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NEW EMPEROR**

**BHARAT JODO YATRA
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**HEALTH THE
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INDIA TODAY

BENGALURU HOW TO RUIN INDIA'S BEST CITY

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CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE AND RAMPANT
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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Bangalore. Coined sometime in the early years of the 21st century, the word used to mark out a unique Indian success. At the height of the outsourcing boom, an American would use the word to convey defeat in a long-distance economic competition. Bangalore, to take the old and familiar anglicised form of the name, was our own Silicon Valley. It was our sunrise city, our El Dorado. The world was its oyster. What possibly could go wrong with this script? Well, trust India to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. That American word has been turned inside out. Now it just as likely conveys an instrument of self-torture. The city may have renamed itself as Bengaluru in 2005 to suit rising nativist sentiments, but it has been 'Bangalore'—and has no one else but itself to blame for it.

For a country that had mastered urban planning 5,000 years ago with the Harappan cities, we have unlearned whatever we knew. From north to south, east to west, our cities are in a shambolic state. To be sure, this is less a case of being bad at creating but being alarmingly efficient at destroying. You see Mumbai and Chennai routinely go under after the rains. There seems to be a fatalistic acceptance of this, as if it is a part of their lives. Other cities pop up too in the headlines for the assorted kinds of mess they get into, whether it is endless traffic jams, water shortage, garbage disposal, pollution or crumbling infrastructure.

But of all these, Bangalore is the one that evokes the maximum pathos. Built at a site on the Deccan Plateau chosen by its 16th century founder Kempe Gowda, its altitude of 3,000 feet from mean sea level still gives it a hill station feel. With great weather, an abundance of parks and lakes and a genteel population, it used to be known as a place to retire to. That was in the days before its economy went on an adrenaline overdose. With a special wistfulness, Group Editorial Director Raj Chengappa writes the cover story this week—Bangalore is the city he grew up in. He also wrote INDIA TODAY's first cover story on it in 1983. We had anointed it as the 'Boom City' then. Now, nearly four decades later, he returns to chronicle the layers of gloom hanging over the same city as it threatens to go bust. That three days of torrential rains in early September caused unprecedented flooding came as an unhappy coincidence in the middle of his reporting—stunning scenes of city-wide devastation played out over days as even the IT corridor was inundated. Even some business tycoons had to be rescued on tractors from posh colonies and luxury villas.

But the flooding, and the unseemly sight of a beautiful city going under, was only a metaphor for a much larger malaise of Bangalore's crumbling infrastructure. It was the symptom and not the disease itself. In Chengappa's estimation, the city's crown jewel—the infotech sector—is unfairly blamed for the present mess. As recorded in his 1983 cover story, the city was already booming in the 1980s. Infosys founding chairman N.R. Narayana Murthy first saw Bangalore in the 1960s on a family visit: leave alone the traffic nightmare of today, even


the human population on the roads was scanty. And by the time he shifted Infosys from Pune in the 1980s, he was moving into an already irrevocably changed landscape.

The first wave of the city's growth, in fact, happened in the 1960s when public sector giants like HMT, BEL, ITI and BEML were set up to take advantage of its clean air and its scientific and technological base. Then, in the late Seventies, with the city having surplus power, its planners opened the doors to businesses from across the country. Bombay was then beset with union issues and Calcutta was plagued by the Naxal movement, so industrialists from these original megalopolises of India moved in droves to Bangalore. By 1983, it was already among the fastest growing cities of the world.

The IT boom came on top of that: beginning in the Eighties, picking up steam and global cachet by the Nineties, and pretty much exploding in the 2000s. It became a city, as Chengappa writes, "where start-ups spring up like daisies every morning and grow into unicorns by sundown". The present-day tech corridor, a glittering 17-km arc of glass and stainless-steel skyscrapers on the southeast swathe of the ceaselessly expanding metropolis, houses an estimated 400 of the Fortune 500 list of corporates. It's a dense concentration of wealth generators: some \$22 billion per annum, accounting for a third of Bangalore's revenue and employing close to 1 million people. But it contributed to the story of broken infrastructure: in the past decade alone, the city has grown four-fold in size and now straddles 800 sq. km. Also, its population nearly trebled from 5.7 million in 2001 to 14.2 million last year. It is India's third largest metro now, having overtaken Chennai and Kolkata.

April 15, 1983

How does one cope with growth on that scale, at that pace? Unfortunately, successive state governments are responsible for being riddled with endemic corruption, sloth and systemic confusion. All this has left the city bereft of a grand design. Its last master plan expired in 2015 and the new one is yet to be cleared. This has conferred on it the air of a city perennially in trouble. Murthy of Infosys suggests that Bangalore get a mayor, a leader with stature who operates like a CEO, with the multiplicity of civic agencies reporting to him or her, and invested with financial autonomy. The mayor should govern the city with an iron hand, making the elected corporators and civic officials accountable and ensuring timely implementation of infrastructure projects, while cutting down on corruption. At the moment, Bangalore has eight civic agencies responsible for its upkeep, often working at cross-purposes, or not at all. As India develops economically, urbanisation is inevitable. That's how a country progresses. But if the governance of our cities remains in today's pathetic state, we are heading for many urban nightmares. Bangalore, with its wealth and high quality of human resources, could set an example that others could emulate.


(Aroon Purie)

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Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

COVER STORY/ BENGALURU

HOW TO RUIN A CITY

Its very allure has become Bengaluru's bane, as a growing
 population and administrative apathy push it to the brink

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The Congress's walkathon aims to forge a narrative of unity and also rebuild political capital for Rahul



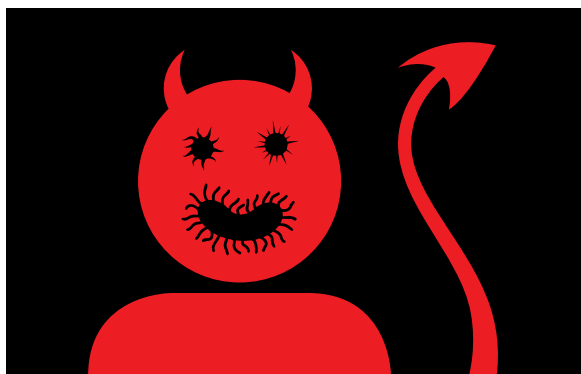
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THE BIG STORY

Why Asaduddin Owaisi disagrees with Mohan Bhagwat's 'population imbalance' remark

By Amarnath K. Menon

The AIMIM chief claims Indian Muslims are showing the way in family planning <https://bit.ly/3CvGROy>

FROM THE STATES

Why Assam is sceptical about Shah's promise to make the state flood-free in five years

By Kaushik Deka

Assurances on tackling the problem, made by the BJP governments in the state since 2016, have remained on paper <https://bit.ly/3yAmuip>

FROM THE INDIA TODAY ARCHIVES (1993):

MULAYAM SINGH YADAV

How Mulayam Singh Yadav built the Third Force in UP

By Dilip Awasthi

A rewind to post-Babri Masjid demolition Uttar Pradesh when Mulayam Singh Yadav was out to finish off his loathed enemy BJP and fill the vacuum left by other parties <https://bit.ly/3MrsS19>



SPOTLIGHT: BLACK MAGIC

How police cracked the 'human sacrifice' case in Kerala

By Jeemon Jacob

Three suspects—a black magic practitioner and a couple—have been arrested for the murder of two women. Both victims were lottery vendors <https://bit.ly/3Vpna3C>

HEALTH: WEIGHT LOSS

How to make the keto diet work for you

By Sonali Acharjee

Things to keep in mind before setting off on your weight-loss journey with a ketogenic diet <https://bit.ly/3CRZTQM>

CINEMA: AMITABH BACHCHAN@80

'Amitabh Bachchan is synonymous with cinema, he should complete a century'

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Ajay Devgn pays tribute to Big B on his 80th birthday <https://bit.ly/3SW2cbf>

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GUEST COLUMN

NOW, CHAIRMAN XI?

The national party congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which being convened on October 16 in Beijing, will be closely watched across the world. Its proceedings will convey important indicators of Chinese domestic and foreign policies in a more significantly altered geopolitical landscape and a more challenging political and economic situation at home. Globally, every country is grappling with heightened uncer-



By SHYAM
SARAN

tainty and rapid, relentless change. China is no exception. How is it setting the stage for formulating and articulating an appropriate strategy for a more challenging environment?

China's top party and state leader, Xi Jinping, is likely to receive endorsement of the congress for continuance in these positions at least for another five-year term. Although he is already the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong, the rhetoric leading up to the congress suggests he

is seeking an even greater measure of authority. This is reflected in efforts to suggest an equivalence in eminence and in power with Mao. For example, there are reports that Xi may be anointed as party chairman, a position given up in 1982 under Deng Xiaoping, who wanted a more collective form of leadership and a rejection of the personality cult around a leader that was the hallmark of Mao's leadership. The party constitution already recognises Xi as an outstanding ideologue of the party. His ideas are enshrined in the constitution as "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in a New Era". This phrase may be replaced by a more pithy "Xi Jinping Thought", again establishing an equivalence with Mao, whose ideas are encapsulated as "Mao Zedong Thought". Finally, party media have begun to refer to Xi as the "helmsman", as Mao was often addressed. It is clear that we should expect a more powerful, a more ideologically inclined and assertive leader of China after the party congress.

China is confronting an unprecedented, even crisis-like, situation on the economic front. There are structural reasons why China's GDP growth is unlikely to sustain the high rate witnessed over the past four decades. Like other mature economies, China is experiencing declining factor productivity. Its population has begun to decline and is rapidly aging. The external economic environment, which was so favourable to China over the years when the "Washington Consensus" of open markets and efficient supply chains reigned, is now over. These structural factors are currently exacerbated by more cyclical and short-term factors. These include a high rate of indebtedness, supply chain disruptions triggered by the persistence with its zero-Covid policy and the bursting of the over-leveraged property market, which has been the main driver of Chinese growth over the past several years. Against a target of 5.5 per cent GDP growth for the current year, the likely outcome may be closer to 3 per cent or

GETTY IMAGES



A GROWING DISTANCE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping (extreme right) along with other heads of state at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in September

less. How may the party congress deal with this adverse situation?

A survey of Chinese media indicates that while acknowledging the severity of the economic setbacks, the party leadership is unlikely to abandon the zero-Covid policy, and hence the frequent lockdowns and economic disruptions are likely to continue. The zero-Covid policy is associated personally with Xi Jinping and was seen as a great success during the initial wave of the pandemic. It was projected as a demonstration of the superiority of the socialist system and the superior wisdom of Xi Jinping's leadership. How can it now be admitted that he was perhaps wrong?

It is also unlikely that the regulatory assault on the most successful and dy-

A more assertive posture towards India is likely, even if there are tactical shifts dictated by the G20 and SCO summits

namic of Chinese private sector entities, like Alibaba or Weibo, will be halted or reversed. The renewed emphasis on state-owned enterprises (SOEs) as the advance guard in the economic and technological transformation of the Chinese economy will be reaffirmed. In dealing with the property crisis, it is again the SOEs that are leading the effort to turn around financially strained private companies. The emphasis on economic self-reliance remains under the "dual circulation" policy, which clearly gives precedence to import substitution and relative technological autonomy.

Ideological factors will influence economic decisions more than mere pragmatism. We are likely to see greater focus on technological self-reliance and this may be reflected in the emergence of a more highly educated and technocratic new generation of leaders. Xi Jinping believes that technology will be the decisive battleground of the future and the source of power of a modern state. We should expect a much greater emphasis on, and investment in, the acquisition of high-tech capabilities.

The party leadership recognises that it confronts a more adverse and

unpredictable environment. The call for greater efforts, even sacrifices, is coupled with renewed confidence in the imminent achievement of the "great rejuvenation" of the Chinese nation. Here is what Xi Jinping said in a recent article in the party journal *Qiu Shi*: 'Our party must be united to lead the people to face major challenges effectively, defend against major risks, overcome major barriers and resolve major contradictions. We must press on with great struggles under new historical characteristics.'

The repeated use of the word 'major' reflects the seriousness of these challenges. Xi claims that the country "has never been closer to achieving its great rejuvenation but the last mile will

be full of perils and challenges". The inevitability of Chinese rejuvenation, as an idea, has now been tempered with a dose of unpredictability.

What about Chinese foreign policy after the congress? Former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger seems to think that after consolidating his leadership at the congress, Xi Jinping is likely to make some conciliatory moves towards the US, acknowledging that his bet on Russia's Putin has gone sour. While China may distance itself to some degree from Russia, it is unlikely to undertake a major shift towards the US. Xi's ideological preferences stand in the way. This is apparent from

constant references to the danger from US-inspired "colour revolutions", which seek to undermine and subvert socialist countries through ideological contamination. Regime security has always been the priority for authoritarian states.

Against this background, one should not expect any change in China's India policy. A more assertive, even obdurate, Chinese posture towards India is likely after the congress, even if there are some tactical shifts dictated by the forthcoming G20 and SCO meetings, which will be chaired by India. ■

Shyam Saran is a former foreign secretary and senior fellow, Centre for Policy Research

SENA SPLIT

SYMBOLISM VERSUS REALITY

By Kiran D. Tare

The Shiv Sena is no more. Or at least has been sent into a limbo, for now. The Election Commission of India (EC) on Monday, October 10, sealed the split in the 56-year-old party with the allotment of two separate names to the warring factions led by Uddhav Thackeray and Eknath Shinde. With it, the poll panel—as an interim measure—denied both of them the right to be the "real" Shiv Sena. The row had started with Shinde's coup in June that toppled the Uddhav-led Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government and saw the rebel-in-chief become the chief minister in a stunning last-minute decision by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Now, while the Uddhav faction will be known as Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) with a 'mashaal' ('flaming torch') as its symbol, the Shinde camp has been allotted the



ADSC

name Balasahebanchi Shiv Sena (or Balasaheb's Shiv Sena) and the symbol of 'two swords and a shield'. Both have been denied the parent party's symbol: the 'bow and arrow'.

But the battle for the Shiv Sena and its founder Bal Thackeray's legacy is far from over. On August 23, the Supreme Court had referred petitions filed by the Uddhav- and Shinde-led factions, which raised constitutional questions related to defection, merger and disqualification, to a five-judge bench. While the apex court is still dealing with the matter, it had dismissed a petition by Uddhav's faction to stop the EC from deciding on Team Shinde's claim to the party name and symbol.

On October 8, the EC—unable to decide which of the two represents the original party—barred both the factions from using the party name or its symbol for the Andheri East assembly bypoll scheduled on November 3. While Shinde enjoys the support of 40 of the 55 party MLAs and 12 of the 22 MPs, Uddhav has the backing of most of the office-bearers. The new names were allotted on October 10, along with the symbol, to Uddhav's faction. The CM's group had to wait for another day, as all its three preferences for a symbol were rejected and options were sought afresh.

Shinde, after the allotment of the party name, wrote on Twitter that it proved "we are the inheritors of Balasaheb's thoughts". At a first glance, it seems Uddhav has lost the opportunity to lay exclusive claim to the legacy of his father, popularly known as Balasaheb. But his close aide and Lok Sabha member Arvind Sawant claims the Sena's supporters will start associating themselves with Team Uddhav "very soon". "Everyone knows that Shiv Sena means Balasaheb Thackeray. Uddhavji is his real heir," he reasons.

As the first among the three preferences submitted to the EC, both the factions had sought to be named as the Shiv Sena (Balasaheb Thackeray). Uddhav, on October 9, went live on social media to share his faction's list of proposed names, while Shinde chose to



MANDAR DEODHAR

HIGH STAKES

Uddhav Thackeray at a Dussehra rally in Mumbai, Oct. 5

go into a huddle with his trusted aides. The following day, the EC allotted the two their respective second preferences due to a tied first choice. For Shinde, "the name Balasaheb's Shiv Sena itself suggests it's a party that carries the lineage of the great man," says political analyst Hemant Desai. But he is quick to add that "it is only a perception". "The decision on who the real political heir is will depend on how the two factions fare in upcoming elections."

The first test for both the factions is the November 3 bypoll. It precedes elections to 15 resource-rich municipal corporations, including Mumbai and Thane, 200 municipal councils and 30 zilla parishads in the next couple of months. Uddhav's son Aaditya has announced that their faction will take the 'flaming torch' symbol to each house-

hold in the coming days. The group is likely to field Rutuja Latke, the widow of former MLA Ramesh Latke whose death necessitated the bypoll. The Shinde faction is as yet undecided on whether to go solo or contest the bypoll with the BJP. In all probability, the two will field a joint candidate, but it's not clear whether from the Balasahebanchi Shiv Sena or the BJP.

The stakes are high. The result of this perception battle can virtually overshadow the ongoing legal battle for the claim to 'legacy'. Uddhav's supporters point to the Sena's first "lucky" tryst with the 'mashaal' when Chhagan Bhujbal, now a Nationalist Congress Party leader, had won an assembly election with the same symbol in 1985. As the Shiv Sena had no dedicated symbol back then, its leaders had fought the polls on various symbols. Bhujbal was the only one elected. The party was allotted the 'bow and arrow' only in 1989. But it is to be seen whether the 'flaming torch' can light up the beleaguered outfit's prospects and help Uddhav retain his father's legacy.

For Shinde and the BJP, a failure will be a huge embarrassment. But for Uddhav, it could mark the beginning of an end to his political career. ■


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SIKKIM

Anti-incumbency is an unpredictable phenomenon—it can afflict governments when they are least expecting it. Three years after the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM)-led government came to power—itsself riding on the back of anti-incumbency against former chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling’s 25-year government—it’s already beset by a lack of public confidence in it. In 2019, the tedium of status quo and the SKM’s slogan of *parivartan* enthused the youth and gave it a narrow victory in the assembly polls. The SKM was only six years old, but its leader P.S. Golay, an old aide of Chamling, appeared a viable alternative. Besides, their manifesto was bountiful: jobs or monthly allowances for the unemployed, support prices for ginger, orange, cardamom crops, allowances for women and so forth.

In the assembly polls, the SKM won 17 seats, while Chamling’s Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) won 15 seats in a 32-seat assembly. Significantly, the SDF won a larger vote share (47.63 per cent) than the SKM (47.17 per cent). However, it soon found itself in dire straits. Ten out of its 15 MLAs joined the BJP and two joined the ruling SKM after the polls. After two MLAs had to vacate one of the two seats they had won, the SDF’s assembly strength fell to a lone MLA—Chamling himself, India’s longest-serving CM till then.

However, much of the enthusiasm around the SKM has fizzled out within three years. “The party made unrealistic promises. For example, creation of 30,000 jobs for youths, a monthly unemployment allowance of Rs 10,000, a yearly allowance of Rs 1,00,000 for family matriarchs for five years...,” says Barap Namgyal, head of SDF’s social media cell. Yet, unemployment figures grew under the SKM’s watch and more people were pushed into poverty. Especially hard-hit was the rural economy.

“Farmers’ pension of Rs 1,000 a month, widow pension and festival allowance have been stopped. The promise of regularising part-time jobs for 20,000 young people within 100

A Chance for Chamling

By Romita Datta



MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Former CM of Sikkim Pawan Kumar Chamling is playing hard for a comeback in 2024

SUBIR HALDER

days of the new government has not been fulfilled. We had brought in this government with a lot of hope but now we see ourselves being fooled,” says a resident from Namchi, south Sikkim. The deeply felt disaffection cuts across age, gender and socio-economic class.

“The government came to power making time-bound promises. Naturally, people are restless when they remain unfulfilled. The government’s credibility has taken a beating. Youths are disillusioned the most,” says SDF vice-president P.D. Rai. The time, in

short, is now ripe for the SDF to strike.

Chamling, now 73, is back on the scene too, announcing that he’d be the CM candidate for the 2024 polls. With most of his top leaders gone, he’s rebuilding the SDF, depending on young blood. “We have lost a lot of deadwood (defectors). The focus is on educated youth,” Rai adds. Persons between 18 and 45 comprise over 50 per cent of Sikkim’s population; likewise, three out of four SDF leaders are relatively young. Karna Bhutiya, 39, is head of the farmer front, 31-year-old Arun Subba heads the labour front, Rickzing Norbu Bhutiya, 30, heads the student front. Young leaders, Chamling hopes, can tap into the youth’s aspirations. The party plans to tackle the blights hounding Sikkim—drug abuse,

WITH A LOT OF THE ‘DEADWOOD’ GONE, EX-CM CHAMLING’S NEW-LOOK PARTY IS DEPENDING ON YOUNG LEADERS

child abuse, mental health issues.

The SDF is also weighing in on national issues with a bearing on the state’s future. Spokesperson M.K. Subba feels India’s border security will be at stake with the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. “There will be an influx of people from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Restricted Area Permit applicable for foreign nationals will not hold once CAA comes into force. We’ll sensitise the youth about the dangers ahead,” he adds. The party is opening new offices in 30 districts. Highlighting achievements of past Chamling governments as well as showcasing a new-look party are high on the agenda. The critical role an opposition could have played is missing, says Subba, with CM Golay allying with the BJP in 2020. Only the SDF can reclaim that democratic space now, he says. They have over a year to drive home their message. ■

LAW CATCHES UP Mukhtar Ansari being produced in court



UTTAR PRADESH

YOGI, THE PROSECUTOR

By Prashant Srivastava

Yogi Adityanath’s first term as Uttar Pradesh chief minister got huge attention for its ‘bulldozer action’ against the properties of mafia dons. In his second term, Yogi has taken it a step further with ‘Mission Punishment’. So now, alongside the bulldozers, the government is focusing on legal prosecution and securing convictions of these bahubalis.

The UP administration says it has identified 62 mafia gangs who they will be going after. Big names in the list include gangster-turned-netas Mukhtar Ansari, Atiq Ahmad and Vijay Mishra. Other prominent names from Purvanchal include Dhruv Kumar a.k.a. Kuntu Singh, Mohammad Ashra and Khan Mubarak; and Yogesh Bhadoda, Amit Kasana, Billu Dujana and Aakash Jat from western UP. An official source says the CM is personally reviewing the progress in the prosecution cases against these criminals.

The new zeal is already showing results. Recently, Mukhtar Ansari, a five-time MLA from Mau, was convicted in two cases within a week, one of them dating back to 1999. Prashant Kumar, ADGP,

law and order, says, “The 62 gangs on our list are being monitored by UP Police HQ. We have attached properties worth Rs 2,200 crore of these dons in the past six months.”

ADGP (prosecution) Ashutosh Pandey says that the use of technology and e-prosecution (digital prosecution) has helped smoothen out the whole process. “Uttar Pradesh is the top state in terms of both entry and disposal of cases through the Centre’s e-Prosecution portal,” he says. Some 9.12 million cases had been resolved this way till August end, he claims. The portal, through the Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS), enables sharing of data among the courts, police, jails and forensic science laboratories.

The opposition, though, isn’t too impressed. SP spokesperson Ashutosh Verma asks, “The Yogi regime selectively targets 3–4 mafia dons and keeps boasting about the action taken against them. Why don’t they talk about convicting Union minister Ajay Mishra Teni’s son in the Lakhimpur incident? Or about convictions in the Hathras and Unnao rape cases?” It seems the UP home department has a few wrinkles to iron out. ■



MAN ON A MISSION
UN Climate Change High-Level Champion, Dr Mahmoud Mohieldin, in Delhi

INTERVIEW

“DISASTER-HIT NATIONS NEED ACTION, NOT NICE SPEECHES”

The 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference, referred to as COP27, is being held from November 6 to 18 at the Egyptian resort of Sharm El-Sheikh. With the devastating impact of climate change already being felt, COP27 will focus on implementation, whether it is adaptation, mitigation or building resilience. Finance and technology are crucial, with developed countries not meeting their targets to provide adaptation funds and the private sector yet to move in a big way to cash in on green projects. Economist **Dr MAHMOUD MOHIELDIN**, a former Egyptian minister and former senior vice president at the World Bank, is the UN Climate Change High-Level Champion, whose focus is on getting non-state actors, particularly corporate houses, to invest in green technologies in a big way that could turn the tide in the fight to save the planet. On a recent visit to Delhi, Mohieldin spoke to Group Editorial Director **RAJ CHENGAPPA** on his priorities. Excerpts:

Q. What would you like COP27 to achieve when it meets in November at Sharm El-Sheikh?

A. Adaptation to climate change needs to be the winner at COP27. This would need finance, investment and projects to be highlighted. This is an implementation summit that needs to come up with practical solutions for disaster risk management. Unfortunately, when it comes to loss and damage funds, the issue is lost in endless discussions. I hope this will be tackled properly by the state actors in their negotiations. Otherwise, the role of non-state actors, who are a catalyst force and whom I represent, would be very much constrained.

Q. Pakistan was devastated by floods recently; other developing nations have also been hit by freak weather patterns. What can the international community do to compensate for the loss?

A. Two things. One, we need to recognise the importance of the loss and mobilise funds to help these countries. Secondly, we must expedite work in mitigation in order

to reduce emissions and to do more on resilience to minimise the impact of such disasters. Developing countries cannot afford to do it on their own. It calls for international cooperation. It will not be solved by nice speeches but by action on supplying finance and technology and improving capacity development.

Q. Developed countries had committed \$100 billion annually for adaptation funds. Yet most reports say they have not even met half their commitments. Is it game over for the world?

A. COP27 needs to ensure that developed countries meet their commitments. But we must realise that even if the full \$100 billion is delivered, that would still be no more than three per cent of what is

“**THE UKRAINE WAR HAS ALSO DIVERSIFIED ENERGY SOURCES BY INVESTMENT IN WIND, SOLAR AND GREEN HYDROGEN**”

required. Post 2025, we need to get them to commit to multiple times the amount. The most conservative annual figure for climate action is around \$2.5 trillion and we need to recognise this challenge. The heavy lifting of finance is still coming from the public sector. The assets from states have to be transferred into investable funds. For that, we are creating a pipeline of projects to benefit from this kind of interest of the financial sector, to be presented at COP27.

Q. So you believe that private investment must help fill the gap?

A. Yes, but we are not asking for charity. We are after the golden rule—that there is risk, there is cost and there is decent return. Solar, wind and green hydrogen has great interest for the business community, including in India. We will share some ideas about debt reduction mechanisms, including a new generation of debts for climate swaps that will allow opportunities for investment based on the Nationally Determined Commitments. In India, I held discussions related to the creation of carbon credit markets.

Q. How have Covid and the Ukraine war affected climate change goals?

A. Covid has been a huge setback for all sustainable development goals by impacting investment and human capital in sectors like health and education. It affected poverty alleviation measures. The Ukraine war compounded the crisis. Morally speaking, the war should end. Its impact has seen countries fall back upon old means of energy, especially coal. But it has also helped diversify energy sources through investments in wind power, solar energy and green hydrogen.

Q. What are you going to champion in COP27?

A. Developing countries expect us to deliver on climate action regarding mitigation, adaptation, damage and finance, but at the same time putting in a framework to deal with unemployment. For the first time since 1998, based on UN figures, we have numbers of the extremely poor increasing. So, we will not welcome climate action that will compromise the labour market or add to the numbers of the poor. We have the technological solutions and the means of production to pursue a high, inclusive growth that would create more job opportunities. For this, we need partnerships and coordination of our efforts. ■

UPFRONT

E-RUPEE

The Official Crypto

By M.G. Arun

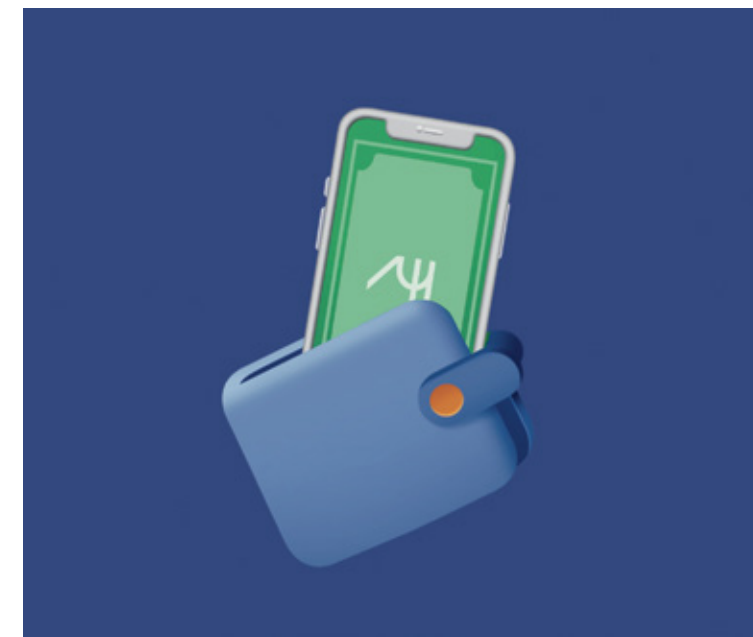


Illustration by SIDDHANT JUMDE

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has drawn up its plans to launch a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) or a digital version of the rupee, which was in the works for almost a year. The apex bank has floated a concept note on the CBDC examining its implications on the banking system, monetary policy and financial stability. It will soon start pilot launches of the digital rupee for specific use cases. The e-rupee will be released in two forms: wholesale for inter-bank settlements and retail for the public. Commercial banks can distribute the currency further. One has to hold it in an e-wallet provided by a bank or a registered service provider.

“The CBDC, being a sovereign currency, holds unique

advantages of central bank money viz. trust, safety, liquidity, settlement finality and integrity,” the RBI said, adding that the key motivation for exploring the digital rupee was the reduction in operational costs involved in physical cash management, fostering financial inclusion, bringing resilience, efficiency, innovation in the payments system, and so on. The use of offline features in the CBDC will also be useful in remote locations and offer availability and resilience benefits when electricity or a mobile network is not available.

The e-rupee has a unique feature: it can be ‘programmed’ by tying up the end use in specific ways. For example, agriculture credit by banks can be programmed

One has to hold the digital currency in an e-wallet provided by a bank or a registered service provider

VIRTUALLY REAL

- Pilot launch planned for specific use cases
- Wholesale and retail forms of e-rupee on the cards
- To offer trust, safety, liquidity, settlement finality and integrity
- The architecture could be blockchain, centralised technology or hybrid
- To comply with money laundering/ terror financing norms

to be used only at input store outlets. The RBI is exploring the option of an account-based digital currency (where transactions could be traced) for wholesale transactions and a token-based version (where only verification takes place) for retail. The architecture to implement all this has not been finalised yet. It could either be a distributed ledger technology like blockchain, a centralised one, or a hybrid (open source/proprietary) architecture. The currency will also need to comply with money laundering and terror financing norms.

The e-rupee's advent comes when India has already made big strides on the digital payments front—with the pandemic accelerating its adoption. In 2021-22, UPI (Unified Payments Interface, an instant real-time payment system) processed more than 46 billion transactions amounting to over Rs 84 lakh crore. Experts think the concept note has come a bit late in the day, and the CBDC will not be able to make any significant change in the way digital transactions occur in the country. "Digital transactions are growing exponentially through UPI and a host of apps such as Paytm and Google Pay. There is not much more that the CDBC can achieve," says Kunal Nandwani, co-founder and CEO, uTrade Solutions, a fintech firm. Digital currencies haven't had much traction in countries where they have been launched, he adds.

The move also comes at a time when India is working on a bill to regulate private digital currencies such as cryptocurrencies. This, then, is the official crypto. ■



CRUSHING BLOW

Officials destroy
confiscated liquor
in Ahmedabad

GUJARAT/ PROHIBITION

MESSAGE IN THE BOTTLE

By Jumana Shah

Unlike previous elections, prohibition has emerged as a big issue in Gujarat this time, especially after the ongoing war of words between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In July this year, spurious liquor ('chemical consumption', as the government calls it) led to the death of 42 people in Botad district. This gave AAP a handle to attack the ruling BJP over the lax implementation of prohibition in the state. But as the Delhi liquor

policy 'scam' unravelled, the state BJP launched a counter-offensive questioning the moral grounds on which AAP raised the issue. Gujarat has been a dry state since it came into being in 1960 and BJP leaders have been trying to create an alarm about AAP lifting prohibition if it comes to power.

However, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal quelled that rumour saying the party will demonstrate how the law can be effective with zero corruption. The Congress perforce has had to be pro-prohi-

bition as this is the land of Mahatma Gandhi.

AAP has nothing to lose here; it is the BJP that is walking a tightrope as Gujarat is split wide open over the issue. The urban middle class and industry want prohibition gone, but the tribal and OBC communities—which form 18 and 52 per cent of the electorate, respectively—want it to continue. Urban areas make up 55 seats in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot; the BJP won 44 of these in 2017.

After 27 years in power, the BJP can ill afford the apathy of its loyal urban middle and upper middle class voters. "The first murmurs about the lifting of prohibition started after Narendra Modi first came to power on a pro-industry plank in 2000. But in the initial years, Modi was consolidating his

votebank and, for a variety of reasons, the move did not happen," says political analyst Gaurang Jani.

Industry sources confide that Modi, as CM, had promised many times at closed-door meetings that prohibition would be lifted soon, but the announcement never came. He did, however, relax the laws to allow group liquor permits for conferences and also set up a protocol for getting permits online. But the process remains cumbersome.

"The ideological aura of Gandhian institutions was powerful till about a decade ago, and they did not allow the move. Today, these institutions are weak. In fact, the BJP has taken over the Gandhian mantle, which is quite a departure," says Jani.

Dilip Thakkar, former secretary of the Hotel and

Restaurant Owners' Association (HRA), says that in the past 45 years, representations have been made to every chief minister to at least relax the laws so that premium institutions could sell alcohol. "The hospitality industry estimates that the liquor restrictions result in a 30-50 per cent loss in business to Udaipur and Mount Abu in Rajasthan, Daman and Diu, and Maharashtra in outbound domestic tourism, corporate events

and wedding celebrations," says Thakkar. Industry associations refuse to come on record, but say growth is stunted in sectors requiring skilled manpower as the attrition rate is very high.

IT'S A FRAUGHT ISSUE FOR THE BJP. GUJARAT IS SPLIT WIDE OPEN ON IT: A DRY STATE MEANS LOSSES FOR INDUSTRY, BUT THE VAST TRIBAL/ OBC SEGMENT WANTS IT

On the other side, there are people like OBC leader Alpesh Thakor (currently a claimant for the BJP ticket from Radhanpur constituency in north Gujarat) who formed his Thakor Sena and shot to prominence primarily on the issue of alcohol abuse among the OBC communities. "The issues of the urban classes and industry are sec-

ondary...alcoholism is a real problem in the lower middle class and backward communities. Any party that talks of removing prohibition will be looking at losing at least 20 per cent of the female vote in rural Gujarat," he says. The BJP is also making a big play for the tribal vote, which was earlier a loyal Congress votebank but is now increasingly fragmented. Jani concedes that safety and decorum in public places in Gujarat—largely attributed to prohibition—is a huge plus for the government.

Ex-CM Shankersinh Vaghela, who now heads the Praja Shakti Democratic Party (PSDP), recently reiterated his stand that prohibition has to go. "It's a fake law riddled with corruption. Liquor flows in Gujarat thanks to the bootlegger-police nexus, but it is the tribals and poor who bear the brunt as they have to make do with spurious hooch since their healthy organic liquor from the local *mahudo* tree is also banned."

In 2018, then CM Vijay Rupani sought a special compensation package from the 15th Finance Commission citing a prohibition-induced loss of Rs 9,864 crore in excise duty. AAP pegs the loss at Rs 15,000 crore annually. PSDP spokesperson Parthesh Patel points to a two-year survey that suggests the police-politician-bootlegger nexus mints about Rs 15,000 crore annually. "If implemented effectively, liquor sales tax and the industries it will benefit could bring in Rs 40,000 crore revenue in a financial year; the jobs created will be another plus," he says. It's always been a fraught issue, but perhaps it's time to open the topic up for debate. ■

The Wrestler Socialist

By Rahul Shrivastava

In the 1960s, the Congress was a political monolith and the opposition just an idea in a few heads separated by space, time and ideology. The stranglehold the socially and economically privileged had in Uttar Pradesh was such that cracking the ceiling was well nigh impossible, especially since history had not left the subaltern combatants with either the sophistication or the organisation for it.

For the Mulayams then growing up in Saifai, even an ordinary act like going to school meant breaking unimaginable barriers. But looking back at his life, Mulayam Singh, the Yadav patriarch, must have felt he had achieved a whole lot more than he set out to do. Wrestling taught him the importance of subjugating the opponent outright for a victory. He started out alone but soon mastered the art of alliances, inclusions, brutal exclusions and break-ups. His first guru, then Jaswantnagar MLA Nathu Singh, was the only one who “became his mentor”, taking him from the *akhada* to the political battlefield. After him, Mulayam picked or dropped his mentors according to the changing needs of his politics. Speed and a nose sharp enough to read the political winds were his trademark. Post-1989, V.P. Singh’s move to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations saw the BJP throw a *kamandal* counter through the Ram temple agitation. As the Mandal vs Mandir debate heated up, Mulayam cast a net for OBC votes. He was in luck, for the Congress had never gone fishing for this segment. Meanwhile, the onward march of the kamandalites was scaring the Muslims. By issuing firing orders in October and November of 1990, Mulayam, then the Uttar Pradesh chief minister, stopped the frenzied karsevaks from doing to the Babri mosque what they eventually did on December 6, 1992. With this, he also managed to forge secularism to *sama-jwad* or socialism. That was his counter to the BJP’s own OBC push, with Kalyan Singh blending Mandir and Mandal in his political persona. The two symbolised the irreversible ascent of OBCs in UP politics.

The saffron surge led Mulayam to expand the Mandal definition and go for more inclusions. In 1992, he formed the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the next year tied up with Kanshi Ram’s Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). As samajwad met the bahun, the streets reverberated with the slogan, “*Mile Mulayam-Kanshi Ram, hawa mein ud gaye jai shri Ram* (Mulayam and Kanshi Ram are together, the mandir plank has been blown away).” Mulayam defeated the BJP at the crest of the mandir movement. If in 1989 he had evicted the Congress from UP, 1993

was the start of the BJP’s 24-year exile in the state. The alliance with the BSP didn’t last, with the SP chief said to have crafted an attack on Mayawati. It led to a bitter rivalry between the SP and BSP but it kept the two national parties eclipsed in UP.

The SP chieftain went on to play dealmaker and saboteur on a number of occasions in state and national politics. He defied V.P. Singh (who later vetoed Mulayam’s chance to be PM), swallowed the CPI in UP, and scuppered Sonia Gandhi’s chances of becoming PM by refusing to support her—a nativist streak there, as with his Lohiaite support for Hindi. But in 2008, he also bailed out the short-on-numbers Manmohan Singh government, in the process abandoning his Left Front friends. Mulayam became the CM of UP thrice, but couldn’t complete a single term. As an administrator, he took regressive decisions, including nixing an anti-cheating law (in exams), pausing anti-dacoity operations—though his gift of a Lok Sabha ticket to Phoolan Devi is often read as emblematic of his emancipatory politics—and being infamously soft on rapists.

But there were limitations to the “*daanv*” (wrestling tackles) he could throw. Mulayam allowed the dilution of the Samajwad ideology, acquired a taste for being seen in the company of Bollywood and big business and took flak for hoarding political power in his family. In the process, his OBC politics developed cracks and a perception grew that “Mulayam raj” meant “Yadav raj”. The intra-OBC faultlines cracked.

In retrospect, Mulayam’s biggest mistake was that he derailed the BJP but couldn’t erase Hindutva. In the late 2000s, the BJP activated the dormant but ticking Hindutva pulse, while tilling the non-Yadav OBC fields. In 2013, it unleashed Narendra Modi, who exemplified both traits in a potent combination. The North, especially, was a fertile field for this. It also used the post-Muzaffarnagar riots polarisation to revive Hindutva of a different

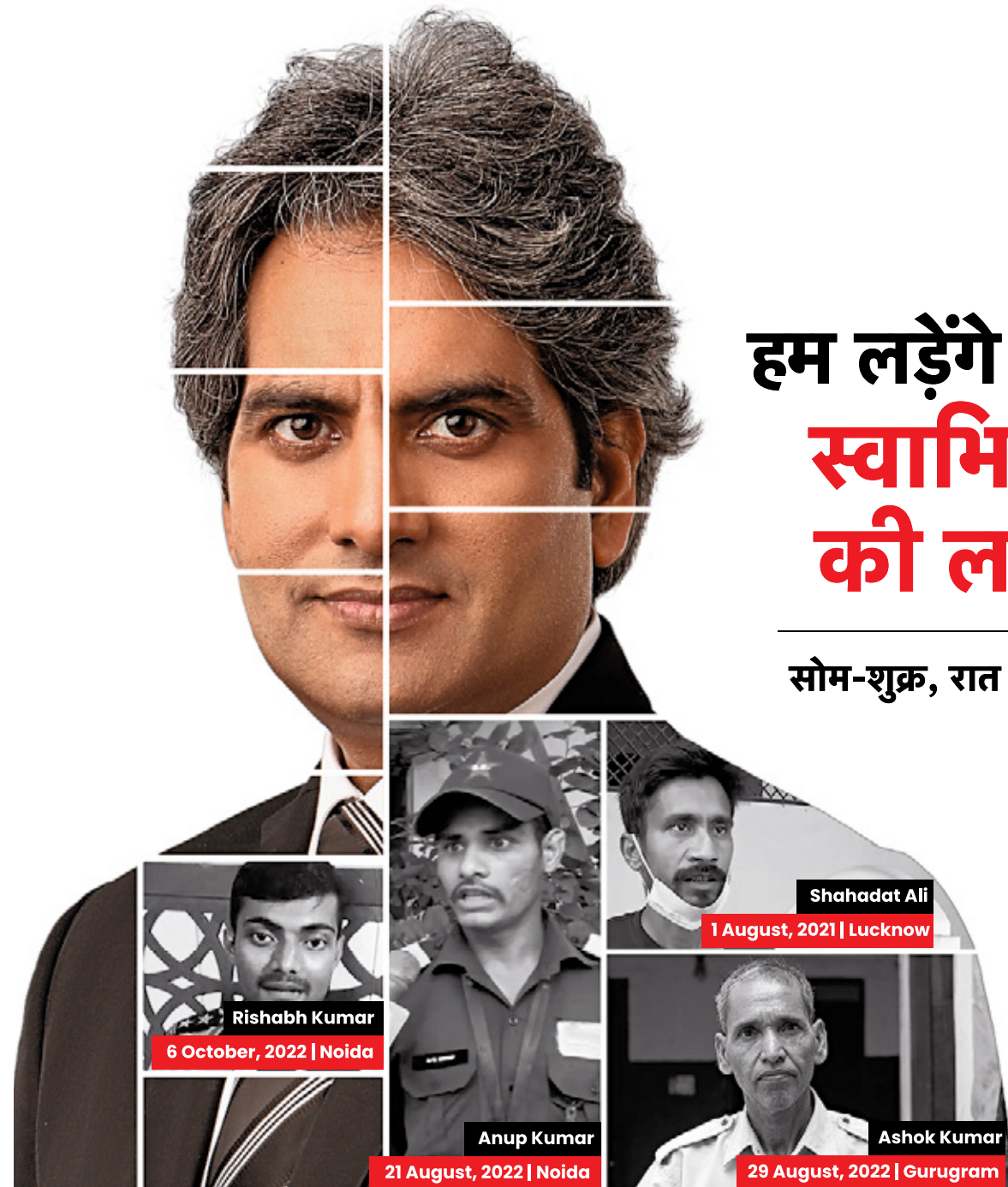
kind. Polarisation not on tangibles like a temple, but on issues like *shamshan-kabristan*. The castes, unhappy with Mulayam and Mayawati, plugged into their Hindu identity.

From then on, Mulayam’s Mandal has lost thrice to the BJP’s “kamandal dressed as mandal”. And that’s the legacy he leaves behind for son Akhilesh. But the failures don’t dwarf the fact that a boy from a marginalised caste with zero privileges straddled Indian politics in a 55-year-long career. He leaves behind legions of admirers, both among those who call him an astute strategist and those who deem him a rank opportunist. ■

The author is National Affairs Editor, India Today TV



Mulayam’s rise symbolised the irreversible ascent of OBCs in Uttar Pradesh’s politics



हम लड़ेंगे आपके स्वाभिमान की लड़ाई

सोम-शुक्र, रात 9:40 बजे



#MeraSwabhimaan

मेरा स्वाभिमान उन लोगों की आवाज़ है, जो सिक्योरिटी गार्ड्स का काम करते हैं, टैक्सी चलाते हैं, जो डिलीवरी ब्वायज का काम करते हैं। सुबह से रात तक अपना काम करते हैं, पर तमाम लोग ऐसे हैं जिन्हें कड़ी मेहनत के बावजूद अपमान का घूँट पीना पड़ता है। आजतक की ये मुहिम उन्हीं लोगों के लिए है। यदि आपके साथ या आपके आस पास कोई भी ऐसी घटना होती है जिसमें आपके स्वाभिमान को ठेस पहुँची हो तो आप वीडियो बनाकर हमें भेज सकते हैं, क्योंकि आपकी लड़ाई अब हमारी लड़ाई है।

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GLASSHOUSE

KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has often projected himself as a Hanuman bhakt. However, on a recent visit to poll-bound Gujarat, the Aam Aadmi Party convenor invoked Lord Krishna, Gujarat being the state where the deity's kingdom, Dwarka, lay, and which is one of the char dhams of the Hindu pilgrimage circuit today. Kejriwal said he had a natural right to take on the evil king Kansa—read BJP—being born on the day Janmashtami was celebrated that year. A miffed BJP googled the date—August 16, 1968—and claimed Janmashtami that year fell a day before Kejriwal's DoB. Fact-checkers say both sides are correct—the celestial positions for Janmashtami straddled August 15-16 in 1968. Scores even for now.

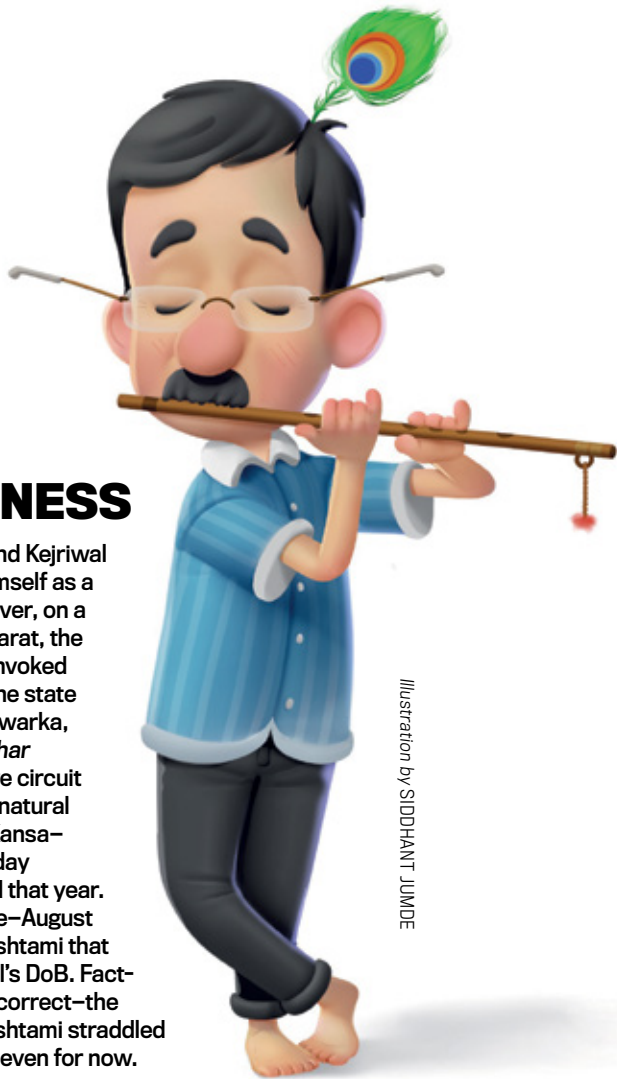


Illustration by SIDDHANT JUMDE

POST SCRIPT

It's rare for a party president, especially in a disciplined unit like the BJP, to criticise bureaucratic reshuffle, a chief ministerial prerogative. So, when Gujarat BJP president C.R. Patil recently said that IAS officer Banchhanidhi Pani, who was transferred from Surat, should have been made municipal commissioner of Ahmedabad instead of Vadodara, it created a stir. It came as an endorsement of Pani's public displeasure at his posting. But then Pani is no ordinary babu. When Vijay Rupani was CM, he was the Rajkot municipal commissioner and his wife's camaraderie with Rupani's wife Anjali was the talk of the town.



Kaushik Deka with Kiran D. Tare, Jumana Shah, Rahul Noronha, Amarnath K. Menon and Prashant Srivastava

UPFRONT

BLACK MAGIC CM

As K. Chandrasekhara Reddy (KCR) revealed his national ambition by renaming his Telangana Rashtra Samithi the Bharat Rashtra Samithi, BJP leader and Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman claimed that the Telangana chief minister had fallen prey to tantric advice. The state BJP alleged that he had been "undertaking occult practices using a black cat at his farmhouse", where he spends at least two days a week. KCR has been silent, but his nephew, the state's finance and health minister T. Harish Rao, has said that unlike the BJP, which started a course in Bhoot Vidya at BHU, the TRS relies on Loktantra vidya, not tantra.



ANI

Micro Mismanagement

The Congress is attempting to get its act together in Uttar Pradesh. Except that it has ended up creating more confusion. The party has appointed one state president and six working ones for the six zones it has divided the state into. These zones, in turn, each have an in-charge, who reports directly to general secretary Priyanka Gandhi. Party functionaries now do not know which of the 13 bosses to report to—the president, the working presidents or the zonal in-charges. Every boss has his own coterie. While the exercise intended to change the fortunes of the party, it seems to have caused further divide among the ranks. As a senior state functionary said, "We are doing too many experiments but gaining nothing." Too much of a good thing is not all good, it seems.

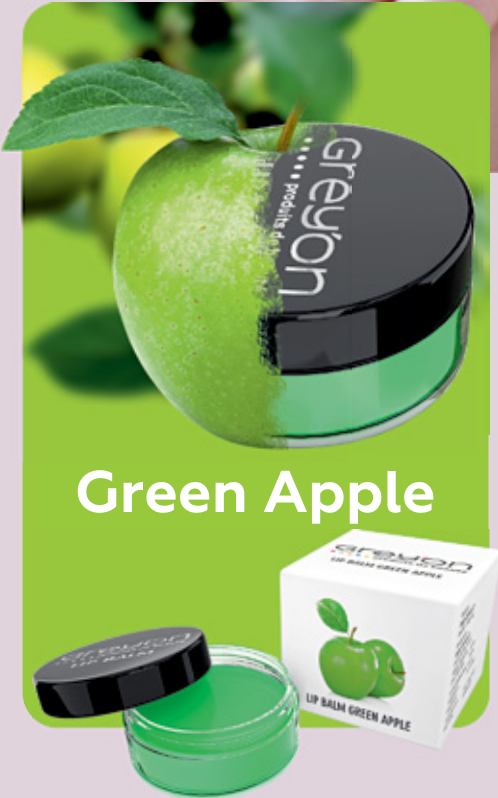
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Gandhiji's SEVAGRAM IS TAKING SHAPE IN NAYA RAIPUR

In order to keep the values, principles, ideals and concept of 'Gram Swaraj' of Mahatma Gandhi intact in the 75th year of independence, a sevagram on the lines of Wardha is being established in Nava Raipur. 75 acres of land has been identified on which this Sevagram is taking shape in Nava Raipur. In order to strengthen the rural economy and to realize the dream of self-reliant village, provision has also been made for the training of artisans in the institute.

Sevagram in Nava Raipur is being constructed using natural materials like clay, lime, stone. This project will also inspire people to remember and learn Gandhian Philosophy, and would also keep alive the memories of freedom moment. Centers of Gandhian principles, rural arts and crafts will be developed in Sevagram. Where guidance will be given by guest subject experts. Along with this, old

age homes and schools for the underprivileged will also be established there. Sevagram will be decorated with various artistic items using bell metal, iron, terracotta, stone, cloth and bamboo from Bastar, Raigarh and other districts. Sevagram will be a place where visitors can learn about local arts and crafts, local cuisine and share their experiences and experiences. Sevagram will also an open theater where cultural programs will be



organized. This will boost tourism opportunities.

MEMORIES OF MAHATMA GANDHI RELATED TO CHHATTISGARH

The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi was also not untouched by Chhattisgarh. He came here. The first arrival took place on 20 December 1920 and the second arrival on 22 November 1933.

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHHATTISGARH

Pt. Sunderlal Sharma went to Calcutta on 2 December to pick up Gandhiji during the Kandel Village

Satyagraha (1920) run in the present Dhamtari district. He took them to Raipur on 20 December 1920. He was welcomed on the platform by Pt. Ravi Shankar Shukla, Thakur Pyarelal Singh, Sakharam Dubey etc. He was accompanied by the eminent Ali brothers, Maulana Shaukat Ali.

KANDEL CANAL SATYAGRAHA

On his first arrival in Chhattisgarh, the people of Raipur welcomed Gandhi with great enthusiasm. Gandhiji's speech took place in a huge public meeting at the present Gandhi Chowk in Raipur. It was only after this public meeting addressed by Gandhiji that the place got the name Gandhi Chowk. After this meeting, this place became the center of public activities of the whole of Chhattisgarh.

Gandhiji arrived in Dhamtari on 21 December 1920. Upon his arrival, Gandhiji was welcomed with great enthusiasm by the people of the city at Makai Bandh Chowk. In Dhamtari, Gandhiji gave a speech in Mooja Hussain's enclosure. Here a businessman named Umar Seth carried Gandhiji on his shoulders and took him to the stage. The Zamindar



of the city, Bajirao Kridutt presented a bag of Rs 501 to Gandhiji, welcoming him on behalf of the town and the villagers.

After that Gandhiji addressed the public for about 1 hour, Gandhiji congratulated the people for the success of Kandel movement. The program went on till about 1 o'clock. Having lunch at Nathuji Jagtap's place, left for Raipur. Gandhiji also went to Kandel and Kurad village from Dhamtari. where he was warmly welcomed. Arrangements were made for Gandhiji's stay at Dhamtari at Shri Narayan Rao

Meghawale, where he rested for the night.

During his first visit - Gandhiji addressed a gathering of women in the courtyard of Anand Samaj Library located in Raipur Brahmanpara. Women participated in large numbers in this meeting. Here women donated jewelery worth about Rs 2000 for the Tilak Swaraj Fund.

GANDHIJI'S SECOND ARRIVAL IN CHHATTISGARH

Gandhiji's second arrival in Chhattisgarh took place on 22 November 1933 in Durg district. Gandhiji was accompanied by his personal secretary Mahadev Desai, Thakkar Bapa, Miss Meera Ben (Madelaine Slade) and Jamunalal Bajaj's daughter Madalsa Narayanan also came to Raipur. In this journey, he went to places like Durg, Dhamtari, Bhatapara, Bilaspur etc.

The main reason for the arrival was the upliftment of Harijans. But on coming here, he came to know that the work of Harijan uddhar is already going on in Chhattisgarh. Which was started in 1917 by Pandit Sunderlal Sharma ji. Gandhi ji was happy to know this and he called Pandit Sunderlal Sharma ji as his guru.

ESTABLISHMENT OF RURAL INDUSTRIAL PARK ON GANDHI JAYANTI

On the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, an action plan and work has been started to develop four rural industrial parks in each development block of Chhattisgarh. In this, the availability of raw materials at the local level will be taken care of. For example, in Dete Bijapur, Dantewada and Kondagaon districts where processing units of various minor forest produce are being set up along with Mahua, Tamarind, Tikhur. Similarly, for processing of herbal medicines in Gauthans from Korba to Surguja, Kosa work is done in Korba, Janjgir-Champa, Bastar, units of Kosa fabric are being established here. There will also be a training center in these industrial parks.



THE REBRANDING OF RAHUL GANDHI

The Congress's Bharat Jodo Yatra has the lofty aim of forging a narrative of unity against the BJP's divisive politics but it's also about rebuilding political capital for Rahul Gandhi

By KAUSHIK DEKA in Mandya |

IT'S A GIANT, MOVING JAMBOREE AND IN the middle of it, the cynosure of all eyes, is Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. Born to one of India's most powerful political families but at a complicated distance from power himself, the Gandhi scion has been following an unusual routine since September 7. He has been walking some 20-25 km a day, with the media recording his progress diligently: 255 km by the 12th day, 511 by the 21st, 700+ by the end of his first month on the road. He spends his nights in a container—17 feet long, 6 feet wide and 8 feet high—mounted on a Tata truck. Equipped with an AC, freezer, bed, sofa, table and an attached bathroom, the container is part of a mobile caravanserai of sorts. There are 64 other such containers, all of whom keep moving location with the padayatris as Rahul's Bharat Jodo Yatra (BJY) wends its way across India.

He wakes up early, finishes his breakfast, and starts walking by 7 am. After four hours, the yatra breaks for lunch, after which he tries to catch a nap, this time in another specially designed container. Occasionally, he goes out to visit important places



STAYING IN STEP
(From top clockwise) Sonia Gandhi joins Rahul in Mandya on the Karnataka leg of the rally, Oct. 6; Congress party knick-knacks on sale on the rally route; supporters line the roadside for a glimpse of the party leaders

nearby, interacts with groups of people or addresses press meets. At 4.30 pm, the second round of the walk begins, which often continues well past sundown. While he walks, the containers shift base to the end point of the day's march.

In the evening, he addresses public meetings, at times braving downpours—giving his party members and enthusiasts some iconic photo memories to plaster all over social media. Those spaces have been awash with images of him smiling, chatting, waving, hugging overjoyed commoners, taking little children in his arms, making local party grandees go on short sprints with him—at the head of a billowing comet's tail of followers. They are seen to fill up highways in impressive drone shots and slick videos embellished with rousing marching songs. The day's engagements over, Rahul returns to the container camp, has dinner, and is often in a huddle with senior Congress leaders strategising for the next day. Finally, he retreats to his container, reads a book or remains engrossed with his mobile phone till he catches sleep well past midnight. This is the daily drill Rahul has been following in his padayatra from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, criss-crossing 11 states and one Union territory. The yatra's name names its own high objective: uniting India.

Dressed in a white T-shirt, trousers and sneakers, the Gandhi scion will go through this rigour for the next four months—having finished just one. By Day 157, the yatra is to have completed all of 3,570 km. It's a journey intent on its own progress: Rahul may not even take a break to campaign in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, scheduled to go to polls in a couple of months. In fact, the BJY is not even covering the two states. In the rationalising, if evasive words of Congress leaders, this exercise is 'not about winning elections'. They speak of building a narrative of unity against the BJP's divisive politics and raising issues that affect common citizens the most—price rise and unemployment. "The objective is not the 2024 election...in our political system, a distance has developed between the political class and our citizens. The idea of the Bharat Jodo Yatra is to go on the road and meet our people," Rahul said at a press conference in Karnataka.

On cue, he duly articulates local issues and pays obeisance to local sentiments—but isn't entirely oblivious to the demands of politics. In Karnataka, in almost every speech, he takes the name of Basava, the revered 12th-century social reformer from the state. And then reminds people how the Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government in Karnataka is "the most corrupt in India". When it comes to naming a Congress chief ministerial candidate for the next assembly polls, he plays safe: "We have brilliant leaders in Karnataka and, once we win, the chief minister will be decided through a process that is carried out in the Congress party."

BHARAT JODO YATRA IN NUMBERS

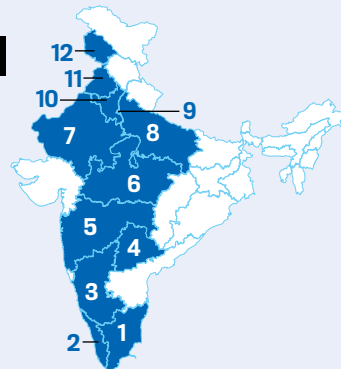
THE GEOGRAPHY

3,570 KM

to be covered in 157 days

22 KM

Average daily walking distance



STATES ON THE ROUTE

11 states and one UT

1. Tamil Nadu
2. Kerala
3. Karnataka
4. Telangana
5. Maharashtra
6. Madhya Pradesh
7. Rajasthan
8. Uttar Pradesh
9. Delhi
10. Haryana
11. Punjab
12. Jammu and Kashmir

WALKING SCHEDULE

6.30 am to 11.30 am, and from 4.30 pm to 7 pm

THE PEOPLE

123

permanent yatris, including Rahul Gandhi

35

Women yatris

38

Average age



YOUNGEST MEMBER

Vaishnavi G. Bhardwaj, 26, Nagpur



OLDEST MEMBER

Vijendra Singh Mahlawat, 58, Rajasthan



“MODI SPEAKS HIS MANN KI BAAT, RAHUL LISTENS TO PEOPLE'S MANN KI BAAT. THIS YATRA IS A DIRECT WAY TO LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF INDIA”

JAIRAM RAMESH

Rajya Sabha MP, Congress communications in-charge



“HE DOESN'T GET TIRED AT ALL EVEN THOUGH HE SLEEPS ONLY 4-5 HOURS AT NIGHT. I'M YET TO SEE A FITTER POLITICIAN IN INDIA”

RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA

Rajya Sabha MP, Congress gen. secy

THE INFRASTRUCTURE

➤ All yatris spend the night in makeshift containers built on trucks

➤ 65 containers—60 residential, five for services such as a hospital, conference room, wash-rooms and electrical unit

➤ The containers halt at different locations every day—need an area of two acres to park these, erect makeshift dining hall

➤ Daily breakfast and dinner prepared for 300 people and served in the dining hall

➤ During the day, temporary camps are set up for permanent yatris and common people to rest and have lunch; three sets of tents keep moving to set up camps well in advance

➤ Rahul Gandhi rests in a specially designed container van during the day

➤ Around 40,000 vegetarian lunch meals prepared a day

➤ 75,000-100,000 packaged water bottles—branded specially for Bharat Jodo—are used daily

➤ Every container has a load capacity of 20-amp



electricity—four gensets of 125 KVA each and two gensets of 65 KVA each are used to supply electricity to the containers

➤ 12,000 litres of tanker water used daily for cooking, laundry and washrooms in the camp

PIT STOP

(From left) Jairam Ramesh outside his container; Container No. 2, for Rahul; the 8-12 bed container



Photographs by KAUSHIK DEKA

Four types of containers depending on number of beds

SINGLE BED

Container No. 1 and 2—marked yellow, reserved for Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi (when she joins)

DOUBLE BED

Marked blue—for top leaders such as Digvijaya Singh and Jairam Ramesh

FOUR BEDS

Marked green—for senior state leaders

EIGHT AND 12 BEDS

Marked orange—for the rest of the yatris

Political or apolitical? Congress apparatchiks may be chary of conceding the point, but the yatra is clearly about rebranding Rahul Gandhi as the alternative to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It's about putting some blood and sinew and street cred into the political capital of Rahul. That last thing had been battered by a series of electoral defeats, not to speak of the mammoth BJP machinery fuelling the "Pappu" image, at times aided by Rahul's own inexplicable faux pas.

The BJY comes as a strategic attempt to bust every negative narrative that the BJP has built around Rahul. As the Congress will have a non-Gandhi president on October 19, there's a virtue to be made out of that: Rahul hopes to free himself from the criticism directed at him for the party's electoral failures. "He is a people's man. This is what he enjoys, being among the people, learning from them. Due to security reasons, he has always been kept away from people," says a Congress Working Committee member. A spring in his step, then; also a weight off his shoulders. The yatra has been a plat-

form to showcase Rahul's public connect and present him as a politician with a heart. As the hundreds of cameras travelling with him beam live images, he holds hands with nameless folk as they walk along, comforts a little girl who has fallen down, and engages empathetically with differently-abled individuals waiting to offer him roses. His security contingent tries to stop attempts by people to get too close—policemen use a rope to create a moving barricade around him—but Rahul's eyes are sharp, reaching out to everyone seeking his attention.

Personal attention is given to every *yatri*—there are 122 of them who will walk with him during the day and sleep in the remaining containers at night for the next four months. All of them get a chance to walk and interact with him. If he picks the mind of a doctor from Karnataka on issues related to rural healthcare and telemedicine in India, he engages with a grass-roots party worker from Assam on organisational reforms. "I could never have imagined a top leader would spend over an hour with me talking about the party organisation while



putting his arm around my shoulder,” says Sanowar Ali, 45, a Congressman from Assam’s Barpeta district, showing the prize image sent to him by the yatra’s official photo team.

In fact, images are defining the reinvention of Rahul through BJJ. If Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s images with his mother have become a national spectacle for several years, Rahul sent social media into a tizzy with the photograph of him tying the shoelaces of mother Sonia Gandhi when she came to walk along with him in Karnataka on October 6. If the prime minister strove for the mantle of the nation’s fitness guru by championing yoga, 52-year-old Rahul is walking an average 22 km daily at a speed that leaves co-walkers panting—not to speak of the viral videos where Siddaramaiah and D.K. Shivakumar, the former and prospective CMs of Karnataka, were made to sprint. “He walks very fast and doesn’t get tired at all even though he sleeps only 4-5 hours at night. I’m yet to see a fitter politician in India,” says Randeep Singh Surjewala, Congress general secretary in-charge of Karnataka and Rajya Sabha member.

Rahul doesn’t replicate the Modi model. Unlike Modi’s colourful attire and well-groomed look, he prefers a dishevelled mien with unkempt hair and a growing salt and pepper beard. The white T-shirt—he is carrying nearly a dozen—has become part of the signature look for the yatra. All the *yatris* wear white T-shirts with the BJJ logo and tagline, but Rahul prefers a plain white tee. The differences often vanish, especially during dinner time when he joins the other 122 *yatris* in the common dining area. There is no camera here and the conversation is free-flowing. “He is so easygoing. He listens to us patiently and answers anything we ask,” says 27-year-old Bikash Nath Jogi from Assam. Shamsheer Chand, 45, owner of a diagnostic lab in Jammu and Kashmir, concurs.

This is what Team Congress considers the biggest difference between the two leaders, Modi and Rahul. While the PM believes in one-way communication, the Gandhi scion enjoys interacting with people out there. All along the yatra route, he has regularly lent an ear to diverse groups: farmers, teachers, students, women, unorganised workers. “Modi speaks his *mann ki baat*, Rahul listens to people’s *mann ki baat*. The yatra is a more direct, intimate way to listen to the voice of India,” says Jairam Ramesh, Rajya Sabha member and Congress communications in-charge. And there are many willing to engage with the Congress leader. Take Shaan Ahad, a homemaker from Bengaluru. She’s drawn to the peaceful coexistence narrative Rahul is trying to build. That’s the reason she travelled to Mysuru—Bengaluru is not on the yatra route—to walk alongside Rahul. “I’m at the receiving end of the hatred spread by the BJP/ RSS. Rahul talks about love and equal treatment for all. It’s a simple, powerful message,” says Ahad. She is, however, disappointed that the security team didn’t allow her

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE YATRA

CENTRAL PLANNING COMMITTEE



DIGVIJAYA SINGH



SACHIN PILOT



SHASHI THAROOR



RAVNEET SINGH BITTU



K.J. GEORGE



JOTHI MANI



PRADYUT BORDOLOI



JITU PATWARI



SALEEM AHMED

MEMBERS OF TASK FORCE 2024

P. Chidambaram, Mukul Wasnik, Jairam Ramesh, K.C. Venugopal, Ajay Maken, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Randeep Singh Surjewala, Sunil Kanugolu plus heads of all frontal organisations

THE MAN IN CHARGE



K.B. BYJU

Monitors and executes all logistics plans related to the Bharat Jodo Yatra in collaboration with state units

closer access; she had to follow from a distance.

Dr Shushruta Hedna, a Mysuru-based neurologist who returned from the US in 2019, was luckier. He is not a Congress worker but was selected as one of the 123 *yatris* at the recommendation of the Gandhian Rajagopal P.V., founder of Ekta Parishad, a people’s movement for land rights. In every state, several such civil society groups will join the yatra. On an average, members of at least 4-5 civil society organisations walk with Rahul every day. “They have not come for any gain. They have joined us because they realise our intent is to save India, as it was envisaged by our Constitution,” says Ramesh. Born to



LIFE-SIZED Flex board cutouts of Rahul and state Congress leaders in Mandya

CHANDRADEEP KUMAR



“WHAT’S THE HARM EVEN IF IT IS A BRANDING EXERCISE? RAHUL IS OUR BEST-KNOWN LEADER AND PEOPLE ARE CONNECTING WITH THE CONGRESS...”

DIGVIJAYA SINGH

Rajya Sabha MP, BJJ committee head



“INDIA IS GOING THROUGH A CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS. I’M WITH ANYONE WHO TALKS OF UNITING INDIA INSTEAD OF SPREADING HATRED...”

YOGENDRA YADAV

Political activist, Swaraj India

a family of doctors, Dr Hedna, 48, shares a container with 11 others, wakes up at 4.30 every morning so he has enough time to use the common toilet before getting ready for the walk. “When the country is in distress, personal comforts are meaningless. We are banking on the Congress to end the BJP’s misgovernance. But if it strays after coming to power, we will raise our voice against it too. The yatra is not about the Congress, but about India and its values,” says Hedna, as he finishes a simple vegetarian lunch along with a hundred others in a makeshift dining hall.

Those are the sentiments that led activist-turned-politician Yogendra Yadav to join the BJJ. Or 80-year-old former Bombay High Court judge Baban G. Kolse Patil. In the run-up to the 2019 general election, Yadav had famously said the Congress should be shut down; today, he claims he has

not seen a more honest leader than Rahul. He attributes the change of heart to the Congress ‘waking up’ to its responsibility of challenging the BJP on the streets. “India is going through an unprecedented constitutional crisis. I’m with anyone who talks of uniting India,” says Yadav, who founded the political party Swaraj India. He is happy walking at the rear end of the walkathon, with the likes of former JNU students’ union leader Kanhaiya Kumar, a new party recruit.

Up front, Rahul is both the brand ambassador for BJJ and its brand. From the beginning, the yatra, planned by a panel headed by Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh, projected Rahul as its face, though he doesn’t hold any official position in the party. Sonia made a brief appearance for 30 minutes; Priyanka Gandhi is yet to show up. “What’s the harm even if it is a branding exercise for Rahul? He is our best-known leader and people are connecting with the Congress through him. That’s what we want,” says Digvijaya, who at 75, has been walking the full length every day, leading a small Seva Dal advance guard. That initial objective has been achieved. People and political observers have taken note of this six-month-long public commitment of Rahul, known for his regular vanishing acts. Besides supporters bussed down to join the walk daily, locals are paying attention to his words. But these are initial days, and only two southern states—where the party anyway has a strong base—have been properly crossed. Has the Congress avoided an instant assessment of the BJJ by staying away from Gujarat and Himachal? Perhaps, but Rahul doesn’t seem focused on immediate outcomes. “I am by nature a believer in *tapasya*,” he tweeted as the BJJ completed a month. As that mobile penance continues, the next Congress chief will have to find a way to channelise the momentum derived from the yatra into electoral dividend. Otherwise, it will remain what a Karnataka youngster described it as—entertainment and free food. Also, there may not be another opportunity to save Rahul. ■

COVER STORY

BENGALURU

HOW TO RUIN INDIA'S BEST CITY

Its very allure has become Bengaluru's curse, as a growing population, administrative apathy, corruption and a construction boom strain its infrastructure and push it to the brink

● ● *By RAJ CHENGAPPA with AJAY SUKUMARAN in Bengaluru*

Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

THE GREAT
MOBILITY
MESS

10.4

million
REGISTERED
VEHICLES IN
2021-22

1:1

THE RATIO OF
VEHICLES TO PEOPLE
IN BENGALURU

243

EXTRA HOURS
PEOPLE SPENT
COMMUTING IN 2019

Source: Karnataka Transport
Ministry annual report 2021-22
and TomTom Traffic Index 2019

CHOCK-A-BLOCK

A traffic jam near Central Silk
Board junction, a choke-point in
the city's software arc

A

giant 10-storey-tall bronze statue of Kempe Gowda, the illustrious founder of Bengaluru, is being installed at the entrance of the city's swank airport. Back in AD 1537, Gowda, a feudatory of the mighty Vijayanagara

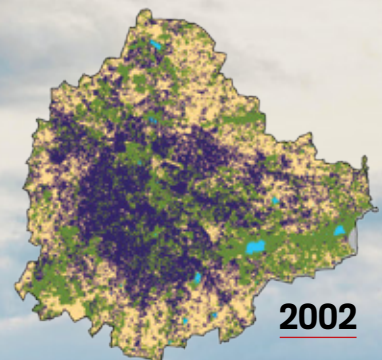
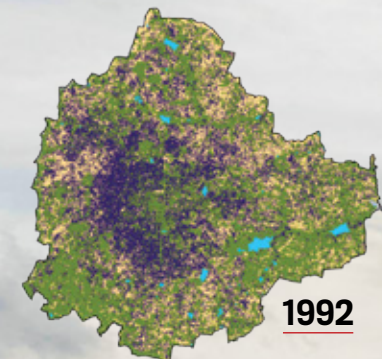
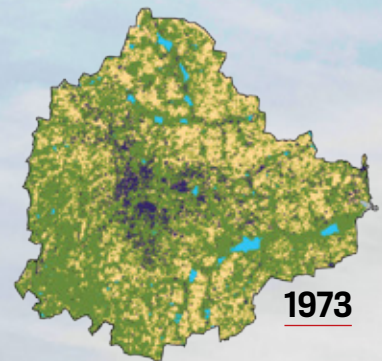
empire, built a fort on a 2.4 square kilometre site atop an undulating plateau with a vision of creating a city of the future. Engaging two pairs of bullocks with ploughs, he got one set to walk in the north-south direction and the other in an east-west one. He then built roads along the furrows they created, dividing the city into four zones. Areas for housing, markets, government, and worship were clearly demarcated. The city won praise for its orderly planning from even his emperor, Achyutha Deva Raya. It came to be called Bengaluru, whose meaning ranges from the City of Boiled Beans to the City of White Quartz to the place of the bodyguards, depending on which theory you are partial to.

Cut to the year 2022 and the statue of Gowda stands blindfolded awaiting a formal unveiling, possibly in early November, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. When the scaffolding is removed, Bengaluru's founder may not like what he sees of the city he had planned so meticulously. For one, it stretches way, way beyond the fort Gowda built around it, a giant, sprawling megalopolis that continues to expand at an unwieldy pace. In the past decade alone, the city has grown four times in size and now covers a swathe 800 square kilometres in area, joining the league of the world's fastest growing cities. Its population has almost tripled in the past two decades, from 5.1 million in 2001 to 14.3 million in 2021, making it the third largest metro in the country. It has overtaken Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad and has only Delhi and Mumbai as its superiors.

On the surface, though, Bengaluru appears to be a thriving, throbbing conurbation where start-ups

A GROWING NIGHTMARE

URBANISATION



■ Built-up ■ Vegetation ■ Water
Source: Reuters; Census

POPULATION

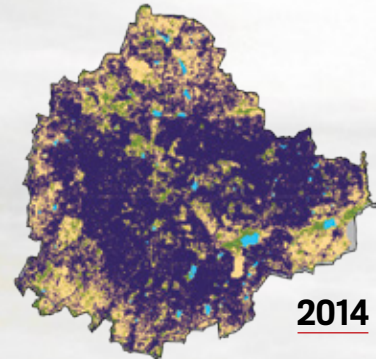
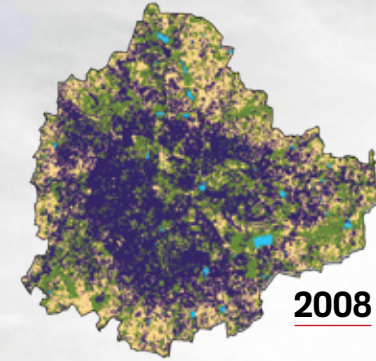
1971
1.7
million
↑37%

1991
4.1
million
↑41%

2001
5.1
million
↑24%

↑ Decadal growth in %

URBANISATION



■ Built-up ■ Vegetation ■ Water

POPULATION

2011
8.4
million
↑65%

2021
14.3
million*
↑48%

↑ Decadal growth in %
*estimated

Rapid urbanisation and population growth have rendered the garden city into an urban sprawl, with the infrastructure unable to keep pace



BANDEEP SINGH

A DIFFERENT VISION The Kempe Gowda statue outside Bengaluru international airport

WHY THE CITY WENT UNDER

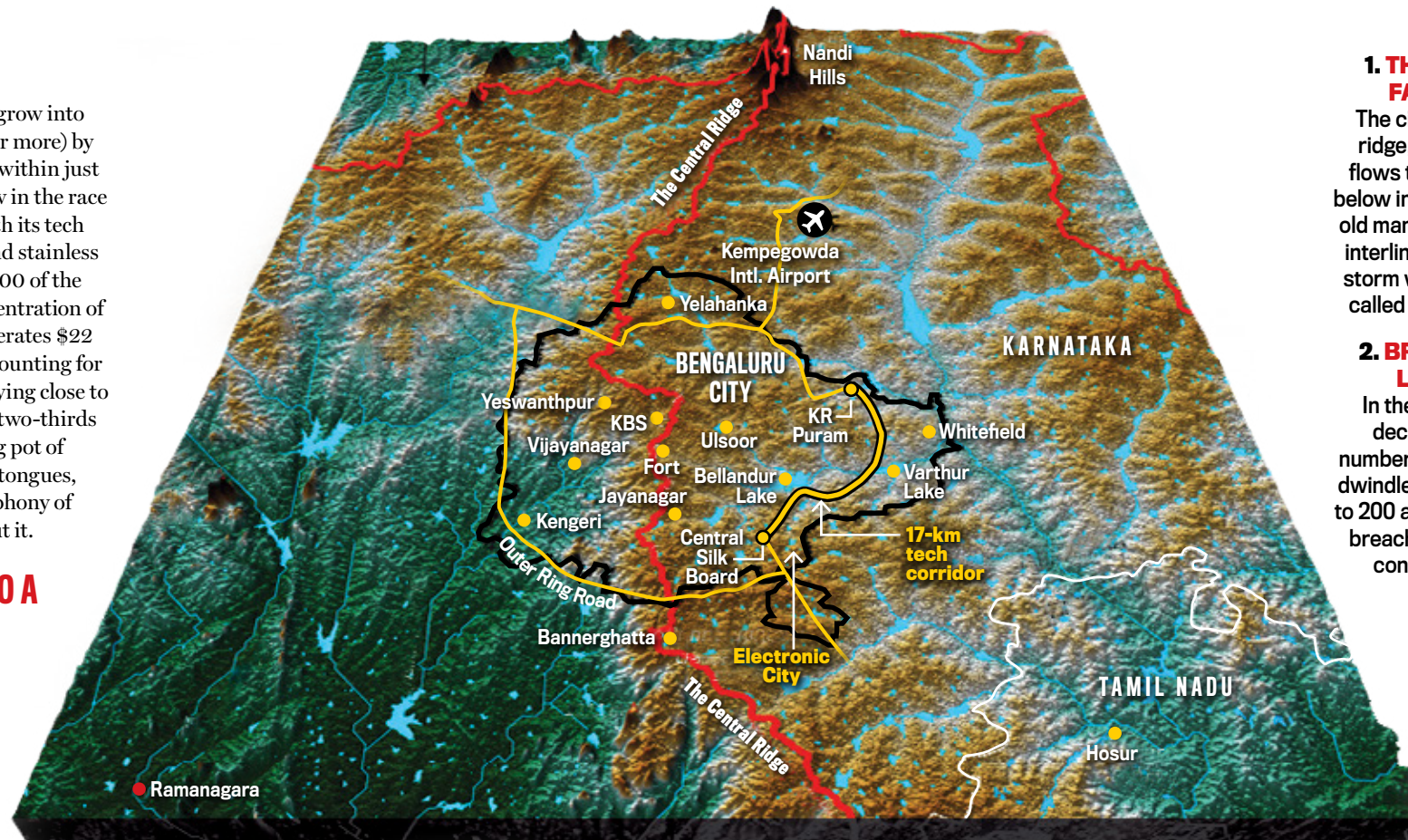
spring up like daisies every morning and grow into unicorns (having turnovers of \$1 billion or more) by sundown. Or even decacorns, like Byju's, within just a decade of being set up. Bengaluru is now in the race to be the infotech capital of the world, with its tech corridor, a glittering 17-km arc of glass and stainless steel skyscrapers, housing an estimated 400 of the Fortune 500 corporates. This dense concentration of the world's top IT and banking firms generates \$22 billion (Rs 1.8 lakh crore) per annum, accounting for a third of Bengaluru's revenue and employing close to 1 million people. With migrants forming two-thirds of its population, more than just a melting pot of cultures, the 'Multiple City' has a myriad tongues, multiple origins, multi cuisines and cacophony of soundtracks and festivals, as an expert put it.

FROM SLEEPY CANTONMENT TO A CITY THAT DOESN'T SLEEP

Once a laidback pensioners' paradise, the city now has an army of software development and business processing firms chasing the sun to get work done worldwide with their lights burning bright through the night. There are other distinctions, too, to commend the city. It has the highest number of multinational R&D centres, accounting for a third of the 1,165 in the country. Hi-tech capital apart, Bengaluru is also acknowledged as India's science, avionics, space, start-up and biotech capital. The joke is that with Bengaluru's software enterprises running so many of the global computer installations, were the city to get nuked, the world would go back to the Stone Age.

With a per capita income of Rs 5.72 lakh, or four times the all-India average, Bengaluru is one of the most affluent cities in the country. Occupying just two per cent of Karnataka's land area, it contributes a staggering 37 per cent to the Gross State Domestic Product. Yet its prosperity threatens to be the kiss of death for Bengaluru. It took just one major spell of rain in September to expose the city's worst-kept secret—India's most progressive city is regressing at warp speed and, if left unchecked, could see total collapse.

Among those who bore the brunt of nature's fury was Gaurav Munjal, the CEO of Unacademy, the ed-tech giant, who lives in a posh colony of luxury villas close to Hi-tech City. On September 6, he, his family and his pet dog had to be rescued from their house after flood waters entered it. Uploading a video, Munjal tweeted: "Family and my Pet Albus has been evacuated on a Tractor from our society that's now



Source: Topography prepared by Raj Bhagat P.



AFP

1. THE RIDGE FACTOR

The city lies on a ridge, rainwater flows to the valley below into centuries-old man-made lakes interlinked through storm water drains called *rajakaluves*

2. BREACHED LAKES

In the past four decades, the number of lakes has dwindled from 1,000 to 200 as these were breached to allow construction

3. BLOCKED DRAINS

Many storm drains were blocked to permit construction while others were poorly maintained

4. AD HOC SANCTIONS

Major building complexes were permitted to come up on low-lying agricultural land in the valleys

5. HEAVY RAIN

The downpour in September saw even posh suburbs get submerged. The Outer Ring Road tech corridor (left) got waterlogged too, the floods causing losses of Rs 225 crore

BANDEEP SINGH



CITIZENSPEAK

'Private splendour, public squalor'

V. RAVICHANDRAR, 66

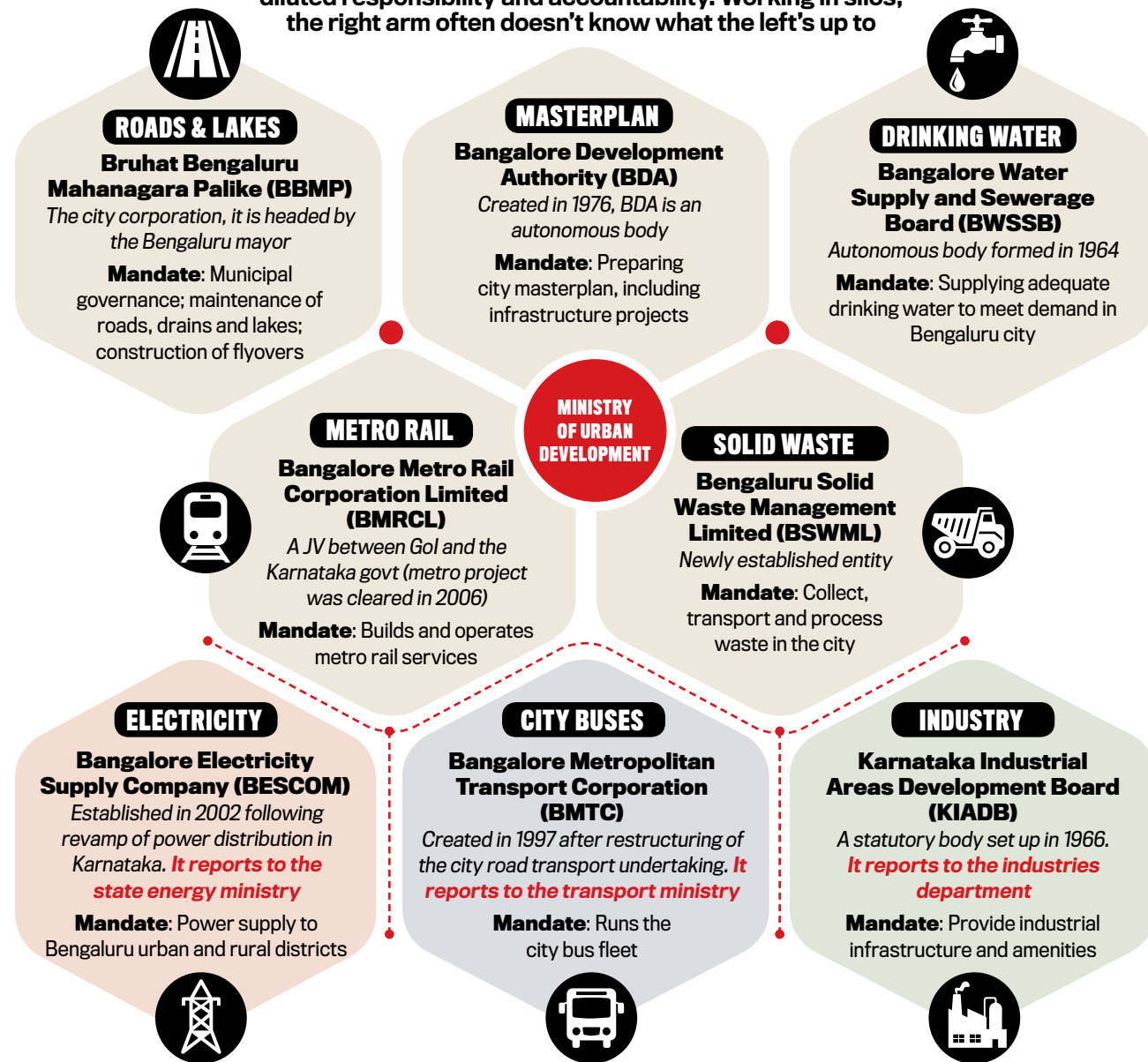
Director, Bangalore International Centre

V. Ravichandrar calls himself a 'civic evangelist'. He has been on most major committees set up to improve Bengaluru in the past two decades, and attributes the recent floods to "nature's fury over city planners violating natural drainage that ensured that water flowed from higher areas to lower ones". Originally, much of the city was on the crest of a ridge and rainwater run-off was channelled to the valleys below through drains called *rajakaluves*, which fed multiple mini-lakes. In the past two decades, however, much of the growth has been in the valleys below the ridge. This includes the 17-km arc that hugs the Outer Ring Road

and is the hub of its electronic and cyber cities. As companies built vast campuses with multi-storeyed buildings, no one paid heed to drainage or roads, resulting in what Ravichandrar calls "private splendour amid public squalor". He holds all governments in Karnataka culpable for everything that has gone wrong with the city. In a 2017 report warning of such floods, Ravichandrar and environmental architect Mohan S. Rao outlined a series of interventions for the city's vulnerable zones. But they were ignored. Ravichandrar warns that the problem of waterlogging and floods will persist unless a proper watershed management plan is put in place.

TOO MANY MONITORS

A multiplicity of agencies overseeing civic amenities has diluted responsibility and accountability. Working in silos, the right arm often doesn't know what the left's up to



submerged. Things are bad. Please take care." The loss the flood caused to the Outer Ring Road tech corridor alone was estimated to be over Rs 225 crore. But the damage it did to the city's reputation as the Mecca of Innovation was irreparable. Bangalore, a word that once described the city's ascendancy over California's Silicon Valley, has now taken on a whole new negative connotation of a city bursting at its seams with its cup of woes brimming over.

What is not brimming is drinking water supply, despite the recent floods, as the city faces a huge shortage. To quench the city's thirst, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has to pump 1,450 million litres of water daily from the river Cauvery that flows 120 km away up a steep gradient as the city is located on a ridge. Its elevation of

LACK OF UNIFIED COMMAND

8
TOTAL NUMBER OF CIVIC AGENCIES dealing with the city's amenities

4
TOTAL NUMBER OF MINISTRIES overseeing various civic agencies

COVER STORY: BENGALURU



BANDEEP SINGH

3,000 feet is what gives Bengaluru the climate of a hill station but makes supplying water an expensive affair. The pumping costs alone are Rs 45 crore a month and while it costs the board Rs 28 per kilo-litre (kl), it is sold at a starting rate of Rs 7 a kl (for domestic users). As a result of the heavy subsidy, the board faces an annual revenue deficit of Rs 1,300 crore. The city has a water supply shortfall of 650 million litres a day, or a third of the demand, leading to intermittent service and increased dependence on groundwater. There is a proposal to meet the city's growing water needs from the Sharavati river 400 km away, but it has been stalled owing to strong protests on ecological grounds.

A CUP OF WOES BRIMMING OVER

Meanwhile, the rapid expansion of the city with scarcely a thought for transport and ease of mobility has led to nightmarish traffic jams on its arterial roads. The Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTc) has failed to provide a sufficient or efficient public transport system to ease commuting woes. The result is an explosion of private transport for commuting, with 10 million registered vehicles in 2021-22, the most in India after Delhi. That's an irrational 1:1 ratio—one vehicle per adult citizen in the city. Worse, the roads are poorly maintained and marred by potholes. Congress legislator P.R. Ramesh sarcastically asked Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai recently in the legislative council

CITIZENSPEAK

'Need a powerful mayor to run the city, as in London'

N.R. NARAYANA MURTHY, 76
Founder and Chairman Emeritus, Infosys

He first came to Bengaluru in 1961 at the age of 15 to visit his sister in Jayanagar, then a new locality in the city. He remembers walking to her house from the railway station. Sixty years later, Murthy, founder and chairman emeritus of a global software giant, prefers to live in a quiet, middle-class lane in Jayanagar despite his vast personal wealth. It is an area he has been living in ever since he shifted base to Bengaluru in the mid-'80s and set up Infosys. He chose the city because of its wealth of engineering talent as well as easier rental rules. Among the first ones to move to the exclusive Electronic City, he recalls how it would be a two-hour commute as the infrastructure was poor. His perseverance, however, paid off, and today the Infosys

campus is among the best in an area that has become as famous as California's Silicon Valley, with most of the top IT companies located here. Murthy believes that Bengaluru needs a powerful mayor to administer it, to whom all agencies involved in civic amenities report, as is the case in, say, London or New York. "The best political leaders should be encouraged to take charge of the city," he says. "Boris Johnson earned his spurs as mayor of London and subsequently went on to become prime minister." He also believes that the Centre and state government should allocate a certain part of the budget based on the financial contribution that Bengaluru makes to the country. His advice: "We should look for solutions rather than analysis."

COVER STORY: BENGALURU

if he could identify even 1 kilometre of Bengaluru's 11,000 kilometres of roads that did not have a pothole. Bommai promised a thorough audit of the roads. In 2019, the TomTom Traffic Index, which evaluates traffic services across the globe, rated Bengaluru as the world's worst city in terms of traffic congestion, with people spending an extra 243 hours that year commuting.

Housing its burgeoning millions is another major worry. The boom saw an explosion of largely unplanned vertical and horizontal residential colonies. Rents too are soaring, with a two-bedroom house in Indiranagar now fetching Rs 1 lakh at the higher end, double of what it commanded prior to the pandemic. In addition, more than 400 slums have come up in random fashion, and they house almost a third of the city's population. The total housing shortage is estimated to touch 2.56 million by 2031, with the economically weaker sections bearing the brunt of this crisis. A recent study based on 500 workers in Bengaluru found they lived in shared spaces, half of which were no more than covered sheds, and shared toilets or used public facilities.

Yet, amazingly, the Union ministry of housing and urban affairs (MoHUA) ranked Bengaluru as No. 1 among 49 cities with a million-plus population in its Ease of Living Index (EoLI) for 2020. Attribute it to Bengaluru's consistently high score in terms of economic prowess. However, cut to municipal performance and sustainability development, and the city ranked 31 out of 51 cities in the MoHUA's Municipal Performance Index (MPI) for the same year, faring poorly in key criteria such as services, technology, finance, urban planning and governance. NITI Aayog's first Sustainable Development Index released in 2021 confirmed the trend: while Bengaluru was a frontrunner in providing jobs and ensuring economic growth, it stood 13th on sustainability issues.

FIVE REASONS THE CITY IS GOING TO SEED

What explains Bengaluru's descent into chaos and decrepitude? The blame for the city's boom and subsequent bust is wrongly pinned on its crown jewel, the IT or information technology sector. Tech czar N.R. Narayana Murthy, the founding chairman of Infosys, recalls the time he first visited Bengaluru in the early 1960s to see his sister. Forget vehicles, even humans were hard to find on its roads. By the mid-1980s, when Murthy shifted his nascent company from Pune to Bengaluru, the city had already undergone a radical transformation. It was a boom city long before Murthy and a dozen other pioneers spawned the IT miracle.

The first wave of the city's growth came in the 1960s when public sector giants like HMT, BEL, ITI and BEML were set up to capitalise on Bengaluru's clean air as well



DESPAIR AND HOPE
A clogged stormwater drain in Adugodi in central Bengaluru; (right) Narasimhan with the restored K-100 drain



BANDEEP SINGH

SANDESH RAVIKUMAR

as its scientific and technological base. Then, with surplus power, the city's planners threw open its doors to businesses from across the country in the Seventies. With industrialists in Bombay beset with union troubles and those in Calcutta harassed by the Naxal movement, they moved to Bangalore in droves. By 1983, when INDIA TODAY featured a cover story chronicling Bangalore's boom, it was already among the fastest growing cities in the world. The entry of the IT sector at the turn of the century only accelerated that growth. The prosperity, though, came at a price, as the city's infrastructure began heading for a total breakdown. If Bengaluru has become a textbook case for how to ruin a city, there are five major reasons other Indian metros and wannabe cities can learn from and avoid.

THE BLAME FOR BENGALURU'S WOES IS WRONGLY PINNED ON THE IT SECTOR. IT WAS A BOOM CITY LONG BEFORE MURTHY AND CO SPAWNED THE IT MIRACLE IN THE CITY

1. Multiple Agencies at Cross-purposes

Bengaluru has a maze of governmental, parastatal and autonomous bodies to govern and provide its citizens infrastructure and civic amenities, with no unified command to monitor, regulate and coordinate its growth (see *Too Many Monitors*). Foremost among them is the Bangalore Metropolitan Region Development Authority (BMRDA), which oversees the development of three districts—Bengaluru Urban and Rural and Ramanagara—totalling 8,000 sq. km, making it possibly the largest among India's metropolitan regions. The BMRDA was formed to coordinate the activities of the various civic agencies in these districts, but lack of financial powers have rendered it a largely toothless body that cannot enforce its diktats.

Then, there is the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), an autonomous body meant to prepare the master plan for the city and oversee its orderly growth. Shockingly, however, the city's last master plan expired in 2015 and it has not got a new one even after seven years. The BDA had prepared a plan for 2015 to 2031, but the state's urban development department (UDD), which the planning body reports to, summarily rejected it and asked for a revised plan incorporating the transport development framework prepared by the UDD's directorate of urban land transport. Why it wasn't incorporated in the first place is a telling example of how these agencies operate in silos.

Other examples of agencies working in isolation are the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC), which oversees the city's land transport, and the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation (BMRC). They are housed in the same office complex in Shantinagar but don't work in coordination. The BMTC reports to the state's transport ministry and operates independently of other civic agencies

CITIZENSPEAK

'Bring the public into public infrastructure'

NARESH V. NARASIMHAN, 60
Principal Architect, VA

Narasimhan wears many hats—architect, entrepreneur, urbanist and activist. Having grown up in Bengaluru, he has decided to actively engage in solving the city's woes. Among them was the dismal state of major storm drains, or rajakaluves. Over the years, silt has reduced their flow capacity by a third, and garbage dumped into these drains as well as sewage and illegally released industrial effluents have compounded the problem. Come rain and the drains overflow. Two years ago, Narasimhan got MOD, a non-profit that he co-founded, to collaborate with the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and map out the contours of one of the worst maintained stormwater drains. Originating in

Majestic, the city centre, it flowed into the Bellanduru Lake in the Koramangala Valley 12 km away, with a watershed of 32 sq. km and accounting for 12 per cent of the city's rainwater run-off. Inspired by an example from Seoul city, BBMP, with the help of MOD, got down to restoring K-100, as it was named. That included removing 900 truckloads of silt, in addition to reworking the piped drainage system. The project cost Rs 150 crore. With the gradient restored, stormwater began to flow freely; during the recent floods, there was no overflow in the surrounding areas. "This is an example of how we can move from a grey to a green infrastructure," says Narasimhan. "And also of how we must bring the public into public infrastructure."



URBAN JUNGLE
An aerial view of Central Silk Board junction

BENGALURU METRO

ON THE SLOW TRACK

55.9

KM
Length of tracks completed since 2011

119.5

KM
Length of tracks to be completed by 2025

10

PER CENT
of the city's 4 million commuters use the metro daily

Source: BMRL

TRANSPORT

RETARDED GROWTH

0

Buses the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation added to its fleet of 6,521 from 2014-15 to 2020-21

3

MILLION
No. of private vehicles added due to insufficient public bus transport system during the same period

Source: BMTC/Transport dept

in the city. The result: there is very little first- or last-mile connectivity for commuters to move seamlessly from bus to train and vice versa, to ease congestion and ensure convenience, forcing them instead to rely on autorickshaws and taxis to get to their destinations. One reason is that when the metro project, a joint venture between the central and state governments, was set up in 1994, it decided that much of the rails will be overground to save costs. That decision ruined some of the landmark avenues in the heart of the city, including the famed MG Road, now marred by monstrous concrete girders running down its middle. In the densely-packed city, much of the network runs parallel to arterial roads where buses also ply, defeating their very purpose.

This is also the reason implementation of the metro project has been slow, as land acquisition for overground rails is cumbersome and time-consuming. The metro finally began operations in 2011. It has so far completed just 56 km, with another 119.4 km to be completed by 2025. The cost so far: Rs 59,328 crore. Currently, the metro handles barely 10 per cent of the total commuting traffic of 4 million and though the BMTC boasts a fleet of 6,521 buses, commuters prefer their own vehicles because of poor connectivity. The city's vehicle population grew by 3 million from 2014-15 to 2020-21; the BMTC did not add even a single bus in that time. As architect Nareish Narasimhan points out, "It costs Rs 340 crore



BANDEEP SINGH

CITIZENSPEAK

'Less govt, more privatisation'

SATYA NARAYAN AGARWAL, 77
Chairman, Bhoruka Group

When he moved to Bangalore from Calcutta 50 years ago, the city welcomed him warmly, recalls Satya Narayan Agarwal. He was then running the Transport Corporation of India, one of India's largest logistics firms, headquartered in West Bengal. But with the Naxal movement, several industrialists like him found Bangalore a safer haven. Despite his wealth, Agarwal prefers to stay in a narrow lane off Benson Cross Road, in a refurbished house he bought decades ago. He finds the city's failing infrastructure appalling.

He recalls how it used to take him just 15 minutes to reach Whitefield industrial estate, where he had set up shop. Today, it takes him an hour. He jokes, "There is a road somewhere amidst the potholes, not the other way round." He believes that a metropolitan city like Bengaluru should plan for development for the next 50 years, as cities like New York and Paris did. Privatisation of civic amenities, he thinks, is the way forward, particularly in power distribution and water supply, as it will lead to more accountability and curb corruption.

per km for a metro whereas it would have cost Rs 5 crore a km to make a dedicated lane for buses. We must get our priorities right. The word economy and ecology come from the same Greek root word 'eco'—meaning home—and people forget they must be said in the same breath."

2. An Unholy Nexus

The second major reason for the decline of the city is the arbitrary way in which the affairs of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), or the Greater Bengaluru Municipal Corporation, have been handled. The BBMP was set up in 2007 by the then H.D. Kumaraswamy government by merging the hundred wards of the erstwhile Bengaluru



BANDEEP SINGH

CITIZENSPEAK

'We should avoid band-aid solutions'

IRFAN RAZACK, 69
CMD, Prestige Group

Razack recalls Bangalore as a sleepy little town in the '60s. Today, he is possibly the largest builder in the city, who has been instrumental in its growth into a giant megapolis. Starting as a real estate broker, Razack saw his company's growth skyrocket in the 1990s after the IT sector boom. He has put up over 250 highrise office complexes across the city, including the snazzy UB City for Vijay Mallya. He dismisses claims that it was the politician-builder nexus that led to Bengaluru's civic woes. "I can tell you that

the building laws in the city are clear-cut. It would be a crime to stop development. But at the same time, we shouldn't do it mindlessly. Whatever we do now to improve the infrastructure shouldn't be band-aid solutions."

Razack believes that the private sector should be roped in to improve accountability. He is not in favour of pouring resources into a 'twin city' that many experts are proposing. "It's like I need a heart surgery and instead the doctor decides to do it on someone else in the hope that it will cure me," he says.

Mahanagara Palike, seven city municipal councils, one town municipal council and 110 villages surrounding the city into a single administrative area. Almost overnight, Bengaluru's municipal jurisdiction grew from 200 sq. km to 800 sq. km and the total number of wards increased from 100 to 198. With no accompanying planning to expand its administrative capabilities and inadequate funds to meet the demands placed by this fourfold expansion in territory, a senior state official in service then recalls, "Bengaluru became ungovernable with all of us firefighting for amenities rather than planning ahead. It led to ad hoc development, increased corruption and sent the city down the tube."

The only one to benefit was the politician-businessman-

COVER STORY: BENGALURU

builder nexus, which thrived. With almost 100 additional elected corporators and their lackeys, it meant more hands in the till. “It was meant to be a single window for the city’s development,” says an expert. “But it turned out to be just another window to pay more speed money.” With no proper zoning laws for the newly added wards, agricultural land was converted into revenue properties, resulting in an explosion of highrises, both in commercial and residential spaces in low-lying areas on the outskirts of the city. But even as posh colonies mushroomed in new areas, the infrastructure lagged, as roads remained narrow, the drainage poor, and garbage disposal too. So, while Bengaluru’s IT hubs boasted glittering buildings and plush campuses, open drains, narrow streets causing traffic jams, and uncleared garbage remained an eyesore. V. Ravichandar, honorary director of the Bangalore International Centre and a city evangelist who has been waging a losing battle to save it, terms it “private splendour amid public squalor”.

3. Greed versus Green

The recent floods, says Ravichandar, were a disaster waiting to happen since successive city administrators have messed with the natural flow of rainwater while sanctioning its expansion. Bengaluru’s topography holds the clue to why water management is key. The old city came up on a central ridge line that runs north to south. Rainwater falling east of this ridge drains into valleys, filling up the numerous interlinked man-made lakes downstream. This is where the city’s storm water drain (SWD) network came in—these primary canals, known locally as *rajakaluves*, were once natural rain-fed streams across which farmers built small bunds over time to arrest the flow of water and create lakes. When one lake filled up, water was let out downstream via sluice gates to the next lake.

The city administrators made their third big mistake when, to meet the demand for space for construction and roads, they allowed lakes to be breached regularly. The lakes, which once numbered a thousand-odd, are now reduced to a paltry 200 or so. Worse, the *rajakaluves* that channelised the storm water had buildings built over them. Bellandur, the tiny village from which Bengaluru’s best-known lake takes its name, is today a mass of buildings and shanties sitting cheek-by-jowl alongside business parks—a thriving ecosystem that provides everything from paying guest accommodation to shops and restaurants. Leo F. Saldanha, the coordinator of the non-profit Environment Support Group, which has been litigating for lake preservation for over two decades, says, “All these were natural agricultural wetlands. But while putting up buildings, planners should have ensured space for water to collect and interlinkages to lakes downstream if they overflowed. It was a very simple thing to do, but we ignored it and the citizens are paying the



SANDESH RAVIKUMAR

CITIZENSPEAK

‘Deep corruption should be rooted out’

T.V. MOHANDAS PAI, 62
Chairman, Manipal Global Education

You can’t find a more quintessential Bangalorean than T.V. Mohandas Pai. The former Infosys CFO and angel investor went to school and college in the city. He is now the chairperson of Manipal Global Education and is also the co-founder of Akshaya Patra, which runs the world’s largest mid-day meal programme. Pai is enraged that the Bengaluru he grew up in has gone to seed.

“The city’s municipal corporation has become too big, it has one commissioner who administers 800 sq. km with 12 million people.” Pai suggests

implementing a pending law to break up the municipality into five corporations. However, he knows that the current government won’t do it because “city MLAs don’t want to give up their power”. He speaks about the “deep corruption” in most civic bodies, “where posts are sold, people openly make money for projects, nobody is sacked and everybody who benefits lives happily while the city suffers”. He is dismissive of plans to decongest Bengaluru by building a twin city: “It will be another real estate venture and won’t solve the problem.”

OVER 400 SLUMS HAVE COME UP ALL OVER BENGALURU, HOUSING ALMOST A THIRD OF ITS POPULATION. TOTAL HOUSING SHORTAGE IS ESTIMATED TO TOUCH 2.56 MILLION BY 2031

price—as we all experienced in the recent floods.”

In a perceptive article, Rohini Nilekani, philanthropist and wife of Nandan Nilekani of Infosys and Aadhaar fame, wrote, “The recent Bengaluru floods washed up the dirty linen of mismanagement and corruption on the shores of a crumbling city infrastructure. As the elite of East Bengaluru painfully experienced, we cannot be consumers of good governance, we have to create it. If we point one finger at the government, are three fingers pointed back at ourselves? Have we built our sprawling campuses on flood plains? Like it or not, floods, pandemics and air pollution put everyone in the same boat, even if some of us are in the upper deck private cabins. We will have to row together to steer away from the rising waters. Life jackets are under the seat. But the oars are right on top.”

4. Criminal Neglect of Maintenance

The lack of repair and maintenance, especially of stormwater drains and solid waste management, are the fourth folly the city’s administrators are guilty of committing over the years. Funds to upgrade and remodel half of Bengaluru’s 850-odd km SWD network have been allocated over the past two decades, but progress has been inexplicably slow. In his budget this year, CM Bommai allocated Rs 1,500 crore to upgrade the remaining 400-odd km; following the heavy rains and inundation, he released a further Rs 300 crore for SWDs. With angry citizens demanding answers, Bommai told the assembly last month that tenders for these have been awarded. “But to start work, we must first clear buildings and encroachments that are in the way. That’s the situation in Bengaluru today,” he said, adding that it will take at least one and a half years to upgrade the SWDs. “But wherever there is an urgent need, we have started work.” Among these efforts has been the restoration of the arterial K-100 drain (see Narasimhan *Citizenspeak*).

Bommai, who heads the UDD that oversees the func-



SANDESH RAVIKUMAR

CITIZENSPEAK

‘There is no short-cut out of the mess’

ANJALI KAROL MOHAN, 53
Partner, Integrated Design

Anjali Karol Mohan has been working on master plans for Bengaluru ever since she shifted to the city in 1994. An urban and regional planner, she points to several infirmities. For one, the city is operating on an outdated master plan that was relevant only till 2015. The new plan was withdrawn four years earlier by the state government, seeking modifications, and is yet to be finalised. Mohan says that even if the plan is approved, the statutory framework is archaic and requires a complete overhaul to be in with the

times. Among other problems, there is what she calls “an elite capture of public policy”. A capitalist consumerist culture has compromised the city’s ecology and has impacted the vulnerable. Mohan believes there are no short-cuts. Setting up a task force is not enough. What’s needed is bridging the gap between the mechanics of the actual, lived city and the framework the government deploys to manage its growth. It calls “for a democratic bottom-up approach of planning a city”, not just the current top-down one, she says.

CITIZENSPEAK



SANDESH RAVIKUMAR

‘Public sector lacks responsibility, accountability

PRASHANT PRAKASH, 57
Founding Partner, Accel, India

Prashant Prakash has not only led investments in 30 Indian tech start-ups, he is also the chairman of the government’s Vision Group for Start-ups, acting as a bridge between babudom and entrepreneurs. Being an old Bangalorean, he is not only concerned about where the city is headed but also deeply involved in its upliftment. “If there is one cause for Bengaluru’s failures,” he says, “it’s the lack of capacity to design solutions and contract them for implementation that

ensures outcomes.” In many major projects, he says the design is given by a consulting agency that doesn’t have skin in the game and implementation is by an agency that has no interest in making it cost-effective. “The city bears the brunt of the mistakes, especially environmental ones. The government sector is all about authority, but lacks responsibility and accountability.” Prakash recommends setting up a coordinating body to govern infra across stakeholders and PPPs to ensure outcomes.

tioning of the BBMP apart from the BMRDA and the BDA, has also drawn flak for delaying the municipal polls to elect corporators and the mayor of the city. There have been no elections since 2020, as a new law passed that year by the assembly to expand the number of wards from 198 to 243 and to devolve more powers to the mayor is caught in a legal battle. Critics cite the delay as deliberate because Bengaluru is seen as the cash cow that generates an enormous amount of speed money or bribes to get clearances for licences to construct buildings quickly. With the assembly election due next year, the political class allegedly wants the ambiguity to persist in order to milk funds to fight the polls.

5. Bribe and Prejudice

This brings us to the fifth major reason for Bengaluru’s decline: rampant corruption in civic bodies to get sanctions as well as clearance for land use, building construction and completion certificates. Every party that has ruled the state in the past few decades has been guilty of looking the other way. T.V. Mohandas Pai, the city’s top angel investor, is blunt, “Everyone knows that the BBMP is a very corrupt organisation where posts are sold, people come there to make money for projects and there is no auditing, so nobody has been sacked. You can’t start a project, get a building licence and electricity sanction unless you bribe them. It’s getting worse by the year.” Last year, to Bommai’s acute embarrassment, one of the major contractors’ associations in the state wrote a letter to the prime minister alleging that the ministers and elected representatives demand up to 30 per cent of the tender amount to approve a contract in addition to the 5-6 per cent towards the release of the ‘Letter of Credit’ against pending bills. Bommai dismisses the charges, saying after taking charge in July 2021, he constituted a tender scrutiny committee headed by a retired judge to prevent malpractices. Interestingly, the 28 MLAs who represent Bengaluru are among the richest in the state as the declarations before the Election Commission have shown, with B.S. Suresh, a Congress MLA from Hebbal, boasting a net

worth of Rs 375 crore. Also, as a former senior official said, “The political instability in the state means it is very much an MLA-governed state.”

HOW TO SAVE BENGALURU FROM SELF-DESTRUCTION

What will it take for Bengaluru to get out of the collective hell-hole it finds itself in, as Ravichandar terms it? Can the city be saved? Yes, says Narayana Murthy. But with three caveats: that its administration be placed under the command of a CEO-like figure and all civic and infrastructure agencies report to him or her; the person chosen to head the unified command be someone of political stature (Murthy cites the example of Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel who cut their teeth in city politics and development before they became statesmen. In the UK, it was former British prime minister Boris Johnson’s performance as the mayor of London that catapulted him to the top post); and three, a portion of the enormous revenue that Bengaluru generates for the state be ploughed back into its development.

Others suggest that Bengaluru, like other major international cities, draw up a master plan with a 50-year vision, as Singapore did, and work towards it. Narasimhan disagrees, though. He argues that master plans for fast-growing cities like Bengaluru are an outdated idea, because it is based on land use, which is a euphemism for real estate. “It’s like a colouring book,” he says. “Yellow means residential, blue means commercial, red means government and green means public pace. This is all motherhood and apple pie stuff.” Narasimhan says the rest of the world is abandoning such fossil fuel-era planning and instead repopulating the inner city because planners believe that urban density is better than urban spread. Narasimhan, therefore, wants a vision for the city that defines how air quality should be, the per capita water availability, the standards of mobility, the spaces for interactivity—criteria that define the quality of life a city hopes to offer rather than just buildings and roads, and then ensure these are implemented. London, for instance, decided that every single land transit vehicle, including cabs, metros and buses, be brought under a single organisation called Transport for London. It became so successful that people stopped using personal vehicles for office commutes, with many office complexes even abandoning parking spaces for vehicles.

The key, though, is time-bound implementation of civic infrastructure projects, with high-quality standards, something that Prashant Prakash, a serial entrepreneur and start-up investor, says is a major lacuna currently. Prakash argues that what the city administration lacks is the capacity to design and find solutions that are appropriate and contract them so that the work is done diligently rather than the suboptimal and substandard outcomes that have become the norm. Rather than rely on consultants for design and contractors for implementation of projects—neither of whom has much skin in the long-term game—he believes the government should leverage the competence of the vibrant private sector and form public-private partnerships to resolve civic amenity issues. He cites the example of Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML), an autonomous body that was formed recently to handle the city’s garbage. Administratively and financially indepen-

dent, it will be free to enter into tie-ups to meet its goals.

What about developing a twin city for Bengaluru that can decongest the existing one? Many experts, including Ravichandar, are enthused by the idea and believe the Bangalore International Airport area, which covers 437 sq. km, could be developed into an alternative magnet if planned well. But real estate tycoon Irfan Razack, chairman of the Prestige Group, is against any move that detracts focus from Bengaluru and its collapsing infrastructure. “Bangalore is having a heart attack,” he says. “It won’t help the city if you operate on another body.” Bommai believes the

solution lies in developing satellite towns around the city and connecting them to Bengaluru with high-speed circular rail facilities. The central government has stepped in and sanctioned Rs 15,700 crore to boost the city’s suburban rail network, a project PM Modi inaugurated and which he promised will be completed in 40 months and not 40 years. In addition, Bommai has announced that work will begin on the 74-km, eight-lane Peripheral Ring Road (PRR), a project estimated to cost Rs 15,000 crore. The recent floods and the damage they caused is a wake-up call for Bengaluru and gives Bommai and Co the opportunity to take tough decisions that can pull Bengaluru out of the current morass. This includes holding elections for the BBMP and devolving management to elected corporators, who will be accountable to the citizens. What is needed is speedy, concerted action to rescue India’s city of the future from turning into a fossil of past follies. ■

AMONG THE SUGGESTIONS TO SAVE BENGALURU IS GETTING IT A CEO-LIKE FIGURE WHOM ALL AGENCIES CAN REPORT TO, AND TO PLOUGH BACK SOME OF ITS REVENUE INTO ITS DEVELOPMENT

WATER WOES

2,100

MILLION LITRES
The daily demand for drinking water

650

MILLION LITRES
The daily shortfall, a third of the demand

Source: BWSSB website



ROTARY ACTION
An LCH Prachand during its
induction ceremony in Jodhpur

DEFENCE LCH

THE FIERCEST CHOPPER

After a long wait, India has an indigenous Light Combat Helicopter **that can operate in high altitudes**. Prachand is also being talked up as one of the world's best

BY PRADIP R. SAGAR

The operations in the high-altitude battlefield of Kargil in 1999 is vivid in the memory of Group Captain R.K. Narang (retd), a helicopter pilot. Most of all, he recalls how the absence of an attack helicopter had cost the Indian Army dear. When infantry units asked for close air support, Gp Capt. Narang, who was flying in Kargil, claims that the Indian Air Force's then-existing fleet of Russian-origin Mi25 and Mi-35 choppers were ineffective over the craggy terrain of Kargil and Drass because of their weight. "These choppers are heavy, meant for low-altitude operations and are supposed to carry combat troops." The Kargil experience led to an introspection within India's defence establishment, and designs for a Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) were first drawn up in 2003. The government sanctioned the indigenous LCH project in 2006, with state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd spearheading the effort. There were occasional setbacks, like the absence of some sophisticated infrastructure needed to develop such hardware, but progress was steady—over the next decade, extensive flight testing was carried out on four prototypes, and operational clearances came between 2017 and 2019.

In March, after the Cabinet Committee on Security gave its nod to the procurement of 15 Limited Series Production (LSP) LCH for Rs 3,887 crore along with allied infrastructure sanctions worth Rs 377 crore, the ball was set rolling. After 23 years, the Indian military finally got its coveted attack helicopter—a state-of-the-art machine named Prachand (fierce) that can operate at an altitude of 5,000 metres with a full load of weaponry. It can be a gamechanger for the Indian military. The first four Prachand helicopters were inducted into the IAF's 143 helicopter unit at a ceremony at Jodhpur airbase on October 3. After taking a sortie in a LCH, defence minister Rajnath Singh said, "There is no need to define Prachand. The message is received by the enemy." Prachand has nearly 45 per cent indigenous content by value, which will progressively increase to over 55 per cent, HAL claims. With the army and the IAF projected to require around 160 LCHs, HAL plans to step up production and deliver them within the next decade.

Weighing 5.8 tonnes, LCH Prachand is capable of operating in any terrain, weather or altitude, but is especially suitable for high-altitude operations. Extremely manoeuvrable, it is capable of destroying enemy air defence and engaging in combat search and rescue and counter-insurgency operations. The sharpness it imparts to the IAF's combat prowess cannot be overstated. "It's a fast, agile machine. It charges clean through clear air turbulences (treacherous air masses). A lot of helicopters give up under such harsh weather conditions," says Gp Capt. Hari Nair, one of the lead project pilots of LCH. Nair's effusive assessment stems from the helicopter's performance over the Ladakh sector in winter, where pilots witness severe air turbulence, with windspeed up to 150 km.

A month after the Galwan clash, with tension at its peak between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh, India deployed the LCH along with frontline fighters at Leh airbase. Stationing the aircraft in a live operational setting before it had been formally inducted was a remarkable signal. The fact that the indigenous chopper was pressed into service even before the US-made AH-64E

Apache, often considered the world's most lethal attack helicopter, showed the faith reposed in the LCH.

The Prachand has a tandem configuration (one behind the other) for the pilot and co-pilot, who is also the Weapon System Operator (WSO) and a narrow fuselage, giving it its sleek appearance. It carries a 20mm twin barrel turret gun, 68mm rockets and air-to-air missile systems like ATGMs (anti-tank guided missiles). It also has a number of stealth features such as reduced radar and infra-red signatures and crash-worthy landing gear. The LCH has a maximum speed of 275kmph (148kt), a combat radius of 500km and an operational ceiling of 16,000 to 18,000 feet (5,490 metres).

A key HAL official says that on January 17, 2019, the Prachand successfully engaged a moving aerial target with an air-to-air missile at the integrated test range at Chandipur, Odisha—the first ever air-to-air engagement in India by a helicopter. Its anti-tank capability is based on the Helina ATGM, which can hit targets between a range of 500 metres and seven kilometres.

The LCH project has had its share of problems. Gp Capt. Nair points out that unlike the US or Europe, India does not have a large wind tunnel testing infrastructure that simulates flight conditions, so it took longer to develop the LCH. He adds that in 2010, when the first prototype came out, it had serious design and functional issues. It forced designers to go back to the drawing board for a major restructuring. IAF operates Russian-made Mi-25 and Mi-35 attack helicopters, along with the newly inducted Boeing-made Apache helicopters. While the Mi-25 and Mi-35 are set to be phased out, the IAF has a fleet of 22 AH-64E Apaches. Some experts say Apaches are not suited for high-altitude terrain and that they are designed for operations in West Asia. The force needed more attack helicopters, and the timing of Prachand's

LEAN MACHINE

The LCH Prachand **has the latest technology and has passed rigorous flight tests**



A SORTIE TO REMEMBER

Defence minister Rajnath Singh in the LCH in Jodhpur

➤ 5.8-tonne combat helicopter, capable of advanced self-protection, including stealth capability and crashworthy landing gear

➤ Armed with a chin-mounted 20mm turret twin-barrel gun, cluster bombs and 68mm rocket pods

➤ Maximum speed of 275kmph (148kt), combat radius of 500 kilometres

➤ Capable of high-altitude warfare, with an operational ceiling of 16,000 to 18,000 feet (5,490 metres)

➤ 45 per cent indigenous content

➤ IAF will have 65 LCH; the army will have 95 of the helicopters

THE LCH WAS PRESSED INTO SERVICE FOR THE FACE-OFF WITH CHINA IN LADAKH EVEN BEFORE THE APACHE WAS DEPLOYED

arrival, when copters are on the defence ministry's 'negative' list of imports, is perfect. "LCH overtakes Apache or any other combat chopper in the world," says Nair, reiterating that it is one of its kind.

HAL officials said that the flight testing on the four prototypes was carried out at various altitudes—from the sea level to the Siachen range as well as over extremely hot weather conditions over deserts. Further, integration of mission sensors such as electro-optical systems, helmet-mounted display systems, solid state data and video recorders are done and weapon firing trials completed. "A total of 2029 flights have been carried out on the prototypes till date," says an official.

Over 250 vendors are involved in

the manufacturing of components, assemblies, fixtures, tools, test equipment and preparation of technical documentation, apart from 70 vendors involved in the indigenisation of various parts. Some believe that the helicopter has huge export potential and HAL has already obtained a no objection certificate from the MoD for its export to Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Egypt, Indonesia, Ecuador and Nigeria.

Later this month, the army is going to deploy four Prachands in Assam's Missamari, within striking range of the forward areas along the Line of Actual Control in Arunachal Pradesh. It plans to have at least one squadron of LCH in each of its 17 corps.

"From air to ground and air-to-air capability, the LCH is able to operate on heights better than any helicopter in the world," says Gp Capt. Narang, talking it up. While operating in low altitude areas or plains, the Prachand can be fitted with counter-drone technology, since both China and Pakistan have significant drone capabilities.

Clearly, the LCH has been gathering fulsome praise from all quarters. Now it has to live up to the good press. ■

World-class BRAHMOS steps into "new realm"

Shri Atul Dinkar Rane

Outstanding Scientist
Director General (BrahMos), DRDO
CEO & MD, BrahMos Aerospace

India's strong resolve to modernise its military in the backdrop of swiftly evolving global geostrategic equations has coherently aligned with the country's ambitious plan to build an "Aatma Nirbhar Bharat" in the defence sector. One among the many cutting-edge military-technical programmes India has undertaken is the development and successful operationalisation of world's most powerful precision strike weapon BRAHMOS.

Designed and developed by DRDO in partnership with Russia's NPOM, supersonic cruise missile BRAHMOS has strengthened India's modern warfighting capability from across the spectrums of land, sea and air. The formidable tactical weapon, combining speed, precision, firepower, range, manoeuvrability and versatility, has become the Indian Armed Force's "weapon of choice" in times of high volatility and conflict.

Since the inception of the India-Russia Joint Venture (JV) programme in February 1998 and the maiden successful test firing of BRAHMOS in June 2001, BrahMos Aerospace, the JV entity producing the weapon, has achieved incredible milestones. All three Defence Services of India have deployed the BRAHMOS – Indian Navy in 2005; Indian Army in 2007;

Indian Air Force in 2020.

In over the two decades of this spectacular journey of providing the Indian Armed Forces with a near invincible capability, BrahMos Aerospace has now embarked on yet another glorious trajectory to reach newer frontiers.

On January 28, 2022, BrahMos Aerospace signed a historic contract with the Republic of Philippines to supply shore-based anti-ship BRAHMOS systems to the Armed Forces of Philippines. It is the first-ever export deal for BRAHMOS.

"With this landmark contract, BRAHMOS has become India's first full-scale major weapon system to be delivered to a foreign customer nation," according to Shri Atul Dinkar Rane, DG (BrahMos), DRDO and CEO & MD of BrahMos Aerospace.

India's pledge to build an "Aatma Nirbhar Bharat" encompassing modern defence technology through the uninterrupted 'Make-In-India' and 'Make-for-the-World' endeavours have been hugely propelled forward by the BRAHMOS missile export deal.

"BrahMos once again leads by example. After building a robust 'missile industrial consortium' and being the true flagbearer of 'Make In India' in defence indigenisation, we have now rightfully stepped into the next realm – 'Make

In India' is now going to 'Make for the World,'" says the BrahMos Chief.

By sealing the historic export deal with the Philippines, the JV entity has successfully fulfilled its "Mind-to-Market" strategy which was conceptualised as part of the BRAHMOS weapon development programme in 1998.

Strongly supported by the Govt of India's endeavours to promote responsible defence exports, the multi-million dollar BRAHMOS deal with the Philippines has paved the way for India's ambitious target to achieve defence exports worth US\$5 billion by the year 2025.



STRIVE FOR SELF-RELIANCE IN DEFENCE PRODUCTION

India's 'arms dependency' represents an acute vulnerability as far as national security and strategic autonomy are concerned

There is a huge irony in the fact that India, the world's second largest arms importer, also happens to possess one of the world's largest defence technology and industrial bases (DTIBs), comprising the vast Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), with its network of 50 laboratories, backed by 16 Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), including 41 ordnance factories recently 'corporatised' into seven DPSUs. Over the years, this complex has delivered an array of military hardware—warships, submarines, fighters, tanks, and aero-engines, two 'cherries on the cake' being the recent delivery of a 42,000-tonne aircraft carrier and a light combat helicopter, both designed and built in India.

What should temper national pride in all these platforms and systems, declared as 'indigenous', is the fact that major components, such as engines (whether diesel, gas-turbine or nuclear), guns, missiles and radars, as well as key micro-processor-based electronic components are of foreign origin. Representing 60-70 per cent of the platform/ system cost, these vital components render the availability of our weapons systems contingent on support from foreign sources of dubious reliability—especially in war.

There has been inadequate appreciation of the fact that this arms dependency represents an acute vulnerability as far as national security is concerned. As demonstrated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, our dependence on both these nations for military hardware has eroded our 'strategic autonomy' and impacted our diplomatic freedom of action. The egregious failure of our government-owned

DTIB represents not just security vulnerability but also an economic 'missed opportunity'. Thriving arms, aeronautics and shipbuilding industries could have made a dramatic contribution to India's economy by spawning ancillaries in the MSME sector, skilling our youth and creating jobs for them, and positioning India amongst major weapons exporters.

India's post-independence political establishment having failed to appreciate the need for self-sufficiency in military hardware, no roadmap has ever been drawn up to attain autonomy in defence

aircraft and hypersonic missiles.

Most prominent among DRDO projects that have attracted criticism for time/cost overruns and performance shortfalls are the Tejas fighter and the Arjun battle tank. The inchoate Kaveri jet engine, which could have fathered a family of engines for indigenous military/ civil aircraft has, for unknown reasons, been cast into limbo, a decision India will regret forever. Collectively, these are indicative of not just the organisation's lack of focus but also of the absence of political vision and support, as well as

inadequate user involvement. The exclusion of the private sector from defence production, to protect the DPSUs, has denied our DTIB huge advantages that would have accrued from such a dynamic partnership.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Make in India project having morphed into the laudable Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign, our unhappy experience so far should prompt the government to ensure past mistakes are not repeated. There is also the need to recognise that while gimmicks like 'banned' and 'positive indigenisation' lists may make for good publicity, they contribute little to genuine fostering of technology. Among the measures that merit serious consideration are:

✚ Evolution of a 50-year Defence Production Strategy to spell out actions for a revamp and planned growth of DTIB.

✚ Creation of an independent ministry of defence production and re-structuring of DRDO to inject transparency, efficiency and accountability.

✚ Mobilising private sector as a full partner in defence R&D and production. ■

The author is a former Indian Navy chief



GETTY IMAGES

MAKE IN INDIA
Army chief General Manoj Pande at a military expo, Jul. 28

production. Since the 1960s, India has poured billions of dollars into Soviet/ Russian coffers for weapons purchases, but no thought was given to leveraging these huge transactions to acquire advanced technology. The same playbook is being re-enacted while acquiring billions of dollars worth of American hardware, and India's laggard DTIB remains deficient in high technology. We must also honestly introspect as to how, starting from a similar base in the 1950s, the defence industries of Brazil, Turkey, South Korea and Taiwan have left India miles behind. China today is a major arms exporter and is engaged in serial production of modern aircraft carriers, destroyers, nuclear submarines, stealth

C295MW – Flying high for an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'

Airbus, along with Tata Advanced Systems Limited, is proud to kick-start the first-ever private aircraft manufacturing in India. The C295MW programme demonstrates the trust and confidence the Government of India places in this partnership, which will serve the Indian Air Force and the vision of a self-reliant India.





LT GEN. PRAKASH KATOCH (Retd)

DEFENCE **GUEST COLUMN**

INDIA'S DEFENCE ECOSYSTEM AND THE UKRAINE CONFLICT

A possible disruption in the future supplies of spares is an opportunity to speed up self-reliance through indigenous arms production

America continues to heckle India to reduce defence and energy relations with Russia, while simultaneously cosying up to Pakistan. Meanwhile, Germany wants Kashmir raked up at the UN. The fallout of the Ukraine conflict on India's military preparedness remains in discussion, with the US 'using' Ukraine to battle Russia and not wanting the conflict to end till Russia's war-waging potential is reduced to its liking.

Indo-Russian defence relations have remained steadfast over the decades. In December 2021, both countries inked a 10-year defence cooperation pact and signed 28 agreements. Some 70 per cent of Indian armed forces equipment is of Russian origin including some under licensed production, the majority of which is held by the army followed by the air force and navy.

Russia is exporting the S-400 missile system to India. The delivery is on time and all five regiments are expected by 2023. BrahMos Aerospace Ltd has begun exporting BrahMos missiles to foreign countries, and is developing the BrahMos-NG and the BrahMos-II hypersonic cruise missile. AK-203 assault rifles are also being produced in India with Russian collaboration. The third Akula-class submarine Chakra III on a 10-year lease from Russia is also expected by 2025.

There have been concerns about the supply of spares from Ukraine for some of the tanks and missile systems in our army, as also gas turbine engines for the Talwar class frigates contracted from Russia. However, India independently contracted gas turbine engines from Ukraine to resolve the issue. The army

reportedly has enough spares for the tanks and missile systems. Russia has also assured no disruption in supplies.

The defence establishment has been reviewing the likely impact of a prolonged Ukraine conflict, coupled with ambiguous Chinese intentions—the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has not vacated areas of eastern Ladakh seized in 2020. However, possible disruption in future supplies of spares should be seen as an opportunity to speed up self-reliance through indigenous production and Make in India.

GETTY IMAGES



According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) study 'Arms Production Capabilities in the Indo-Pacific Region: Measuring Self-Reliance' released on October 3, India's target of defence exports worth Rs 35,000 crore by 2025 can be achieved by doubling procurement from domestic manufacturers. The study ranked India fourth in the Indo Pacific and states, 'Maintaining local arms manufacturing and repair capabilities allows states to sustain their forces' equipment in case of supply disruptions and provides limited capability for military adaptation and innovation.' We should be focusing on voids in indigenous development like aero and gas turbine engines for naval warships.

With no end to the Ukraine conflict in sight, the feasibility of indigenous production of spares in conjunction with Russia could be examined.

Is the clout of the public sector compared to the private defence industry slowing our self-sufficiency in defence? Can we afford to continue bureaucratic indifference towards operational priorities? Witness how the procurement of six submarines under Project P-75I has been stuck at the RFP stage for years. Looking at the chain of events since 1997 when the defence ministry approved the

acquisition of 24 submarines, there appears little urgency despite increasing maritime threats in the region.

Similarly, the 'Strategic Partnership' model is yet to take off and the 'offsets' clause has seen much success, indicating poor implementation and, perhaps, forethought. Decisions about modes of procurement and procurement procedures are changed periodically, there is no effort to cut down

red tape and the fact that this delay results in exponentially higher procurement costs is ignored, perhaps by design.

India developed NavIC after the US switched off GPS during the Kargil conflict to prevent the Indian Navy from blockading the Karachi harbour. Similarly, we should aim to create a defence ecosystem in conjunction with Russia and others to remain unaffected by a prolonged Ukraine conflict. Our defence relationship with Russia remains important also because it is a reliable friend compared to the US, which has a history of 'using and throwing' countries despite the pretence of friendship. ■

The author is a Special Forces veteran

INDIA TODAY



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SPECIAL REPORT  **ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE**

THE RISE OF SUPERBUGS

As existing antibiotics cease to tame bacteria due to indiscriminate use and the pipeline for new drugs runs dry, India is staring at a massive public health crisis

By Sonali Acharjee

Illustration by NILANJAN DAS

In

March this year, Saanvi Jain, 33, was planning to bring her father back home to Gurugram after a successful gall bladder operation, when he contracted a blood infection in the ICU at Max Hospital in Saket, Delhi. The doctors were concerned, but reassured her that the strong antibiotics they had put him on should see him through. But they didn't. Saanvi's father developed sepsis, and within no time was gone. Even powerful drugs such as Colistin and carbapenems, which are considered 'last resort' ICU drugs in the medical community, could not save him. "Doctors suspected antibiotic resistance and asked me whether he had ever taken these medicines before. He had. Only a year ago, he had been given these antibiotics when he was hospitalised for Covid-19. The doctors [at Max] said the dose had been too short," says Jain. Thus, an incomplete round of life-saving drugs cost the 62-year-old his life.

Rampant overuse and misuse of antibiotics is contributing to growing anti-microbial resistance, or AMR, in India. A study published

in the *BMJ* in 2020 looked at Indian public healthcare centres (PHCs) and found that half the patients who were given antibiotics did not need them; half the antibiotics were on the World Health Organization's (WHO) 'Watch-list', 12.1 per cent were on the 'Discouraged' list and three out of 23 prescriptions were on the 'Reserve' list. Antibiotics in the 'Watch' category should be used for well-defined infections and must not to be stopped abruptly. 'Reserve' antibiotics should be used as a last resort to treat multi- or extensively-drug-resistant bacteria. 'Discouraged' refers to combinations that may negatively impact AMR. A small study of 20 people in Haryana in 2017 found that most of them preferred to buy antibiotics over the counter and those with lower incomes were likely to stop using them prematurely. "People don't understand or respect antibiotics," says Dr Abdul Ghafur, an infectious disease specialist at Apollo Hospital, Chennai. "They want to get better quickly, not correctly."

It did not come as a surprise, therefore, when a study titled 'Global Burden of Bacterial



Antimicrobial Resistance in 2019' published in 2022 in the journal *The Lancet* revealed that India has one of the most worrying antibiotic resistance trends in Asia. Another study conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) between January 1 and December 31, 2021 only corroborates the observation. Its estimates show that resistance towards broad-spectrum antibiotics, a group of drugs that can be used for both gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria, two categories that bacteria are commonly classified into on the basis of their cell wall structure, is rising; according to Dr Kamini Walia, who led the study, this rise may be up to 10 per cent a year.

Enter 'superbugs' or multi-drug resistant bacteria that commonly available medicines cannot treat. Particularly carbapenems, a class of antibiotic agents used to treat complicated bacterial infections. "Resistance to carbapenems," says Dr Purva Mathur, a pathologist with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) who contributed to the aforementioned ICMR study, "is a huge concern as it is a powerful medicine for ICU patients and is used to treat pneumonia and septicemia. Resistance has gone up from 40 to 70 per cent." A study conducted by the Jai Prakash Narayan Trauma Centre at AIIMS last year reached similar conclusions when it found an alarmingly high rate of multi-resistance in gram negative bacteria, and again particularly against carbapenems, within their own hospital. The study noted that the numbers have been rising for the past five years.

Resistance to one drug has a cascading effect on other medicines. *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, which is one of the most common causes of hospital-acquired diseases, is growing resistant to not just carbapenems but other antibiotics as well. In 2016, the bacteria was 65 per cent vulner-

able to Imipenem, a carbapenem drug; in 2021, that figure was 43 per cent. As carbapenems became less effective, says Dr Mathur, doctors began using Colistin, another powerful antibiotic. Then, in 2017, Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore, identified six cases of *Klebsiella* that had become resistant to Colistin, too.

Doctors are alarmed. "Colistin resistance is of concern as this is an important last-hope drug. If this fails, we are out of options," says Dr V Balaji, head of clinical microbiology at CMC Vellore and of the antimicrobial stewardship programme at ICMR. "In India, bacterial resistance spreads fast due to a variety of factors. If resistance has already started growing, there is little to be done except come up with a new drug—or ensure that high-risk patients don't get infected," he says. The ICMR report also warns against other bacteria that have grown resistant. (see *India on a Slippery Slope*).

"PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND OR RESPECT ANTIBIOTICS. THEY WANT TO GET BETTER QUICKLY, NOT CORRECTLY"

DR ABDUL GHAFUR
Infectious Disease specialist,
Apollo Hospital, Chennai

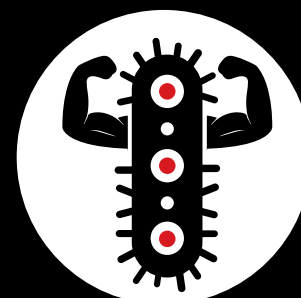
ANTIBIOTICS IN YOUR FOOD?

However, the general belief that only overdosing or misusing antibiotics can put one at risk is not entirely true. When Mumbai-based banking executive Sarah Banerjee (*name changed*), 45, went for a stool test, the culture showed she had drug-resistant bacteria in her gut. She says she always completed her antibiotic courses and had never been admitted to a hospital.

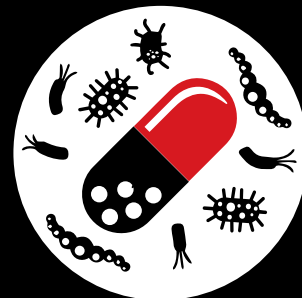
Research has shown that overuse of antibiotics in the food industry could also contribute to AMR. In

2020, a study published in the journal *Diagnostic Microbiology and Infectious Disease* found that out of 65 stool samples of healthy patients at Apollo Hospital, Chennai, 51 per cent had Colistin-resistant bacteria in the gut, out of which 77 per cent were food-acquired. This is now considered the first indirect evidence of gut colonisation by food-origin Colistin-resistant bacteria. "Earlier, we were clear that either you misuse antibiotics or you acquire drug-resistant bugs in a hospital ICU where these creatures thrive on plastic-like

INDIA ON A SLIPPERY SLOPE



THE ANTIBIOTIC CRUNCH



➤ As of 2021, only 27 new antibiotics were being developed against priority bugs, down from 31 in 2017

➤ The WHO estimates that bacteria develop resistance to new drugs within two to three years of their market entry

➤ In 2021, the WHO said that only 12 antibiotics had been approved in the previous five years. Of these, 10 belonged to existing classes with established mechanisms of resistance

➤ On an average, it takes 10 years to develop a new antibiotic due to long-term safety and efficacy concerns. But only one in 15 of the existing antibiotic types reach the market; for new antibiotic classes, only one in 30 drugs make the cut

➤ India is seeing a 5-10 per cent rise in resistance to broad-spectrum antibiotics every year

➤ Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, which was virtually non-existent in India two decades ago, almost doubled from 28.4% to 42.6% between 2016 and 2021

➤ For diarrheagenic *E. coli* and *Shigella spp.*, norfloxacin's efficacy has fallen drastically

➤ The susceptibility of *E. Coli*, which causes over 85 per cent of urinary tract infections (UTIs), to Imipenem dropped from 86 per cent in 2016 to 64 per cent in 2021

➤ For *Acinetobacter baumannii*, resistance to carbapenems stood at 87.5 per cent in 2021

(Source: ICMR; data collected from January to December 2021)

surfaces of machines (if they are not sanitised well). But now, we have found a mutation in food-origin *Klebsiella* that allows it to convey the Colistin-resistant gene to *Klebsiella* inside humans," says Dr Ghafur, who led the study. Doctors say such indicators, while small in number at present, may mean that a large part of the population could soon become vulnerable. Drug-resistant bacteria can be present in your gut, spreading to others through contaminated surfaces. In the event of any hospi-

THE COST OF NEGLIGENCE

1.27
MILLION

The number of deaths caused directly by antimicrobial resistance in 2019 across the world, according to *The Lancet*

10
MILLION

The number of deaths per year that the WHO estimates AMR will cause by 2050

73.3
PER CENT

of blood infections and 53.1 per cent of UTIs were found to be antibiotic-resistant in a study conducted across 120 ICUs in the country by HAI-Surveillance India. Of these, 38.1 per cent of blood infection and 27.9 per cent of UTI cases had fatal outcomes within 14 days (HAIs, however, were a risk factor, not a direct cause)

sistant strains in animals can enter humans through direct contact with live or dead animals, exposure to contaminated surfaces, or through litter, which is often used as farming manure," says Dr Ghafur, adding that something as simple as touching uncooked chicken that has resistant bacteria and then touching our faces with contaminated hands can put us at risk.

Further, even though there has been a ban since 2019 on using Colistin for animals, doctors say other antibiotics continue to be used. The burgeoning fast food industry has also not made any public commitment to use antibiotic-free chicken in India, even as it has undertaken steps to cut down on the use of such meat in the West.

HOW DO BACTERIA DEVELOP RESISTANCE?

Recent studies have revealed fascinating insights into the mechanisms (see *How Bacteria Fight Back*) bacteria employ to overcome drugs. Once a mechanism works, the bacteria that have survived find ways to replicate and spread. For example, an alert issued in the UK in 2009 warned of an increasing number of carbapenem-resistant *Enterobacteriaceae* strains identified in hospital patients in the country. Many of them had been recently hospitalised in India and Pakistan. Later, an Indian study published in 2010 showed how the 'New Delhi Metallo-1', a resistance mechanism employed by *Enterobacteriaceae* for carbapenems, had spread to 22 people in just around three months at the Hinduja Hospital in Mumbai.

"DNA from a resistant germ can eventually alter the DNA of a non-resistant germ," says Dr Balaji. This can happen in various ways, and one among them is simply the power of survival. "Normally, our gut carries 10¹¹ bacteria per gram of stool. But suppose you have a single resistant bacteria and you take the antibiotic it is resistant to, all the other bacteria will die, but the resistant ones will survive and grow to dominate your gut flora. They can also pass through your faeces and continue



to circulate in the environment,” says Dr Mathur.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Those in the ICU face the highest risk—their hospitalisation is longer, their expenses are higher as more expensive, stronger drugs need to be used, and if they contract sepsis during their stay, their risk of mortality becomes extremely high. “Neonates or anyone with weakened immunity, such as people on chemotherapy or those with autoimmune disorders, also fall in this bracket,” says Dr Yatin Mehta, chairman of the Institute of Critical Care and Anaesthesiology at Medanta Hospital, Gurugram, and president of the Sepsis Society of India. For him, the most concerning cases are those where a patient can be saved with an antibiotic, but the drug just doesn’t work.

What is the solution then? Regulating antibiotic use, for one. A *Lancet* study published in 2022 found that although the per-capita private-sector consumption rate of antibiotics in India is relatively low compared to other nations, the country consumes a large volume of broad-spectrum antibiotics. “Antibiotics are a science. They are not like paracetamol for giving instant relief,” says Dr Aditya S. Chowti, a senior consultant with the Internal Medicine wing of Fortis Hospital, Bengaluru.

In the US and Europe, antibiotic misuse is regulated by a system of surveillance, which has so far been missing in India. However, in a joint, state-backed effort between AIIMS, the ICMR and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the US, the newly-formed Healthcare-Associated Infection Surveillance-India (HAI-Surveillance) aims to strengthen surveillance of healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) and study AMR and HAI threats in India.

While the effort is commendable, the difficulty in treating drug-resistant bugs is compounded by the fact that the pipeline for new antibiotics is running dry (see *The Antibiotic*

HOW BACTERIA FIGHT BACK

Resistant traits may be passed on from generation to generation of bacteria in the following ways

➤ **Transduction:** Resistant genes may get transferred via phages, that is, viruses that specifically infect bacteria and can carry some DNA with them

➤ **Conjugation:** When bacteria come in direct contact with one another

➤ **Transformation:** Genes released from nearby germs may be picked up by another living bacteria

.....

DEFENCE TACTICS

Bacteria employ five major types of ‘resistance mechanisms’

➤ **Changing or destroying antibiotics** by secreting certain enzymes or proteins

➤ **Restricting the entry of antibiotics** into their cells by developing a protective covering

➤ **Pumping out antibiotics** that enter the cells

➤ **Changing an antibiotic’s target** so that the drug can’t find the bacteria

➤ **Altering themselves** to avoid using the cell process that the drug targets

.....

STAYING SAFE

➤ **Washing hands regularly**, consuming fully-cooked meats, having water only from trusted, contamination-free sources and timely vaccination for some bacterial infections such as diphtheria, cholera, pneumonia and tetanus may help

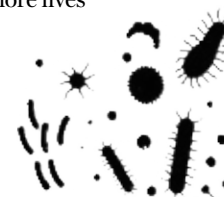
Crunch). Experts say pharmaceutical firms focus more on diabetes and hypertension drugs, which have a longer usage life. “Antibiotics need financial investment and time and their life-span is limited now due to high rates of resistance. If the industry stops producing new drugs, we will be in serious trouble,” says Dr Mathur.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Hospital ICUs are hotbeds of bacterial infections. Hence, the first step towards saving high-risk patients is reducing HAIs. The CDC trained over 150 professionals from the ICMR and the National Centre for Disease Control in HAI surveillance in 2018. Since then, over 30 hospitals have started such surveillance.

Another measure that a few hospitals are taking is finding out what bugs are entering the ICU and studying how to treat bacterial infections should they arise. “Most hospitals don’t have good microbiology labs and aren’t able to give evidence-based antibiotics,” says Dr Balaji. In Delhi, however, two hospitals have altered their approach. Medanta, for example, tests patients for resistant bacteria before admitting them in the ICU. If a patient is positive, they are isolated from others to prevent spread. At Max, Saket, only a special committee can prescribe high-end antibiotics. “Our only weapon now is diagnosis,” says Dr Omender Singh of Max Hospital. “Even with drug-resistant bacteria, testing gives a clearer picture of which alternative antibiotics to use.”

India does have a National Action Plan for AMR, on the basis of which some states have developed their own strategies. But more must be done. The country already has over 120,000 cases of drug-resistant tuberculosis. There have also been reports of cholera, typhoid and salmonella infections growing resistant to certain drugs. New antibiotics are few and far between. If we don’t act now, more lives will be lost needlessly. ■



NO BREAKING
THIS WALL
PG 61

ART AS
DRAMEDY
PG 64

BEYOND
HEAVENLY
PG 62

Q&A WITH
RUSKIN BOND
PG 66

LEISURE



The **National Games** are a perfect platform for both new heroes to make their mark and old warhorses to stage a comeback

SPORTS

LORDS OF THE RING

This year’s National Games have seen old records being broken and new rivalries being formed, but what they have given India is a fresh set of unlikely heroes

The National Games were last organised way back in 2015. In that year, swimmers Sajan Prakash and Aakanksha Vora had picked up the best male and female athlete award, respectively. Prakash was unstoppable in the pool with a haul of six gold and three silver medals, while Vora landed five gold and a silver. Over the next few years, Prakash went on to represent India at two Olympic Games, while Vora turned out for the Harvard University swimming team and is now pursuing a corporate career in the US. Clearly, a lot can happen over seven years.

➤ **HARMEET DESAI, Table Tennis**

FOR A FEW YEARS now, Harmeet Desai has operated in the shadow of G. Sathiyam, who came into the event as the top seed. The two faced off in the semi-final of the men's singles, where Desai made the home advantage count, beating him 4-2 en route to the gold. He also combined with Manav Thakkar and Manush Shah to pick up the team gold for Gujarat.

➤ **ROSY MEENA PAULRAJ, Pole Vault**

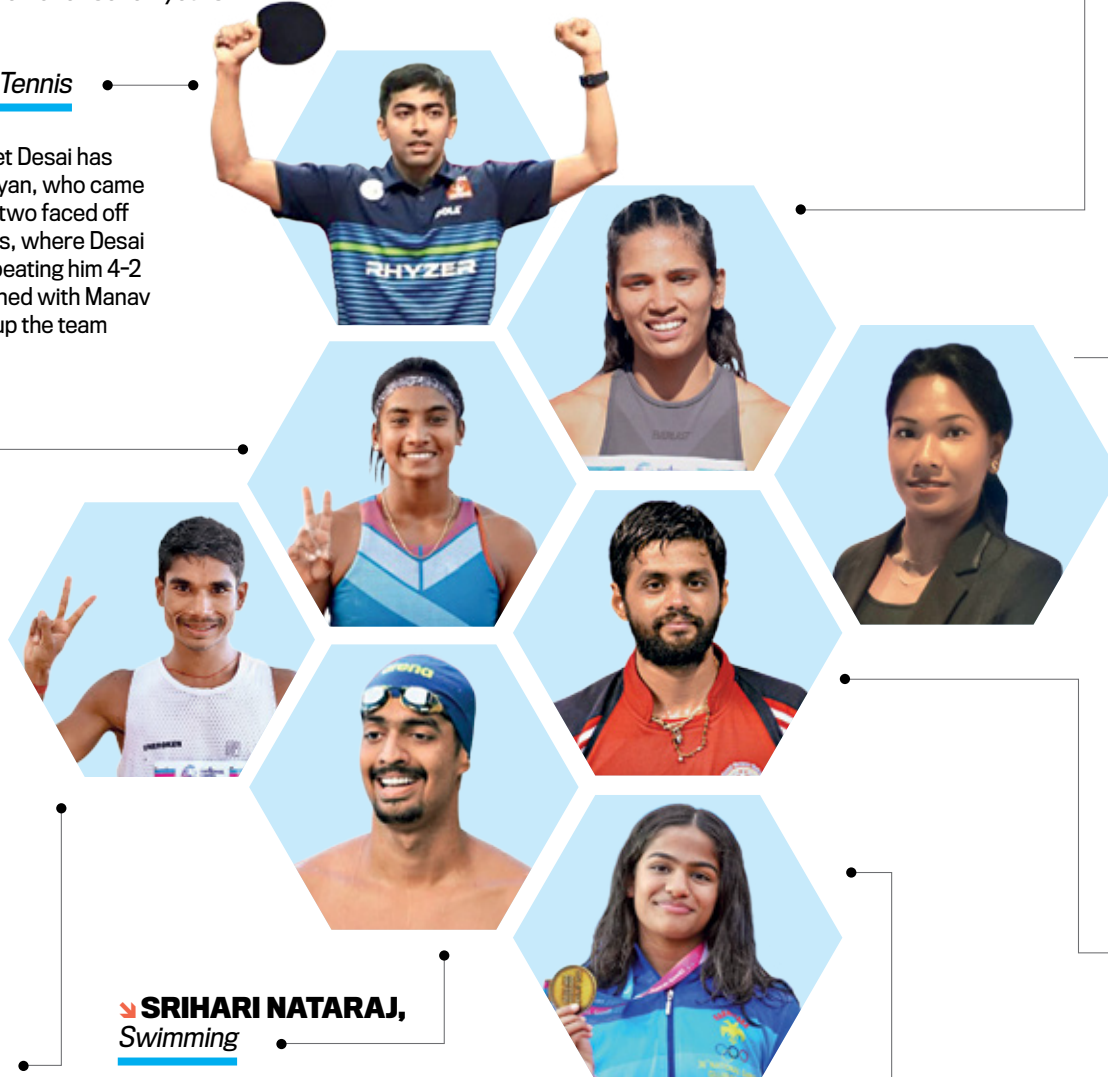
A PROMISING gymnast in her previous avatar, the athlete from Tamil Nadu took to pole vaulting just three years ago. Paulraj's diminutive stature raised a few eyebrows, but she made her mark with gold (4.00m) at the Federation Games in April. For those still in doubt, she sprang a surprise this time around. She not only took the top spot after clearing 4.20m, but also smashed V. Surekha's national record (4.15m) from 2014.

➤ **RAM BABOO, Race Walk**

A FEW YEARS AGO, an injury brought Baboo's running career to a grinding halt. It was only then that he took up race walking. Though short on experience, he made his abilities count as he took gold in the 35km category (2.36.34) of the Games. In the process, he relegated former national record holder, Juned Khan of Haryana, to second place.

Though there has always been a cloud of uncertainty hovering over the National Games in the recent past, this 36th edition finally unfolded seamlessly in Gujarat. A few big names such as Olympians Neeraj Chopra and Bajrang Punia chose to opt out, but for those who showed up, it all just seemed like another day at the office. While the likes of Mirabai Chanu, Bhavani Devi and Elavenil Valarivan clinched gold medals with relative ease, a few other key contests and new records made the event a gripping watch. The Games also presented the perfect platform for fresh faces to make their mark and old warhorses to stage a comeback.

Shail Desai



➤ **SRIHARI NATARAJ, Swimming**

DESPITE SOME promising talent in the pool, the contest among men was always going to be between Olympians Sajan Prakash of Kerala and his younger counterpart, Karnataka's Srihari Nataraj. By the penultimate day, both had five medals, but in the 100m freestyle, one of the last events, Nataraj trumped Prakash to register a new meet record and finished with a tally of six gold, a silver and a bronze.

➤ **HASHIKA RAMACHANDRA, Swimming**

AT JUST 14 YEARS, Hashika Ramachandra picked up a staggering haul—six golds, a silver and a bronze—rewriting three individual meet records along the way.

➤ **JYOTHI YARRAJI, 100 metres & 100 metre Hurdles**

IN A STAR-STUDED women's 100 metre final, there was an unlikely winner in Yarraji, who stormed to the finish ahead of more experienced sprinters like Dutee Chand and Hima Das. Her timing of 11.45 seconds was a personal best in an event where she was essentially an outsider. A few days later, the Andhra girl was back in the final of her pet event—the 100 metre hurdles. She picked up gold yet again. Her timing of 12.79 seconds was the first sub-13 second mark achieved by an Indian woman.

➤ **SWAPNA BARMAN High Jump & Heptathlon**

TIME AND AGAIN, Barman has experienced frustration due to injuries. Though she missed out on the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, she bounced back to continue her revival with a gold each in the women's high jump and heptathlon events at this year's National Games. With the Asian Games scheduled for next year, she'll be hoping to do more of the same while defending her heptathlon crown.

➤ **B. SAI PRANEETH, Badminton**

THOUGH SAI PRANEETH has experienced a slump over the past few months, he held fast in the final game against H.S. Prannoy of Kerala to win 22-20, eventually helping Telangana to a team gold. A few days later, the former World No. 10 put on another great performance after winning the men's singles final in three games against Karnataka's Mithun Manjunath.

NO BREAKING THIS WALL

Adjuded the FIH Goalkeeper of the Year a second time, **Savita Punia** is moving from strength to strength

Savita Punia says she remembers the moment hockey became her mission. Born in Sirsa, Haryana, she was nudged into the sport by her grandfather, Ranjeet Punia. She didn't instantly fall in love with it. She spent the first few years protesting. Having to lug the heavy goalkeeper's kit on rickety state buses, she

dreaded the journey to and from the sports hostel.

Punia, however, quickly rose through the ranks and in 2008, aged 18, she made the India squad. "At that time, there were seven goalkeepers in the team. I never thought I could beat them to the playing XI spot," she says. "They carried an interview with me in the newspaper after I was selected and I showed it to my grandfather. There had been a few tragedies at home and he used to be very despondent. My hockey was the one thing that made him happy."

Her grandfather couldn't make sense of the words at the time, but promised Punia that he would learn to read in a year. "And he kept his promise," she says. "If he could do that for me at that age, then why was I thinking that I could never be the No. 1 goalkeeper in India? I wanted to make him feel even prouder. That's when I became serious about hockey."

She hasn't let her guard down since. The 32-year-old, popularly known as the 'Great Wall of India', won the FIH Goalkeeper of the Year award for the second

time in a row recently, becoming only the third player to do so since the awards were instituted in 2014. In a memorable year, Punia led India in a World Cup for the first time, played a key role in the team's bronze medal finish at the 2022 Commonwealth Games—their first medal at the Games in 16 years—and pulled off 57 saves in 14 matches as India finished on the podium in their FIH Pro League debut. Punia, who has seen women's hockey in India transform in the past few years, was the team's rock as they sought to build on their Tokyo Olympics success.

While fan and media votes tend to slightly tip the scales in Indian players' favour at the annual hockey awards, Punia received the highest points in each of the four categories—including experts and teams. The 8.3 points she was given by teams was almost double that of her closest competitor. "When I started, I never thought my journey would be so long," says Punia. "Unfortunately, my grandfather, who took the biggest decision of my life, is not here to share the joy (he passed away in 2013). I have been through highs and lows, but given everything, today it gives me great joy to be a hockey player."

Punia might not have chosen this journey, but she has clearly made it her own. ■

Deepti Patwardhan



BANDEEP SINGH

"When I started," says **SAVITA PUNIA**, "I never thought my journey would be so long"

PHOTOGRAPHY

BEYOND
HEAVENLY

Milan Moudgill's photo project gives Kailash-Mansarovar an identity mythology cannot

Milan Moudgill didn't feel too overwhelmed when he first saw Mount Kailash in 2002. It was only during later trips to the area that the graphic designer began using words like "special" and "beautiful" to describe his experiences. "It's hard to put my finger on it," says Moudgill, "but I think what happens is that the natural beauty evokes something in you, and you retrospectively start calling that feeling 'spiritual.'" Last displayed at Delhi's India Habitat Centre in early August, the photographs Moudgill took of Kailash-Mansarovar between 2002 and 2007 do something unique: by forcing us to first consider Tibetan geography instead of Hindu myths, they

make secular the sacred.

Almost 20 years ago, Moudgill remembers being woken up by an insistent voice in his head at three in the morning. His unconscious had left him with a clear instruction—"You must write a book on Kailash." Soon after he started his research, he found that a lot of the

literature on the area was tinged with religiosity: "These books all focused on the spirituality of the area, describing it as the centre of the universe, etc. I wanted my project to have its own niche and that only came later."

Like many other photographers, Moudgill could well have made himself

or his pictures the protagonist of his exhibition, but *Kailash-Mansarovar: A Photographic Journey* bypasses that vanity by focusing on the journeys of two explorers—Sven Hedin and Swami Pranavananda. While the Swedish Hedin came to Tibet "wanting to fill gaps in the world map", Pranavananda, an ascetic

traveller, came to the region in 1928, two decades after Hedin, and tried to set right what he felt the Swede got wrong. "Having two protagonists was a challenge. How do you balance them both?"

One only needs to glance through the catalogue of Moudgill's show to know he is unsentimental, both as a

Moudgill's photos show how he's unsentimental, both as a photographer and researcher

photographer and researcher. While he is respectful of Hedin and Pranavananda—they did, after all, "discover" the geography of the Kailash-Mansarovar region—he never hesitates in pointing out how perilous their ambition, and, in some cases, their haste might have been. Hedin and Pranavananda, for instance, disagreed about where the Brahmaputra originated. Not only does Moudgill give us context, he also brings clarity, the way a journalist might.

Many Hindus believe that Kailash is where Shiva dwells, that Mansarovar is where Ganga was tamed, but in Moudgill's images, the mountain and lake are natural wonders first, places of worship later. We see nomads here, not pilgrims. Shot 15-20 years ago, Moudgill says his pictures are already archival. "Since 2007, Tibet has changed multiple times. I last visited Kailash in 2018, and you had everything from mobile telephony and paved roads to four-star hotels and air-conditioned buses."

Moudgill says that Hindus often go to Kailash-Mansarovar with one agenda: "They believe their god lives in Tibet. So, they go there to meet their *bhagwan*, not for any cultural immersion." Several tourism packages now promise a ring-side view of Kailash-Mansarovar, but if you end up catching Moudgill's show as it starts to travel, you are sure to feel you're briefly in that ring yourself. ■

Shreevatsa Nevatia



KING OF THE HILLS
(left) A nomad family camping; morning light touches the north face of Kailash

NO MOUNTAIN
HIGH ENOUGH

AN INDIAN FATHER-DAUGHTER DUO IS MAKING HISTORY BY CLIMBING SOME OF THE WORLD'S TALLEST MOUNTAINS

Even before we speak, it seems clear that Ajeet and Deeya

Bajaj take fitness seriously—they request for an interview after Ajeet's early morning swim—"I *have* to swim from 7 am to 8 am every day," he says. On June 5 this year, the father-daughter duo summited Denali in Alaska, which is the tallest mountain in North America, thereby becoming the first Asian parent-child team to com-

plete the Seven Summits challenge. "Denali is right at the Arctic Circle—it's really cold and you have 24 hours of daylight," says Ajeet. Prior to the climb, they spent five days kayaking and hiking in Alaska to warm up. "It was a very good, intense climb. You're carrying about 60 kg up the mountain—all your food and supplies for the 21 days you're expected to be on the expedition," says Deeya, 28, who studies at Wharton. They completed the expedi-



AJEET AND DEEYA BAJAJ
have so far completed around a dozen expeditions around the world

tion even as temperatures plunged to -45°C. Ajeet, 57, rates it as the second toughest of the Seven Summits after Mount Everest, which they had climbed from the more challenging north side in Tibet, in 2018.

The Bajaj family has always loved the outdoors. "My father used to take me trekking when I was very young," recalls Ajeet. So, when it was his turn, he started hiking with Deeya and his younger daughter, Meghna—as toddlers, they could often be seen hanging from his back. "Now they ski, do whitewater kayaking, hold black belts in taekwondo and are rescue divers," he says. Deeya, it turned out, had a taste for even more daring adventures. When she was 14, they set off on their first

'major' expedition. "We were a part of an Indo-US team and did a sea kayaking expedition for about 18 days along the fjords of West Greenland," says Ajeet, who is the first Indian to finish the Polar Trilogy. He received a Padma Shri in 2012. "We were out in this mind-blowing wilderness where we would catch fish for dinner, see blue whales and arctic foxes."

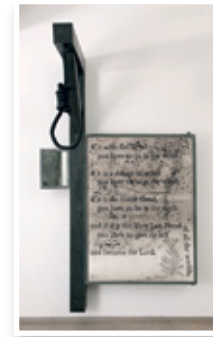
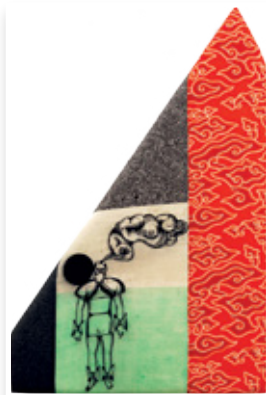
Three years later, they embarked on their first extreme expedition—a cross-country skiing expedition across the Greenland ice cap—and have, so far, completed around a dozen expeditions around the world.

Father and daughter share a unique dynamic. "We think alike, especially in emergencies. We just look at each other and know exactly what we are going to do," says Deeya. As honorary ambassadors of the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign, they aim to spread awareness about the girl child through their expeditions. "In a country like ours, often, I think, women aren't given the same opportunities as men," says Deeya. In a similar vein, Ajeet adds, "Given opportunities, girls can attain the greatest heights possible and that, I feel, will take our country to the next level." ■

Anu Prabhakar

**SNAPSHOTS**

Exhibits that are part of *A Lick of Night in the Morning*—(clockwise from above) 'Tamasha - Kiska Sunu?', 'Nazar', 'Hospital', 'If It Rains Fire', 'Synaptic Visions of Dead Time', 'Late Evening Footboard Riders', 'Clouds for a Diver'



off the wall, each animal with a similar *mudra* of a long pre-sapien finger pointing heavenwards. While their tails are interlaced, the linking seems more like an act of celebratory, seditious communication rather than of mutual entrapment. At one level, the upward pointing fingers indicate some higher being that is witness to everything. On the other hand, these beings are themselves all-seeing, all-hearing, all-talking—a cheerful, crouching cabal of simian umpires, giving out the human race for its grotesque shenanigans and sending us back to the pavilion of oblivion. Going closer, you see the nuts and bolts that hold up each sculpture, the obvious cloth ropes that make up the snaking tails, the absence of visual subterfuge creating a distancing loop of laughter and contemplation.

A similar mobius strip is created when you sit down and spend some time engaging with Ranbir Kaleka's new, 5-channel video-sculpture, 'Synaptic Visions of Dead Time'. On a platform in a darkened room is what seems to be a model of an old ruin, a cave temple of sorts, with five arched corridor-tunnels, each containing a continuation of the architecture on a small video screen. In the tiny videos, small mysterious things simultaneously unfold with what seems like an aleatory synchronicity: asteroid-like stones drop through; light changes on ancient walls; a man in a suit sits in a chair and brings down a heavy mallet, conjuring up a docile horse; in one window, a tree and sky form the sliver of a landscape from a Renaissance painting; in another window, a man rows a boat and abruptly disappears in mid-stroke; flocks of superimposed birds fly through from one window to the next, creating an obviously false continuum of space and time. It's a flick of sombre absurdity, but also a flame-lick of laughter, pushing against a dark time. ■

Selected works by B.V. Doshi and six other artists are on display at Delhi's Vadehra Art Gallery



Ruchir Joshi

ART

ART AS DRAMEDY

As it puts on display the work of some of India's foremost artists, an ongoing group show in Delhi makes you laugh and ponder all at the same time

Curated by Dipti Anand, *A Lick of Night in the Morning* (on display at Delhi's Vadehra Art Gallery until November 11) is a small and very pleasurable show, consisting of work by six well-established Indian artists and a small metal sculpture by Balkrishna Doshi, the great doyen of Indian architecture. Except for the pieces by Atul Dodiya and a new iteration of

an older piece by N.S. Harsha, all of the work is from the last two years or so.

Anju Dodiya has two contributions—a combine and a painting, each with one of her typical solitary figures. The unmistakable, tannic quality of the depictions plays off, in one against the asymmetrical tessellation of brightly patterned fabric, in the other under the

cloudburst of a deep crimson wash, eliciting meditation on solitude and the heft of dreams and thoughts.

After a lifetime of practice, Sudhir Patwardhan has arrived at a twinned distillation of looking and of empathy that is singular in contemporary Indian painting. The two works displayed here are an acrylic sketch and a canvas in

oil; in each, the press of the invisible city bends the spine of an old man—one sitting, clutching a bag or a tiffin-box at possibly a railway platform, the other on a hospital bed with his back to us, a figure somehow emaciated and bloated at the same time, his unseen face indicated vividly in the stern yet pitying gaze of the much younger nurse attending to him. While there is other lovely work in the show, just these two paintings are worth the effort of the trip.

Speaking of his langur sculptures and their intertwined tails, N.S. Harsha has mentioned that he partly got the idea from a folk tale of rats getting their tails fatally entangled. In 'Tamasha - Kiska Sunu?', four langurs adopt different poses while suspended

DOWN TO AN ART

Must-see shows in the country



▲ INSCAPES

Basist Kumar
Nature Morte, New Delhi
(Until October 29)

Though Basist Kumar's paintings seem to mimic photographs on the surface, they also defy almost all photographic convention when you look a little closer. His landscapes seem both spiritual and surreal.

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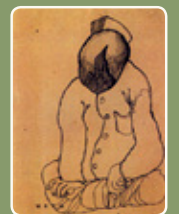


▲ AND WHEN SHE ROARED, THE UNIVERSE CRACKED

Various Artists
Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai
(Until October 29)

Artists like Mithu Sen, Pooja Iranna and Shakuntala Kulkarni come together in this Jesal Thacker-curated show to explore themes of performance, transition, resistance, and, in the end, reformation.

.....



▲ THE COMPULSIVE ACT

Jogen Chowdhury
Gallery Art Exposure, Kolkata
(Until December 17)

Jogen Chowdhury has now been drawing for six decades. Looking at his output, we are made witness to his sublime artistic process—that uncanny ability to make extraordinary even very ordinary things.

THE ENCHANTER OF LANDOUR

Ruskin Bond, national treasure and one of India's most beloved authors, is back with *The Enchanted Cottage*, a short book that reads like a greatest hits package

Q. The role of the owl in this book is fascinating. Readers may remember your poem 'The Owl'. Could you tell us more about the bird's role here?

I have a soft corner for owls. In *The Enchanted Cottage*, I felt that the owl and the crow would be a good way to get into the story. Of course, there's a lot of superstition around owls, but they're useful, they keep the rat population down. On the one hand, the owl is considered wise in folklore but in India, we also often call a foolish person 'ullu'.

Q. About the character David Fennimore, there's this sense that for the hill people, he represents every plains-dweller who comes up for a vacation, screws up their lives and hightails it out of the place...

You're right, there's a bit of that with Fennimore, and that also explains why the locals in this book have built a superstition around him. But Fennimore is also a dream-creation. I have this habit of noting down my more interesting dreams in a journal so that I can use them in stories later. And the character of Fennimore was one such thing.

Q. While reading the book, you almost feel like you're in the middle of a Gothic mystery, where the old manor or country house is also a character...

The story is based on Maplewood Cottage, where I lived when I first came to these parts. It was right next to a forest and close to a stream. Sadly, the cottage isn't there anymore: along came the PWD and built a road through the property, taking a part of the forest as well.

Q. There are references to *Walden* and *Robinson Crusoe* in this book: were these 'man-isolated-amidst-nature' texts on your mind lately?

I actually had a copy of *Walden* with me when I lived at Maplewood. Also, Richard Jeffries' *The Story of My Heart*, which had a lot of nature passages. There aren't too many books of this kind, so the few good ones become all the more important.

with Aditya Mani Jha



M ZHAZO



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Health Care Providers & Diagnostic Labs (AIIMS, Military Hospitals, Command Hospitals, Private Hospitals)



Investors for MedTech Sector



Multilateral & Bilateral agencies – World Bank, JAICA, ADB, USAID



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