







AFTER DEATH OF BJP MLA
Cong stakes claim to form Govt in Goa

Panaji: The Congress on Saturday staked claim to form Government in Goa claiming that the Manohar Parrikar dispensation has lost its majority in the Assembly following the demise of BJP MLA Francis D'Souza.

YSRC announces first list of 9 candidates for Lok Sabha polls

Amaravati: The YSRC Congress on Saturday night announced its first list of nine candidates for the April 11 Lok Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh.

AGP workers clash with protesters in Assam

Guwahati: A scuffle broke out on Saturday between Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) workers and protesters belonging to various outfits over the party's alliance with the BJP for the upcoming general elections.

IAF ex-sergeant sentenced to death

Bathinda: A local court here has sentenced a former Indian Air Force sergeant to death for the murder of a 27-year-old corporal in February 2017.

Top bureaucrat pens his 4th book

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
K K Srivastava, Additional Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General of India, has brought out his fourth book, 'Siliology of a Small Town Uncivil Servant', published by Rupa Publications.

Parrikar's health has deteriorated, but he is stable: Goa Minister

Panaji: Goa Minister Vijai Sardesai on Saturday met Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar and said his health had "deteriorated", but he was "stable".

उप प्रो वावर ट्रान्स्मिशन कारपोरेशन लि. निविदा विस्तारितकरण सूचना इस कार्यवाही द्वारा आमंत्रित निविदा सूचना टी-279 / 2018-19 जो दिनांक 16.03.2019 को खोली जानी थी...

Loyalty...

From Page 1
"I believe that under Rahul's leadership, Congress will make country stronger. Before coming here, I sought blessings of my father. He asked me if I can walk on path of truth, I said, 'yes'...

BJP in...

From Page 1
The BJP is expected to announce the list of more than 100 Lok Sabha candidates which may include candidates from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Assam, Odisha, Uttarakhand and other States slated for first phase of polling on April 11.

Poll meals on tracks for 2.70L...

From Page 1
Each meal will also have one litre of packaged drinking water, mouth freshener and hand sanitizer (1 ml). The charges for the drinking water bottles will be paid separately to the IRCTC.



Congress party supporters during Parivartan Rally in Dehradun on Saturday

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is given on behalf of my client M/S Instakashi Technologies Pvt. Ltd. The flat bearing number 718, B-1, CKP-3, KHELGAON, ASIAD GAMES VILLAGE, NEW DELHI, measuring 1345.06 SQFT, was sold via E-Auction...

Indian techie, student killed...

From Page 1
Ancy, who had migrated to New Zealand with her husband Abdul Nassar last year, lived near the mosques that were attacked, an officer at the Kodungallur police station in Thrissur told IANS.

Snubbed MSY...

From Page 1
Earlier, in March 2017, Mulayam had opposed the SP's alliance with the Congress for the UP Assembly elections and had even refused to campaign for party candidates.

Western Railway Improvement and Repairs to Officers Club Badhwar Park

Western Railway Manager (WA), Divisional Railway Manager (DRM), Western Railway, 6 floor, Engg. Dept., Mumbai Central, Mumbai-400008 invites E-tender as per details given as follows :-

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"Suppliers are requested to visit website www.ireps.gov.in on which tenders issued by PCMM office, stores depot, Sr. DMMS of NER Division and Dy. CMM/CON/BG office are published and tender documents are available. The site also permits for submitting the offer online:-

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Notice is hereby given that original perpetual Sub-Lease Deed, "D" Form, and Occupancy Certificate of PROP. No. A-11/6, Govt. Servant CHBS Ltd., Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-110057 has been reported lost/misplaced by my client...

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My Clients Raj Kumar Gandhi S/o J R Gandhi and Veena Gandhi W/o Raj Kumar Gandhi both R/o G-18, S.F., Pushkar Enclave, Paschim Vihar, Delhi-110063, have severed all relations with his son Punit Gandhi, his wife Nisha Gandhi and their son Rudransh Gandhi also disowned / debarred from all moveable and immovable properties due to their immoral attitude, behaviour and misconduct.

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Public Notice

It is notified for the information of general public that my client Mr. Vinod Sharma has lost the original doc. i.e. Allotment Agreement executed between M/s Agarwal Associates (Promoters) Ltd. And Mr. Vinod Sharma pertaining to Penthouse bearing No. EPH-2, 13th Floor, Plot No. C/GH-3, Vaibhav Khand, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad. Our client has also lodged a FIR on 10.09.2018 for the same.

WESTERN RAILWAY IMPROVEMENT AND REPAIRS TO OFFICERS CLUB BADHWAR PARK
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# Dadar foot over bridge closed for 13 days for repair work

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

As a precaution measure taken after Thursday's Foot Over Bridge (FOB) that claimed six persons and left 30 others injured, the Western Railway has decided to close down the Dadar south FOB constructed by the Brihanmunicipal Corporation (BMC) for 13 days beginning from Sunday to facilitate its repairs and strengthening.

A day after its senior officials inspected the Dadar south FOB, the Western Railway announced that it would close

down the Dadar south FOB constructed by the BMC between March 17 and March 29, 2019.

After the FOB inspection, the Western Railway said that the Ramp at Platform number one and Staircase at platforms 2 and 3 and would be closed temporarily for safety of passengers.

"The Staircase will be closed for 13 days for repairing/strengthening of the same from 17th March to 29th March 2019. Likewise, the Ramp of Platform one will be closed for 90 days for rebuilding from March 1 to 16th June 16, 2019," a

Western Railway press release said.

"During this period the passengers may use railway south FOB. The main FOB will be available to commuters for crossing over from east to west and vice versa," the release added.

Meanwhile, the Bombay High Court has agreed to hear all PILs relating to the condition of the condition of foot over-bridges in Mumbai on March 22.

A day after the Himalaya bridge near Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus collapsed, Pradeep Bhalekar, a resident of Dadar in north-central moved a HC bench

of Justices Ranjit More and Bharati Dangare and sought an urgent hearing of a PIL he had filed in the wake September 29, 2017.

Bhalekar had urged the court to order the Maharashtra government, BMC and the Railways to conduct an audit of all bridges in Mumbai.

Another activist Kamlakar Shenoy was mentioned before a division bench of Chief Justice Naresh Patil and Justice Nitin Jamdar.

Alluding to Thursday's mishap, Shenoy said that the latest FOB collapse was the second major bridge collapse. Earlier, a por-

tion of Gokhale bridge in Andheri collapsed on July 3, 2018. "My concern is for millions of Mumbaikars using such FOBs. The citizens of Mukmbai pay adequate taxes from time to time," Shenoy stated in his plea.

Thursday's was the third FOB mishap during the last one and a half years.

A major portion of the FOB --- also known in knowledgeable circles as Kasab bridge as it was this bridge that Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Kasab had taken after indulging in mayhem to head towards Madam Cama Hospital for second round of strike on the night of November 26, 2008---had come-

crashing down at 7.35 pm, when nearly 50-odd commuters were rushing inside the suburban railway terminus from across the road to take local trains back home.

Thursday's FOB crash had revived the unpleasant memories of first of its kind human tragedy witnessed in the metropolis on September 29, 2017. In that mishap, as many as 23 commuters had been killed and at least 39 others injured in a massive stampede that took place on a narrow foot-over-bridge (FoB) connecting the Parel and Elphinstone Railway stations in south-central Mumbai.



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# WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE

SHALINI SAKSENA caught up with three women who have chosen to dream & follow their passion

## 'Action to speak rather than words'

She is the first Indian to win any title at Miss Deaf World Pageant. She won Miss Deaf Asia title at the 18th edition of Miss and Mister Deaf World-Europe — Asia Beauty Pageant 2018 that was held at Prague, Czech Republic. Prior to this title, she won the Miss Deaf India title on February 26, 2018, in Jaipur.

She has also been awarded the National Award for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Award (Divyangjan) by Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu in the 'role model' category for her overall achievement and excellence in the fields of education, sports as well as art and culture. Meet the 23-year-old Nishtha Dubeja, a Delhi girl who is a Commerce graduate from Sri Venketeswara College, Delhi University.

Nishtha was born with severe-profound hearing loss in both ears. But that didn't deter her to pursue whatever took her fancy. It started with judo at the age seven and won many medals. At the age of 12, she started playing lawn tennis and has been an International Lawn Tennis player, having played many AITA, Asian Tour Tennis and ITF tournaments. She represented India thrice at the international games — Deaflympic-2013 held in Sofia, Bulgaria, World Deaf Tennis Championship-2015 held in Nottingham, UK and Deaflympics-2017 held in Samsun, Turkey.

On the night of finale at Prague, after completion of all rounds, when the judges announced the winner of Miss Deaf Asia 2018 is.... India, and she came forward to be crowned and looked towards her parents, the pride on their faces is something that she can never forget.

"I had won the first title for my country in this prestigious pageant since its inception 18 years back. Before going for the pageant, I was well aware that this was going to be a very tough contest as no Indian had won any title at this pageant in the past. I prepared well. I was always positive. Even on the night of finale, I was not nervous," Nishtha says and tells you that she never let her handicap come in the way. She got the freedom to do whatever she wanted to do.

There is an interesting story on how the student of MA in Economics from Mithibai College, University of Mumbai decided to enter the pageant. "I was a tennis player for around 10 years. However, in 2016, a physical injury forced me to retire from professional tennis. At that time, I thought of trying something new. I always wanted to learn new things. I read about Miss Deaf India and decided to participate. The idea to begin with, was to learn many things at the same time," Nishtha recounts.

Unlike many differently-able people who say that society hampers their progress, Nishtha doesn't subscribe to this thought.

"It all depends on the parents of differently-abled people. How they raise their children? How they treat them? How they teach them? My parents — father (Ved Prakash Dubeja) is a Chief Engineer in Northern Railways and my mother (Punam Dubeja) is a homemaker — always treated me as a normal child. They

always encouraged and supported in all my pursuits. However, it is a fact that a lot is yet to be done for inclusive growth of differently-abled persons as all are not lucky," Nishtha says.

However, this didn't mean that many people whom she interacted with in life didn't think that deaf people are stupid. People who treat the differently-abled persons with pity or they make fun of them are not a desirable situation. Society needs to be sensitive towards the special needs of such persons. What they need are equal opportunities to prove themselves.

"As far as my family is concerned, they never let me feel that I was a differently-abled. However, society in general treats such persons with pity or sympathy. I feel the differently-abled persons deserve equal opportunities to prove themselves rather than pity. I hate the word *bechari*," she says and had to work very hard with speech therapy in her childhood.

Nishtha's parents have played an important role in getting her where she is today and never made her feel that was any different. "They made me a strong person and they taught me to never give up. They supported me like a rock. I consider myself lucky to have born in such a family where every member made it a mission to bring me at par with others," she says. Even her brother and has been very patient with her since childhood. Her parents taught him to be sensitive towards her.

"He has never complaint for the less attention he got from my parents due to my special needs. My friends too, in school and college have been very encouraging. They would give me their classnotes when I was not able to attend classes due to my tennis coaching or matches. I got some really wonderful friends," Nishtha says who besides having a positive frame of mind during the competition had to undergo training for the pageant.

She had to undergo training for makeup, ramp walk, posing before camera, dance and many other aspects of beauty pageant. These were not available for her under one roof. She had to get training from different experts.

She tells you that the exposure has changed her as a person. The pageant has made her more confident, yet humble. It has empowered her. Earlier, she used to think that her life was simple and normal, but now after winning the Miss Deaf Asia pageant, many people including parents of differently-abled children tell her that they are drawing inspiration from her life and achievements.

"I'm getting a lot of affection from people wherever I go. Pageant has surely given me a lot of exposure to the world but there is still a long way to go," she tells you and her work for the empowerment of persons with disabilities in the fields of education, sports, arts and culture.

"It is about creating awareness about the need for early detection of hearing loss in new born babies and, use of hearing aids and speech therapy," Nishtha says and insists that she wants her actions to speak rather than her words.



MY FAMILY NEVER LET ME FEEL THAT I WAS DIFFERENT. HOWEVER, SOCIETY TREATS SUCH PEOPLE WITH SYMPATHY. DIFFERENTLY-ABLED DESERVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVE THEMSELVES RATHER THAN PITY. I HATE THE WORD BECHARI



## Investing in her passion

She is a grandmother, a professional teacher with VR Manohar Institute of Diploma in Medical Laboratory Technology, Nagpur for the last 37 years. After an MA in English she pursued her PhD in sericulture. Even though she is teaching full-time, it didn't deter her passion to open a school — Shanti Vidya Bhawan, back in 1987, in a village, Digdoh, near MIDC, Nagpur. Meet Dr Sushma Pankule.

Her journey began with seven girls. The aim was to provide free education to the girl child especially those families who couldn't afford to educate their daughter. "My focus was the girl child. This was because back then the only thought parents had to put their child to work as soon as they were ready so that they could add to the family income. I had to go from house to house to convince the parents to send their girls to the school which provided free education — from uniform to books — everything was provided to them," Pankule says.

In 1992, she got the school registered with the Maharashtra Government. This meant that her school started getting a grant. Though this sum is not very large, it pays the salaries of the 25 faculty that the school employs which starts from Nursery to Class XII. However, it was Pankule who paid for the land and had the school building constructed in an acre-and-a-half of land. She bought this land by selling the jewellery that her parents had given her.

It was her dream to open a school and hence she doesn't mind when 50 per cent of her salary goes towards the school.

There are companies as well who contribute and provide transportation for the students. Family and friends help too. The problem, she tells you that since the school is in a rural area, there are always anti-social elements that have to be dealt with. Then there is electricity bills, the maintenance of the building and other sundry expenses that go into running a school.

Therefore in 2015, when the strength of the students fell from 2,000 to 1,000 Pankule had no option but to make it a co-ed. She attributes this fall to the skewed girl child ratio in the country. However, she doesn't agree that because the school is co-ed, parents of the girls are reluctant to send their ward to school.

She tells you that today, parents understand the importance of education. "There is more awareness. From the times when we started off, we have come a long way. Back then, more children meant more hands to earn. When we would tell them that if the girl is educated, the coming generation would be educated too. This was a point that was difficult to drive home? Now, parents want to better the future of their children," Pankule says and tell you that most of the children in her school come from very low income families where the father spends most of the money drinking.

It is not just education that Pankule is involved with. After the girl finishes school, she guides them towards vocational courses that they can pursue so that they can get jobs where they can earn up to ₹10,000 a month. However, this earning can go up depend-

**Today, parents understand the importance of education. There is more awareness. We have come a long way from the time when we started. Back then, parents wanted their child to earn as soon as possible**

ing on their efficiency. "The financial condition of some of the students is such that they are forced to look for jobs after Class X. While the salary may not be much, it does give these girls dignity of labour and confidence that they are not just mere maids. If such girls drop out, we insist that they join a distance learning course. There are several scholarships that are available for the girl child. The problem is that most people are not aware of them," Pankule tells you and says that the challenge today is to find the right career path for these students given the fact that there are so many colleges and courses that are out there. "Our job is to ensure that they find the right course so that they can start earning as soon as possible. There are so many fake degrees. These students need a job to add to the family income and not get

caught in a trap where they end up spending money and a degree that has no job viability," Pankule explains and tells you that her faculty plays an important role in guiding these students on the right path.

Most of the teachers have been with the school for years since the State pays their salaries. The principal is a PhD as are a couple of more teachers. But, like with all schools, there is always a teacher who is indifferent.

But this doesn't deter Pankule from doing her job. She has weekly meeting to ensure that everything is running smoothly. Sometimes, after her full-time job, she goes to the school to oversee things.

She plans to superannuate in 2020 and make the school eco-friendly and teach the students the importance of Nature since the school is in an agri-based region. "I want the students to know how to grow vegetables, how a seed grows and the role that soil plays in our lives," Pankule says.

This is not all. Pankule is also India's Vice President for the The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. It is an international non-governmental organisation.

"Since our establishment in 1915, we have brought together women from around the world who are united in working for peace by non-violent means and promoting political, economic and social justice for all. Our approach is always non-violent, and we use existing international legal and political frameworks to achieve fundamental change in the way states conceptualise and address issues of gender, militarism, peace and security," Pankule says.

## 'THE LESSON STARTS AT HOME'

People who have pets will tell you the problems they face from neighbours and RWAs — from designated areas where pets can poop to not allowing them inside the elevators are some common issues that pet owners face. Then there is the usual — your dog barks and creates a nuisance — comment.

Founder of Pet Parents Association, Itri Tyagi tells you that her work involves creating awareness among people and sensitising them about the animals. "When I was staying in Gurugram, there were many issues related to the animals. I stood by them and fought for their rights. Animals can't speak. The same has now split over to where I stay now — West End Greens. The area has a green belt — Rangpuri — New Delhi," Tyagi says.

Her fight began when she got her first dog eight years back. "To begin with, I was very afraid of pets. But this changed when

I came in contact with Romeo, a Lab. It changed her path. More than my fight for pets, it was my work with stray animals. We see kids tie cracks on their tail, kids thrown colour on them during Holi and some would even beat them up. I ensured that they were taken care and fed. One should take care of everything around them," Tyagi tells you and hates the word nuisance that is associated with strays.

"This is a perception in our minds. It is not necessary that the person is creating a nuisance. If I believe that he is creating a nuisance, we think that he is. The same holds true for strays. Do we think of what happens to these animals when it is cold outside? Do we think of them when the temperature is 45 degrees outside? Do we think that we should give them water? We are the ones who have invades their space, not the other way round. We have created homes in their

habitat. These animals are roaming in their territory. How do we know why they are where they are? Do we think why a cow is where it is? May be it is looking for food. When we see two dogs fighting, we think that they are creating nuisance. May be they are just playing," Tyagi says and is open about the fact that This was her mindset as well. But it all changed when she had a pet of her own.

She tells you that the problem is that people are insensitive to the environment and things around them. According to her, the first step beings at home. "I have a toddler. I teach him to be senator not just the pets that we have but the animals outside as well. Just the other day, we were sitting at a cafe when my son just picked up a piece of bread and went to the door and gave it to the dog sitting outside. My job, as a parent is to make sure that my son keeps a safe distance yet be kind and



respect the animal's boundary. Then next step is education in schools. We don't have animal sensitivity chapters. Who is reading books on animals," Tyagi tells you.

She gives you an example of Mowgli. "How did Rudyard Kipling come up with the story of *The Jungle Book*? Mowgli is a story of a Bondi boy, a tribe from Madhya Pradesh. When Kipling wrote this story he must have been inspired by a little boy," Tyagi says and tells you that she does face challenges due to her work with animals. People come up to her and tell her that the pigeons have been creating problems by pooping all over the balcony.

"What does one even say to something like this," Tyagi asks who is also the founder of Craft Village in the Capital and has been awarded the Nari Shakti Puraskar given by the President for her work to promote craft.

"I am a product designer and take inspiration from the environment. The village is a community living for the craftsmen and pets are allowed when we hold workshops. The award is for the work that I do for the craft club. But animal welfare is a passion for me," Tyagi tells you and that is how she started working with the Bondi tribe and promote their work.

"I promote a lot of their work. The craftsmen come and teach their art through workshops that we hold. There is need to bring their work to the fore. But synchronisation is needed. Art is all about a piece of work that a person can relate to. This art form is close to my heart because it is all about my culture. Bond art is about trees, animals, the community and Nature," Tyagi says and tells you that she will continue to work to promote craft but her dream is to set up an animal shelter once she retires.





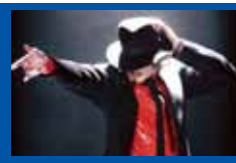


# the pioneer agenda

I hate receiving compliments; I hate being told I'm talented or people think I'm going to be a movie star. I always feel that it's forced and fake  
— Megan Fox



**3 Tales of love and loss**  
Neel Patel's new book, *If You See Me Don't Say Hi*, has 11 stories with intricate, realistic modern plots with abrupt and bow-tie endings



**6 A conspiracy of silence?**  
As new MJ sex abuse claims emerge, is the music industry — hotbed of scandal and debauchery — guilty of turning a blind eye?



**7 Are we really robots?**  
Souls come programmed, but if we pursue the spiritual path, we will no longer be robots but free souls making spiritual progress

FROM THE INSIDE

Late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi hated marigold flower, although in death it was strewn all over her body. Many such hitherto unknown aspects of 11 'newsmakers' have been unravelled by Kumkum Chadha in her book, *The Marigold Story*. This is not a gushing account of their accomplishments; rather it captures their weaknesses. An edited excerpt:

## WHEN THE HEROES ERR

Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi, India's third Prime Minister, was allergic to marigolds. Throughout her life, her lieutenants stopped people from taking the gold-flower near her. While no one could stop her admirers from bringing them in bunches, the garlands were immediately taken away, and the petals were swiftly brushed aside. If someone still managed to smuggle the flower in, Indira Gandhi would frown to show her displeasure. Her silence was signal enough that she hadn't taken well to the transgression.

But her anger was never directed at people who spent days, often weeks, to meet her. It was her staff who had to face her ire, for they were trained rigorously to handle her likes and dislikes. It was incumbent upon them to ensure that things went the way she wanted: Perfectly, with clockwork precision. A slip-up may not have cost them their jobs, but it did earn her indignation. For the faithful, including the man who routinely carried an umbrella over her head, it was worse than being booted out.

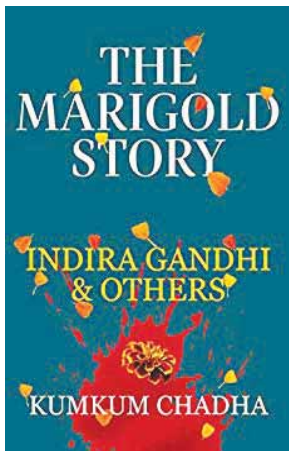
It was, therefore, ironic that in her death, several such details were missed out. Were Indira Gandhi to have her way, she would have never allowed for what she may have described as 'violations'. But she lay still and lifeless: Her bullet-ridden body bedecked in marigolds. The gold-flower that was kept away during her entire life, clung to her in death. But the shock of her sudden and violent death was so intense that even for her coterie, the issue of her allergy to the flower may have seemed trivial. Death numbs everyone, but for someone like Indira Gandhi to die the way she did, it was nothing short of a catastrophe. For India, it was like hitting a dead end, or at least that is what it had seemed like at that point in time.

She had ruled with an iron hand for almost 16 years and for most parts, turned around the country when few had the grit and determination to steer the fortunes of hundreds and thousands of deprived Indians. Equally it was true that she did not encourage a second line of leadership, making it clear that none other than a Nehru-Gandhi was fit to rule India.

Indira Gandhi's death had decidedly created a vacuum. For people like me, who were a generation apart, it had also posed the 'who next' question. Sanjay Gandhi, the obvious heir-apparent, had died before his mother, and Rajiv Gandhi, the reluctant one. More than Indira Gandhi's death and the sorrow that came with it, what was worrying was India's future and the lonely road that lay ahead.

On some lonely, dark nights, Alfred Tennyson and William Butler Yeats are my companions. I can't explain the how and why of it, but I have often read and re-read their verses and liberally quoted and often misquoted them while churning a story in my head. But in the context of 'India without Indira', I'd failed to evoke Tennyson's optimism about the old order changing, yielding place to the new or like the Victorian poet, comfort myself. His lines simply did not fit in the turbulent times India was facing. Introspect what I'd felt was more in sync with Yeats' *The Second Coming*: *Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.*

Like millions of Indians, I was unsure if the Second Coming was at hand; whether another messiah would descend from the heavens to bail out a country that had more problems than solutions. Of course, Indira Gandhi was no messiah. She was more of a cross between a goddess and the poet's vision of a rough beast. Among the uninitiated, she was worshipped; in the politics she practiced, her opponents likened her to a



“IT WAS HER STAFF WHO HAD TO FACE HER IRE, FOR THEY WERE TRAINED RIGOROUSLY TO HANDLE HER LIKES AND DISLIKES. IT WAS INCUMBENT UPON THEM TO ENSURE THAT THINGS WENT THE WAY SHE WANTED: PERFECTLY, WITH CLOCKWORK PRECISION



typhoon which destroyed at will. At one level, she had built India; at another, perhaps, destroyed its core. But as I had felt then, and do so even now, I believe that she did more good than harm.

From a distance, I watched Mrs Gandhi's body lie in state. It was in New Delhi's Teen Murti House, where she had spent several years as a young woman with her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. It was the late Vasant Sathe, the Congress leader from Maharashtra and once Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting in Mrs Gandhi's

Cabinet, who had taken me along to Teen Murti House. All through the drive, I don't recall how long it was, but Vasant Sathe had sobbed like child. For him, it was like losing his mother, as his wife later told me. We entered from the ante-room and stood near where her head lay: Bereft of the uneasy crown that she had symbolically and willingly worn. Her head was covered with the *pallu* of her sari. Her face was swollen and looked nothing like it once had. It was difficult to see her the way she was. Silent and still.

It was equally tough to see people bring in marigolds and add to the lay-

ers over her body. I wanted to step over and remove each one... specially those which touched her face. That I thought would be my tribute to a woman who had allowed me easy access into her home.

There was no special bond between us, except as journalist. I would often hover around her for off-beat stories, and Mrs Gandhi cooperated to the extent that I usually went back with one. "Marigolds," Indira Gandhi often told me, "are not for me". Her words came back as I helplessly watched hundreds of people come in and heap them over her.

Her marigold allergy seemed to

have skipped RK Dhawan's mind too. He was in a daze. It was too much to expect him to worry about such details; it really didn't matter anymore. But Mrs Gandhi was a woman who had a keen eye for detail. Had this happened to anyone else, she sure would have stepped in to correct it.

RK Dhawan was Indira Gandhi's closest aide. As long as she lived, he was forever by her side, ensuring that nothing went amiss. There are, however, no easy answers for how things had gone so horribly wrong on the last day of a nippy October morning in 1984.

Excerpted with permission from *The Marigold Story* by Kumkum Chadha; Westland, ₹699



SOME HISTORIANS ARGUE THAT MUGHAL EMPEROR AKBAR, WHO COULD NOT READ OR WRITE, WAS DYSLEXIC

FATEHPUR SIKRI

# AN ARCHEOLOGICAL MARVEL

Fatehpur Sikri might not have fully enjoyed its position as the capital of Mughal empire, but its architectural grandeur still mesmerises all. There's something about this place that doesn't allow time to rob it of its magic, writes SOMEN SENGUPTA

If one goes through the detailed chronology of Islamic rule in India, he/she will come across several archeological marvels, each more astounding than the other. In this rich archeological heritage, there is one 450-year-old magnum opus that still stands tall. Fatehpur Sikri refers to a town in the Agra District. It was founded by Mughal emperor Akbar as the capital city of his empire. The monument that is metonymously referred to by the same name is so beautiful that it still manages to amaze tourists.

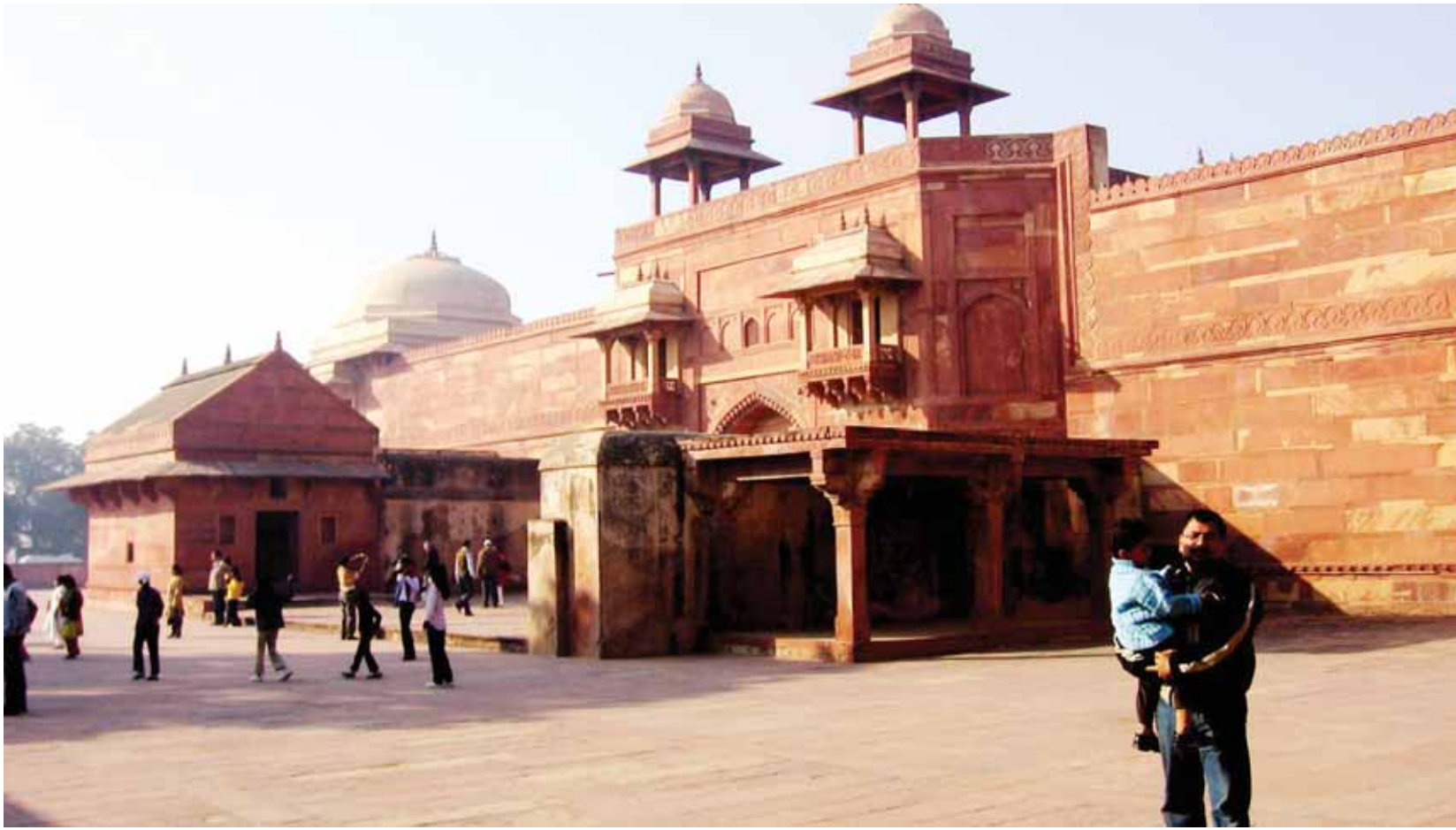
Even though Fatehpur Sikri is largely associated with Akbar, this place was first named by his grandfather Babur. Babur had named a village Shukhria. This name transformed into Sikri in common parlance and around the 16th century, it gained popularity as the place where Salim Chisti, a Sufi saint, used to stay. Legend has it that Akbar sought this saint's blessing in order to have a male child. The emperor had been childless for a long time. The prophecy of Salim Chishti worked like magic and Akbar's third wife, who was a Rajput princess, became pregnant. The grateful king took his pregnant wife to the village of Sikri. The royal couple had a son on August 30, 1569. Akbar named the child Salim after the saint who had made his birth possible. Soon, Akbar was blessed with two more sons from his two other wives. One son was born in 1570 and another in 1572. As a gesture of his gratitude, Akbar decided to set up his new capital in the village of Sikri.

So, a huge construction project was undertaken on the rocky ridge of a dusty village in 1569. The material used for this was high quality red sand stone that still shines on every wall. The design of this Indo-Islamic masterpiece included a royal court, pavilions, gardens, palaces, entertainment arena, mosque, majestic gates, zone for games and amusement, residential apartments and, needless to say, provision for religious activities. Researchers argue this was the first planned city of Mughal India. It was imagined and executed at a phenomenal speed. And the result turned out to be the perfect combination of intense emotion and effort.

What we today know as the monument of Fatehpur Sikri can be divided into three parts — section for religious practices, administrative section, and private residential section. The three-km-long and one-km-wide city is surrounded by a six-km wall on three sides. The entry passage is decorated with several majestic gates named as Delhi Gate, Lal Gate, Chandanpal Gate, Gwalior Gate, Ajmer Gate, and Tehra Gate.

It all started with construction of a massive mosque which was completed between 1571 to 1572. Known as Jama Masjid, this 540-ft-long mosque is one of the biggest mosques in India. Still in use, the mosque houses a massive congregational space and a central courtyard. The domes are made of marble with a *chhatra* (umbrella-like structure) decorated over sanctuary. Like most of the other monument in Fatehpur Sikri, this too reflects strong Hindu influence in its design, especially the domes.

At the courtyard of the mosque stands the grave of Salim Chishti (1478-1572) which is a pure marble tomb deeply influenced by the 15th century Gujarat sultanate school of architecture. The marvellous work on marble with serpentine brackets that covers the entire tomb is breathtaking. The brackets look like English alphabet "S". They have been decorated with floral design that hold the running marble canopy. Even the rain water drainage system of

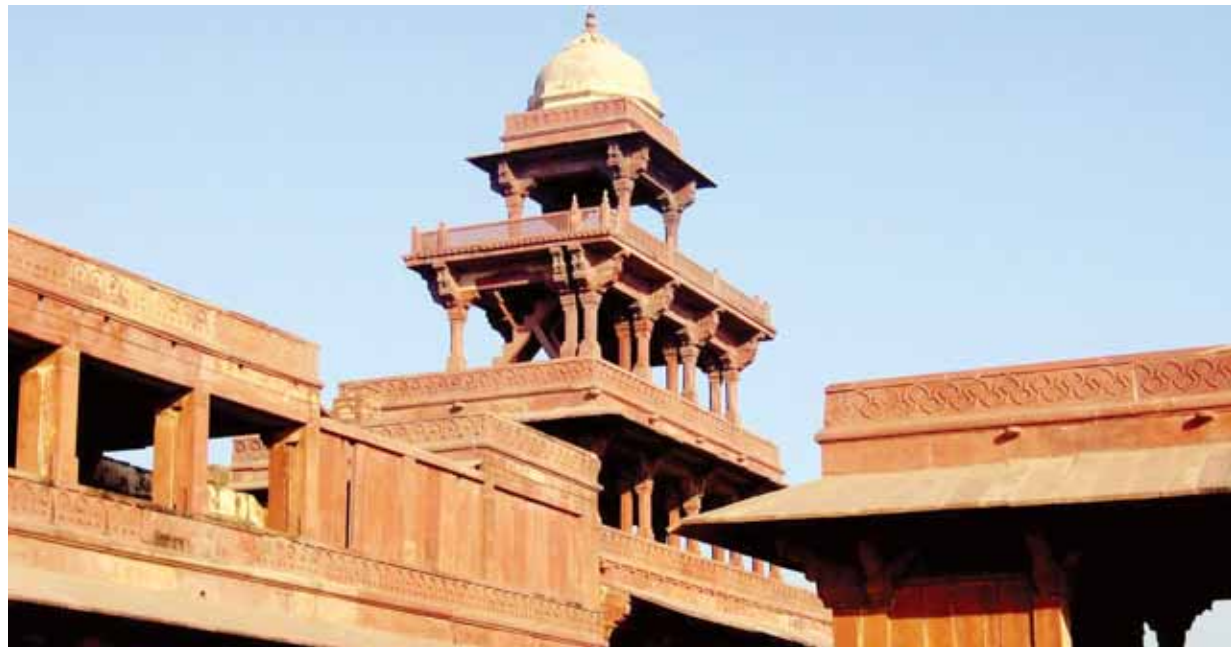


the tomb is so modern that it has the provision of passing water directly from the roof to the underground level through a hollow pillar. The tomb is still counted a sacred place for childless couples who come here for blessings.

In 1573, Akbar's conquest of Gujarat gave a new gem to this city. Akbar added the word Fatehpur meaning the "city of victory" to the word Sikri. To commemorate the victory, a 176-ft-high Buland Darwaza was added to the structure. It replaced an existing gate on the south of the courtyard of the mosque.

The idea behind this was to make the structure accessible through a grand number of stairs from a lower slope. Upon climbing them, one would see a gate so massive that it will leave a lasting impression. The intention was that the impact would combine three different *rasas* or themes. These included the Bhayanak Rasa that would generate a sense of fear — at a glance, the front of the gate looks like a demon with its mouth wide open. Veer Rasa was supposed to be the second theme — parts of the gate are designed like a regal crown. Shanta Rasa was supposed to be third theme as one idea behind such a grand gate was to remind human beings of the massiveness of almighty. The side and top panels the gate are embellished with quotes from the *Quran*.

Fatehpur Sikri also houses Diwan-i-Khas and Diwan-i-Am. The former boasts of a rather unique architectural design where a central pillar made of red sand stone is very richly designed in a blending of Hindu and Islamic motifs. The design expands on top to make a provision of a royal seat which is reachable from four elevated pathways. The pillar is square at the base. The crowning of the pillar is expanded with several layers of decorated brackets. It seems that the members of court had their seats on the ground floor. There is a hanging balcony on the second floor. The multi-religious influence has led certain groups of historians to believe that Akbar used to dis-



PICS: SOMEN SENGUPTA

**EVEN THOUGH FATEHPUR SIKRI IS ASSOCIATED WITH AKBAR, IT WAS FIRST NAMED BY HIS GRANDFATHER BABUR. BABUR HAD NAMED A VILLAGE SHUKHRIA. THIS NAME TRANSFORMED INTO 'SIKRI' IN COMMON PARLANCE, AND AROUND THE 16TH CENTURY, IT GAINED POPULARITY AS THE PLACE WHERE SALIM CHISTI, A SUFI SAINT, USED TO STAY**



cuss religious texts here.

Diwan-i-Am is a simple, square-shaped, double-storied building in a garden. There are five rooms on the second floor and a hanging chamber in Rajasthani *Jharokha* style which was the seat of Emperor. From this royal seat he used to address his subjects. At the North-West corner of this chamber, a big iron ring can still be seen. It is believed that a royal elephant would be tied up here when the court was in session. The elephant would be assigned the task of executing death penalty.

Badshahi Hammam and Anup Talao are two closely situated monuments in this area. The former is nothing but the royal bath with a unique system for the supply of hot and cold water circulation. This place also includes oil massage room, changing room, toilets, and water tubs. A unique system for capturing natural light was also used here.

Anup Talao is a water reservoir that has an open, decorated seat at its centre. The seat is bridged with a narrow walkway. It is encircled with a beautiful stone railing on all four sides. It is believed that two legendary musicians from Akbar's court — Tansen and Baiju Bawra — used to perform here.

The royal bedroom is known as Khwabdaha. This special room houses a high legged big stone bed which used to be climbed with a flight of stairs. There was a provision to fill the floor with cold water that used to keep the room cool. The room had secret connectivity with the Begum Mahal and that path was once covered with especially designed stone curtains.

Several other majestic palaces in this part of Fatehpur Sikri are mingled with legend, folklore and history. Often, it becomes difficult for people to differentiate between these and authentic history. One such palace is Jodha Bai Mahal, the palace of Akbar's chief queen Jodha Bai. Interestingly, historians argue that Akbar was never married to any such Rajput lady who bore him a son. Another such disputed palace here is Birbal palace — home of Akbar's favourite Hindu court royal. It is located inside the zone where Akbar's harem is located. But again, historians argue, why would a Hindu male be allowed to live in the emperor's harem?

Moving on, another such palace is called Sunehra Makan. This palace is believed to have been inhabited by Akbar's mother Hamida Banu, also known as Mariam Makani. But other versions suggest rear this was in fact the palace of Akbar's Goan wife, Mariam.

Nauroz Bagicha or the royal garden was once the place for a weekly bazaar organised by female members of royal family. Some even argue that this was where Jahangir and Noor Jahan had first met. Other minor monuments of Fatehpur Sikri include Rang Mahal, Kabutar Khana, Hathi Pole, Sangin Burj, Hiran Minar, and Karawan Sarai.

Political upheaval after 1585 kept Akbar busy in Lahore of Punjab. Around 1599, when he did come back to Fatehpur Sikri, it was suffering from acute crisis of water and its population had declined. Eventually, Akbar shifted his power centre to Agra.

Soon after that, Fatehpur Sikri became a ghost town. By end of the 17th century, it was completely abandoned and banished into oblivion. It was Lord Curzon who took the initiative to restore and salvage the place. In 1986, the place was declared a UNESCO world heritage site. Clearly, there is something about this place that doesn't allow even time to rob the monument of its magic.

# Infertile women more likely to develop cancer

A recent study found that women with fertility problems were 18 per cent more likely to develop cancer, writes LAURA DONNELLY

Infertility could increase the chance of cancer in mid-life by almost a fifth, research suggests. The study of more than three million women of childbearing age found that those with fertility problems were 18 per cent more likely to develop the disease. Scientists from Stanford University said it was not possible to show whether infertility — or treatment for it — was a cause of cancer.

The explanation could be an underlying mechanism which increased the risk of cancer and infertility, they said. But the four-year study of women who were in their 30s when monitoring began, found that those who suffered infertility problems were 18 per

cent more likely to develop any type of cancer during the period. Researchers stressed that the overall risk of cancer at this stage in life remained low. Overall, those with fertility problems had an absolute risk of 2 per cent, compared with that of 1.7 per cent among other women.

The findings were published in the journal *Human Reproduction*. Study leader Dr Gayathree Murugappan, a fellow in reproductive endocrinology and infertility at Stanford University School of Medicine in California, said: "We do not know the causes of the increase in cancer that we found in this study, whether it might be the infertili-



**RESEARCHERS ANALYSED DATA FROM 64,345 WOMEN WHO HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED AS BEING INFERTILE BY DIAGNOSIS, TESTING OR TREATMENT BETWEEN 2003 AND 2016**

ty itself, the causes of the infertility, or the infertility treatment.

"We can only show there is an association between them. In the future, we hope that we will be able to understand why infertile women are at higher risk of cancer; for example, by identifying a common, underlying mechanism that can cause cancer and infertility."

Researchers analysed data from 64,345 women who had been identified as being infertile by diagnosis, testing or treatment between 2003 and 2016. The researchers compared them with more than 3.1 million women who were not infertile and who were seeking routine gynaecological care.

During the follow-up period

there were 1,310 cancers diagnosed among the infertile women and 53,116 among the control group of women who were not infertile. Breast cancer was the most common cancer in both groups. Study senior author Associate Professor Michael Eisenberg, of Stanford University School of Medicine, said: "Although the absolute increase in cancer risk among infertile women was small, this increase was seen in only a short period of four years of follow-up. "We need to carry out further research with longer follow-up to determine what factors may be influencing the long-term risk of cancer for infertile women."

# OF CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

This book uses a combination of theory and real-life case studies of marketers to analyse the state of businesses in the midst of climate change and technological disruption. It shows how some have managed to find the balance, says GAUTAM MUKHERJEE

This book, *Balance*, seeks to tell the story via a tour of the main markers. There are “externalities and their implications” meaning the impact of a given commercial or industrial activity on others. The “Social return on investment (SROI)” is a formula for measuring the social profits against the investments made, controversial as it may be in terms of accounting principles adopted. But it does set up an index for comparing scores. One of the most interesting explorations in this book are on the “frictionless” uses of Blockchain technology. It could, say the authors, “support green supply chains, measuring water use, emissions management,” and can support the “sharing economy”. Cryptocurrencies are already legal tender in Japan.

There is an urgent need to understand climate change better. The World Economic Forum projects that by 2020, which is almost upon us, “about \$5.7 trillion will need to be invested annually in green infrastructure”. This is definitely a tall order, given that most of the investment has to come from a concept called “climate financing,” a kind of World Bank for climate change mitigation by adopting projects and programmes. Again, there are controversies of what kind of project qualifies. There is a need for instruments like “Green bonds” and “Catastrophe bonds” and qualification on the basis of “impact testing”. The whole caboodle is commonsensically very difficult to get started and flourishing, as the tangible short term returns are negligible. However, the importance of doing something, almost anything, cannot be denied.

There are UN developed Sustainable Development goals (SDGs), some 17 in number, and extremely macroeconomic in scale. They list, for example, “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and pro-

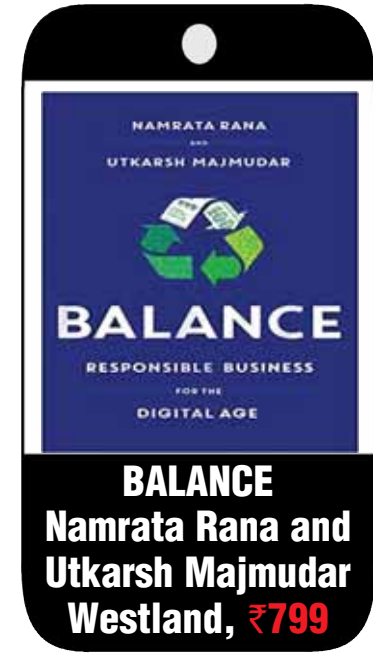


ductive employment, and decent work for all” and “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”. And then there is corporate social responsibility to do things in an ecologically friendly way that makes for sustainability. Broad Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) norms are increasingly mandatory, but is this enforced around the country and the globe? India only mandates 2 per cent

of turnover spend on CSR, but a survey of its top 166 companies in 2016-17 clocked just 1.88 per cent. And about 45 per cent of this was used on health and education, while the list includes poverty alleviation, water, energy, capacity building and many other heads. Still, the CSR spend has risen from about 1 per cent before it was made mandatory. Of course, this CSR approach is

going to stay largely cosmetic, given the size of the problem and its overhang that threatens to engulf us all. However, to get the largest economies to take on extra here-and-now costs, which are far from negligible, to fuel a cleaner, more sustainable future, is a difficult task.

Much of the clean-up therefore has to be undertaken at Government expense, as in the sewage processing



**BALANCE**  
 Namrata Rana and Utkarsh Majmudar  
 Westland, ₹799

stations and other effluent management infrastructure being developed in the Namami Gange projects. However, these are showing good results in short order, after years of trying to tell municipalities and industry to do something about it failed. The book lays out case studies taken from a number of companies in different fields such as Kirloskar Motors, Toyota Motor Corporation, Yes Bank, Ambuja Cement, ITC and Dr Reddy’s.

It reviews the challenges faced by various and diverse sectors such as cement, automobiles, oil and gas, telecom, mining and metals, banking and financial services, information technology, towards not only controlling and sanitising effluents and emissions, but even toxic electronic waste. Laws play their part, as does enforcement or lack of it. India has quite a few laws in this

space — Waste Management Laws, Environmental Protection Acts, Bio-Medical Waste Management and Handling Rules, Batteries Management and Handling Rules, Hazardous Wastes Management and Handling Rules, Transboundary Movement Rules, Plastic Waste Management and Handling Rules, E-waste Management and Handling Rules, Solid Waste Management Rules.

Data is another great frontier that has got its European law even as India is starting to enact its own. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is applied in the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA) towards data protection and privacy for individuals. How privacy of personal data impacts sustainable development, however, is unclear. The authors of this book are Namrata Rana, who works in the area of strategy and brands at Futurescape and is visiting faculty at IIM Udaipur, and Utkarsh Majmudar, who teaches at leading business schools and writes on sustainability and business responsibility. This volume covers a lot of ground, but the authors are probably most comfortable with the growth and improvement matrix for a responsible corporate sector, where both authors display the confidence of domain knowledge.

Many of the global initiatives described, however, have failed to touch many lives, even as they have underscored that efforts are indeed underway. But will the answer to a cleaner world eventually come from inexpensive new technology adoption that renders older, polluting ways obsolete, and too expensive to carry on with? The history of the industrial revolution, now apparently in its 4th wave, as well as the socio-political advancements we have seen over the last century, seem to suggest as much.

The reviewer is an entrepreneur and former corporate executive

## NEW ARRIVALS

**THE CONFIDENCE PROJECT**  
 Dr Rob Yeung  
 John Murray  
 Learning, ₹399



Follow the practical advice within the book and undertake *The Confidence Project*, a complete plan for helping you make better decisions and take action in order to fulfill your true potential. Often the only thing separating successful people from the crowd is the self-belief they have running around inside their heads and their innate self-confidence. This book isn’t about promoting unrealistic positive thinking — it will help you understand the complex psychology of your beliefs.

**HOW TO GET TO GREAT IDEAS**  
 Dave Birss  
 Nicholas Brealey Publishing, ₹399

The highly practical lessons in *How to Get to Great Ideas* are based on neuroscience, psychology and sociology. Written by former advertising creative director Dave Birss, this book offers a brilliant new system for conceiving original and valuable ideas. It looks at how to frame a problem, how to push your thinking, how to sell the idea, how to build support for it and how to inspire others to have great ideas. It proves that any organisation — and any individual — can create a fertile environment for ideas.

**OUR START-UP AFFAIR**  
 Sheila Kumar  
 Speaking Tiger, ₹299



A romance about modern lives as lived in India’s tech capital and city of youth, Bangalore. He opened his mouth to say something, then seemed to think the better of it. Their eyes met in the rear-view mirror and Aditi raised her well-shaped eyebrows in query. “I prefer start-ups,” he said flatly. Aditi Pillai is an entrepreneur —part-owner of the Snack Team, a food start-up. Sitting in her shared cab one day, in Bangalore’s gridlocked traffic, she suddenly notices that her cab driver is extraordinarily good-looking. Turns out he is Aditya Shenoy, owner of cab aggregator start-up Caboyea.

## Tales of love and loss in Newfoundland

In this novel, each character is looking for his/her own place in the world — whether it is a house of their own, their identity, a place in the school peer group, or a permanent place in the arms of a lover, writes SANYA DANG

Short stories are sometimes more difficult to write than novels. They also sometimes showcase a writer’s talent more visibly. That is the case with this particular collection — the stories not only have a deep impact on the reader but also ring true with a profundity that is impressive. The cover design is very interesting — simple yet layered, the many shades of brown speak about the different and multifarious experiences of Indian immigrants in USA. The blocks of colour remind us of wall paint shade cards with their funny specific names — burnt sienna, brick rust, dark tan. Some of them are like Crayola shades — peach, yellow, brown, black. On these colorful boxes are the words that have a strange, universal appeal — *If You See Me Don’t Say Hi*.

This anthology contains stories on many different themes — on deception, class discrepancy, society’s negative effects on the psyche, arranged marriages, mixed marriages, unrequited love, childhood crushes, same sex relationships, adultery and the power of love. Neel Patel tries to go beyond the obvious, he doesn’t write of Indians in the typical way — his characters rise from being mere caricatures and stereotypes to having a unique identity and even more unique problems. His characters are Indians, but not the ‘super achievers’ or the ‘good kids’. They have different expectations from themselves even though their parents’ pressures weigh heavily on their psyches. They are modern cosmopolitan individuals with a liberated sexual identity, with a hitherto unseen problem of alcohol or drug abuse. This hidden side is a revelation — Indians can’t always be reduced to people who get good grades and win Spell Bees. The characters deal with the pain of not fitting in, the feeling of not belonging to any peer group or community, the sense of alienation that comes with growing up in a country where they do not have their roots.

There are 11 stories in all — 11 narrators with as many similarities as differences, intricate, realistic modern plots with abrupt and bow tie endings. It is an incredible debut



collection, thoughtful and poignant with unique stories and perceptive people. The title of the stories refer to Indian gods, monuments and popular American slangs.

The power of perspective is very significant here as seen in the last two stories. They are the same stories with the same characters but from two different perspectives. This is a very new way of dealing with ‘perspective’ and ‘voice’. The stories are full of many motifs and symbols that define the Indian immigrant experience in America — sacrifice, success, expectation, identity, sense of belonging. Each story contains wonderful insights into human nature, culture and relationships, especially in the Indian context. Some stories are believable, some leave a bad taste in the mouth

This book takes you on a journey where you not only realise the power of perspective but also the power of community. The power of love is not



**IF YOU SEE ME, DON'T SAY HI**  
 Neel Patel  
 Penguin, ₹399

given a very high status. Love not only tests endurance, tolerance but is also tested time and again by external factors — society, norms, personal circumstances. Lust is a very important part of the narratives, sometimes given as much importance as love.

The Epigraph is a quotation from *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri and the author acknowledges his debt to her in terms of characterisation. He says that her books showed him for the first time how Indian immigrants are like and how they are depicted. He dedicates this book to his parents. The over-arching theme in many of the stories is the power of society and how community gossip can break bonds, sour relationships and ruin lives in the process. This particular trope is known in the Indian context as — “log kya kahainge?” We are all familiar with this hiding of face and showing off at community gatherings, suffering the taunts and being party to the cruel rumours that float.

The writing style is classic, fresh, beautiful, languid, fluid, visual, sensual and poetic. The language is simple enough for anyone to understand yet the simplicity does not take away from the ornate beauty of the overall effect it creates. This is a novel where each of the characters is looking for his/her own place in the world — whether it is a house of their own, their identity, a place in the school peer group or a permanent place in the arms of the man/woman they love.

Each story has its own irresistible trait — some have a very interesting plot, some end in a way that make us ponder about the fate of those characters, some deal with homosexual relationships and some have characters we have never met before. Women characters here have been given a lot of agency where they are calling the shots, managing their lives well yet we see women characters trapped in loveless marriages, forced into arranged marriages and also dealing with husbands committing adultery.

Even though many characters are aware of their behaviour, what they should or should not do, what is ‘expected’ of them, yet there are many who are rebellious, troubled and indulge in things that any parent would disapprove of. Thus, Patel does not stick to a few good people, he shows us a range of characters who break hearts, try to come out of the crowd, care a damn about their parents, are selfish to the core, embarrassed about ‘everything Indian’ and there are others who listen to their parents, try to fulfill their expectations, achieve success by getting into Ivy Leagues and marrying within their community.

Patel doesn’t put his characters on pedestal, he shows their weaknesses, failures, inner thoughts and emotions, however flawed and tragic they may be. His characters face moments of truth and need to make split second decisions with significant consequences. Their dilemmas make the story deep and profound. In the words of Emily Smith Gilbert, “These characters struggle to break away from the confines of their parents’ home and stifling suburbs.”







Theresa May's EU withdrawal deal has been rejected by MPs by an overwhelming majority for a second time

# BJP needs strong alliances to fight robust Opposition

sunday gupshup

HARI SHANKAR VYAS



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah are brimming with confidence in the run-up to elections. Some BJP leaders claim that after the Pulwama and Balakot incidents, the party is certain of victory, although the Opposition is trying to ensure that their path is not without hurdles. This is thought to be the reason behind the BJP's "surrender" before smaller parties, in the hope of forging alliances. A case in point being Jharkhand, where the BJP has left one Lok Sabha seat for its partner, the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU). Not long ago, it was being said that the BJP was not in the mood to kneel before the AJSU, and Amit Shah had asked its leaders to either merge into the BJP or fight alone. But in no time, the BJP changed tack and left the Giridih seat for the AJSU. This indicates that the BJP needs strong alliances to fight against a strong Opposition.

That is why the BJP has gone into alliances with its old partners in States like Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab — and compromised everywhere. In Maharashtra, the BJP changed its old formula and agreed to fight on 25 seats instead of 26. Before this, the BJP used to fight on 26 seats, and the Shiv Sena got 22 seats. But this time, the Sena has managed to get 23 seats in its kitty. In the same manner, the JDU — which has only two MPs — has got 17 seats. In Tamil Nadu, the BJP had to make do with only five seats, while in UP, it has tried its best to continue with both partners.

## THE CASE OF SECOND SEAT

The preferred seats of Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi have been revealed. The Congress recently released a list of 15 candidates in UP, and Rahul is set to fight from his conventional seats, Amethi. In the recently held meeting of the BJP's Parliamentary Board, Modi's candidature was also fixed. He will fight from Varanasi again. It is being said that both leaders will fight from at least one more seat. The last time too, Modi had fought from two seats — Varanasi and Vadodara, leaving the latter later. There is speculation that he will contest from Vadodara this time around, but seats from other States are also on the discussion table. Puri seat is the most talked about for PM Modi. The BJP leaders feel that if Modi fights from Odisha, the party will benefit in the Lok Sabha as well as Assembly Elections. Some time ago, it was being said that Modi might fight from Patna Sahib too, but that spec-

Some BJP leaders claim that after the Pulwama and Balakot incidents, the party is certain of victory, although the Opposition is trying to ensure that their path is not without hurdles. This is thought to be the reason behind the BJP's "surrender" before smaller parties, in the hope of forging alliances



ulation is now over. On the other hand, Rahul has won from Amethi thrice and not fought from any other State. This time, there is speculation that he will contest from a seat from a Southern State. His mother and grandmother have both fought from South India. The Congress leaders feel that if Rahul fights from some other State also, the party prospects could be better. Though it is also true that the Congress is very weak in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, but in the other three States, it has forged strong alliances. That is why the party is also mulling over a State either from North or West India for Rahul to contest.

## MULAYAM KIN IN THE RACE

This time, some more members of Mulayam Singh Yadav's family will fight the Lok Sabha Elections. In 2004, the number was four: Mulayam had fought from two seats, Mainpuri and Azamgarh. Apart from him, Mulayam's daughter-in-law Dimple Yadav had fought from Kannauj, nephew Dharmendra Yadav from Budaun, and grandson Akshay Yadav from Firozabad. The SP was able to win only these five seats. Later, Mulayam had left the Mainpuri seat and his grandson Tej

Pratap Yadav fought from there and won. Then Tej Pratap became the son-in-law of Lalu Yadav. This time, Mulayam will fight from only Mainpuri seat. So, Akhilesh Yadav will have to find another seat for Tej Pratap. The SP has released a list of nine candidates, which has four members of the Mulayam family. Mulayam will fight from Mainpuri, Dimple from Kannauj, Dharmendra from Budaun, and Akshay from Firozabad. Earlier, Akhilesh had said that his wife would not fight this time and he would contest from Kannauj. But, at last, he has roped in his wife. It is being said that he might fight the Lok Sabha Elections. Apart from the seats, which are said to be the den of the Yadav family, two other seats are also Yadav dominated and the SP has a strong vote base there. That is why there is speculation that Akhilesh might either fight from Azamgarh or Sambhal. These two seats might go to Akhilesh and Tej Pratap. Shivpal Yadav has formed a separate party and is gearing up to fight elections. He could be the seventh member of Mulayam's family to contest this time.

## FIGHT OVER VOTE BANK

Many top leaders of the country are trying to break the ice between the

BSP and Congress. Even the SP's supremo, Akhilesh, wants to take the Congress on board. The Opposition leaders are considering it necessary not only for UP but for the entire country. But Mayawati is not paying heed to anyone and has announced solo fight in many States. In Haryana, she has tied up with Raj Kumar Saini's party, the LSP. She is gearing up to go alone in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka, and Delhi. It is no secret that Mayawati is miffed with the Congress. She feels that Rahul's party is trying to usurp its vote bank. She is upset with the Congress politics in UP.

In fact, Dalit, Brahmins, and Muslims have been the conventional vote bank of the Congress. The BSP has also made these three vote banks its own at different times. Now, when the Congress has roped in Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Mayawati feels that its vote bank could shrink. Recently, Priyanka managed to persuade Dalit leader, Savitribai Phule, to join the Congress, and this has made Mayawati angrier.

## CONG ALLIANCE COMMITTEE

A few months ago, the Congress formed a committee to talk with probable partners and finalise alliances.

AK Antony was the chairman of this committee. Apart from Antony, Ahmed Patel, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and Ashok Gehlot were also a part of the committee. Now, when the Lok Sabha Elections have been announced, questions are being raised over what the committee has done. Did the committee and its members talk to any of the alliance partners in any State? Did they try to search for new partners? When all decisions regarding alliances are being taken either by the General Secretary or Rahul, then what was the need of this committee? Rahul is talking with all parties regarding alliances. Many Congress leaders are not happy with this strategy and say that all negotiations must be done by other leaders and Rahul should come into the picture only in the final stage. However, Rahul has his own style of working. He wants to hold alliance talks, like he did with Tejashwi Yadav in Bihar.

In Maharashtra also, Rahul held discussions with the NCP leader Sharad Pawar. They had four rounds of talks over the seat-sharing formula. Rahul also talked to Sitaram Yechury over seat sharing. Where Rahul didn't talk directly, his general secretaries stepped in. Even then, the AK Antony-led alliance committee was not roped in at any stage.

# US won't accept 'incremental' disarmament

Stephen Biegun, the United States envoy to Pyongyang, has stressed that Washington will not settle for the incremental disarmament of North Korea and that it is aiming for complete denuclearisation by the end of US President Donald Trump's first term in 2021. "We are not going to do denuclearisation incrementally," Biegun told a conference in Washington hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in his first comments since the failed summit between Trump and Kim Jong-un in Hanoi, Vietnam, last month. Biegun insisted that sanctions would not be lifted unless Pyongyang completely eliminated its nuclear weapons, stressing that it was Washington's goal to achieve this within the current administration.

"We stand by the expectation that if we fully mobilise our resources ... we could align ourselves in a manner sufficient to achieve this in something approaching a year," he said. His statements marked a reversal from previous pronouncements emerging from the White House, with analysts warning that the hardening of the US position is an unrealistic strategy that will end in further stalemate with Pyongyang. Ahead of the Hanoi meeting, Trump had declared that he had "no pressing schedule" on denuclearisation. "As long as there is no [missile] testing, I'm in no rush," he said.

Biegun, meanwhile, had indicated in a speech at Stanford University at the end of January that the US was willing to take a more stage by stage approach to

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the issue — a policy favoured by Pyongyang.

"We have communicated to our North Korean counterparts that we are prepared to pursue — simultaneously and in parallel — all of the commitments our two leaders made in their joint statement at Singapore last summer," he said, referring to the two leaders' first meeting in the city-state last June. Their second summit in Hanoi in late February ended abruptly without any kind of deal.

Trump said that Kim had insisted all economic sanctions were lifted before he agreed to give up his entire nuclear arsenal — a position he could not accept. "Sometimes you just have to walk," he said. However, Ri Yong Ho, the North Korean foreign minister, countered that Pyongyang had only requested "partial relief" on sanctions enacted between 2016 and 2017, and had offered a "realistic proposal" to dismantle uranium enrichment facilities in return.

The talks ended on friendly terms, but North Korea has since shown frustration at the collapse of the summit, with the state-run Rodong Sinmun commenting that the public "are feeling regretful, blaming the US for the summit that ended without an agreement."

In a more alarming development, experts at California's Middlebury Institute of



International Studies, said last week that satellite images suggested that Pyongyang could be preparing to launch a missile or space rocket. In response to questions about what the signs of activity at rocket launch facilities meant, Biegun replied: "The short answer is: We don't know." He added that "the door remains open" for further negotiations. "Nothing can be agreed until everything's agreed," he said. Nuclear and North Korea ana-

lysts expressed scepticism about his statements.

"Biegun: "Nothing can be agreed until everything can be agreed." — a losing strategy," tweeted Jenny Town, a Korea specialist at the Stimson Centre, a Washington think tank.

Others commented that the insistence on full denuclearisation before the lifting of any sanctions would create a bottleneck with Pyongyang, which has consistently argued for reciproc-

cal concessions.

"If we don't move off this position, we have nowhere to go," Vipin Narang, an MIT nuclear expert, told Vox. "There's no zone of agreement if we insist on everything — I mean everything, complete surrender — up front."

Let's review and go back to last month when US President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un's summit in Vietnam was abruptly cut short as the pair failed to reach an agreement over

how North Korea should denuclearise. A working lunch and signing ceremony pre-announced by the White House was cancelled at the last minute as talks in Hanoi hit a sudden impasse around midday.

Trump said that Kim had insisted all economic sanctions against North Korea were lifted while not agreeing to give up his entire nuclear arsenal — a position he could not accept. "Sometimes you just have to walk," Trump said at a press conference, adding that he did not want to sign a bad deal. No new summit date was agreed.

The US president insisted that progress had been made and that he and Kim shook hands and remained on good terms. He said Kim had agreed not to restart nuclear and missile tests and the US would not restart military exercises in South Korea — a continuation of the status quo.

However, the failure to make progress disappointed allies. A spokesman for South Korea's president called it "regrettable". Trump also drew criticism at home by admitting he took Kim "at his word" when the dictator said he had not known of the imprisonment and torture of Otto Warmbier, which led to the US student's death in 2017. "I don't believe he knew about it. He felt very badly about it," Trump said. "I did speak to him. He knew about it, but he knew

about it after."

The comments, which recalled the president's support for authoritarian regimes in Saudi Arabia and Russia, were rebuked across the aisle. Adam Schiff, the Democratic Chair of the House Intelligence Committee, described the remarks as "detestable", while Republican Senator Rob Portman said "we should never let North Korea off the hook" for Warmbier's death.

The first sign that the talks had gone wrong came as reporters waited for the leaders and their teams to arrive for lunch in an elegant dining room at the French colonial-era Metropole hotel hosting the summit. Name cards had already been laid out on eight empty chairs and bouquets of flowers placed on the pristine white tablecloth in anticipation of the dishes to come.

The lunch was first delayed then suddenly cancelled. Outside the Metropole, Kim's stern league of bodyguards sprang into action, jumping into moving cars as his cavalcade roared off into Hanoi.

Confusion reigned for 20 minutes until a statement from Sarah Sanders, the White House spokesperson. President Trump and Kim Jong-un had enjoyed "very good and constructive meetings" while discussing "various ways to advance denuclearisation and economic driven concepts," she said. However, "no agreement was reached at this time." The statement was a dramatic twist to a morning that had begun in a promising way.





