, you require at least double the logistics," he told *The WEEK*.

Ladakh is connected by road through the Manali-Leh road and the Jammu-Srinagar-Kargil-Leh route. During winter (October to March), passes on these routes are closed. So, in the window between

April and September, the Army dispatches about 100 trucks a day with rations, engineering and medical stores, weapons, ammunition and equipment, clothing and vehicles. There are about 80 items stocked for soldiers, including vast amounts of kerosene, diesel and petrol, which provide heat and fuel vehicles.

Singh said that a Srinagar and Leh round-trip for a truck that can carry 10 tonnes of supplies costs around ₹1 lakh. With a C-17 Globemaster military aircraft, which can carry up to 50 tonnes, an hour-long flight would cost roughly ₹24 lakh. A helicopter sortie of 45 minutes costs around ₹4 lakh. Multiple transport aircraft usually carry 200 to 250 tonnes of supplies every day from Chandigarh to Leh.

He also said that, by this time every year, about one lakh tonne of supplies would have been dispatched.

"But we still need to send nearly three lakh tonnes in the next two months," he added. "In the best-case scenario, if we use 400 trucks a day, we can send 4,000 tonnes by road. [But] maintaining the road for peak transportation capacity is the need of the hour. We find slush on roads due to [heavy traffic] of trucks."

He also pointed out that Leh was just the first stop. There, the Army needs transit shelters for truck crew and support staff. Not everything can go by air; heavy material has to go by road. Though Zoji-la and Rohtang are the main passes, the road gets tougher from there. There are two more passes on the route—Baralacha La and Thanglang La—which are at a higher altitude than Rohtang.

Retired Lieutenant General D.S. Hooda, former northern Army commander, said that the advanced winter stocking is usually a well-planned exercise, but with additional deployment, the issue was not only transportation, but also procurement and supply. For instance, the Army would need pre-fabricated shelters, which cost at least ₹15 lakh apiece, to accommodate 20 troops each. "Shel-

ters have to be procured, transported and constructed before winter," he said. "It is almost next to impossible to carry out any construction in winter. Planning for construction of shelters usually takes place over two seasons. Now we have taken the decision to remain on those heights, [so] we need to speed up the process. The window is small now, and I see it as a big challenge."

Reportedly, the Army, through its defence attaches in embassies in the US, Russia and Europe, is hunting for makers of warm clothes and snow tents. Additionally, the Ordnance Factory Board has been asked to speed up deliveries of extreme cold climate (ECC) clothing.

Military observers said that, with the temperature dipping to minus 40 degrees Celsius, it is going to be a battle of who lasts there. The soldier has to negotiate three elements—the weather, his health and, of course, the enemy across the border. With better infrastructure and an easier terrain in Tibet, the Chinese can continue to mobilise from deep areas. However, it costs the People's Liberation Army four times as much

to sustain a soldier on the Tibetan plateau than in the plains.

"Besides the temperature, the chilly winds in Galwan, Gogra and Hot Springs do the maximum damage," said a serving Army officer, adding that it was the extreme cold and low level of oxygen that had claimed most of the 20 lives lost in the Galwan clash of June 15. "When you are in an eyeball-to-eyeball situation, you prepare yourself for any eventuality. Unlike in Siachen, troops on these friction points have to be on the highest level of alertness throughout winter." He also said that the low temperature affects equipment, ammunition and artillery guns, which need special storage.

Military planners said that "mirror deployment" throughout winter would come at a huge cost. "All your perspective plans go for a toss if you do mirror deployment. Money and material meant for capability-building in some other areas is going to be diverted to Ladakh," said Singh.

Instead of mirror deployment, he added, India should have done deterrent deployment, which means holding your forces back and putting them in places opposite to the enemy's vulnerable areas. If this had happened, the Chinese would not have even moved to places like Galwan or Depsang, he said.

"Now, we are only committed and reactive," he said. "Being reactive, you only pay in cost. We have lost an opportunity to be pro-active. With the absence of a mountain strike corps, the Indian Army is missing its offensive capabilities."

Said Hooda: "Massive deployment, up to three division-level strength on those heights through the winter, will incur a huge cost. And if the situation does not improve, it will continue into the next year."

The military thinkers seem to believe in Napoleon's quote: "Amateurs discuss tactics; professionals discuss logistics." **●**



Beginning of a harmonious phase

The construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya is neither anti-secular nor anti-dalit. In fact, August 5, 2020, will be marked with a golden stamp in Indian history as Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for Ram Mandir at the birth place of Lord Ram. The *bhoomipoojan* by Modi was the end of a civilisational exile, and the beginning of a new India, with its ethos entrenched in an ancient value system.

Our model of governance is rooted in the principles of Ram Rajya. August 5 was a historic day that lifted the spirits of the country from a pandemic-induced negativity.

The construction of Ram Mandir cannot be branded as anti-secular because our Constitution does not discourage celebration of a religious activity. Rather, it strives to protect the religious sentiments of every individual. The Constitution does not promote agnosticism or atheism. It promises every individual the right to practise and preach his or her own religion within legal limits.

We must note that the religious aspect of the Ayodhya dispute was not taken into consideration by the Supreme Court; instead, it treated the matter as a mere land dispute. Incidentally, the birth places of all religious figures in the world are well-protected—be it Bethlehem, Mecca in Saudi Arabia or Lumbini in Nepal. What could be a greater proof of India's secularism than the fact that the birth place of the most revered Hindu god was treated as a mere land dispute? I cannot understand how celebrations of building a temple can be considered anti-secular or against the constitutional idea of a secular India.

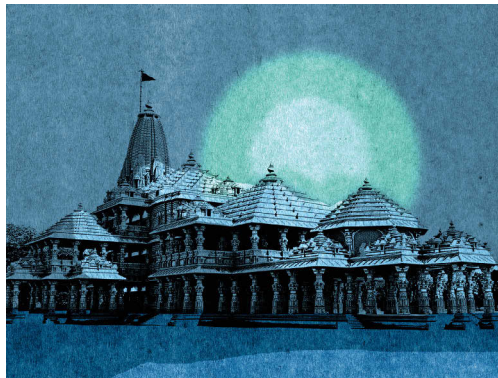
A staunch Hindu, I believe that construction of a mosque at the land allotted to the Sunni Waqf Board will not insult any Hindu in any manner. In

another narrative, in a bid to undermine Hindu consolidation, some people have raised the issue of discrimination by upper caste Hindus against lower caste Hindus. They ignore the fact that the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra has a dalit, Kameshwar Chaupal, among its 15 members. He has been entrusted with the responsibility of supervising the construction of the temple. He is the same person who performed *shilanyas* for Ram Mandir in November 1989. And a dalit family was given the first *prasad* of the *bhoomipoojan* ceremony. It was sent to Mahaveer, a dalit, by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

I suggest that the so-called liberals put the bitter political mobilisations over religious issues behind, and look forward to inclusive governance. The construction of the temple is the logical result of the Supreme Court judgment; it should mark the end of an older, hostile phase of India and the beginning of a fresh, harmonious phase.

India has a large population of Hindus who were historically wronged by invasions and destruction of their places of worship. So, there was a wave of happiness throughout the country on the auspicious groundbreaking ceremony.

Lord Ram is the most venerable religious figure for Hindus, and his birth place has the greatest significance in our culture, texts and sentiments. There is no aspect of an Indian's life where Ram does not inspire. His ideals of an inclusive, just and harmonious state are still instilled in every Indian and continue to influence us. It is unwise to malign the image of *maryada purushottam* Shri Ram with taunting words like anti-secular, unconstitutional and discrimination. We eagerly wait for the completion of the temple that will lead to a just and ideal Ram Rajya in our country.



VISUALISE & LEARN

Manorama doubtbox Pen Drives and Tablets

CLASS 1-12

Based on CBSE syllabus.

Also useful for ICSE/STATE BOARDS

Class 1-4	Science(EVS), Maths & English
Class 5-7	Science, Maths & English Grammar
Class 8-12	Physics, Chemistry, Biology & Maths

To order Pendrive/Tab, Call:

9895 687 463,
0484 - 444 7651

To purchase online,
visit www.elearningstore.in



Line of defence

Herd immunity could slowly kick in across big cities, but vaccinations will be the safer bet, given the uncertainty around antibodies

BY NAMITA KOHLI

RECENT COVID-19 sero-surveys done in major cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Ahmedabad indicated that a large number of people have already been infected in each of these densely populated cities. In Delhi, the numbers suggested that 22.86 per cent people had already encountered the virus; in Ahmedabad it was 49 per cent. Mumbai results showed a wide variation of 16-57 per cent in non-slum and slum areas.

Large numbers of infections, mostly asymptomatic and relegated to specific areas within these cities, have triggered a debate over its implications for Covid-19 management, as well as the optimistic, wishful scenario of attaining herd immunity.

So, are those in large cities at least closer to being immune?

In Delhi, the infection had spread fast in a couple of months, according to results of the two sero-surveys, said Dr Jugal Kishore, head of community medicine, VMMC and Safdarjung hospital. The first all-India sero-survey done by ICMR indicated 12 per cent people had antibodies in the month of May, and the one in July suggested 22.86 per cent had antibodies in June, Kishore said.

Kishore said that herd immunity was a possibility, given the extensive spread of the disease. But he added that in a city like Delhi, the number

of cases were coming down, indicating that the city had crossed its peak. Other factors such as innate immunity may need to be studied to understand the disease better.

"If the infection continues to spread across the country at this rate, and the vaccine comes after six months from now, the question of whether our population should be immunised will have to be addressed," said Kishore. "In the case of H1N1, the vaccine came after the peak had passed, and many people, including doctors, did not take it. The vaccine was underutilised."

Immunologists, however, say that it may still be too early to read too much into the sero-survey data. "Herd immunity is not a goal; it is an outcome. We cannot plan for it, but we can certainly plan for mass vaccination programmes," said Dr Satyajit Rath, faculty member, IISER, Pune and former immunologist with the National Institute of Immunology. Rath said that those trying to make sense of the sero-survey results were at risk of "over-interpreting" what was essentially insufficient data. "Complex questions of immunity and disease spread are being interpreted politically and geographically, in terms of sero-survey results," he said.

A sero-survey essentially looks for a certain kind of antibody (IgG) and

sero-positivity only confirms that an individual has encountered the virus in the past. But Rath said it was hard to say whether these antibodies could also offer protection. "Besides, we know that from a study on 90 people in the UK that there is evidence of waning antibodies in three months," said Rath. Antibodies could also help enhance the disease, as in the case of the dengue virus antibodies, he added.

Dr Vineeta Bal, professor, IISER, Pune, says that sero-surveys give credence to the hypothesis that a majority of the infected being asymptomatic had sailed through the infection and are now unlikely to spread it further. "In a city like Delhi, 50 to 60 per cent of people would have to test positive before herd immunity could kick in," she said. But Bal says that vaccination is a better approach to attain the

robust immunity levels, given the uncertainty around antibodies.

Waning antibodies, however, did not imply that the body's immune response is not at work. Immunologists across the world are studying the role of cellular immunity, or T-cell immunity in Covid-19. Immunity, say experts, can either be innate (quick, non-specific), or adaptive (long-term, specific). "Results of the Oxford vaccine phase two trial indicate that the vaccine has shown antibody and T-cell responses," Rath said.

Tests used during the sero-surveys only measure antibodies, but not the T-cell responses. T-cell responses are also difficult to test, require expensive equipment and are resource intensive, experts say.

Herd immunity varies for different infections in terms of immunological correlates. "For instance, we

can have a herd immunity against measles virus in a population when almost 90 per cent of the population has gained immunity," said Dr Sunit K. Singh, professor, molecular immunology, Banaras Hindu University. "For SARS-CoV-2, however, experts think that it can be achieved once about 70 per cent of the population is infected. With other infections, it is also normal that neutralising antibody titers [the level of protective antibodies in a person's blood] go down once the pathogen gets cleared but the immunological memory remains, and the levels go up again once the body encounters the pathogen again."

A top health ministry official involved in sero-surveys conducted by the Central government told THE WEEK that questions from longevity of the antibodies to immune

responses were still not understood fully. "This virus is too new for us to make these assessments," said the official, also an expert in infectious diseases, speaking on the condition of anonymity. He said that the policy implications of sero-surveys were significant. "In Delhi, we are past the peak, and now, if we get to know that the infected population is about 40 per cent, we know we are on the right track," he said.

"Does that mean herd immunity is being achieved? There are too many factors, starting with how the situation may change over the next few months," said the official. "Then again, each city has a different texture, so sporadic data from certain areas cannot be used to make sweeping assessments. In my view, the only way to tire out the virus is by taking all necessary precautions." ●



TESTING TIMES

Health workers leave after screening people for Covid-19 symptoms in Dharavi, Mumbai



No place like home

Ahmedabad is setting an example for treatment of Covid-19 at home

BY NANDINI OZA

IN JUNE, Chetan Raval from Ahmedabad was running a fever a shade under 100°F for about four days. The 59-year-old runs a business and is active in several social organisations, so he regularly comes in contact with different people. He thought it prudent to get tested for Covid-19. He tested positive. He immediately called up his doctor to ask which hospital he should get admitted to. Dr Parthiv Mehta, a pulmonologist, asked Raval to stay at home. Raval, a Congress leader, then checked with his wife and daughter. “I told them that if they were afraid of contracting the virus, I can get admitted in a hospital,” said Raval. But they both insisted that he stay at home.

Raval’s is not a solitary case. Getting treated at home for Covid-19 has become a norm in Ahmedabad, one

of the worst Covid-19 affected cities in the country. Out of about 72,000 cases in Gujarat and 2,670 deaths as on August 11, Ahmedabad has accounted for over 28,000 cases and 1,630 deaths.

According to sources, a few thousand have recovered after being treated at home, and even more are still under treatment. These patients are being treated by private practitioners and the Ahmedabad municipal corporation’s (AMC) Ghar Seva: Sanjivani teams.

Treating a particular patient depends on the risk factors involved like whether the patient has comorbidities, Mehta told THE WEEK. It is also important to know the proximity of a hospital to a patient’s home, in case hospitalisation is required. Equally important is the cooperation

of the patient and family members. Being admitted in a hospital can be depressing for a patient, and more so when doctors and paramedics are in PPE. Hence, being at home is relaxing for the patient and the family gets real-time feedback.

“Whenever I needed to speak to Chetan, I would call him [on the phone] or go to his room and stand at a distance, wearing a mask. He, too, would wear a mask,” said Diana, Raval’s wife. Life for Raval was otherwise normal as he exercised, drank plenty of fluids and even did some

REMOTE REMEDY

Dr Parthiv Mehta on video call with patients getting treated at home; (below) Chetan Raval, who got treated at home, with wife, Diana



PHOTOS JANAK PATEL

The home care service started by the civic body is more than a month old now. What began as a handful of paramedical teams visiting those under home care, has now expanded to 184 teams.

indoor chores. At his home, the house help continued to come but took precautions.

Doctors put on PPE just before entering the patient’s home and remove it when leaving, said Dr Raj Rawal, critical care expert, whose team provides home treatment for Covid-19 patients under the aegis of Care Associates. The family then calls the AMC and the kit is disposed of. Consultations are also done through Zoom and WhatsApp calls. The patients are required to share their blood work and other reports, including X-rays regularly.

It is also important for doctors to deal with patients carefully as they often battle anxiety. Deval Gandhi said she nearly cried when her husband, Devanshu, managing director of popular ice cream brand Vadilal, and their two daughters tested positive within a week of her doing so. “The way Dr Mehta handled us is commendable,” said Deval, adding that he was also strict with them.

According to one estimate, more than 25 teams of doctors and private practitioners have been providing health services to patients at home in Ahmedabad since late March. These doctors have also been treating patients outside Gujarat. Rajendra Prasad Goyal, superintendent of police in the criminal investigation department in Udaipur, Rajasthan, and his 27-year-old daughter Arushi were also Mehta’s patients. Under his guidance, their quarantine period began on August 3. The father and daughter had shifted to another home while the mother and son, who had tested negative, stayed in their apartment.

“Our daughter had a mild fever and some throat irritation for about four to five days,” said Goyal. “After she tested positive, all of us, including our 11-member staff, took the test. Except me, all tested negative.” Goyal has no symptoms and Arushi’s symptoms have gone. The father and daughter now spend quality time together.

Remaining in quarantine may sound

simple, but that was not the case with S.P. Adeshara’s family back in Ahmedabad. At the residence of this former food and drugs commissioner, he and six others tested positive. Only Meenaben, his wife, tested negative. “It was difficult. Either all seven had to get admitted to a hospital or get quarantined at home,” he said. After consulting Rawal, it was decided that the family would be treated at home. So, while all members who tested positive would move around freely in the house, Meenaben was isolated in one room.

Their cook would bring lunch and dinner for all of them in eight different parcels. However, they did face medical issues. Adeshara’s son developed a lung infection, and they were prepared to move him to a hospital. The antibiotics, however, worked and gradually the infection subsided.

Rawal said that in April they used to get about 100 calls a day with requests for hospital beds and so they started home service. “In fact, the AMC even pulled us up for it,” he said. “We later wrote to them that it reduces the burden on the hospitals, and that people who require aggressive treatments will get the beds.”

The home care service started by the AMC is more than a month old now. Municipal Commissioner Mukesh Kumar said the civic body has been following ICMR guidelines. What began as a handful of paramedical teams visiting those under home care, has now expanded to 184 teams. The teams visit the patients daily or on alternate days to check on them. If need be, even a physician visits them.

The doctors are able to judge when the breathlessness could occur or increase, said Dr Ajay Jain, a pulmonologist who treats patients at home through e-consultation. According to him, when tested positive, it is all about isolating oneself, washing your own utensils and keeping a distance from family members. ●

Lasting impact

Covid-19 patients should take care even after testing negative as they could continue to suffer from its symptoms for a long time

BY POOJA BIRAIA JAISWAL

IT WAS ON the eighteenth day after he was first diagnosed with Covid-19 that Dr S. Chatterjee resumed work. But later that day, he rushed home; he felt giddy, very weak and had a variable pulse rate. A battery of tests revealed that he had myocarditis—an inflammation of the heart muscle. The Covid-19 literature has been peppered with reports about myocarditis accompanying the disease. “It took a slightly longer time for me to recover,” says Chatterjee, internal medicine specialist at Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals in Delhi. “This virus kind of pulls you down.” He is back on his feet now, with his PPE suit on for seven hours straight and handling patients inside the Covid-19 ward.

Being infected with the novel coronavirus is akin to facing a boxer’s punch, say experts. The pugilist walks away, but the victim is left reeling from the bout for months on end. “It takes time for the body to come back to the baseline after testing negative, and whether it will bounce back to its original self at all remains debatable,” says Dr Rahul Pandit, an intensivist at Fortis hospital in Mulund, Mumbai.

Medically, a patient is said to have recovered from Covid-19 once he or she tests negative. But the actual

recovery may take days, months and even years, say doctors. “The signs and symptoms we see in patients in the recovery phase, which is long after they first tested positive, is what we term as the post-Covid syndrome,” says Pandit.

Acute weakness, fatigue, low-grade fever and changes in blood pressure are a few common symptoms observed in patients four to six weeks after they test negative. There are also reports of symptoms like diarrhoea and vomiting that continue for days after the patient tests negative. “Covid-19 continues to impact the heart, lungs, nerves, kidneys and the psyche for weeks after the patient has tested negative,” says Chatterjee. “Right now, we have a Covid-19 patient who showed symptoms of Guillain-Barre syndrome (rare disorder in which one’s immune system attacks nerves) after almost three to four weeks.”

Ganesh Shah, 53, spent 33 days at Bhatia Hospital in Mumbai; he had pneumonia and later tested positive for Covid-19. But even now, his lungs are inflamed and any strenuous activity leaves him gasping for breath. “The doctors have said it will take at least another two months for recovery. I exercise a little every

day and have stopped going to work altogether,” says Shah, who works at a jewellery firm in downtown Mumbai. “I hope to recover completely, but I am not sure if it is possible.”

Patients with acute respiratory distress syndrome are advised to continue with oxygen therapy once back home from hospital, says Dr Samrat Shah from Bhatia Hospital. Those with ARDS, he says, are on oxygen support inside the hospital, as their respiratory muscles have gone into fatigue because of overwork and the lungs undergo certain fibrotic changes. “So, after a prolonged stay of 45-60 days inside the hospital, patients are asked to continue oxygen therapy at home for at least one or two weeks until the lungs get their capacity back to help the patient perform day-to-day tasks,” he says.

Recovery, however, differs from person to person. Satish Katke’s recovery has been speedy, “without any leftover signs”. Katke and his family of six had tested positive for Covid-19 in April. Today, Katke feels “fit as ever”. A resident of Dharavi,

he recently donated his plasma at a drive organised by an NGO.

A majority of Covid-19 patients also show a tendency to develop blood clots. “We are now putting these patients on at least three to four weeks of blood thinners,” says Pandit. “Even at discharge, the blood tests done suggest that there could be a tendency to clot.”

In patients with pre-existing comorbidities, the dosage of drugs for those conditions may change. For instance, a patient whose sugar levels could be controlled through tablets earlier might have to take insulin owing to the rise in blood sugar levels during Covid-19 treatment. Blood sugar levels could rise because of the use of steroids in Covid-19 treatment, say doctors.

Hospitals are now planning to start post-Covid outpatient departments, offering medical and psychological counselling and support. “I know how depressing it was to stay inside the isolation ward of the hospital for 14 days,” recalls a 33-year-old woman. “I was all by myself and had



GETTY IMAGES

FITNESS STRETCH

A yoga session being held at a Covid-19 care centre at the Commonwealth Games Village in Delhi



Covid-19 continues to impact the heart, lungs, nerves, kidneys and the psyche for weeks after the patient has tested negative.

Dr S. Chatterjee, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals Delhi, who had tested positive for Covid-19



frequent bouts of anxiety, depression and a constant fear of what will happen next.” Issues related to stress and depression are being reported increasingly now, especially with patients who have long recovered from Covid-19. Pandit, who, too, had tested positive for Covid-19, says that the trick is to never let one’s guard down.

Yet, with the disease being relatively new and the knowledge about it being limited, doctors say it is too early to estimate the long-term impact of Covid-19 on a patient’s health. Most doctors recommend complete rest even after being discharged from hospital. “Rushing back to work is just not possible and it takes at least three weeks to recover well,” says Dr Harshad Limaye, senior consultant, internal medicine, Nanavati hospital. “We have had incidents (less than one per cent) where patients have gone home with negative reports and come back with positive report after a couple of months. Whether this was re-infection or persistence of the virus remains open for debate.”

Seeking help is the first step

How to maintain one's mental health during the pandemic

It has been over six months since the first Covid-19 case was registered in the country, and numerous people have come to me with a variety of mental health issues. People across age groups have been affected. From a child stuck indoors to a youth who is anxious about her career to even frustrated homemakers, everyone is struggling to come to terms with the stress and the anxiety in the present circumstances.

Get over the stigma

There is a stigma attached to mental health as Indians do not take issues of the mind seriously. People do not want to come to the clinics for fear that someone might spot them. We need to give importance

to mental health issues like severe depression like any other disease. There are tools to treat every mental disorder, and so it is crucial that people seek help.

Children express differently

Nervousness, irritability, anger and lack of concentration are some of the signs most commonly observed among children in these times. These are signs of underlying depression. If the child becomes more demanding and attention-seeking, parents have to take the child's tantrums seriously. Provide them with a listening ear, validate their feelings, reassure them and encourage group activities.

Women are most vulnerable

JANAK BHAT



“From a child stuck indoors to a youth anxious about her career to even frustrated homemakers, everyone is struggling to come to terms with the present circumstances.”

”

Many women have reported burnout and depression as a result of juggling multiple tasks along with daily chores. There are women seeking help for depression for the first time in their lives. Maintaining a daily routine and a balanced diet and following breathing exercises can help get over mental, physical and emotional exhaustion.

Tackling addiction

I have observed people resorting to tobacco and alcohol misuse and then struggling with withdrawal symptoms of extreme restlessness and irritability when these substances are not available. A young man who had a pre-existing mental health condition went further into his shell when he lost his job during the pandemic. He began to blame himself for not being able to provide for his family. Fortunately, he sought support, else there was no way he would have come out of it. Get counselling. That is the first step towards tackling addiction.

—As told to Pooja Biraia Jaiswal



There are tools for every mental disorder, so it is crucial to seek help



Nervousness, irritability and lack of concentration in children could be underlying signs of depression



A regular routine, balanced diet and breathing exercises can help get over exhaustion

Negligence is AAPparent

BY GAUTAM GAMBHIR

A LOT HAS BEEN written about Delhi's response to Covid-19.

Being the capital of the world's second most populous country, Delhi has a high density of population. Millions come to this city in search of a better life, and it is a prime destination for travellers around the world. These factors had put Delhi in a precarious position when the pandemic hit our country.

A lockdown was needed to avert a complete collapse of our health infrastructure and to build facilities for treating millions of potential patients. This lockdown impacted the most vulnerable sections of the city—labourers, migrants and the poor. On March 28, just days after the imposition of the lockdown, thousands of dejected migrants lined up at the Anand Vihar bus station and elsewhere to leave the city. They were absolutely disappointed with the state government's response. Shocking videos of migrants indicated that they had been given information about buses and trains by members of the ruling Aam Aadmi Party. This implied that the AAP wanted migrants to leave so that they had less people to worry about.

This was just the beginning of Delhi's disastrous Covid management. A city that has built the best hospitals, including the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, could not even provide personal protective equipment to doctors and nursing staff. There were horror stories from across the city—patients being



denied beds, hospitals charging exorbitant rates and relatives unable to collect bodies of their loved ones.

Meanwhile, radio and television sets across Delhi ran lengthy ads of the chief minister patting his own back and patronising people for their resilience. Crores were spent on these ads while he asked for funds from the Centre and batted for the lifting of the lockdown. Shops that sold non-essential items like liquor were opened, leading to thousands of people violating all social distancing norms.

The government remained a mute spectator. The chief minister was desperate for funds because the state was not left with any savings after the advertisement blitz and the distribution of freebies in the run-up to the assembly elections in February. His Twitter bio reads 'Sab insaan barabar hain [all men are equal]', but he became an exclusionist overnight. He started blaming patients from the national capital region for exhausting resources and passed an order denying them access to health care in India's capital. Thankfully,

the lieutenant governor revoked the obnoxious order.

The state government then blamed the Centre and absolved itself of all responsibilities. On June 9, the deputy chief minister made a sensational claim—that Delhi would have around 5.5 lakh cases by the end of July. With this, the state government completely surrendered before the pandemic and asked the Union government to step in.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah soon responded. On June 14, he chaired a high-level meeting attended by the chief minister and high-ranking officials. Several key decisions were taken in this meeting—to increase testing exponentially, map patients in containment zones, cap Covid test charges, appoint a team of doctors from AIIMS to supervise treatment in all hospitals, arrange for a large number of beds, and so on.

The situation, which had seemed catastrophic, slowly started to improve. On July 20, the number of new cases dropped to less than 1,000. Amit Shah's timely intervention averted a major disaster.

But the battle has not been won yet. We have to be cautious, so that Delhi does not relapse into misery and despair. The most painful part is that many citizens had the worst experience of their lives because the state government was more interested in being seen to be working rather than actually working.

The author is an MP, BJP leader and former cricketer.



TEST OF PRECISION
A flight landing on the tabletop runway at the Kozhikode airport

HEIGHTS OF NEGLIGENCE

Systemic lapses contributed to the mishap in Karipur, and it shows that we have learnt very little from the past

BY PRADIP R. SAGAR

In a report on the IX812 crash which took place at the Mangalore International Airport in 2010, Air Marshal (retired) B.N. Gokhale, who headed the court of inquiry, specifically mentioned the hazards of tabletop runways. They require extra skill and caution during flight operation, and the risk of overshooting or undershooting can lead to grave situations, noted the former vice chief of

the Air Force, who was a Sukhoi pilot. The IX812 crash had 158 fatalities.

A 'tabletop runway' is one located on top of a plateau or hill with one or both ends stopping short of a precipice. Like Mangaluru, the Kozhikode Calicut International Airport in Karipur, Kerala, also has a tabletop runway, and experts are pointing fingers at it for the IX1344 crash of August 7. The Air India Express flight, a Boeing 737-800, overran the runway,

skidded off at the end, slid down 35ft and broke into two. Eighteen people, including both pilots, were killed.

The experts, however, are asking for the Swiss Cheese Model aviation disaster probe mechanism before coming to any conclusion on the crash. The model illustrates that, although many layers of defence lie in between hazards and accidents, there are flaws in each layer (like holes in a wedge of Swiss cheese)

that, if aligned, can allow an accident to occur.

"Accidents are often caused by the confluence of multiple factors, ranging from unsafe individual acts (human error) to organisational errors, including that of the regulator," said Captain Mohan Ranganathan, member of a safety advisory committee constituted by the ministry of civil aviation. "In India, all the previous layers (of cheese) are removed and

we only see the final layer (the pilot)."

The pilot of the IX1344 seems to have committed exactly the same error that caused the accident in Mangaluru. "And if it is the same airline and the same error has occurred, it points to a very serious deficiency in aviation regulation," said Ranganathan.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation, India's aviation regulator, has blamed the weather, saying that

it was raining heavily when the flight from Dubai tried to touch down. The flight was supposed to land on runway 28, but due to low visibility it landed on runway 10, which is said to have had tailwinds. The wind is likely to have accelerated the flight, making it impossible for the pilots to stop it.

Kozhikode is one of the 11 airports that were named as critical after the Mangaluru crash. Leh, Kullu, Shimla, Port Blair, Agartala, Lengpui, Jammu, Patna and Latur are the others.

Gokhale, however, is of the opinion that there is not much to worry about tabletops if rigid safety norms are followed. He maintains that pilots should get special clearance from the regulator to land on such runways. “Besides pilots, we must look into safety issues, including friction test. In case of rain, rubber marks need to be removed quickly as they affect brakes. Friction test and rubber removal are critical on short runways,” he noted. He also recommended avoiding the downward slope in the overshoot area and a ground arresting system similar to those in IAF airfields.

Ranganathan, who specialises in wet runway operations, is surprised that authorities allowed flight operations in Kozhikode airport during heavy rains. He said both ends of the runway had heavy rubber deposits that would result in friction being well below normal in wet conditions. There is also a marked downslope after the first third of runway 10. “These are all detrimental to safe landing,” he said. “When pilots feel that they experience poor braking due to heavy rubber deposits on the runway, there is a tendency to touch down early.” In fact, Ranganathan had even submitted images to the aviation authorities showing landings made well short of the aiming point on runway 10 at Kozhikode.

Director General of Civil Aviation Arun Kumar jumped the gun by saying it looked like “a bad judgment

In case of rain, rubber marks need to be removed quickly as they affect brakes. Friction test and rubber removal are critical on short runways.

—Air Marshal (retired)
B.N. Gokhale

call by the pilot”, harping on the point that the aircraft made a late touchdown. Indian Commercial Pilot Association has objected to his statement and demanded that Minister for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri remove him. In the early days, the directorate was headed by aviation professionals. Of late, however, it is mostly IAS officers.

A senior Air India pilot told THE WEEK that Mangaluru and Kozhikode airports were particularly tricky as the margin of error for the pilots was very low. “They lack the right kind of lighting required on the runway and the weather makes it worse. The rain is blinding during the night and it is like making a black hole approach,” he said. Captain Deepak Vasant Sathe, the commander of the ill-fated flight in Kozhikode, was a highly decorated veteran of the Indian Air Force.

Sudden changes in wind pattern on approach is a common phenomenon on tabletop runways. “It makes the approach management difficult,”

SPLIT WIDE OPEN

The IX1344 after the accident

said another pilot, adding that monsoon conditions make it a lot more difficult. And, it does not help that at times pilots are entirely dependent on instrument indications that might suddenly change when the transition to the tabletop happens. “For example, the radio altimeter, which shows the height of the aircraft, may show 500ft, and a second later it may show 100ft because you have entered the table zone,” he said.

In a communication to K.N. Srivastava, chairman of Civil Aviation Safety Advisory Council, Ranganathan had pointed out that Kozhikode had been classified as Code 4E to accommodate wide-body aircraft in violation of International Civil Aviation Organization standards. “The DGCA and the Airport Authority of India are aware of this and this has been documented in detail by Arun Rao, member of Aerodromes



BLDE (Deemed to be University), Vijayapura Centre of Medical Excellence

INFOCUS

BLDE (deemed to be university) came into existence with the sole objective of providing quality medical education and meeting health care needs of the people in a backward region of north Karnataka. The sponsoring society, BLDE Association, is a 110-year-old education society with more than 75 institutions. Shri B.M. Patil Medical College, Hospital & Research Centre, the only constituent college of the university, was established in 1986. It has a unitary 45-acre campus with 26 departments and a teaching hospital with 1,125 beds, accredited by NABH at Entry Level.

BLDE (deemed to be university) has been assessed by NAAC and accredited with CGPA of 2.90. DSIR-SIRO recognition by Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India.

Shri B. M. Patil Medical College has been offering UG Programme-MBBS (with an intake of 150 students), PG Programmes in 21 disciplines, PG Super Specialty Programme in Urology (M.Ch.), Ph.D. Programme in 15 disciplines, UG and PG Programmes in Medical & Allied Health Sciences and Innovative courses like, Degree (intake 144) Fellowship, Diploma and Certificate Courses in Medical and Allied Sciences.

The Institute has partnered UNESCO/UNITWIN Programme under UNESCO Chair (Life Sciences) for World University Networking from August 6, 2018. The University Journal with international academics on its Editorial Board is being published by Wolters-Kluwer.

Our faculty members have got awards and recognition from governments and reputed organisations. Recently, Prof. Kusal K. Das has been appointed Dean of Environmental Health under UNESCO Chair Life Sciences.

The University's Shri B. M. Patil Medical College has expanded infrastructural facilities—Modular operation theatres, ICCU, CCU, NICU and DSA. Departmental buildings of Biochemistry, Anatomy and Microbiology have been expanded. The Research & Training facility has been upgraded.

The University has been concentrating on enhancing ICT facilities, strengthening and upgrading training (Skills Lab) and research facilities (Central Research Lab, Vascular Lab and Genetics Lab). BLDE (deemed to be university) has established a well equipped Rural Health Centre in the nearby village of Ukkali and adopted five villages under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan. Recently, we established an RTPCR/Viral Lab for testing of H1N1 and COVID-19. HIV Testing Laboratory of the Dept. of Microbiology has received certificate for “Outstanding performance in Quality Assurance in HIV testing and achieving international standard as per ISO 15189” from Lov Verma, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, at the National Meet on Strengthening HIV Laboratories in India. The Lab has been accredited with NABL Certification.

For further information, contact : registrar@bldeu.ac.in / Dean: Dr Aravind Patil- 98452 72720

DESCEND INTO DESPAIR

WHAT IS A TABLETOP AIRPORT?

Built on top of a plateau or hilly surface. One or both ends of runway overlooking a valley

WEATHER (10 minutes before touchdown)

Scattered clouds at **300ft** and **1,200ft** with a few cumulonimbi (clouds forming a towering mass with a flat base) at **2,500ft** and overcast clouds at **8,000ft**. Wind from **260** degrees (west) at **12 knots** (around **22kmph**). Visibility: **2,000m** in rain

THE AIRCRAFT

Boeing 737-800 (Registration: VT-AXH)

First flight: Nov 15, 2006

Boeing 737-800 design service objective: **75,000** flights/**51,000** flight hours

Boeing 737-800 accident statistics

Hull-loss accidents: **19**; fatalities **608**

Survival rate: **46.8%** of all occupants survived fatal accidents

THE ACCIDENT

Aug 7: Aircraft approaches from west, overflying the airport at 19:12 local time. Attempt to land aborted because of rain, wind and low visibility

Aircraft climbs to **3,600ft** and, after 20 minutes, makes another attempt to land, approaching the airport from west and using the Instrument Landing System

Goes past the safe landing mark of **900m** on the **2,700m** runway. Touchdown at **1,200m** at 19:40. Hydraulic braking does not work because of waterlogging

THE WIND FACTOR

The direction of wind changes more in tabletop runways than in other runways. This is generally because there are hillocks nearby

Headwinds: Winds from the direction opposite the aircraft; they reduce its speed

Tailwinds: Winds from behind the aircraft; they increase speed

Tailwinds necessitate more runway for the aircraft to stop, a luxury not available in most tabletop airports. For example, the Kozhikode runway is **1,730m** shorter than the Delhi runway

RESA VS EMAS

While RESA provides a buffer, another system—Engineered Materials Arrestor System—focuses on stopping an aircraft overrun. EMAS is currently made of crushable, lightweight concrete blocks. It has a retarding effect on the aircraft and according to reports, about **75m** of EMAS can serve the purpose of **240m** of RESA

TABLETOP AIRPORTS IN INDIA

Lengpui, Mizoram

Shimla and Kullu, Himachal Pradesh

Pakyong, Sikkim

Mangaluru, Karnataka

Kozhikode and Kannur**, Kerala

An accident in the Mangaluru airport in 2010, which killed **158** of **166** people on board, highlighted operational risks in tabletop airports

**Though Kannur has the fourth largest runway in India, it is technically a tabletop. Aerodrome elevation: 344.08ft

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

It provides the pilots with weather conditions, including visibility, rain and winds. The ATC will not give clearance to commence approach if visibility is below a minimum prescribed level. But, if this minimum is met, the ATC cannot stop the pilot

Group-CASAC and a former ICAO head. All these reports have been ignored," he said.

Kozhikode and Mangaluru airports have only 75m on either side of runway when the mandatory requirement is 155m. This, however, could have been mitigated by taking extra safety features, said aviation experts. "This (Kozhikode) was an accident waiting to happen," said Ranganathan. "They manipulated the rules to allow wide-body aircraft to operate."

V.P. Agarwal, former chairman of AAI, said there was no procedural error but admitted that in 2017, under pressure from the local community, wide-body aircraft was allowed to operate from Kozhikode with 'load penalty' (with fewer passengers than the capacity). "As load penalty operation is uneconomical for both airlines as well as passengers, efforts were made to allow full load operation by extending the length of the runway," he said. A request to acquire additional land was made to the state government.

The construction cost of tabletop runways is much higher compared with regular ones. "The cost of making a tabletop runway is similar to constructing a full airport at any other place," said Agarwal. "While making the Gangtok airport, out of total expenditure of ₹450 crore, the runway cost close to ₹350 crore." In Kozhikode, he said, the new land acquisition rule made the process cumbersome. It would have cost the AAI ₹250 crore to extend 900ft of the runway.

Experts say engineered materials arrestor system (EMAS), which is a bed of engineered materials built at the end of a runway to reduce the severity of the consequences of a runway excursion, is an easily available option for short runways like Kozhikode. EMAS is mandatory in many countries.

Agarwal said as the airport was not old and the pilot was not inexperienced, other safety aspects should be investigated, including the use of rubber removal machines and friction testing machines on the runway. Rubber removal machines and friction testing machines were procured for Kozhikode, Mangaluru and Thiruvananthapuram airports after the mishap in 2010.

In 2019, a DGCA audit had found "various critical safety lapses", including on the runway and the apron in Kozhikode. The AAI later responded that it had complied with all suggestions. Now experts are asking if the regulator had verified AAI's claims. "I am not saying that the pilot did a perfect job. The pilot had made an error. But the contributory factor shows failure on part of the AAI and DGCA," said Ranganathan.

Another concern is the narrow approach roads to tabletop runways. It came into light after the Mangaluru crash. "It was noticed and AAI procured rapid intervention vehicles to deal with such situations instead of crash tenders for faster mobility in narrow lanes," said Agarwal. "In hilly terrains, it is not easy to expand roads. Such vehicles were stationed at Kozhikode and Mizoram airports as well."

Ranganathan had predicted in a tweet in February that 2020 would be a year of a fatal accident for India. "It is happening every ten years. 1990, Bangalore A 320 crash of Indian Airlines; 2000, Patna crash of Alliance Air; 2010, Mangaluru crash." It would make sense for the authorities not to wait for another 10 years to fix the holes the safety system. 🕒

SOURCES GOOGLE EARTH, AVIATION SAFETY NETWORK AND AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA

GRAPHICS SREEMANIKANDAN S.
RESEARCH KARTHIK RAVINDRANATH



LOSS OF VISION

The Karipur crash would not have happened had the airport been modernised

BY CITHARA PAUL

HASHIM P.K.

T

he year was 1982; the venue was Karipur in Kerala's Malappuram district.

A huge crowd had gathered to see their long-cherished dream of having an airport in the Malabar region take wing. Welcoming guests to the foundation stone-laying ceremony was an elephant that belonged to one of the richest families in the area. The family had handed over more than 100 acres for the airport; the elephant, all decked up, was there to bring good fortune to the project.

Little did they realise that a decked-up elephant was not enough

RUSH TO RESCUE

A child injured in the air mishap at the Kozhikode airport being taken to hospital

to ward off disasters in the airport if there was no vision to support it. On August 7, 2020, the Air India Express Flight 1344 from Dubai carrying 190 people skidded off the airport's tabletop runway while trying to land amid heavy rain. The aircraft fell 35 feet into the valley and broke into two. Eighteen people, including the pilot and the co-pilot, died and 114 were injured.

The Karipur airport, officially called the Kozhikode Calicut International Airport, was built by razing hills. Its tabletop location makes it one of the most challenging airports for pilots, since there is no margin for overshooting the runways. At 2,860 metres, the airport's main runway is only about 400 metres longer than the runway in Mangaluru, where a similar tragedy happened in 2010.

"A detailed technical probe will find out the exact reasons why the tragedy happened. There could be multiple reasons. But regardless of the findings, common sense is enough to realise that, had there been a longer runway, this tragedy would not have happened," E.K. Bharat Bhushan, former director-general of civil aviation, told THE WEEK.

Bhushan, who retired as the state's chief secretary, had been associated with the airport since the stone-laying ceremony. He was sub-collector of Malappuram then. Later, as district collector, he fast-tracked the completion of the airport in 1988. As DGCA

in 2012, he addressed several safety concerns in the airport.

According to him, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) had long wanted the runway be extended. "But there has been no movement, thanks to local opposition to land acquisition. There have been instances where officials who had gone to survey the land were manhandled by local people," he said.

"This accident could have been easily averted had there been a little more vision," said Bhushan, who is from Malabar.

The story of the Karipur airport is one of long waits, tight purse-strings and lack of vision. The airport was first announced by Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, India's first minister for communications, in 1953 along with 12 other airports. While all the other airports opened within a decade, Karipur had to wait till 1988.

In fact, the idea of the airport can be traced to Ayub Khan, who became president of Pakistan. It was he who first proposed an airport in Kozhikode in the mid-1940s. He was heading the Indian Army cantonment in Kannur then.

The Malabar Chamber of Commerce had been campaigning for an airport as Kozhikode was a commercial hub even then. The project got life when 214 acres were acquired in 1968. The estimated budget was ₹14.5 crore.

But the plan remained dormant for more than a decade. After many

JLF
PRESENTS **BRAVE NEW WORLD**
Presented by **TEAMWORK**
CELEBRATING THE ARTS

JLF BRAVE NEW WORLD SEASON 1 REDUX

FRIDAY, 14TH AUGUST, 7:00 PM IST

ELIF SHAFAK

JANICE PARIAT

ELIF SHAFAK: 10 MINUTES 38 SECONDS IN THIS STRANGE WORLD

FOR THE FULL LIST OF SESSIONS THIS WEEK, PLEASE CHECK OUR SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES!

WATCH ON

@JLFLITFEST

@JLFLITFEST

YOUTUBE.COM/C/JAIPURLITFESTJLF

MAGAZINE PARTNER **THE WEEK**
JOURNALISM WITH A HUMAN TOUCH

dharnas in Kozhikode and Delhi, work finally began in 1982 and was completed in 1988. "It was a long-cherished dream of the people of Malabar," said Dr P.A. Kunjappu, whose father was the "Karipur Adhikari" who owned much of the airport land.

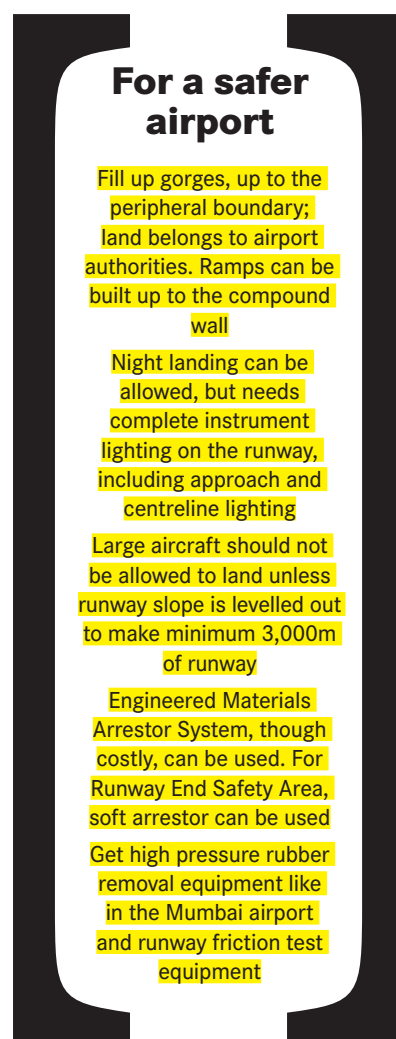
According to Alikutty, a former postman who has written a novel in which the Karipur airport has a central role, Karipur was chosen because of the availability of water resources. "I used to bring English newspapers for the officials from Mangalore who had come to survey land in the 1960s. At that time, the whole area was a grazing field for cows," he recalled.

According to K.K. Kunjalankutty, who was associated with the airport from 1970 to 2004 in various capacities, the proposal to extend the runway has been pending for more than two decades. "There had been many moves for land acquisition, but they were all scuttled," he said. "Unless political parties who are powerful in the region come forward, there will not be progress."

Politically, the area in and around Karipur is dominated by the Indian Union Muslim League. IUML leaders, however, deny that they were not interested in developing the airport. They also counter the allegation that the accident happened because of the relatively shorter runway.

"The inquiry has proved that the accident was due to the pilot's mistake and not because of the runway's length," said P. Abdul Hameed, the local IUML legislator. Hameed said his party had been consistently demanding that the airport be developed.

But the Kondotty gram panchayat, which is ruled by the IUML, passed a resolution against land acquisition for the airport in 2013. Why are IUML supporters opposing land acquisition? "That is because successive state governments and the Central government failed to come up with convincing packages for rehabilitat-



ing those who will lose their property," said Hameed.

IUML sources, however, told THE WEEK that a few hardline Muslim political groups were the real hindrance. "They are behind the opposition to the GAIL pipeline project and the national highway expansion, too," said a leader.

Amid these hindrances, a larger airport was opened in Kannur in 2018. That airport has a 4,000-metre runway—the fourth longest in the country—and is spread over 2,300 acres. It has attracted a major share of non-resident Indians from Malabar, who earlier had to depend on the Karipur airport. The situation may prompt the civil aviation ministry

to shut the Karipur airport until it is modernised.

"The people of Malappuram should realise that the Karipur airport has no future unless there is development," said K.N.A. Khader, IUML legislator. "We got this airport after decades of struggle and we should do everything possible to develop it. This airport is so close to our hearts."

There could not have been a better display of this 'bonding' with the airport than the way the local people rushed to the rescue of passengers trapped in the aircraft. Ignoring heavy rain and Covid-19 fears, they reached the spot minutes after the mishap, and helped take passengers to hospital in autorickshaws, cars and other private vehicles.

"As soon as we heard the loud sound, we rushed to the spot," said Shaheer K.K., who was part of the rescue operation. "Many were bleeding heavily and we knew they had to be in hospital at the earliest."

Did they not think about the possibility of an explosion, as it had happened in the Mangaluru crash? "No," he said. "All we thought at that time was how to rescue passengers trapped inside the plane."

Throughout the night, there were long queues in hospitals to donate blood. The airport was part of a Covid-19 containment zone, and one of the passengers who died was later found to have been infected. So the state government has asked all rescue workers to quarantine themselves. Nearly 500 people took part in the rescue operation.

Their courage, however, has received boundless praise. Air India thanked them saying they had risked their own lives to save many passengers. "Taking a bow to humanity!" it tweeted. "A standing ovation from our hearts to the people of Malappuram, Kerala, who had showered us with kindness and humanity during the uncertain incident. We owe you a lot!"



A lesson soaked with sweat

We are all snobs, at the end of the day. If we pride ourselves on being entirely unaffected by caste, wealth or religion, chances are that we may sneer at bad pronunciation. If we mingle freely and without judgment with people of all faiths and origin, and we are chill with bad grammar or intellectual ignorance, then perhaps we are the sort who look with pitying non-comprehension at people who are overweight or unfit.

Or, maybe we are beauty-snobs. Or brand-snobs, or grammar snobs, or travel snobs, or grad-school snobs, or animal-lover/vegan snobs, or literary snobs, or handloom snobs, or single-malt snobs—the varieties are endless.

Of course, the things you love, and the things you do, do not define the individual you are. They fuel great college rivalries, good-natured competition and sparkling party conversation. Snobbery can be constructive and aspirational. But when it tips over into wilful misunderstanding, prejudice and bigotry, then we have a problem.

A couple of years ago, I was at a party where a young stylist, known for her work in various Bollywood productions happened to say to me, "Oh, you work out at a public gym? Oh, but you are from Bangalore, na! So lucky! I would love to join a Gold's Gym or a Fitness First or whatever, because I hate working out alone. But bro, here in Bombay, I just cannot. There is," she gave a delicate little shudder, "TV actor sweat all over the machines and it just makes me want to throw up."

I came back with something weak like, "Wow, that is pretty bitchy, even for a fashion designer!" (a remark that reveals a lot of my prejudices), and we both laughed and sipped our wine and moved on to talking about something else. But when the news of Sushant Singh Rajput's death came out, this cruel little exchange came back to haunt me.

It is stupid to look down at TV talent, because TV has given us not just Shah Rukh Khan, Ayushmann

Khurrana (*Roadies*) and Arijit Singh (*Fame Gurukul*), but also Smriti Irani, the giant slayer of Amethi, who took down a fourth-generation political superstar from his home bastion. TV discoveries (of both genders) are just as goodlooking, charming and hot as the ones on the big screen, and not one-tenth as pampered and fussy besides.

It is stupid to look down at TV talent when my 72-year-old housekeeper, whenever she is asked which movie she would like to see, invariably answers "Maanav ki picture dekhni hai (I want to see Maanav's movie), which, of course, is Sushant's character's name in *Pavitra Rishta*—the show that made him wildly popular all across north India for six whole

years. And, that is why all the big Bollywood stars, in spite of all their snobbery, show up meekly at Kapil Sharma's *Comedy Nights with Kapil* when they have a film to promote.

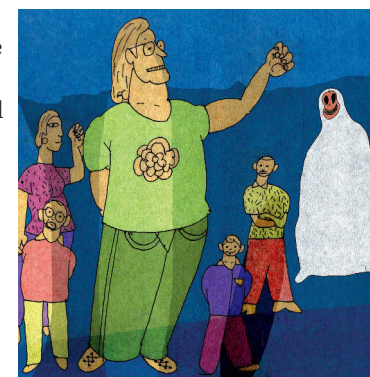
Probably the stylist I met had memories of costumes being returned to her after an over-extended, eighteen-hour, non-AC shift, damp and heavy with hardworking sweat? Of course, that would never happen on a shoot with a top star, for whom four copies of the same costume

would have been stitched, so he could remain daisy-fresh right through his contract-mandated, fully air-conditioned, eight-hour shift.

The crux of Bong Joon-ho's Oscar-winning film, *Parasite*, is the smell of rancid sweat. It is what sets the rich people apart from the poor folk, and it is the rich man's fastidious, involuntary, almost imperceptible wince at the whiff of the poor man's sweat that tips the poor man over into stabbing the rich man to death in the climax.

Nowadays, of course, Covid-19 has made everybody's sweat a big no-no, Amitabh Bachchan downwards. It has proved that blockbuster sweat, at the end of the day, is just the same as TV actor sweat. And that both can be equally tainted, or equally talented.

Perhaps that is a little lesson all of us snobs should sit back and absorb.



Script gone sour

Political controversies muddy investigations into the actor's death

BY DNYANESH JATHAR

THE MYSTERY surrounding the alleged suicide of actor Sushant Singh Rajput is getting deeper by the day. Three investigating agencies—the Mumbai Police, the Bihar Police and the Enforcement Directorate—are examining whether there was any foul play, while the Central Bureau of Investigation is all set to take over the probe.

Sushant was found dead at his Bandra residence on June 14. It was reported as a suicide as he was found hanging in his room. The initial controversy surrounding the death was about nepotism and bitter rivalries within the Hindi film industry. There were reports about how certain influential names exerted control over the careers of newcomers, especially those without any industry background. The Mumbai Police recorded statements of filmmakers like Aditya Chopra of Yash Raj Films, director Mahesh Bhat and Apoorva Mehta, who is the CEO of Karan Johar's Dharma Productions.

Sushant's girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty subsequently approached Union Home Minister Amit Shah for a CBI probe into the actor's death. The tragedy turned into a political controversy after Sushant's father, K.K. Singh, expressed his unhappiness over the investigation carried out by the Mumbai Police and registered a zero first information report (an FIR that can be filed at any police station irrespective of the place of crime and area of jurisdiction) in Patna on July

25, accusing Rhea and her family of mentally and financially harassing Sushant and driving him to suicide.

With Bihar heading for assembly elections, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Modi accused the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra of not investigating the case thoroughly. "Uddhav Thackeray is under pressure from the Congress-funded Bollywood mafia and is bent on saving all the elements responsible in the case," tweeted Sushil Modi.

On July 30, Atul Bhatkalkar, BJP legislator from Kandivali East constituency, wrote to Shah, requesting a

CBI inquiry into Sushant's death. "An Nationalist Congress Party leader like Parth Ajit Pawar has demanded a CBI inquiry," said Bhatkalkar. "Parth's father is Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar. The home minister belongs to the NCP.... Sushant's sister has complained that the deputy commissioner of police carrying out the inquiry did not record her statement. Considering all these aspects, people also say that a young minister in the Maharashtra government has a vested interest in the case. The Bihar government has launched its own investigation. It would be difficult to reach a conclusion if police forces of two states are investigating the same case. Hence I would like to request you to hand over the investigation of the case to the CBI."

Bhatkalkar's letter stirred up a hornet's nest, with the needle of suspicion pointing towards Uddhav's son Aaditya. It was said that Aaditya had attended a party with Sushant just a few days before his death. Sushant's former manager Disha Salian, who committed suicide a few days before Sushant's death, had also attended the party.

On August 4, former Maharashtra chief minister Narayan Rane who is now a BJP MP, said Sushant was murdered, while Salian had been raped and murdered. Aaditya felt compelled to issue a statement defending himself. "As grandson of the late Balasaheb Thackeray, I assure you that I will never do anything that will bring shame to my Thackeray name,

This mudslinging at me... is the result of frustration and political despair because our government is working well and is very popular.

Aaditya Thackeray, environment minister, Maharashtra



AMEY MANSABDAR

CUB, CORNERED

It was said that Aaditya Thackeray had attended a party with Sushant Singh Rajput (left) just a few days before his death

the Shiv Sena and the state of Maharashtra. Bollywood is a big industry which provides employment to thousands of people and there is nothing criminal in having good relations with the many who are associated with the industry. This mudslinging at me and the Thackeray family is the result of frustration and political despair because our government is working well and is very popular," said Aaditya.

Sena leaders including Transport Minister Anil Parab, MPs Sanjay Raut and Priyanka Chaturvedi rushed

to Aaditya's defence. In his weekly column in the Sena mouthpiece *Saamna*, Raut wrote that Sushant's relationship with his father was not cordial as the actor was not happy that his father had remarried. Raut challenged the BJP to openly name Aaditya in the case.

A Sena insider told THE WEEK that Aaditya was just 30 and was yet to fully grasp how his authority and power could be exploited by certain elements in the film industry for their ulterior motives. "Balasaheb Thackeray also had friends in Bollywood, but nobody would dare use his name for ulterior motives. Uddhav knows everyone, but prefers to maintain a safe distance from these people," he

said. "Now that Aaditya is in politics full time, he should maintain a safe distance from friends and acquaintances who could misuse his name."

He said the BJP was using the case for electoral gains in Bihar and to destabilise the Maharashtra government. "By attacking Aaditya, they want to bring us to the negotiating table so that a Sena-BJP government can be formed again. The BJP is putting out feelers about breaking our ties with the Congress and the NCP. It will accept the post of deputy chief minister now and will take the chief minister's post two and a half years later," said the Sena insider.

The Union government has, meanwhile, handed over the case to the CBI following a recommendation by the Bihar government. Nitish made the recommendation as he felt that the Mumbai Police was not cooperating with his officers. For instance, Vinay Tiwari, superintendent of police, Patna City (Central), who was sent to Mumbai to monitor the investigation, was quarantined by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, citing Covid-19 protocol.

Rhea has now filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking the transfer of the case from Patna to Mumbai. Aaditya's role in the case came up during the arguments in the apex court on August 11 when senior advocate Maninder Singh, who was appearing for Bihar, said, "It is the Maharashtra CM's son who is involved in the case, [and it has] nothing to do with Nitish Kumar's insistence on filing the FIR." Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing Maharashtra, said the desperation of the Bihar government to take over the investigation was fuelled by the upcoming assembly elections. "I don't know whether Sushant's death was murder or suicide, but I can say that the murder of the Criminal Penal Code is being attempted here," said Singhvi. "After the election, you will not hear of this case." 📌

I have not asked for any position

BY SONI MISHRA

Congress leader Sachin Pilot is back in Jaipur after a month-long standoff with his bête noire, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. As the uneasy truce plays out, Pilot told THE WEEK that the main issue he raised with the party leadership in Delhi was about Gehlot's non-inclusive style of functioning. He said he had not wanted to be deputy CM and was keen on working outside the government as he had anticipated that the arrangement might not work out well. Pilot also addressed allegations of colluding with the BJP and his choice of lawyers to fight the case. Edited excerpts from the interview:

In the one month you stayed away from Jaipur, you were accused of putting your own government in peril.

I was served a notice by the Special Operations Group of the Rajasthan

Police under the sedition charge. We took the issue to Delhi to make the leadership understand what is going on in the government. The very next day, some coercive actions were taken, including expulsion of ministers, suspension of MLAs, FIRs being registered and notices issued by the speaker. All this was not required because having a difference of opinion with the chief minister is not anti-party and certainly not anti-national.

Finally, I stand vindicated. We did not utter a single word against the party or our own government. When Priyankaji (Priyanka Gandhi Vadera) and Rahulji (Rahul Gandhi) met me, we had a threadbare, frank discussion for two to three hours.

What made you finally sit down with senior Congress leaders and work out a resolution? Channels for talks were open. But on the one



Why was Pilot unhappy?

- He is believed to have felt short-changed when the party opted to make Ashok Gehlot the chief minister instead of him in 2018
- Since then, he felt he was being side-lined in the government's decision-making process
- The recent provocation was the notice served to him by the Special Operations Group over allegations of horse trading

What made Pilot end his rebellion?

- Pilot's campaign against Gehlot ran out of steam as the veteran leader proved he had the support of the majority of MLAs
- Some of Pilot's MLAs are also said to have become restive as the assembly session drew closer
- Pilot worked out a resolution with the party, which assured him of setting up a committee to look into the issues

What next for Pilot?

- He is only an MLA now and cannot hope to get back his posts of deputy CM or PCC chief anytime soon
- There is talk of Pilot being offered a role at the central level. But he is keen to continue in Rajasthan
- It will be an uphill task for him to rebuild his stock in the state

hand, you are discussing issues and on the other hand, you are suspending and expelling MLAs, filing cases and serving notices. The actions were not consistent with what was being said.

How will you reconcile with the harsh words used by Gehlot against you?

Even if you say such words to your house help, that person will not work for you anymore. I thought the political discourse needs a dignified conversation. I did not want to respond in the same tone and tenor. We maintained a dignified silence.

Can all this bitterness be brushed under the carpet?

I came to Jaipur as party president when the number of MLAs was reduced to 21 out of 200. Ashokji was chief minister when this happened. He was not made Congress Legislature Party leader or Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president. I worked with all honesty and dignity. Eighteen months ago, Rahulji insisted I become deputy chief minister. I was quite happy not being in the government because I thought it might not work out well. My apprehensions turned out to be true.

“

I did not want to respond [to Gehlot's barbs] in the same tone and tenor

“

My apprehensions [of working in the government] turned out to be true

“

From the very first day, I had said that I would not join any other political party

The chief minister said he had not spoken to you for one-and-a-half years.

Then what kind of government was he running? As head of the government, it is incumbent on him to take everyone's views on board. But to say this gives an insight into how things may have been.... A committee will look into the issues, and [the party leadership] have promised us that corrective steps will be taken.

Did you demand a leadership change in Rajasthan from the party high command?

I said everything I had to say to the Congress leadership. They understand the gravity of it. It will not be proper for me to spell out the laundry list of what was discussed. But the issue is not about any individual. It is about three years later, when we have another election to face.

It was said that you are in a hurry to become chief minister.

I have not asked for any position. I have been lucky enough to be minister at the Centre and deputy chief minister.

The Congress said you and the other MLAs were enjoying the hospitality of the BJP in Haryana and engaging lawyers close to the BJP for your court cases.

The MLAs had about 40 FIRs against them and feared coercive action, so they were afraid of going back to Rajasthan. Where we stayed made no difference. All 20 of us had pooled in our resources and paid for all the logistical and legal expenses. As for the court cases, the first person I called was Abhishek Manu Singhvi. He is a dear friend, but he politely declined, saying he was doing cases for Ashokji. The other good lawyer that I know personally is Harish Salve. So, I called him. From the very first day, I had said that I would not join any other political party.

No longer deputy chief minister or PCC president, what is the road ahead for you?

Whatever role the party may deem fit for me, I will certainly do, but I have not asked for any position. Rajasthan is my *karmbhoomi* (land of labour) and my relationship with the people and this land will be till my last breath.

To read the full interview

Visit www.theweek.in



First among equals

India gets its first legislator from the Siddi community

BY PRATHIMA NANDAKUMAR

SHANTARAM BUDHNA SIDDI was in his village, Hittalahalli in Uttara Kannada district, when someone called him from Bangalore on July 23 and told him that he had been nominated to the Karnataka Legislative Council. Siddi, 55, dismissed it as a prank. More calls came, and finally he realised that he had become the first person from the Siddi community to become a legislator. Feeling humbled, he sat down with his wife, Susheela, and their two children.

Shantaram is also the first Siddi graduate; he took his degree in economics from Karnatak University. The nomination to the upper house of the legislature, he says, was “a recognition given to my three decades of service and to the Siddi community.”

The Siddis are an ethnic group of African descent. The Portuguese brought them to India as slaves and sold them to Muslim rulers and wealthy landlords in Hyderabad, Karnataka and Gujarat. Some became soldiers; others worked on farms and in plantations.

The Siddis of Karnataka have lived in small settlements near the Western Ghats for generations. The settlements are spread across the five taluks of Uttara Kannada district (Karwar, Ankola, Yellapur, Siri and Mundgod), Khanapur in Belagavi district and Kalaghatagi in Dharwad district. Most of them are farmers who depend on forest for livelihood.

Shantaram began working for the RSS-affiliated Vanavasi Kalyana Karnataka in Uttara Kannada in 1989, but insists that he is no politician. “My people are overwhelmed with my nomination as we cannot even dream of contesting an election,” he

says. “The last time we saw one of our own hold a political position was when Lawrence Khaitan Siddi was elected president of Yellapur taluk panchayat. The Siddi women are getting elected to gram panchayats after the government made it mandatory for them to have at least one Siddi member. Many youth are growing politically aware. But numerically, we are a small community (of 40,000 people) and do not wield enough political power.”

Prashanth Siddi, who has acted in more than 70 Kannada films, says Shantaram has been working for the uplift of tribal communities for three decades. “He has worked without expectations, spending from his own pocket many times,” he says.

“The last time the Siddis in Karnataka made news was when Kamala Mingel Siddi won a bronze medal in 100-metre hurdles in the 1993 SAF Games in Dhaka. Kamala was one of several Siddi children handpicked and trained by the Sports Authority of India under the Special Area Games project, launched in 1987 to identify and train children who have natural physical aptitude for athletics. The project was abruptly scrapped in 1993, leaving many recruits shattered.

Shantaram, whose daughter is a graduate and son is a pre-university student, says the Siddis remain backward because they are mostly uneducated and landless. “The school dropout rate among tribal children is worrying. Unless we make learning a happy experience for the children, the fear of failure will keep them away from school. I hope to build hostels with better facilities. Only a handful of our youth are pursuing higher education. I want the numbers to grow,” he says.

The Siddis were accorded Scheduled Tribe status in 2003, but it has done little to empower them. “It has not helped much as the major tribes corner all benefits. Social discrimination also forces our youth to drop out of schools,” says Jayaram Siddi, the first advocate from the community. The stringent Forest Rights Act remains a

big impediment. “Small farmers are tilling small parcels of forest land,” says Shantaram. “The government must grant them land rights (title deeds) to make them self-reliant. Our people are deprived of benefits of the ST status as the guidelines to get a caste certificate are complicated.”

Shantaram was born in a poor farming family in Hittalahalli in Yellapur. To make ends meet, he worked with his parents and three brothers and a sister in the fields of local landlords. A bright student, he stood first in class 7 and his teacher was keen that he study further. “I joined a free hostel in Ankola run by the social worker Nirmala Gaonkar,” he says. After his graduation in 1988, he returned to farm labour and was hoping to land a decent job when two RSS workers, Prakash Kamat and Ajit Kumar, met him.

“They asked me if I would work for tribal communities, especially Siddi, which was an endangered tribe and the most backward, too, he says. “In August 1988, we set up the first tribal students’ hostel in Mundgod. Today, we have eight such hostels across six districts and our activities are spread across 18 districts. Around 52 tribal communities are part of our network and we work with 22 tribal groups.”

The Siddis are often mistaken to be foreigners because of their appearance, but they have assimilated into the regional culture. They speak a dialect that is a mix of Konkani, Kannada and Marathi, and follow Hinduism, Islam or Christianity. The women wear sari, dot their forehead with vermilion and are experts in local cuisine. They depend on forest produce—honey, tubers or even red ants—to whip up delicacies. “The Siddis are unique and the only tribe to follow three different faiths. They all come together for the annual ‘Siddi Naasa’, where they worship their ancestors (spirits),” says Professor H.C. Boralingaiah, former vice chancellor of Kannada University, Hampi.

The Siddis, however, still battle discrimination. “It is common for people to stare at us or touch our hair. I remember an incident in Kumta, where I was attending a shakha. I overheard two schoolboys saying a black bear had visited their school. They were referring to me, and it hurt,” says Shantaram. “But things are slowly changing. Our youth in cities like Bengaluru, Dharwad and Belagavi are finding greater social acceptance. But, if we go to smaller towns like Bhatkal, Honnavar or Siddapura, people still laugh at us. To our people, it is traumatic.”





In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, heroes of the past are falling by the wayside. In a similar move, prominent Indians have been protesting the glorification of the man who led the loot of the country and paved the way for the British empire—**Robert Clive**

BY MANDIRA NAYAR

Thug of Hindustan



PAINTING BARA BHASKARAN



t began, as change often does now, with a burst of idealism and an online petition.

The statue

of slave trader Edward Colston had just found a permanent place at the bottom of the sea in Bristol. History had been made. It had been corrected. There was a rush of revolution. And, swept up in the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, Ameya Tripathi, Meera Somji and Rhianna Ilube—British, but inheriting stories of the empire—launched a petition to topple India's original bad guy: Robert Clive. "It sometimes takes pulling down a statue," says Somji, studying gender at the London School of Economics, "or removing it to shake people."

This is a new generation discovering the past through the prism of the present, probably spurred by this pause of a pandemic, to urgently right the wrongs of history. From America to Australia, the BLM movement is raging with this sense of urgency and is forcing countries

to confront racism and imperialism. It is a revolt—the kind that has the possibility to ensure that the past is more inclusive, fairer and is not only the version of the victor. In a *Game of Thrones* sort of frenzy, statues are coming down and heroes are turning into villains. The message is clear: heroes of the past must subscribe to the 21st century sense of justice to be on pedestals.

In Belgium, statues of Leopold II, the coloniser king, have been

pulled down; in the US, some memorials to the Confederacy, which supported slavery, have disappeared, and in the heart of London there is Clive, still standing.

One of the first Indian words to enter the English dictionary was loot. Clive can single-handedly take credit for that. The weight of the word—as well as the enormity of it—is on display at Powis Castle in Wales, which has the largest private collection of Indian artefacts in pri-



GETTY IMAGES

Towering, no cowering

The protected statue of Robert Clive on King Charles Street in Whitehall, London; (below) Ameya Tripathi, Rhianna Ilube and Meera Somji, who filed an online petition to remove the statue, with Nick Robins, author of *The Corporation That Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational*



It is more politically palatable for a certain white constituency, conservative or liberal, to say that Clive was hated in Britain and Bengal. But as a British citizen, whenever I see the statue at Whitehall, I don't feel offended; I feel complicit.

—Ameya Tripathi
student, Columbia University

vate hands in Britain, courtesy Clive and his eldest son, Edward. But it goes beyond just plunder. Clive systematically presided over the first corporate takeover of a country. The East India Company (EIC) stripped Bengal of its wealth to turn Britain into a rich country and later an empire. His first loot is valued at £250 million in today's money.

Clive began his career in the EIC as a writer and rose to become the first governor of Bengal. Under him, the EIC became rulers. He installed a pliant nawab in Bengal—Mir Jafar—with the Battle of Plassey in 1757, because the earlier nawab Siraj-ud Daula had gone rogue. But his masterstroke was that he extracted the *diwani*—the right to collect revenue of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa—from the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II. In the hands of unscrupulous company officials, this triggered the famine of Bengal. (Clive knew that once the news



SHUTTERSTOCK

Treasure house
Powis Castle in Wales has the largest private collection of Indian artefacts in Britain, thanks to the Clive family

of the *diwani* reached England, the price of the EIC stocks would soar. He wrote to his stockbroker to ensure that he profited from it). "There is nothing redeemable about him," says historian Lakshmi Subramanian, who wrote *History of India 1701-1857*.

Yet, Clive stands tall right in front of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Whitehall, a hero and a constant reminder of the empire, the plunder and the ruin. Prime Minister Boris Johnson walks past his statue every time he heads to the park behind 10 Downing Street for a walk. "This is not where he belongs," says historian William Dalrymple, who has been vocal

about removing the statue.

The incongruity of Clive having pride of place, in a tourist spot and right in the heart of British government, stands out. Former high commissioner of India to the UK Navtej Sarna had tweeted: "White-hall statue of so-called 'Clive of India' irked me each time I went to British #FCO. It needs to go. The Raj was not 'some enormous rose-tinted Merchant Ivory film writ large over the plains of Hindustan, all parasols and Simla tea parties.'"

Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor's tweet to London Mayor Sadiq Khan on removing the Clive statue triggered public outrage, which has added to the momentum of the

Many of the artefacts that fill museums across the UK belong to the Clive family. The loot is treasure and how he acquired it does not even impact the countless who troop through the museums marvelling at them.

movement to get the statue out. "His statue there is a daily affront to people from the former colonies," says Tharoor. "Removing Clive is a powerful symbol. Don't forget the Brits actually called him 'Clive of India'. So, in many ways, he is emblematic of the Raj and all its misdeeds."

Unlike the other instances of instant justice, the Clive statue will be removed in a civilised manner. There will be debate, discussion, resistance, and a long wait. But it does offer hope that for once there will be real conversation. The petition demand is to move the statue to a museum, where future generations can fully understand the extent of

Plunder and scoot

BY MANDIRA NAYAR

Robert Clive carted home Siraj-ud Daula's palanquin. Far away from Bengal, it is now in Powis Castle, Wales. The castle, according to historian William Dalrymple, has more Mughal artefacts than even the National Museum in New Delhi.

Powis Castle boasts the largest private collection of Indian artefacts in Britain. And there is more. In 2004, Clive's descendants sold five bejewelled Mughal pieces, including an "extraordinary" jade flask that sold for £29,17,250.

The jade flask, says auction firm Christie's, was part of the imperial collection of the Mughal court and formed part of the booty that Nadir Shah took away. It is unclear how Clive got his hands on it. Christie's says that only two other such flasks have been recorded; both are part of the Hermitage Museum collection in Russia.

The other objects in the lot were a "pistol-grip dagger decorated with elegant floral sprays" (£7,33,250); "a pale green nephrite jade bowl" (£53,775); a flywhisk, made with banded agate and inset with rubies (£9,01,125); and a hookah with sapphires "innumerable" on a blue enamel field, which Christie's says was a Mughal favourite.

Among Clive's other collections, there is a small but beautiful album of paintings—miniatures of flowers, plants and court life. The album is on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

While Clive was certainly one of the richest men of his time and carried away plenty of treasures, his eldest son Edward carried the family tradition forward. Edward and his



Head, stones
The finial from the Clive Collection at Powis Castle

ALAMY

wife, Henrietta Clive, added to the collection at Powis Castle. Among them is a tiger's head in solid gold, studded with diamonds, emeralds and rubies—one of the eight finials on Tipu Sultan's throne. It was given to Lady Henrietta Clive as a souvenir, when Tipu's gold throne was being broken up for sale.

In a letter to her brother, Henrietta writes, "The plunder of Seringapatam is immense. General Harris will get between £1,50,000 and £2,00,000. Two of the privates have got £10,000 in jewels and money. The riches are quite extraordinary. Lord Clive has got a very beautiful blunderbuss (a short, large-bored gun) that was Tipu's and much at Seringapatam. I should like to have the pickings of some of the boxes." The blunderbuss, the finial, Tipu's slippers and a portion of his tent are on display at Powis castle. Another finial was auctioned for £3,89,600 in 2009.

The Clive Collection for years has been displayed as Indian curiosities, for those who wanted to get a glimpse of the stuff that fuelled myths about the empire. But the displayers and viewers alike did not put into context how the treasures reached the castle. Given the current controversy, it is likely to change. **i**



Reality check
Claremont
House in Surrey,
another grand
house built for
Clive

GETTY IMAGES

Clive's legacy. "It will not happen overnight," said Murad Qureshi, a UK Labour politician who has chosen to lead this battle from the front. Qureshi went through school without learning about the empire; it was at the dinner table where he heard Clive's name. "Most people who go past it [the statue], don't know who this guy is," says Qureshi. "But for those of us who do, we are offended."

Thanks to the BLM movement, Britain, for the first time in centuries, might be forced to acknowledge its past in an unvarnished way—to actually have a conversation about plunder, loot and empire, a word that has lost its punch. "The campaign to remove it has attracted 85,000 signatures on its petition in one month," says Tharoor. "As the numbers grow,

Thanks to the Black lives Matter movement, Britain might be forced to acknowledge its past in an unvarnished way—to actually have a conversation about plunder, loot and the empire.

I hope it will be difficult for the British government to ignore this demand." And the debate this time has gone beyond the government.

Public opinion matters. "I'm afraid British historical amnesia has convinced too many of them that they have nothing to apologise for," says Tharoor. "So they are unlikely to act, even to remove the statue, unless the facts are impressed upon them."

But this is not the first time that Britain has faced resistance about the empire from within. The Rhodes Must Fall movement against Cecil Rhodes, who is like Clive in terms of pushing for profit, rocked Oxford University in 2016, a year after his statue was removed from the University of Cape Town. It still stands outside Oriel College in the heart of Oxford.

But at a time when the world is reassessing the past so that it reflects a more just world today, the stubbornness of not removing the

Mentor and more

Clive's mentor Stringer Lawrence streamlined the East India Company's army and is, therefore, seen as the father of the Indian Army

BY R. PRASANNAN



They were mentor and pupil, but poles apart in character and disposition. If Robert Clive was a bully, his mentor Stringer Lawrence was a gentleman. If Clive was driven by greed, Lawrence never touched a penny that was not honest. Yet, they had the highest regard for each other, and remained lifelong friends. So much so, when he heard that Lawrence was in financial difficulties after his retirement, Clive settled an annuity of 500 pounds a year for him. Once when Clive was to be honoured with a sword of honour, he refused to accept it unless Lawrence, too, was similarly honoured.

Though the Indian Army traces its founding to January 15, 1949, when it got its first Indian commander-in-chief in General K.M. Cariappa, several military historians, including Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, consider Lawrence as the father of the Indian Army.

Major (later Major-General) Stringer Lawrence arrived in Madras in 1748, offering his services to the East India Company after having served in Flanders and Gibraltar. The company's small force, not better than a troop of factory guards, had no commander at that time after the death of Major Knipe. So Lawrence was selected "to be major of our garrison at Fort St



ALAMY

Military mind

A painting of Stringer Lawrence by Thomas Gainsborough

George", which had, by then, been captured by the French.

Lawrence soon set out to raise a professional army out of the "ill-disciplined ruffians" that comprised the company's army then. "He organised seven companies of Europeans each with a captain, a lieutenant, an ensign and eighty-one other ranks, and adopted a similar system for the Company's sepoys," writes James P. Lawford in *Clive: Proconsul of India*. "Until then the Indian soldiers had been nothing better than roving bands of poorly armed men under a local leader. They remained under their own officers, but British officers

were now posted in to command them on operations. Above all he initiated a system of military law which, for the first time, made it possible to introduce proper military discipline into the Company's forces." This, according to several historians, was the beginning of the modern Indian Army.

Within weeks, Lawrence captured Cuddalore from the French—the first major military victory of the British in India. It was during the small siege of Ariancopang (Ariyankuppam) that Lawrence noticed the young Lieutenant Clive who was standing firm with some 30 men even after most other platoons had retreated. Next, he was impressed with the young man's audacious attack of Devicottah.

Their finest hour together was during the operations around Trichinopoly against Chanda Saheb in the famous Carnatic wars. It was here that Lawrence finally chose Clive, who was the junior-most of Lawrence's captains, for some of his most arduous operations including the one to break the siege of Trichinopoly. Clive proved to be worth more than Lawrence's confidence, so much so that the fond mentor gave full credit to his pupil in every dispatch that he sent to the directors. By the time the Carnatic wars ended, the British were virtually the masters of the south and Clive, just 27, the rising star of British arms.

Soon Clive moved to Bengal where he defeated Nawab Siraj-ud Daula. Lawrence continued in the south for a few more years, and retired to England where he spent his last years as an honoured guest of his friend Sir Robert Palk, a former governor of Madras after whom the Palk Bay and Palk Strait are named. ●



THE NABOB GENERAL

Robert Clive played a key role in securing the Indian empire for Britain; he also used his military and political influence to amass a fortune



BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

Born: Sept 29, 1725. He went to live with his maternal aunt

His uncle wrote: "His fighting (to which he is out of measure addicted) gives his temper a fierceness and imperiousness that he flies out upon every trifling occasion."

Clive was a regular troublemaker as a schoolboy

WRITER TO SOLDIER

He arrived in Fort St. George, Madras, in 1744 as a writer (clerk) in the East India Company (EIC). The fort was captured by the French in 1747. Clive and a few officers escaped

He received his first commission on May 2, 1747; the governor in council wrote: "Mr. Robert Clive, Writer in Service, being of a martial disposition and having acted as a volunteer in our late engagements we have granted him an Ensign's Commission upon his application."

The French, the Dutch and the English battled for control over the Carnatic region. In 1751, Clive seized the Carnatic capital, Arcot, and withstood a 53-day siege by the forces of the nawab of the Carnatic, Chanda Saheb, a French ally. British prime minister William Pitt hailed Clive as a "heaven-born general"

Clive was afflicted with a nervous disorder during the Second Carnatic War and went to Bengal to recuperate

BEFORE AND AFTER PLASSEY

Clive married Margaret Maskelyne in Madras in 1753 and the couple soon sailed back to England

He returned to India in 1755. In January 1757, he recovered Calcutta from Nawab Siraj-ud Daula

The Battle of Plassey followed. The nawab commanded 50,000 men; the company's army was about 3,000-strong. The nawab's opening cannonade was out of range and various skirmishes were inconclusive. Mir Jafar, who commanded the nawab's cavalry, refused to fight; Clive had secretly offered to make him the new nawab of Bengal. Jafar was eventually appointed nawab, though he was little more than a puppet ruler. Siraj-ud Daula was defeated on June 23, 1757; Clive's victory planted the seeds of the British empire in India

Clive served as governor of Bengal from 1758 to 1760

TO ENGLAND AND BACK

He arrived in England on July 9, 1760, a rich man. A chronicler claimed that the general could realise £1.2 million (over £240 million today) in cash, bills and jewels; his wife had a casket of jewels estimated to be worth at least £2,00,000

On April 27, 1761, Clive was elected as the member for Shrewsbury. He was made Baron Clive of Plassey in 1762

His health deteriorated and he fell into a fit of melancholia. In 1764, Clive sailed back to India as governor and commander-in-chief of Bengal to reform the company. He cracked down on corruption and obtained *diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, in perpetuity, for the company from Emperor Shah Alam II

SUICIDE

Clive sailed back to England in 1767; he was quite unwell. He was installed as a Knight of the Bath in 1772

The EIC had lost money during the Great Bengal Famine (1769-1773). The Regulating Act of 1773 was discussed in parliament to regulate the company and Clive's vast riches came into question. He defended himself in front of a select committee, saying: "Take my fortune but save my honour." He left the House on May 21, 1773. He committed suicide on November 22, 1774

statue is troubling. In Shrewsbury, Shropshire, where Clive was born, two petitions to remove his statue sparked a debate. With the local council voting to keep the statue, it continues to dominate the skyline. The governing body of Oriel College, however, has voted in favour of removing the Rhodes statue.

That offers hope. The effort to talk about the silences in British history is coming from within the country. People under 30 are re-examining the past through books like Dalrymple's *The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire*—a mass market seller that was read by both former US president Barack Obama and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan—or Tharoor's *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India*. The EIC story, largely forgotten, is being rediscovered.

Clive was not a name Somji had ever heard before. "I was meeting my family a few years ago and they told me to meet at Clive," she says. "I thought it was odd, who is Clive of India? It was like one of those characters in *Lagaan*." Somji is not alone. Clive has vanished from British curriculum for the past 40 years, and Tharoor has been pushing for the empire to be included in the British curriculum.

For the BLM movement to go beyond symbolism, this has to happen. Especially for Britain, where the empire has been normalised. "Clive is different from Colston," says Tripathi, who is pursuing his PhD in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University. "He is different



Removing Clive is a powerful symbol. Don't forget the Brits actually called him 'Clive of India'. So, in many ways, he is emblematic of the Raj and all its misdeeds.

—Shashi Tharoor
Lok Sabha MP and writer

from Churchill; he is a privateer. It is more politically palatable for a certain white constituency, conservative or liberal, to say that he was hated in Britain and Bengal. But as a British citizen, whenever I see the statue at Whitehall, I don't feel offended; I feel complicit."

Clive and his adventures had become an inspiration. He fuelled the idea of the empire. It was where fortunes were made. He was received by the king. He became an MP from Shrewsbury. Later, he became Baron Clive of Plassey in Ireland's County Clare—a title he proposed him-



self. The Irish estate brought him £2,000 per annum, Clive writes. His life in India was the stuff of legends. In Corsica, Napoleon dreamt of being a nabob. Prime minister William Pitt the Elder referred to Clive as the heaven-born general.

His wealth, which was obviously not amassed through kosher means, bought him power. The sheer magnitude of what he had can be judged by just a box that he sends to his wife, Margaret, in 1765. It contains, he writes, diamonds, rubies and pearls amounting to 42,000 Arcot rupees. A large transparent diamond of 20 *rattis* (one *ratti* is just under a carat), a diamond ring, 20 diamond drops, one ruby ring set with diamonds and 103 pearls. The invoice does not contain the 22 loose diamonds, he writes. This is just the tip of his vast fortune. Over the years, he acquired grand houses. His wife became a patron, so powerful that Mozart performed in their home. And when Clive sailed back to India in 1764, he had an orchestra on his ship.

He carted away everything—money, bejewelled flasks, hookahs, the palanquin that Siraj sat on. His son Edward, who was governor of Madras, even took Tipu Sultan's horse back. Many of the artefacts that fill museums across the UK belong to the family. And in many of them, he is still Clive of India. The loot is treasure and how he acquired it does not even impact the countless who troop through the corridors of museums marvelling at them.

And increasingly, he might be the perfect test case to talk about the empire. Churchill may be its poster-boy—"a monster," as Tharoor puts it—but he was a prime minister. He had been elected. His statue, how much ever it offends the colonies, was voted in with popular appeal. Clive's was not.

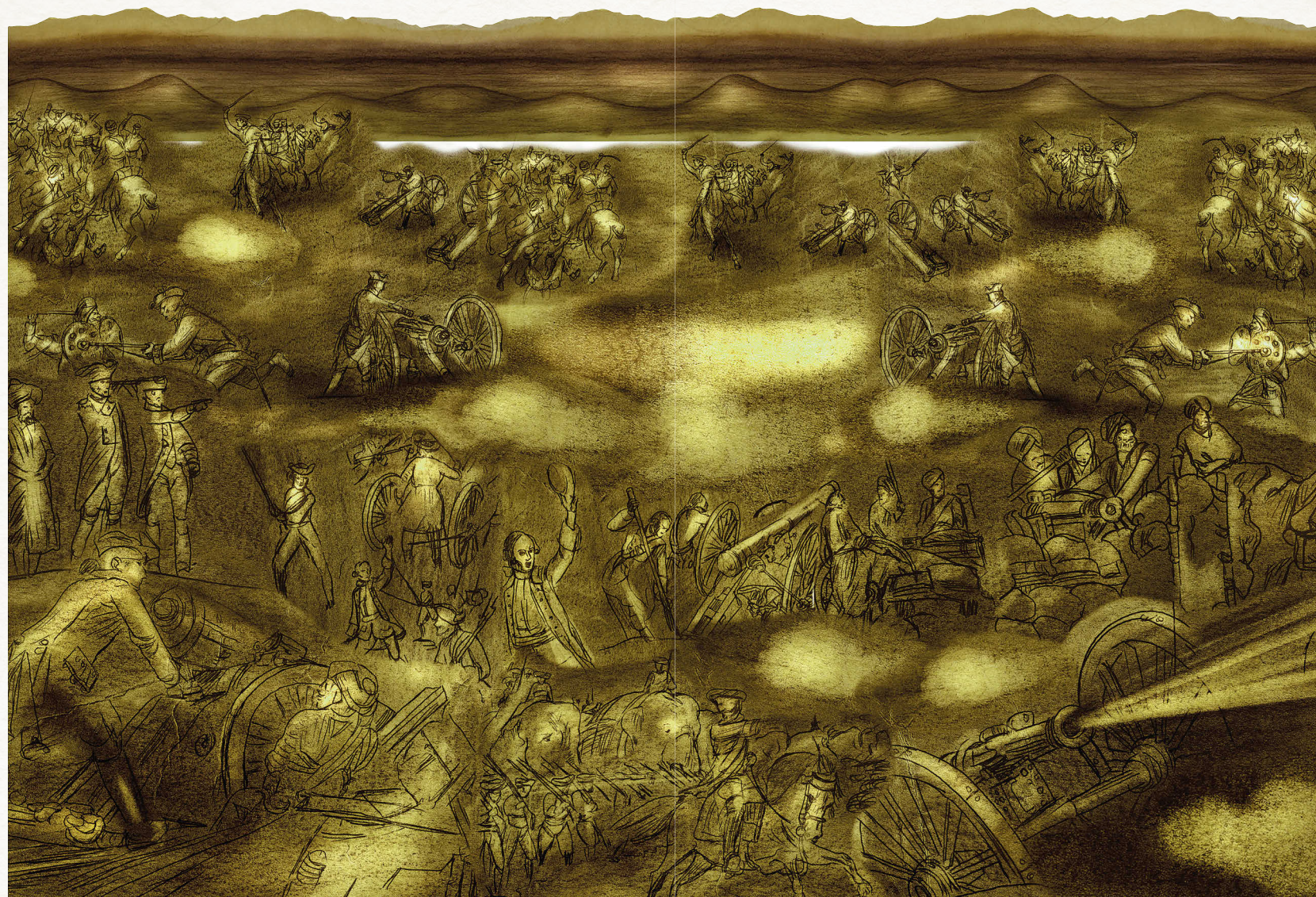


ILLUSTRATION BARA BHASKARAN

Clive's statue was hoisted up in 1911 by Lord Curzon who wanted to shore up an empire that was on its last legs. When he died, Clive was the most hated man in Britain, a biographer says. "Clive was regarded as a criminal in his lifetime," says Dalrymple. "He died from his own hand, in the immediate aftermath of a massive parliamentary debate on whether he was a crook. He actually escaped full censure but the whole thing was incredibly bruising for him. He went home the night of the debate not knowing

whether he was going to wake up with a penny in the morning." Clive was buried in an unmarked grave in Shropshire in the dead of the night. He was 49.

In his defence before the committee, he had said, "Presents in India are coeval with the Company.... There has been no commander of his Majesty's Squadron, nor a commander of His Majesty's Land Forces nor a governor nor any chief who has not received presents." An argument that is bought. As a committee member acknowledges

at the end of the debate, Clive did contribute to the country. This is why Clive's statue needs to go even more than Churchill's. Despite the scandal, Clive was corrupt, but had respect. He still does. Even on websites of the National Trust, Clive is still very much a name that matters.

In a world where companies are being increasingly pressured to be ethical; where the Chinese government's pushing of an economic agenda is being seen as neo-colonialism; and security concerns over Huawei are being debated as

an assault on sovereignty; can Clive still stand? It is unlike the demand for an apology for Jallianwala Bagh, which was for the action of General Reginald Dyer. Clive represents the empire. He founded it.

"History has a tendency to catch up," says author Sudeep Chakravarti. "But it's up to a particular country's citizens to do what they wish with statues, memories and histories. Britain is a country built on myth, cruelty and commerce, much like modern Belgium, which still has several statues of Leopold

Clive installed a pliant nawab in Bengal—Mir Jafar—with the Battle of Plassey in 1757, because the earlier nawab Siraj-ud Daula had gone rogue.

II." This is at the heart of the battle to remove Clive's statue. How does Britain see itself? Post Brexit and in a pandemic-stricken world with hyper nationalism, any conversation on colonisation will be difficult, dirty and divisive. "I believe if you are a mature postcolonial power, you should be able to reconcile with the history that is ignominious," says Subramanian.

But it will not be easy. Change in institutional Britain happens slowly. Germany is the only country in the west that has dealt with its Nazi past. "The imperialist history of Britain runs so deep. There will be resistance," says Ilube, who along with Somji founded A History of Everything Else, an online platform, to research and share untaught stories of the empire. "Because it is very difficult to understand what Britain is if we are ashamed of the imperialist past."

The conversation about the empire has so far been led by those who felt the weight of it the most—who came in last. And the immigrant debate is a very dangerous one. "It is very different for us," says Robert Fowke, writer and Clive's descendant. "You haven't had this immigration into India that we have had into Britain. But if you, say, had a population which



I believe if you are a mature postcolonial power, you should be able to reconcile with the history that is ignominious.

—*Lakshmi Subramanian*
historian

was European and discontented, you would need to integrate their historical narrative with yours. We have the same problem. The problem is if you are from an Indian background or an African background, then Clive is not an ancestor. There is a lack of belonging.”

At Berkley Square, in London, stands one of his houses that Clive refurbished to demonstrate himself as a man of taste while he stripped Bengal; a blue plaque outside it describes him as a soldier. Qureshi wants that corrected. “He was a mercenary,” he says.

In the US, Woodrow Wilson’s name is being axed from institutions; Dixie Chicks will now onwards be simply known as The Chicks; and the term master bedroom has been expunged. The politically correct term is primary. The cultural landscape is being transformed to acknowledge the uncomfortable silence of the past. For Clive, vocabulary must change again. An Indian word that has now become English, loot must accompany each picture from his collection, each object in Powis Castle and especially under his statue when it does go to the museum. ❶



SHUTTERSTOCK

Lost glory
The House of Jagat Seth in Murshidabad

Bankrolling a battle

How a banking family in Bengal financed Clive’s campaign against Nawab Siraj-ud Daula

BY MANDIRA NAYAR

The story of Robert Clive and the Battle of Plassey will be incomplete without the story of his financiers.

The Battle of Plassey did not see much blood. It was fixed by the ultimate fixer himself—Clive. He wanted to place a more pliant nawab on the throne. Mir Jafar, who had been demoted by Siraj-ud Daula, was the perfect candidate. But Clive also had the most powerful partner on his side: Mahtab Rai ‘Jagat Seth’, head of the banking family that

controlled the economy. The title Jagat Seth—meaning banker to the world—had been conferred on Mahtab’s family by the Mughal emperor.

While Jafar’s treachery is well known, the role the Jagat Seths play in this conspiracy to replace Siraj has been lost, except in academic circles. According to the *Siyar-ul-Mutakherin*, a *History of Mahomedan Power in India During the Last Century*, the Jagat Seths offered the British three crore rupees

for the campaign against Siraj. The figure may be exaggerated, but it is very likely that they paid them.

A key to understanding the kind of influence the Jagat Seths had and the power they wielded as king-makers is understanding who they were. All of the money of Bengal, the richest province in India, passed through their hands. They had the monopoly over minting coins. They also collected revenue for the nawab. They also lent money to everyone—the nawab, merchants and trading companies. Their banking network branched out across Calcutta, Dhaka, Delhi and even Patna. “They dealt big,” writes Sudeep Chakravarti in *Plassey: The Battle that Changed the Course of Indian History*. They were the Ambanis of their time, much less flashy.

“For several decades, the Seths

displayed a particular knack to back the winning horse,” writes Chakravarti. “Even create the winning horse.”

It was always a good idea, especially since they had keys to the treasury, to keep the Jagat Seths in good humour. Siraj’s takeover from his grandfather Alivardi Khan—a man who loved food, had a professional storyteller and preferred consensus—upset the power equation in the province, even with the Jagat Seths.

Chakravarti writes about an incident when Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai was slapped by Siraj for failing to raise 30 million rupees from the East India Company and other merchants. This was the beginning of intrigue, and the Jagat Seths participated whole-heartedly in the plot to overthrow Siraj. “They are, I can say, the movers of the revolution.

Without them the English would never have carried out what they have,” writes Chakravarti, quoting from the recollections of Jean Law, Siraj’s ally and chief of the French factory in Bengal.

The Company’s run-ins with Siraj had increased. There had been similar problems with his grandfather, too, but the English then had found a way out, with the Jagat Seths acting as intermediaries for a fee. But Siraj was not his grandfather. He had a temper and wanted to centralise power. “Clive is rightly reviled, but we should know that he was financed by the Jagat Seths because they were sick of the exactions of Siraj-ud Daula,” says Lok Sabha MP and writer Shashi Tharoor.

In the introduction to J.H. Little’s *House of Jagatseth*, historian N.K. Sinha writes that the role of Mahtab Rai and his cousin Swaroop Chand was clear—they supported Yar Latif Khan, a general and Siraj’s arch-enemy, and then “persuaded him to throw in his lot with Mir Jafar”. According to Jean Law’s recollections, “the path which led to the Battle of Plassey had its beginning in Murshidabad and not in Calcutta and it was the Seths who placed the feet of the English in the path”.

The Jagat Seths proved to be formidable enemies. With access to information and proximity to Siraj, they became agents for the British. They also played a part in the charade that was the battle, posting an agent in Siraj’s court to “attend” to him. The die was cast, and Siraj—betrayed by his own—finally lost.

However, despite their craftiness, the Jagat Seths miscalculated when it came to the British. They backed the wrong horse. “They thought the British would go away,” says historian Lakshmi Subramanian. “They thought they would be like the Marathas. They would intervene and then disappear. They didn’t.” ❷



GETTY IMAGES

Past, pride

Every year, dalits gather in Bhima-Koregaon to celebrate the anniversary of the battle between the British, with mostly Mahar soldiers, and the Marathas

Beyond binaries

Historians in India are taking a relook at history, bringing in caste, gender and more texture to a linear narrative

BY MANDIRA NAYAR



Bhima-Koregaon, a tiny village in the heart of the Maratha country, offers a twist to India's favourite 'the British-were-the-enemy' story. On January 1, 1818, the British army, with mostly Mahar soldiers, defeated the army of Peshwa Baji Rao II. This decisive battle decimated the once-formidable Marathas, paving the way for the empire, and is celebrated as a victory of the dalits over the upper castes.

In 1927, Dr B.R. Ambedkar made a pilgrimage to Bhima-Koregaon, bringing this forgotten battle into dalit memory. The ritual is now repeated each year. The victory

tower at the centre of the village is festooned with flowers. For dalit political consciousness, this is a milestone. The Bhima-Koregaon battle is only one story among the many that does not fit in a neat version of what is Indian history.

"Caste complicated a lot of received wisdom and these linear narratives," says historian Manu S. Pillai. "Caste throws a spanner in the wheels when learning Indian nationalism. For example, Lord Macaulay is a textbook villain. But there are groups of dalit intellectuals who celebrate his birthday as a *jayanti*. In Uttar Pradesh, briefly, they tried to install a goddess called

'Angrezi Devi,' wearing an English hat. To them, Macaulay, by propagating English education in India, opened up the opportunity for a lot of marginalised groups to go up the ladder."

For years, Indian history has existed in these binaries: good and evil; black and white. Of late, the battle between saffron and secular has become more heated. Then, there is the great revival of the past and stories that came from across the Vindhyas. The Cholas and their sheer clout has now found its way into mainstream history. Pillai is the poster boy of how a 700-odd-page book on an "obscure" subject set in Kerala—*The Ivory Throne*—by an unknown writer can become a bestseller.

Gradually, history, too—at least on bookshelves in bookstores and online—is becoming much more of a cacophony rather than just the classical-trained rigid symphony. "Any scholarly inquiry into history is to ask uncomfortable questions and challenge binaries," says Pillai. "The whole idea of history is to complicate and contextualise."

Cookie-cutter history is on the way out in the west, courtesy the Black Lives Matter movement and its push for a more diverse, more inclusive, less imperialist version of history. India also has, in the last few years, witnessed challenges to the established linear narrative.

"Our past has not been free of coercion either," asserts Srinath Raghavan, military historian and trustee of New India Foundation. The biggest push-back has been where the longest silence has existed—among women. The past two years have seen a spate of women writers choosing to question the male domain of history. From the Mughal court, where the harem was a centre of power—so strong that even Emperor Akbar chose to bow down to its authority often—to



The past two years have seen a spate of women writers like Ira Mukhoty (above) and Ruby Lal choosing to question the male domain of history.

more ordinary women.

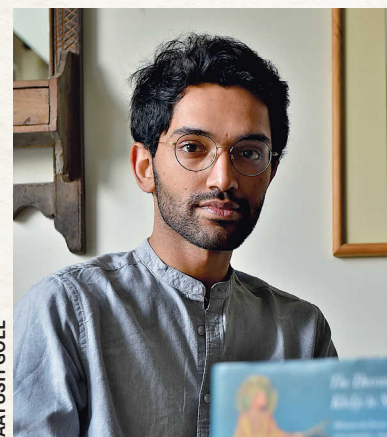
Daughters of the Sun: Empresses, Queens and Begums of the Mughal Empire by Ira Mukhoty, which looks at the role of women in the Mughal harem, came out in the same year—2018—as Ruby Lal's book *Empress: The Astonishing Reign of Nur Jahan*, providing an insight into the lives of women in that era. Last year, there was *Tawaifnama* by Saba Dewan, a book that came out of the New India Fellowship that encourages well-researched books on post-independent India precisely to provide nuanced understanding of the country.

"There is another subtle effect in India that adds to the assumption that there are no strikingly fiery or transgressive women in history," says Mukhoty. "In that when a woman's acts or achievements do



escape censorship and are recorded, they are over time so entirely sanitised and sandblasted by patriarchal assumptions that the woman ends up seeming like a perfect *sati-savitri* figure. Even someone like Meerabai is now understood to have been a perfect woman and widow, whereas she railed at and fought against all the evils of patriarchy and caste hypergamy, natal alienation, purdah and patriarchal control. She was deeply critical of the elite Rajput structure that had stifled her so completely."

But beyond the obvious silences—of caste and gender—is also the omission of texture from official history to "not tell the full truth," as William Dalrymple puts it. His book, *The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire*, brings to the fore the role that the Jagat Seths



AAYUSH GOEL

Any scholarly inquiry into history is to ask uncomfortable questions and challenge binaries.

—Manu S. Pillai, historian

played in bankrolling Robert Clive's campaign against Siraj-ud Daula. "The fact that Clive fought Plassey on Marwari wages—it just wasn't there in their books," he says. "You can't get around that and you can't understand Plassey and what happened unless you take it in."

The independence struggle is the star of the show. And its setting—as the ultimate battle in *Star Wars*, where the evil empire is defeated by the forces of good—has reduced the Battle of Plassey as a story between Clive, who is conniving, and Siraj, who is often portrayed as a debauch. The truth lies somewhere in between.

Sudeep Chakravarti's *Plassey: The Battle that Changed the Course of Indian History*—a lush retelling—adds more texture to the nationalist vs the imperial version of the battle. "There is a need for, what I like to term, corrective history," he says. "There is a need to peel away layers to expose the truths and lies, the myths and the nuances—the greys between the black and white absolutes. Moreover, the back-story of Plassey, which is a mix of aggressive mercantilism married to geopolitics, is often diminished. For instance, a few works acknowledge just how much the French were a factor in the run-up to Plassey. There is also the immensely interesting cast of characters—dramatis personae—in and around Plassey."

While academics have written extensively on the clout of the Jagat Seths, their writing remains confined to that space. "It is a fact that this has not yet percolated in the popular understanding," says Raghavan. "For which Indian historians have something to answer because they have been writing only for their own audiences." This is a gap that needs to be filled. And, this is perhaps the best time. But beyond the scholarly and the popular exists history that is laying the



There is a need to peel away layers to expose the truths and lies, the myths and the nuances—the greys between the black and white absolutes.

—Sudeep Chakravarti, author

foundation of the future. The battle for a more inclusive world begins in school.

"Clive is rightly reviled, but we should know that he was financed by the Jagat Seths because they were sick of the exactions of Siraj-ud Daula," says Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor, a campaign leader for the removal of the Clive statue in London. "I would be in favour of teaching Indian schoolkids a broader and more complex history than they get now. Because that is exactly what I am demanding that Britain should do—teach unvarnished colonial history in their schools. Today you can get an 'A' level in History in Britain without learning a line of colonial history. That must change in Britain, and we must open up our history syllabi, too." ●



Interview

William Dalrymple
author and historian

Clive fought Plassey on Marwari wages

BY MANDIRA NAYAR

Standing testimony
The Plassey monument in Nadia district, West Bengal



SUDIP BHATTACHERJEE



William Dalrymple has been vocal about removing the Clive statue in front of the Foreign Office in London. His book—*The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire*—is a cautionary tale of a corporate that took over a country. Dalrymple writes about loot, plunder and Robert Clive. "If [British Prime Minister] Boris [Johnson] wants to go for a walk in the park and avoid the press, he comes out of the back and passes Clive every day. This is not where this man should be," he says. Excerpts from an interview:

Q | *The Anarchy* has made Clive's loot story with the East India Company mainstream, even in India.

A | Two things have made an impact in India [with the book]. The fact that it was a company... it was a business and was no more British, as Facebook is [an] American [company] and not a governmental organisation....

The other thing that took people aback, which was not in their history books, was the business of the Jagat Seths—the fact that Clive fought Plassey on Marwari wages.

Q | Why this omission in textbooks?

A | There was an awful lot in Nehruvian textbooks that polished the rough edges. These were written in the aftermath of partition when 1.5 million people had been killed. A nation was trying to find its feet and those books did all they could to emphasise Hindu-Muslim unity and to make the villain of the piece the colonial. While they were written by major historians with the very best of intentions, they opened the door to complaints from the Hindu right to point to an



omission... and they do gloss over unpleasant facts that get in the way of a straightforward nationalist narrative.

Like, it was a fact [that it was] Indians who paid Clive to fight Plassey. This is an important part of the tale.... I think there is a realisation among the right that they were not getting the whole story about, particularly, the early days of the Sultanate in textbooks.... I am getting the impression that they [Indians] weren't told the whole story of the East India Company. It wasn't the British. This was a commercial company operating in the early days... doing an errand for the Marwaris.

Q | Do you think a revisionist version of history in India will be more upfront about the collaboration between the Jagat Seths and the British?

A | At a scholarly level that has already happened. There has been important scholarly work by Bengali historians on the different banking families, done 10 or 15 years ago, but it hasn't made it to the mainstream. The three big names are Kumkum Chatterjee, who is no longer with us, Rajat Kanta Ray and Lakshmi Subramanian.... It is not new what I was saying, but it was new to the lay reader.

Q | Where do you see the Clive debate today in Britain?

A | Clive has been out of the British curriculum for the past 40 years or so. My generation was the last to learn about Clive. But everyone has completely forgotten him here. He is not a name that means anything to anyone here, particularly younger people. The people who are angry about Clive are either historians or Indians.... I haven't seen crowds in the streets baying for Clive's blood. That said, the British are now well used to seeing themselves as,

in movies, villains.... We have seen for 20 years or 30 years [that] the British are quite open to the idea that their forbearers may have been war criminals.

But they remain in perpetual ignorance. Unless you go out and study it in university, you don't come across it. You can go to the best schools in the country and study history at various levels and still not know anything, astonishingly. Appalling as that is... this is a minority interest. It is not like slavery, where it directly impinges on a large section of the British population (and) where you can get a large mob to gather and knock down a statue in Bristol. I just don't think that will happen to Clive. That said, we are working to get it taken down and [moved] to a museum.

Q | Please elaborate.

A | There is a group of us who are actively engaged with the Foreign Office to try and find out who actually owns it, whether it is the council or English Heritage. We are taking it up with some people in the Foreign Office as well as elements in the Conservative Party. There is not much resistance and I think it is doable. What makes me want to bother doing it is where that statue is. It is immediately outside the Foreign Office, just behind Downing Street.

[The statue] was not put up there in his lifetime by a grateful nation who thought Clive was a wonderful figure. Clive was regarded as a criminal.



Residence in ruins
Clive's summerhouse in Dum Dum, near Kolkata

Every ambassador who goes to pay his credentials, passes Clive. If Boris wants to go for a walk in the park and avoid the press, he comes out of the back and passes Clive every day. This is not where this man should be.

It was not put up there in his lifetime by a grateful nation who thought Clive was a wonderful figure. Clive was regarded as a criminal.

He died from his own hand in the immediate aftermath of a massive parliamentary debate on whether he was a crook. He escaped full censure, but the whole thing was incredibly bruising for him. He went home the night of the debate not knowing whether he was going to wake up with a penny in the morning. He took his life immediately afterward.

There is a parallel with the

Confederate statues in the United States, just as they were built as the civil rights movement was about to grow. So, Curzon raised the money for the statue, just as the resistance [against] the Raj was growing.... It was 130 years after Clive's death.... This is being done by arch imperialists to show the power of the empire at a time when it realised that it is not a given and indeed in a generation it will be over.

Q | Why is it easier to put the Clive statue in a museum than getting an apology for what happened in Jallianwala Bagh?

A | I think that will come, too. We are seeing movement on that. The Archbishop of Canterbury went down on his knee and apologised. I will be astonished if we don't see an apology pretty soon.... You can't claim that you are forward looking

and diverse and not apologise.... Of course, there will be resistance from the far right, like in America. Where you would have much more difficulty is in Winston Churchill, who unquestionably was a racist, who unquestionably contributed to the Bengal famine, but of course, he didn't create it. And yet, he is rightly looked on by the country as a saviour from Nazi occupation.

Q | Do you think that there will be a certain simplification of history with the Black Lives Matter movement? That everything will be reduced to a villain versus victim binary?

A | Indian history is complicated, too. Slavery was prevalent in India right up till the mid-19th century. There were massive numbers of black slaves shipped from Ethiopia

and Somalia to India throughout the Middle Ages. This is not something that happened elsewhere. This is a big part of Indian history.

Q | There were attempts to vandalise Gandhi's statue, too. In India, there has been an attempt to revisit the legacy of leaders like Gandhi.

A | Gandhi and Churchill are well oddly paired. In a way, they are heroes to an older generation and troubling to younger ones.

Q | How do you see this Black Lives Matter movement with the toppling of the statue ending?

A | I think the general direction of history has to be in the direction of diversity, inclusivity and justice. In the long term, it is not sustainable in having totems of imperialism on every street corner.... You will gradually see them being taken down and put into museums. The specific movement of George Floyd, I say this with regret, that sort of moment of action has gone.... There are more pressing anxieties. [But] just like we have seen in the British High Commission in Delhi, all those imperialists who had been filling the drawing room of the High Commission are not there anymore. You have more [art] by Anish Kapoor and the Singh Twins representing a more modern vision of India-British relationship.... Meanwhile, I will continue to push for people to be educated and push it in the British curriculum.

Q | Do you think that will happen?

A | I hope it will.... I don't think it will happen in (t)his particular government. In the course of time, it has to happen. It is something I will continue pushing for. I think it is the key. Unless you have that people's knowledge of the Raj, it will be Merchant Ivory films with constant tea-parties. **●**



HURRICANE FLOYD

The protests that followed the killing of George Floyd saw many memorials being destroyed or removed. Here is where and why

THE US

Most memorials found objectionable were related to the Confederacy. The Confederate States of America had fought and lost a war to preserve slavery

Other targets were linked to the genocide of native Americans and racial segregation

More than 190 memorials were destroyed or removed, or commitments to remove them were made, according to media reports.

Personalities whose memorials were found objectionable include Christopher Columbus (enslavement of and violence against the indigenous people of the Caribbean), Spanish conquistador Juan de Onate (genocide of indigenous peoples) and former president Theodore Roosevelt (statue showing him on horseback with a native American and an African walking alongside him)

THE UK

The targets were primarily linked to the slave trade. Personalities associated included former MP Sir John Cass

The statue of former prime minister Winston Churchill was sprayed with graffiti, including the phrase, "Churchill was a racist"

A statue of Queen Victoria was sprayed with graffiti, including the words, "murderer" and "slave owner"

BELGIUM

Memorials of King Leopold II (mass murder and other atrocities in the Congo Free State)

NEW ZEALAND

Memorials of British naval officer John Fane Charles Hamilton, who was prominent in the wars against the Maori

SOUTH AFRICA

A bust of Cecil John Rhodes, British mining magnate and prime minister of the Cape Colony, was decapitated and removed by protestors



Figure out
Clive's statue at the Shrewsbury town square

Icon-o-clash

Clive's hometown in England struggles to come to terms with his imperial past and his statue in the town square

BY MANDIRA NAYAR



he battle to remove Robert Clive's statue goes beyond London.

Clive stands tall in the middle of Shrewsbury town square, a much-photographed landmark in Shropshire county. In the wake of

the Black Lives Matter movement, Clive's imperial past has caught up with him. Local resident David Parton started a petition for the statue to be removed; more than 13,000 people signed it. Parton's argument: "Clive is not a hero. He

is a murderer." A counter petition to keep the statue also exists, with more than 8,000 signatures. Their logic: Clive contributed to Shropshire and needed to stay.

The controversy has generated a heated debate, tearing the small town apart. "When the (slave trader) Edward Colston statue was torn down, I thought this was the moment we needed to have a debate about Clive in my hometown," Parton says. "No one has talked about his historical legacy, no one has questioned his imperial past. This is the moment, we need to address his numerous crimes." But there are those who are equally convinced that Clive needs to stay. The need to remove him is a demand made by

foreigners, they say.

The Shrewsbury example offers—as a microcosm—the kind of resistance that exists to add a progressive caveat to a past that was not always glorious. In London, Clive may be a name that has been forgotten, even though he stands in front of the Foreign Office. But in Shropshire, he is the boy who came back as a successful man and represented the county.

His school desk inscribed with an R, from the Old Grammar School, is on display at the Market Drayton museum. The house he built for his parents at nearby Stych is listed as a Grade II building and has been divided into flats for sale.

"We are having a purge on any-

thing regarded as not quite praiseworthy. So that includes almost all of our history," writes Ian Picton-Robinson, manager, Market Drayton Museum, in an email. "Curiously, I think India was not a slave situation. Though Britain unquestionably dominated, with force and total misunderstanding, were there not some benefits? Many governors and viceroys wanted to improve things, but were frustrated by the sheer complexity of India and its traditions, and by the government in London understanding even less."

The statue is not the only memory of Clive in the town. There are three streets named after him—Clive Road, Clive Way and Clive Green—according to local history sources. Clive was elected MP from Shrewsbury in 1761, a seat he held until his death. In 1762, he was elected mayor of the town.

He died in 1774. It is believed that he killed himself amid accusations of greed and was buried in an unmarked grave at St Margaret's Church in Moreton Say, Shropshire. He was hailed as a hero only in 1860, following which the bronze statue was raised in Shrewsbury town square. "If seen as just Clive, then well worth being there," says Picton-Robinson. "If seen as a symbol of the East India Company, then perhaps it should be moved to somewhere less prominent, surrounded by relevant history." According to local history sources, it was the stain of taking his own life that prevented the town from honouring him earlier.

In July, the Shropshire council voted to retain the statue 28 to 17 votes. The council is debating on adding a plaque to put in context Clive's past. But Parton says, "Clive's statue represents bringing up painful imperial memories every single time we walk past it. We shouldn't have to be living in the past." 🗳️



Interview

◇ **Murad Qureshi**
◇ UK Labour politician

It will take two or three years to remove Clive statue

BY MANDIRA NAYAR



Murad Qureshi has been at the heart of the battle to remove Robert Clive's statue in London. A member of the London Assembly, an elected body that scrutinises the activities of the mayor of London, he is aware that the statue cannot be removed overnight. He has also objected to the plaque outside Clive's Berkley Square residence in London that calls him a soldier and administrator. Excerpts from an interview:

Q. Why is it important for the Clive statue to go?

A | It is a simple thing. I thank the Black Lives Matter movement for giving us scope to talk about other (aspects) of the British colonial legacy. The importance of Robert Clive, otherwise known as Clive of India, is some of the myths around him on the basis of which a statue and a blue plaque have been put up.

There is clear evidence that he looted Bengal, and contributed greatly to the famine in which almost ten million people perished in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Also, he gave the means for the British Raj to enter. Historically, his contemporaries were very critical of him. So, I am not judging him by the standards of today. I am judging him by his times. Contemporaries like Samuel Johnson, people of

the Tory Party and the Whigs also condemned him strongly. Lord Curzon puts up the statue. I declare an interest as a Bengali. Sometimes to go forward in life, you need to deal with the past, that is what I am doing here.

Q. Will it be easy to remove the statue?

A | I have been involved with putting up statues. When Ken Livingstone was mayor of London, I assisted in putting up the statue of Nelson Mandela. I assume it is pretty much the same process. We know the English Heritage manage the statue in King Charles street near the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Secondly, the local council is Westminster. We have to persuade English Heritage that in [this] time there is no need for Clive of India.

Most people who go past it, don't know who the guy is. But for those of us who do, we are offended. For example, Nelson Mandela's statue was put up in Parliament Square; it was a battle but we got there.... We are laying the groundwork [for the Clive statue removal]. I know it won't happen overnight. It will take two or three years.... We hope that the Museum of London will take it. They have a new building coming up. I have just written to them asking to make space for all these

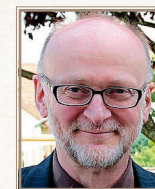
statues. They should be put up in their context.

Q. Do you hope to take this further to talk about the empire?

A | I think this is an example of British history that most Brits do not know at all. I went through the British education system. We are taught about Henry VIII and six wives in Tudor times and then suddenly we come to defeating the Nazis in World War II. Everything in between, there is nothing there. I think it is time we come to terms with our history. On the back of discourses like this... it is a useful way to learn some history lessons. Britain is fresh of leaving Europe proper in end of January. India becomes a more prominent trading country. We need to get this right.

Q. The London mayor has started a committee to review statues and names of streets for a more diverse view of London.

A | I want to make sure the commission has taken on board the practical things on ground—the planning process, whose ownership it is in. So, they can also put pressure on the museum in London. In Central London, we have the plaque.... I am objecting to that on a factual basis: he wasn't a soldier; he was a mercenary. There is no way you can call him an administrator. ●



Interview

◇ **Robert Fowke**
◇ author and Clive descendant

Showing disrespect to someone like Clive does not help

BY MANDIRA NAYAR



Robert Fowke has spent years busting myths—be it historical myths for children or in poetry. He wrote about the sailor that inspired Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. Lately, Fowke has found a story closer to home that he hopes to put into perspective.

A descendant of Robert Clive through his wife, Margaret, Fowke is writing a book on Lady Clive. A couple of years ago, he had come to Chennai, where the Clives had gotten married. He disputes that Clive was a monster. "I know [William] Dalrymple says Clive was a monster and a racist," says Fowke, over the phone from Shropshire. "But he wasn't." Excerpts from an interview:

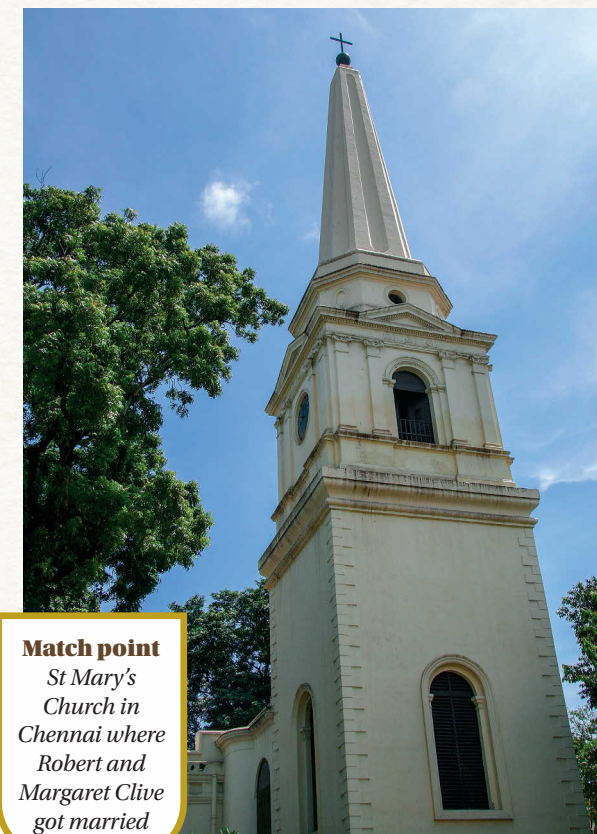
Q. What do you make of this petition to remove Clive's statue?

A | I think it is necessary that we look at the shared historical narrative that we have in the country so that it includes people who came from the New Commonwealth in the last 50 years. I have no problem with that at all. I think there is a danger now that it becomes indiscriminate... you end up in a situation where you could say that anyone who contributed to British history, contributed to the British empire.... That everything about the British empire is bad without exception, which is kind of simplistic. We need to look with detail and empathy at people from the past and not just dismiss them because they are associated with our own British history.

I found that Indian people are far more open-minded... [about] the history of the association between Britain and India than British people are themselves.

Q. As a descendant of Clive, do you think that the Black Lives Matter movement is forcing you to relook at his legacy? Do you think that you are being forced to feel apologetic for the past?

A | It has become very divisive. Obviously, he was a



Match point

St Mary's Church in Chennai where Robert and Margaret Clive got married

man with many faults. In particular, he was very greedy. He was also a very brave man, a tormented soul. He achieved a great deal, in British terms. He was also before the empire—there was no British empire at that time. You should not really judge him for the very racist attitude that developed in the 19th century. It is unfair on him as a historical character that I am personally, emotionally very involved with. It is not right to show such disrespect to somebody of that calibre.



Q. | As someone who has written extensively on history, do you think the Black Lives Matter movement is reducing history to this rather simplistic binary of black vs white, victim vs victor?

A | History is almost a bunch of fiction, isn't it? Because you have to use a process of selection in order to write our book. It is so much a constructed thing. It can almost be seen as fiction. For instance, Dalrymple, for narrative purpose, sets Clive against Warren Hastings. Anyone who knows about that period knows that Clive proposed Hastings to go out to India. They were not rivals. In a way, Hastings [was] continuing the politics that Clive had already suggested.

Q. | Clive was judged for his actions by his peers.

A | This is interesting. He was judged at that time very harshly by [Edmund] Burke and [Horace] Walpole. Very falsely in many ways. Obviously, he took a huge amount of money after Plassey. But by the standards of the time in India it was not much... it incited envy at home more than anything else. He acquitted himself very well in parliament. [William] Pitt said he was one of the greatest orators of his time. He was a remarkable man.

Q. | He battled mental illness, which is not much talked about.

A | He was a bit like Churchill, I think, a manic depressive. He was so driven. The number of times he risked his life is extraordinary. He was not a military mind, but he was good at fighting. To be driven and to be so ambitious—I can hardly imagine it myself.

Q. | You think people are judging him by 21st century mores?

A | Which is absurd. Even judging by the standards of his time, he was humane. If you take a look at other

historical figures who have had great victory—Wellington or Napoleon—tens of thousands of people died. In the Battle of Plassey, there were only a few hundred. People were dying in tens of thousands in massacres that were happening at the end of the Mughal empire. Clive didn't do that. He wasn't a blood-thirsty man at all. He wasn't even really a soldier.

Obviously, Clive was a man with many faults. In particular, he was very greedy. He was also a very brave man, a tormented soul.

Q. | But the idea was that he amassed so much wealth.

A | That is what people don't like about him. But then to put on his shoulders the process of the empire thereafter is not good history.

Q. | You are writing a book on Lady Clive.

A | Margaret was a lovely woman. She was clever and funny. Her family are called Maskelyne. Their mother was a clever woman interested in astronomy. Margaret herself was interested in astronomy. They were all passionate about music. She had interests that were more intellectual than Clive. But it was a happy marriage. They were evenly matched. I can imagine he cannot be always likeable. But she was always entertaining. She complemented him. I am charmed by her. I sort of fell in love, reading about her.

Q. | Were you always aware of the Clive association?

A | My family was involved with the East India Company from 1700. I sort of knew about it very vaguely. You know how you hear those myths and stories. I thought I would like to find out more in detail. We have this huge archive in The British Library. It is the largest archive of private letters and they are all associated with my family. What stood out for me were the women's letters. The men's letters are more about business or politics. The women's letters are more emotional, therefore intriguing.

Q. | What were you looking for in Chennai?

A | I was trying to retrace where they [the Clives] were. It was immensely rewarding.

Q. | Do the letters throw light on the Clives' marriage?

A | You can't achieve what Clive achieved. I know those who disagree won't call them achievements, but they were, without being very clever. They say he would sit quietly in a room. But then, if there was a subject that he was interested in, his observations would be very acute. He could be funny. He was quite a humorous man. I love the anecdote of an aunt—she would sit on his knee and he would coax her into telling all the naughty words she had learnt at school.

Q. | What do you think of relooking at history with the Black Lives Matter movement?

A | I am sure it is completely helpful. It is very different for us. You haven't had this immigration



A woman of her own
A portrait of Margaret Clive by Nathaniel Dance

Peggy, the other Clive

Lady Clive was overshadowed by her husband, despite her keen sense of humour and deep love for music and astronomy

BY MANDIRA NAYAR

Margaret Clive sits gazing into the distance in a portrait attributed to Nathaniel Dance. There is sheet music on the table and a string of pearls around her neck. The portrait, which hangs in Powis Castle in the UK, was painted in 1773—a year before her husband, Robert Clive, killed himself.

Margaret's brother Edmund had played cupid. There are two versions of this story. One version claims that Clive saw a miniature of a young woman in Edmund's

room, and asked about her. When told that it was his sister, Clive begged him to invite her to Madras. The other version claims that he read her letters and was "struck by them", and asked Edmund to invite her to India. Whatever the version, a letter from Edmund to her says: "Matches in this country generally proving so vastly superior to what are made in Europe."

Clive, then 27, was a catch. He had spent a decade in India and was being referred to as General Clive by the directors of the East India Company in London. He had proven his credentials on the field, thwarting French ambitions in the Carnatic four times.

"They were evenly matched," says Robert Fowke, a descendant who is writing a book on Lady Clive.

Peggy, as Margaret Maskelyne was

known as, had "won all hearts in Madras", writes Sir George Forrest in *The Life of Lord Clive*. Margaret came from old East India Company stock. Her father, however, was a civil servant. Edmund, meanwhile, "led a life that was more entertaining than memorable".

The fatigue of the company's campaign had done Clive in. His "fits" continued, and Clive was set to sail home in 1753. He married Margaret five days before he was to go home; on a Sunday, at St Mary's Church in Madras. Later, when he appeared without his wife in Calcutta, the French spread rumours that he was attracted to courtesans—a charge his biographer Forrest staunchly defended. "There is little evidence that his wife or any other woman had much influence in his life," he writes.

Lady Clive and her achievements have been overshadowed by her husband. She was a clever and humorous woman, interested in music and astronomy. She had a young Mozart perform in her house in London, and used to correspond with astronomer William Herschel. "Her letters are obsessive to the point of boring," says Fowke.

In a letter, cited by Fowke, Margaret writes after Claremont, another grand home, has been completed: "I have a charming new house for a charming old husband." Money was certainly not an issue for them. At home in the evenings, Clive and Margaret tended to socialise with old friends and family.

When he was in India as governor, Clive wrote long, descriptive letters to Margaret, suggesting that the two certainly shared a warm relationship. **1**

Access denied

Covid-19 has given the Trump administration the perfect opportunity to achieve its anti-immigration objectives

BY LAVINA MELWANI/New York

THE COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a nasty blow to all those who have been waiting patiently to enter the United States legally. Citing the pandemic, President Donald Trump has shut down most immigrant and work visa programmes till the end of the year, pulling the rug from under the feet of those waiting for their green cards and H-1B visas.

Green cards are now being issued only to physicians, nurses and health care workers and their families. It, however, leaves the door open for the EB-5 immigrant investor programme. The freeze on green card applications—initially for 60 days—has been extended for the whole of 2020. The administration has also stopped issuing H-1B, H-2B, H-4, L and J visas during this period.

In early July, the Trump administration came up with yet another restriction, banning foreign students

from entering or remaining in the US if their academic programmes were fully online. Many colleges and universities have moved their courses online because of the pandemic. Trump's order was challenged immediately in court by prominent institutions like Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology as "arbitrary and capricious". The administration backtracked quickly and agreed to allow existing students to continue their studies. The ban, however, remains applicable to fresh international students.

With presidential elections coming up in less than three months, Trump seems to have gone into an overdrive on the immigration front. In yet another move targeting foreign workers, he has banned federal agencies from employing foreign workers on H-1B visas and has put restrictions on H-1B workers moving to other

employers' job sites. The administration has also hiked application fees for H-1B and L-1 visas.

Indians will be among the hardest hit by the newly imposed visa and immigration restrictions. The blanket freeze on green cards and job visas has come as a big shock for those who were scheduled to get their visas, says New York-based immigration lawyer Cyrus Mehta. "If they have been sponsored by employers through the labour certification process and they happen to be overseas, then they, too, will be impacted by the order," he says.

In an opinion piece in *The Hill*, journalist and attorney Raul Reyes says Trump's latest move is little more than a calculated political stunt. "It is designed to stoke anti-immigrant sentiment and to distract the public from the administration's myriad failures in dealing with the coronavirus crisis," he says.

The new restrictions have thrown several families already in the US into a whirlpool, as immigration and the pandemic have combined to form a potent mix. Millions have lost their jobs in the US and so the H-1B workers are not immune; but unlike

American workers, if they do not find a job within 60 days, they will have to leave the country.

Tahmina Watson of Watson Immigration Law in Seattle says the Trump administration is using Covid-19 as a vehicle to achieve its anti-immigration objectives like banning most family-based immigrant visas. "It is not a secret that this administration does not like H-1B visas. Covid-19 and the onset of recession provided the perfect opportunity for the administration."

Meanwhile, the Democratic Party has promised a major overhaul of the Trump administration's immigration agenda, if its candidate Joe Biden wins the presidential elections in November. "We support awarding visas for permanent, employment-based immigration in a way that is responsive to labour market needs," says the party's campaign agenda. With Trump and Biden having sharply divergent views on the issue, the debate on immigration is likely to become more acrimonious.

The Trump administration, meanwhile, is considering a proposal to require companies to pay foreign-born scientists and engineers

in H-1B status a minimum wage of \$1,50,000 to \$2,50,000 or more a year. "The law enacted by Congress does not limit the issuance of H-1B visas to those earning such high salaries. This proposal would be subject to court challenges," says Mehta.

Watson says the regulations are set on this issue through the Code of Federal Regulations. To change the rules, new regulations have to be drafted, proposed and finalised and the public will have an opportunity to comment on any proposed rules. "A standard high salary will lead to economic failure for companies that hire high-skilled foreign workers. It will lead to economic hardship for businesses just when the economy needs all the help possible to recover," says Watson.

There are, however, some signs of cheer in the prevailing gloom. "Federal courts have reversed arbitrary H-1B denials," says Mehta. "One court also held that the policy of requiring extensive documentation with third party clients was unlawful. This should improve the prospects of H-1B requests filed on behalf of IT professionals from India who are assigned to their party client sites."

VOCAL FOR LOCAL

President Trump meets tech workers on August 3, before signing an executive order banning federal agencies from employing foreign workers on H-1B visas

GETTY IMAGES

Meanwhile, it is wait and watch for those almost on the finish line for green cards. Gautam (name changed) who is in Seattle on an H-1B visa lost his job. With 18 days left on his visa, he debated whether to get a tourist visa so he could stay on to take care of unfinished business. At the same time, he also tried hard to get a consultancy job that would take care of his visa issues. He got a job despite the hiring freezes. "On the day my visa was expiring, I got the news that my new visa application was filed," he says. "Within two weeks my visa was approved."

One cannot predict what the future holds for those waiting to enter America, but there may be a silver lining to the Covid-19-induced crisis.

"India's high-skilled workers are sought after globally," says Watson. "As we enter an era of remote work for the technology industry, countries will compete for talent. I don't necessarily worry about my clients making a living outside the US. My concern would be for the status of America as a global leader if we lose the talent that gives us the edge."

—The author is a New York-based journalist who blogs at *Lassi with Lavina*.



WATERSHED MOMENT

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa leaves after his swearing-in ceremony in Colombo on August 9

Winners take all

With their commanding victory in the parliament polls, the Rajapaksas cement their grip over Sri Lanka

BY FRANCES BULATHSINGHALA/Colombo

THE SRI LANKAN parliament elections held on August 5 will go down in history as a watershed moment in the country's political history. It saw the United National Party (UNP), which was in power till a year ago, getting decimated so thoroughly that it failed to win even a single seat. The other traditional party of the island nation, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, contested only in a few districts and gave overall backing to the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP).

The SLPP, founded by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and

his brothers, including President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, won 145 of 225 seats. With their allies, the four-year-old SLPP crossed the 150 mark, securing an unprecedented two-thirds majority. The last party to achieve such a feat was the UNP, which swept the polls in 1977 under the first past the post electoral system. Under the proportional representation system, which has been in operation since the 1980s, such commanding margins have become almost impossible, leading to post-election crossovers and horse-trading.

Mahinda and Gotabaya campaigned hard to avoid such a situation, seeking a comprehensive mandate from the voters. And, they got it thanks to the weak and divided opposition which failed to learn the lessons from their disastrous presidential campaign last November. The main opposition party this time was the Samagi Jana Balawegaya of Sajith Premadasa, the former deputy leader of the UNP who chose to float his own party following a tiff with UNP leader and former prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. After the

crushing defeat, Ranil stepped down as party leader.

With the overwhelming mandate for the Rajapaksas, Sri Lanka could be potentially looking at a one-party rule scenario. The new regime will be looking to repeal the 19th amendment to the constitution enacted in 2015 by the UNP regime. The Rajapaksas believe the amendment was brought to keep them out of politics and to weaken the directly elected executive president. Their campaign was focused on convincing the electorate that the repeal has brought the country to an economic, political and security crisis, including the horrendous serial bombings in April 2019.

Another key challenge for the Rajapaksas will be reconciliation with the Tamils and the Muslims. After the civil war, the Mahinda government had appointed the

Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) and had taken steps to release and rehabilitate nearly 12,000 LTTE cadres who had no grave charges against them. Steps were also taken to release civilian lands. Yet, all those initiatives remain unfinished.

Dealing with the minorities will test the political and diplomatic skills of the Rajapaksas as the issue is being keenly monitored by the powerful Tamil diaspora, the United Nations, the United States and the European Union. Many Sri Lankans fear that the west is using its economic power to impose its control over Sri Lanka. The country had faced economic sanctions on grounds of human rights violations during the final phase of the civil war.

Disappointment with the west has pushed Sri Lanka close to China, which does not enjoy a stellar human rights record. As a result, China now enjoys a critical economic and strategic hold over Sri Lanka. In the 2015 elections, the Chinese "debt trap" and the 99 year-lease of the Hambantota harbour were key campaign issues. This time, however, the key issue was the pressure exerted by the west, especially the United States.

With the strong parliamentary backing they enjoy, the Rajapaksas are expected to strategically balance the pressure from the west, China and India, all of which want a share of the Sri Lankan economic pie and its support for their strategic designs. India considers Sri Lanka to be in its sphere of influence, while China considers it to be a key part of its Belt and Road Initiative. The US, India and Japan want Sri Lanka to support the 'Quad', an informal strategic platform they share with Australia.

India, in collaboration with Japan, has been wanting to run the Colombo port's eastern terminal, perhaps because it is next to the Chinese-run terminal. But port workers have gone on strike against the proposed deal

and have extracted a promise from Mahinda that the terminal will not be handed over to foreigners. It may not be easy for Sri Lanka to wriggle out of its contractual obligations without antagonising India. There are already reports about India dragging its feet on giving Sri Lanka a moratorium on its loan repayments.

Nearly 15 Indian project proposals are pending with the Sri Lankan government since 2017. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi complained about Sri Lanka's non-response, Gotabaya said India was to be blamed for the delay and that some of the projects were unnecessary. Sri Lanka, meanwhile, wants India to return 25 of the 99 oil tanks in Trincomalee which were given to India in the early 2000s. India, according to Sri Lankan sources, has been using only 15 of them.

SLPP spokesperson G.L. Peiris said the new government would revisit international agreements, though he did not mention any pact in particular. The unprecedented victory of the SLPP is seen as a result of the disillusionment with the attempts of the UNP-led regime to take the country along a neoliberal and pro-western path. Some observers, however, think that the Rajapaksas may find it difficult to free themselves fully from the pressure exerted by the US.

Making the country self-reliant by strengthening its economy will be one of the key objectives of the new government. Gotabaya has a team of intellectuals, business leaders and economists who are expected to assist in setting up a strong platform to boost entrepreneurship in the post-Covid-19 era.

One of the first tasks before the new parliament when it meets on August 20 will be to decide on a fresh vote on account as the government needs time to prepare a full-fledged budget for the upcoming year. For the Rajapaksas, the real challenge may have just begun. ■



Trade winds

Indians are falling in love with the equity markets. As in every relationship, they must keep their eyes open

BY NACHIKET KELKAR

SAURABH ARORA always invested in real estate. He had tried trading stocks, but burnt his fingers during the 2008 financial crisis and had stayed away ever since. The Delhiite, however, recently started buying blue chip stocks. At a time when the economy has taken a knock from the Covid-19 pandemic, what made Arora take the plunge once again?

"I have followed stock markets for some time and done a lot of reading,"

he said. "Now I am buying stocks that I am confident will ride the crisis and do well in the long term."

Some 500km away from Delhi, in Kota, Rajasthan, medical practitioner M.S. Suri, 65, also has been learning the tricks of the trade in equity investing. At an age when most people would be content with bank deposits or debt funds, Suri is waiting patiently for the markets to correct themselves and then buy again. "Earlier,

I was also a conservative investor," he said. "But now I have changed the strategy after I got in touch with financial advisers. Buying stocks has become a hobby for me. I sold some recently, and I am now waiting for a correction so that I can re-enter and invest in pharmaceuticals, an area I understand well, as well as consumer goods and good quality infrastructure companies."

Typically traditional investors,

Indians always considered equity markets risky, and therefore parked their money in bank deposits or other fixed interest bearing instruments like small savings certificates and public provident fund. Buying real estate and gold were other preferred avenues.

That, however, is changing, as many of them have woken up in the past few years to the advantages of systematically investing in mutual funds. Now they are venturing into the capital market and buying stocks. The number of people opening demat accounts and starting trading in equity has steadily been growing. That number jumped a few notches up since the stocks crashed in March and the pandemic forced people to stay at home.

The average daily turnover of stock exchanges in June was ₹61,395 crore, a 69 per cent jump from the average daily turnover of ₹36,432 crore recorded in the year that ended in March 2020.

Nithin Kamath, cofounder and CEO of Zerodha, India's largest online stock broking firm, said it was adding 70,000 to one lakh new customers a month even before the pandemic struck. In the past few months, it added 1.5 lakh to two lakh new customers a month. Upstox, another online broking firm, has seen its customer base jump from one lakh to 10 lakh in two years. Ravi Kumar, its cofounder and CEO, said it hoped to double that in the next six months.

The growth is not restricted to online brokerages. Motilal Oswal Financial Services is now averaging around 5.5 lakh account openings a month. Angel Broking has recorded its highest monthly client additions, about a lakh, since the lockdown started.

Ajay Menon, CEO of broking and distribution division of Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said a large number of clients who open accounts are first-time investors and many of



We have seen strong momentum in account opening and market share gains across cash, derivative and advisory products.

—Ajay Menon, CEO, broking and distribution division, Motilal Oswal Financial Services

them are coming from tier II and tier III towns.

These first-time investors, interestingly, are confidently venturing into the derivatives market and options strategies. Volumes in the derivatives segment rose 22 per cent year-on-year in June. "Motilal Oswal has seen strong momentum in account opening and market share gains across cash, derivative and advisory products," said Menon. "We think this trend may continue as clients have got hooked onto digital platforms, the corporate sector is looking more confident of the revival and global markets have rebounded, wiping out the entire loss post Covid."

A big reason behind the growing interest in stocks is the fall in interest rates. Interest rates have been reduced all over the world as central banks and governments have pumped in money in the form of stimulus measures. In India, the interest rate at which the Reserve Bank lends to banks (repo) is 4 per cent, the lowest in two decades.

This has in turn led to lenders slashing their deposit rates. State Bank of India is now paying an interest rate of just 2.7 per cent on its savings bank deposit accounts, and the highest term deposit rate for general public is 5.4 per cent. HDFC Bank is paying 3 per cent interest on savings deposits up to ₹50 lakh and fixed deposit rates max out at 5.50 per cent. "Falling interest rates on savings raise the attractiveness of equities," said Dhiraj Relli, MD and CEO of HDFC Securities. As a large number of people have been working from home in the past few months, many of them are dabbling in equities during their spare time and see it as an additional source of income.

"The Indian customer is an intelligent individual and will move money where he sees the best return," said Ravi Kumar. "When other asset classes are not doing well, it makes more sense to invest in equity market, where returns in the longer period



Falling interest rates on savings raise the attractiveness of equities.

—Dhiraj Relli, MD and CEO, HDFC Securities

have shown to be better.”

In the last decade, Indians invested heavily in property. In the recent years, however, especially after demonetisation, the residential real estate market has been subdued. According to consulting firm Knight Frank, between January and June, house sales in India’s top eight cities halved to 59,538 units, a ten-year low. “A lot of people realised that all of a sudden they couldn’t sell their gold or land quickly in this environment to meet their short-term financial needs and that they should be keeping their savings instead in financial assets, which are more liquid and you could have access to money on a rainy day,” said Kumar.

The emergence of new platforms makes it easy to buy stocks listed not just in India, but also the blue chip companies listed globally. Upstox, for instance, is launching global investing on its platform that will allow buying stocks from 60 exchanges.

As the stocks started looking attractive when the equity markets crashed in March, there was a huge inflow of investors. In the same period, major economies rolled out trillions of dollars in stimuli. The surge in retail investments on the one hand, and the huge stimuli on the other, have led to one of the fastest rebound in equity markets. The Sensex almost touched the 38,500 levels on July 28, just four months after it hit a low of 25,638.90 on March 24.

The biggest question, however, is how long will this rally last, given that the pandemic is showing no signs of subduing and several sectors remain badly impacted. While the rating agency Fitch expects India’s GDP to contract 5 per cent this year, another agency, Nomura, sees the economy shrinking by 6.1 per cent. Given this uncertainty, should investors continue to pour money into equities?

Avinash Gorakshakar, director, research, at ProfitMart Securities, said the markets were not looking at the fundamentals at all and the rally was



When other asset classes are not doing well, it makes more sense to invest in equity market, where returns in the longer period have shown to be better.

—Ravi Kumar, co-founder and CEO, Upstox



As long as there is going to be an easy money policy, a lot of liquidity will come into the markets and will chase equities from emerging markets.

—Avinash Gorakshakar, director, research, ProfitMart Securities

purely liquidity driven. “The central banks are driving the markets. As long as there is going to be an easy money policy, a lot of liquidity will come into the markets and will chase equities from emerging markets.”

If investors want to continue investing directly in equity, then choosing the right stocks is crucial at all times; more so when overall economic uncertainties persist. “There is no better wealth creation tool than equity. But, never compromise on quality,” said Anant Laddha, a certified financial planner and founder of advisory platform Invest Aaj for Kal. “You should always go for growth stocks, focus on fundamentals and not just look out for stocks that are cheaply available.”

But, many investors are splurging cash on penny stocks hoping to make a quick buck. For instance, shares of a bankrupt telecom company have soared 350 per cent since June 1. “This is a trading market, where everybody just wants to play the momentum. There are many companies, which have poor balance sheets, no corporate governance. There are a category of investors who are willing to take the extra risk. But, once a fall comes, these will be the first ones to get destroyed,” warned Gorakshakar.

There are worries ahead. The RBI’s Financial Stability Report has warned that gross non-performing assets could surge to 12.5 per cent by March 2021 from 8.5 per cent in March 2020. Several sectors like airlines, retail and infrastructure have been hit hard and there are no turnaround signs yet. Public sector banks may also need another round of government recapitalisation given the pressure on their balance sheets. Even large companies, like Maruti Suzuki, reported a loss in the June quarter. “At the current valuations, you have to be very selective,” said Gorakshakar. “I don’t think today is the time that you can go out and buy confidently.”



SUBSCRIBE TO THE WEEK. SAVE UP TO 61% AND GET FABULOUS ASSURED PRIZES.

Yes! I would like to subscribe to THE WEEK.					
Term	No of issues	News-stand Price	You Pay Only*	Mega Savings	Your Free Prize
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 years	260	₹ 13000/-	₹ 5000/-	₹ 8000/-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rs 1500 Amazon.in Email Gift Card <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> US Polo Wheeler Bag <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sheaffer Pen & Wallet Best Offer
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 years	156	₹ 7800/-	₹ 3500/-	₹ 4300/-	<input type="checkbox"/> Rs 1000 Amazon.in Email Gift Card <input type="checkbox"/> 3 year subscription of Tell Me Why <input type="checkbox"/> Wildcraft Backpack
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 year	52	₹ 2600/-	₹ 1250/-	₹ 1350/-	<input type="checkbox"/> United Colors of Benetton Leather Wallet & Card Holder <input type="checkbox"/> Rs 500 Amazon.in Email Gift Card <input type="checkbox"/> THE WEEK Travel Bag <input type="checkbox"/> 1 year subscription of Tell Me Why

Name: Mr./Ms. _____ Date of Birth: _____ Current Subscription Number (If renewing): _____

Address: _____

Post Office _____ City/District: _____ State: _____ PIN (essential): _____

Phone: (Mobile) _____ (Res) _____ Email: _____

To receive Amazon.in email gift card, email id & mobile number are mandatory.
If email ID, mobile number & prize are not mentioned for 5, 3 and 1 year subscriptions, US Polo Wheeler Bag, Wildcraft Backpack and THE WEEK Travel Bag will be sent respectively.

Cheque/DD No.: _____ dated: _____ for [] ₹ 5000 [] ₹ 3500 [] ₹ 1250 favouring THE WEEK

Bank Name: _____

I agree to inform any changes in the postal address/contact numbers to which the publication is sent, as and when any such changes happen, and also to receive any details regarding the subscription. THE WEEK magazine/Malayala Manorama group of publications may also contact the email-id/contact numbers given by you for information/upgradation of THE WEEK magazine/Malayala Manorama group of publications and offer promotions. In case you are not interested to receive any such information please tick the box ☐

For terms and conditions please refer www.theweek.in *On a cover price of ₹ 50/- website: theweek.in [facebook.com/theweekmag](https://www.facebook.com/theweekmag) [google.com/+TheWeekMag](https://www.google.com/+TheWeekMag) [@theweeklive](https://twitter.com/theweeklive)

Fill in, enclose your payment and send to THE WEEK, Manorama Buildings, P.O.Box No.4278, Panampilly Nagar, Kochi - 682036, Kerala, India. TW/373/BVO/23-08-2020

To subscribe, visit manoramaonline.com/subscribe or call 18001035981 (Toll free)



Adieu, Amar

The only way to describe the late Amar Singh (he passed away in Singapore on August 1) is as a “loveable rascal”. No matter what he did or said, no matter how outrageous his conduct, there was something most endearing about the man. I clearly remember taking two steps backwards when he arrived unannounced at our home, with a common acquaintance, for what was a private dinner for close friends. Far from being embarrassed, he made himself right at home, mingling freely with our guests and regaling everybody with his vastly amusing and highly gossipy tales. Mumbai not being Delhi, and this being more than 20 years ago, nobody knew what to make of this upstart who was so at ease, throwing big names around and making bombastic claims. Somehow, I warmed up to his rustic, raw, unfiltered personality and admired his chutzpah. Nothing and nobody can keep this man down, I remember thinking at the time.

That is pretty much an accurate view, given Amar Singh's highly controversial political career which saw great highs and abysmal lows, including a judicial custody stint under the Prevention of Corruption Act. Nothing fazed the man, not even serious allegations of corruption, not even being expelled from the Samajwadi Party by his mentor Mulayam Singh Yadav in 2010 for facing widespread scorn for contributing \$5 million to the Clinton Foundation. For a man born to humble parents—he told us about his father's modest locksmith stall in Kolkata's Burrabazar—Amar Singh's mind-boggling rise in public life is the stuff only masala movie scripts can rival. Oh yes, he tried his hand at movies, too, acting in a Hindi and Malayalam film.

He enjoyed power play at all levels and got his high from cultivating wealthy, well-connected, influential individuals. If they were also glamorous and flashy,

Amar Singh's ecstasy became almost palpable! He fancied himself as a kingmaker, but behaved more like a college groupie around the rich and famous. I would watch him as he worked the room, hobnobbing and networking brazenly, shaking countless hands, air-kissing gorgeous socialites, flashing starlets on his arm, dropping names galore not bothered by snubs or sniggers. It was his rhino skin that kept him afloat, particularly when his chips were down and he was treated like a political/social pariah. The very same people he had gone flat out to help after cultivating them meticulously, shunned him publicly and blatantly. Like a whipped schoolboy who had been rusticated by the principal, Amar Singh licked his wounds in

private and sulked openly. He gave countless interviews bad-mouthing those who he said had “betrayed” him. I had spotted him in Mumbai a few times during this period and wanted to gently tell him he had passed his sell-by date by then and had become more of an embarrassment, a huge liability to his old “close friends”. Mumbai society can be harsh and cruel to people like Amar Singh, who come up the hard way from the streets, become power brokers, but are regarded as nothing more than street hustlers.

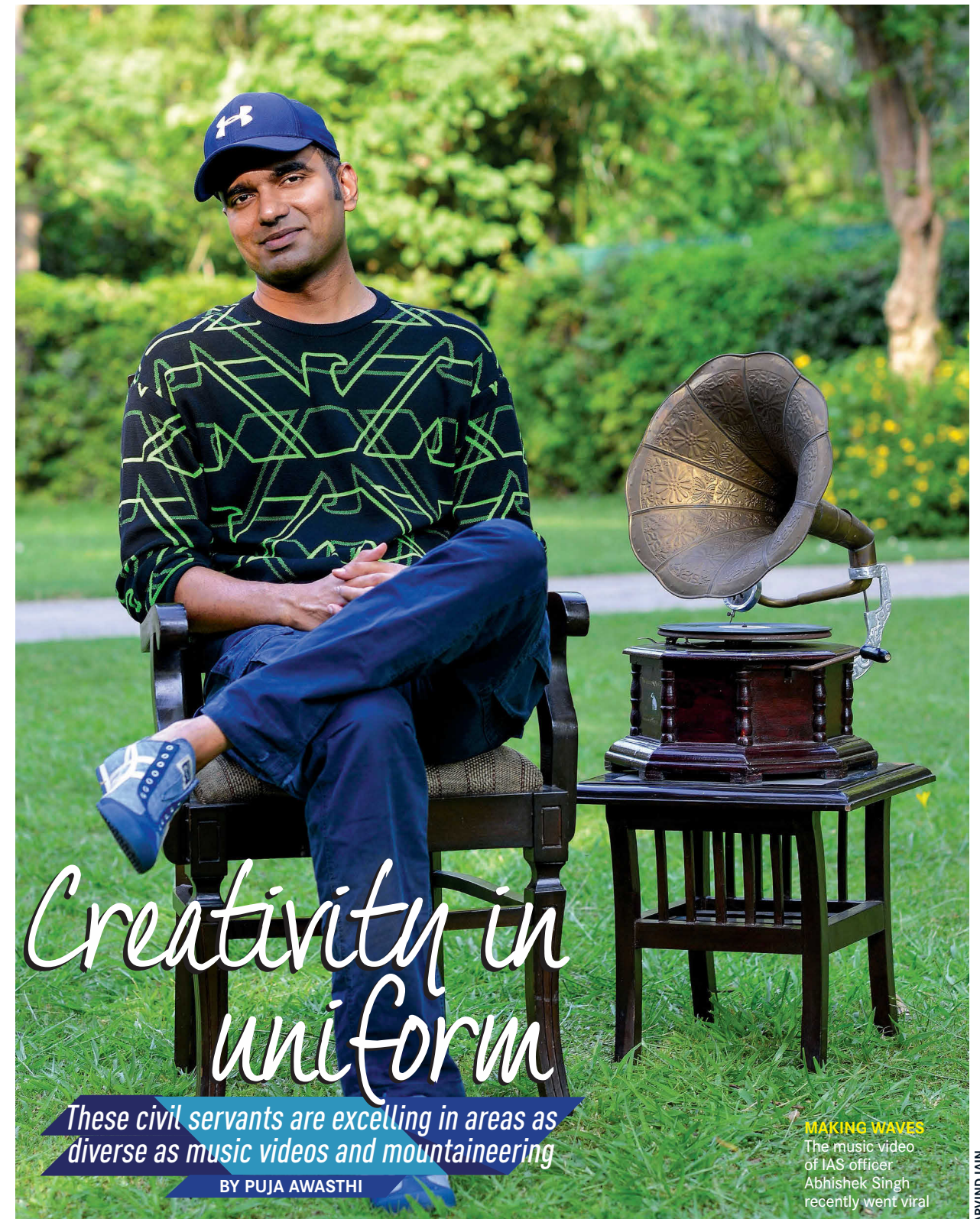
The last time I ran into him was at my own book event in Delhi. He was half his size and looked visibly

sick. I failed to recognise him, and frankly, I was not sure whether or not his name was on the guest list. Not that any of this bothered him—he came up to chat and once again I marvelled at his gung-ho spirit. I recalled him telling me about starting his career in Delhi as a young graduate, working for K.K. Birla's *Hindustan Times* as a liaison officer—the standard euphemism for “fixer”. He had chuckled: “I know all the big journalists in India and abroad because of my first job.” His candour was disarming. So was his “never-say-die” spirit. Amar Singh, adieu. In your own unique way, you will always remain *amar* in our memory.



PHOTO PTI

www.shobaade.blogspot.com



Creativity in uniform

These civil servants are excelling in areas as diverse as music videos and mountaineering

BY PUJA AWASTHI

MAKING WAVES

The music video of IAS officer Abhishek Singh recently went viral

ARVIND JAIN

IAS

officer Abhishek Singh blazed into internet stardom recently with the release of a music video which has so far garnered over 50 million views. Morphing from an officer of a service often perceived as stuffy and dull to someone who is being described as “too hot,” “superfantabulous” and “phenomenal” has been quite a ride. In the video of the song ‘Dil Tod Ke’ (after breaking my heart), Singh plays a jilted lover riding resolutely to his ex-girlfriend’s engagement with a gun tucked into the waist band of his jeans. While the role has been criticised by some for its underlying misogyny, Singh disagrees.

“The concept is dramatic but the idea is to leave a positive message that one should not ruin one’s life over such an incident,” he says. For the song, he drew from his own experience of being dumped by a woman and then throwing himself into preparing for the civil services exam which he cleared in 2011. Singh’s initiation into acting, however, happened earlier this year in a short film, the psychological thriller *Chaar Pandrah*. But the first offer he got was to play an IAS officer in the soon-to-be-released season two of the Netflix drama, *Delhi Crime*.

Singh might be the most recent, but is not the only member of the civil services to display talent beyond the confines of the job. Aparna Kumar, a member of the Indian Police Services since 2002, is the only officer to have scaled the South Pole and completed the ‘Seven Summit Challenge’—which entails climbing the highest summits in the seven continents. Hailing from Karnataka, Kumar had never seen a snow-capped peak till she landed at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy



IN MY INITIAL CLIMBS, I WOULD BE BOGGED DOWN BY THE PHYSICAL CHALLENGES OF BEING A WOMAN. BUT I LEARNT TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.

Aparna Kumar, IPS (2002)

of Administration for her foundation training course.

“I was mesmerised,” she says of her first sighting in Mussoorie. Then policing duties took over. The call of the mountains renewed itself during a posting with the 9th battalion of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) in Moradabad, a unit with a glorious tradition of mountaineering.

Kumar found herself being regaled by old timers’ tales. In 2013, she enrolled herself in a basic mountaineering course and then did an advanced course some months later.

In August 2014, Kumar scaled the first summit in the challenge—Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. Two years later, she summited Mount Everest from the northern face, inspired

by her hero, George Herbert Leigh Mallory. Her next goal is to ski to the North Pole.

The mountains taught Kumar that life does not revolve around humans alone and that every adversity can be tackled by reminding oneself of how far one has come. The most important lesson, though, has been to embrace the need to pay attention to oneself. “In my initial climbs, I would be bogged down by the physical challenges of being a woman. But I learnt to take care of myself. I learnt that it was only in being happy that I could keep others happy,” she says.

Sujoy Banerjee, a member of the Indian Forest Services (1997), displays equal adroitness as a photographer and singer—hobbies through which he often propagates messages about the environment and wildlife. His photographs have featured in *BBC Wildlife*, *National Geographic* and *Sanctuary Asia*, besides on calendars and posters. Banerjee has also created a montage of videos and photos of the largely unsung work of those who guard our forests and wildlife.

He started taking pictures (and singing) while in college and taught himself the technical skills through constant reading. Yet, over the years, his definition of good nature/conservation photography has remained unchanged. “It is one without people—not one where people stand in the foreground and nature is relegated to the background. I edit minimally as there is a thin line between a real picture and an artificial one,” he says. Photography has brought him patience and a love for solitude.

Banerjee’s musical performances moved from college festivals to bigger ones, cable networks and Doordarshan. He was also featured in the music magazine, *Rock Street Journal*. He sings in Hindi, English and Bangla, often playing a guitar, harmonica and bass drum strapped to his leg all at the same time. “To me, both music



TO ME, BOTH MUSIC AND PHOTOGRAPHY CREATE AWARENESS. I REGRET, THOUGH, THAT NEITHER HELPS ME CAPTURE THE SOUNDS AND SMELLS OF THE FOREST.

Sujoy Banerjee, Indian Forest Services (1997)

and photography create awareness,” he says. “I regret, though, that neither helps me capture the characteristic sounds and smells of the forest.”

Devajyoti Ray (IPS, 1999), though a self-confessed “slow, not serious painter”, has had his work included in prominent exhibitions such as the All India Fine Arts Fair (Kolkata, 2005) and the Windsor Art Fair (London, 2015). He has had solo shows at the Jehangir Art Gallery (Mumbai, 2008) and the Nehru Centre (Mumbai, 2012). Ray is self-taught and learnt by observing artists at the Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata. He describes his style of using striking colours and bold images as ‘pseudorealism’.

“Pseudorealism is based on the idea that what we perceive as reality is often a projection of our own thoughts and deep-seated beliefs

rather than facts,” he says. “In pseudorealistic artworks, we don’t see reality as in nature, but a constructed image in an unreal colour scheme and yet the image has the appeal of realism.” As an artist, Ray loathes disclosing his professional credentials. “What fun is it then?” he asks, about the reaction his work draws.

The newly famous Singh, meanwhile, believes that a fuller display of the artistic inclinations of those in the services could help humanise them. He is working towards a talent hunt called ‘World of Vardi’ (uniform) that can serve as a platform for exhibiting such skills. “This will help people in understanding the lives and challenges of those in the positions of head constables and below,” he says. Meanwhile, the music continues to play for him. ❶

Sky's the limit

A film on Gunjan Saxena, the first woman pilot in the Indian Air Force, brings out her inner strength and vulnerability

BY PRIYANKA BHADANI



In 1994, during an outbreak of bubonic and pneumonic plague in western and southern India, when the film *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* was all the rage among cinephiles, a teenager from Uttar Pradesh was nurturing an unlikely dream—to become a pilot. Gunjan Saxena could not remember having any other dream since childhood. Fortunately, her father, an army man, never clipped her wings. After graduating from Hansraj College in Delhi, she joined the Delhi Flying Club at Safdarjung, when the Indian Air Force had just started inducting women pilots into its ranks. “It was destiny,” says Saxena, 45, about her joining the Air Force in 1995. “One, because defence felt like a familiar environment, with my father being an army officer, and second, because no one can take away the glamour and glory of a defence uniform.”

The highlight of her Air Force career, which lasted till 2004, was her participation in the Kargil War in 1999. Saxena, the first woman pilot in the Indian Air Force, was 24 years old then and would be later awarded the Shaurya Chakra for her service. “Being part of the war helped me evolve, not just as an individual, but also as a professional and as an aviator,” says

FLYING HIGH

Janhvi Kapoor as Gunjan Saxena; (below) Kapoor with Saxena



the “Kargil Girl,” as she later came to be known.

Her life has now inspired a movie, *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl*, starring Janhvi Kapoor in the lead. Debutant director Sharan Sharma recalls how, when he first telephoned Saxena, she dismissed it as a prank call. “Gunjan ma’am is very modest and she thinks her journey is very normal,” he says. “Forget the film, anyone who has heard her story has reacted strongly because it is such an inspiring one. I am very lucky that no one has picked it up in so many years.” He stumbled upon Saxena’s story in a small newspaper article. “The fact that she was 24 at the time of the Kargil War and [participated as] a rescue pilot appealed to me,” he says. “I got interested in how her brother was also in the army during the war and her father had been an army officer.”

Sharma, born and brought up in Mumbai, did not have much connect with the world of defence. As a first-time director, he was initially hesitant to explore such an unfamiliar terrain. But when he met Saxena, he discovered how the dynamics between her family members were so similar to his. It felt personal. Pankaj Tripathi plays Gunjan’s father Anuj. Tripathi’s character is such a pillar of support and strength to his daughter that many people thought it was “too filmy to be true”. Nevertheless, there was nothing false about it. “We may have taken cinematic liberty in retelling other things, but not the father-daughter relationship,” says Sharma.

Ultimately, the film is not just an inspirational tale about a female pilot. It subtly raises questions of everyday misogyny and sexism that still exist when it comes to letting women pursue their dreams. Kapoor’s restrained performance conveys the message without making it too in-your-face.

Contrary to the portrayal of Air Force pilots in the films Sharma had

watched, he did not find Saxena to be too tough or aggressive when he met her in person. “The world never believed she could become an Air Force pilot,” says Sharma. “There is a lot of inner strength and confidence, but with a softened exterior and vulnerability. For us, it was important to find an unlikely hero—someone whom the world might doubt, but who could pull off the job and finish the task. That is the journey of the film as well. And Janhvi fit perfectly because she has that sense of vulnerability.”

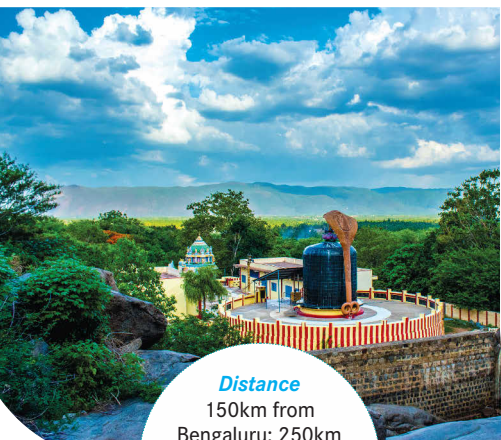
“When you meet Gunjan ma’am, it is hard for you not to fall in love with her—her simplicity, warmth and all of her great achievements,” says Kapoor who, besides understanding Saxena’s personality and relationships, had to go through the rigorous process of gaining five kilos for the role and then losing them. “It was important for me to understand the life of a pilot, what it was like being inside a chopper, the on-field experience.... All of that was immensely helpful.”

“Janhvi and Sharan were really inquisitive, even after I often told them that so much was not required,” says Saxena, who was amazed at Kapoor’s desire to understand every aspect of her life during the training.

Even with its strong storyline, the film has been mired in controversy, especially on social media, ever since the release of its trailer. Some pointed out that the salute of the Indian Air Force has been depicted wrongly in the film. But it was correct in 1999, when the story takes place, says Sharma. “It was on March 7, 2006, that the salute changed and became a 45-degree salute,” he says. “I did not know this either. It was Gunjan ma’am who told me all of this, and I feel lucky to have had her by my side throughout the filming.” According to him, researching the film was an ongoing process because it is a huge responsibility to tell a story centred on the country and its defence forces. 1

YELAGIRI

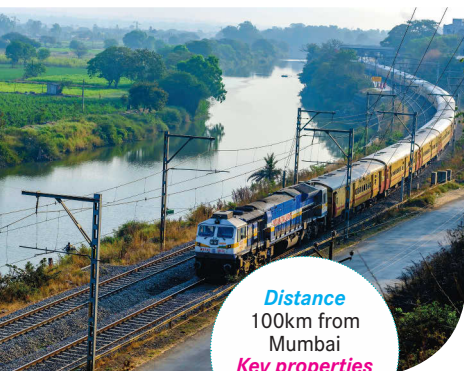
This hill station located in the heart of Tamil Nadu is a visual treat with its cascading waterfalls, lake and green fields. Though generally a trekking hotspot, the breathtaking views from the hotels and the Punganor Lake make for a pleasant weeklong stay.



Distance
150km from
Bengaluru; 250km
from Chennai
Key properties
Kumarraraja Palace,
Sterling Yelagiri

KAMSHET

An underrated destination for Mumbai-kars. Its greenery and variety of birds help you escape the bustle of the city. There are numerous mud-and-thatch houses around that give it a quaint touch. The Vadivali Lake is surrounded by the scenic Western Ghats, setting the mood to kick back and relax.



Distance
100km from
Mumbai
Key properties
Firdaus Baug,
Le Farm

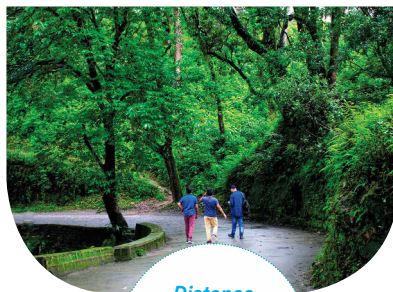
Break the monotony

For those stuck at home for months, a change of environment is not only welcome, but also much required according to psychologists. Staycations and workcations (stay/work + vacation) seem to be the best travel solutions for 2020. (Even UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is on a two-week family staycation in Scotland!)

Here are some destinations for that refreshing getaway you deserve

LANSDOWNE

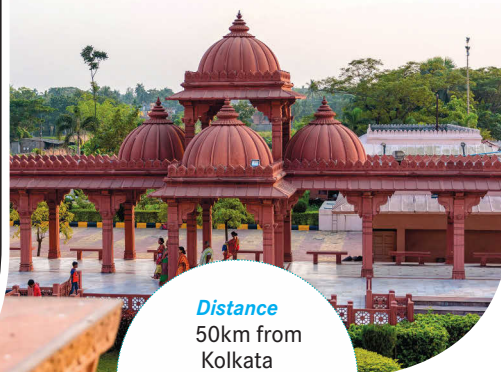
A charming town in Uttarakhand, filled with colonial-style buildings amid oak and pine forests. There is nothing much to see in Lansdowne. But what it does ensure is that one gets to nestle in the lap of nature, in a home far from home. A lake, a museum, cosy cafes and a great sunrise point complete the package.



Distance
250km from Delhi
Key properties
Blue Pine Resort,
Lans Castle

DIAMOND HARBOUR

The highlight of a trip to Diamond Harbour is said to be the soothing experience of sitting on the banks of the Hooghly, watching boats sail by. It was an important Portuguese trade port that was often troubled by frequent pirate raids. Now, it is one of Bengal's most serene weekend getaways



Distance
50km from
Kolkata
Key properties
Ganga Kutir, The
Ffort Raichak

ARAKU VALLEY

This valley in Andhra Pradesh has rich offerings of coffee plantations, forests and waterfalls amid misty hills. It is also the perfect location to take a drive on long, winding and picturesque roads. No trip to Araku is complete without trying out Bongulo chicken, the local delicacy.



Distance
110km from
Visakhapatnam
Key properties
Ananthagiri Haritha
Hill Resort, Moun-
tain View Resorts

TEXT REUBEN JOE JOSEPH

Coup with a clone

Chingari aims to be the next firecracker in India's short-video universe after TikTok

BY SNEHA BHURA

Sumit Ghosh's WhatsApp status—"hustling hard"—is an apt reminder of the push-and-shove game the 34-year-old entrepreneur has entered into. He has taken on the onerous task of attracting TikTok fans to his short-video app, Chingari. He wants to be the firecracker in the great void left behind by the banned TikTok.

Local alternatives to the banned Chinese app are variously motivated. ShareChat's Moj targets "talented local artistes". Mitron faced the allegation that its source code came from Pakistan. The Art of Living's Elyments suffered a cyber attack less than a day after its launch. Bolo Indya wants to host "knowledgeable" videos. Roposo, with more than 50 million downloads, started as a fashion social network, but became a video platform.

Ghosh has no such spin to offer. He is as straightforward as it gets. "A TikTok user should feel at home at Chingari," he says. "We provide them with everything they were doing on TikTok."

Ghosh developed his app in 2018, after his market research threw up Musical.ly (later acquired by Beijing-based ByteDance to become TikTok) as a fast-growing social media app. In November 2018, he launched Chingari, which he incu-

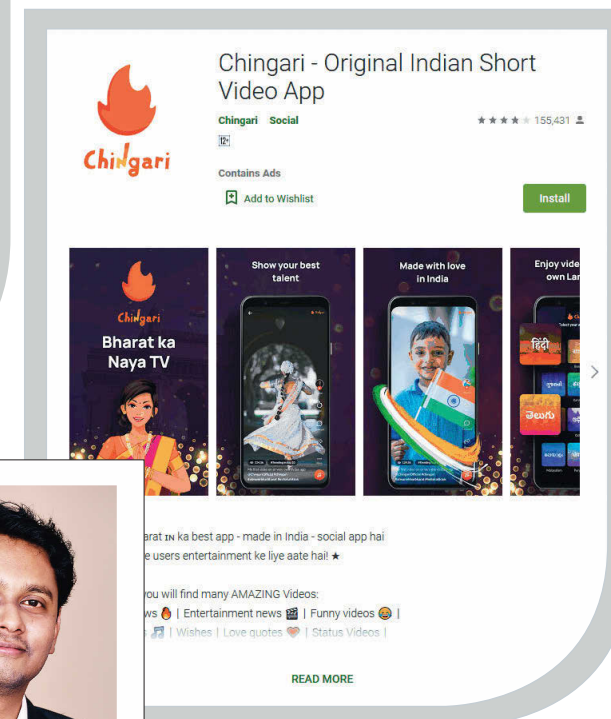


Sumit Ghosh,
Chingari developer

bated at his software development company Globussoft Technologies in Bengaluru. For more than a year after its launch, Ghosh witnessed the rise of TikTok in India, while his own local version went into a limbo.

Around June 10, with anti-China sentiment at a crescendo, Ghosh saw a gradual uptick in Chingari's user base. Within the next six days, he earned 25 lakh users. The surge went on, followed by newspaper reports and then a game-changing thumbs-up by a corporate honcho. "I had not ever downloaded TikTok, but I have just downloaded Chingari. More power to you," tweeted Mahindra Group chairman Anand Mahindra.

"That tweet shot us into a whole new orbit," says Ghosh. "The next



day we had one million downloads. After TikTok was banned on June 28, everything skyrocketed. Now, I have 26 million users and 3 million daily visits."

In the first week of August, Chingari became a winner in the social mobile app category of the AatmaNirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Buoyed by this approval, Ghosh is ready to embrace the deep-cash game that is cloning TikTok, and venture capitalists are lining up to fund his app.

His many-splendoured plans to lure users include getting government officers to make videos, offering scratch card money for continuous scrolling, and crowning a national "Chingari star" with a cash prize of ₹1 crore following a two-month-long contest, with a ₹5 lakh cash prize for each state winners. "I want everyone in the streets to start talking about Chingari," he says. ①

Shortwave Link

Despite the face-off on the border, a Chinese radio station still has listeners in remote Indian villages

BY SNEHA BHURA



We have segments on Chinese society, economic progress and a special segment on Tibet. We do not play too many Chinese songs; there is no demand for it. We play mostly Indian songs.

—Yang Yifeng, aka Bindi, broadcaster, China Radio International

At 6:30pm every Saturday, the signature tune of China Radio International (CRI) wafts into Rajesh Mehara's two-bedroom house in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district. Sometimes the voice of Neelam, often Chandrima, Anjali or Bindi float through the airwaves, straight from Beijing, with CRI's live Hindi broadcast. Mehara has been listening to CRI for 20 years.

Gushing about the "Chinese-type Hindi" of radio jockeys from the state-run international broadcaster, the 35-year-old Mehara imitates their sedate but sonorous All India Radio-like "*aapkifarmaish* (Make a request)" lines. On May 20, CRI played a song he had requested on email—Hum Toh Chaley Pardes from *Sargam* (1979). "Sometimes I send letters with song requests," says Mehara, a nurse. "I like it when they read out my name and address, before announcing my song request. Their Mandarin-style Hindi is a delight to my ears." A father of two, Mehara says that his whole family loves radio programmes.

The CRI Hindi broadcasts a one-hour programme daily. The music programme that Mehara listens to has a 20-minute slot on Saturday. Although Mehara listens to many radio stations, he has a special liking for the Chinese shortwave stations. After the monsoon set in, he got CRI to play Tip Tip Barsa Paani from *Mohra* (1994) last month. The station also read out the name of his

village, Bakani Khurd.

The India-China border stand-off has not affected CRI's weekly broadcast. "Perhaps, they may have lost listeners now," says Mehara. "But their shows are not much different." Mehara knows 10 others from his village who are regular listeners of CRI. They tune in mainly for songs and cultural programmes. "I do not listen to Chinese music. I only want Hindi songs. Their collection of Hindi songs is quite impressive," he says, dismissing any talk of anti-India propaganda in CRI's programming.

Just like other international broadcasters like Voice of America, NHK World-Japan and ABC Radio Australia, CRI is also a soft power initiative. Founded on December 3, 1941, it began its Hindi service in 1959. It currently offers its services in 63 languages, including Tamil, Hindi, Bengali and Urdu. Back in 2013, CRI's Tamil service launched its first FM station in India as part of its 50th anniversary. CRI is the only Chinese state-owned station aimed at an international audience, though there are reports of Chinese stations being used for propaganda in border areas.

Mehara's listening choices are reaffirmed by CRI broadcaster Yang Yifeng, aka Bindi. "We have segments on Chinese society, economic progress and a special segment on Tibet," she says. "We do not play too many Chinese songs; there is no demand for it. We play most-

ly Indian songs. There is a 10-minute segment to teach Mandarin. That's what Indian listeners prefer."

Bindi has been working in the CRI's Hindi service department since 1993. She studied Hindi at Peking University, followed by a year's stint at the Delhi University. She was in Chennai in October 2019 when China's President Xi Jinping met Prime Minister Narendra Modi there. Her voice is clear, calm and comforting; little wonder why the station gets hand-written letters from remote corners of India. Most of the letters, she says, come from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal.

She says that the number of radio listeners has dropped in the last few years. "Indians can only listen to our programmes via short wave radio. Besides, new media and the internet has led to a decline in our listener base," says Bindi, who also produces videos and live shows for CRI's social media pages. Fond of Tagore poems in Mandarin, she almost sounds like a pacifist. "Our listeners tell us they want peace; they do not want a war [between India and China]," she says. "Because, these days the world is such that only with mutual co-operation can we move forward. It is a global village; be it an outbreak or any other issue. Same goes for economic relations."

Lias Jiyong is a correspondent for China Media Group, which owns CRI. He has been in Delhi for four

years now. He learnt Hindi in China and goes by the name Ramesh in India. Lias says CRI gets song requests from distant villages like Mirpur Juara in Chapra, Bihar. "We now want to focus more on positive news between the two countries," he says, adding that hand-written letters from Indian listeners have dried up during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lias says he is at home in India. "I have gone back home only once (in four years)—for a month," he says. "I do not miss home much. My security guards, neighbours and homeowners all have been good to me. They are normal people. For them 'boycott China' only exists at the government level."

Rabi Sankar Basu, 52, from West Bengal first stumbled onto CRI in 1985. Back then, it was known as Radio Beijing. Basu was trying to tune in to an All India Radio play in Bengali, when he caught a mellifluous voice signing off in stilted Hindi. Since then, he has been an ardent fan of CRI. In 1999, Basu started a Sino-India friendship club named New Horizon Radio Listeners' Club, which has 62 members.

Interestingly, Basu does not want CRI to play Hindi songs. He has shot off angry letters to them on the issue. "Why are you listening to CRI? To learn about Chinese culture, right? You can listen to enough Hindi songs on Indian radio channels," says Basu. "This has been happening for two to three years. It is just not right." ■



Clue hunt

Filmmaker **Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri** of *The Tashkent Files* fame has come out with a book on the death of former prime minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri—*Who Killed Shastri?*—billed as “the first ever book to investigate the mysterious death of [Shastri] from all possible angles”. Agnihotri, who is married to national award-winning actor Pallavi Joshi, explores the death with his team of assistants-turned-whistleblowers. Was it really a heart attack? Was he poisoned? Did the CIA kill him? To find out, get a copy of the book published by Bloomsbury.



Hot swap

Singer **Kelly Clarkson** is temporarily replacing Simon Cowell on *America's Got Talent*, while the latter recovers from an accident. Clarkson joked on Instagram that “someone far wiser, cooler and hotter is taking his seat! The unbelievably hot Kelly Clarkson”. This is ironic, considering how Cowell was one of the judges who crowned Clarkson the winner of *American Idol* season one in 2002. Some things really do come full circle!

CONTRIBUTOR / SNEHA BHURA
COMPILED BY ANJULY MATHAI



RADHIKA APTE, actor

Hungry for more

Radhika Apte was keeping herself busy before the lockdown with an adaptation of Gregory David Roberts's *Shantaram* for Apple TV, a science fiction series tentatively titled *OK Computer* for Disney+Hotstar, and casting director Honey Trehan's directorial debut, *Raat Akeli Hai*, that recently released on Netflix. Here, she talks about acting for different platforms, making the short film, *The Sleepwalkers*, and why she still is not satisfied as an actor.

Q\ You seemed to have agreed to do the film without reading the script. Does that usually happen?

A There are times when I strictly need to see the script and there are times when I don't. [The latter] usually happens when I have a good working relationship with the people [behind a film] and I know that we are on the same wavelength. Otherwise, there are a lot of reasons why you do a project. Sometimes the script really excites you and the part is great, or you want to work with the actors or the director. [There are times] when you want to work with a production house. Sometimes, you need the commercial viability, or the money is good, or they are shooting in a fancy place and you just want to go there (laughs).

Q\ Over the last few years, you have been a part of films and shows in different formats, platforms and even languages. Has that been



enjoyable?

A The platform does not really matter as an actor as the process remains the same. But it is funny that people say that I have chosen a variety of roles and blah blah blah. Of course those roles are great, but I just do not feel that way. In 2018, everyone said ‘it is your year’, with seven projects [of mine] that released. But you know it was just so little. I had a small part in *Sacred Games*. It was the same with *Lust Stories*; there were just three days of shoot. I want to go to shoots and be challenged every single day. I do not think it is still satisfying at the moment.

Q\ You wrote and directed the short film, *The Sleepwalkers*, recently.

A Truth be told, it is just a short film. Let us not talk about it as if I have made my debut directorial. But having said that, I thoroughly enjoyed working on it. It was extremely stressful because someone is putting money into it and you have to make sure that you are not making a crap film. [Still], everything was new and it felt so creatively satisfying. I would like to do it again.

—By Priyanka Bhadani

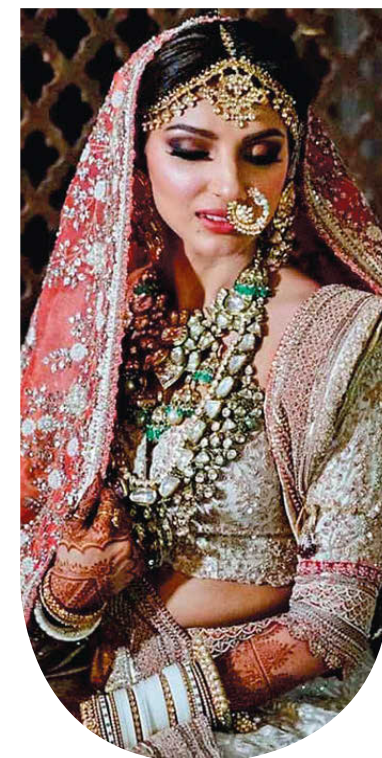


A poignant ode

Although he is busy with *Mirzapur 2*, **Ali Fazal** found time to lend his voice to an animated video titled *Tasveer*, directed by Ashutosh Pathak. Fazal narrates a poem that urges the privileged among us to be kinder to those who have suffered. “It is a truth poignantly penned by Ashutosh that I found myself lucky enough to be able to lend my voice to,” said Fazal. “The idea was to keep the tonality not too much in the face because the visuals were going to be strong.” Pathak says he was inspired by the “burning shame” he felt when he watched from the comfort of his living room migrant labourers walking home.

Getting hitched

It seems everyone is talking about the celebrity wedding of Telugu superstar Rana Daggubati and **Miheeka Bajaj**. So who really is the woman who swept the Telugu superstar off his feet? Born in Hyderabad to jeweller parents, Bajaj owns the decor and event management company, Dewdrop Design Studio. She studied at the Chelsea University of Art and Design in London and runs a blog called Pixie Dust. The two had announced their wedding on social media on May 12; the August 8 wedding turned out to be a grand affair with the bride sparkling in a *zardozi lehenga* designed by Anamika Khanna.



COURTESY ANAMIKA KHANNA.IN/INSTAGRAM



Congress accommodates all

In the wake of the consecration of the Ram Mandir on August 5, critics have been suggesting that the Congress has caved in to the forces of hindutva, and that the minorities no longer have the Congress to speak for them. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The Congress has traditionally furthered a brand of secularism that recognises India's pluralism. It acknowledges a profusion of religions and beliefs, where all are equally respected and can peacefully co-exist. This is compatible with people being practising Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, whatever. But this does not mean we will accept a weaponised political version of any religion, as the BJP has done by reducing the complex diversities of Hindu beliefs to the narrow-minded and exclusionary tenets of hindutva. As a party we will continue to resist any attempts by the ruling dispensation to promote such chauvinistic and divisive beliefs in the country, and we will stand by anyone who becomes a victim of their narrow-minded philosophy.



I believe that those who look at the Congress as a 'BJP-lite' or 'hindutva-lite' do not take the Congress's own assurances at face value—that it remains a party for all, the safest refuge for the minorities, the weak and the marginalised, and fundamentally committed to secularism. The BJP does not even bother to pretend that it has the interests of any of these sections at heart.

Our critics see the Congress's distinction between Hinduism and hindutva as specious. They reject its leaders' arguments that the Hinduism, respected by Congress leaders, is inclusive and non-judgmental, whereas hindutva is a political doctrine based on exclusion. They are quick to conclude that what the Congress offers is merely a watered-down version of the BJP's political messaging.

That is both inaccurate and unjust. Rahul Gandhi has made it explicitly clear that, for all his willingness

to avow his personal Hinduism, he does not support any form of hindutva, neither soft nor hard. The Congress understands that whereas Hinduism is a religion, hindutva is a political doctrine that departs fundamentally from the principal tenets of the Hindu faith. While Hinduism is inclusive of all ways of worship, hindutva is indifferent to devotion and cares only about identity. Hinduism is open to reform and progress, which is why it has flourished for 4,000 years; hindutva is regressive, with its roots in the 'racial pride' ethos that spawned fascism in the 1920s, which is why it is unlikely to outlast its current peak.

There are more fundamental differences. Congress leaders profess a Hinduism that accommodates a vast amount of diversity and respects the individual and his/her relationship with the divine; the BJP's hindutva prefers communal identity politics and seeks to Semitise the faith into something it is not—a uniform monolithic religion. Congress leaders' Hinduism rests on Gandhiji's and Swami Vivekananda's ideas of the acceptance of difference; the

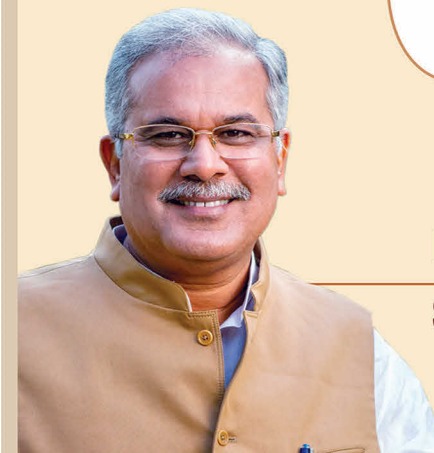
BJP's hindutva seeks to erase differences by assaulting, intimidating and subjugating those with other views.

I am not saying this as a party spokesman; I am not one. I am in politics because of my convictions. I genuinely and passionately believe that what the Congress stands for and offers the nation is fundamentally indispensable to the future of the country. We represent an alternate vision of the idea of India, an inclusive and pluralist vision that reflects truly the heart and soul of the country. The ideology of an inclusive and progressive party, liberal and centrist in its orientation, committed to social justice and individual freedoms, patriotic in its determination to protect national security and promote human security, still has great appeal if it is projected properly. We must not leave the national field uncontested for the BJP's distorted, bigoted and narrow-minded version of what India stands for.

Initiatives & Impacts



Industrial and Economic Development-Touching New dimensions



Lucrative Policies : Supportive Leadership

Service-Care-Empathy, Government of Chhattisgarh

Shri Bhupesh Baghel
Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh





Keeping you safe from **COVID-19**, always.

Apollo Hospitals Group introduces a safe & comprehensive **COVID-19** management program

Doc on call

Consult an expert for seeking medical advice and other queries on COVID-19

Fever Clinic

Isolated and dedicated fever clinic offering specialised consultation and diagnostic services for fever/flu like symptoms

Apollo Kavach Health Check up

Unique Preventive Health check packages, designed to offer tests tailored to detect co-morbidities



Isolation care @hotel Stay i@hotel

Safe, sanitised isolation care setup at selected hotels for offering comfortable and medically supervised accommodation with round the clock access to medical care and ambulance support along with door delivery of medicines, diagnostics and contactless food delivery.

Isolation care @home Stay i@home

Complete suite of medicines, consumables disposables & medical supervisions for a worry-free home isolation services under the guidance of home care experts.



*As per Government guidelines. comprehensive testing & treatment options available at hospitals

To know more



1860 500 0202

Visit: www.apollo247.com