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'Let Experience Be Your Guiding Light'

Shreya Kachroo, Krishna Kakani & Nikita Nikhil

Education has the potential to transform communities and reform society and could become a nation's strength. The quality of education in India needs to be improved as none of the Indian universities figured in the top global rankings, said Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu while speaking at the 16th Convocation of the Symbiosis International University in Pune on 8th December.

He told over 16,000 graduating students that it was important to remember one's roots as the country raced ahead in terms of technological advancements. Imparting values and traditions along with education. Our culture had eroded as our lives had become fast-paced. One must not attain education for the sole purpose of employment but for enhancement and enlightenment of the society and the country. We must preserve, propagate and promote the history of the country and draw inspiration from our freedom fighters like Baba Saheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, he added.

He pointed out how social discrimination existed in the country and underlined the cruelty and



Photo Courtesy: SSP

miseries women faced. A mere bill or act would not suffice to bring any major change until and unless people changed their mindset. Women like Kalpana Chawla, PV Sindhu, Tessy Thomas and others had brought laurels and both, nature and culture were required for a better future, he said.

Referring to the ever-changing economy and technology, he said that while liberalization, privatization and globalization threw ample opportunities at us, we also faced difficult challenges and the way out was to work hard and think of out-of-the-box ideas.

Naidu said that students should always remember the importance of mother, mother tongue,

motherland and the teacher as they go forward with their lives.

The university conferred honorary degrees to renowned scientist Dr. Tessy Thomas, Director General of Aeronautical Systems and legendary lyricist and poet Javed Akhtar.

Dr. S.B. Mujumdar, chancellor of the university, said that there was no substitute for hard work and tough times did not last, but tough men did.

Angelina Francis Williams from Tanzania was awarded the Dr. S.B. Mujumdar Award for the most outstanding international student. There are students from over 85 countries studying at the university.

'NRC - The List That Divided A State'

Saikerthi

Jyotsana has been getting incessant calls from her village for about seven months now. They convey to her the location and time of the NRC Seva Kendras that she has to be present at, this time around. She has been frequently summoned at NSKs around the state for which she has to often take an overnight train or bus with her son so as to get his name registered on the NRC list. Each trip she takes has an emotional toll on her as she has to confront her abusive estranged husband and his family.

The National Register of Citizens or NRC is a register that consists of names and relevant information of citizens living in Assam as maintained by the Government of India. It was first prepared in the 1951 Census of India and has since then been recently updated and published on 31 August 2019 with the process spanning more than seven years. The final NRC list saw the exclusion of over 19 lakh people from the state. According to reports, many of those declared as illegal settlers are Muslims. These included Mohammed Sanaulah who is a retired and decorated army captain as well as family members of late President, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed according to media reports.



Photo Courtesy: NEWS18

The final list led to widespread panic in the state as people found their siblings and relatives excluded from the list. While the state grappled with the unforeseeable future of their lives in India, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, addressing a public rally in Jharkhand early this month announced that NRC will be implemented for the entire country and repeated in Assam before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections setting a date for his previously advocated motion in the Rajya Sabha. Akankshya Kashyap, a 21-year-old Assamese student of IIT, Varanasi, told INK that many of those excluded from the list were Bangladeshi Hindus. So, the government has now come up with the Citizenship Amendment Act to deal with this new problem so that their vote bank stays intact."

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Mobile Rooftop Garden

Bornika Das

If you are ever in south Kolkata, look out for a taxi that flaunts grass and saplings on its roof. Its owner, Dananjay Chakraborty, has made it his life mission to spread awareness about planting trees and save the environment. You will easily find it as famous graffiti artists from The City of Joy have decorated the cab with their creativity. He has lovingly christened his cab as Shobuj Raath (Green chariot). Popularly known as Bapi, he brushed off ridicule from clients and others and did what he is so passionate about. There are saplings behind the back seat too. He told The Ink: "A beer bottle was left in my cab. I planted a plant in it and it grew. I got the idea from there and felt it would be a good idea to carry plants to spread the message."



It is not as easy as it sounds. Chakraborty spends thousands of rupees just in getting custom made metal trays that would snugly fit on the curving roof of his cab. The bottom of the tray is lined with sand, stones and a net to ensure that the water does not leak. But, he has no regrets. He enjoys the attention he now gets and the fact that his clientele has gone up. "After a ride, customers want to take pictures of me with the cab," says the 44 year-old gleefully.

In another corner of north Kolkata, Bijay Paul drives an auto that also has a roof full of plants. If you are travelling from Phoolbagan to Ganeshtakies, it is unlikely that you will not see it buzzing past. Being a colourful personality, he decked up his auto with fairy lights. As his auto attracted more customers, other auto drivers and the auto union objected to it. Then, he tried wearing costumes similar to the ones worn by actor Amitabh Bachchan in Bollywood films. That too was objected to. The third thing he did was to grow plants on his roof. Fortunately, that has not been objected to. He is the only earning member of his joint family and the only grave expense he has to maintain the plants. Points out Paul: "Even as a child I was fond of trees, but never thought of planting them on the roof of my auto. Passengers are delighted by my initiative where they feel they also can do something to bring about a change."

RTO Drive Upsets Auto Drivers

Shreya Kachroo & Upasana Singh

After a significant judgment of the Bombay High Court that ruled that autorickshaws cannot be operated to ferry school children under the amended Central Motor Vehicles Rules, the Regional Transport Office in Pune started a drive to enforce it. But auto drivers have continued to carry school children labelling it a pointless exercise.

On any day, you can find countless auto rickshaws coming in or leaving the All India Shri Shivaji Memorial Society School (AISSMS) with school children. This is next to the RTO. Sanjeevani Deshpande, a female auto driver who has been driving rickshaws to AISSMS for the last ten years said, "Parents can barely afford the 500 Rs I charge per month. How will they pay for the school buses and vans that charge more than double of this? No parent would ever send their children in vehicles that are unsafe and not equipped to carry them," said Deshpande while defending what the drivers were doing.

Auto drivers spoke to INK about how the judgment had affected their livelihoods. Deshpande had been fined four times but continues to violate the rules as she says she has no choice. Auto Rickshaws are permitted to carry only three children but most of them carry around 13. Fines varied between Rs. 10,000 to 2000 depending upon the number of children that they carry in excess.



Anant Bobde has been driving children to schools since the last 25 years in his autorickshaw. Some of the parents of the children he ferries today also went to school with him. Bobde echoed a common argument when he pointed out that buses could not manoeuvre the narrow streets of Pune to pick up the children while autos could easily do that.

Manoj Bhajmal, a senior clerk of the RTO said that it was just following court orders by fining the drivers and that a flying squad had been appointed to go to check on auto drivers violating the rules in government and private schools across the city.

As the union of autorickshaw drivers has challenged the judgment, RTO officials say that they will continue to do what the court directed them till it gets further orders.

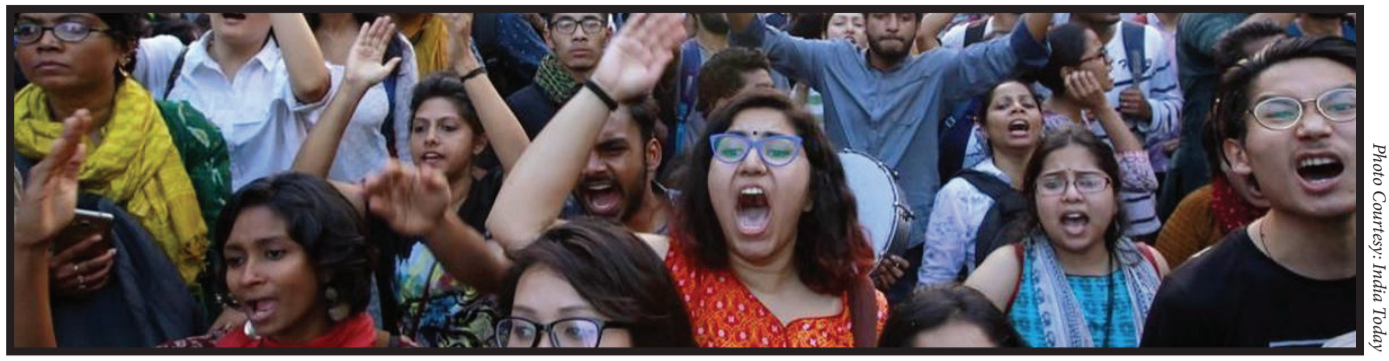


Photo Courtesy: India Today

'Quality Education Is Not A Privilege, It Is A Right,'

Manaswini Tripathy & Manya Saini

Protests continue to rock the Jawaharlal Nehru University, India's premier educational institution as students fight against the recent fee hike by the administration. As part of the ongoing protests, students in 14 JNU centres have decided to boycott their final semester examinations. The JNU administration reacted saying that it would conduct the scheduled exams in mid-December and would consider removing students from the rolls if they did not meet academic requirements.

"A place of academic rigour and political activism, JNU has stood for the past 40 years as more than simply an educational institution, it is where democracy comes alive," said Kawalpreet Kaur, Delhi President, All India Students Association.

Students had taken to the streets last month after a fee hike notice was released by the administration, affecting almost 40 per cent.

Reacted Kaur: "It is perhaps the only higher education institution in the country which offers a space for a student to think free-

ly, it is a dangerous prospect for most so called establishments."

Responding to a question on the importance of dissent especially from the youth, she said, "Dissent is the foundation of a healthy democracy. The constitution of the country gives us the freedom to protest peacefully, we are well within our rights. Quality education is not a privilege, it is a right." The Delhi Police had resorted to a lathi charge and used water cannons on the marching students last month. Kaur remarked, "JNU does not disrupt for the sake of disrupting. We firmly believe in our agenda as students' and no amount of un-called for actions by the police and administration can change that."

The on-going agitation has seen some success after the University Council decided to give a 75 per cent concession on some facilities to students' coming from families living below the poverty line. However, it did not pacify the student body. Rupal Anand, Student, M.A International Relations, JNU, said, "There has been

no communication between the students and the administration, and with the protest nearing 41 days, we are left with no choice but to boycott the end semester exams to be taken seriously."

The United Front of Left Student groups AISA, SFI, AISF and DSF is in power having won all four central panel posts in the student union election polls of the university in 2019. For the last five years, right-wing student wings have been desperately trying to wrest control of the student bodies but with little success. Discussing the trend of declining affordable public education, Kaur said, "It is absolutely unacceptable. It is the job of the government to ensure that every institution in the country gives equal opportunity to students of all socio-economic backgrounds. There aren't enough institutions in the country which produce citizens' who possess critical thought and ask the right questions."

She can say that again.

RBI's Monetary Policy Revised: Repo Rate Remains Same

Kashish Arora & Vanisha Jagwani

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept repo rate unaltered according to the recent Monetary Policy report. Most of the market analysts and research houses anticipated that the national bank should cut rates in its bi-monthly meeting of the monetary year 2019-20. The RBI, notwithstanding, cut the GDP development forecast for FY20 to 5 per cent from 6.1 percent prior.

The Monetary Policy Committee chose to keep the policy repo rate unaltered and proceed with the accommodative position as long as it is important to restore development while guaranteeing that inflation stays inside the objective," RBI said in a statement. Financial development has slowed down to 4.5 per cent in the month of September, its weakest since the year 2013, in spite of 135 bps cut in the policy rates of 2019. Despite the money related upgrade so far and a huge number of government measures to help the economy, financial analysts don't anticipate a prompt recuperation. Vegetable costs have begun balancing out; however, onion costs are understood to stay high.

Core inflation, the change in the costs of goods and services, besides does those from the food and energy sectors, saw a drop because of base impact and is required to ascend throughout the following months.

"GDP growth for Q2 turned out to be significantly lower than projected. Various high frequency indicators suggest that domestic and external demand conditions have remained weak," RBI said. The upcoming union budget will give better knowledge into further measures to be taken by the government and their impact on development. RBI does not want to reduce MPC rates time and again until the maximum impact is seen, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das stated.

"Repo rate being the single instrument of monetary policy unambiguously conveys the stance of monetary policy of the Reserve Bank of India and helps in clear communication with the financial markets." Dr. Deepak Mohanty, Executive Director RBI, stated.

Maharashtra's Apathy and Verve On State Elections

Aayush Kataria, Ritaban Misra & Aparupa Mazumder

Photo Courtesy: Bing

As Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) boasted of 104 seats along with 56 as an addition due to the alliance with Shiv Sena, the results clearly indicated towards another stint of Devendra Fadnavis as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. However, what followed next was beyond the imagination of many and expectations of everyone. After a month of what can be termed as a cold war, Maharashtra saw the birth of "Maha Vikas Aghadi" (MVA) with Uddhav Thackrey taking oath as the Chief Minister of an unprecedented coalition between Shiv Sena, National Congress Party (NCP), and the Indian National Congress.

The burning question that has been on for a while now is throw light on the respect given to the people's mandate. Dr Suresh Patil from Uran district of Maharashtra questioned the essence of elections by asking, "What is the point of conducting elections? Ad-



ding that "voters are being taken for a ride. According to him, the BJP deserved another chance and he further strengthened this statement by praising the party's actions over the last five years. The same sentiment was echoed by Somnath Phulabe, a local shop owner near Sus Village in Pune who claimed that the previous government did an impressive work in his home district of Latur especially in agricultural development. Both Phulabe and Dr. Kumar have expressed

disappointment in Fadnavis' decision to ally with NCP in order to form the infamous three-day government.

Chetan Bramhe and Parameshwar Gore, local security guards had wanted NCP in power but express happiness in the party's decision to ally with Shiv Sena. Bramhe mentioned, "It is because of Shiv Sena that the state hasn't seen any riots for many years." Gore said, "I am not surprised at what happened" and also reminded every-

one that Raj Thackrey had predicted this long ago." However, there is some disagreement on the future of this coalition.

Sajjan Kumar, faculty of Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication and a political expert told INK that this coalition shows the "pragmatic nature" of political parties and politicians in India. As ideology and pre-poll alliance were discarded, he further pointed out that this coalition is an evidence of the uprising "anti-BJP sentiments." "Regional parties are feeling threatened by BJP's aggressive style of politics" he added. Furthermore, according to him that reason for BJP dominance is not just because of Modi's image but it is actually the inability of not finding strong and popular regional leaders like Sharad Pawar who could stand up to BJP's politics.

On the topic of voters being betrayed, Kumar offered an interesting perspective saying, "A voter is cheated even when a party does not live up to their promises." In Maharashtra's case, he claimed that one needs to wait and see if the issues people had in mind while voting are addressed.

Can Citizen Journalism Challenge Mainstream Media?

Aishwarya Varma & Ashitha S. Prasad

When Mayawati was the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, she decided to cut down 6,000 trees in a city forest in Noida to make a park that would showcase her statues along with other leaders like Ambedkar. It was just a few meters away from scores of television channel offices. No TV network seemed to have noticed the forest vanishing. It was a citizen journalist who finally did the story for the erstwhile CNN-IBN. It created ripples.

Citizen journalism is giving a new dimension and colour to the way reporting is done in India.

As rains lashed Mumbai, potholes became a worrying issue with numerous accidents. Late this year, Neha Shaikh, a doctor, died when her two-wheeler ran over a pothole in Thane. She was returning home after shopping for her wedding. As she fell, a passing truck ran over her.

Mumbai Mirror, a popular Mumbai tabloid, found an interesting way to tackle the issue. It asked readers to report on and post pictures of potholes around the city. There was a flood of photos that poured in increasing by the day.

The authorities were forced to take action. Following one of the reports about the sorry state of the Mumbai-Nashik Highway, authorities swung into action and repaired the potholes.

When unrest punctuated Kashmir in 2010, citizen journalists could report on the situation using the internet to talk to the world. In the last few weeks, it was again citizen journalists who could reach out to the Indian populace who had no idea of how serious the lockdown in the state was after it was made into a union territory as television and print media houses mouthed the government point of view as if there was no other narrative.

On August 4 this year, social activist Nawal Ali in Srinagar posted on Instagram about crossfire across the Line of Control, photos of paramilitary forces taking over the High Court premises and how all lines of communication would soon shut. When the media blanks out news, the citizen journalist can take over.

With a population of over 1.3 billion, India is full of stories. Most of them would be in its deepest interiors where the mainstream media has no reporters. This is where citizen journalism, comes in where citizens take up the responsibility of reporting in the form of videos, letters to the editor, tweets and social media posts. "Journalists cannot be everywhere but citizens can be," said Ramesh Menon, veteran journalist and adjunct professor at Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication, Pune.

Last year, the Kerala floods saw numerous instances of good citizen journalism stories that saved hundreds of lives as rescuers could reach affected



Photo Courtesy: Youth Ki Aawaz

areas fast after reading these reports.

Today, tweets by commoners have become one of the most important sources of hyperlocal news. News Portals and News Apps dedicated solely to citizen journalism have emerged as a big part of the picture. Times of India's Citizen Reporter App and Huffington Post India are major players in the domain, whereas Newslook Pune and Satark Punekar operate at a local level.

As citizens become producers and not just consumers of news, the credibility of news can be questioned. "It often becomes difficult for the editor to trust a citizen journalist as they cannot be held accountable like professional reporters," added Menon.

However, the convenience and anonymity provided by online media has supported the spread of fake news. So, methods to tackle it are emerging. Social Media Hoax Slayer is a website that debunks false news and Newslook Pune is a news application that allows citizens to only report issues live.

Citizen journalism shines a light on fringe reports and community issues that would otherwise go unnoticed. While reporting local and obscure issues, citizen journalists can like professional journalists be at risk. But, citizen journalism is here to stay and might just end up churning better stories than mainstream media.

Contd From Page 1: NRC

The Citizenship Amendment Bill cleared the Rajya Sabha on 11th December and received the President's accent on the 12th, becoming an Act. Assam entered into a state of panic and widespread protests were organized against the obvious favoritism and religious disparity in the provisions put forward by the Government of India. In response to these violent protests, the mobile Internet was suspended from 7 pm, the next day for 24 hours along with the deployment of Army troops, according to reports from ANI.

Sayesta Yamin, an Assamese student studying business management at Pune, said: "Seeing the NRC exercise up close, the only thought on my mind was how privileged we are to take our citizenship for granted. At the same time, the marginalized section of society was left with constant dread about their fate in this country. Any moment, everything they have worked for can be taken away from them and they won't even have the resources to prove otherwise" says

The state of Assam and the entire country await as the Indian government fails to spread messages of secularism and solidarity. Will India after CAB and the country before it serves as an example of a carefully executed political propaganda? Has the government dusted the books of the two-nation theory? Will our generation witness yet another partition?

The Big Problem of the 'Little Man': India's Inflation Situation

Siddharth Ganguly & Varuni Trivedi

Suman, a resident of Pune works as domestic help. The increasing vegetable prices leave her dismayed every time she returns from the Mandi. "We use little to no vegetables in our meals now," she said. While she would generally buy 1 kg of onions for her family, now she can only afford a quarter kgs to get her through the week. Suman's story is not an aberration in India today; it's the norm. Millions of people from economically weaker sections of society are tasting the salt of inflation, but no one seems to be talking about it.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman is not difficult to find on the headlines of newspapers, but the problem of inflation is yet to be heard from her lips. She waxes poetic about the need for reforms to stimulate growth, she lets the world know that no onions are consumed in her house, but on inflation, she remains silent.

All debates in the public sphere have been centered on growth. The record low rate of 4.5% GDP has everyone's attention, and all debates have been centered around reforms that would inject a new stimulus into the economy and change India's growth trajectory. The RBI's spree of Repo rate cuts is a testament to this, but things have now changed.

However, in some effort to better the inflation situation, a 6-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI has decided against reducing the repo rate further, which sits now at 5.15%. This is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation figures for December, which have been revised upwards from 3.5% - 3.7% to 4.7% - 5.1%. This means that the RBI is in a situation



of "waiting and watching" as governor Shaktikanta Das put it, unable to okay growth-stimulating measures.

However, Sitharaman's proposals seem only to see India as a whole, but not Indians as individuals. The finance ministry focuses only on

the big picture without sparing a thought for the common man, such as Suman and her family. Suman's husband is a fruit seller and the increasing food inflation has dried up his income. "People don't have money for vegetables, how will they afford fruit?" Suman said. Her family shows up both sides of the struggles the poor are faced with as the government focuses only on GDP growth rate and stimulus measures.

This tendency to ignore the poor while thinking about 'The Country' has trickled down even to fellow vegetable sellers. Kamal Raza is a vegetable vendor who owns three stalls. Despite his friends blaming him for the rise in prices, he isn't worried. "Onions cost 170 Rupees/kg, Cauliflower is up to 120 Rupees. All vegetable prices have gone up greatly," he said casually, "but people will still buy them, only the poor won't, but they don't matter anyway." Raza's mentality seems to be echoed by the government's discussions being reported.

India's current growth slump is a cause of concern, but it does not justify ignoring the ground realities, the travails of the most vulnerable section of the society. Today, India's inflation scenario is going, not unnoticed, but unspoken of.

Saving Stray Dogs with Reflective Collars

Sukanya Mohanty & Vanisha Jagwani

The sight of a stray dog run over and killed by a vehicle on a Pune street shattered Shantanu Naidu, a young Pune resident. He helplessly stood by the carcass when another vehicle ran over it. It was a moment that changed his life. Being an automotive design engineer at Tata Motocorp, Naidu told himself that day that he had to think of some device that ensured that drivers would see the animal in good time that would be enough to slam the brakes.

As he mused over it, he figured that if drivers noticed the dog only five seconds before the accident, there was very little room in that narrow time frame to swerve. One way of getting around the problem, he thought, was to increase the visibility of the dog by getting it to wear reflective collars. "I called a few friends and made a collar with reflectors so that the drivers would be able to see it from far," he said.

With the help of friends, the initiative took off but costing remained a worrying issue. While rummaging through his wardrobe, he realised he had denim clothing just lying around. As denim was something that every household would normally have, he thought of manufacturing a collar using denim, orange mesh and retro-reflective fabric that is used on safety jackets. It took him a month to finalise the design and get it ready with the help of tailors in Pune.



Photo Courtesy: OHB

Enthused by the idea, an army of animal lovers rallied together to further the cause and took to the streets to collar numerous stray dogs in its pilot phase. "I did not know if the collars would work until I finally received a message saying that a dog had been saved because of my collar. My cause had achieved its purpose," said Naidu.

However, the first design had failed as the collars could not stay in a position for the reflectors to work effectively. The texture of the reflective material worked only if it was on a flat surface. With the use of an industrial retrograde reflective, embedded into the collars, they changed the design to make it workable. He started Motopaws, an NGO, dedicated to making the streets safer for dogs and also cater to animal welfare.

Although the initiative attracted a lot of public attention, Naidu and his team struggled with the funding. Noticing his son struggle, his father advised him to write to Ratan Tata, one of India's renowned industrialists, who is also an avid dog lover. Naidu wrote a profound letter to his employer underlining the problem, the solution he had found and the prickly issue of not having the funds.

Tata and Naidu met again to figure out how to stabilize the movement adding medical rescues and rehabilitation so that their action was more holistic. Today, the movement is active in around 20 cities and is spreading to new parts.

Naidu said that people his age have a hard time finding the right friends, a right mentor and a boss who would lead the right way. "People lovingly call him Boss, but I like to call him the Millennial Dumbledore," says Naidu with a smile.

Natural Healing - 'Green Therapy' for Peace

Sneha Das

Mitali was found on the streets of Kolkata in January 2013 in an unkempt state by Iswar Sankalpa-Support For The Mind, a NGO, which caters to homeless women with mental disabilities. She was restless, used to hallucinate, mutter to herself and had disorganized thoughts. She was generally inaudible and was later diagnosed with schizophrenia. She came from Bangladesh and was abandoned by her family. Care givers suspected that she bore the wounds of her past memories as she had suffered from long-term abuse.

She is slowly showing signs of recovery. Presently, she is part of a programme called Nayagram conducted by the NGO that aims at healing them with what they call as "Green Therapy" which includes activities like farming, gardening, looking after cattle and open air exercises.

The inmates also grow vegetables and fruits that is later sent to the local markets. This all happens in a village in Uttar Kashipur located on the outskirts of Kolkata. The soothing green and fresh environment comforts and heals them over a peri-



od of time. Iswar Sankalpa's communications and fundraising officer says: "The idea is to heal them using nature and help them to slowly recover." Most of the women at the shelter could not recall their address. Some were abandoned by their family. Even those who knew their addresses could not be sent back as their families were not

there anymore. The project created after buying a piece of land in 2015, today houses 15 women who are mentally challenged. The farmer who sold the land to them says that the women are recovering as they are busy with numerous activities. Parul, one of the inmates says: "Yahan bahut accha lagta hai." (It feels very good here) During weekends, they are encouraged to

take part in outdoor activities or art therapy sessions. Putul from Murshidabad is another inmate who was diagnosed with mental retardation and behavioral problems. She loves taking care of goats and watering plants. She used to get into fights with inmates earlier, but now she is one of the most social residents at Nayagram.

Reports by psychiatrists and counsellors indicate that the inmates who go through regular counselling and vocational training recover faster and become more active through the green therapy method. Caregiver Manorama said that this happens as they spend most of their time working on the natural settings and contribute to both outdoor and indoor activities. Gunjan Chandak, Khemka, assistant director, Iswar Sankalpa, says: "It is amazing to see them experience inner peace. Instead of being indifferent, we must make them feel accepted." Usually, medications are preferred to treat mental illness. But initiatives like this where the magic of nature is used to heal is more effective. As mental illness becomes a common and major concern, little efforts like this are small steps towards dealing with it.



Jharkhand Elections: A Fight for the Tribal Rights

Nishant Ranjan, Kashish Arora & Pallavi Mehra

“The green had already turned saffron in the 2014 elections when the NDA won with a majority of 43 out of 81 seats in Jharkhand. It was the first time since Jharkhand was created, a single party formed a majority in the state assembly,” says the head of the Journalism Department, Central University of Jharkhand, Dr. Dev Vrat Singh.

Seems like the election scenario has not made much difference since the inception of assembly election in 2000. Ironically, the NDA has been on a winning streak even in a tribal populated state and has not been much affected by the Naxalite movement.

Despite the boycott call from the Maoists, the voter turnout in phases 1 and 2 was significantly high: 62.87% and 64.39%

respectively. Yet, the boycott reiterated the Naxalite movement on the issues of land acquisition policy of the BJP and the communal onslaught of Hindutva that caused widespread insecurity for the minorities. The Jharkhand government's decision to curb 12,000 schools in the name of law enrolment and commercialisation of healthcare was also taken into account.

The same escalated in the second phase of elections wherein Gumla's Sisai constituency, a man was killed in the firing by Rapid Action Force at booth number 36, and in West Singhbhum district Naxals torched an empty bus in Jojo Hatu Village in the Chaibasa constituency; in turn, affecting the tribal community.

Even though the governments that have ruled over Jharkhand over the years were aware of the Naxal movement, none of them ever tried to reach to its core and have instead, asphyxiated the movement, negating Tribal Rights. Modi's "Mission Samadhan", to curb the same, has only flared the movement. In fact there has been no serious difference of approach between the BJP and the Congress on the issue of handling the Naxalite question.

And to ensure safe elections, more than 42,000 personnel have been deployed across all 24 districts of Jharkhand. Out of a total of 6066 polling stations, 949 have been declared as critical and 762 as sensitive and Naxal affected areas. 101 polling stations have been relocated due to securi-

ty reasons. Webcasting facilities have been made available at 1662 polling stations.

“The situation might look tensed but I am hoping for the best,” says Nidhi Singh, a student of Central University of Jharkhand, who recently turned 18 and will be voting in the next phase of elections.

The rest of the three phases of elections will be held on December 12, 16 and 20, respectively. Counting will take place on 23rd of the same month. Unless Tribal rights find the foundation of their staunch edifice on the development, any “Samadhan” would be unlikely.

Taking Women Security Online: Durga Shakti App

Shweta Jamsandekar & Drishti Kharbanda

With the launch of the app Durga Shakti, Dr. Chawla, the recipient of IPS Sword of Honour, brought stress to the fact that many states in India are known to be unsafe for women. Pointing the example of Haryana, Dr. Arshinder Singh Chawla, taking inspiration from his study tour in the UK, 'Improving Access to Justice for women and Girls victims of violence in India', as head of IT Police, Harayana came up with the idea of the app. The app is designed specifically to safeguard women.

“The app is designed for both android and apple play stores and offers very easy to use feature, keeping in mind the vast spectrum of highly educated women to most illiterate women in Haryana.” - Dr. Arshinder Chawla, Commissioner of Police, Panchkula But now the question arises that in a state where wom-

“Most members working with Durga Shakti here in Panchkula district are women and they work day and night to ensure that women feel safe. Our aim is keeping women who have recently joined the team in high spirits.” -ACP Noopur, Durga Shakti Team, Panchkula

The figures tell that the Durga Shakti App has been downloaded by about 1.35 Lakh women across Haryana since its launch and more than half have made use of the app at least once, resulting in 48 FIRs and resolving 419 issues.

Haryana police are aiming to double the number of resolved cases by the first quarter of the next year, as the reach of the app is still marginalized to make any significant difference, yet.

It is not wrong to say that Durga Shakti App is a step ahead in ensuring better services while tackling women safety issues. Building a special app which caters to the need of women can not only help protect women from atrocities but also help empower them, is the premise here.

“We hardly get to know about any schemes regarding women and the public, in general. There is so little information that the public has access to. Launching an app is definitely a great step but we don't know if it exists or will work for us.” - Nisha Singh (MCM DAV College Chandigarh, Student)

The fate of Durga Shakti application depends on what initiatives the Government of Haryana will take in future to strengthen the reach of the app and if other states take note of the research done by the Haryana IT Cell for building this app. The reach of the app is a greater issue at hand in order to make it successful towards its aim.

Unexpected Magic on Wheels

Sukanya Mohanty & Shivani Pathak

We listen to noise and see corrective efforts after an event has taken place, but rarely do we see problems being tackled at the roots. If there is sufficient prevention, there will not be a need for a cure. Disabilities had overpowered the Indian subcontinent with the economic slowdown and political upheavals and there wasn't sufficient information circulated about disabilities like cataract and polio. And in the middle of the chaos, Impact India Foundation (IIF) was born.

Not ready to take 'No' for an answer, Zelma Lazarus, the founder director of IIF took it upon herself to wage a war against disabilities in India. After looking at the statistics clearly indicating that most of India's population resides in rural areas with almost no access to good healthcare, Impact India decided to take it upon itself to provide free medical care to those in need. After much ideation, Lazarus came up with an innovative way to provide help. She realized that the subcontinent was well connected through railway networks and that a hospital on the train would be the best way to implement their objectives. And so, the Lifeline Express was born!

The Lifeline Express is the world's first seven coach hospital train, donated by the Indian Railways for this cause. It is equipped with state of the art operating theatres and five operating tables along with a coach that serves as residential quarters for all permanent and visiting employees and staff. Impact decides on the route of the train and it stops on the required station for a few days, during which they carry out restorative surgeries for cataract, hearing impairment, cleft lips and orthopaedics for children less than 14 years. It also offers dental treatment and oral health

hygiene, epilepsy treatment, along with investigations for oral, breast and cervical cancer. The staff onboard the train is also trained to conduct regular blood pressure and blood sugar tests for the patients. Continuing their medical education program, they train frontline health workers as a part of their community outreach.

The Lifeline Express has inspired three trains in China, two in South Africa, a floating hospital in Bangladesh and boat clinics in Cambodia. The project was awarded the United Nations grand prize for excellence in public service along with which it has been featured in several international films and publications like the BBC. In 2009, the government of India, in honour of this unique project, released its national postage stamp depicting the Lifeline Express. Up until November 2019, the magic train had touched the lives of 1.2 million people across 140 districts of 19 states in India through their 204 projects.

Impact India Foundation is a unique organization that works on the principle that “my project is your project.” It embodies the message that every individual deserves a healthy life and works towards curing India of disabilities so that the world is a better place to live in with a healthy and active population that harbours no hatred towards the people on the upper side of the line.



en literacy is the lowest in the country, and which is considered one of the worst states for women in India to live, could building an App be enough?

“There are so many inhibitions in our minds while contacting the police for any purpose whatsoever; we don't know how we will be treated and will the help be provided in time, for instance.” -Tanya Garg (Political Science student, MA, Panjab University, Chandigarh)



Photo Courtesy: Rediff.com

Acceptance is Hard to Come by for Kashmiri Students Staying in Pune

Alex Michael Binoy

"I'm a Kashmiri, but to stay safe and to avoid unnecessary suspicion, I tell people that I'm from Jammu." These are the words of Aziz Rehman who has been staying in Pune since 2012. He came to Maharashtra to pursue his higher education in Pune University and is currently a guest lecturer in an educational institute in the city. Rehman feels like an outsider in India and fears to disclose his place of birth to anyone who isn't a trusted acquaintance.

This comes four months after the abrogation of Article 370 resulting in the revocation of all special provisions of the Indian Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir.

"Back in 2012, I went to five or six different locations to find accommodation

but all of them turned me down. Ultimately, I got into the university hostel," said Rehman. According to him, the landlords weren't hesitant to cite the reason on why he was denied accommodation, "You are a Kashmiri...we don't feel safe."

Finding accommodation was just the first of the many discriminatory actions he was to face. Recollecting a story of him and his friend buying a scooter, he said, "We had already purchased it with the help of a broker. On the day the papers were supposed to be signed, the owner, with the recent knowledge that we are Kashmiris, got furious with the broker for keeping it from him.

Getting pelted by questions like - why don't you respect the flag?, why don't you respect India?, why don't you say you are an Indian? has become a routine for him. "I always have to be guarded with my replies," a visibly dejected Rehman says.

Abdul Malik, a PhD student at another University in Pune, flew down from Kashmir six years ago to pursue his higher education. He said, "There are issues [regarding discrimination against Kashmiris] of course, and they are everywhere."

Malik has been staying in the college hostel for the past six years and he and his friends had to face false accusations numerous times. "There were a few people who kept complaining that



we were cooking beef and fish in the hostel, which we never did. But the hostel authorities and the University has always been on our side," he added.

When asked if he or his friends faced physical violence due to being Kashmiris in the current political milieu of the nation, Malik answered, "Not yet," which goes on to say that he has to be cautious always.

Concern Overriding Capricious Cravings of Conscious Locals

Krishna Kakani & Mallika Chugh

If we ran an all-inclusive survey on the collective political status of the world, most of the ideas about the subject across latitudes would seem to converge on a virtual disintegrated state of affairs. Climate change, on top of it, is performing the dance of looming death with its cyclonic moves and setting the whole place alight, literally. However, an insurgent global consciousness has been emerging as the saving grace in this madness, screaming out on the streets to hold back the catastrophic hurtling towards the climatic tipping point, in a movement called the 'Extinction Rebellion,' according to a news feature by BBC UK.

An exciting time to be alive:

The west, as a part of the movement, has seen an unprecedented shift in dietary habits from extensive meat consumption to eating plant-based alternatives, more than any other part of the world, especially over the last decade or two. This transition is driven partly by the growing compassion for animals suffering commodification in farms and slaughterhouses, and partly by statistics with respect to the environmental impact of animal agriculture. The latter is

to debunk popular myths about meat, protein and its sources. It established that animals were mere 'middlemen' in the food chain, consuming about six times more protein than they produce, and yet meat, egg, fish and dairy together occupied 83% of the world's farmland. According to the Water Footprint Network's comparative report on crop and animal products' water footprint, it takes 322 litres of water to produce one kilogram of vegetables, but the number leaps onto 1020 in case of milk. That multiplies more than threefold for as many eggs and gets incomprehensible at 15415 litres for one kilogram of bovine meat, colloquially known as beef.

Veganism taking over, one person at a time:

Madhuri Jaybhay, the owner of a plant-based café in Pune, shared her story in an interview with INK as to how she turned vegan for ethical reasons. "When I first learned about the ugly brutality of animal farming, it was then that I decided to ditch meat altogether. My sister and I started reaching out to people to get more insights and found out that people practising veganism had no options to eat out," she said. "It inspired us to set up this café. Now, every time someone chooses to eat here, they are actually consuming one less meal or snack that could have come at such a high environmental cost," she added.

Madhuri quit her I.T job for an unusual business venture, now one of quite a few vegan-friendly eateries in Pune. Verde & Co (earlier 'Tales Over Tails') is best known for its mock-meat chicken alternative called 'Chicken Satay', which is essentially, processed soy with a texture similar to that of meat.

The idea of green alternatives to products of forceful breeding and environmental degradation is resonating increasingly with responsible people all around the world. It would be fair to say PETA and Greta have come a long way on their respective missions.

Pune Panics, as Dengue Causes Havoc Over 100 Dengue Positive Patients in Pune Between 1st and 3rd December, This Year.

Netra V. & Sanjukta Mandal

There have been 219 registered cases of dengue in Pune during November 2019.

Over 900 registered cases of dengue have been reported in Pune over the last three months.

According to the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), over 1,333 cases of dengue have been registered this year. The situation in Pimpri-Chinchwad and Aundh areas are grave, as PMC reported about 943 cases in the last three months.

"I treated at least 2-3 patients suffering from dengue every day," said Dr Santosh Kumar Deshpande, Medical Representative Officer, Aundh E.S.I.C Hospital, Pune, as he explained the seriousness of dengue. Dengue is a viral fever caused by the Aedes Aegypti mosquito, which bites only during the day time and breeds in clean water.

Monsoon long went, but not dengue:

Pune's monsoon that extended till October increased the breeding capacity of these mosquitoes. Rainwater collected in shells, tyres, coolers, tanks and pots that turn out to be mosquito-breeding places. Dr. Deshpande explained that callousness of people, storing water for a longer period can multiply mosquito-breeding. "One must not store water for more than a week, and must adopt the practice of emptying the stored water," he said. "Precaution is better than cure," said Dr Madhu Bansode, Medicine Doctor, Symbiosis Hospital and Research Centre. The most effective way to con-

trol the sharp spike of dengue is by controlling the mosquito larvae. "Fish like Gambusia and Guppy are recommended, as they prey on the larvae of Aedes aegypti mosquito that are present in large water bodies or large water containers," explained Dr Deshpande. "Use of chemical on water sources abates the larvae of the mosquitoes," he added. Both the doctors suggested adopting the practice of emptying collected water in the house every week (dry day).

"The major misconception people face while having dengue is that it must be treated in the hospital, but it's not until the platelet count is below one lakh that a person needs admittance to the hospital for thorough treatment. The doctors should explain this scenario to patients to reduce panic," suggested Dr. Deshpande.

The dengue numbers would continue to increase if not kept in check by the Municipal Corporation and the residents of the city, advised both the doctors. People should not panic, take medication in time and visit doctors rather neglecting the symptoms.



linked directly with global warming, after all.

While the masses still argue that only animal source foods promise a human body the ideal amount and forms of protein it should take in every day, a fairly sizeable chunk of the population is waking up to recent scientific research that suggests otherwise. In 2018, a documentary 'The Game Changers', that features an elite group of athletes and scientists, former English professional mixed martial artist James Wilks, set out

Reuniting the Youth with its Roots: SPPU's Initiative

Rujuta Thete and Nikita Nikhil

Every state in India has a unique language associated with its roots and culture. It is incomprehensible that the majority of Indians today are being oppressed by the mere lack of knowledge of a language. The more we head towards modernization, the farther we move from our linguistic origins. The only way this culture will sustain itself is if the youth of this country decides to. A language is a simple yet crucial part of Indian culture, which shall not fade away.

Universities across Maharashtra are taking steps towards sustaining the regional Marathi language by adding it to their curricula. This approach has already been adopted by Mumbai University, Shivaji University in Kolhapur and Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University in Aurangabad.

The Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) is going through a similar procedure of making the state language 'Marathi' as a compulsory language subject across all the courses under the University.

This would get implemented from the beginning of the next academic year. This action was taken after a proposal from the Senate which suggested that every student studying under SPPU should have basic knowledge of the Marathi language.

Bhushan Desai, an Associate Professor of SPPU's Department of Marathi said, "It is important to keep the Marathi language alive in Maharashtra and SPPU is trying to work towards it. Every student should at least have a basic knowledge of the language of the state they are residing in. However, making it compulsory might invite flak. The course could be constructed interestingly which will motivate the students to learn it."

The University will be providing students with a proper syllabus. This would be a 30-hour course and would be introduced as an online course.

"The University is presenting this as an online course as our country is heading towards digitalization. This will attract students and promote online lectures," added Desai.

However, Dr Ruchi Kher Jaggi, Director of Symbiosis Institute of

Media and Communication, Pune, has a different point of view on this matter. "Learning a new language at the higher education level should be a matter of choice and interest and the decision should rest completely with the student," she said.

She further added, "A journalism student who wants to report out of Maharashtra should know Marathi, that's a professional requirement. If she doesn't learn the local language, she can miss out significantly. However, mandating it academically in the higher education framework is restrictive as well as in contrast to the ethos of giving students greater agency."

Speaking about the importance of regional language, Sunanda Rana, a Professor from SPPU's Sanskrit department said, "For a person who plans to settle and work in Maharashtra, it is going to be very favourable."

It is understood that implementation, preservation and propagation of regional languages is the only way to save them, but making it a mandate in institutes of higher education should not be goal-driven.

Will Pune Face a Climate Emergency?

Nabodita Ganguly & Shraddha Tiwari

Pune is the first city in India to have more vehicles than residents. With a population of over 3.5 million, it has nearly 3.62 million vehicles, according to the city's Regional Traffic Office.

The burden is already showing. A recent report of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, says that Air Quality Index (AQI) in the city has hit a 'moderate' level and is expected to deteriorate further. Areas like Hinjewadi and Wakad that house numerous IT companies witnessed excessive smog recently with AQI touching 427 mark in sensors.



Photo Courtesy: Fridays For Future

Deepak Shrote, co-founder of Vasundhara Swachta Abhiyan, a public movement to mitigate global warming, points out that the public transport in Pune had deteriorated over the years. "No matter how hard we try to reduce air pollution, it would have no effect, unless we improve public transport," he said.

Pune residents are often complaining of air quality related illness. Vivek Chattopadhyaya, Senior Programme Manager, Clean Air and Sustainable Mobility, Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi, told INK: "Air quality deterioration in

Pune is a major issue the city is not able to deal with growing sources of pollution. It is also consistently exceeding the national ambient air quality standards. Strengthening public transport, introducing non-motorised transportation and promoting electric vehicles will go a long way to clean up the air. The city must implement the Comprehensive Clean Air Action Plan by holding agencies and departments accountable with time bound targets. It must also prepare location specific action plans to deal with specific pollution sources in hotspots."

Pulmonologist Dr. Aparna Birajdar has seen a surge in respiratory complications. She says, "Currently, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is showing rising incidence even in non-smokers especially those exposed to air pollution like traffic police and drivers. COPD is becoming the leading cause of morbidity, mortality and acute reduction in lung function capacities of population at large."

Various voluntary groups are equally concerned and are trying to introduce initiatives to address the problem. One of them, Fridays for Future, Pune, (FFF) are attempting to replicate Greta Thunberg's global movement to fight climate change. They are having outreach programmes to create awareness about global warming and throw open discussions every Friday on the vexed issue. Points out Athrava Shinde, one of its core members: "My generation is called GenZ as we are the last ones who can save this planet. I am just seventeen and it is not my fault."

FFF members warn that the time has come for Pune to declare a climate emergency.

Healing Cafe

Praveen Tewari & Shivangi Kapoor

"Healing begins the moment when you feel that you are being heard," says Kamlesh Sonawane, owner of The Book Establishment, an unique café on S.B. Road in Pune. Welcome to the café that heals. Every day, numerous youngsters swarm the café eager to engage in conversations that give them a sense of emotional wellness.

Genuine, honest and sincere conversations in today's time of digitalization and hectic lifestyle is essential as it could be an effective safety valve. Unfortunately, urban life and obsession with social media has taken its toll. The café provides a free space for those who want to unburden themselves or just share their stories. Impromptu conversations surrounding their mental well-being are accompanied by coffee and snacks.

Sonawane, who is also a counsellor, has been managing the café for the past year and a half. "The café is an initiative by Anhad which is our parent psychological consultant organization. Our basic idea was to promote conversations around mental health. Despite awareness, mental health still has a lot of stigma attached to it. So, we thought a café would be a good comfortable place for people to come and talk."

The café has a varied crowd. There are college students, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, corporate employees and housewives. "Over the past year, more than 1,200 people visited us to seek our help. Youngsters today are under a lot of pressure and anxiety as they do not have anyone to talk to." The café is also now well-known for organizing therapeutic events like open mic poetry and musicals to help people express themselves. Many find it easier to open up with strangers as they do not have the fear of being judged. Twenty-three year old Shiva, an MBA student, says, "It is easier to talk about problems with a stranger. Recent issues with my partner were bothering me but I could deal with it after the counselling sessions."

A new city can be very lonesome for a lot of people. Points out Rajiv, a painter, "The city has been very overwhelming and adjusting to it has taken a toll on me. But the conversations here has been liberating and I can see myself full of hope again."



The World Health Organization in a recent report stated that India is one of the most depressed countries in the world with every one in four individuals suffering from some mental issue or the other. Says Sonawane, "Conversations and awareness regarding mental health is the need of the hour as our country is slipping down every year on the Global Happiness Index. While we focus so much on our physical wellbeing, we need to concentrate more on the mental part of it to make a huge difference."

A Story of Handcrafting Skill Toys

Snigdha Nalini Oreya

How often do we come across skill toys in India? And most importantly how many of us are aware of what skill toys are? All of us have come across skill toys at least once in our lives not knowing what they are. A skill toy is a toy which requires skill, in terms of dexterity, to use it. Skill toys stand at the extreme end of the dexterity spectrum. Founder of SoulFuel Skill Toys, Siddharth Kumar, 24, makes hand-crafted skill toys. His collection includes yoyos, begleri beads (a skill toy consisting of two or more beads at the ends of a short string), and Sikke (his own brainchild which is a modern rendition of the cup and ball toy inspired from the whirling dervishes of the Mevlevi culture).

Kumar first started with yoyos. The idea behind this emerged when he was toying with his yoyo. He noticed how in Indian markets “you do get the basic handmade yoyos and spin tops at fairs but they’re not really meant for anything besides the up and down motion,” said Kumar. He tried with one of his own personal yoyos and realized the high potential. His toys are “modern day old school toys”.

His toys are made of wood, brass, copper and delrin. But wood forms 60% of his creations. He gets wood from markets around Pune that sell exotic and reclaimed timber. Search for high quality material for his creations took him to the outskirts of Bangalore once to get high quality wood which he used for a special batch. He takes a 5ft block of wood, turns it into round blocks and makes individual blanks to work a shape on them manually on the lathe. Since each of them is handcrafted, all yoyos are unique.

In India, this is a niche community which is slowly gathering momentum as people are becoming aware of

skill toys in general. A new batch of ten yoyos is sold out in a day or two. He prices his creations based on how many hours it takes him to make the same, also the level of difficulty. “I typically dedicate 3-4 hours to make one yoyo,” he said.



Having a single-man operation, Kumar takes care of the raw material sourcing, the making of the toy, packaging and shipping, and product marketing.

He started making yoyos by himself because they “can spin at over 10,000rpm - as fast as a Formula One engine. So, any small machining variations, as much as 50 microns, can cause vibration issues for a yoyo. Most shops don’t make such precise parts so they have no idea how to approach such an issue and don’t hold up to machining tolerances.” Depending on external manpower would drastically increase the price because of the human resource and time involved, according to Kumar.

What started as a modification project 3 years ago is now a success. He currently sells his works via his Instagram page. “As far as I know, I am the only person who is into this. Few resellers of American and Chinese brands exist in India but none of them is into manufacturing,” said Kumar. The difficulty he faces as a small scale business is the drastic increase in shipping charges and sourcing raw material in bulk at cheap prices. His future plan is to create a bigger skill toy community in India which is more than a common therapeutic pastime.

Young Talent Attracted by Independent Cinema

Rhea Binoy

Two of the many short films that were showcased at the Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival in Hyderabad recently were, ‘Maqсад’ and ‘The Second Chance’. Both were directed by Ashwyn Goveas who is in his early twenties. One of the discerning trends in the independent film movement in India is the emergence of young film makers who are not wary of experiments and out of the box ideas. Trends show that the films tend to derive a lot from real life incidents and things that connect with the audience who now prefer a film that gives them a slice of life.

Goveas is presently honing his skills while completing his Masters in Mass Communication (Audio Visual) at the Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication (SIMC) in Pune. While experiencing the highs and lows of the industry interning at The Glitch in Mumbai, he said, “This is the perfect time for the independent film industry to overtake the old and worn out formulaic films of Bollywood. Audiences have matured and have started to like films that have a good story to tell. The OTT platforms have jumped ahead with its wide array of content that are mostly independent creations.”

Stepping into the film industry is a huge step and starting off with Independent films is important for an actor or filmmaker. There are eloquent examples of actors who have excelled like Vicky Kaushal, Ayushmann Khurana and Nawazuddin Siddique. All of them started with smaller roles and films. Today, they are reigning at their game as they figured out how the industry works while starting out. Independent films need not necessarily be on a low budget. “Lust Stories”, a Netflix original, was one of them that was put together by four different film makers. The critical acclaim that independent films get also helps attract distributors.

Social media has played a huge role in attracting audiences towards independent films. Says Goveas: “It is really unbelievable to see someone pick up a camera, shoot something, upload it on the internet and become a viral sensation. Social media has the capability to take your film to millions of people which is fascinating if compared to older times when just the word of mouth was the only way to make an independent film work.” Funds are a sticky issue for independent young film makers. Many resort to crowd funding as avenues in that area are opening up. “Wishberry.in” and “Goodclap” are two of them. But their idea and concept have to be good. Points out Goveas: “One needs to be sure of the idea as those who are investing in the project will not fund it otherwise.”

However, there are others who do not want to get into the complications of crowd funding and are comfortable requesting their families to pool in funds. Mruthyunjay Mehetre, an English Literature student and an Independent filmmaker from Pune, says he would rather ask his family for money and as he knows where it comes from, he would use it very carefully.

Independent film makers often find help at hand very easily as many youngsters volunteer to pitch in doing both the important and sundry jobs. Verun Chavaan, an actor and a student at SIMC, said: “I always provide whatever help I can. It can be giving out my house for a shoot, lending my car to carry crew and equipment or even going around hunting for locations.” Independent film making is an attractive proposition today as it gives a new space for creativity to bloom. Youngsters dabbling in it confidently feel that they will make a mark sooner or later. After all, many others like Steven Soderbergh, Robert Rodrigues and Quentin Tarantino had also made it when they were young and they grew to become some of the remarkable pioneers of independent cinema.

SPORTS

Fans Dismayed at MCA Stadium

Aayush Kataria & Ritaban Misra

It was a fine Sunday afternoon in Pune when captain Virat Kohli scored a scintillating knock of 254 at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium while batting against South Africa during the Freedom Trophy. But, there were just a handful of spectators to cheer.

Kohli was not amused. He said that India should have five strong test centres so that the visiting teams know the pitches they are going to play in and the crowds to expect. “It cannot be sporadic and spread over so many places,” he added.

Was the poor turnout a surprise? Probably not. The much-touted stadium had failed to attract crowds even during the first test on its grounds in 2017 when India faced Australia. Cricket fans complained about how the stadium was situated far

away from the heart of the city.

North Stand Gang, Mumbai’s famous cricket fan club, had travelled to Pune for the match and stayed all through the four days of the test. Nish Navalkar, a member, told INK: “Most of the stands does not have a roof and the Grandstand which has a roof was leaking with rain water messing up the seats.”

That is not all. Navalkar pointed out that fans were inconvenienced while entering the stadium as they had to park their vehicles more than a kilometre away from the main stadium and walk all the way. To go to the upper stands, there were a dozen staircases, but only two were kept open.

Even exiting the stadium was not a smooth process as spectators had to leave from one gate even when the stadium was at full capacity.

The stadium also faced a se-

vere shortage of food and water on the third day of the test which left everyone hungry and thirsty for a couple of hours. Navalkar echoed a common feeling when he said, “All Indian cricket fans want is good service.”

Attempts to get the Association’s officials met with no response. With crowds diminishing day by day for red-ball cricket, the onus is on the administrators now to rectify numerous issues to get spectators back into stadiums.

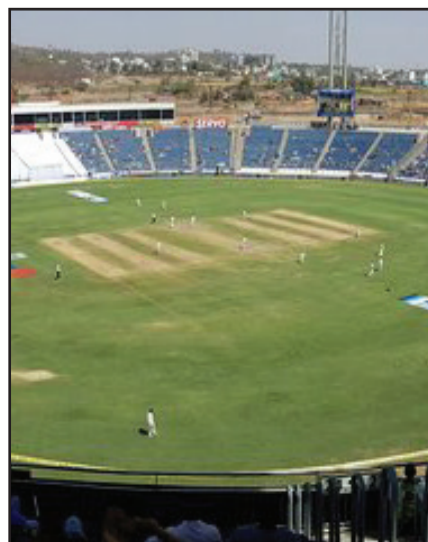


Photo Courtesy: MCA Facebook Page

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