

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW **KAGISO RABADA**
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WILL THEY REALLY FREE THE FARMER?

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HITS AIADMK

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'FAKE ENCOUNTER'

FAST-TRACK COURTS
JUSTICE ON SLOW TRACK

THE WEEK

OCTOBER 4, 2020

SPECIAL ISSUE

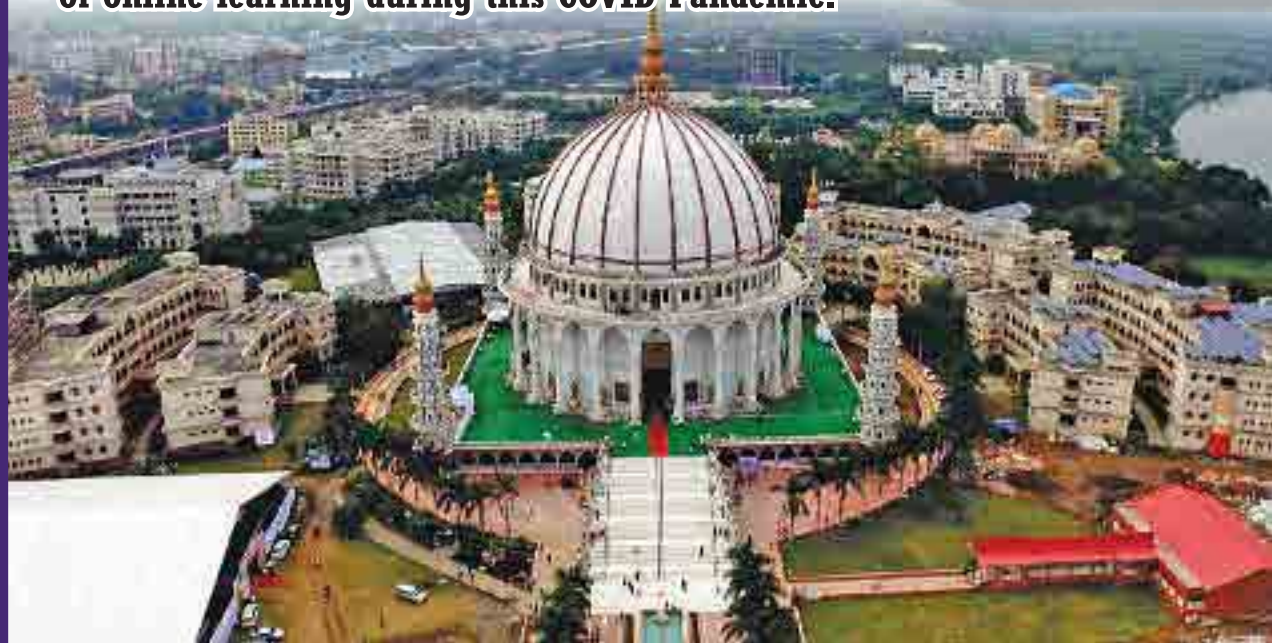
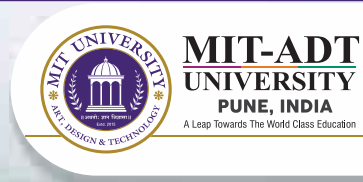
DECLASSIFIED
DOCUMENTS
ACCESSED BY
THE WEEK
SHOW THAT
**SYAMA
PRASAD
MOOKERJEE**
WAS NEVER A
BLIND FOLLOWER
OF HINDUTVA

PLUS

**Jana Sangh's
ideas were different
from those of the BJP**
JUSTICE (RETD)
CHITTATOSH MOOKERJEE,
SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE'S
NEPHEW



Reinvent Higher Education at MIT Art Design Technology University & holistic approach through the new dimensions of online learning during this COVID Pandemic:



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

MIT Art Design Technology University was established in the Year 2016 as per the UGC act as per the private state University Act, of State Govt. of Maharashtra. **Hon'ble Dr. Mangesh Karad, Secretary MAEER's MIT Group of Institutions, man behind conceptualizing this University** to offer education in the most unconventional fields and in the most unorthodox formats.

MIT Art Design Technology University is an Initiative of MAEER's MIT Group of Institutions who are pioneer in privatization of engineering education in Maharashtra. **Dr. Vishwanath Karad, Father - Founder & Director General of the MAEER's MIT Group of Institutions** is one who has made this possible in Maharashtra and launched the first Private Engineering college Maharashtra



Institute of technology in the year 1983. Today the Group represent more than 4 Universities and 15+ schools with the name **Vishwashanti Gurukul, CBSE** and IB pattern schools, spread across India. The university campus is spread over sprawling 120 acres, previously owned by **Late Legendary Bollywood Actor Raj Kapoor.**

The MIT-ADT University was recently awarded the '**Best University Campus 2017**' by the **Associated Chambers of Commerce India (ASSOCHAM)**. In the 2018 the said University is been awarded as a **Best Private State University 2018** by **Better India Education award**. This spectacular campus offers state-of-the-art infrastructure, extensive library, hostels, playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts, swimming pool, cricket and football grounds, indoor sports facilities and a theatre.

MIT ADT offers multiple courses at Under Graduate, Post graduate and Doctorate levels in Fine Art Design, Management, Marine engineering, Bioscience Engineering, Food Technology, Film and Television, Broadcasting and Journalism, Vedic Science & Education and Literature studies.

Preparing for future after this pandemic situation of COVID-19 entire world is suffering MIT ADT University is ready to evaluate as well as to support private state University Education System:

After this Pandemic situation Entire University education is live via video



lecturing using the University learning management system along with the live streaming facility as well as the through the virtual lab establishment to all the core engineering as well as design Nish programs. All the assignments and Practical's are demonstrated using virtual lab establishment online tutorial mode helps the students to evaluate regularly along with the delivery of the subject. MIT ADT University is pioneer in the privatization of University education it also established the proctored evaluation system for the entire university students and declared it's almost all the results on time. Also Initiative of PERA Foundation by the Association of the Private state university leads the university admission process on time to all the private state universities in Maharashtra as well as in India. Lot of Private state university admission process will be streamlined through this to start their academic on time.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



AS A STUDENT OF HISTORY, I have seen that in some cases interested parties do push history off its academic pedestal and try to erect it on a foundation comprising hearsay, emotions, personal experiences and faith. The creature standing on this base ceases to be history and is cursed to inhabit the shadowy world where facts are unwelcome. The populists, peddlers of hoaxes and inhabitants of echo chambers often try to bestow a pedigree on this creature. A pedigree that crumbles when subjected to rigorous scrutiny.

Another effort that has baffled me is the quest to slot people and events into binaries—black or white. Throughout history, man has walked on the grey side. And that is why no trained historian shuns the greys. I feel that this game of binaries might perhaps be rooted in the need for closure. Perhaps, that is also why we have so many conspiracy theories about deaths.

Will we ever have closure on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's death? Will the conspiracy theories about Lal Bahadur Shastri's passing in Tashkent die out? Or even those about the comparatively recent passing of everyone from Madhavrao Scindia to Rajesh Pilot to G.M.C. Balayogi and Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy?

This special issue of THE WEEK, too, features a man whose death has got more press than his life. But we have set the death aside to focus on

the life of Syama Prasad Mookerjee—former Union minister, a colossus in academia, former president of the Maha Bodhi Society and the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, a fine orator and founder of the Jana Sangh.

Senior Special Correspondent Rabi Banerjee accessed declassified documents from the home department of West Bengal and spoke to multiple sources to bring you this uncommon life. Justice Chittatosh Mookerjee's article on his uncle is a wholesome addition to the package. There are also interviews with former governor Tathagata Roy and Netaji's grandson Chandra Bose.

I am sure that it was no easy assignment for Rabi, considering that both Mookerjee's detractors and admirers seek to highlight elements that bolster their arguments. And also taking into account the amount of misinformation peddled about him and magnified by WhatsApp University. Neither Rabi nor I would claim that the Mookerjee story is complete. We only hope that it would encourage others to complete the story—with facts. For example, Mookerjee's stand on Article 370 alone is worth studying; his views on the legislation had changed over time.

The most widely circulated Mookerjee quote is the one that calls for one flag, one prime minister and one Constitution for India. I agree to the last two wholeheartedly. The first one is debatable though. Every US state has a flag featuring local elements, and they take nothing away from "The Star-Spangled Banner". Republics in the USSR had their own flags; many Russian cities have flags. Australian states and cities have flags. Sometimes, flags reflect current realities. For example, the flag of the American state of Mississippi has been taken down in the light of the Black Lives Matter protests; the flag featured Confederate symbols. On September 2, a state commission picked a new design: a brilliant white magnolia—the state flower—on a rich navy blue backdrop, flanked by red and gold bars.

While nationalism and national symbols hold us in a warm hug of togetherness, it does not and should not call for an extinguishing of individuality. Else, why would a nationalist like Mookerjee reply in Bengali to Mahatma Gandhi's letter to him in Hindi?

Phishanath,

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This pandemic saw podcasting going beyond metropolitan hipsters

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PAINTING BHASKARAN

THE FACE BENEATH THE MASK

The dominant narrative about Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee is that he was a British sympathiser who promoted politics of hatred. Declassified documents accessed by THE WEEK, however, show that he was neither a blind follower of hindutva nor a stooge of the raj.

PLUS

- ◆ BJP governments should have probed Mookerjee's death: Tathagata Roy, former governor of Tripura and Meghalaya
- ◆ The Jana Sangh's ideas and objectives were different from those of the BJP: Justice (ret'd) Chittatosh Mookerjee, Syama Prasad Mookerjee's nephew

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With cases piling up in fast-track

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Education is the only way to free yourself from racism: Kagiso Rabada, cricketer, South Africa

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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**

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Well explained

It has become increasingly evident that the synergy between humans and technology is more productive than the solo march. The avenues of new jobs that you have mentioned vouch for the resilient human spirit (‘Work & the virus’, September 20).

The representative case studies of pandemic-induced job losses show the enormity of the pain and anguish that befell millions across the country and elsewhere. The conspicuous silver lining is that abject dejection or despondency has not smothered their will to move forward with added force.

Raveendranath A.,
On email.

Error

In People (September 27), the photographs of Devendra V. Darda, managing director of Lokmat Media Group, and Chaitanya Tamhane, filmmaker, were wrongly published. Below are the right photographs.

We deeply regret the error.

Editor



DEVENDRA V. DARDA



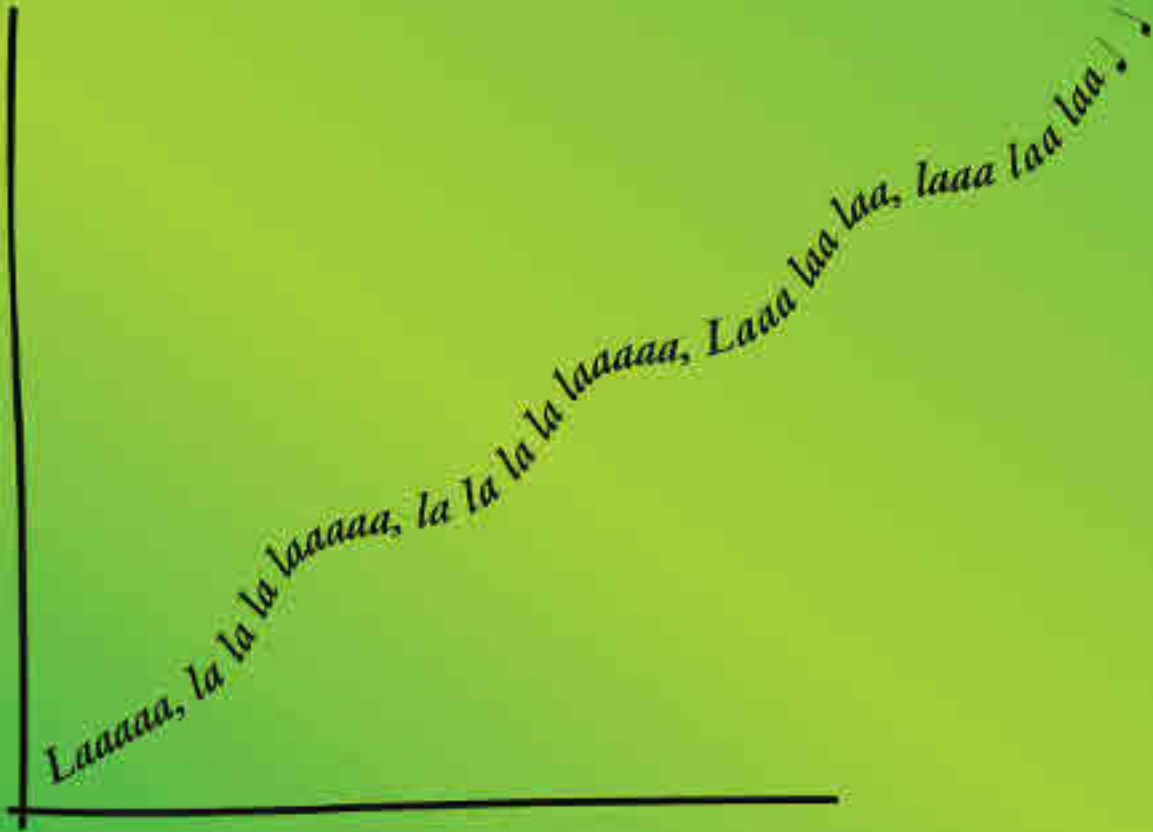
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PARK GROUP OF HOSPITALS - CARE WITH EXCELLENCE

ADDING DIMENSIONS OF EXCELLENCE IN HEALTHCARE

Park Group of Hospitals, situated in North India, is a landmark healthcare entity of global standards. The Group is undergoing rapid expansion making it North India's fastest-growing chain of super-specialty hospitals including cancer and tertiary level care where patients continue to flock seeking medical intervention and care in the state-of-the-art facility for various ailments.

Making Park Group Hospitals Dream Come True

In 1982, Dr. Ajit Gupta, Chairman, Park Group of Hospitals, envisaged the group to be a collection of medical services and facilities with commitment and compassion to deliver high quality patient-centric healthcare. This journey of social responsibility started with the establishment of the first hospital in Malviya Nagar, South Delhi. The first patient was admitted in 1982 in the 50 bedded hospital. As the good word spread far and wide of the relentless efforts of Dr. Gupta, the hospital grew exponentially with number of patients increasing tremendously. Consequently, as significant demand for new facilities in the city rose to a crescendo that led to an expansion to the hospital in 1984, with additional beds and multi-super specialties. The response of people was an inspiration for Dr. Gupta to focus on forming a chain of healthcare entities that can deliver high-end services in line with international standards in quality and services. There has been no looking back since then.

Park Group of Hospitals, equipped with world class facilities has witnessed incredible growth to become

one of the most advanced and comprehensive healthcare institutions in the region. The name Park Group of Hospital was coined by Dr. Ajit Gupta and the tradition of his rich legacy is being carried forward by his son Dr. Ankit Gupta, Managing Director. Savvy about the current trends in the healthcare sector, Dr. Ankit Gupta believes in maintaining the great reputation of the Park Group of Hospitals with business acumen for viability while sustaining the legacy of providing world-class medical services to people from all economic backgrounds. Passionate about introducing latest technologies for enabling complex surgical intervention for various super specialties, Dr. Gupta's visionary zeal was recognized with the 'Future Leader of Healthcare' Award conferred by the Vice-President of India.

Addressing Growing Healthcare Needs

Park Group of Hospitals' 10 Super-Speciality chain of hospitals are NABH accredited, making it amongst the foremost hospital chains which is providing a comprehensive spectrum of advanced medical and surgical

interventions for both in-patient and out-patient people. With its impeccable services, the Group has already made an impressive presence in cities like Delhi, Gurugram, Hodal, Ambala, Karnal, Faridabad, Panipat & Behror. By 2021, the Group intends to mark its presence in Punjab & Rajasthan. As a part of the Group's mission to be the best hospital chain in north India, the objective is to increase the capacity of the hospital to 3000 beds by 2021. Five years down the line, the Group has chalked out ambitious plans for further growth and is expecting its revenues to exceed Rs. 1700 crore. In all, the Group presently has 2700+ beds, including the recently acquired 300 bedded Healing Touch Hospital in Ambala and 300 bedded Kailash Super-Speciality Hospital in Behror, Rajasthan. Park Group of Hospitals takes pride in having the biggest ICU facility with 4 Trauma Centres in Haryana & Rajasthan and continues to abide by its commitment to provide excellent healthcare services in multiple disciplines. When the Covid 19 pandemic struck, the Park Group came forward to strengthen the government's efforts to tackle the contagion. The hospital made significant contribution by allocating an entire wing for Covid patients and treated them at nominal government

rates without compromising on the quality of service rendered.

Making a 'Signature' statement

The Signature Advance Super Specialty Hospital, is a new premium medical services division of the Park Group of Hospitals for proactive healthcare service. Inaugurated recently in August, 2019, this dream project, of Dr. Ankit Gupta, was opened with the intent to explore new horizons and set new milestones supported by enhanced facilities for delivering high-end services of international quality and standards. This world-class medical hospital provides services that ensure precision and care under the supervision of globally renowned and experienced doctors in the midst of state-of-the-art facilities. Focus is also on medical academia, training and digitalization for timely clinical outcomes. As an extended super-specialty healthcare unit, of Park Group of Hospitals, The Signature Hospital is a perfect blend of modern medical services and luxury in New Gurugram, in the densely populated NCR region.

Hubs of Excellence

The remarkable medical services at The Park Hospital & The Signature Hospital include the Centre of Cardiology, Cardiac Surgery, Cancer Care - Bone Marrow Transplant, Critical Care, Neurology Spine & Neurosurgery, Orthopedics, Joint Replacement & Sports Medicine,

Renal Sciences - Urology & Kidney Transplant and Nephrology with Dialysis, Advanced Laparoscopic & Bariatric Surgery, Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery, and Gastroenterology & Gastrointestinal (GI) Surgery.

An impressive record of successful surgeries

With a remarkable record of happy narratives by patients about successful surgeries, Park Group of Hospitals has come to be a renowned global name in the medical world for transplants and major surgical procedures. World's top medical experts have recorded the impressive data of more than 2 lakhs successful procedures and surgeries like cancer surgeries, kidney transplant, bone marrow transplant, brain tumors, trauma cases, day care and other surgical procedures conducted by the Group, in the last 40 years.

Hi-Tech Medical Facilities for Organ Transplantation

Park Group of Hospitals are equipped with cutting-edge technology facilities and services for treating patients under the supervision of the best medical experts in the country. The Group's supreme medical facilities for safe Kidney transplant, Bone Marrow transplant and ECMO are handled by experienced doctors. Pursuit of excellence in patient care through improved understanding of disease, processes and development of new

strategies in the treatment for kidney disease is the prime objective of the Group. The Park Hospitals can boast of having super specialized doctors such as nephrologists, urologists and transplant surgeons, cancer specialists. More than 2500 hemodialysis are performed every month (24x7 dialysis) which includes ICU dialysis, that are handled by highly trained technical and nursing staff under the guidance of dialysis medical officer and overall supervision of senior consultants. To tackle the alarming rise in cancer, among the world's leading killer disease, Park Group has set up a dedicated Cancer centre in West Delhi completely equipped with modalities such as Medical, Surgical & Radiotherapy. The humanitarian touch of Park Hospitals is being vouched by its teeming number of patients at all its establishments.

Setting New Milestones and Vision

Education & Training Centre for DNB & MRCP Courses

Park Group of Hospitals has grown in leaps and bounds adding new dimensions to its services and expansion plans. The Group has set up an academic centre where education, training and care come together and translate into clinical excellence. Recently, new courses of MRCP and DNB were added for nurturing a dynamic medical career making the Group into a veritable medical hub of teaching and treatment where everyone 'Parks' their confidence!

Northern India's Fastest Growing Chain of Super Specialty Hospitals



Upcoming Super Specialty Hospitals



Recently Acquired by the Group:
Kailash Super-Speciality Hospital, Behror, Rajasthan





■ **APERITIF** ■
THE BIG PICTURE

THE SHOW GOES ON

A theatre group in Kolkata has found a novel way to keep art alive in pandemic times. Wearing masks, observing social distancing norms and having insured themselves against Covid-19, the artistes debuted a Goddess Durga play called *Jarashur Badh* in an open-air theatre on September 21. The masks have motifs to help the audience identify characters; tickets were sold online and Covid rules were strictly adhered to.

PHOTO BY SALIL BERA

POINT BLANK



For those who claim that I am not doing anything, my reply is that I have a database of 7,03,246 people whom I have helped and whose addresses, phone numbers, Aadhar card numbers I have.

Sonu Sood,
actor

The fourth estate was conceived to act as a watchdog of the three organs of the state. In recent years, significant players in mainstream media, instead of discharging their responsibilities as watchdogs, have passed the test of being lapdogs with flying colours.

Kapil Sibal,
Congress leader

I like watching Rafael Nadal [Spanish tennis player] because he is as cute as a button and never gives up. He fights every point. He is like a gentle giant, almost where he is sweet, calm, and nice off the court, but a killer on the court.

Kristy Pigeon,
former US tennis player

No data on migrant workers, no data on farmer suicides, wrong data on fiscal stimulus, dubious date on Covid deaths, cloudy data on GDP growth—this government gives a whole new meaning to the term NDA [National Democratic Alliance].

Shashi Tharoor,
Congress leader, on Twitter, attacking the Union government saying NDA now means No Data Available



The world is what you make of it. You just have to keep moving forward with faith. It is not like I have not faced rejections. I have had huge ups and downs. But I am someone who has faith in the goodness of people.

Vidya Balan,
actor

WORD PLAY

Global skin-care brands are coming out with “maskne essentials” to deal with one of the most irritating skin problems of the season. Maskne is acne caused or worsened by wearing masks. It is not a new phenomenon; maskne has always been an issue for people who have to wear masks as part of their jobs. Thanks to the pandemic, both the skin problem and the word are now prevalent.

MILESTONES

MAKING HISTORY

Zendaya, 24, became the youngest Emmy Award winner for lead actress in a drama series, for her performance in HBO's *Euphoria*. She is also the second black woman to win this award.



LOW-COST TEST

India's first clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR) coronavirus test, Feluda, was approved for commercial launch on September 19. Tata Group and CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology jointly developed this low-cost Covid-19 test.



ARCHITECTURAL WONDER

Odisha's Krushi Bhawan was selected as the “People's Choice Winner” at the globally-recognised AZ Awards 2020 for architecture in the social good category. The Krushi Bhawan was the only initiative from India considered by the Toronto-based media brand that announced the awards.



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The moral: no oral

Parliamentarians are known for unleashing oral barrages during debates, with the presiding officer having to repeatedly ask them to conclude. But the CPI's Rajya Sabha MP Binoy Viswam got into trouble with his party for using the word oral. Viswam thought he was taunting the government when he asked for an oral amendment during the discussion on the controversial agriculture marketing reforms. But, CPI general secretary D. Raja was not amused; perhaps more so when Viswam stated he would vote with the BJP members if Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar could give an assurance that the minimum support price scheme will be protected. While opposition parties were accusing the government of a conspiracy to dismantle the half century old price protection given to farmers, Viswam's rhetorical flourish gave the contrary signal.

Even though Raja frowned, Viswam should be thrilled to get the credit for introducing the phrase "oral amendment" to the parliamentary lexicon. He had baffled experts hurriedly searching the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure to check whether a minister could amend a law by mouth. They came up with a unanimous no. Even the president or prime minister cannot alter the words of a written law. The Supreme Court can interpret it in new ways. If, during the debate, the government accepts the suggestions or demands of a member, then the concerned minister has to introduce a written amendment. The process of consideration before passing a law is called reading, where every word mentioned in the draft is considered and approved clause by clause.

In one way, Viswam was not wrong. Two oral assurances made to Parliament and to state governments have been controversial. Both, interestingly, involve former finance minister Arun Jaitley. One is the Centre refusing to pay the shortfall in GST this year; Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has told all states to borrow the shortfall from the Reserve Bank of India. Though BJP- and NDA-run governments have agreed, while murmuring

about the interest burdens, finance ministers of opposition-ruled states such as Punjab, Kerala, West Bengal and Maharashtra are crying foul. They quote a promise by Jaitley in 2016. Jaitley had insisted in both the finance ministers' conference and in Parliament that any shortfall would be paid out of the GST compensation fund.

While Jaitley had declared "We will compensate...", his successor, Sitharaman, and Attorney General K.K. Venugopal are convinced that "We" meant the GST Council, of which the Centre and the states are members. The finance ministry insists that it was not a grand "We" meaning the Central government, but a collective "We" referring to the Union and state governments.

The other instance of an oral assurance not being followed through was when Jaitley wriggled out of a verbal commitment made to Parliament by former prime minister Manmohan Singh. While intervening in an acrimonious debate on the bill to divide Andhra Pradesh in 2014, Singh told the agitated members from what would be the residual state of Andhra Pradesh, without the cash cow of Hyderabad, that the Centre would give special status to the state for a decade. But, the elections saw the rout of the Congress and the emergence of Telugu Desam Party-BJP combine in Andhra. Chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, put pressure, first friendly, then annoyed, on the Central government, run by his regional ally, to make good on the promise by Singh. It would have meant more Central funds and support for mega projects.

But, Jaitley turned the tables. He asked Naidu why the oral agreement was not incorporated into the bill by the Congress. He added that the 14th Finance Commission's recommendation of higher revenue share to states from Central taxes had abolished the special status scheme, and that Parliament had accepted it.

Naidu could not get it for five years and now his successor Jagan Mohan Reddy has also not got it. Given the pressures on the economy, that is another pie in the sky.

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UNITED OPPOSITION?

It seems that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has come a long way since her anti-left days. Recently, while criticising the Centre, she said: “I have political differences with (CPI(M) general secretary) Sitaram Yechury. But I strongly condemn [including his name] in a charge-sheet [in the Delhi riots case]. This government is very vindictive.”

The CPI(M) in West Bengal, however, is sceptical. “She cannot be trusted because she will say something today and she will contradict it the next day,” said a party central committee member. “We are sure she would befriend the BJP like she did in the past.”

ILLUSTRATIONS JAIRAJ T.G.

FACE-OFF!

Amid the high drama in the Rajya Sabha on September 20, when the BJP pushed through two controversial farm bills, Partap Singh Bajwa emerged as the Punjabi face of the Congress. It was seen as a balancing act by the Congress high command. Bajwa had recently revolted against Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh; state party president Sunil Jhakar had even called for Bajwa’s expulsion from the party. Notably, he had said that Bajwa could not be trusted to take a stand on important bills in Parliament.

Also, with the seasoned Harish Rawat recently replacing Asha Kumari as Congress state in-charge indications are that while Amarinder might be the party’s most prominent face in Punjab, he will not be allowed free rein.

SITE-SEEING TRIP

After last week’s heated debate on whether the Telangana Rashtra Samithi government had indeed built flats for the poor in Hyderabad as part of a housing scheme, Fisheries Minister T. Srinivas Yadav promised to personally show Congress leader Bhatti Vikramarka one lakh such homes. Both leaders hopped into their cars and went for a drive to survey the construction. The television media followed.

However, on the second day, after seeing a few buildings, they called off the guided tour; they could not agree on whether flats in certain areas fell under the scheme. It was a tame end to a ride that had started on an exciting note.



PARTY PLANNING

Walter Lindner, the German ambassador to India, has been twice unfortunate. The Indophile envoy, who arrived here last summer, has been wanting to host his Indian friends in style. Last year at the German National Day bash, he had arranged to put up a musical performance himself. But an unexpected downpour forced the guests into nearby buildings and drenched the grand set on the lawn. He had hoped for a better show this year, but the pandemic played spoilsport.

Unfazed, Lindner is planning a surprise event, different from regular webinars. What it will be, we will get to know on October 3.

SHASHI AND SPECULATIONS

After he figured in the list of 23 leaders who had written to Sonia Gandhi, asking for changes within the Congress, many party leaders in Kerala have started writing political obituaries for Shashi Tharoor. One prominent speculation was that Tharoor would now be the chief minister candidate for the BJP, which is desperately looking for a “suitable face” to win the state.

But Tharoor criticised Prime Minister Modi again this week, and then issued a statement—which went viral—slamming the United Democratic Front’s protests against the Kerala government during a pandemic. Now, the latest theory is that Tharoor is cosying up to the left to retain his Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha seat, just in case the Congress drops him.



FRIENDLY FIRE

Voters in Madhya Pradesh have an interesting battle on their hands. The state Congress has urged Sachin Pilot, the former deputy chief minister of Rajasthan, to campaign for it in the upcoming assembly byelections. He would focus on the crucial Gwalior-Chambal region, which has a sizeable Gurjar population. More importantly, Pilot would have to take on his long-time friend and now BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, whose act of leaving the Congress with his supporters necessitated the byelections.

The confrontation would be especially interesting as Pilot himself had recently rebelled against Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot in Rajasthan.



PTI

Opposite leaves

Infighting, Sasikala's return and uncertainty over its ally worsen the leadership crisis in the AIADMK

BY LAKSHMI SUBRAMANIAN

Nearly four years after her death, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) is still struggling to fill the void left behind by former Tamil Nadu chief minister J. Jayalalithaa. The party, which will turn 49 in October, is plagued by a leadership crisis that is deepening by the day.

On September 16, as the assembly proceedings came to an end, Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam, as party coordinator, wanted to call

a meeting of all AIADMK MLAs and senior leaders at the party office. But Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, as joint coordinator, refused to give consent. The tilt in the power equation within the party was for all to see. When the two factions headed by Panneerselvam and Palaniswami came together—brokered by the BJP, following Jayalalithaa's death—the division of power was clear: Panneerselvam would control the party, and Palaniswami would head the government.

On September 17, Panneerselvam, also known as OPS, decided to convene an emergency meeting of party executives at the party office. In a first for the AIADMK, the notice was tweeted. Ahead of the meeting on September 18, there was much sloganeering at the headquarters—OPS supporters hailed him as “future CM” whereas Palaniswami's aides called him the “permanent CM”. The three-hour long meeting, convened to broker a truce between the two, turned combative and end-

ed inconclusively.

The clash between the two factions is not new though. Soon after the merger in 2017, senior party leader V. Maitreyan posted on Facebook: “The factions have merged. Months pass by, but what about the hearts?” Even though there was a clear distinction of power between the two leaders, Palaniswami, aka EPS, started getting more support within the party. As a senior AIADMK leader said, “OPS decided to assert himself and take control of the party, but EPS was always accommodative of everyone.” Also, the 11-member steering committee, which was to be constituted during the merger, was never formed. Sources said that OPS had trouble recommending his aides for party posts as every decision required the joint coordinator's consent.

The rift between the two widened this August, when senior ministers took sides on the issue of the party's chief ministerial candidate for the

2021 assembly elections. While Minister for Cooperation Sellur K. Raju said that MLAs will elect the chief minister post the polls, Minister for Milk and Dairy Development Rajenthra Bhalaji said, “Let us face the election with EPS as the CM candidate.” These statements soon turned into a poster war, which soon spilled on to the streets.

On August 15, Panneerselvam received the Chief Minister's Best Practices Award for the total computerisation of the finance, treasury, human resources and pension management processes of the state. But soon there was frenetic activity outside the residences of the Panneerselvam and Palaniswami, both of whom live just a few metres away from each other on the Greenways Road in Chennai. Hectic parleys went on till late afternoon on August 16, with a group of ministers acting as interlocutors. The ministers were seen rushing in their cars from one residence to another to

POWER TUSSELE

The rift between Panneerselvam (left) and Palaniswami has widened

deliver messages. Later that day, the two leaders seemed to have arrived at a temporary truce. However, the EPS camp felt that OPS had his way as they could no longer project Palaniswami as the chief minister candidate, while Panneerselvam's supporters were upset that he still did not have complete control of the party.

Days after the truce, Palaniswami reportedly visited party presidium chairman E. Madhusudhanan at his house in North Chennai. While it was supposedly to enquire about Madhusudhanan's health, it was no courtesy call. Madhusudhanan, OPS and EPS were co-petitioners in the fight for the party's two leaves symbol against Jayalalithaa's close confidante V.K. Sasikala and her nephew T.T.V. Dhinakaran. With that visit, the

truce reportedly came to an end, and Panneerselvam then tweeted about the emergency meeting on September 16.

Party sources said that as soon as the meeting got under way, a Panneerselvam supporter raised the issue of the delay in constituting the steering committee. While J.C.D. Prabhakar and P.H. Manoj Pandian from the Panneerselvam camp were said to be quite vocal during the meeting, deputy coordinators K.P. Munusamy and R. Vaithilingam tried to keep the peace.

A minister from a northern district pointed out that the party was being dominated by a particular community from west Tamil Nadu, which consists of the Kongu region—home to the Gounder community. Palaniswami and his lieutenants—S.P. Velumani and P. Thangamani—are from the Gounder community. A few days before the emergency meeting, three ministers from the Vanniyar community, hailing from north Tamil Nadu, had a closed-door meeting to discuss strategies to contain the growing clout of Palaniswami. Sources said that this meeting was convened after a Vanniyar minister was asked to approve a lucrative tender that was against the norms. With the failure of the emergency meeting, the party has called for an executive committee meeting on September 28.

Meanwhile, at a press meet hours before the emergency meeting, AI-ADMK's Ramanathapuram strongman Anwar Raja said that Sasikala's release from prison would have a huge impact on Tamil Nadu politics. On September 20, Dhinakaran is said to have taken a chartered flight to Delhi to meet a senior RSS leader, who is close to the BJP high command. This private meeting triggered speculations that the BJP was trying to merge Dhinakaran's Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam with the ruling AIADMK. The visit has also led to rumours of his aunt Sasikala's



“**SASIKALA'S RELEASE FROM PRISON WOULD HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON TAMIL POLITICS. THE “PROBABLE DATE OF RELEASE IS JANUARY 27, 2021”.**

early release from the Parappana Agrahara prison in Bengaluru. But the state prison department, in a reply to an RTI query, said that the “probable date of release is January 27, 2021.”

Sasikala's release and Dhinakaran's moves gain significance, as party insiders said that only a “single leadership” like MGR's or Jayalalithaa's could lead the party to victory in the 2021 elections. And Sasikala,

they said, was aware of each party member's strengths and weaknesses, including those of Panneerselvam and Palaniswami. Sasikala and Panneerselvam belong to the politically powerful Thevar community. And Panneerselvam's rise in the party, it is said, in the early 2000s was thanks to Sasikala's recommendations. “Wait for two more weeks. Much more drama combined with hectic parleys will unfold,” said a senior party functionary close to Panneerselvam. “He wants to lead the party and he is not averse to bringing back Sasikala's family into the party.”

Also, Panneerselvam is keen on continuing the alliance with the BJP. His son P. Raveendranath Kumar, the party's lone MP in the Lok Sabha, voted in favour of the farm bills. Rajya Sabha MP S.R. Balasubramoniam, though opposed to the bills, voted for it, saying, “It is an order to vote for the bill from the party high command.” Sources said BJP state in-charge Piyush Goyal had spoken to Panneerselvam, seeking support for the farm bills.

Palaniswami, however, wants to ditch the BJP and go it alone for the upcoming polls. He thinks that the alliance would prove disastrous for the party, like it did in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. And, he has been taking on the BJP and its policies at the Centre. In August, he opposed the Centre's three-language policy, and later prohibited Vinayaka Chaturthi processions in the state. He also got a Bharat Sena member booked under the National Security Act for defacing the statue of social reformer Periyar E.V. Ramasamy in Coimbatore. But Palaniswami has not declared an all-out war against the BJP for fear of raids from Central agencies.

His actions though seem to have angered BJP leaders in Tamil Nadu, with state BJP president L. Murugan saying, “We can win 60 seats if we contest alone.”

SCHIZO-NATION

ANUJA CHAUHAN



Weed-ing out the liberal!

So *bhang* is the new beef. It is evil, depraved and anti-national, and you can be arrested/assaulted on the spot, no questions asked, for consuming it.

Never mind that Zeenat Aman made *bhang*/marijuana/cannabis/weed the epitome of rebellion in 1971's *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*; that Rajesh Khanna and Mumtaz mainstreamed it from edgy #hippiecool to wholesome #honeymoongoals with 1974's 'Jai Shiv Shankar', shot in Gulmarg in a Shiva temple no less; that Amitabh Bachchan took it down to every street and mohalla in 1978's *Don* with the lyrics '*Bhang ka rang jama ho chakachak, phir lo paan chabaye*' from the super-hit 'Khai ke paan Banaras wala' (Banaras, of course, being our venerated prime minister's constituency); that the line 'Mary-Jane ka ek packet' in the iconic 'Meri laundry ka ek bill' song from 2008's *Rock On!!* is a wink-and-nudge reference to the open consumption of marijuana in colleges; that Amish Tripathi's first and best novel *The Immortals of Meluha* from his bestselling Shiva trilogy has Lord Shiva taking a long drag from a marijuana bong in his introductory scene; and that even a channel as prissy and *sanskari* as Star Plus showed Arnav and Khushi, the iconic super-couple from 2012's *Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon?* finally confessing their love for each other while stoned on the happy, liberating hit of Holi *bhang*.

Cannabis is practically *prasad* for heaven's sake; it is the air that hangs over Manasarovar lake, it has clearly proven medicinal and pain-relieving benefits, it features in the Atharva Veda's list of five most holy plants, and although the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act of 1985 prohibits the production, sale and consumption of certain parts of the plant, the leaves are an exception.

So why is the GOI bent on demonising it?

Well firstly, Lord Shiva is not too popular with the hindutva types. He is too much of an outlier, too broad-minded, too unworldly or '*bhola*'. He mixes

with all kinds of lowlife (his wedding procession famously comprised of demons, apparitions, witches and ghouls who cannot be plotted into the meticulously hierarchical caste and class system) and unlike the poster gods of muscular Hinduism, Ram (famous for abandoning his spouse) and Krishna (famous for being polyamorous), he loves, respects and is fiercely loyal to his wife and is therefore a natural ally of the #SmashThePatriarchy army fighting for #JusticeForRhea.

Secondly, it is always good to have something to hit liberals on the head with, especially now that homosexuality has been de-criminalised. Students, poets, writers, filmmakers, vocal creative people who disturb the nationalistic narrative with subversive babble about free speech, unity in diversity and

democracy can now be gagged and suppressed for being stoners, if nothing else.

Thirdly, wild speculation, crack-downs and witch-hunting of Bollywood A-listers for using marijuana (and other drugs) provides great circus-style entertainment on our news channels and feeds the schadenfreude-need of the masses (who have nothing to celebrate nowadays apart from the misery of others, preferably those who are

richer, from a different religion, or more privileged than themselves.)

And finally, and most importantly, it diverts attention from the real issues, like the high-handed passing of two farmers bills in Parliament, without any discussion or voting or probing by a parliamentary committee.

At the end of the day, cannabis is as good or as bad as alcohol or cigarettes—cheaper than ciggies and less fattening than booze (which is perhaps why it is popular with celebrities.) Overindulgence in any kind of intoxicant is eventually bad for you, but surely, in a reasonable society, adults should have the right to choose.

But reason isn't really in vogue these days. What is in vogue is stoning the stoners.



ILLUSTRATION BHASKARAN

editor@theweek.in

Innocent dead

Parents of youth killed in Shopian “encounter” speak to THE WEEK as the Army admits that its men exceeded bounds

BY TARIQ BHAT

ON SEPTEMBER 18, the Army finally admitted that its personnel had exceeded the mandate of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1990 during an operation at Amshipora in Shopian on July 18, in which three “terrorists” were killed. It said that its statement was based on prima facie evidence found in an inquiry into the operation. The evidence also indicated that the “Dos and Don’ts of Chief of Army Staff”, as approved by the Supreme Court, had been “contravened”.

“Consequently, the competent disciplinary authority has directed [those concerned] to initiate disciplinary proceedings under the Army Act against those found prima facie answerable,” said Srinagar-based defence spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia.

THE WEEK spoke to the families of the dead and they told the story thus. In March, Abrar Ahmed—a resident of Peeri, Kotranka, in Rajouri district—had returned home from Kuwait. The 23-year-old was excited about building a small, three-room house and catching up with his ten-month-old son.

The construction soon began, but it could not be completed as Ahmed ran out of money in July. As he could not return to Kuwait because of the pandemic, Ahmed decided to go to Shopian, 80km from Rajouri, where

his maternal uncle’s son, Imtiyaz Ahmed, a Class 12 student, was working as a labourer to pay his fees.

On July 15, a day before leaving for Shopian, Ahmed spent the night at his aunt and mother-in-law Sifat Jan’s house, also in Rajouri. The next morning, he left for Shopian with Jan’s son, a Class 10 student also named Abrar Ahmed. They took the Mughal Road and reached Shopian in the evening; Imtiyaz was waiting for them. The cousins then rented a room at Keegam for ₹1,600, and bought some rations. The following day, Imtiyaz called home and said that all three of them were fine. That was the last time their families heard from them.

On July 18, the Army had said in a statement: “On a specific input by 62 RR (Rashtriya Rifles) about the presence of terrorists in the Amshipora area, an operation was launched by them. During the search, terrorists fired upon Army personnel and the encounter started. Later on, the police and the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) also joined. During the encounter, three unidentified terrorists were killed. Their bodies were retrieved from the site of encounter. The identification and affiliation of the killed terrorists are being ascertained.”

The statement said that incriminating materials, including arms



ANGER AND GRIEF

National Conference MPs Farooq Abdullah (left) and Hasnain Masoodi during a protest at Parliament House on September 19

and ammunition, were recovered from the site of the encounter. It also said that the bodies of the terrorists were sent to Baramulla for their last rites after completing medico-legal formalities, including collection of their DNA. “In case any family claims the killed terrorists to be their kith or kin, they can come forward for their identification,” the statement said.

On August 9, the cousins’ families filed a missing persons’ report;

they had not heard from them in weeks. The following day, when photos of the killed “militants” first appeared on social media, they were shocked to see the resemblance. They went to the police and urged them to trace them.

The Army, having heard of the families’ reactions to the photos, said it was investigating the matter. “We have noted social media inputs linked to the operation at Shopian. The three terrorists killed in the operation have not been identified and the bodies were buried based on established protocols,” said Kalia.

Political parties in Kashmir reacted sharply to the possibility of a fake

“
I want the police to return the bodies of our children. We will bury them ourselves, even if it is only a limb.

—Sifat Jan, mother of a slain youth

”

encounter. In a tweet from the handle of Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti, her daughter, Iltija, said the reports of the “staged encounter” in Shopian showed that the armed forces were operating “with impunity”. She said it explained why bodies were allowed to decompose at unknown locations, and demanded an investigation into recent encounters.

Said Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader M.Y. Tarigami: “This is shocking and must be probed by a sitting High Court judge in a time-bound manner.” He added that,

NO ROOM FOR BLAME GAME

The Amshipora encounter is the first of its kind after security forces came under the direct control of the Union home ministry

in the past, too, civilians had been killed in fake encounters for rewards and promotions.

The National Conference said it had constituted a team to explore the possibility of moving court to know the truth about the encounter.

On August 18, Kalia said that the Army's high-level inquiry into the operation was in progress, and that the statements of key witnesses were being recorded. "Additional civil witnesses are being asked to depose before the court of inquiry," he said. "Concurrently, the Jammu and Kashmir Police have collected DNA samples from Rajouri (on August 14) and sent them for matching with [those of] the terrorists killed on July 18."

The father of Imtiyaz (Sabr Hus-sain), the mother of the younger Abrar (Jan) and the father of the older Abrar (Muhammad Yousuf) attended the Army hearings. "I testified before the Army and told them that our children had no connection with militancy," Yousuf told THE WEEK. "I told them they could have arrested them. Why did they kill them?"

However, he said he was satisfied that the administration and the Army had acted swiftly. "Those who killed our children should be hanged," he said. "Only then will we have some peace. If we do not get justice, I will hold those responsible for the murder of our children before God on the day of judgment."

He said that his son had brought a new phone from Kuwait, but had been locked out of it; Ahmed had forgotten the screen lock code and had taken the phone with him to Shopian to get it unlocked. "Before he left for Shopian, he told his wife that he would get the phone opened in Srinagar and then put a SIM card in it for her," Yousuf said.



I am happy that the Army has admitted that three Shopian men were killed mistakenly. I hope the government gives [their families] a hefty compensation.

—Farooq Abdullah, NC president

Jan told THE WEEK that her son wanted to earn money to pay for his studies. "I want the police to return the bodies of our children," she said. "We will bury them ourselves, even if it is only a limb."

She said the police must match the DNA and release the results quickly. "Why are they delaying it? This delay is creating anxiety and doubts," she said.

On September 18, Kalia said the evidence prima facie indicated that the three unidentified "terrorists" killed in the operation were Imtiyaz Ahmed, Abrar Ahmed and Abrar Ahmed, who hailed from Rajouri. "Their DNA report is awaited," he said. "Their involvement with ter-

rorism or related activities is under investigation by the police."

He said the Army was committed to ethical conduct in all counter-terrorism operations. "Cases where doubts are raised are investigated under due process as per the law of the land," he said. "As the case is under investigation, further details will be shared periodically, as appropriate, without affecting due legal process."

On September 21, speaking in Parliament for the first time since his release from detention, National Conference president Farooq Abdullah said, "I am happy that the Army has admitted that three Shopian men were killed mistakenly. I hope the government gives [their families] a hefty compensation."

He and party MP Hasnain Masoodi stood in front of the Gandhi statue outside Parliament with photos of the three Rajouri youth and Irfan Ahmed, who died in custody in Sopore, to highlight human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Amshipora encounter is the first of its kind after Jammu and Kashmir was made a Union territory last year. And as security now comes under direct control of the Union home ministry, the blame for fake encounters will be laid at its door. **■**

FORTHWRITE |
MEENAKSHI LEKHI



More hits than misses

There is a saying: A thief believes everyone else is a thief. That is the case with the so-called liberals and anti-government elements in India right now. Our prime minister exudes power and enjoys popularity like no other, which has led the anti-government lobby to unite and criticise the government. Yes, the situation is not ideal when it comes to keeping the spread of the novel coronavirus in check. But then which country has been 100 per cent successful in containing it? None.

The success and failure of any government are measured by the response from its citizens and its status compared with other countries. India has performed better than even developed countries with the best of health care systems. Another aspect is the quasi-federal structure of India. India does as well as its states do collectively, as they are the implementing agencies of Central policies.

India has touched a recovery rate of 80 per cent, up from 60 per cent in early May, and accounts for nearly 19 per cent of the total global recoveries—the highest in the world. India's Covid-19 fatality rate is only 1.6 per cent of the total cases, which is one of the lowest in the world. Barely 0.2 per cent of the total active cases need ICU care.

Our health department took on the humongous task of providing adequate health facilities to citizens. The pandemic, in a way, forced the government to prioritise health care infrastructure like never before. In early March, when India had recorded only a handful of cases, 52 labs were authorised to carry out Covid-19 tests. As on September 19, the number has gone up to 1,771, of which 1,152 are government-owned labs. The idea was to have a testing centre in each district to minimise Covid-related travel, and we have achieved that barring a few exceptions.

On July 7, the Medical Council of India directed medical colleges to set up labs that were biosafety level (BSL) 2-compliant, and informed that a failure to do so would result in them being derecognised. By August, 293 of the 540 medical colleges had BSL-2 facility.

There is ample focus on the standard of testing, too. The Indian Council of Medical Research hopes to have a BSL-2 lab—one that can run the RT-PCR tests—in every district. Wherever there are public or private medical colleges, their labs are being upgraded to BSL-2. Through the PM-CARES fund, ₹2,000 crore was allocated to supply 50,000 'Made in India' ventilators to government-run Covid-19 hospitals. The number of beds for Covid-19

patients increased 14 times since June. India could not achieve these in the last 75 years but did so in the past five months and is proud of the work done.

The government also passed the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020, making any verbal or physical assault against doctors, nurses or other health care providers a punishable offence.

The government's zero-tolerance attitude towards such offenders initiated this legislation, which is being applauded by the health care community.

There have been more hits than misses in the management of Covid-19. By increasing the number of beds, ventilators, testing centres and PPE kits, India not only was able to display a good record on the global scene, but also pushed its local industry to produce the relevant machinery. These developments will go a long way in the betterment of the health infrastructure in India. Focused and effective measures for early identification through high and aggressive testing, prompt surveillance and tracking, coupled with standardised high-quality clinical care, have resulted in this globally acclaimed achievement.



ILLUSTRATION BHASKARAN

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Woman of substance

A charming politician, a caring friend, a willing brawler—Kamala Harris represents the changing, multicultural face of America

BY LAVINA MELWANI

Meeting Kamala Harris in the flesh is compelling. I experienced it first hand when I saw her take the stage for a fundraiser in New York two years ago.

More than 500 Indian Americans had gathered to meet one of their own. All of them must have had a Kamala in their circle of family and friends. In her genes and luminous smile, they found echoes of a shared past and ancestry.

An Indian and Jamaican by birth, Senator Harris has been anointed vice presidential candidate and Joe Biden's running mate in the US presidential election, due in November. Harris, 55, is the first woman of colour contesting the election for the second-highest job in the US.

Who would have thought that 2020 would be the year that all of America learned that Kamala in Sanskrit meant lotus flower. Most Americans find it difficult to pronounce the name correctly, but the fact that they are trying to do so represents the changing face and multicultural spirit of America.

Indeed, according to the Pew Research Center, hers is the face of the future. In a report about multiracial Americans, the researchers noted: "Biden's selection of Sen Kamala Harris of California as his running mate in this year's presidential election has sparked a conversation about multiracial identity in the United States. Harris, the daughter of immigrants from Jamaica and India, is among a relatively small but growing group of Americans with a multiracial background."

In 2019, Harris wrote *The Truths We Hold*, a memoir that gives insights into her American journey—a rough and tough growing up in Oakland, California, living through segregation and the civil rights movement. She persisted and went on to become the first black and Asian woman to be elected attorney general of California, and the first south Asian woman to be elected to the US Senate.

"Kamala, as you all know, is smart. She's tough. She's experienced. She's a proven fighter for the backbone of this country, the middle class," said Biden while introducing her as his

running mate in the virtual national convention of the Democratic Party in August. "She knows how to govern. She knows how to make the hard calls. She is ready to do this job on day one."

At the convention, Harris showed how strong her Indian roots were by showcasing the biggest influence of her life, her mother Shyamala Gopalan. "She came here from India at age 19 to pursue her dream of curing cancer," Harris said. "At the University of California Berkeley, she met my father, Donald Harris, who had come from Jamaica to study economics. They fell in love in that most American way—while marching together for justice in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. In the

streets of Oakland and Berkeley, I got a stroller's-eye view of people getting into what the great John Lewis called 'good trouble.'"

Good trouble became a mantra of her life, which Harris has dedicated to fighting injustice and inequality. "My mother instilled in my sister Maya and me the values that would chart the course of our lives," she said. "She raised us to be proud, strong black women, and she raised us to know and be proud of our Indian heritage."

In her speech, Harris said of her mother: "She taught us to be conscious and compassionate about the struggles of all people, to believe public service is a noble cause, and the fight for justice is a

shared responsibility." It led Harris to become a lawyer, a district attorney, attorney general and a United States senator. "And at every step of the way, I have been guided by the words I spoke from the first time I stood in a courtroom — Kamala Harris, for the people," she said.

Biden's choice has been well received. As the *New York Times* noted, "In announcing Ms Harris, 55, as his vice-presidential nominee, Joseph R. Biden told supporters she was the person best equipped to 'take this fight' to President Trump, making space in a campaign premised on



AP



HARRIS HAS BEEN HAILED AS THE FEMALE OBAMA. HER FAMILY IS MULTICULTURAL; HER HUSBAND, DOUG EMHOFF, IS JEWISH AND HER STEPCHILDREN LOVINGLY CALL HER 'MOMALA'.



FACE OF CHANGE

A young Kamala Harris with her father, Donald; (far right) with her mother, Shyamala, and sister Maya (in the middle)



PHOTOS: AP

restoring American decency for a willing brawler who learned early in her career that fortune would not favour the meek among black women in her lines of work.”

Harris has been hailed as the female Obama. She represents many different groups that see themselves reflected in her. Her family, too, is multicultural; her husband, Doug Emhoff, is Jewish and her stepchildren lovingly call her ‘Momala.’

According to Impact, a leading Indian American advocacy group, an estimated 1.3 million Indian Americans are expected to vote in this year’s election, including two lakh in Pennsylvania and 1.25 lakh in Michigan, both must-win battleground states. “Kamala Harris’s story is the story of a changing, inclusive America. At a time of rapid change, she ties all our national threads together,” said Neil Makhija, Impact’s executive director. “She represents the future and promise of this country. Her candidacy is historic and inspiring, not only for black Americans but for millions of Asian American voters, the fastest-growing voting bloc in the country.”

Manisha Sinha, professor of history at the University of Connecticut,

termed Biden’s decision to pick Harris a “personal gift”. “Not only does she represent the very groups mocked and vilified by Trump—women, black people and immigrants—but also, as a woman of Afro-Indian descent, she might well be the future face of American politics,” she said.

Subodh Chandra, a civil rights lawyer and former law director of the City of Cleveland, Ohio, has seen Harris interacting with children and the elderly up close. She once visited his elderly parents and immediately took to his mother, addressing her as aunty and interacting as if the two had long been relatives. When she met his three sons—triplets—there was so much hugging, and not of the kind meant for a politician’s photo op. “The sense you get from her is that she is someone who really values family, kids and good cooking,” said Chandra. “On Twitter, you have all these funny videos of her instructing her husband on food preparation.”

At work, he said, she exudes magnetism and positivity. She can quickly cut to the truth and expose someone who is talking nonsense. “These qualities are going to make

her a magnificent candidate and asset to the ticket and the country. And, I think, eventually our first female president,” Chandra said.

Shelly Kapoor Collins, a venture capitalist who lives in San Francisco, has known Harris since 1998. Four years ago, when Harris ran for the Senate, Collins’s mother gave her a silver Lakshmi coin, saying she would go very far. The blessing seems to have worked.

“You have to meet her to understand there is something very charismatic about her,” she said. “She is fierce—and I love that in a woman who is so strong and has paved the way for other women. She has a bold vision for the country and you believe her when she talks; her authenticity really comes through.”

Some feel that Harris is not Indian enough. Collins, however, disagrees with that view. “As Indian Americans, we need to rally around our candidate not because of shared heritage but because of shared values,” she said. “I believe in her vision. I believe in what she wants for America. The Indian American community needs to align itself with values, not just with identities.”

SOUND BITE

ANITA PRATAP



Suga, the self-effacing samurai

Dark-suited and silent, he is the typical, faceless bureaucrat. Now he is the face of Japan. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga appears to fit Winston Churchill’s description of his political opponent Clement Attlee—a modest man with much to be modest about.

Suga is modest because his origins are modest. Son of a strawberry farmer from northern Japan, Suga fled his village at 18 and laboured in a cardboard factory to pay his Tokyo college fees. In the parallel universe of Japan’s elitist dynastic political families, whose scions become PMs, humble origins are insurmountable barriers to political crowning.

But destiny favoured Suga. Greatness was thrust upon him by former PM Shinzo Abe, who resigned suddenly citing ill health. Abe knew his devoted lieutenant Suga would safeguard his legacy and complete his unfinished reforms. They had been a good team—Abe grandstanding in the limelight, Suga toiling in the shadows.

With almost eight years at the helm, Abe is Japan’s longest-serving PM, and his appointee—the unsmiling, weary-eyed Suga—the nation’s longest-serving chief cabinet secretary. Self-effacing Suga secured that top job through loyalty and merit. But he also had an underrated asset and strategy—a drab personality that helped him fly under the radar. “The nail that stands out gets hammered,” is a popular saying in Japan, where society swiftly squashes any deviation from conformity, modesty and humility. Abe and Taro Kano, another blue-blooded minister who could eventually become PM, are mavericks. But Japanese carpentry rules do not apply to princelings.

For now, the princelings who head the fratricidal factions in Japan’s ruling LDP party support Suga’s elevation because he is uncontroversial and a political lightweight. Anyway, this is a stop-gap arrangement until the September 2021 elections.

PHOTO: AFP

For similar reasons, Congress factions had agreed upon the mild-mannered, scholarly P.V. Narasimha Rao becoming prime minister after Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination three decades ago. Rao went on to serve a full term.

Like Rao, Suga, 71, is not a vote-getter. He is disciplined and hard-working, but lacks people skills, charisma and eloquence. In his victory speech, he prioritised tackling Covid-19 and then droned: “I want to break down bureaucratic sectionalism, vested interests and the blind adherence to precedent.” Not exactly crackling words that inspire voters to spark revolutions.

But like Rao, Suga has a trump card, acquired through a long innings in politics. He is a skilful, behind-the-curtain operator who can manoeuvre Japan’s opaque bureaucracy. It is tempting to describe

Suga as a humourless Sir Humphrey, the crafty bureaucrat in the BBC sitcom *Yes Minister*.

Some experts predict that Suga is doomed to be merely a stand-in PM because the sectarian samurais will swoop in for the kill before next year’s elections. Internecine warfare could propel Japan back to the “revolving door” era—short-term PMs packed off prematurely by rivals. Since World

War II, Japan has had 63 PMs. But others say Suga’s factional neutrality may help him become the least troublesome choice that all can agree upon... again.

Much depends on how Suga tackles his basket of inherited problems—the pandemic, a shrinking population, an ageing society, the slumping economy, the massive public debt and a rising China. His past suggests he is reform-minded. He counts the privatisation of Japan railways as one of his triumphs. He may even call snap elections to secure himself. Suga has already travelled far from his humble origins. If he plods on as a boring bureaucrat who delivers results, he may yet pioneer a ‘velvet revolution’ in Japanese politics.

Pratap is an author and journalist.



10 commandments for a healthy heart



Mark Twain's thoughts on losses sound all the more insightful in these pandemic times. "Nothing that grieves us can be called little: by the eternal laws of proportion a child's loss of a doll and a king's loss of a crown are events of the same size," he said.

Every loss matters and it hurts in more ways than one, be it loss of livelihood, health or a loved one. When you lose a kingdom of love, hope and stability, the heart bears the brunt of it the most.

During the pandemic, one may not be able to avoid vulnerability. But be kind to your heart. Following these ten commandments that will help keep heart diseases at bay.

score is average, then the subject may be advised a healthy lifestyle, diet and to be vigilant about their cholesterol levels. Determining Polygenic Risk Score at a young age should become the new mantra in India.

1 Find out your chances of having a heart attack

Dr Bagirath Raghuraman, senior consultant, Heart Transplant, Narayana Institute of Cardiac Sciences, Bengaluru

Cardiovascular diseases are the leading causes of mortality and morbidity in India. Indians are genetically three times more vulnerable to Coronary Artery Disease compared to the Western population.

Modern genetic research has been able to identify the risk of developing Coronary Artery Disease and quantify them using a novel technique called Polygenic Risk Score. This technique looks at subtle variations in an individual's genome which makes him/her susceptible to Coronary Artery Disease and quantifies the risk as high, average, or low risk. If an individual's score is reported to be high risk, the subject can be initiated on a preventive therapeutic regime. If the risk

2 Snoring should be treated

Dr Zainulabedin Hamdulay, consultant cardiothoracic surgeon and chairman of Masina Heart Institute, Mumbai

Generally, when people sleep, blood pressure drops by almost 10-20 per cent. However, for patients suffering from sleep apnea, there's an increase in blood pressure. This is because the body needs to exert more pressure for maintaining flow of oxygenated blood to the heart and brain. People with sleep apnea generally have high blood pressure all the time—while sleeping and while awake.

It is universally known that high blood pressure increases risk of cardiovascular ailments, heart attack and stroke. Sleep apnea is a major contributor to the problem of high blood pressure.

Usually, people who suffer from such a problem snore heavily or snort or even gasp for breath suddenly while sleeping. If you notice any such things or any changes in sleeping patterns, report it to a doctor immediately. Taking proper steps and precautions at the right time will help in averting serious health issues.

Manage stress

3

Dr Vidyadhar S. Lad, consultant, Adult Cardiac Surgery, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai

Stress releases cortisol. High levels of cortisol lead to an increase in blood cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure, which are risk factors for cardiac disease. Stress also affects blood flow to the heart with the heart muscle not getting enough oxygen. Anxiety and stress cause blood to become stickier and form clots, which increases the risk of heart attack and stroke. Long-term stress can lead to a build-up of plaque deposits in arteries.

It is important to manage stress to reduce the risk of heart disease. During the pandemic, take a break from the news that constantly bombard us with negative stimuli. Stay connected with your near and dear ones digitally. Do meditation and cultivate a hobby.

Live like your grandpa and grandma

4

Dr Salil Shirodkar, senior consultant, Interventional cardiology, Nanavati Super Specialty Hospital, Mumbai

Atherosclerosis has been derived from the Greek word 'Athero' meaning porridge. Sclerosis means hardening of your vessel. The porridge, in this context, is the bad cholesterol that gets deposited in your blood vessels and form a plaque. Eventually, the plaque hardens leading to calcification inside them and the blood flow gets obstructed.

In younger patients, this can lead to a plaque rupture all of a sudden. Factors like substance abuse and stress could contribute to it. When the plaque rupture happens in a younger patient, the vessels suddenly gets obstructed and the person develops a heart attack.

A recent study known as CARDIA Trial (Coronary Artery Risk Disease Development in Young Adults), involved 5,000 young patients in the age group of 18-30. It was found that among patients who smoked more than ten cigarettes a day, the likelihood of

developing a heart problem was 50 per cent. Those who had systolic BP of more than 10 mm of required values had 30 per cent more chances of having a heart problem. Every 30 mg/dl rise in one's LDL cholesterol can up his risk of heart diseases by 50 per cent. Every 10 mg/dl increase in your sugar levels raises your risk of heart problems by 20 per cent. Lifestyle can play a crucial role in modifying your risk factors.

Normalise your blood pressure, sugar and cholesterol levels; keep moving

5

Dr Subrata Lahiri, Senior Consultant Cardiologist, Delhi Heart and Lung Institute, New Delhi

The common risk factors for heart disease are diabetes mellitus, high cholesterol levels, hypertension, obesity, smoking, alcohol consumption and sedentary habits. All of these cause plaque formation in the arteries that narrow them down and disrupt the flow of blood.

The pandemic has transformed the lifestyle of the population as a whole. All the risk factors leading on to heart disease have increased in the recent times due to the effect of lockdown. The incidence of obesity has increased due to immobility, lack of regular exercise and job losses.

Diabetes is one of the leading cause of heart disease and heart attacks in our country. It causes not only clogging of the blood vessels of the heart by increasing the levels of LDL cholesterol and triglyceride but also causes heart failure. Patients with diabetes need to control their sugar levels if required with newer anti-diabetic medication and insulin. Keeping a tight control on average three monthly sugar levels (HbA1c levels) should prevent target organ damage and maintain healthy heart. It is important to control obesity as well. It is believed that people who did moderate exercise just 15 mins a day tended to live an average of three years more than their inactive peers.

People with high blood pressure should take regular medication to prevent sudden surge in BP and cardiovascular events like strokes, heart attacks and heart failures.



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Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the number one cause of death on the planet. It has many causes: from smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, to air pollution. In the time of COVID-19, CVD patients are more at risk of developing severe forms of the virus and they may also be afraid to seek ongoing care for their hearts. **Love your heart, understand what it takes to live a heart healthy life and to act on that knowledge, changing your behaviour for a better quality of life now and in the future.**



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YOUR HEART MATTERS



-BY DR. SUMAN BHANDARI

Q1) What kind of heart patients you get to see these days?

For most people heart diseases come up unannounced and suddenly with an attack, and while such patients continue to come, a lot of others these days are those who show signs of a poor heart on whom one can work on a planned treatment. The age profile is varying a lot these days, but in my opinion, with the advancement in drugs, there is a lot more of the older population above the age of 55 who come for the typical coronary artery disease (CAD) treatment. I think this has more to do with increasing longevity, where some of these patients have delayed the onset of a heart disease to a later age in life, with some of them being in their 60s. Earlier, we had a cut off age of around 60 for surgeries and intervention, but now that has gone up due to several factors. In fact, there is also a patient set that I get who are coming for a second stent after a 10-15 year period and they are in their 70s. Infact we currently accept even 90 plus patients if they need essential treatment. I feel this transformation is because of improved quality of life and medication.

Q2) What is a good age to get checked to deal with heart diseases later in life?

I think an annual health check-up as a concept was introduced at way back in the late 1980s and early 1990s when many people who came to meet their patients got tested and the concept picked up. From getting themselves tested for cholesterol, hypertension and diabetes say in their 40s, now people in their late 20s and early 30s are getting



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"Advanced medicines, easy access to health care, greater success rates are some of the factors that make surviving a cardiac disease without significant compromise to your lifestyle possible these days says Dr. Suman Bhandari, Director - Cardiology, Fortis Escorts Hospital. On World Heart Day, he also stresses on how one can prevent heart diseases without hampering too much of their lifestyle."

these tests. It's to do with increased awareness as well as many organizations are insisting on their employees to get examined early on. An early discovery of cholesterol can be addressed with good drugs these days.

I feel given the rise in obesity among children and youth, it may be a good idea to screen children when they are in middle or high school for cholesterol and

start an early treatment. They are young and could be put on strict diets and adapt to changes in lifestyle to get healthy. Take for instance in the US, they have banned sodas in school campuses, which could be emulated here and awareness on early onset of cholesterol and diabetes be spread at the school level itself. These changes are far from how things were when you started in the early 1980s.

Q3) Cardiac diseases management in those days?

In 1981-82, when I had started off cardiology at AIIMS, we saw less number of patients with the kind of heart diseases we come across these days. There were few patients with heart attacks due to hypertension or diabetes and more patients with rheumatic heart disease. In rheumatic heart diseases, the heart valves are damaged and it starts with a rheumatic fever, which can affect connective tissue throughout the body, especially in the heart, joints, brain and skin. I also recollect patients with problems in the valve like infections on them. Angiography was rarely performed and balloon angioplasty was nascent. The risks involved with treatments were high, interventional cardiology was yet to take off.

Q4) How technology has evolved over the years?

Up to late 1980s, we had patients who went abroad to get a surgery. Those who couldn't afford it were on medication and various degrees of rest and medication to manage their condition with deterioration in quality of life. That

trend started to change from around 1988 when a few private hospitals came up to focus extensively on heart care. There was also advancement in interventional cardiology with catheters coming in and balloon angioplasty being performed. And, the success rates also started getting better. I think by early 1990s, the trend reversed with most patients getting treated in India barring cases that were complicated or those who still felt they would get better treatment abroad.

But, by mid 1990s, India had several private and government hospitals which had reported quality heart care treatment centres and success rates were getting better that those going abroad for treatment was a rare occurrence. In the early 1990s we also started witnessing a change in the patient profile - they weren't necessarily from the rich families. The number of patients with lifestyle triggers causing heart diseases increased - hypertension & diabetes.

We graduated to stents by late early 2000s, which has seen several advancement and so has been the case with better catheters that allowed more manoeuvring inside the body for better views and treatment. Advancement also meant, we were able to detect more patients at an early stage of heart diseases.

Q5) A lot of studies and research in the field is still dominated by the west, while we have higher number of patients. Isn't there a need for an Indian standard to treat heart diseases?

Indians are unique, in fact the incidence of heart disease in expat Indians is 15-20 per cent higher compared to the residents in the US and Europe. At the same time, we are working towards collaborating on studies with the west when it comes to treatment of patients with heart diseases.

Q6) What will be your message for readers on World Heart Day?

Stop treating your heart as just a given pump organ. It has an important role to play and any disruption to it can cause you greater harm. In people who develop a heart disease and complications such as an acute heart attack, it is imperative to provide immediate treatment in the form of angioplasty to minimize or avoid the damage to the heart muscles. Angioplasty is done to restore and improve blood flow. A long, thin tube (catheter) is inserted into the narrowed part of the artery. A thin wire mesh (stent) mounted on a deflated balloon is then passed through the catheter to the narrowed area. The balloon is inflated, compressing the deposits against the artery walls and leaving expanded stent embedded in the artery. Drug-eluting stents release medication to help keep the arteries open. Few stents are US FDA approved and well-studied for safe use in patients with complications such as diabetes, high bleeding risk or in patients who might have to interrupt medication a month after angioplasty. In CABG, the surgeon creates a graft to bypass blocked coronary arteries using a vessel from another part of the body. This allows blood to flow around the blocked or narrowed coronary artery.

Some tips that parents can follow at home to tackle obesity and unhealthy habits in children:

- ❖ Encourage healthy eating habits right at the onset.
- ❖ Try making favorite dishes healthier. Few changes can make even snacks healthier.
- ❖ Avoid tempting children with calorie-rich food. It is okay to treat them but in moderation and by limiting high-fat and high-sugar or salty snacks.
- ❖ Make kids understand the importance of being physically active.

- ❖ Lead by example. Indulge in at least 60 minutes of moderate to intense physical activity every day.
- ❖ Reduce sedentary time. While reading is a good option, too much of screen time is not.
- ❖ Replace screen time with the outdoors and fun activities to keep children engaged.

Q7) What is this year's message for world heart day from the world heart federation?

Use heart to beat heart disease. We are living in unprecedented times. The course of pandemic is unknown, however heart disease is leading cause of death on the planet (30% of all deaths). In times of Covid patients face a threat of not seeking care for their hearts

Using heart is about using:

- ❖ Your head - To understand and act on behavior for healthy heart
- ❖ Your influence - Your example
- ❖ Your compassion
- ❖ Also we can use heart to make better diet choices, quitting smoking, getting exercise and sticking to safe alcohol guidelines. Use heart to listen to your heart by not letting covid-19 stop regular checkups.

I Feel given the rise in obesity among children and youth, it may be a good idea to screen children when they are in middle or high school for cholesterol and start an early treatment.

Choose your cooking oil wisely

6

Dr Sundeep Mishra, professor of cardiology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi

No single oil is perfect. So use a combination of oils. Blend two or three types of oils or use them separately—each dish cooked in a different oil. However, if you want to stick to one cooking medium, use rice bran, mustard or groundnut oil; Each of them is a great choice for Indian style of cooking.

Do not reuse frying oil. Cooking or frying at high temperature leads to ‘smoking of oil’ making it extremely harmful. Likewise, virgin olive oil is good only for sprinkling on salads or light cooking because it smokes at a very low temperature and degenerates. Hence it is not suitable for frying of any type.

Hydrogenated oil or vanaspati ghee is the worst oil and should be strictly avoided. All kinds of street or dhaba foods and packaged foods like bhujia, biscuits, cakes are best avoided because they are generally cooked in vanaspati ghee.

Don't ignore symptoms of heart attack

7

Dr Brajesh Kunwar, director & head-Interventional Cardiology, Hiranandani Hospital, Vashi

Symptoms in both genders differ. Women are susceptible to experience chest discomfort, shortness of breath, indigestion and back and neck pain as well as the classic chest pains—also seen in men; sometimes, these symptoms are elusive and harder to detect.

Eat right on around 2,000 calories a day

8

Dr Vivek Jawali, chief cardiothoracic and vascular surgeon and chairman, Fortis Hospitals, Bengaluru

The commonest heart problem in India is heart attack (cardiovascular disease).

Heart attacks are found to be more common in men than in women. The risk of heart attack is strongly linked to family history.

The modifiable risk factors for heart attack include diabetes, blood pressure, obesity. The key to managing these risk factors would be to eat right.

Follow a low calorie diet. Eat 2,000 calories a day. Cut down on sugar, especially white sugar and refined sugar.

Make better food choices. Limit your fat intake. Less is better when it comes to oil, ghee, cheese, butter and fried stuff. That said, one can have three teaspoonful of oil or ghee and a small piece of dessert a day.

Women should get screened for heart disease

9

Dr Amit Gupta, consultant, Cardiology, Columbia Asia Hospital, Palam Vihar, Gurgaon

Women are not ‘immune’ to heart disease.

Certain conditions during pregnancy such as pre-eclampsia and gestational diabetes up the risk of a heart disease or a heart attack in future.

Menopause is another risk factor for Cardiovascular Disease. It reduces the protective effect of estrogen, the naturally occurring female hormone available in a woman's body during her reproductive life cycle, from about age 12 to 50.

Annual checkup is an absolutely must for women, especially those who have a complicated pregnancy or have entered menopause. They must also get enough sleep and reduce stress to keep their heart healthy.

Care for the elderly. Make sure they don't miss their check-ups

10

Dr Yugal Kishore Mishra, head of Cardiac Sciences and chief of Clinical Services, HCMCT Manipal Hospitals, Dwarka, New Delhi

Amid Covid-19, the elderly with pre-existing heart problems should not delay tests and treatment if they feel any progression. They can go for clinical examination along with an investigation that includes Chest X-ray, ECG and Echo. Schedule online consultations and minimise hospital visits whenever possible. It helps understand the urgency of follow-up or tests. If needed, go to a closer facility. Make sure patients don't miss their ongoing medications.

Those who have undergone Advanced surgical Procedures such as heart transplant, Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD) and Total Artificial Heart (TAH) need to be even more cautious in terms of protection and monitoring their condition regularly. This could mean wearing masks even at home because the virus can come through family members as well.



USE THE HEART TO BEAT HEART DISEASE

Cardiovascular disease continues to be the leading cause of death and disability in the world today. The term ‘cardiovascular disease’ (CVD) refers to any disease of the heart, vascular disease of the brain, or disease of the blood vessel. More people die from CVDs worldwide than from any other cause and mostly it affects low- and middle-income countries.



DR. PREETI SHARMA

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Associate Director & Interventional
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KNOW YOUR RISK

Visit your healthcare professional and get few simple checks:

Check your blood glucose levels

CVD accounts for 60% of all deaths in people with diabetes so if it's left undiagnosed and untreated it can put you at increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

Check your blood pressure

High blood pressure is the number one risk factor for CVD. It's called the ‘silent killer’ because it usually has no warning signs or symptoms, and many people don't realize they have it.

Check your numbers

Measure your cholesterol levels, weight and body mass index (BMI), doctor can then advise you on your CVD risk, so you can plan to improve your heart health.

RISK FACTORS FOR CVD

There are many risk factors associated with coronary heart disease and stroke. The more risk factors you have, the greater the likelihood that you will develop CVD, unless you take action to modify your risk factors and work to prevent them.

Modifiable risk factors include:

- Physical inactivity
- Unhealthy diet
- Raised blood pressure
- Tobacco use
- Cholesterol
- Obesity and being overweight

Non-modifiable risk factors include:

- Family history
- Diabetes
- Age (>55yrs.)
- Gender-Males are at greater risk (postmenopausal females have same risk as that of males)

Understand the signs and symptoms of a heart attack

Over 70% of all cardiac and breathing emergencies occur in the home when a family member is present and could help a victim.

Heart attack warning signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, where no one doubts what's happening. But most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Some common symptoms are:

- Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.

- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

Women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND HEART HEALTH

Around the globe, there is a decrease in patients seeking the usual heart care that they would need in non-pandemic times. In Covid 19 pandemic, people with heart attack are not seeking medical advice and delay in treatment, leading to poor outcomes which increases the risk of death.

So, in the time of COVID-19, taking care of your heart is more important than ever before. Make right choices and look after your heart well by:

- Eating healthily,
- Getting more exercise
- And saying No to tobacco.



Manipal Hospitals, Bangalore shows the way forward in tackling the Rising Burden of Heart Diseases among Indians on World Heart Day

World Heart Day 2020-#Use heart to beat cardiovascular disease

Heart diseases are the leading cause of mortality and morbidity globally. The World Health Organization reports death in every 3 - 10 people due to heart disease every year. During the ongoing pandemic, the global burden of heart disease is further expected to rise. On one hand, patients with heart conditions are at increased risk of severe COVID infection and complications. On the other hand, many of them are staying away from the hospital due to the fear of getting the infection, leading to worsening of existing conditions.

29th September is celebrated as the World Heart Day every year globally. It is organized by the World Heart Federation to raise awareness about heart disease. The theme for this year's campaign is **"Use heart to beat the cardiovascular disease"**. The overall management of heart disease starts with awareness, change in one's behaviour and compassion for those who are vulnerable to heart disease in times of COVID 19.

At present, heart disease has also been recognised as the leading cause of deaths among Indians, accounting for about 28% of all deaths.

Prevention by Managing Risk Factors

Evidence suggests that Indians as a race is predisposed to heart diseases,

owing to genetic risk factors for Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) in 35-40% of the Indians. High prevalence of diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidaemia coupled with low intake of fruits and vegetables, smoking, sedentary lifestyle, stress, and maternal malnutrition, etc have been identified as some of the most important risk factors of increasing heart diseases among the Indians. Effective control of these risk factors in the population can reduce the prevalence and related complications significantly in India.

Underdiagnosis and underreporting of heart diseases are also rampant in the country, creating the need for public awareness about the early recognition of signs and symptoms and seeking medical help regarding the same.

Technical Advances for Effective Management of Heart Conditions Cardiac emergencies

Heart attacks and cardiac arrest are medical emergencies and the patient should be rushed to a hospital with a catheterization laboratory immediately, without delay. A heart attack happens when a blocked artery restricts optimal blood supply to a part of the heart causing symptoms such as chest pain and sweating. A cardiac arrest is characterised by a sudden loss of heart function due to electrical malfunction in the heart. In most cases, a person loses consciousness and

has no pulse. The best approach to treat such patient is to begin CPR immediately and continue the same until medical help arrives.

Manipal Hospitals, Jayanagar has recently launched **State of the Art cath Lab** with a reduced door to balloon time that minimizes death risks in such patients significantly and allows a faster recovery. It carried out several life-saving procedures such as primary angioplasty, ablation, and pacemaker placement. Elaborating on the same **Dr. K P Srihari Das, Senior Consultant - Interventional Cardiology & Team, Manipal Hospitals, Jayanagar** said, *"A heart block is characterized by narrowing of the heart arterial walls by cholesterol deposition and often presents as a heart attack. Angiography is a great tool to identify a vessel block early in the disease state and enables timely management. Angioplasty is a life-saving procedure used by us to open up blocked artery in patients coming in with heart attack. The management of cardiac arrest in the Cath lab generally includes the use of a defibrillator, drugs, an implantable device or other procedures."*

Complicated Heart Procedures

Some heart conditions such as an aortic aneurysm or rheumatic heart disease require complicated cardiac repair or valve replacement surgeries. *"Aortic diseases are an important cause of cardiovascular mortalities*

and is on the rise in India due to the increasing age of the population. An aneurysm is a weak point in the arterial wall that can burst suddenly, leading to an emergency like a stroke. Technological advances have enabled us to treat several aortic diseases such as aortic aneurysm through minimally invasive endovascular repair instead of open-heart surgery. However, patients should seek early medical care. Unfortunately, most patients present after the aneurysm has ruptured," said **Dr. Pradeep Haranahalli, Consultant - Interventional Cardiology, Manipal Hospitals, Whitefield.** The expert cardiac team at Manipal Hospitals, Whitefield have carried out several complicated cardiac repair and valve replacement surgeries till date.

A heart valve surgery is required when a person has narrowing of the heart valves known as stenosis or a leak in one of the valves causing blood to flow back in one of the chambers. This can significantly affect the heart's ability to pump efficiently. In such cases, a patient might require valve replacement surgery. In some patients, repair surgery might be considered to speed up the recovery period. **Dr. Devananda N S, HOD & Consultant - Cardiothoracic Vascular Surgery, Heart and Lung Transplant Surgery, Manipal Hospitals, Old Airport Road** said *"Today Valve repair is the treatment of choice for all non-rheumatic valve problems producing valve leak. Repair is heart friendly in all the ways and doesn't require blood thinner unlike the replaced valves. Its durability is also time tested. We have 2 decades of experience in valve repair in all age groups."* Dr. Devananda has successfully conducted several valve repair surgeries. The hospital has conducted a Quadruple valve procedure for the first time in Karnataka, amidst the recent pandemic.

Manipal Hospitals Old Airport Road branch also specialises in han-

dling all complex procedures including cardiac transplants, transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVI) for aortic stenosis and Intravascular Lithotripsy (IVL) balloon to remove calcified heart block effectively, Left atrial appendage (LAA) closure for AF patients. Elaborating on the importance of TAVI, **Dr. Ranjan Shetty, HOD & Consultant - Interventional Cardiology, Manipal Hospitals, Old Airport Road** said *"TAVI is a minimally invasive procedure like angioplasty, done in patients with severe blockage of the aortic valve. It is a good alternative in patients prone to a complication with open-heart procedures. As compared to open-heart surgery the procedure is less invasive, have a faster recovery, have a lower risk of complications, including morbidity and can be performed under local anaesthesia. Also, LAA closure is a procedure done as alternative to blood thinners for patients with Atrial fibrillation. Manipal Hospitals Bangalore has the highest experience of this procedure in South East Asia."*

COVID-19 relating Cardiac complications

The ongoing pandemic has further complicated the scenario for heart patients in India. Evidence gathered so far has also made it quite clear that such patients are at higher risk of COVID-19 infections and a higher risk of related complications. Heart patients are advised not to ignore their pre-existing conditions owing to the virus outbreak and should continue to seek regular medical care to prevent disastrous outcomes. Moreover, heart complications have also been reported in several patients post-COVID recovery. *"At this point, it is quite clear cardiac patients need to take utmost care of their health during the ongoing pandemic, especially those who recovered from COVID. Patients with existing heart conditions should not stay away from the hospital any longer. On the other hand, Cardiac*

high sensitivity c-reactive protein (HS-CRP), Serum Ferritin level and Cardiac enzymes like Troponin I-T, D-Dimer Test, etc are some of the important tests recommended in all COVID recovered patients to minimize their chances of cardiac complications in the future" explained **Dr. Nagesh H E, Senior Consultant- Cardiology, Manipal Hospitals, Malleshwaram.**

"Heart disease patients and Co-morbidities associated with heart disease like hypertension, diabetes and obesity are at increased risk of severe COVID manifestations. In these difficult times it is all the more important to take care of your heart. Like taking regular check-ups, continuing cardiac medications, and brisk physical activity to the tune of 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week with an addition to precautions for COVID. Like social distancing, wearing masks and hand sanitisation" explained **Dr. Arun Veeram Reddy, Consultant - Cardiothoracic Vascular Surgery, Manipal Hospitals Whitefield.**

Conclusion

The need of the hour is to create public awareness about heart disease and seeking early medical care regarding the same. Technological advances and expert specialist care have made it possible to treat several complex heart conditions successfully and reducing their related morbidity and mortality significantly in our country. Manipal Hospitals has been voted as one of the best hospitals in India for heart treatment for its ultra-modern facilities coupled with experienced staff including interventional cardiologists, electrophysiologists, and cardiologists. It offers a wide range of cardiac healthcare services from out-patient treatment and diagnostics to advanced clinical care.

For more information please visit: www.manipalhospitals.com or call: 1800 102 5555

THE TRANSPORT-TECHNOLOGY INTERFACE AT MANIPAL HOSPITALS, SALEM, SAVES LIFE OF PATIENTS IN EMERGENCY CONDITIONS

Advanced cardiac catheterization lab, highly sophisticated State-of-the-Art ambulance service and preventive cardiac health check-up ensures comprehensive cardiac care services at Manipal Hospitals, Salem

CARDIAC CARE AT MANIPAL HOSPITALS, SALEM

The cardiac care centre at Manipal Hospitals, Salem is equipped with advanced facilities for managing several cardiac disorders. In the emergency cardiac events such as cardiac arrest, time is critical. Door-to-balloon time is calculated as the time from which the patient enters the hospital until he receives balloon angioplasty. It has been proven that a longer door-to-balloon time is associated with an increased risk of death and disability in a cardiac emergency. The State-of-the-Art infrastructure of Manipal Hospitals, Salem and the trained expert medical team allows a faster door-to-balloon time, allowing faster recovery in patients.

MARS: AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO AVOID LOSING THE GOLDEN HOUR

Manipal Hospitals Salem has a fleet of highly-advanced ambulances for patients with critical emergency conditions. The ambulances are equipped with advanced life-saving facilities such as ECG machines, ventilators, defibrillators, monitors, and other instruments to stabilize the patients. The primary aim of the MARS (Manipal Ambulance Response Services) is to make optimum use of the initial golden hour of emergency. When the hospital receives information about an emergency, the MARS gets activated and is rushed to the patient. The ambulance is equipped with a video monitoring system. Through this sys-

tem, the technician that reaches to the patient provides real-time information to the doctor at Manipal Hospitals. The first response treatment is done at the home of the patient by the staff trained in cardiac procedures. Training is provided for the technician to perform CPR and Defibrillator shock in the event of cardiac arrest to maintain blood circulation which is very vital for cerebral perfusion and oxygenation.

"The ambulance has the necessary facilities to perform these procedures, and the trained technician performs the procedures. The first response is provided under the guidance of an emergency physician and cardiac specialist, sitting at Manipal Hospitals, and is connected through video monitor with the staff and patient", says **Dr Arul Ramakrishnan, Consultant- Accident and Emergency at Manipal Hospitals, Salem.**

The availability of first-hand information about the condition of the patient and the diagnosis through a video monitoring system helps the doctors to save the critical time to deal with the patient. *"The patient is under the strict vigilance of the cardiac specialist and emergency physician through video monitoring system while shifting him into the ambulance. The signs, symptoms, and health status of the patient is shared with the doctor so that the cardiac care team is prepared with the appropriate treatment plan when the patient reaches the hospital. It saves crucial time that otherwise*



Dr Arul Ramakrishnan
Consultant- Accident and Emergency
at Manipal Hospitals, Salem.

may have serious repercussions." informs **Dr Arul Ramakrishnan** while emphasizing the benefit of first-hand information of patient shared with the hospital.

HEART ATTACK OR CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE (CHD)

A heart attack occurs when the heart fails to receive enough oxygenated blood resulting in damage of the heart muscles. The most common symptoms of a heart attack include chest pain and heaviness that may radiate to the arms, shoulder and jaws, excessive sweating, dizziness, shortness of breath, anxiety and confusion. The most common risk factors for heart attack include high cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, alcohol abuse and stress. People experiencing a heart attack should reach out for emergency medical help without delay, the first hour also called the GOLDEN HOUR. During the ongoing pandemic with unpredicted health and social scenarios having the treatment arriving early and initiated at the patient's location will surely help turn the situation in favour and may save progression to further complications.

For more information please visit: www.manipalhospitals.com or call: 1800 102 5555

HEART DISEASE BURDEN IN INDIA



DR. ANAND KR. PANDEY
MBBS, MD (Medicine), DM (Cardiology)
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SITTING ON VOLCANO

There is strong possibility of a genetic risk factor with a high prevalence of heart disease in Indians and south Asians. The incidence, prevalence, and mortality, from premature heart disease, in Indians have been among the highest reported for any ethnic group in different countries. The prevalence of heart disease is 89% - 300% higher among Indian men than among whites in the US.

India is experiencing an escalating epidemic of heart disease. The contribution of heart disease to total deaths and disease burden in India has almost doubled since 1990. In 2016, an estimated 2.8 million Indians died from heart disease. Overall, CVD contributed to 28% of the total deaths in India in 2016, compared to 15% in 1990. Heart disease has now become the leading cause of mortality in all parts of India, including the poorer states and rural areas. The prevalence of heart disease has increased seven-fold in urban India and fourfold in rural areas between 1970 and 2013. Current prevalence of 14% in the urban and 7% in the rural populations.

India currently has the highest burden of acute heart attack in the world. The

number of deaths due to heart disease in India is predicted to increase by another 50% by 2030, unless aggressive preventive efforts are undertaken. 62% of all heart diseases deaths and its related complication in India were premature.

MALIGNANT CAD IN YOUNG INDIANS

Indians are particularly susceptible to premature heart disease leading to heart attack at an earlier age. More than one-half of patients are less than 55 years and one-third are less than 45 years of age with a mean age of 48 years. Despite the young age, multi vessel disease which includes double-vessel disease, three-vessel disease, and left main disease was found in 79% of patients. Additionally, coronary atherosclerosis was generally diffuse with multiple sites of obstruction in most vessels. The median age of bypass surgery was 60 years; 6% of these bypass surgery was performed in those aged <45 years. The 3 hallmarks of malignant heart disease in Indians are (1) extreme prematurity, (2) extreme severity and (3) high mortality at a young age. A notable element, that can be considered the fourth feature of malignant heart disease, is that established risk factors are at low levels or absent.

Heart disease in young people (aged less than 45 years in men and less than 50 years in women) is strikingly more common in Indians-10% to 15% of all heart disease- compared to 2%-5% reported in Western populations.

Heart disease in young Indians is clinically aggressive, severe, extensive, diffuse, and malignant, often resembling the disease pattern of older individuals. These features are typically found in patients with diabetes but are also common in young Indians without diabetes. This phenomenon may be termed diabetic-like heart disease in the absence of diabetes. Many Indians have extensive and diffuse atherosclerosis and greater plaque burden

throughout the arteries, which may masquerade and get misinterpreted as small coronary arteries on angiography.

DIABETES AND ESTABLISHED RISK FACTORS INSUFFICIENT TO EXPLAIN MALIGNANT HEART DISEASE

Although the modifiable established risk factors (Bad Cholesterol, Hypertension, Smoking and Diabetes) are undoubtedly major contributors to heart disease, they do not fully explain malignant heart disease in young Indians and point to the presence of other drivers

So in view of such a high incidence of cardiovascular disease we require intense screening for primary prevention.

Assessment of cardiovascular risk can be done starting at early age with taking following parameters into consideration. There are multiple risk factors which can cause blockages in blood supply of heart leading to angina and heart attack. We must look for:

- ❖ Family history of premature heart disease
- ❖ Diabetes
- ❖ Hypertension
- ❖ Smoking
- ❖ Deranged Cholesterol Parameter
- ❖ Physical inactivity
- ❖ Quality of Diet specially lack of fruits and vegetables and consumption of high amount of Trans fats. Trans fats are worse kind of fat especially present in fast and junk food.
- ❖ Obesity is also becoming a silent killer which is again life style related disease.

Avoiding HURRY, WORRY and CURRY will further be a good help.

These changes incorporated in daily life style and timely undergoing preventive health checks can prevent many life style related diseases which may turn fatal.



POWER PLAY

The appointment of C.R. Patil as state BJP chief is a warning signal to Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, who is close to Amit Shah

BY NANDINI OZA

THE EASE OF DOING business rankings released on September 5 by the Union government's department for promotion of industry and internal trade saw Gujarat slipping from fifth to tenth position. It has come as a big blow to a state already battered badly by the Covid-19 pandemic. The state's response to the pandemic has faced a lot of criticism. The Gujarat High Court recently pulled up the state government for its alleged mismanagement of the pandemic and said the Ahmedabad civil hospital looked worse than a dungeon.

It has been a tough few months for Gujarat, which used to advertise its health care facilities to attract NRIs, and is known for its business-friendly climate and the biennial Vibrant Gujarat Summit, launched by Narendra Modi when he was chief minister.

Ever since Modi moved to New Delhi after a 13-year stint as chief minister, Gujarat has been slipping on a number of parameters. It has become a major headache for the BJP, which considers Gujarat its model state.

There have been rumours that Vijay Rupani, chosen by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to replace Anandiben Patel as chief minister in 2016, is on his way out. While that change is yet to happen, the BJP has appointed C.R. Patil, a three-time MP close to Modi, as the new chief of its state unit in the place of Shah's protégé Jitu Vaghani. The appointment is seen as a warning signal to Rupani and his deputy Nitin Patel, with whom he shares a testy relationship.

Patil appears to have been given a clear brief as



NEW EQUATIONS
With C.R. Patil (left) having taken charge, Vijay Rupani's wings have been clipped

the Rupani government has fallen short on a range of critical issues including the response to the pandemic, agitations by Patidars and the OBCs, dalit issues and the controversies surrounding police recruitment and private school fees.

With Patil taking charge, it seems Rupani's wings have been clipped. The new president meets party workers regularly. Despite appeals by the government about maintaining social distancing and avoiding rallies and processions, he organised two *yatras*—one each in Saurashtra and north Gujarat. Patil has now tested positive for Covid-19. Unconfirmed reports indicate that at least 130 BJP leaders and workers, too, have become infected. There are rumours on social media that the new BJP president turned out to be a superspreader.

What has further ruffled feathers within the BJP is Patil's order that ministers should be present at the party headquarters in Gandhinagar to redress the grievances of party workers as Covid restrictions prevent them from visiting the secretariat frequently. Those who belong to other parties and those without any party affiliation are also allowed to meet the ministers at the BJP headquarters. Patil is also reaching out to BJP workers through an e-interface after Covid cases were reported from the party headquarters.

Not many within the BJP are happy with the new scheme of things. But unlike in the Congress, nobody is speaking out. A senior BJP leader told THE WEEK that forcing the ministers to function from the BJP office was unconstitutional. "Why give VIP status to BJP workers? And, why force Congress workers to go to the BJP office? Moreover, the ministers are being paid their salaries from the state's exchequer," he said.

Right wing ideologue Vishnu Pandya, however,

said the move was a step in the right direction. "In the state secretariat, the entry is limited due to various reasons and the ministers are not able to reach out to many people. Moreover, the administration remains confined to GRs (government resolutions)," he said.

Political analyst Hari Desai said Patil had been given the "assignment of a super CM". The way he organised a rally in Rupani's home city, Rajkot, was a clear indication of the changing power equations in the state BJP. Desai said the new president might be able to arrest the worrying slide in the party's fortunes, but his appointment was also indicative of disagreements between Modi and Shah. The way things are, in the upcoming byelections to eight assembly seats and several local body seats, Patil will be calling the shots.

Gujarat BJP spokesperson Bharat Pandya dismissed the allegations that Patil was brought in as a super chief minister. He said ministers were asked to spend time at the party headquarters to motivate ordinary workers and that such an experiment was undertaken in the early 1990s as well. "The government and the party complement each other," said Pandya.

The opposition Congress, however, said Patil's order to the ministers to get to the party office showed that its workers were not being heard. "The BJP is not listening to the common man or even ordinary party workers. Only influential people are being heard," said Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi. "If Patil or the Gujarat government wants to listen to the masses, then they should open the doors of the secretariat to all." 🗣️



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ARVIND JAIN

SOWING ANGER

Farmers' organisations are on the warpath against new reforms

BY PRATUL SHARMA

What happened in the Rajya Sabha on September 20 was unprecedented and against constitutional propriety. Both the government and the opposition agree on this, but for different reasons.

The trouble started when Deputy Chairman Harivansh asked for proceedings to be extended to pass two crucial agriculture reform bills. The opposition resisted. As Harivansh persisted, agitated members of the Congress, the Trinamool Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party rushed to the well saying the chair was being

partisan. Some opposition members tore rulebooks, threw papers and advanced menacingly towards Harivansh before the marshals restrained them.

The house eventually passed the two contentious bills with a voice vote. The opposition parties then boycotted the session. On September 22, the house passed another bill, again with a voice vote. "The division (voting) could not have been allowed when there was ruckus inside the house," said Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. "The deputy chairman asked them to return to their seats 13 times."

Farming has always been a sensitive issue in India, especially politically. For instance, parties have often won elections by promising farm loan waivers; the Congress won Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan in 2018, and the BJP won Uttar Pradesh in 2017 with a similar promise.

No one wants to alienate the farmers, and the Modi government knows that. For the first time, the opposition may have an issue that it can use to mobilise crowds against the government; it failed to do so during demonetisation and the rollout of the Goods and Services Tax.

GRAPES OF WRATH

Congress workers during a protest in Delhi

The BJP, on the other hand, would need a massive awareness campaign to convince farmers that the bills would increase their incomes. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been vocal about farmers' interests, and said that the reform bills were "historic".

Of the bills, the most controversial was the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, which allows a farmer to sell his produce to anyone, anywhere. The existing Agricultural Produce Market Committee-run *mandis* and minimum support price would be kept intact. The farmer, however, would get the minimum support price only at the APMC *mandis*.

"These bills will give more profit to farmers and ensure greater participation," said BJP Rajya Sabha member Bhupender Yadav. "The opposition parties do not want more money for the farmers. The lies of the opposition will be exposed. The MSP will stay."

The Congress disagreed. "The MSP will continue, but the government will reduce its procurement [of grains]," said Dr Amar Singh, Congress MP from Punjab and former Food Corporation of India chairman. "History will tell us. If procurement is not reduced, how will PDS (Public Distribution System) supply reduce? If the PDS supply is not reduced, how will the private players come in? The government should assure that

procurement will not go down."

Politics aside, farmers' organisations are on the warpath. A group of them has called for a bandh on September 25, and a meeting of all farmers' unions in Delhi on September 27 to chalk out the course of action.

Said V.M. Singh, convener of the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, an umbrella organisation of more than 250 farmers' unions: "We have the example of Bihar, which had abolished APMC in 2006. There, crops are sold below MSP. The same will happen elsewhere. The AIKSCC warns the government of nationwide unrest if MSP is not guaranteed."

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch, which the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh backs, also has asked the government to guarantee MSP, even in the private sector. "The farmers have poor bargaining power," said SJM national co-convener Ashwani Mahajan. "They could be exploited, and thus need government protection."

The *mandis* are a source of revenue for state governments. In Punjab, for example, sale and purchase of agriculture produce at *mandis* attract a tax of 6 per cent, along with *arhatiya* (middleman) commission of 2.5 per cent. This earns the state around ₹4,000 crore a year. The state governments stand to lose this revenue as the new reforms would introduce zero-tax trade areas outside the *mandis*.

Another point of contention is that, according to the bill, a farmer with a complaint would have to go to a sub-divisional magistrate for redress. This might discourage the farmers

and also burden the magistrate.

The other two bills—the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020—have not faced as much resistance. The essential commodities act, a socialist-era law enacted during the time of food scarcity, had become obsolete. On September 22, the Rajya Sabha passed the bill to remove cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onions and potatoes from the list of essential commodities. This would remove private players' fears of excessive regulatory interference and would benefit a number of new agri-tech startups. Along with the ₹1 lakh crore agriculture infrastructure fund, this will help create more facilities for farmers.

"Earlier, there was no clarity on the rules in different states," said Karthik Jayaraman, CEO and cofounder, WayCool, a Chennai-based agri-tech startup. "Procuring was tedious. The new reforms will give greater freedom to us to expand, and source farm produce directly from farmers, instead of just the APMC. The farmers will benefit, so will new agri-tech companies."

The second bill, for empowerment and protection of farmers, gives legal sanction to contract farming. This will allow big companies to sign contracts with farmers and use the land to grow crops of their choice. This is already done in several states. The government has also clarified that the farmer would not be at risk of losing his land, which many parties and farmers' bodies had feared would happen.

Despite disagreements on many aspects of the bills, most people seem to agree that the private sector would gain from them, which would in turn help the economy. The trouble, though, lies in convincing the farmers, and the Modi government will have to work overtime to do so. ■

“THE OPPOSITION PARTIES DO NOT WANT MORE MONEY FOR THE FARMERS. THE LIES OF THE OPPOSITION WILL BE EXPOSED.”

—Bhupender Yadav, BJP Rajya Sabha member

■ **INTERVIEW**



ARVIND JAIN

Harsimrat Kaur Badal,
former Union minister for food
processing industries

BY PRATUL SHARMA

HARSIMRAT KAUR BADAL quit the Union cabinet protesting that the farm reform bills were against farmers. The Shiromani Akali Dal, her party, has been part of the National Democratic Alliance since its inception, and had been the first to support Narendra Modi's candidacy for prime minister. However, the Akalis could not lend their support to Modi this time as the party's vote bank is largely made up of the Sikh peasantry.

In an exclusive interview, Badal explains the factors behind her resignation, and the way forward for her party.

Q\ Why did you resign from the Union cabinet?

A My party and I are opposed to the three agriculture-related bills which are against farmers. When I could not convince the government, and the bills were going to be passed in the Lok Sabha, I had no option but to oppose the bills. So, I resigned as a minister and opposed the passing of the anti-farmer bills.

The SAD raised the need to address the apprehensions of farmers through all possible means. First, I raised it while giving my comments during the inter-ministerial consultations before ordinance came to the

Will not allow implementation of the bills

cabinet. I again expressed my apprehension in the cabinet meeting when it was tabled for discussion. After the ordinances were promulgated, the SAD took up the issue with the BJP top leadership. However, when the NDA government refused to address the matter, I did not have any option but to resign from my post and prepare to battle alongside farmers.

Q\ Other Union ministers say you were present in the cabinet when the bills were approved.

A I have never claimed not being present. Before, during and after the promulgation of the ordinances I continuously raised objections about the bills, and urged the government to address these apprehensions before bringing the bills. I tried for more than two months to make the government agree to critical changes for making the bills beneficial to farmers, but I could not convince them.

Q\ The government claims the bills are for farmers' benefit.

A The cumulative impact of the three legislations will create serious problems. It is going to ruin agriculture of Punjab.

Once the private players get established the state procurement system will first get weakened, and finally [will become] irrelevant. The state

mandis and the infrastructure created to procure food grains, which has been established painstakingly over a period of 50 years, will be destroyed.

Q\ The SAD has been the oldest BJP ally. Will both parties continue their alliance in Punjab?

A This is a call which the party leadership will take collectively. We will discuss the issue with the party cadre as well as block and district level units before taking a final call on this.

Q\ What is your party's future course of action on the farm reform bills?

A We stand firmly and strongly with the farmers. We will make sure that the anti-farmer bills are not implemented in Punjab. All efforts will be made to stop the implementation of these bills. Akali Dal is a party of warriors. We will lead the fight.... The party has already drawn an action plan to ensure that the voice of *annadaata* [farmer] is heard by the nation and its government. We have announced a *chakka jam* (stop the wheels) on September 24, and will hold a *kisan* march to Mohali on October 1, to hand over to the governor a memorandum for the president, from Sri Akal Takht, Sri Damdama Sahib and Sri Kesgarh Sahib. We will not rest till justice is done to the farmers. ●

Winds of change

ESG investing is gathering momentum

BY ANUJA AGRAWAL



THERE IS A category of funds in Europe that saw record inflows of nearly \$65 billion in just three months between

April and June. The category saw an unprecedented inflow totalling \$10.4 billion in the US market in the same period. Combined with the first three months of 2020, the cumulative half-year flows in US stood at \$20.9 billion, which is just a tad lower than 2019's full year flows of \$21.4 billion.

So, which is this category of funds that investors are falling over each other to invest? What is the potential they see, especially amidst a global pandemic that has caused most asset class losing their sheen?

Welcome to the world of Environmental Social and Governance Funds, popularly known as ESG Funds. It is also called sustainable investing by a growing community of fund managers and investors who believe that the time has come to look at companies that respect factors like responsibility towards the planet, social obligations and good corporate governance.

What is an ESG Fund?

Simply put, an ESG Fund would only invest in companies that incorporate in their operations and functions, things like efficient disposal of waste, conservation of water and energy, climate change, gender equality, women empowerment, labour rights,

donating for social causes, strong internal controls in terms of efficient management and ethical practices among other things.

In terms of broad sectors, companies involved in alcohol, tobacco, gambling and controversial weapons are often kept out of ESG ambit.

One may feel that while ESG is quite big on the global scale, it is still nowhere in the reckoning in India. Quite true to a large extent, but the winds of change are here, and could be here to stay for the long haul.

Return generation potential

Let us first see the benefits of ESG investment in terms of returns—after all returns are what everyone invests for—and then the options that Indian investors have.

Not many might be aware but there is a Nifty 100 ESG index that serves as the benchmark for the few ESG Funds that are offered by mutual funds in India. More importantly, the ESG index has managed to outperform the benchmark Nifty in the recent past as Covid issues continue to impact the stock market.

From the highs in January, the 50-share Nifty fell by around 40 per cent by March and since then has gained a little over 53 per cent. On the other hand, the ESG index fell around 37 per cent between January and March and since then has surged over 56 per cent.

In terms of total returns, an investment of ₹100 in ESG index would have got you ₹226 in the last nine years while the same in Nifty would have made ₹198. So, numbers clearly favour ESG index over the benchmark Nifty.

Incidentally, in the current calendar year, the ESG index is marginally in the green while the Nifty is down nearly 5.50 per cent.

Investment avenues

Now, the all-important part of investment avenues. Well, if the returns are there then investment options are what one needs to know. As mentioned earlier, there are not too many options currently though three fund houses—Axis Mutual Fund, SBI Mutual Fund and Quantum Mutual Fund—offer ESG Funds.

ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund has come out with a New Fund Offer (NFO) of its ICICI Prudential ESG Fund which is currently underway and is open till October 5, 2020. The fund will have both growth and dividend options along with the option of direct plan in both the variants.

Corporates today are increasingly aware that millennial generation is increasingly mindful of the ESG practices they follow. Also, regulations are catching pace in the ESG space, all of which is leading to more compliance in terms of ESG practices. At such a time, it is interesting to see that an increasing number of fund managers and investors are looking at ESG investing. In the years ahead it is very likely that deep pocketed pension funds, large institutions and even millennial, which account for 60 per cent of our population who are comparatively more aware of environmental and social issues, would actively scout for ESG complaint funds to invest their money.

The writer is managing director,
InvestAscent Wealth Advisors Pvt Ltd.



PTI

**STEADY
BUILD-UP**
An Army con-
voy on its way
to Ladakh on
September 20

Uncompromising position

With Xi Jinping unlikely to back down, more violent skirmishes can be expected on the India-China border before winter sets in

BY PRADIP R. SAGAR

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping are likely to come face to face soon at the BRICS summit in Russia. The summit, which has been delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic, is now expected to take place by the end of October. Modi and Xi have met 18 times since 2014. The 19th meeting is going to be a tough one, given the tense border standoff between India and China.

Military commanders from both countries have been holding marathon deliberations, but they have not yet produced any tangible results. The sixth such meeting held on September 21 was also attended by Navin Srivastava, joint secretary in charge of east Asia at the ministry of external affairs. The MEA sent its representative to ensure that the Army and the political leader-

ship were on the same page on the issue. Srivastava, who has been holding border talks with Chinese diplomats, had accompanied External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during his recent meeting in Moscow with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

India went with a bigger delegation for the sixth round of talks, which was the first one after the Jaishankar-Wang meeting. The team led by Lieutenant General Harinder Singh of the Leh-based 14 Corps consisted of commanders of the two divisions responsible for Ladakh, Major General Abhijit Bapat and Major General Padam Shekhawat. Lieutenant General P.G.K. Menon, who is expected to take over

Strategists believe India's recent tactical gains have made China jittery. Operation Snow Leopard has given the Indian Army control over the dominating heights in the Chushul region.

the command of the 14 Corps, was also present. The Indian side said the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was the aggressor and should withdraw first following the principle of 'first in, first out'. At the end of the 14-hour-long meeting, the two sides agreed to "stop sending more troops to the frontline" and "refrain from unilaterally changing the situation on ground".

Lieutenant General Harinder Singh and Major General Liu Lin of the South Xinjiang military district have now spent nearly 75 hours trying to negotiate a way out of the current impasse. "Such long hours indicate that there are too many differences between the two sides. The Indian side needs to change its approach while negotiating with the Chinese military," said former northern army commander Lieutenant General (ret'd) D.S. Hooda.

Military planners do not foresee any major breakthrough in the coming days. They are, in fact, apprehensive of further violent skirmishes before winter sets in. General (ret'd) V.P. Malik, who led the Indian Army during the 1999 Kargil operation, said eyeball-to-eyeball situations can escalate quickly. He mentioned the Nathula crisis of 1967 when an accidental firing by a Chinese soldier while setting up a fence escalated into heavy artillery exchange which lasted for four days. "We need to be on our highest level of alertness and should be prepared for winter," said Malik. Citing the example of the Indian victory in Kargil, he said a robust defence was needed for diplomacy to succeed.

Military strategists believe that India's recent tactical gains have made China jittery. Operation Snow Leopard launched on August 29 has given the Indian Army control over the dominating heights in the Chushul region, bringing China's Moldo garrison under its range of fire.

Major General (ret'd) S.B. Asthana, an infantry leader with over 40 years of experience, said the PLA's operational aim was to maximise its territorial gains on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and gain some tactically significant features crucial to India before the onset of winter. "It will exploit the



UNEASY TIES
External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting in Moscow on September 10

remaining 30 to 45 days before heavy snowfall for the purpose, and will try not to give away any more critical heights,” he said. “We should raise the cost for the PLA for its gross violation of the LAC, even if it requires a long haul on the border and a few more military options.”

He said the five-point agreement between Jaishankar and Wang in Moscow was nothing more than a diplomatic nicety, and was difficult to implement on ground. “We have had 22 rounds of diplomatic talks on border management, but failed to reach any consensus,” said Asthana. As the LAC is not clearly demarcated, there will be incidents of jostling. “Jostling is not a strategic, tactical or operational action. Talks have very little meaning without proper demarcation, but it requires political will on both sides.”

Malik said there was a complete breakdown of trust between the Indian Army and the PLA. “On the ground, they do the exact opposite of what they discuss during talks, like what happened in Galwan. Armies always hit their adversaries at their weak spots. For proactive defence, we need to look for soft spots on the other side. You cannot guard each and

every inch of a high altitude mountainous border,” he said. He also warned about areas where India lacked adequate infrastructure and about posts which were thinly guarded.

Indian military planners think that a pullback from the border will be politically costly for Xi. The PLA, therefore, is unlikely to withdraw and may use the time for negotiation to bolster its logistics and beef up infrastructure support for its forward troops.

While India insists on unhindered access to the 15 Patrolling Points in eastern Ladakh currently blocked by China, the PLA wants India to vacate the strategic heights along the south bank of Pangong Tso. But giving up the newly occupied heights will be a strategic disaster for India. “If China does not agree to disengagement, then we should ask the PLA to thin down its troops close to the border. We need to rethink our negotiating position to break the logjam,” said Hooda. Many military strategists are, however, sceptical about the ongoing negotiations. “We should not go for a quick fix solution,” said Asthana. “It will turn into a major handicap in the future.”

THE WEEK

DEAR DOCTOR

Dr Rohit Shetty

consultant, cornea and refractive surgery,
and vice chairman, Narayana Nethralaya, Bengaluru

Be all eyes

How to keep your eyes healthy during Covid-19

Early humans were hunter-gatherers, who used their eyes to meet their basic needs. These days, people overuse their eyes. In this era of gadgets, our eyes are going through rapid evolutionary changes, and are trying to adapt to changes in the environment. The rest of the body has also undergone changes, but it has been more gradual.

Blink more often

We don’t blink enough. Every blink brings in more water. It helps keep your eyes lubricated. Eyes that are devoid of moisture are like a barren land, where bacteria grows. The fluid in the eyes gets muddy, and you will keep rubbing your eyes. When your eyes don’t get enough nourishment, bags and dark circles develop. How often should you blink? Anything more than ten times a minute is good.

Are carrots overhyped?

Carrots contain beta carotene and lutein that improve

eyesight. They are good and healthy, but are overrated. There are many vegetables that can promote better vision. Also, turmeric, sprouts, blueberries, almond and omega-3 fatty acid are good for eyes.

Eyes hate to be indoors all the time

In a study done in Singapore, children exposed to sunlight for up to two hours were found to have less progression of shortsightedness, compared to children who stayed indoors all the time. Sunlight helps in stopping the eyeball growth, and reduces the axial length of the eyeball.

Huge increase in cases of shortsightedness this year

Due to the scare generated because of Covid-19, people spend long hours indoors. By the end of 2020, there will be an increase in shortsightedness among children, by 20-30 per cent.

Most children, nowadays, spend 80 per cent of their



“

When your eyes don’t get enough nourishment, bags and dark circles develop. Blinking more than ten times a minute is good.

”

time in front of computer. The more they watch television or use computer, the more will be the elongation of their eyeballs. Ninety per cent of elongation of eyeballs is irreversible.

Eye care during Covid-19

Wearing masks for long hours could cause face mask-associated ocular disease, characterised by eye irritation.

The expelled air that gets trapped in the mask can lead to problems in the ocular surface area. There is an exponential increase in people experiencing it. Lubricating eye drops can help in relieving the irritation.

Keep myopia at bay

Ocular muscles in children are getting weaker leading to shorter attention span. Sometimes they see a shadow above objects or get double vision. This is known as binocular single vision problem. It is one of the most under-reported eye problems in the world and has to be examined by an ophthalmologist.

Eye exercise can be helpful for children with binocular single vision problem. It can have a huge impact on the child’s academic success..

—As told to Mini P. Thomas

To watch the interview with Dr Rohit Shetty, scan the QR code



Blink more often. Every blink brings in more water. It keeps your eyes lubricated.

By the end of 2020, there will be an increase in shortsightedness among children by 20-30 per cent.

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THE MAN, THE MELANGE

The dominant narrative about Syama Prasad Mookerjee is that he was a British sympathiser who spread hatred against Muslims. Declassified documents accessed by THE WEEK, however, show that while he was a Hindu nationalist, Mookerjee was never a blind follower of hindutva. He did not support the Quit India movement, but he did resign from the Bengal provincial cabinet in 1942 protesting the violence unleashed on the movement

BY RABI BANERJEE

ILLUSTRATION JOB P.K.

On July 6, 2000, prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee arrived in Kolkata to inaugurate the birth centenary celebrations of Syama Prasad Mookerjee, his political mentor. Vajpayee was Mookerjee's secretary when he was the president of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh.

West Bengal chief minister Jyoti Basu, who had sanctioned the use of the Netaji indoor stadium for the celebrations, and deputy chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee were invited to the function. But Basu was away in Israel, and the state cabinet gave the event a miss. A furious Vajpayee later told journalists that the leftists had insulted Bengal by boycotting the event. But then Mookerjee's politics had always been unacceptable to a large section of the Indian political establishment, especially the left, as they believed that he promoted communal politics.

Not all would, however, agree. Legendary communist and iconic parliamentarian Hiren Mukherjee wrote this in a tribute published by the parliament secretariat: "Mookerjee could not be glibly branded as a mere communalist, though in the heat of politics he often was. One could always discern the catholicity and, also within limitations, the rationality of his outlook. He cherished freedom of opinion and was far away from socialism, as one could be, but there was in him an innate liberalism. He made no bones about his Hindu Mahasabha links but he was a champion of civil liberties and kept himself above the narrowness of communal chauvinism."

Mookerjee saw himself as the defender of Hindu rights, especially in his homeland—the Muslim-majority Bengal province of British India. He felt the Congress was not standing up to the Muslim League, especially during the frequent communal riots in Bengal. And he was a trenchant critic of Mahatma Gandhi's version of secularism. Many Congress leaders agreed with him on the issue, but they stayed silent out of deference to Gandhi. Mookerjee, eventually, got slotted as a communal leader.

In 1952, when they both were members of the first Lok Sabha, Mookerjee jokingly told Hiren Mukherjee, "Do you know Hiren, they have allotted accommodation to me at Tughlak Crescent, mind you, not on Tughlak Road. And, I don't bat an eyelid, yet some people call me a communal Hindu."



COURTESY SPMRF

Mookerjee in the drawing room of his New Delhi residence in 1949

FROM STUDIES TO STATECRAFT

Mookerjee was born in 1901 into one of Calcutta's most respected families. His father, Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, had served as vice chancellor of Calcutta University and as a judge of the Calcutta High Court. After completing his BA Honours in English from Presidency College, Mookerjee went on to pursue his master's degree in Bengali language as he wanted to promote his mother tongue. In 1925, he left for England to study law and was called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1927. Upon his return to India, he turned his focus to higher education and, in 1934, was appointed vice chancellor of Calcutta University. He played a leadership role at several other prominent institutions such as the Asiatic Society and the Indian Institute of Science.

Throughout his career as an educationist, Mookerjee had never been influenced by religious considerations. His family members told THE WEEK that Muslim academics from all over the country used to visit him at his south Calcutta residence. Some came seeking his support to maintain their schools, colleges and students. "Legendary Bengali poet Kazi Nazrul Islam faced starvation at one point of time. It was Dr Mookerjee who saved his life," said Anirban Ganguly, director of the Delhi-based Syama Prasad Mookerjee Foundation.

Mookerjee's first brush with electoral politics came in 1929 when he was elected to the legislative assembly as a Congress candidate representing Calcutta University. He resigned a year later and got himself re-elected as an independent candidate after the Congress boycotted the assembly. Mookerjee became increasingly involved in politics after he was re-elected in the 1937 elections. He started associating himself with the Hindu Mahasabha, then headed by V.D. Savarkar.

The 1937 elections resulted in a coalition government of the Muslim League and the Krishak Praja Party, a breakaway faction of the League headed by prime minister A.K.

Fazlul Haq. Two decisions of the Haq government pushed Mookerjee deeper into politics. He was opposed to the decision to reserve half of the seats in the Calcutta corporation council for Muslims. Although Muslims were in majority in the province, they constituted less than 30 per cent of the city's population.

Mookerjee was even more appalled by the government's plan to remove Calcutta University from the supervisory role over secondary education in Bengal and give it to a board nominated by the government. He felt that it was a deliberate attempt to communalise the education sector. Despite his opposition, the Haq government passed the corporation bill, reserving 46 of 93 seats in the corporation council for Muslims.

BATTLE WITH BOSE

After the corporation bill was passed, new elections were scheduled to be held in early 1940. Subhas Chandra Bose, who was forced to quit as Congress president at the 1939 Tripuri session of the All India Congress Committee because of his differences with Gandhi, saw the corporation elections as a

platform to demonstrate his popular support. He had launched a pressure group called the Forward Bloc within the Congress; he proposed that the Bloc and the Mahasabha together fight the League in the corporation elections.

Bose and his elder brother Sarat, who then headed the Bengal Congress, discussed the alliance with Mookerjee.

Although Mookerjee supported the proposal enthusiastically, negotiations broke down at the last minute. The Mahasabha fought alone and won 50 per cent of the seats. "We defeated Subhas's force whom Gandhi followers had feared to challenge," wrote Mookerjee in the book *Leaves from a Diary*.

Bose, however, allied with the League to keep Mookerjee at bay. Shocked, Mookerjee wrote: "The great liberator and leftist who regarded Gandhi, Jawaharlal and the rest as moderates, and branded them as 'com-

Mookerjee saw himself as the defender of Hindu rights, especially in his homeland—the Muslim-majority Bengal province of British India.

promise-wallahs,' was not hesitant to install a League mayor and placate the League for his own purposes. He was out to wage a relentless war on the League ministry in one breath, in another he was a warm and dear ally of the League while it ruled the corporation. Could Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde do any better?"

Bose, too, was shaken. The electoral drubbing and the uncomfortable alliance led to his leaving Calcutta to focus on the Azad Hind and the Indian National Army. In 1941, he left his homeland for the last time, via Afghanistan.

Mookerjee, however, did not forgive Bose for what he felt was a betrayal of the Hindu cause. He accused Bose of being autocratic and even of committing financial irregularities, citing certain observations made by Congress leader B.C. Roy. "Dr Roy made an astounding statement that there have been serious financial irregularities on Subhas's part," wrote Mookerjee. "Monies received as purses presented to the president have mostly been appropriated by himself—while according to previous practice 75 per cent should have gone to provincial Congress funds and 25 per cent to the central fund."

SETTING THE SYLLABUS RIGHT

The strong performance in the corpo-



(Clockwise from above) Mookerjee with Dr B.R. Ambedkar in front of Parliament; addressing a ceremony to hand over Buddhist relics in Calcutta—president Dr S. Radhakrishnan, prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Burmese prime minister Thakin Nu (left) can also be seen; receiving Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at the Dum Dum airport, with Dr B.C. Roy (right) in 1949



COURTESY SPMRF

ration election, however, established Mookerjee in Bengal politics. Soon, he became working president of the Mahasabha. In December 1941, when the Muslim League withdrew support to the Haq government, Mookerjee helped cobble together an alliance that propped up Haq and kept the League out. He became the finance minister in the new government. To this day, Mookerjee's detractors cite this experiment to bolster the allegation that he got into bed with the Muslim League for the sake of power.

In March 1942, when the education bill was taken up by the cabinet for discussion, Mookerjee told governor John Herbert that it was being proposed because of political reasons. He said the secondary education board should not be in the hands of the proposed 18-member political committee, which would be dominated by Muslim bodies, but should be controlled by government officials. The government was forced to drop the bill because of Mookerjee's opposition.

The bill was proposed again in 1944. By then, Mookerjee had resigned his ministership and Khwaja Nazimuddin of the League was the prime minister. He continued to oppose the bill and threatened that if it was passed, he would launch a movement demanding a separate secondary board for Hindus. After listening to Mookerjee's arguments, governor Richard Casey asked the cabinet to consider whether the bill would lead to communal disturbances.

Nazimuddin thought the bill was important to checkmate Mookerjee and told the governor that his government had the support of the scheduled castes as well. "Dr Mookerjee would find it difficult to create any communal feeling. The teachers

PORTRAIT OF A LEADER

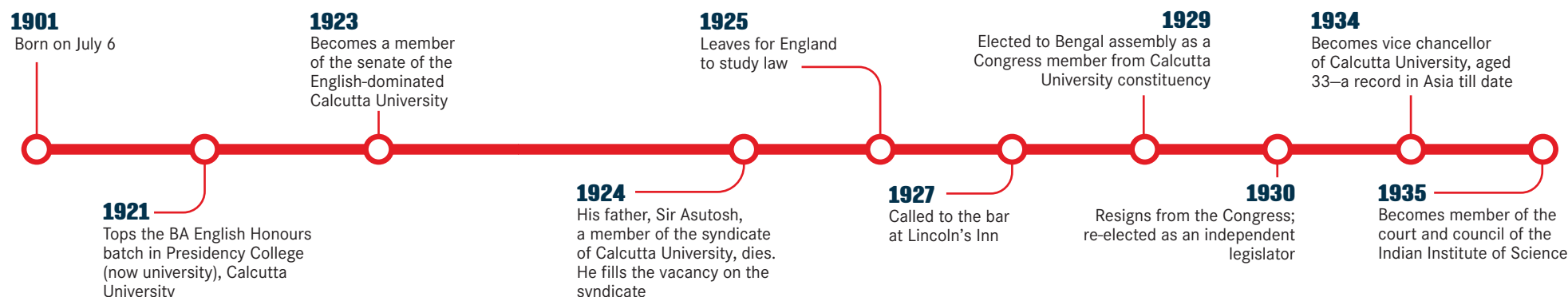
Syama Prasad Mookerjee was opposed to partition in the beginning. But the 1946 Calcutta and Noakhali riots made him change his mind. His final mission was the total integration of Jammu and Kashmir

Harendra Coomer Mookerjee, a Christian, who was vice chairman of the constituent assembly and governor of West Bengal, was Syama Prasad Mookerjee's home tutor

His father, Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, was directly involved in the Bengal Renaissance in the 19th century

During the Bengal famine, Syama Prasad Mookerjee formed the Bengal Relief Committee and roped in the Hindu Mahasabha

He proposed the entry of Muslims into the Hindu Mahasabha. But, V.D. Savarkar refused, following which Mookerjee resigned from the Mahasabha



already have been attracted by the DA hike and would get substantial grants in improving schools,” said Nazimuddin, according to declassified cabinet documents. The governor, however, listened to Mookerjee’s objections and sent the bill to the director of public instruction. The government was ultimately forced to drop the bill.

SPARRING WITH SAVARKAR

Despite allegations that Mookerjee was a product of the Savarkar ideology, he was never a blind follower. Mookerjee had a mixed relationship with Savarkar. He was angry that Savarkar chose to ignore the Mahasabha’s decision to launch direct action if Britain failed to honour its promise of complete transfer of power. “I had joined Mahasabha in the full belief that I would not hesitate to fight the government at the right moment and thus pave the way ourselves towards national freedom,” wrote Mookerjee. He felt Savarkar had no desire to popularise the Mahasabha; he quit the party after Savarkar refused to initiate reform measures and give membership to liberal Muslims.

THE QUIT INDIA CONTROVERSY

Mookerjee’s critics maintain that he betrayed the Quit India movement by joining hands with the British. While he was initially opposed to the movement, declassified documents reveal that Mookerjee’s resignation from the provincial cabinet on November 20, 1942, was largely influenced by the brutal crackdown the British administration unleashed against Congress leaders.

In August 1942, governor Herbert informed the Bengal cabinet that viceroy Lord Linlithgow had declared the Congress an unlawful organisation and that there would be a stringent crackdown against the party. Haq said he agreed with the viceroy. Mookerjee was the only cabinet member to oppose the decision.

“It is essential to appeal both to people and British government through the viceroy. The attempt might fail but it

would be a noble failure. And if the ministers fail, they might have to resign,” he said.

Mookerjee wanted to meet Gandhi in jail, but was denied permission. He wrote to the viceroy that the demand of self-rule by the Congress was a demand of all Indians. “What is regarded as the most unfortunate decision on the part of the British government was its refusal to negotiate with Mahatma Gandhi, even after he gave his emphatic assurance that the movement would not start until all avenues for an honourable settlement had been explored.”

In his letter, Mookerjee listed a series of conditions to be followed by the Indian national government if Britain granted independence to the country. One of the proposals was about the importance of guaranteeing minority rights. “There will be a treaty between Great Britain and India which will specially deal with minority rights,” he wrote. “In any case, any minority will have the right to refer any proposal regarding the future constitution to the arbitration of an international tribunal, in case it consid-



COURTESY SPMRF

ers such a step to be necessary for the protection of its rights. The decision of such a tribunal will be binding on the Indian government and on the minority concerned.”

As the letter went unanswered, Mookerjee continued in office for only a few more months. A devastating cyclone hit Midnapore in early November, and Mookerjee felt that the relief and rescue efforts organised by the governor were inadequate. It was the last straw for him and he submitted his resignation on November 20.

FACE OFF WITH FAMINE

The dreadful famine, which devastated the Bengal province in 1943 and 1944, saw the death of more than 50 lakh people. Mookerjee had warned the cabinet in July 1942 that governor Herbert was misleading the viceroy about the food situation in Bengal. “Since the military is lifting huge amounts of resources, it would be required to send fresh statistics to the government of India,” he said, according to declassified files. Mookerjee strongly criticised the government’s decision to divert rice from Bengal to British troops in the Gulf and Ceylon.

After the governor denied the allegation, Mookerjee revealed that the decision was made by the concerned joint secretary in connivance with the Muslim League, without consulting the minister. “The joint secretary had without sufficient examination given the contract to an agent who had no organisation for doing the work and was effecting purchases at government expense through representatives of the Muslim League,” said Mookerjee. The Haq ministry was dismissed by the governor in March 1943 and a Muslim League government headed by Nazimuddin was appointed in its place. The new government constituted a civil supplies department to tackle the food crisis.

According to declassified papers, Bengal exported two lakh tonnes of rice in 1942, despite the threat posed by World War II. Madras and Bombay, the other two major provinces, had set up channels to purchase and distribute food. But Bengal kept on exporting its rice stocks. “Calcutta had a large European commercial community which controlled the distribution of rice. Rice was exported by Shaw Wallace & Co, which was meant for industrial workers. Export to the Gulf, too, continued unabated,” said the declassified files. Suhrawardy, meanwhile, kept open inter-district and inter-regional rice trade, despite opposition from Nazimuddin. Suhrawardy said



(Top) Mookerjee with J.R.D. Tata at the Tata factory in Pune in 1949; meeting refugees from East Bengal at Bongaon in 1952

1936

Becomes chairman of the Inter-University Board of India (now Association of Indian Universities)

1941

Becomes finance minister of the Bengal province. Joins Hindu Mahasabha as working president

1943

Becomes opposition leader in Bengal assembly.

1945

Meets Jinnah to convince him against partition; had met Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah earlier, too, for the same reason. They are not convinced

1947

Opts out of constituent assembly, only to return after independence; becomes commerce and industry minister in first cabinet

1938

Conferred DLitt by Calcutta University

1942

Resigns ministership. Meets Sir Stafford Cripps to try for immediate transfer of power to an Indian government

1944

Health deteriorates. Confined to Calcutta. But still active in national politics

1946

Demand for Pakistan picks up. Calcutta riots. Mookerjee delves into relief work for riot victims. Becomes member of the constituent assembly

1950

Resigns from cabinet, protesting Nehru-Liaquat pact

LAST DAYS AND DEATH



On June 26, 1952, Mookerjee urged Nehru in Parliament to rethink Article 370



He supported the Kashmiri pandits' movement led by Jammu Praja Parishad

Visited Jammu with a permit. On his return, he asked Nehru again to implement the Constitution in Jammu and Kashmir

When Nehru took no action, he decided to go to J&K, without a permit

He left Delhi on May 8, 1953, with Atal Bihari Vajpayee and lawyer U.M. Trivedi



On May 10, he reached Amritsar and held a rally. The next day, he entered Udhampur, J&K, and was arrested

Sought treatment for back pain and chest pain, which had troubled him for long. He wanted to talk to Dr B.C. Roy, his personal doctor and West Bengal chief minister; denied, because Roy was in politics



He wrote a letter to his family in Calcutta; he told them he was writing a biography of his father and that he had maintained a diary of day-to-day activities

By May end he was moved to a cottage to provide medical care. Dr Ali Jan was his visiting doctor



Mookerjee was taken to Srinagar Central Jail on May 12. He visited some tourist locations under heavy guard, but was not allowed to meet anyone

Trivedi and Vajpayee were sent back; Trivedi secured a permit to go back to J&K



On June 21, he was admitted to a nursing home in Srinagar. The same day, Trivedi filed a habeas corpus with the J&K High Court. The hearing was slated for June 23

On the night of June 22, Mookerjee's condition deteriorated. Jan said it was a mild heart attack. Mookerjee asked him to contact Roy before administering medicines

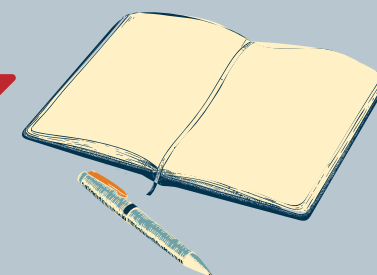


Trivedi later said that Mookerjee was administered with Streptomycin despite his fear about being allergic to the drug



His death led to the dilution of Article 370. The permit system was abolished and the Jammu and Kashmir High Court was brought under the Supreme Court of India

His death set off a raging debate in Parliament; Roy led the demand for a probe. But, an incident in Kashmir could not be probed by the Supreme Court



His belongings were sent to his family in Calcutta. His diary is still missing

Mookerjee died at around 3:30am on June 23

GRAPHICS SREEMANIKANDAN S./RESEARCH RABI BANERJEE/ILLUSTRATION JOB P.K.

the alarming situation in the rural areas forced him to keep trade channels open. But the government reserves ran out in no time. Suhrawardy then imposed fresh agriculture tax and also hiked sales tax, causing the prices to skyrocket, accentuating the effects of food shortage.

To deal with the crisis, Mookerjee set up an organisation called the Bengal Relief Committee. He also launched an agitation against the government's inept handling of the crisis. Nazimuddin recognised what Mookerjee was doing; in an oblique criticism of Suhrawardy, he said that Mookerjee would have lost his face had the food ministry been able to show some result.

In December 1944, Suhrawardy himself admitted failure and acknowledged the good work done by Mookerjee. "Because the government failed to step in to control and coordinate the activities of relief work, the Bengal Relief Committee and the Hindu Mahasabha took the lead in the matter of relief and acquired a disproportionate amount of authority and prestige," said Suhrawardy.

RIOTS MOST FOUL

Suhrawardy's mischief was not just limited to the civil supplies department. Declassified files show that he played a leading role in instigating communal riots on August 16, 1946, which was observed as Direct Action Day by the Muslim League, demanding the creation of Pakistan. There was widespread rioting across Calcutta, Howrah and 24 Parganas, in which thousands of people lost their lives. The number of Hindu casualties was higher as Suhrawardy took control of the police control room at Lal Bazar and directed police action. Mookerjee requested governor Fredrick Burrows to deploy the army, but it was delayed because of Suhrawardy's intervention, resulting in more death and destruction. With no official help forthcoming,

INTERVIEW



Tathagata Roy,
*former governor of Tripura
and Meghalaya*

BJP governments should have probed Mookerjee's death

BY RABI BANERJEE

Was Mookerjee a secularist?

Secularism is a much abused word and I am not going to use it. I am giving you examples. It was Mookerjee who brought Hassan Suhrawardy—elder brother of the first Pakistani prime minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, who was blamed for the Calcutta and Noakhali riots—to Calcutta University as professor of fine arts. Hassan, back then, was a professor of English in St Petersburg, Russia, and Mookerjee, as vice chancellor, wanted him to fill the post vacated by Rabindranath Tagore's cousin Abanindranath. The famous Bengali poet Jasimuddin was able to complete his studies only because Mookerjee arranged a scholarship for him. Yet, Mookerjee got a raw deal ultimately as he was branded a communalist.

Is it not wrong to say that Mookerjee did not support the Quit India movement?

He did not support the Quit India movement. But leaders like B.R. Ambedkar and C. Raja-

gopalachari, too, were not in favour of the movement. What perhaps gave you the impression that Mookerjee supported the movement was a letter he wrote to viceroy Lord Linlithgow, acknowledging the patriotic sentiment of the movement. He opposed the atrocities unleashed on Congress workers. He wanted the British to quit, but he realised that there was no one to whom they could have handed over power.

Later in 1947, India saw the problems associated with the transfer of power. The country had to be partitioned. The Quit India movement had a dangerous effect on Bengal as Muslims and communists had a field day, (as) Congressmen (were) in jail. They propagated their views openly as a result of that.

But Mookerjee resigned from the Bengal cabinet because of the oppression against Congress workers.

I do not think that was the only reason. A tsunami had hit Midnapore, causing huge destruction. But Mookerjee was not allowed to visit the place. As the British government failed to undertake a proper rescue operation, he took on the governor.

How do you assess Mookerjee's relations with Subhas Chandra Bose?

Mookerjee had practically no interaction with Subash Bose except during the corporation election in 1940. Personally, I feel that a leader of Bose's stature should not have stooped so low to interfere in corporation politics. Earlier there was some talk of a coalition between the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress for the corporation election, but it did not work out. Bose threatened Mookerjee that he would break his organisation, by force if needed. But their paths crossed barely for a year. Bose left India in January 1941 and never returned.

What about Sarat Chandra Bose?

When Mountbatten became viceroy in 1947, the Congress accepted the partition proposal. Mookerjee categorically said that Hindus could not be a part of Pakistan and that if India had to be partitioned, Bengal should also be partitioned. We, Bengali Hindus, are all grateful to him for this. We would have been Pakistani citizens but for him and would have been killed in state-sponsored pogroms. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Suhrawardy and Liaquat Ali Khan did not want to give up Calcutta, which was then India's number one city. As they saw Mookerjee winning, floated the idea of a united, independent, sovereign Bengal and they managed to get Sarat Bose on their side. But by that time, Bose was a politically discredited person.

So, if the Congress had accepted the partition proposal, why is Mookerjee alone being hailed as the founder of West Bengal?

This is primarily because Mookerjee was then the undisputed leader of Bengal on the issue of partition. The Congress did not have a leader of Mookerjee's stature after the departure of Subhas Bose. Mookerjee was the man who initiated the 'Save Bengal, save Hindu' movement and

he continued with it till the end.

Why did Calcutta forget him?

It is a canard floated by the communists that he was not popular in Calcutta. When he became minister in Nehru's cabinet, the city cheered him and there was a long queue from Howrah station till the Howrah bridge to receive him. After he resigned, too, there was a huge gathering in Calcutta to receive him. There were reasons behind it. Chittaranjan Locomotive Works and Damodar Valley Corporation were his contributions as cabinet minister.

After his death, although his coffin reached the Calcutta airport in the middle of the night, a huge crowd had assembled to pay their last respects. It took seven hours to complete the journey from the airport to his house, which normally takes just 45 minutes.

Was Mookerjee a mass leader?

Of course. Otherwise how could he have swayed the people of Bengal on the issue of partition and the entire nation over Kashmir? The whole country erupted when he took major political steps, first against the British and then against the Congress government in free India. There was a similar reaction after his death as

well. People cutting across party lines paid him moving tributes.

His death remains mysterious.

What is really mysterious is that there was no inquiry after his death. His death in custody came soon after he was heralded by *The Illustrated Weekly of India* as a likely successor to Nehru, preferred over prominent leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan in a survey. He died under questionable circumstances. There had been five inquiries about Netaji's disappearance. Gandhi's assassination was also thoroughly investigated.

Why was Mookerjee's death not investigated?

Nehru stonewalled it with his brute majority despite requests by senior leaders like Nirmal Chatterjee and H.V. Kamath. Nehru and home minister K.N. Katju prevented it.

Why non-Congress governments, too, chose not to investigate?

The 1977 Janata Party government was totally confused. However, I agree that the Vajpayee government should have set up an inquiry commission. That argument is valid for the present government as well, but most of the evidence (is) probably lost by now. ❶

COURTESY SPMRE



Mookerjee's
cremation at
the Keoratala
Burning Ghat
on June 24,
1953

ing, Mookerjee organised defence and counterattack teams for Hindus with the support of the city's Marwari groups. Communal riots broke out a few months later in Noakhali, located in present-day Bangladesh. The situation was so dire that Gandhi rushed to Noakhali to bring the situation under control. In his report to governor Burrows, Suhrawardy accepted that a large number of Hindus were forcibly converted. "They were being fed and looked after in their villages, but they were being kept there virtually as prisoners," wrote Suhrawardy. Mookerjee, too, wrote to the governor, highlighting the violence and conversions and, for the first time, demanded the partition of Bengal to protect Hindu interests.

PANGS OF PARTITION

The seeds of Bengal's partition were sown during the time of the great famine. But it was kept in check by Suhrawardy and Sarat Bose, who were working hard to keep the province united. Bose's grand-niece Madhuri wrote in her book *The Bose Brothers* that Congress workers in Bengal were opposed to partition.

"In May 1947, the majority of Congressmen in Bengal remained in favour of a free and united Bengal. Those not in favour were influenced by the pro-partition propaganda largely financed by the Hindu Marwari capitalists of Calcutta, with Shyama Prasad Mukherjee of the Hindu Mahasabha as the main spokesman," wrote Madhuri, quoting her father Amiya Nath Bose. Madhuri, a human rights lawyer based in Geneva, told THE WEEK that the Bose brothers—Sarat and Subhas—were Indian nationalists whereas Mookerjee was a Hindu nationalist. "The disagreements and conflicts that arose between them can be explained by this fundamental difference," she said.

Madhuri said including Suhrawardy in the united Bengal movement possibly did hurt the cause. "But for Sarat, achieving his goal of keeping Bengal united was paramount and he was ready to reach out to those he believed shared this goal no matter what their personal interests were," she said. Mookerjee, however, trumped both Sarat and Suhrawardy using his influence in Delhi with Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel. Both leaders wanted to retain Calcutta at any cost.

THE POLARISATION DEBATE

Mookerjee remained a deeply polarising figure throughout his political career. He was not a blind dogmatist, but he feared that his homeland was facing the threat of creeping Islamisation orchestrated by the Muslim League and facilitated by the British government. The demographics of Calcutta—a Hindu majority city located in a Muslim majority province—indeed affected and shaped his thinking. He fought against giving Muslims reservation and other concessions. He took strong exception to the fact



(From above) With Sheikh Abdullah (left) and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad (right) in Srinagar in 1952; with V.D. Savarkar; crowd awaiting Mookerjee at the Howrah station, after his resignation from the Nehru cabinet in 1950



COURTESY SPMRF

that government departments often ignored merit and used religion as a criterion for recruitment. In 1943, the Bengal Public Service Commission published a report on recruitment practices in the province. It revealed that the home department, for instance, often recruited only Muslim candidates from the merit list given by the commission, ignoring higher-ranking Hindu candidates.

Even after India became independent, the 'Hindu in danger' theme remained close to his heart. When he contested the first Lok Sabha elections in 1952 from the Calcutta South East constituency, the plight of Hindus in East Pakistan was his key campaign plank.

TRYST WITH THE CONGRESS

Mookerjee wrote in his diary that Patel, Nehru and others had persuaded him to join the Congress because of his courageous efforts to retain parts of Bengal, especially Calcutta, with India, but he politely turned it down. He had his share of ideological differences with Gandhi on issues ranging from his economic philosophy, the Congress position on the Muslim League and on the status of Hindi as national language. Mookerjee believed that spinning wheels could resolve the issue of India's clothing shortage, but it was not enough to make the country a great economic power.

In 1946, when the AICC session was held in Calcutta, Mookerjee was unwell and all senior Congress leaders except Gandhi visited him at his home. Gandhi sent him a note in Hindi before leaving Calcutta. And, Mookerjee replied in Bengali.

Mookerjee was part of independent India's first cabinet headed by Nehru. "Most people are unaware of the fact that Gandhi and Patel asked Nehru to include Dr Mookerjee in the first cabinet," said Ganguly of the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Foundation. Mookerjee worked for three years as minister of commerce and industries and prepared the blueprint for several major industrial projects like the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works, the Sindhri Fertiliser Corporation and the Hindustan Aircraft Factory. He quit in 1950 saying India was not doing enough to protect the Hindu minority in Pakistan. A year later, he launched the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the predecessor of the BJP.

Mookerjee then turned his attention towards achieving Kashmir's total integration into India. Non-Kashmiris required a permit to visit the state back then. Mookerjee chose to challenge the rule and was arrested on May 11, 1953, upon entering Kashmir. He was held in preventive detention, a provision against which he had vociferously protested in Parliament. As he was suffering from chronic rheumatoid pleurisy and heart ailments, he was soon shifted to a nursing home in Srinagar. But his condition deteriorated and he breathed his last on June 23. Despite multiple requests for an inquiry into his death, there was no probe, and his death remains controversial to this day.

"We differed sometimes very deeply on many issues and we agreed too on many issues and it is a matter of peculiar regret and grief to me that in the last days of his life an occasion arose on which there was very considerable difference between him and me," Nehru told the Lok Sabha after Mookerjee's death. "However, we are deprived of the personality who had played such a notable and great part in the country and who was after all fairly young and who had a large and good stretch of years before him. But that was not to be. ❶

INTERVIEW



Chandra Bose,
grandnephew of Subhas Chandra Bose
and BJP member

Mookerjee's Hindu nationalism could cause riots in Kolkata today

BY RABI BANERJEE

How do you look at the tussle between the legacies of Subhas Chandra Bose and Syama Prasad Mookerjee?

No comparison could be drawn between Netaji and Mookerjee. There is no doubt that Mookerjee was a great academician and a Hindu nationalist. But Netaji was a world leader and a secular man.

The Kolkata port has been renamed after Mookerjee.

There was no need. The Kolkata dock was named after Netaji because he went abroad twice from there. I am not perturbed because it has been named after Mookerjee, but I am disturbed that the name of Netaji dock has been changed. This is unacceptable.

The Forward Bloc went to court against it.

That was also not required. I do not think it is a matter for the courts to decide. It is a question of morality and ethics. There are many other

things which could be named after Mookerjee. Calcutta has a long road in his name.

How do you describe Mookerjee's role in history?

I do not want to insult Mookerjee. But it is a fact that he opposed the Quit India movement. The Central government celebrated Mahatma Gandhi's birthday with so much fanfare, so then how could you mix that with Mookerjee's politics? Here lies the contradiction. Also, his politics in Bengal was not at all good for Hindu-Muslim unity.

But many people think of him as the creator of West Bengal.

I do not agree. People who should be credited for the partition of Bengal are Jawaharlal Nehru, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Louis Mountbatten.

But Mookerjee made a massive effort for it.

Then so be it. But if Nehru did not want partition, it would not have happened.

Your family wanted a unified and independent Bengal.

We did. We wanted a secular and independent Bengal. The partition of Bengal was a wrong move.

But look at what happened to West and East Pakistan.

Whatever happened in Pakistan was caused by radical forces there. If Bengal was united, such things would not have happened, at least in East Pakistan. Do not forget that Pakistan was a secular state so long as Jinnah was alive. In India, we faced Sikh radicalism and Hindu radicalism along with Islamic jihadism. What would you say about the people who destroyed Babri Masjid? Are they not radicals?

But how would you define the Muslim League and a man like Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, who should

have been indicted for the Calcutta and Noakahali riots?

I agree. My grandfather and grand-uncle wanted a safe distance from both the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. They considered them two sides of the same coin.

If that is so, why did Sarat Bose join hands with Suhrawardy?

I do not agree with his decision. But it was an emotional decision. He could not accept the partition of Bengal, which he thought would bring mindless misery to common people. In fact, he was right. But could he have done otherwise? The opposite side was led by Mookerjee, which was equally lethal.

In fact, Netaji had sent my father (Amiya Nath Bose) to Gandhi in 1937 to persuade him to accept a coalition between the Congress and Fazlul Haq's party. But he could not go as

he was suffering from an asthma attack. The Congress did a massive blunder by not accepting that proposal. Had that been accepted, it would have kept the Muslim League in check in Bengal for a decade.

You do not consider Mookerjee a legend?

I do not think of it that way. Of course, Mookerjee made a huge contribution in Kashmir. He was an extremely bright academician and his contribution in Kashmir was extremely memorable and we should cherish that. A man launching such a movement and dying because of that was definitely a big contribution. But that does not mean we should not point out what he got wrong. His Hindu nationalism should not be replicated in Bengal today. In fact, it would be a dangerous idea to propagate such an ideology today. There

will be riots in Kolkata if we apply such principles.

Mookerjee did not have a cordial relationship with your grandfather or granduncle.

It does not matter. They do not require any certificate. Mookerjee was a great scholar. He was respected for that. But in Bengal he messed up his own politics. He lacked political acumen. There was no need to create East Pakistan. He could have fought for merging undivided Bengal with India. People would have remembered him forever for that. We think it was a political blunder that time. And, yes, unfortunately the Congress was a part of that blunder.

You said Mookerjee's ideology was just the opposite of Gandhi's ideology. But Gandhi also opposed Subhas Bose strongly.

That rivalry was not personal, but was based on some small issues. Rivalry between Mookerjee and the Bose brothers was ideological. Both Netaji and Gandhi were the most secular people India had ever seen. Netaji never compromised with communalism. He rejected the idea of different kitchens for Hindus and Muslims in the Azad Hind Fauj. Gandhi knew all these.

My father told me an interesting story. Gandhi did not take part in the first Independence day celebrations as he did not accept partition. He was in Calcutta and then went to Pune. Sarojini Naidu was with him. My father went to Pune and met with Gandhi. He told Gandhi that had he interfered strongly, partition could have been avoided. Gandhi said everyone wanted to become prime minister and that he could not do much.

When my father was about to leave, Gandhi told him, "Amiya, I think I backed the wrong horse. I should have backed Subhas." My father broke down hearing that. ☐



COURTESY SPMRF

RSS workers giving guard of honour to Mookerjee

GUEST COLUMN

The Jana Sangh's ideas and objectives were different from that of the BJP

BY JUSTICE (RETD) CHITTATOSH MOOKERJEE



DR SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE

was my uncle and he lived in our family mansion at 77 Asutosh Mookerjee Road, Kolkata. I am somewhat diffident to write at length about someone who was so closely related. Our grandfather, Sir Asutosh

Mookerjee, died a few years before I was born. But when I was young, the memory of Sir Asutosh and his influence still prevailed in our family.

My uncle used to speak often about the values and ideals of his father. While he was in Calcutta, my uncle remained extremely busy. He met a stream of visitors from all walks of life every morning. Former president of India Dr S. Radhakrishnan was one of his close friends. I have seen him visiting my uncle immediately after he returned from his morning walk. My uncle spent his days in Calcutta attending meetings at Calcutta University and elsewhere.

My uncle was totally relaxed when we were at our holiday home in Madhupur. He enjoyed playing bridge with his friends and with youngsters from our family. He also loved to recount the stories of his younger days. While he was in England, he and his friends used to hold seances (a meeting at which

COURTESY SPURF



Mookerjee (middle) and friends at poet Thomas Gray's tomb at Buckinghamshire, England, in 1926; (above, right) Mookerjee (left) with his siblings in 1905

people attempt to make contact with the dead). Occasionally they were disturbed by an evil spirit. My uncle had then sought the advice of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (the author of the famous Sherlock Holmes series) who advised him against holding further seances. My uncle enjoyed home-cooked food when he was in a relaxed mood and would even suggest some of the recipes. As he became more and more engrossed in politics, his light-hearted company with us became rare.

My uncle was from the field of education and he later entered active politics. After the 1937 general elections, A.K. Fazlul Haq first joined hands with the Muslim League to form the government in Bengal. Communal tension between the two major communities was on the rise. The Congress split in Bengal



and there was a leadership vacuum in the legislative assembly and outside. My uncle was compelled to assume the leadership of the Hindus who were facing danger from the communal politics of the Muslim League. In December 1939, he joined the Hindu Mahasabha and gradually became a national leader. He was never communal and maintained his friendship with prominent Muslim leaders.

My uncle was a great orator and an able parliamentarian. After Haq broke away from the Muslim League, Sarat Chandra Bose (elder brother of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose) and my uncle joined hands with him to form the Progressive Coalition Party. Haq became prime minister and my uncle became finance minister. Sarat Bose was also to be a minister, but he was arrested before he could take oath. Under his direction, two of his followers were made ministers.

It is totally untrue that Syama Prasad Mookerjee ever joined hands with the Muslim League. As a minister, my uncle frequently clashed with Bengal governor Sir John Herbert. His letters to the governor and the viceroy were banned when they were published. After Haq resigned and the Muslim League came back to power, Bengal faced the great famine. My uncle organised relief measures and he exposed, on the floor of the legislature, the lapses and wrongdoings of the government's food policy.

Communal tension continued to rise in Bengal and the rest of India. My uncle had campaigned

throughout India against Muhammad Ali Jinnah's demand for Pakistan. But when partition became inevitable and the whole of Bengal was claimed by the Muslim League as East Pakistan, my uncle took a prominent part in demanding that at least a part of Bengal should remain with India. He used to say, "Jinnah divided India, but I divided East Pakistan by retaining a part of the Bengal presidency within the Indian Union."

My uncle successfully opposed the creation of a sovereign Bengal as advocated by Sarat Bose and S.H. Suhrawardy. It was largely because of his leadership that a part of Bengal became what is now known as West Bengal under the Radcliffe Award. My uncle was a member of the Constituent Assembly of India and its proceedings have recorded his speeches and suggestions while the Indian Constitution was being framed. He had vehemently opposed amendments of Article 19 and 31, which curtailed civil liberties and the right to property.

My uncle was minister of industries in the first Union cabinet after independence. He resigned when Jawaharlal Nehru made a pact with Pakistan prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan regarding the migration of refugees from East Pakistan into India. After the first general elections, my uncle was elected to the Lok Sabha; although he was not formally designated so, he was the de facto leader of opposition. He frequently clashed with Nehru over his policies, particularly towards Pakistan. He formed a new party called the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The ideas and objectives of the Jana Sangh, however, are not the same as that of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

My uncle was arrested when he tried to enter Kashmir and was detained in Srinagar. Nehru then went to London for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference and Syama Prasad Mookerjee died in Srinagar. Nehru refused the request made by my grandmother for an inquiry into the circumstances of his death.

The message on the morning of June 24, 1953—the news of his death—was conveyed in a rather garbled way by a telephone operator to my father in Calcutta. I recall my father going to Dr B.C. Roy to ascertain correctly the news of his demise. Many prominent physicians in Calcutta and elsewhere had criticised the treatment given to my uncle in Srinagar. Our family was not informed when my uncle had taken ill and was hospitalised. His detention was totally unconstitutional.

The author, who is Mookerjee's nephew, was chief justice of Calcutta and Bombay High Courts.



West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar during Mookerjee's birth anniversary celebrations at Raj Bhavan

Divide and conquer

The BJP hopes to win Bengal by reviving Syama Prasad Mookerjee's legacy of Hindu nationalism and Bengali pride

BY RABI BANERJEE

The Kolkata Raj Bhavan wore a festive look on July 6, despite the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar hosted the celebrations to mark the birth anniversary of Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the BJP's predecessor. It was for the first time that Mookerjee's memory was honoured at the Raj Bhavan. For decades, he had remained largely forgotten in his hometown.

Dhankhar has also installed Mookerjee's portrait at the Raj Bhavan. Although his portrait was unveiled in the Parliament's Central Hall way back in 1991, no such honour was bestowed on him by the West Bengal government. "I need to recognise the monumental contributions of this great man, who is in a league of three greats with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr B.R. Ambedkar," said Dhankhar. With only months left for assembly elections in West Bengal, it is hard to miss the political undertones of the move. Dhankhar, however, said he was only acknowledging Mookerjee's contributions just like the Union government did with its decision to revoke Kashmir's special status, which was one of Mookerjee's life's missions.

"I went to the National Library and saw a video presentation on 100 years of Indian nationalism. Four nationalists of Bengal—Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee—were part of it," said Dhankhar. But there was nothing in the Raj Bhavan—a building frequented by Mookerjee, often to lock horns with the British governors over his pet causes. "A full-size portrait befitting Dr Mookerjee's stature will soon be installed at the Raj Bhavan," he said.

But opinion is divided in Bengal about reviving Mookerjee's legacy. The Forward Bloc, the political



SALIL BERA

The Kolkata Port Trust, which maintains the Howrah Bridge, was renamed after Mookerjee early this year

outfit launched by Subhas Bose, has approached the Calcutta High Court against the Narendra Modi government's decision to rename the Kolkata port after Mookerjee. The party, which is part of the left front, pointed out that there was already a dock in the Kolkata port named after Bose. "The Central government is blind. It did not mind belittling Subhas Bose by renaming the Kolkata port as Syama Prasad Mookerjee port. It has no idea that a dock inside the port is named after Bose. How could Bose live under Mookerjee even after death? This is rubbish," said Naren Chatterjee, state secretary of the Forward Bloc.

Chatterjee said the people of Bengal would never accept Mookerjee as a legend. "Why should we call him a patriot?" he asked. "Was he jailed during the freedom struggle? He sided with the British government. If the prime minister wants to keep Mookerjee's name for the port, he must withdraw Bose's name from the dock."

Chatterjee was quick to find support from the CPI(M). Sujan Chakraborty, CPI(M) central committee member, said Bengal thought

of Mookerjee as a traitor, rather than a freedom fighter like Bose. "He has no place in the history of our state. Naming the port after him is nothing but recognising a Hindu nationalist who compromised with the British," he said.

Historical facts, however, show that Bengal never really turned its back on Mookerjee. His death in 1953 shocked the state. When his dead body was brought to Kolkata from Srinagar, people across party lines paid their respects. Jyoti Basu, who was then the leader of the undivided Communist Party of India, too, was among them. Basu—who was a member of the provincial assembly in British Bengal, along with Mookerjee—never went hammer and tongs against the Jana Sangh leader.

Senior Congress leader B.C. Roy, the second chief minister of West Bengal and Mookerjee's personal physician, demanded a probe into Mookerjee's death by a Supreme Court judge. But the request was turned down as it would have brought Kashmir under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, which was politically not possible at the time. A frustrated Roy then travelled

to Kashmir and visited the place where Mookerjee was lodged after his arrest and the hospital where he died. He also spoke to Dr Ali Jan, who had treated Mookerjee.

West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh said Roy's relations with Jawaharlal Nehru went downhill after his Kashmir visit. Back in Calcutta, Roy erected two statues in Mookerjee's memory and named one of the longest roads in the city and also a college after him.

But after the left front came to power, Mookerjee's name started fading in the city. "The communists taught foreign history and erased the episode of Bengal's partition from the syllabus. And they did everything possible to delete the name of Syama Prasad Mookerjee from the Bengali intellect," said Anirban Ganguly, director of the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation, New Delhi.

Ganguly, who is a member of the Central Advisory Board of Education, said the Modi government would soon include Mookerjee's contributions in the syllabus of Central education boards. "But what is causing deep anguish is that the man who created the state of West Bengal has

not yet found a place in the textbooks of his own state,” he said. He said the left front governments and the Mamata Banerjee regime were equally responsible for ignoring Mookerjee’s contributions.

Dhankhar said Mookerjee’s life, nationalistic convictions and thoughts deserved to be a part of the academic syllabus at the Central and state levels. “His life story and undaunted nationalistic spirit would infuse our young, impressionable minds with inspiration and motivation,” he said. “Convincing Rabindranath Tagore to give a convocation address in Bengali in an English-oriented institution like Calcutta University was such a feat and because of him the vernacular language was introduced as a subject for the highest examination of the university. Significantly, this facet is reflected in the National Education Policy 2020.”

Ghosh said if the BJP came to power in the state in 2021, Mookerjee’s contributions would make its way into the syllabus in a big way. “His contribution would be told to everyone across the urban and rural belts of Bengal. We will ensure that. The idea of leftism in textbooks will be a thing of the past,” he said.

Ghosh, a former RSS *pracharak*, said he grew up learning about the fiery movement led by Mookerjee in Bengal before partition. He said it was M.S. Golwalkar, the second *sarsanghchalak* of the RSS, who inspired Mookerjee to start the Jana Sangh. “Mookerjee wanted efficient and honest human resource which the RSS gave him once he floated the party. That tradition still goes on,” said Ghosh.

The memory and legacy of Mookerjee is a critical element in the BJP’s strategy to win the 2021 assembly polls. Said Ghosh at a rally commemorating Mookerjee’s birth anniversary, “A slap would now be met with a slap, a brick would be met with a



A statue of Mookerjee near Kolkata Maidan

brick and a fight would be met with a bigger fight. This is what Syama Prasad Mookerjee taught us.”

The BJP hopes to educate the young generation about the role played by Mookerjee in facilitating the partition of Bengal and on the issue of refugees. “We are working to infuse young minds with Mookerjee’s ideology,” he said. “We tell them that without him, we would have been part of East Pakistan and Bangladesh and would have been subject to forced religious conversion. We also tell them the story of how Hindu women were raped there. You may find it communal, but it is the reality.”

As outlined by Ghosh, the BJP’s key campaign theme for next year’s

elections is Mookerjee’s work for persecuted Hindu refugees and linking the issue with the Citizenship Amendment Act. The party is filling up Kolkata and the countryside with pictures and posters of Mookerjee, equating him with Swami Vivekananda, Tagore and other Bengali renaissance men.

And, right in time for the elections, the party is demanding the Bharat Ratna for Mookerjee. “We are asking the Central government to award Mookerjee the Bharat Ratna,” said Ghosh. “He is one of the greatest Bengalis in independent India who was not honoured with the award. We have appealed to our government and will continue to do that till we achieve our goal.”



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AP

Not so fast

With cases piling up in fast-track courts, timely justice continues to be elusive

BY SONI MISHRA

SHIVANI (name changed) from Delhi was allegedly raped by a male acquaintance in 2012. She was purportedly given intoxicant-laced tea by the man, after which she passed out and was sexually assaulted. He threatened to make a video of the crime public if she spoke about it. However, Shivani, now 28, approached the police and a case was registered. It was assigned to a fast-track court (FTC) and the charge-sheet was filed in 2013. However, recording of evidence started only in 2017 and was listed for final arguments in early 2019. The wait for a judgment continues. The case highlights the irony of fast-track

RARE CASE

The district court complex in Saket, where the 2012 Delhi gang rape and murder case accused were tried. The fast-track court delivered its verdict in nine months

courts—set up to speed up the disposal of cases, but failing to provide timely justice.

Statistics show that these courts take as long as ordinary courts, if not longer, to dispose of cases. For instance, nearly 34 per cent of the cases sent to fast-track courts in Bihar took more than 10 years to clear; in Telangana, 12 per cent of the cases went on for more than a decade. In the same duration, the lower judiciary as

a whole cleared 48.75 per cent cases.

Fast-track courts are also burdened with substantial pendency. According to figures provided by the Union law and justice ministry in Parliament, as of March 2019, the 581 fast-track courts that were then operational had a sizeable pendency of over 5.9 lakh cases. Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state, had over 4.25 lakh cases pending even after the state's 206 fast-track courts disposed of 4.56 lakh cases from 2016 to 2018.

As on December 31, 2019, 828 fast-track courts were functional. They have been set up to try various kinds of cases, primarily those relating to crimes against women and children, and also criminal cases against MPs and MLAs, mob lynchings, riots, and atrocities against scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Fast-track courts were first set up in 2000; the scheme was initially supposed to end in 2005, but it was extended for another six years, and after that their fate was left to the states and High Courts. The brutal gang-rape and murder of a physiotherapy student in Delhi in December 2012 gave a new fillip to fast-track courts amid a public outcry for speedy justice. A fast-track court that was set up on January 2, 2013, decided that particular case within nine months. However, as statistics show, such speed is rare.

The situation led to the Supreme Court, in December 2019, setting up a two-judge committee to monitor,

supervise and make suggestions for speedy trial in cases of rape and crimes under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. As per the law, trials in rape cases have to be completed within two months, and in POCSO cases within a year.

Experts say that problems arise from these courts being seen as a temporary arrangement; judges are drawn from the lower courts, and courts lack staff and infrastructure. "The number of judges is insufficient," said Surya Prakash B.S., fellow and programme director, DAKSH, a civil society group that researches law and governance. "The expectation is that the judge would handle certain cases on a priority basis. But the judge is handling other jurisdictions also. So this becomes another case list for him."



The scheme [to set up fast-track courts] requires even the state governments to pitch in funds, and not all states have the financial capacity to do so.

—**Tarika Jain**, research fellow, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy

Human rights lawyer Olivia Bang said pendency of cases in the fast-track courts do not allow them to expeditiously hear matters. "Even in an FTC, the next date of hearing is often three or four months later," she said. "And it is not surprising, since even in an FTC, on any given day, there are at least 15-25 matters listed for hearing."

"The pace of investigation could also be one of the possible bottlenecks," said lawyer Nimisha Menon. The Supreme Court had in 2019 observed that in more than 20 per cent of POCSO cases, even the investigation was not completed within

one year. Menon pointed out that forensic sample reports are also not processed expeditiously and added that setting up labs specifically for the investigation of crimes against women and children would expedite the process.

Lawyer Eliza Rumthao, who handled one of the first POCSO cases to be registered in Delhi, said that the case, which went to court in 2012, got completed only last year. “The delay is emotionally taxing for the victim,” she said. “In many cases, the family of the victim wants to give up fighting.”

The examination of witnesses also delays matters further. Assam lawyer Bijan Mahajan, who represents the family of one of the victims in the fast-tracked Karbi Anglong mob

lynching case, said: “Witnesses not turning up in the court delays the trial. And witnesses turning hostile damages the prosecution’s case.” Lawyers say that procedural changes need to be made to speed up the recording of evidence, which takes the most time in a case. “You cannot examine a witness in a day,” said lawyer Kamlesh Mishra. “Courts spend seven to eight months examining witnesses. If an alternative mechanism is devised for this, for example, if the registrar or the court commissioner is entrusted with the task of recording evidence, the disposal of cases can be expedited.”

Moreover, experts say that no specific procedure is prescribed for fast disposal of cases by fast-track courts and they have no special powers.

“These courts need a different set of procedural rules and [have to be] given powers such as being able to order a probe if the investigation is found to be lacking,” said Surya Prakash.

The government had proposed the setting up of 1,800 fast-track courts for five years between 2015 and 2020 to deal with cases related to women, children, senior citizens and other vulnerable sections of society. The 14th Finance Commission endorsed the proposal that would require funds allocation of ₹4,144.11 crore to states. In August 2019, the Centre also announced its decision to set up 1,023 fast-track courts for disposal of pending cases related to rape and POCSO, at a cost of ₹767 crore. As of January 2020, 195 of them have been

set up. Out of the 1,023, 389 will exclusively handle POCSO cases, as directed by the Supreme Court.

Experts highlight a fundamental flaw in the scheme. The courts are set up under a Centrally sponsored scheme, but the task of setting up fast-track courts comes under the domain of state governments. “The scheme requires even the state governments to pitch in funds and not all the states have the financial capacity to do so,” said Tarika Jain, research fellow at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. She said that while setting a specific target of clearing 1.66 lakh cases might work for these courts, the scheme does not specify any special training for the judicial officers and it is unclear if any assistance for adequate legal representation for the parties will be provided. Such assistance can help dispose of cases in a timely and efficient manner. Jain added that no provision has been made to digitally record evidence and examine witnesses. “In sensitive cases, it might be critical for the victim to not come in contact with the accused,” she said.

According to a senior law ministry official, a decision has been taken to hire lawyers with up to eight years of practice to work as consultants to implement the scheme. They will be required to coordinate with registrar generals of High Courts to ensure that the timeline of completing the trial is followed. Also, each fast-track court will have one judicial officer and seven staff members, and no existing judge or court staff will be given additional charge of these courts.

The recruitment of judges has to be carried out by the states. But there is already an alarming dearth of judges in the subordinate judiciary, and it is doubtful how effectively the states and the already burdened High Courts will find judges for these courts.

The justification offered for setting



Directing resources towards some kinds of cases over others creates inequalities in the system.

—Alok Prasanna Kumar, senior resident fellow, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy



Skipping procedural steps in hastening a case will not stand the test of the law.

—Shubhangi, programme coordinator, Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives

up the 1,023 fast-track courts is that there are over 2.4 lakh cases relating to rape and POCSO pending. However, experts call for the overall strengthening and reform of the judicial system rather than trying to fix the problem of delays and pendency by setting up new fast-track courts.

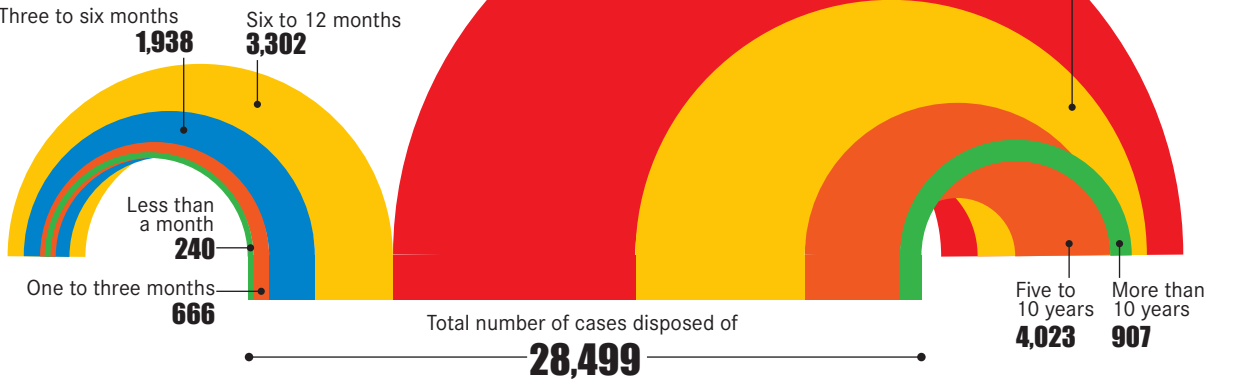
There are fundamental problems with the rationale behind fast-track courts, said Alok Prasanna Kumar, senior resident fellow at Vidhi. “The idea that procedure is cumbersome and disposable in some kinds of cases is wrong and must be opposed,” he said. “And directing resources towards some kinds of cases over others creates inequalities in the system.” He said the focus should be on filling up all the vacancies in judges’ positions and providing for more judicial positions in the states where the pendency is heavy, building better courtrooms and equipping the existing judicial infrastructure, using modern technology and software for better court management, and increasing judicial budgets.

Also, while there has been a demand for speedy and time-bound justice in the wake of the Unnao and Hyderabad rape and murder cases, it is also argued that the emphasis should be on timely justice rather than speedy justice as often the timelines set for the disposal of these cases are irrational and suggest that procedure is dispensable in deciding such matters. “Skipping procedural steps in hastening a case will not stand the test of the law,” said Shubhangi, who uses only one name, programme coordinator at the Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives. “Timely trial would mean there are no unnecessary delays. And it will give the victims an experience of justice. However, there are no guidelines on timely trial by FTCs, so how can you expect these courts to be any different?”

TRIAL BY FIGURES

DATA ON FAST-TRACK COURTS (2018)

CASES DISPOSED OF



CASES PENDING IN FAST-TRACK COURTS
5,90,614*

	Uttar Pradesh	Maharashtra	West Bengal & Andaman & Nicobar	Bihar	Andhra Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Delhi	Assam	Tripura	Haryana	Manipur	Sikkim
NUMBER OF FTCs	206	77	88	45	21	23	14	3	3	5	4	2
PENDING CASES	4,25,442	79,436	46,678	20,092	5,364	4,989	4,363	2,042	1,085	801	311	11

*Stated by Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad in the Lok Sabha in June 2019

States and High Courts have to address backlog

UNTIL DISPUTE resolution is swift, the legal system is not credible. A backlog of around 3.5 million cases is horrendous. There is a long list of what should be done to fix the legal system, with reforms on both demand and supply. The idea of fast-track courts originated with the Eleventh Finance Commission (2000-2005). So, to evaluate the courts, we should consider what the commission visualised: "The demand made to us by the States... including establishment of new courts, sums up to ₹4,870 crores.... It goes without saying that the creation of these new courts would require very large recurring and non-recurring expenditure.... The Scheme is that instead of employing new judges, retired sessions judges and additional sessions judges be appointed as ad hoc judges for disposing of the pending sessions cases. A fixed tenure of two years would be an impetus to them to dispose of the cases early and not to linger on with an expectation of extended tenure."

Accordingly, the commission provided ₹502.90 crore for 1,734 fast-track courts. The funding for improving judicial infrastructure was not meant to come through the Finance Commission. Those funds flowed through the Planning Commission. Nor were broader judicial reforms part of what fast-track courts were supposed to do. The purpose was focus—specific money for specific cases. Though not mandatory, there were guidelines. Each judge should dispose of 14 sessions cases per month; 168 cases a year. Five judges per district, with 600



GUEST COLUMN ♦ BIBEK DEBROY

districts, would mean more than five lakh cases disposed of in a year; backlog reduced by two million in four years. At least, that is what the Eleventh Finance Commission thought. It said that if the experiment was successful, the model could be extended to other criminal (non-sessions) and civil cases; the work norm would be 20-25 cases disposed of per month.

Judiciary is reluctant to accept externally determined work norms. But, it is also not willing to evolve norms on its own. One can understand the difficulty of evolving work norms for complicated constitutional cases. But I have not understood why norms cannot be evolved for lower courts, where questions of fact, rather than the law, are involved, and where there is no need to write long and complicated judgments. (Do you remember a recent instance where Supreme Court judges sent back a Himachal Pradesh High Court judgment because they could not understand it? I wish more judges would write

judgments like Lord Denning.)

Be that as it may, the Eleventh Finance Commission money became additional funds, without work norms, used like a shotgun, in the hope that something sticks. The scheme should have ended on March 31, 2005. It did not, because of the Supreme Court's judgment on May 6, 2002 (Brij Mohan Lal vs Union of India and Others). If you read the judgment, the tenor is that we need more courts and more judges and, to this end, any additional resources are welcome. The directions said that at least one administrative judge shall be nominated in each High Court to monitor the disposal of cases by fast-track courts. I suspect not much has happened in this direction. So, Union government funding continued till March 31, 2011. After that, in a view upheld by the Supreme Court in 2012, it was left to the states and High Courts to decide how to address the judicial backlog issue best.

The 14th Finance Commission said that was the reason states have a higher share (42 per cent) in the divisible pool of taxes. It also said there were 699 fast-track courts which have worked well with a focus (crimes against women, disputes more than five years old). Hence, in 2019, there were 1,023 fast-track courts for rape cases and offences under Protection of Children against Sexual Offences. However, if a state wishes to continue with fast-track courts, these have to be made permanent.

Debroy is chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the prime minister.



■ INTERVIEW

BHUPENDER YADAV,
chairman, parliamentary
committee on law and justice

Fast-track courts need procedural amendments

BY SONI MISHRA

According to NCRB data for 2018, only 22 per cent of the cases in fast-track courts were disposed of within a year. How do you view this?

Fast-track courts have been set up to dispense speedy justice in heinous crimes against women and children. In 2019, the Supreme Court, in a suo motu case directed that all such cases, especially related to POCSO, be sent to the FTCs. The committee also examined and found that till December 2019, 828 FTCs were functional in 17 states and Union territories, and sufficient funding is available for these courts. The problem is that, even in the pursuance of the Supreme Court directions to set up these courts, the legal procedure for these courts is the same as the ordinary courts. Some suitable procedural amendments are required to allow speedy disposal of cases in these courts.

It has been observed that these

courts suffer from infrastructural deficiencies and the judges are drawn from the already thinly-staffed lower judiciary.

Recently, our committee examined the issue of whether we can provide a special court management system. Artificial Intelligence is being used in various areas. We are looking at whether it can be used in court management, especially focusing on allocation and disposal of cases.

There are almost six lakh cases pending in these courts.

There are various procedural issues that need to be streamlined, for example, examination of witnesses takes a lot of time, and it gets prolonged when witnesses do not turn up, and when medical reports are not submitted on time.

How does the committee look at the scheme to set up 1,023 fast track courts to hear matters pertaining to crimes against women and children?

The parliamentary committee also recommended in its report that the impact of the scheme may be evaluated after one year of the scheme to identify the challenges, and the same may be apprised to the committee in the action taken reply filed by the department. Let us wait for the response of the Central government.

Has the committee gone into the progress made under the scheme?

The committee examined the allocation of funds under the scheme, and we feel that the government has provided sufficient funds for the setting up of courts. We feel that the setting up of these courts was needed as there is a huge pendency of cases of crimes against women and children, and especially, with regard to POCSO cases, the number of cases has gone up tremendously. But the main issue of how to ensure speedy disposal of cases remains, and it is a challenge before the system. The action taken report will throw more light on the practical difficulties involved in the functioning of these courts.

Some experts question the setting up of fast-track courts. They say fast-tracking certain categories of cases creates inequality and hence is unconstitutional.

Reasonable classification is recognised by the law under Article 14. We feel that certain cases are more important than others because of their social impact and hence there is nothing wrong in treating them differently.

It is also said that instead of setting up fast-track courts, the entire judicial system should be reformed.

We need to reform our courts. We have entered an era when virtual courts have become a reality. Providing justice that is not just timely but is accessible and affordable should be at the centre of efforts to reform the judicial system. ●

Education is the only way to free yourself from racism

BY NEERU BHATIA

It is not easy to return from a long break and bowl brilliantly in your first game, even more so in the Super Over that sealed your team's win. Kagiso Rabada did just that in the Delhi Capitals' first match of the new Indian Premier League season. The 25-year-old South African has been the pace spearhead of his country for a few years now. He shoulders a similar responsibility in DC's pursuit of an elusive IPL title.

Rabada is representing South African cricket during one of its worst phases. The national cricket board's coffers are dry and it has been taken over by the national Olympic association; the board is facing allegations of financial mismanagement, corruption and racism. As the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement picked up around the world, the cricketing world was not left untouched. And, a storm is on in South Africa, with the country still struggling to overcome the scars of apartheid.

It started with fast bowler Lungisani Ngidi stating that South Africa must take a stand on BLM like rest of the world, leading to several retired stars making public their experiences of discrimination as players. Their voices reiterated the fact that despite South Africa's quota for coloured

players in its cricket teams, inequality persists in terms of opportunities at every level.

In an interview with THE WEEK, Rabada shares his thoughts on the sensitive BLM movement and the need to educate society on racism. He also expresses how grateful he is to be able to play cricket at a time like this. Excerpts:

How does it feel to be in the IPL bio-bubble?

It feels surreal that we cannot leave the hotel. But you learn to look at the positives. The threat of Covid-19 is real. This [bubble] gives us a chance to bond with each other.

Having played no competitive cricket in five months, how hard is it to get back in form for a T20 tournament that is tough on bowlers?

It has not been too bad. I got in and slowly built [my form]. I guess it is because we have been doing this for many years. It does not take too long to get back to where you left off. The build-up has been gradual but steady.

We have analysts to give us an indication of scores. Generally, that gives an idea of how the wickets will be. Getting a feel in the nets also helps. We have a good idea of what to expect, but you never know what will happen in a game. As professional cricketers, it is about adapting to whatever happens.



For me, black lives matter. It has nothing to do with cricket or sports or business.



We came here (the UAE) to play cricket. That is what one must remember. We are actually grateful to be able to do it.

What are your takeaways from DC's season last year?

To be honest, why change something that has worked in the past? So we are going to play with the same attitude. The mindset is to win, but I think we have been gelling quite nicely as a team. That is what is important. My role is to try and not go for runs and to get wickets.

Recently in SA, past and present players expressed their views on BLM. What are your views?

I can speak for myself, not for anyone else. For me, black lives matter. It has nothing to do with cricket or sports or business. Just black lives matter, and I will stand up for that. It does not mean that I expect to get treated like royalty everywhere I go. But from the pride and dignity point of view, black lives matter.

West Indies legend Michael Holding was very emotional about it recently and spoke of how education can eradicate racism. Do you agree?

Yes, 100 per cent. Racism comes from somewhere. It does not just come by mistake. Racism is expressed in many ways. There are reasons why people are racists. So I think it is about understanding that. That is how you free yourself, make an informed decision and not just do something because others are doing it.



COURTESY DELHI CAPITALS

RACISM STORM IN CRICKET SA

- ♦ CSA mandates that in a season, the national team must field an average of six players of colour, including two black Africans
- ♦ But 30 former players of colour issued a statement in July alleging racism in the sport
- ♦ Signatories included Makhaya Ntini, Vernon Philander, Ashwell Prince and J.P. Duminy
- ♦ CSA's appointment of eight white officials over six months also attracted heavy criticism

The only way to do so is through education and from credible news.

Will you take the knee in the IPL?

I have already expressed that people know where I stand. But if they say we must, we will do it.

What is your main aim this IPL in terms of bowling? Is there pressure since DC is yet to win the IPL title?

For DC to win, I need to make sure I hit my straps. If I do, it increases the chances of winning. That is what I was talking about, team dynamics. If everyone performs, we give ourselves a real chance of winning. As a player, you want to come and play well, and understand that if you play close to your best on a consistent basis, the chances of your team winning are high.

How is it playing under a young skipper like Shreyas Iyer?

I have known him since

our Under-19 days, so we have played together and against each other since 2016. He is quite cool and the same age as me. We have tried to keep in touch over the years and met at the NBA All-Star weekend in Chicago. A familiar face for me, Iyer has done well as captain so far. He is a solid player and an interesting guy.

How tough will it be for you mentally to play a long tournament like the IPL and remain in a bubble?

We came here to play cricket. That is what one must remember. We are actually grateful to be able to do it. So many people around the world are losing their jobs and we have an opportunity to come and earn, better yet, doing what we love. It is a bummer to not be able to go out and explore such a unique place like Dubai. But at the end of the day, there are too many blessings to count as opposed to the cons of being in a bubble. 🙏

DETOUR

SHOBHAA DE



Back in the game

The last time Urmila Matondkar was in the news was when she was photographed with Rahul Gandhi in March 2019. She had jumped on to the electoral bandwagon and was welcomed into the Congress by the 'Big Boy' himself. It is another matter altogether that she lost, and almost immediately resigned from the party, citing 'internal politics'. But, while she was at it, she had emphatically stated her long-term commitment to serve the people of India.

Urmila became a trending topic last week, when she boldly took on Kangana Ranaut and debunked the charges against Bollywood. She also came out in support of veteran actor and Samajwadi Party MP Jaya Bachchan, who had spoken up strongly in Parliament against actors who were tarnishing the entire film industry by badmouthing colleagues. By now, Kangana's penchant for promptly hitting back at detractors is well known—and hit back she did!

It was when she scornfully referred to Urmila as a 'soft porn' star, that an incensed section of Bollywood fans reacted and condemned Kangana's crass comment. By then, Urmila had had her say across multiple platforms and thundered she would not 'tolerate' anybody attacking the good name of Mumbai and Maharashtra by daring to question the police about the investigations into the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput. When I heard her raising the issue of 'tolerance', I half-wondered if she was all set to switch political parties and join the Shiv Sena well before the next elections.

For a bright, beautiful and articulate woman of 46, this would certainly be the right time to jump in, and stay in, not merely flirt with, politics. As a 'Marathi Mulgi', who studied in Mumbai and Pune (BA in philosophy), Urmila would certainly make a worthy candidate from her constituency (Mumbai North),

with her glamour quotient and *bhashan*-making skills. She has the makings of a shrewd political player—pity she debuted in the political arena with the wrong party.

Her chequered showbiz career could have taken off to higher levels had she picked her projects better, after making a spectacular success of a role tailor made for her by her besotted mentor at the time, Ram Gopal Varma. As Mili Joshi in *Rangeela*, playing opposite two big heroes, Aamir Khan and Jackie Shroff, it was the petite but perfectly proportioned Urmila who walked away with the top honours and a Filmfare Award (1995). It was the same year that she acted in a Malayalam action thriller opposite Mohanlal.

Despite these amazing breaks, Urmila did not manage to leverage her initial success, and was soon relegated to accepting offers to play judge on dance reality shows.

Perhaps, this is Urmila's moment—she has certainly impressed prime time viewers with her sensible, sober views. She could have retaliated to Kangana's taunt in the same

language. But she did not.

I have known Urmila off and on over the years, even though we have not been in touch on a regular basis. She has been consistently warm, friendly, and well-spoken during our brief encounters. Years ago, she had spontaneously come to our home after an event, with her close friend, fashion designer Manish Malhotra. She disarmed the entire family with her bubbly personality. She has what it takes to become a politician in the mould of say, a Mahua Moitra, who is creating waves each time she speaks up in Parliament.

If Urmila does indeed join another political party, she should ensure she can handle 'internal politics'—for which political party in the world is free of that mega menace?



PHOTO JANAK BHAT

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HEAR HERE

This pandemic saw
podcasting going beyond
metropolitan hipsters

BY SNEHA BHURA



SOUND CHECK

Sudeep Rao, a visually challenged stand-up comic, transitioned into podcasting during the lockdown

PUNYA ARORA





Rushabh Vasa, co-founder of Aawaz.com, one of the biggest home-grown podcasting players in Hindi, does not see any paradox in its top two shows being ideologically poles apart. It was in January that they launched a show on the religious history of Ayodhya, called 'Ayodhya: Ram in Nagri', and started promoting it around April. "In the programme on the Ram Mandir Bhoomi Pujan ceremony on August 5, we got the man who shared the stage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi—Mahant Nritya Gopal Das (head of Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas)—to tell us lesser-known things about the holy city during our field recording," says Vasa, who does not think there were any ancient mosques in the city; there is no mention of Babri Masjid in the show. He says the show started gaining listeners in July, in the run-up to the foundation-laying ceremony of the Ram temple, and went on to become the most popular podcast on the platform. By the second week of August, however, listeners lost interest in 'Ayodhya: Ram in Nagri'. There was a new contender.

"Around June, we got the late Urdu poet Rahat Indori (whose poem *Agar Khilaaf Hai Hone Do* was widely chanted by the anti-CAA protesters) to record his famous poems," says Vasa about the podcast 'Rahat Indori ke Rang', which includes 10 poems recited by the famous poet and lyricist in every episode. "He (Indori) did it at home during the lockdown and sent it to us. He died of Covid-19 two days after we launched the show in August. We can claim to [have featured] his last show and voice



recording." The podcast has notched up 66,000 listeners on Aawaz in a month, whereas 'Ayodhya: Ram in Nagri' got 46,500 in eight months or so.

Launched in January 2019, the Mumbai-based audio network has more than doubled its listener-base since April this year. Just on Android and iPhone, Vasa says, it reaches out to seven lakh listeners. It has a presence on platforms like Spotify, Ola Play, Saregama Carvaan 2.0, JioPhone and set-top box. According to Vasa, it has got more than 40 million stream counts since inception, mostly from Tier-II cities like Lucknow, Indore, Patna, Jaipur and Agra.

Online video streaming has seen

**PODCASTING
HAS COME TO
THE RESCUE OF
LISTENERS
LEARNING TO
LIVE WITH
THEIR OWN
COMPANY MORE
THAN EVER.**

FRESH CONTENT
(From left to right)
Urdu poet Rahat Indori;
podcaster Shibangi Das
with her partner; Spotify
India managing director
Amarjit Singh Batra



its best days in the pandemic. While the same upsurge cannot be reported for audio streaming platforms, which are more commute-friendly. Podcasting has come to the rescue of listeners learning to live with their own company more than ever. It is more intimate, convivial and unobtrusive, allowing one a way out of the "visual chaos" while multitasking chores like cooking, cleaning and doing laundry, says Amarjit Singh Batra, India managing director of the Swedish audio streaming giant Spotify, which has launched a host of Indian original podcasts in 2020 compared with the three that were launched last year.

"Based on feedback for my show, streams seem to be coming from places like Mysuru, Coimbatore, Gangtok and Goa," says Bengaluru-based Sudeep Rao, a visually challenged stand-up comic who transitioned into podcasting during lockdown with the Spotify original show called 'Life Gone Wrong' on

stories of survival and resilience.

Spotify partners with home-grown podcasting companies like Aawaz and IVM to add to its library, and will soon foray into original shows beyond English and Hindi. Quick and easy podcast-creation apps like Spotify's Anchor are also witnessing a surge in popularity. "In fact, between January and June this year, we have seen a 5x growth in podcasters in the country," says Batra. "For Spotify, India already features among the top few markets based on the number of creators on Anchor today." On International Podcasting Day this year on September 30, the format has grown to include smaller cities and non-metros.

Delhi-based Hubhopper Studio, an end-to-end podcast-creation, hosting and distribution platform, has seen an 88 per cent increase in podcast creation in the last six months, with religious, spiritual and devotional being the most popular genres. But there are some who have identified other glaring

gaps. Like film reviews tailored for a Hindi-speaking audience. "In our line of work, we travel to many different parts of the country—like Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and West Bengal. We noticed that across classes and education [levels], people are in awe of cinema. But in terms of access to material that can help them understand the medium, there was hardly anything. All they can find about cinema in local media outlets are either simplistic film reviews or celebrity gossip," says Pune-based Shibangi Das, who started a film reviewing podcast in Hindi called 'Parda Paar Filmy Pyaar' with her partner on Hubhopper in May.

In a quirkier vein is 'The Telugu Cinema Project' on JioSaavn. "Varun is a 36-year-old movie buff, and Megha has just graduated from college. He adores Chiranjeevi, and she admires Vijay Deverakonda. In this podcast, they revisit some

of the cult classics of Telugu cinema, where Megha reacts after watching that film for the first time in her life and Varun discusses the details. The aim is to introduce Telugu classics to a younger generation," says Ishani Dasgupta, lead, podcast partnerships at JioSaavn, who feels hyperlocal news-related podcasting has tremendous potential.

For instance, when Indresh Aarti from Agra heard that Israel had imposed full lockdown again as Covid-19 cases climbed, the 27-year-old government school teacher got his podcast subject for the day. So, in a seven-minute show hosted by Khabri, a Gurgaon-based audio-sharing platform, Aarti, in a news-anchorish voice, informs his three lakh followers, mostly students from UP, MP and Rajasthan, everything they need to know about the country—from it launching the spy satellite Ofek-16 in July to the street in Tel Aviv named after Rabindranath Tagore to its parliament being called Knesset. "Students are not going to school. Have you seen the state of news media now? Is there any knowledge to be gained from the exam point of view there?" asks Aarti. "Podcasting has improved my own communication skills. My students are learning to put up podcasts [themselves]." ●

Extravagance

A QUICK GUIDE TO RECKLESS SPENDING

BY KARTHIK RAVINDRANATH

What would you do if you earned as much as the world's highest earning celebrity? There are many practical answers, but they are never as much fun as the absurd ones. Just for the record, the top earning celebrity in the world is Kylie Jenner, 23. As per *Forbes's* The Celebrity 100, 2020, she earned \$590 million (around ₹4,300 crore). So, for no apparent reason, here are five impractical ways to spend \$590 million:

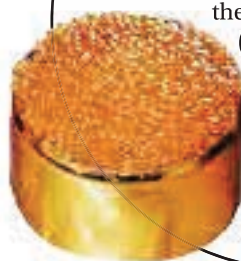


BUY AC MILAN

The historic football club was valued at \$583 million in June 2020. Which means you will have \$7 million left. The annual wages of the starting 11 alone would be much higher than that. Therefore, the club will face bankruptcy for sure. If you support a rival team, this could be a smooth covert operation.

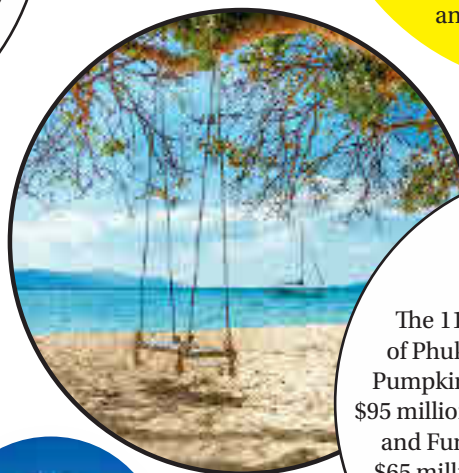
CHANGE YOUR DIET

Make Almas caviar (\$34,500/kg) a staple. Bid for other exotic food such as Yubari king melons (once auctioned for around \$13,500 each) and the Italian white truffle—one (weighing 1.5kg) reportedly auctioned for \$330,000 in 2007. Not to forget wine; winning bids have been in excess of \$500,000 a bottle.



A PAD AND RIDES

The Villa Les Cedres in France is affordable—\$450 million. But the stable, which can house 30 horses, cannot be left empty. So fill it with Arabians for around \$3 million, and a Bugatti La Voiture Noire (\$19 million) to grace the garage. The balance should be judiciously kept aside for upkeep and taxes; it should last a couple of years.



BLING IT ON

The Kohinoor is "priceless"; The Cullinan (up to \$2 billion) is too pricey. But you can get The Hope Diamond (\$200-\$250 million), The Centenary Diamond (\$100 million), and six other famous stones for anywhere from \$465.6 million to \$515.6 million. Get a Narcissus safe for \$336,000 to store them. You will still have more than \$70 million left.



PRIVACY MATTERS

The 110-acre Rangyai Island, east of Phuket, is listed for \$160 million. Pumpkin Key (Florida) is available for \$95 million, and Ifuru Resort with airport and Funadhoo Island (Maldives) for \$65 million. Add a couple more if you want, but keep aside enough money to buy a private jet and a long-range yacht to get to your private islands.



SWEET BETRAYAL

A psychology-driven party activity finds second life as a video game

BY VARUN RAMESH

Much like the shelf-life of an idea, the shelf-life of a video game is indeterminate—you never know when its time will come (or come again).



Six months into a global pandemic, many of us remain disconnected and separated from our friends, with the prospect of in-person get-togethers seeming increasingly unlikely.

Re-enter Among Us, a video game version of the popular party game 'Mafia'—first conceptualised as a psychological experiment by Russian researcher Dimma Davidoff in 1986.

Among Us, released in 2018, is a multiplayer social deduction game that puts a bunch of players onto a spaceship, tasks them with seemingly menial but critical activities to keep the ship going, and randomly selects one or two of them as an Imposter who must murder crew members before they finish their jobs.

The Imposter looks the same as the other players, a sort of legged jellybean with a slightly frantic gait. If the Imposter gets close enough to another player, they can execute them in a variety of cutely-gruesome ways—from the classic knife to the back to the equally classic neck-snap. Once dead, players may not speak but they can continue to perform their tasks as ghosts.

Upon spotting a dead body or given reasonable suspicion, crew members can call an emergency meeting and attempt to identify and vote out the Imposter. This sparks a frantic round of whodunnit and leads to players accusing and defending each with increasing paranoia (but in good humour).

What makes for suspicious behaviour? What tells indicate that your friends could be lying to you? In-person, one would watch for a lack of eye-contact, micro-expressions or visual tells. In-game, perhaps the cute and helpless jellybean moves too ominously in your direction. Perhaps, you spot the Imposter not performing their tasks. Or perhaps they are too eager to accuse others at the meetings. The fun lies in the process.

With many of the biggest streamers on YouTube and Twitch taking up the game in recent weeks, it has found second life as a novel way of getting the gang back together again. Best played in combination with a group voice call, the game's mobile versions (Android or iOS) are free, while the PC version costs ₹199. ①



A LOVE SONG FOR LATASHA

Available on Netflix

Rating



An incomplete melody

BY ANJULY MATHAI

On March 16, 1991, African-American teenager Latasha Harlins was shot dead in South Central LA for allegedly trying to steal a bottle of orange juice. Her death was one of the catalysts for the LA riots of 1992. In a new 20-minute documentary, filmmaker Sophia Nahli Allison revisits the life of the 15-year-old girl. The parallels between the LA riots of then and the Black Lives Matter movement of today are stark. When it comes to matters of race, it is like we are listening to a record stuck in a loop.

Despite this, *A Love Song for Latasha* does not mention the riots except as a footnote. It simply tells the story of a girl who dreamt of becoming a lawyer and loved playing basketball with the guys. But, of course, racial tension hangs like a stench in the backdrop.



It was an eye-opener that the small things we take for granted, like entering a grocery store, is an experience characterised by fear for many kids in racially-tense neighbourhoods. Stories like Latasha's need to be told to humanise a person who might otherwise have remained as just another face on a placard.

For that, *A Love Song for Latasha* is important, but it lacks nuance. And, if accounts of her becoming a rebel after her mother's death are true, it is sad that such aspects were left out. They would have added more depth to the person, instead of the martyr she is made out to be. ②



All the president's thoughts

Former US president **Barack Obama's** memoir, *A Promised Land*, will be out in November, just after the election. It will be one of two volumes that will cover his early political days up to the death of Osama bin Laden in 2011. Due to high demand, Crown, an imprint of Penguin Random House, is expected to print three million copies of the US edition initially. "There's no feeling like finishing a book, and I am proud of this one," stated Obama.



Brewing designs

Gauri Khan is soon to turn author with the coffee table book, *My Life in Design*. Penguin Random House will publish it next year. "There are several experiences in my journey as a designer that I would like to record for posterity," she said. "The book will be very visually appealing with exclusive pictures and information that I feel could guide aspiring designers or those who are just generally interested in the art of design." Khan started her design label, Gauri Khan Designs, in Mumbai in 2013.

COMPILED BY ANJULY MATHAI



ACHYUTH JAIGOPAL, guitarist

Striking the right chord

Popular Kerala quartet When Chai Met Toast has been serenading listeners with soulful English, Malayalam and Tamil songs for the last four years. It is now on Spotify's global emerging-artist programme, Radar. This month, the multilingual pop-folk band released their first full Hindi single, 'Kahaani', with lyrics by popular singer-songwriter Ankur Tewari. It is part of an upcoming album *When We Feel Young*. Achyuth Jaigopal, guitarist with WCMT, talks about first love, song-writing and new numbers.

Q/ What is 'Kahaani' all about and what made you compose it?
A/ 'Kahaani' is an incomplete love story about two right people meeting at the wrong time. It is about that first love that did not work out when we were young. Sometimes even when things seem perfect, they do not go the way we plan due to reasons we are unable to handle at that point. The essence of the song is the emotion of acceptance. Our songs stem from experiences that we have gone through, and 'Kahaani' is no different.

Q/ Why did you approach Ankur to write the lyrics?
A/ Though we speak and sing in Hindi, we found it difficult to write a whole song in Hindi with meaningful lyrics. Ankur is a long-time friend from within the Indie music circle and a brilliant writer. So when we knew that the song would suit Hindi words, there were no doubts about whom we would contact



first. The initial draft he wrote, on a paper napkin during a flight, ended up working perfectly with the melody we had composed.

Q/ Are you planning on working with Hindi lyricists for more songs? Or would you attempt to write them yourself?

A/ There are no plans for now, but when we compose a song that calls for Hindi lyrics, we will consider collaborating with other lyricists then. We have written small verses in Hindi ourselves as well, in a few of our songs.

Q/ How has the pandemic helped you grow as a band in the last few months?

A/ The pandemic has been quite difficult, especially being a band that spends half its time travelling across the country performing live shows. However, on the brighter side, we have been able to produce and complete songs we had written earlier. We also released three songs from our upcoming album, *When We Feel Young*, during these months—'Maybe I can fly', the title track, and 'Kahaani'. Though we have not been brimming with ideas, we have kept ourselves busy honing our skills.

—Sneha Bhura

Show of support

Kalki Koechlin stood staunchly by her ex-husband Anurag Kashyap, who was accused of sexual harassment by actor Payal Ghosh on September 19. "Dear Anurag, don't let this social media circus get to you," she tweeted. "You have fought for the freedom of women in your own scripts, you have defended their integrity in your professional space as well as your personal life." Koechlin is among a host of celebs, which includes Swara Bhasker, Richa Chadha and Anubhav Sinha, who have come out in support of Kashyap.



Sonnets to self

In an Instagram post, actor **Ileana D'Cruz** was all about self-love, quoting a favourite poet about "admiring yourself like you admire poetry... because you are walking poetry". "So many times," she wrote, "it is just so much easier to look at your flaws and focus on them.... You are made of so much more.... You are your own kind of beautiful.... How about celebrating that?" And here you were, thinking you don't really need rhyme or reason to love yourself!





A mirror for Dr Kissinger

So Richard Nixon found Indian women unattractive and sexless. We shall not ask what Indian women thought of Richard Nixon: after all he lost to JFK for a reason. Even in a dark alley on a moonless night he would not have been mistaken for Robert Redford. Egging on the president in his rabidly racist and misogynistic rants was the high priest of realpolitik, the ravishing Greek god, Dr Henry Kissinger.

While Nixon vented his sexual neuroses in between conversations with Indira Gandhi, Kissinger added dollops of choice racist slurs. Indians, he slyly whispered in the manner of a scheming courtier to a demented monarch, were “scavenging people”, “superb flatterers” and “the most aggressive goddamn people around”.

Besides, they were “bastards anyway”. In a classical turn-around, the Jewish teenager who fled racial hate in Nazi Germany had grown up into a perpetrator. For him, Indians were small change: he even let down Jews. “And if they put Jews into gas chambers in the Soviet Union,” he told Nixon, “it is not an American concern. Maybe a humanitarian concern.” Maybe.

Nixon is now beyond reach, and can be left to perform slow turns in his resting place like a boar on a spit, as Indian women light up the global stage and screen, parliaments, courts, corporate boards and multilateral institutions, including in the United States. But Dr K is still around, plodding like Geoff Boycott towards a charmless century. He is fair game.

In recent years Dr K has fudged his visceral hatred of India. It should all be seen in “context”, he says, employing the time-honoured feint of the cornered. The context: in 1971, the Nixon-Kissinger dream team was wooing an aloof Asian beauty—China—and like any beau reading poetry to

his beloved on a porch, they did not want discordant noise. Ten million refugees and untold atrocities by the Pakistan army be damned; China had to be won and Yahya Khan, the willing matchmaker, had to be rewarded. India would not be allowed to wreck the party. Dr K told our ambassador that in case of war, India was on its own; the arrival of the Seventh Fleet in the Bay of Bengal removed any doubts. The commonality of democratic values was discarded in favour of China.

Men like Dr K are beyond guilt; votaries of realpolitik, they pride themselves on cold-blooded pursuit of self-interest. But nobody likes to be remembered badly. Dr K has tried to make up by expressing grudging regret and dishing out small favours: a word in the right ear, a message passed, a timely op-ed, a television appearance.

We are collectively guilty of slipping into his trap: by allowing him to do us these favours, or indeed in seeking them; we have played along in his attempt to gloss over the past. We feel chuffed at his recognition; his vanity emboldens ours. Gushing accolades greet him in India even as his wheelchair cuts

an arrogant swathe through star-struck audiences in five-star halls. Somewhere he must feel validated in saying that the great skill of Indians “was to suck up to people in key positions”.

But great nations can, and should, live beyond transactional trade-offs. We do not need Dr K’s patronising favours to influence the American system and we no longer need help him salve whatever serves as his conscience. Racism is being protested at home in America; it cannot be tolerated abroad. After the latest revelations, Dr Kissinger needs to know where he gets off, and that he actually missed his bus stop some decades ago.



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