

Civil Society



PATIENT AS STORYTELLER

My battle with TB

Anyone can get TB. What is critical is to have access to easy, affordable and quality diagnosis. Hopefully India's policymakers will read my story and make the changes we need to end TB

Saurabh Rane, a physician himself
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Any other (for domains other than the previous four categories) | 6
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"We must find it within ourselves to look beyond ourselves to develop the right thought level values in our actors for development, one of which is India Inc."

Padma Bhushan Mrs. Rajeshree Birla
Chairperson, FICCI CSR and Community Development Committee and FICCI Aditya Birla CSR Centre for Excellence

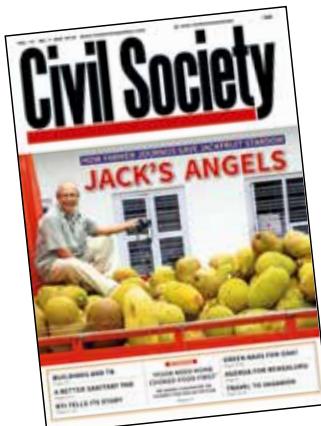
"It has been personally a very enriching experience for me and my jury members. We came across some very amazing experiments and initiatives, which have been undertaken, that can make India proud. I would like to express my special thanks to my fellow members in the jury and team from FICCI for assisting us in a very professional way about how to evaluate initiatives."

Mr. U.K. Sinha
Former Chairman, SEBI and Jury Chairperson

IN THE LIGHT



LETTERS



Jackfruit's angels

Thanks for your cover story, 'How farmer-journos made jackfruit a star.' The Kerala government's decision to declare jackfruit the state fruit is really a very laudable one. This has given jackfruit the place of pride it richly deserves.

However, the unrelenting crusade by Shree Padre and his team at *Adike Patrike* too deserves a big round of applause. It is this crusade which brought jackfruit into the limelight and helped people realise its importance and potential. Kerala's entrepreneurs took the lead in venturing into manufacturing value-added jackfruit products.

I think *Adike Patrike* has brought about a silent revolution in jackfruit. I hope government agencies and the farming community take note of their contribution. The magazine is unique and a household name among the

farming community in Karnataka. It has inspired many farmers to write and share their experiences as well as venture into new farming techniques and initiatives. Your cover picture says it all – Shree, the beaming jackfruit ambassador, on top of a truckload of jackfruit ready to be shipped.

M. Sadashiva Rao

Thanks to Shree Padre and the *Adike Patrike* team yesterday we tasted the red variety of jackfruit harvested from our new tree. The fruit was great.

Dr Varanashi Krishna Moorthy

I have planted many jackfruit trees inspired by Shree Padre and his team at *Adike Patrike*. Thank you.

Dr Damodaran K.P.

surgery, despite all the resource demands it places on the planet? So balance is needed, even when speaking about mining -- often a destructive manifestation of technology. And balance is what your lead article on mining, 'Goa struggles to find mining ban answer,' achieved last month. It presented all sides of the argument. Congratulations!

Nandan Maluste

Garbage plan

With reference to your story, 'Goa's zero waste garbage plan,' we would like to educate our panchayat on how to deal with solid waste. What is the advice we should be giving them?

Prabhakar Panshikar

Paree napkins

Apropos your story, 'Sanitary napkins need a pro to get them right.'

What was intended to be a social enterprise ended up being taken over by a bigger company! And primarily because IL&FS chose a poor solution for poor women. What happened to the 15 women who were making those napkins?

Sachin Sachdeva

Kavita Charanji replies: They now work as Paree Didis, as mentioned in my story.

The Water Cup

I read about Paani Foundation's initiative to make Maharashtra drought-proof in your magazine. I appreciate their work. Could your team publish what they learnt from this process and how that helped them upscale?

N. Deshmukh

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COVER STORY

TB IS A TICKING TIME BOMB

The problems with tuberculosis have been getting worse. Saurabh Rane, a doctor who got infected, tells us what it is like to get the disease and about the many gaps in diagnosis and treatment.

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Civil Society
READ US. WE READ YOU.

The health of the nation

THE failure to contain tuberculosis is a measure of India's poor performance in public health. The disease has been spreading and becoming drug resistant. A government programme has failed to deliver results because it doesn't reach people and people don't turn to it. Private physicians on the other hand have been getting the treatment regime wrong. They haven't been regulated and integrated with the government's efforts.

TB: India's Ticking Time Bomb has the stories of six patients who have survived TB told in their own words. Each story is an eye-opener on what has been going wrong and where the healthcare system needs to be fixed. It is an impactful editorial initiative by Chapal Mehra and Speaking Tiger, the new and enterprising publisher.

We have chosen to reproduce the chapter by Saurabh Rane because as a physician himself he is uniquely positioned to tell his story as a troubled patient. Rane also makes significant observations on the healthcare system and emphasises the need for a national strategy which brings public and private together in an effective joint initiative. His story also needs propagation because wrong diagnosis and treatment is a real problem which is resulting in the spread of the disease. In the absence of reliable guidance, patients, even a young physician like Rane, end up hastily taking medical advice that has serious consequences for their condition.

Public health has as much if not more to do with living conditions as with doctors and hospitals. Housing markets in India have thus far been in the control of politicians and developers who have shaped them for the few who can afford to pay exorbitant prices. The vast majority have had to make do with what they get, which means they either live in slums or shoddy public sector constructions.

The recently launched campaign for affordable housing is an opportunity to set things right. We need to see housing as a true driver of the economy in that it uniformly allows people to live in healthy conditions at the very least. Housing should in fact be the cornerstone of an inclusive economy. It needs to be taken out of the clutches of self-seeking developers who have learnt to manipulate government decision-making. We spoke to Kirtee Shah, the Ahmedabad-based urban planner and architect, about what he thinks should be the strategy going forward and the kind of housing the country should invest in.

In this issue we have revisited Glocal Healthcare Systems, a story we first did five years ago, to see what the learning of this social enterprise has been in setting up low-cost hospitals. It has tweaked its model to shift its focus from primary care to acute care and from a rural block of 30,000 to a small city of 100,000. It is an interesting shift.

We also caught up with the Toilet Board Coalition to find out about the private sector's involvement in Pune's efforts to be India's first smart sanitation city. Multiple businesses around toilets are poised to change the outcomes from better sanitation.

Shubh Anand

'Affordable housing needs better processes to succeed'

Kirtee Shah on the shelter problem in cities

Civil Society News
New Delhi

AFFORDABLE housing allows people with low incomes to live decently and stay healthy. The idea has been moving along in fits and starts with policy spawning initiatives in design, construction and finance. A big push came in 2015 with the Modi government's Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).

But much remains to happen and to get a perspective of what has been achieved and the challenges ahead, *Civil Society* spoke to public-spirited architect Kirtee Shah, chairman of KSA Planning Services in Ahmedabad.

Shah has devoted his life to improving habitats. His views are sought on sustainable urban development. He is also founder-director of the Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG), a public charitable trust.

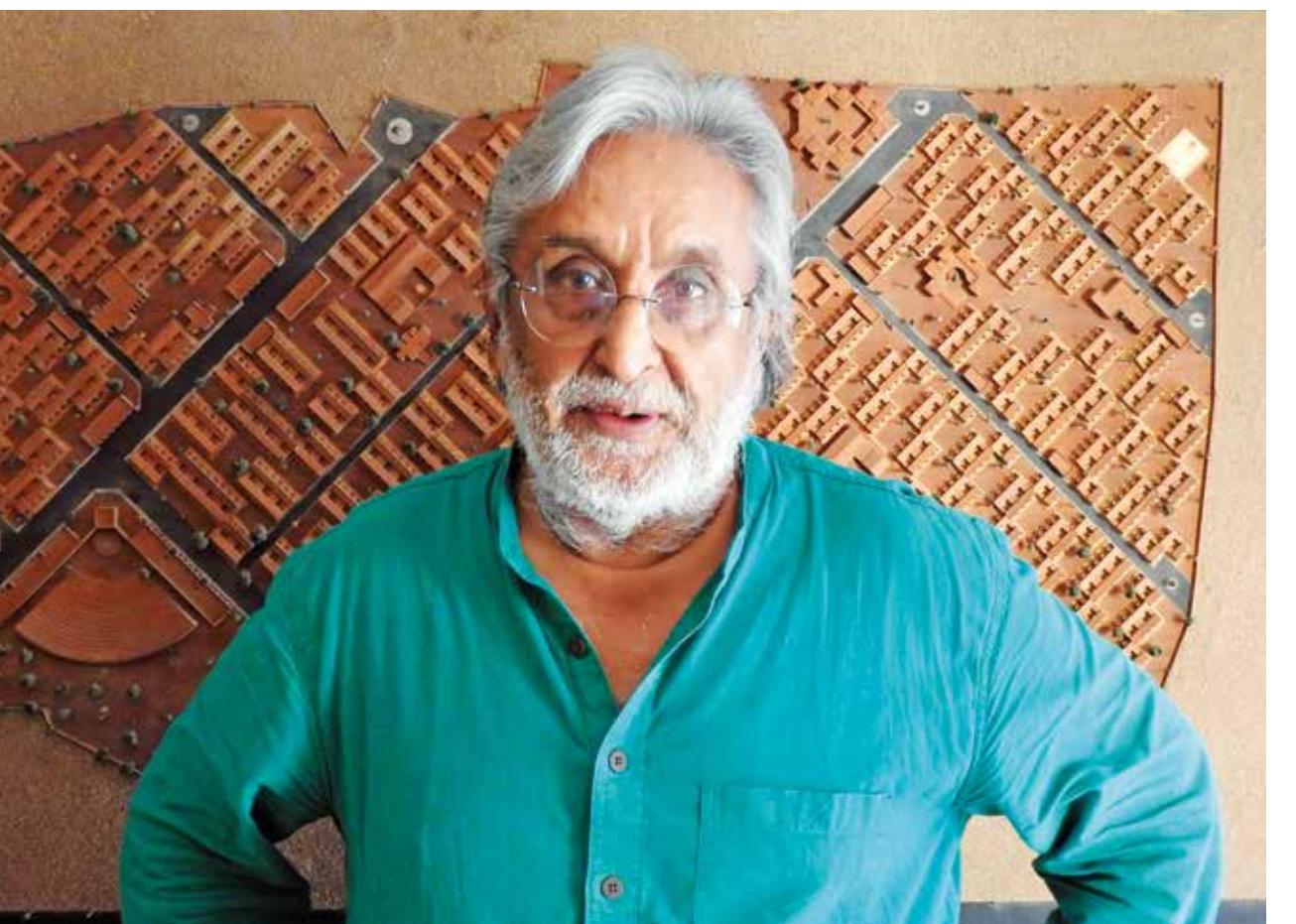
Shah has recently written to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, asking for a new National Commission on Urbanisation to be set up as a think tank that will take a comprehensive view of the problems plaguing Indian cities and suggest ways and means to tackle urban issues based on Indian realities, culture, climate and so on.

It's almost a decade since we started talking about affordable housing. What have we really achieved in terms of policy, numbers and impact?

In the past four years an extra push has been given to affordable housing with the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). I am not saying nothing happened before that, but the real push has come from that programme. The scheme is a good idea, whatever its weaknesses or ultimate outcome.

Building 20 million houses by 2022 may look rather ambitious. You are talking about constructing something like 7,500 houses per day. The question is — do we have the delivery systems, the resources, the institutions to cope with this. Since we don't, we also have a problem.

But the political statement that we have got to house everyone in this country is an important one



Kirtee Shah: 'The quality of housing produced in the last 30 to 40 years has given a bad name to affordable housing'

'Slums aren't a problem but a solution. Slum-dwellers are a resource. Mumbai has millions of people living in slums. If these people had not used their ingenuity to create whatever quality of housing they could, they would be living under the sky.'

and I would like to state that upfront.

Secondly, the government has taken steps in terms of incentives, inviting the private sector, a fairly good design of the PMAY, tax concessions, subsidies and an interest intervention. There is an attempt to bridge the affordability gap.

But there are a number of issues. Achievement has not been very significant. After three and a half years of the PMAY, not more than two percent of affordable housing has been achieved in terms of actual numbers. Despite incentives to the private sector, the market hasn't really geared up, though there are projects here and there.

I have been working with a client who does large-scale housing. He has a 100-acre site in Chennai. Knowing my interest in affordable housing, he reached out to me. But he wanted to do affordable

housing on only two acres. I asked him why when in Chennai there is a big demand for affordable housing. I am not certain about the market, he said. Despite the concessions and subsidies I don't think I can sell that much, he said. So, incentives haven't got the market moving.

Do we need a change in mindset?

See, there are other aspects. It's not only about production of housing. Housing has backward and forward linkages. A large target like this one brings in certain distortions. You end up making hasty decisions, reporting becomes inaccurate, you tend to inflate your achievements. I am talking about the public sector.

The biggest casualty of this large target is that you aren't able to devote enough time to processes. And

housing at all levels in all forms is a process-driven product. It requires time, concentration, many players working together, systems, apart from land, finance, market and unified services.

With stiff targets, quality suffers and processes aren't factored in. I think this is one of the major worries we should have. We need to really examine the kind of housing that is coming up in terms of design, construction, quality of infrastructure and so on.

Are you talking mostly about housing stock created by the public sector?

No, both. If you look at the last 50 years, the private sector hasn't touched affordable housing. Affordable housing has essentially been the domain of the public sector. And the quality of housing produced in the last 30 to 40 years has given a bad name to affordable housing, low-income housing and small housing. In fact, low-income housing has become synonymous with low-quality housing.

The private sector was happy building for the upper middle class and the middle class. There was a market and clients with money which is much easier than dealing with people who don't have money.

The private sector is beginning to get into affordable housing, although slowly, for three reasons. One it is a very large government programme which has been declared an industry. There are tax concessions and other advantages. Secondly, there is a glut in the upper end of the market in most cities with apartments lying unsold. Thirdly, they are beginning to see a future in affordable housing and seeing it as a huge market.

We see housing as a driver of the economy. Shouldn't affordable quality housing be housing for everyone?

This is an important point. If one is talking about housing the whole country then you have to examine the backward and forward linkages of housing: employment generation, contribution to GDP, skilling of craftsmen, delivery systems, institution building, innovation in design and material ... if all this happens on a large scale, you get the economy moving.

Public health is so important. Statistics talk about the costs of improper hygiene, lack of water and sanitation in terms of ill health and loss of wages. Good housing could take care of most of this.

But where does this figure of 20 million come from? Eighty percent of the housing deficit we are talking about, 18.4 million in urban areas, is essentially categorised as congestion. Another 0.99 million or five percent of houses are non-serviceable... 2.7 million or 12 percent is of absolute housing and 0.53 million or eight percent are homeless.

What constitutes a deficit and which deficit are we trying to close? If 80 percent of the housing we are talking about is basically congested housing, do we need to build full houses to take care of that? Maybe we could improve those rooms and toilets.

According to the last census the vacancy rate in several cities is 12 to 14 percent. So the houses exist but they are locked. A 10 to 12 percent vacancy rate in a city like Ahmedabad with a population of six million means a vacancy rate of about 150,000 houses. These houses are built, locked and not in

the market. You have to look at all these options.

How would you address the issue of slums?

We need a change in mindset and strategy. The Odisha chief minister, Naveen Patnaik, has announced that his government isn't displacing slum-dwellers but empowering them by giving 4,000 families land rights.

Slums aren't a problem but a solution and slum-dwellers are a resource. Mumbai has millions of people living in slums. If these people had not used their ingenuity, if they had not dared to encroach on land and create whatever quality of housing they could, they would be living under the sky. They didn't come to Mumbai for housing. They came for jobs, services, livelihood, education. Dharavi is not a slum of poverty. About 83 percent of its residents are above the poverty line. The problem is that the system did not create affordable housing and therefore they ended up living in slums.

These houses should not be bulldozed but improved and built upon. Now if you accept this

'We have not paid enough attention to creating a rental market. You need all kinds of housing in an urban space. We haven't bridged the affordability gap. You also have a younger generation who are very mobile.'

In Germany, 60 percent of its people are on rental. In Berlin, 89 percent of people live in rented accommodation. In Rotterdam 49 percent of people are on rental. In New York it's 55 percent. Compared to that, Delhi has 28 percent of its people on rental.

The biggest villain is the Rent Control Act. It's created such absurdities. A property that could earn ₹3 lakh a month is still out on rent at ₹12,000 per month. Landowners and property owners can't invest in maintenance. The Act brought down the quality of housing very badly, especially in the chawls of Mumbai.

Of course the biggest culprits were the public sector which did a fair amount of rental houses in the 1950s, '60s and '70s but they mismanaged them. The Gujarat Housing Board mismanaged their rental housing so badly that ultimately they had no option but to sell it.

So you think this is a possibility we should seriously explore?

We must do this. You need all types of housing in an urban space. Besides, we haven't been able to bridge the affordability gap. We also have a younger generation who are beginning to earn but do not have the savings to invest in a property. They are also very mobile.

State governments could create greater housing stock and see that it is managed well. I think it will happen in the next three or four years since the housing programme isn't growing so fast.

If I am earning ₹10,000 a month, I will have to pay ₹5,000 to ₹6,000 in monthly loan instalments. But if I can get rental property for two years I am very happy till I can reach a stage where I can afford to invest. There is a large number of people who would fit into this bracket. ■

Glocal takes acute care to small cities with affordable hospitals

A model to achieve social goals with profitability

Civil Society News
New Delhi

URBAN areas in India have been steadily expanding with small cities and towns attracting a rising number of people. But what about medical facilities to meet their growing healthcare needs?

Government-run hospitals and centres in far-flung districts are mostly in bad shape. Private clinics and nursing homes provide services of a kind. So, when a stroke or heart attack or road accident happens it is often fatal. Ferrying a patient to a big city is mostly impractical and invariably too expensive.

Glocal Healthcare Systems, a social enterprise, says it has found a solution. It has set up 11 low-cost hospitals in small cities where reliable and affordable acute care is now available. By the end of this financial year, it hopes to have seven more hospitals and a total of 2,000 beds across them.

Glocal's model is to provide the best standards of treatment at locations where government facilities are lacking and private hospital chains don't find it profitable to go. Over the past six years, Glocal has built well-equipped hospitals and put medical teams in place at such unlikely destinations as Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur, Behrampur, Begusarai, Amroha, Mednipur, Krishnagar and Jeypore.

As a social enterprise, Glocal can't be driven by profit alone. It has the twin goals of reaching people who need healthcare and being sustainable in business terms. The two objectives go together.

Originally, acute care in small cities wasn't Glocal's focus. It set out first in West Bengal to provide primary healthcare to catchments of 30,000 people at the level of a block. It was through the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY) that it hoped to have a steady revenue stream.

The role it saw for itself at first was to give patients basic facilities to deal with common ailments. A Glocal hospital would fix a hernia or remove a gall bladder or handle a gynaecological issue. It would offer professional standards at reasonable costs in tune with RSBY limits. (See Civil Society cover story, March 2013.)

But the model did not work because of several reasons, including delayed payments and the lack of transparency under RSBY. Over time Glocal had to close down two of its five hospitals in West Bengal.



Dr Syed Sabahat Azim: 'We have pivoted to a place between secondary and tertiary care'

Glocal found it more viable to look at small cities with a population of 100,000 instead of a block with 30,000. It also decided to focus on acute care for which there was a demand.

A rethink followed and Glocal found it more viable to look at small cities with a population of 100,000 instead of a block with a catchment of 30,000. It also decided that it was better to focus on acute care for which there was a demand. It continues to provide basic services but they are no longer its focus because it learnt from its experience in West Bengal that people prefer clinics and nursing homes with which they have old associations. It is difficult for a new Glocal hospital to make an entry in the basic care space.

Dr Syed Sabahat Azim, Glocal's hugely energetic CEO and founder, says: "The first hospital at Sonamukhi was well designed and staffed with passionate people. It was the perfect hospital except for the fact there were no patients! We realised that

a large range of services was available in that area. Now we might not consider those services to be good, but people were using them. We still do general medicine, pediatrics and gynaecology but that is no longer our focus."

"Instead, we have pivoted to a place between secondary and tertiary care. We now deliver what local nursing homes cannot provide. Acute care is one of our main areas — emergency and ICU. We have cardiology, neurosurgery, orthopaedics, trauma, respiratory diseases and nephrology," says Dr Azim.

SMALL MORE COSTLY

There was also the realisation that in financial terms very small hospitals are not viable. Glocal's first



A Glocal hospital

hospitals were envisaged as 30-bed hospitals at the block level. But the cost of services you need to run a hospital are higher over a few number of beds. It is more expensive to run a small hospital than a large hospital.

"In terms of population density we found a sweet spot in towns with a 100,000 population," says Dr Azim.

The shift to acute care happened as a part of this learning. The patients who were going to Glocal's early hospitals were doing so when they were about to die and not for basic services. Glocal couldn't turn them away or send them anywhere else either. So it began saving lives and that finally became its new focus.

"I wouldn't say it was great strategic thinking on our part though in hindsight it looks very good. We started attempting to handle these cases. Initially, we were scared and would be calling up neonatologists and intensivists asking for advice. But we started getting results that were much beyond our expectations," recalls Dr Azim.

MORTALITY RATE

"Last year we had a mortality rate of 8.5 percent across all our ICU beds, which are almost always full. As a reference, the US average is 12 percent and the Indian average, though it is not published, is said to be 18 percent according to a study in 2015."

Glocal works on the assumption that 95 percent of all morbidity comes from 42 diseases. It also seeks to be entirely process and protocol-driven in delivering treatment. It does not believe in hiring top doctors and instead invests in an assembly line of skills.

Glocal's assembly line approach has equipped it well to be a provider of acute care services and it made the transition quite easily.

"We are an assembly line, process-driven, protocol-based healthcare system. We believe that



A digital dispensary, the future of primary health centres

'We are an assembly line, process-driven, protocol-based healthcare system. We believe that medicine is a science. There are protocols for treating someone who has had a stroke or heart attack.'

medicine is a science and that it works," explains Dr Azim.

"There are protocols for treating someone who has had a stroke or heart attack or been in a road accident and if you train people these protocols actually work. In acute care you are not actually bothered by why it happened but about fixing what is happening right now. You work backwards. There is a protocol for 0-2 minutes, 2-5 minutes and so on. It is very amenable to an assembly line because you have to respond quickly and by adhering to the protocol," he says.

"For this you don't actually need top doctors but people who can follow instructions. We also run closed ICUs, which means once a patient is admitted the people inside the ICU have the responsibility and authority to do whatever is necessary," he adds.

Dr Azim argues that the space for healthcare is in



Dr Azim with Glocal team members at a conference on rural healthcare in Delhi. And below: A nurse checks a patient in a digital dispensary. The Litmus RX and Litmus MX machines on which the dispensary depends are on the right



the small cities and towns. What is needed is an economic model and Glocal seems to have found it by marrying non-negotiable social objectives with business discipline.

An important part of Glocal's strategy is to have its doctors on salary rather than in a revenue-sharing arrangement like most private hospital chains. With fixed salaries, Glocal's profitability increases as occupancy rises. A Glocal hospital can be profitable at 20 percent occupancy.

EMPLOYING DOCTORS

Glocal believes that there are enough doctors being produced in the country. The problem is to find jobs for them. A neurosurgeon will need to spend 10 years building a practice in a big city like Kolkata because senior doctors will guard their turf.

"Now large hospitals and large cities are not going to come up 10 in a year. We at Glocal are probably the only people doing neurosurgery in very small cities and towns," says Dr Azim.

Geography is key to Glocal's business strategy and determines its financial viability. Hospitals are in clusters and along highways. This means doctors can move easily between facilities and other resources, too, can be shared.

"Small cities which are on the national highways and connected with each other make it possible to

move critical manpower from one place to another. So also with the supply chain," says Dr Azim.

"If you look at the National Health Protection Scheme or NHPS, which will be rolled out despite initial problems, where is the expertise to deliver healthcare at the costs it envisages except at Glocal," he points out.

It works well for Glocal as a business and in terms of social good it takes professional healthcare to underserved people who can't spend much.

DIGITAL DISPENSARIES

For the primary healthcare part of its mission Glocal now has the digital dispensary, which is a computerised unit at which several tests can be performed. This is an important innovation for reaching healthcare to people in remote areas.

A visit to a digital dispensary could cost as little as ₹225, which is significantly lower than what a patient may have to pay while visiting any other clinic.

In the six years since it was founded, Glocal claims its facilities have hospitalised 90,000 patients, done 70,000 surgeries and saved at least 5,000 lives. It provides 1,000 full-time and 700 part-time jobs.

As India seeks to expand its healthcare infrastructure, Glocal is perhaps a good example of how social goals can be coupled with the efficiency and inventiveness of private enterprise. ■



The nurse feeds data into the computer. Based on the tests and symptoms the patient is experiencing, the computer provides a list of possible disease conditions.

The doctor sitting far away can use the electronic stethoscope to hear the heartbeat and check out the lungs of the patient. The derma scope will allow the doctor to look at a rash.

Finally, it is the doctor who decides on the line of treatment and once that call has been taken instructions go to a dispenser which provides the medicines in the correct dosages.

Glocal's digital dispensaries are attracting the attention of state governments. There are 100 in Rajasthan and Odisha is next in line.

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As India seeks to expand its healthcare infrastructure, Glocal is perhaps a good example of how social goals can be coupled with the efficiency and inventiveness of private enterprise. ■

Talking to men about women

Kavita Charanji
New Delhi

TWENTY-three-year-old Gaurav Tripathi comes from a large, conservative joint family headed by his paternal grandfather in Lucknow. His mother is a government schoolteacher but the other women are strictly in *purdah*. Tripathi found the discrimination the women in his family faced disconcerting. His own attitude towards girls was shaped in this patriarchal environment.

In February 2016, along with 14 other young men aged between 16 and 30 years, Tripathi joined a programme called Mardon Waali Baat organised by the YP Foundation. All the young men had skewed notions of gender, masculinity and sexuality. Most belonged to deeply patriarchal families. They had never thought about a woman's consent in a relationship, or of gender inequality or gender-based violence.

Mardon Waali Baat basically trains young boys to examine in depth how gender and sexuality play out in their own lives and how they take stances against it, what their reality is, their ideas of an equal relationship. It also looks into a man's aspiration of being in a relationship, his aspiration regarding the world and how being a man creates a certain pressure on his behaviour," says Manak Matiyani, executive director of the YP Foundation.

"The aim of the programme is to help each young man become a better man by defining who a better man is, that a more caring man is one who takes more domestic responsibility, a better man is one who is able to understand the pressure of gender and then withstand or resist it."

Matiyani conducted many of the training programmes himself with Anuj Gopal Pandey, programme coordinator for Uttar Pradesh (UP).

Between February and September 2016 the 15 young men, termed peer leaders, underwent interactive training over seven days on gender, sexuality and violence, with a focus on examining masculinity and its links with power, patriarchy and violence.

Building the feminist leadership of these young men became a major concern. As Matiyani says, "The bent of the programme was to facilitate a perspective in the young men that since they are automatically given a leadership role because they are male, their real leadership lay in giving up that space for other genders to come up."

The training, workshops, discussion and bi-monthly meetings with experts were a great ice-

breaker. For the first time the men were able to freely discuss their personal experiences of sexuality and sex. The discussions also cleared many of their misconceptions about a girl's consent, the role of girls in domestic work and definitions of violence.

The young leaders were then trained for on-ground action. Along with the YP Foundation



Manak Matiyani: 'Mardon Waali Baat helps young men become better men by defining who a better man is'

project team, they compiled youth-friendly digital and audio-visual resources like films, posters and other IEC (Information, Education and Communication) material to get other young men to think about masculinity, gender-based violence and human rights. They came up with innovative forms of communication like using their own photos and developing postcards, podcasts, short films and the use of social media.

And finally the young leaders were ready to test the ground. They reached out to over 750 other young men in colleges, schools and institutional

Fifteen young men, called peer leaders, were given training over seven days on gender, sexuality and violence with a focus on patriarchy and its links to power.

care homes in Lucknow. They conducted interactive sessions on subjects like masculinity, gender, power, self, gender-based violence and the like through games, film screenings, talks, breaking gender stereotypes and they undertook a public campaign in the popular 1090 Chowk in Lucknow.

The ground action proved a major success.

SHREY GUPTA



A meeting of the Udaan team

Asia Foundation that supported both the cycles no longer extends support, the young leaders continue to visit colleges and shelter homes regularly to channelise the discussions they have started as their action projects towards the bigger goal of the programme," says Pandey.

Meanwhile, on its part, the YP Foundation is now undertaking extensive research on masculinities and young men's major concerns around gender, sexuality and relationships.

The YP Foundation adopts a similar approach to its other programmes that run in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Delhi. Whether it is adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights, improving life skills among children and youth, promoting mental health or comprehensive sexuality education, the aim is to effectively train a pool of well-informed young leaders with a deep understanding of such issues.

"Our push as an organisation is that young people should become advocates and stakeholders who can effectively dialogue with government functionaries,

policymakers and NGOs on government policies and programmes developed for adolescents and youth," says Matiyani.

Among the YP Foundation's newer programmes is the Udaan project. Supported by the Children's

Under the Udaan project, cinema, theatre and sports are being used as outreach strategies to educate young people about sex and relationships in their daily lives.

Investment Fund Foundation, the YP Foundation partners with IPE Global, Manjari and Quicksand for the Udaan Project that aims to reduce the adolescent fertility rate and adolescent pregnancy in Dholpur, Rajasthan.

The Udaan project will use the Human-Centred Design approach, pioneered by US-based IDEO.org, which basically starts with the targeted user and ends with new solutions designed to suit their needs. Constant feedback from the field followed by intensive tests of as many ideas as possible are needed before the programme finally rolls out as a pilot for a year between 2018 and 2019.

The YP Foundation is the technical expert in the Udaan project. It will work to "improve knowledge and practices of sexual and reproductive health among unmarried adolescents," says Rhea Chawla, coordinator,

research and advocacy. Now in the midst of the ideation phase, among the strategies being tested are forum theatre, sports engagements, adolescent-friendly education material, film screening, strengthening government-run Ujala clinics, and greater community outreach.

"The adolescents are now very comfortable after the focus group discussions. They have come up and asked questions that they never asked anyone. They talk about their sexual experiences and their discomfort in talking about their problems with their friends. Based on the discussions, they want information. Girls, in particular, are hungry for information because they lack agency so the amount of doubt is much higher," says Harsh Chauhan, programme associate with the foundation.

The long-term goal of the Udaan project is that the evidence collated during the pilot phase will serve as a means of advocacy with the government of Rajasthan and find a place in the Rajasthan Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram strategy for adolescent sexual and reproductive health. ■

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Anthony Pacheco at his farm with his luscious mangoes

Anthony Pacheco's idyllic farm

Derek Almeida
Chorao (Goa)

ANTHONY Pacheco is one of those rare entrepreneurs who is at home in both an electronics workshop and a farm. Once a week, on a Sunday, he catches a ferry at Ribandar which is about three km from Panaji and crosses the Mandovi river to disembark on the island of Chorao which is home to the Salim Ali bird sanctuary.

A 20-minute drive takes him to his one-acre farm which is at the other end of the island. Once there he inspects the 45 Mankurad and two Thai Honey Dew mango trees to see if they are growing well or have been attacked by pests. His home's wet waste is unloaded and allowed to decompose.

The undulating land, which overlooks a large pond, has black pipes running in directions that only Pacheco is aware of. This elaborate drip irrigation system was set up with a subsidy of ₹30,000 from the agriculture department. "We did get a subsidy but it was not enough," he said. "The problem with the scheme is that the upper limit for one acre of land is not realistic." This means the farmer has to make investments for extension of the system to other parts of the plot.

This did not stop Pacheco, who, with his knowledge of electronics, uses his phone to control the amount of water used and the time of irrigation. He can now start and stop the pumping from anywhere, using his mobile phone.

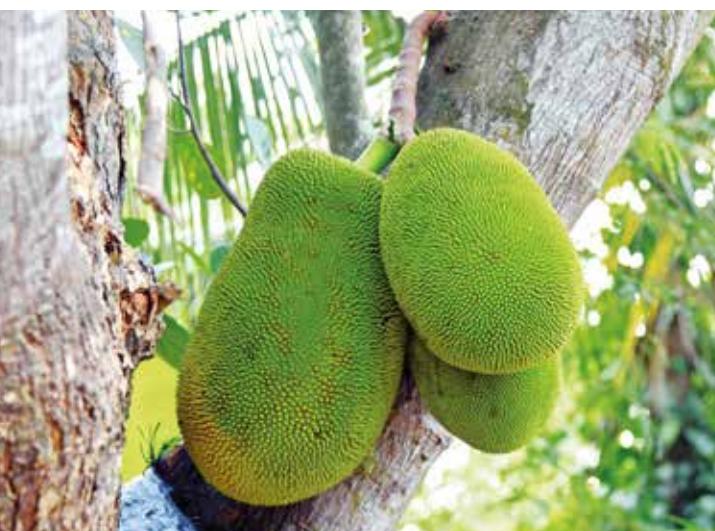
Initially he used a system purchased from Ocean Agritech, Pune, which was sufficient to control a single pump. When the time came to source water from a second well he switched to an advanced system which could control up to five pumps

Pacheco emphasises education in modern methods of farming. 'You have to combine learning with the land to make it work,' he says. What he means is that he had to learn the hard way.

PICTURES BY SAGUN GAWADE



A range of fruits thrive on Pacheco's farm: pineapple, jackfruit and guava.



jackfruit tree that draws attention. "The jackfruits on the tree used to turn black and drop to the ground. After the irrigation system was set up and fertiliser pumped through it, the tree started drawing nutrition and today it has large ripened fruit waiting to be harvested," says Pacheco. He also has three pepper creepers which yield two kg per vine, but Pacheco, aware of the earnings from pepper, has other plans. In the corner of the farm is a 10-foot-thick PVC water pipe. "Can you guess the purpose of this pipe?" he asks. "I plan to grow pepper using the Vietnamese technique. I first place a PVC mesh around the pipe, fill it with soil and compost and then allow the plant to creep upwards. Instead of having one set of roots at the bottom the vine will spread its roots at every level and this increases the yield."

Water was not an issue as the plot has three wells sunk through solid granite. While water is drawn from one of the wells, Pacheco wants to preserve the second one which has the traditional lever system for lifting water along with a short canal which was used to irrigate vegetable patches.

The farm has an assortment of trees. Two huge mango trees, probably planted by his grandfather, stand on the edge of the property but it is the

excavator. A mixture of soil sourced from Bicholim, river sand and cow dung in equal measure was used for the pits. He has several guava trees which were brought from Jharkhand, pineapple plants and two coconut trees which used to yield 25 nuts. "After using a bio-fertiliser which I purchased from Pune, the yield increased to 300 bigger nuts," he said. A glycedria tree, which sprouts leaves laden with nutrients, is located near one of the wells. Pacheco is a self-taught horticulturalist who

continuously emphasises the need for education in modern methods of farming. "You have to combine learning with the land to make it work," he says. What he means is that he had to learn everything the hard way.

"I was told by agriculture experts that the flowers of the mango grafts had to be broken off for five years in succession to strengthen the plant. I did it for two years and today I get a crop of around 1,500 mangoes," he said. He is now looking at harvesting at least 20,000 mangoes in 10 years when the grafts grow to their full height.

At the start Pacheco took the decision to go completely organic and that proved to be problematic because he had no guide and was forced to find solutions himself to the many problems. "I do most of my research online and meet farmers from outside the state at the Pune agricultural seminar every year."

On one occasion two mango grafts were attacked by the borer worm. The traditional method to get rid of it which was advised by the agriculture department did not help. After making several enquiries, Pacheco purchased an organic pesticide from a Hyderabad-based company which worked.

On another occasion he noticed a leak at a joint of the irrigation system. After careful examination he discovered that a tiny hole had been made by ants. "Instead of using chemical we mixed wood ash in soil and spread it over the joint." The ants disappeared. Pacheco regularly collects wood ash from the local baker which he uses to battle ants.

If one is observant one will notice a plastic object tied to one of the trees. "This is used to trap male fruit flies," he explains. "A female hormone is sprayed on the inside to draw the male fly which is then trapped."

Pacheco, who also purchases cow urine online in five-litre cans to be used as a fungicide, is determined to use organic inputs but laments that the approach of the state agriculture department is not encouraging. "The department is not oriented towards organic farming. Most of the people in the department are trained to use chemicals and use of organic pesticides is frowned upon and the success of organic farmers is kept under wraps. We need a special subsidy for organic pesticides and fertilisers because they have to be bought in bulk and have a shorter shelf life."

by SAMITA RATHOR

Samita's World

SO HOW DOES JOY BEGIN?

SAMITA

WITH A FURRY HEAD AND ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE TAIL!

Jaipur helpline saves children

Bharat Dogra & Reena Mehta
Jaipur

WHEN Sameer woke up from deep slumber near Jaipur station, he did not even know where he was. All that the 14-year-old remembered was that while going for an errand he was accosted by a stranger. He was drugged and brought to Jaipur in a truck. In all probability he was to be picked up by another trafficking agent from this point but luckily he was spotted by activists of a child helpline booth set up at Jaipur railway station.

After feeding the hungry child they enquired about his family and contacted his parents in Uttarakhand by phone. The parents, who had been deeply worried about their missing child for the last two days, were extremely happy to know where he was. Sameer's father came immediately to Jaipur.

Reena Sharma, a counsellor with the child helpline team, says, "We prepared all the relevant documents and presented the case before the child welfare committee. Fortunately, we were able to get a quick decision and Sameer went back happily with his father. Before going they thanked us profusely and insisted on giving us a gift of homemade jaggery."

ST is a 15-year-old girl from Sikkim who ran away from home to meet a boy whom she had befriended on Facebook. She managed to reach Jaipur according to the directions given by her friend but the boy did not turn up. She knew no one in the city. Thankfully, she came into contact with the child helpline and they provided safe shelter.

Sharma recalls, "It took a lot of counselling effort to convince ST that she had been misled by someone and prevail upon her to return to her home. Once she was convinced, her parents were called and she went back happily with them."

These are just two recent examples of how tender lives which could have gone terribly wrong with disastrous consequences were saved by the timely intervention of child helpline activists at Jaipur railway station. Shiv, a senior social activist who coordinates the efforts of Antakshari Foundation to carry out relief and rescue work for needy and distressed children in and around the station, says: "About four years ago we carried out a baseline survey and found a serious situation of about 130 drug-addicted children living in and around this railway station in places like Hasanpura. They were being used by traffickers, junk dealers and other anti-social elements for various undesirable activities. It was a challenge to work in very disturbing conditions at that time. However, now this railway station and its surrounding areas are free from such activities to a

large extent. Our record shows that on average we are able to rescue and provide relief to one needy and distressed child every day."

Inspector Rajkumar, in charge of the Jaipur Railway Protection Force at Jaipur Junction, says, "My earlier experience at various railway stations has convinced me that problems relating to runaway, trafficked or other distressed children can be very serious in and around railway stations. In



Child helpline workers with a boy they rescued at the Jaipur railway station

Activists have become quite experienced in identifying trains which bring trafficked children. They go through a complex process for sending the children back home.

the middle of all their other work of maintaining law and order it is not easy for railway police officials to resolve the problems of these children. Even sensitive officials find it difficult to find the time for all the necessary procedures needed to help these children. But when I came to this railway station I found that the presence of a dedicated team of child helpline activists is a big help for providing badly needed rescue and relief for distressed children."

Sharma adds, "We have a 12-member team for a

24x7 rescue and relief effort at this railway station. In addition we have also successfully tried to obtain the help and cooperation of railway vendors, porters and auto-rickshaw drivers in this effort. Our work is well known to all of them and when they come across a child needing help they immediately approach us."

Despite their meagre resources these activists also try to reach out to distressed children at other nearby railway stations including Gandhi Nagar, Phulera and Jagatpura.

These activists have become quite experienced in identifying trains which bring trafficked children. Their effort is to restore these children to their families. However, first they have to go through a complex process of taking their case to the child welfare committee and arranging shelter for the children for some days. Some cases they handle on their own and some they refer to another related organisation called Sneha-Aangan, a one-stop crisis management centre for children, the first of its kind in Rajasthan. Sneha-Aangan makes a wider effort for rescuing and helping trafficked children, child workers, child beggars, children affected by sexual violence and other forms of violence.

Taruna, an activist of Sneha-Aangan, says, "When children suffering from such distress come to our notice, we provide them counselling and arrange for the specific help they need. For example, for child victims of sexual assault we guide their families in obtaining compensation of ₹2.5 lakh which can provide some help for the child's relief and rehabilitation. Several of these children have to be sent to shelter homes and we try our best to keep track of their well-being for as long as we can."

However, several activists also expressed concern and regret about the unsatisfactory conditions in most child shelter homes and repeatedly emphasised that these homes need to be improved drastically.

Vijay Goyal, coordinator, says, "On average our efforts lead to the rescue and rehabilitation of about 50 children in a month. Some of them are brought to us by the child helpline service at the railway station while many others come to us from other sources."

While these are very significant achievements, the activists agree that, on the whole, the problems of child trafficking, sexual exploitation of children and runaway children have been increasing in a big way. Dr Roopa Manglani, who has studied the issue extensively, says, "Due to complex reasons the distress of children has been escalating. So we need many more efforts like the child helpline service and Sneha-Aangan. Some proposals for such expansion have been made in the recent past in Rajasthan and these need to be accepted as early as possible to provide timely relief and rescue to needy and distressed children." ■



Harvesting water. Harnessing futures.

In a perfect world, children lead happy, carefree childhoods. They spend their days learning in school, while their free time is spent at play with friends. However, for the children of Nuh in Haryana, this is but a distant dream. The culprit - a severe shortage of potable water.

While most of us cannot even begin to imagine how crippling this can be; the residents of Nuh suffer the consequences every day. Over-salinated water and a lack of safe and assured water supply has created a trail of chronic issues that impact the health and well-being of school children. This lack of potable water has affected the attendance rate at schools, with children going back home to refill their water bottles. More often than not, they never make it back to school.

DCB Bank stepped in to support an innovative plan using rooftop rainwater harvesting and bio-sand filters in three schools, which resulted in a number of positive changes. Access to drinking water has led to a decrease in absenteeism from schools. Mid-day meals are also cooked using this water, ensuring the children are healthier and happier.

With the capacity to harvest 3,00,000 litres of potable water a year, Nuh now looks to a hopeful future. One where children are free to learn and lead a normal, happy and healthy childhood.

DCB Bank Rooftop Rainwater Harvesting Project:

- Set up at 3 schools in Nuh, Haryana
- Four 25,000 litre tanks harvest 3,00,000 litres of rainwater a year
- Innovative, electricity-free bio-sand filter eliminates contaminants
- Nuh's children now have access to clean potable water, daily
- Over 1,000 futures positively impacted



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PATIENT AS STORYTELLER

My treatment lasted for over two-and-a-half years – months of extreme side effects, high costs, anxiety and mental fatigue

SAURABH RANE

I was training to be a doctor when I started feeling sick. After two weeks of continued fever, cough and immense weight loss, we decided to go for an X-ray and found I had fluid in my left lung. The doctor told me that it was tuberculosis.

I was started on medication but didn't feel better even after a few months. Given my medical training, I knew something was wrong. I persuaded the doctor to get a drug sensitivity test done. Yet nothing conclusive was found and my treatment continued, based on what, I am not sure.

I developed high fever again and lost more weight. In confusion and exasperation, I pushed my doctor for a left lung sonography to determine the cause of fever. During the sonography, my doctor accidentally moved his hand to my right lung. There were close to 1000 cc of fluid in my right lung.

I was devastated, because now both my lungs were infected. I lost faith in my doctor and went in for a second opinion. My new doctor advised further tests, especially a culture to diagnose my drug resistance. Tests revealed I was a highly drug-resistant case.

I could not believe it — especially because I know that the success rate of treatment for cases like mine was barely 20 percent. Also, treatment was long, expensive, and came with multiple side effects. My treatment lasted for over two-and-a-half years — months of extreme side effects, high costs, anxiety and mental fatigue. If it was not for my family and a few friends, I would not have survived this.

TB affects 2.8 million Indians every year. While I sought treatment in the private sector, what we really need is free high-quality diagnosis and treatment irrespective of whether one is diagnosed in the private or public sector.



Rane: 'If it was not for my family and a few friends, I would not have survived this'

Anyone can get TB; what is critical is to have access to easy, affordable and quality diagnosis and medicines. Hopefully, policy makers in India will read this piece and make the changes we need to end TB.

TB AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

India has one of the world's largest and most diverse private health sectors. From qualified doctors to quacks to 'jhola wala' practitioners — everyone treats everything, simple and complex ailments alike. Despite its heterogeneity, the private sector remains one of the largest providers of health services in the country. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), over 70 percent of Indians (72 percent in rural India and 79 percent in urban India) seek care in the private sector at one point or another. This poses challenges but also enormous opportunities for ensuring access to affordable, accurate and reliable high-quality treatment and healthcare services.

In the case of TB, the majority of patients initially seek treatment in the private sector, even though the government provides free treatment and diagnosis. There are numerous reasons for this, of which ease of access and perceived quality of care are amongst the leading ones. In urban areas, ease of access, flexible timings and behaviour of healthcare staff are considered prominent reasons to avoid public sector facilities. Another associated reason is concern about confidentiality.

At the same time, diagnosis and treatment of TB in India's vast private sector remains of uneven quality and, many argue, can even be an engine of drug resistance. Yet millions prefer the private sector. This poses interesting challenges

about balancing patient choice and quality of care in India.

Traditionally, an average TB patient has a long and somewhat schizophrenic trajectory. They often swing between the private and public sectors as funds run out and a final cure remains difficult to obtain. In most cases, there is some interface with the private sector. Clearly, TB in India cannot be ended until the private sector is engaged effectively. This means that the government needs to employ new and innovative strategies to engage and work with the private sector.

THE BIG GAPS

From the patient perspective, as well as from the perspective of disease control, the private sector is fraught with numerous challenges. These include but are not limited to the following:

Diagnosis: TB diagnosis can be a challenge, as the private sector prescribes a plethora of tests for TB diagnosis. Many of these tests are inappropriate for TB detection and are riddled with their own unique challenges. For instance, liquid culture testing takes weeks to provide a result. It is costly and can only be carried out by highly trained staff in specialist laboratories. Similarly, the nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT), which is widely recognized as one of the most efficient means of testing TB, has diagnostic cartridges with a short shelf-life, operating temperature and humidity restrictions, requires a continuous electricity supply and needs annual servicing and calibration of each machine.

Treatment: Private providers have poor compliance with the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP)/World Health Organization (WHO) treatment regimens, with errors in both dosage of drugs and duration of treatment. Also,

India's ticking TB time bomb

Tuberculosis affects 2.8 million people in India, pushing entire families into poverty. A five-year plan to control TB does not take into account that most Indians do not seek treatment under the government health programme. It is usually their last choice. Going to the private sector results in haphazard treatment and the spectre of multi-drug resistant (MDR) TB. India has close to 100,000 cases of MDR TB.

TB is also a whispered disease. Those who contract it are forced to remain silent and not talk about the relentless trauma and pain that they undergo because of the stigma attached to the disease. But the most critical character in the TB story is not the doctor, or the dysfunctional health system but the patient. Very few have a say in how they are treated, the information they get, what support they need and how to get it.

Chapal Mehra, as an independent advocate and editor, has put together the stories of survivors so that society can learn from their experience about the spread of TB and what can be done about it. He is the founder of Survivors Against TB, an advocacy group working on TB.

India's Ticking Time Bomb: The TB Survivors' Manifesto has been published by Speaking Tiger. Price ₹250

Chapal Mehra and every stakeholder connected with TB in India that I know. I welcome L...
 with TB, what patients think and what they want us to do about this.
 We'll never cure uncommunicable diseases. [www.speakingtiger.in](#)
**TUBERCULOSIS
INDIA'S
TICKING
TIME
BOMB**
 Edited by CHAPAL MEHRA
 Introduction by DR SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN,
 Deputy Director General for Programmes, WHO

poor usage of proper adherence methodologies leads to low adherence among patients. Many view this as a genesis for drug resistance in India.

Expense: The costs of diagnosis and treatment remain prohibitive in the private sector. Most patients cannot afford quality care without financial strain. This also makes treatment adherence a challenge. In many cases, patients are forced to stop their course of treatment due to the high costs of medicines, tests or consultations in the private sector. Because of its profit-seeking nature, the private sector also has no system of monitoring to ensure that patients complete treatment.

Uneven quality of care: This is both a function of the heterogeneous nature of private providers, their limited skill levels and poor understanding of TB. This leads to delayed diagnoses, poor diagnostic and treatment practices, and poor compliance with TB treatment. Further, follow-up care, such as contact tracing, co-infection (diabetes and HIV) screening and prophylaxis, remains feeble. This is a function of the numerous quacks and less-qualified providers in the private sectors who treat and diagnose TB.

Lack of counselling and support: There is virtually no engagement of patients and their families via TB counselling and support. As a result, families do not understand the importance of care for TB-affected individuals, and patients themselves do not receive much needed support for the issues they face during TB treatment. Widespread information and awareness building campaigns for patients and their families are needed. However, these are completely missing in the private sector.

THE PP MODEL

From a systemic point of view, there are numerous challenges to the public and private sector working together.

The private sector complains about the absence of information and outreach from the public sector TB programme. The constant refrain is that the government doesn't do much to engage them.

Being profit-led, the private sector finds itself unable to respond to government schemes with limited incentives and is more focussed on numbers. Private practitioners admit that they may be unable to take on certain tasks, such as tracing those who miss taking medicines, providing social support to patients, and detailed record keeping and analysis.

There is a lack of resolve in the public sector to address the challenges in the private sector. National TB Programme (NTP) managers do not consider the private sector as a factor. The managers believe that eventually patients will turn away from exploitative and profit-oriented private practitioners. Others perceive the private sector as an unmanageable entity.

In many cases, public sector managers are too preoccupied with the DOTS programmes. They are apprehensive about addressing the additional challenges that the private sector poses.

Other constraints include a lack of willingness, as well as the necessary skills and human resources to work with the private sector. Nonetheless, there is general agreement on the need to act to get private practitioners on board.

NATIONAL COMMITMENTS

The National Strategic Plan (2012–2017) ensured early and improved diagnosis of all TB patients, improved outreach, expansion of case-finding efforts, and deploying better diagnostic services to patients diagnosed and treated in the private sector.

The recent National Strategic Plan (2017–2025) specifies the provision of free diagnosis and treatment in the private sector. Strategies to control TB through public sector health services will have little impact if inappropriate management

The government needs to ensure that every patient receives appropriate counselling through the government as well as the private sector, empowering them with sufficient information to deal with the disease.

It is the patient's choice about where to seek care. Irrespective of where individuals seek care, it is important that the government ensures enforcement and accountability so that healthcare is reliable and affordable.

of TB patients in private clinics continues unabated. While little has changed over the years, we are hopeful that the private sector will comply with the latest suggestions in the NSP.

PATIENTS AND PRIORITIES

Assured quality of care: It is the patient's choice about where to seek care. Irrespective of where individuals seek care, it is important that the government ensures enforcement and accountability so that healthcare is reliable and affordable. The RNTCP has developed formal guidelines to help local programmes structure collaborations with private healthcare providers and non-governmental organizations. The guidelines need to be enforced stringently. Every citizen affected by TB should be assured of appropriate diagnosis and treatment in the private sector.

Seamless access through public-private partnerships: The private sector can play a pivotal role in controlling TB in India. In the interest of disease control, we need to collaborate with the private sector. This will help outreach in hard-to-reach areas, including remote rural areas. It will also lead to increased case detection and notification of TB cases. A strong system of referrals from the private to the public sector will scale up diagnostic and treatment services for TB and drug-resistant TB. In the end, every TB affected individual should have seamless access to care either through the public or private sectors.

Free and affordable care: The government aims to provide universal access to quality diagnosis and treatment to end TB by 2025. However, even today most private sector patients do not have access to free diagnosis and treatment without enrolling in the government programme. Every patient must be able to access free diagnosis and treatment in the private sector. This can be done easily by following options in partnership with the private sector:

- Participation in referring, diagnosing and treating patients with TB;
- Establishing TB treatment centres within a private healthcare facility and
- Conducting training and workshops with private laboratories.

Counselling: The government needs to ensure that every patient receives appropriate counselling through the government as well as the private sector, empowering them with sufficient information to deal with the disease and also providing the appropriate support systems to manage the disease. Every TB affected family must be provided appropriate counselling and information in their regional language both in the public and private sectors. The government needs to establish protocols for this.

Involve key stakeholders: Other suggestions include reviewing the current approaches to engaging the private sector in TB care and control, and redesigning these through consultations with key stakeholders, including healthcare professionals, NGOs, the pharmaceutical industry, etc.

The Government of India has rolled out a direct benefit transfer scheme for patients on TB treatment. This is a huge step in the right direction which will help TB patients complete their treatment and recover completely. However, the implementation of this scheme needs to be effective and translate on the ground.

Similarly, information and communication technology-based portals such as NIKSHAY (an online tracking system for TB patients) need to become broad-based and reach the grassroots for effective TB prevention and control. The government is also in the process of rolling out 99 DOTS, which offers a fixed-dose combination of TB medicines. This is another welcome step, although its implementation has been slow.

India needs to urgently address its private sector challenge if it wants to end TB by 2025. In the end, this will not be possible until every Indian has access to free, accurate and patient-centric care in both the public and the private sector. ■

Saurabh Rane is a physician in Mumbai



Harvesting Rain for Profit

Name: Shri Muniraj,
Village: Muthur, Krishnagiri district, Tamil Nadu

Muniraj, a marginal farmer with seven acres of land from Muthur village of Krishnagiri district, had a greenhouse where he practiced floriculture. However, a falling water table meant that irrigation became a problem – especially during summer months even for drip irrigation.

To overcome the problem of insufficient water, Srinivasan Services Trust (SST) encouraged Muniraj to save every drop of rainwater falling on his green house. SST provided technical information and engineering support for creating a pond, next to the greenhouse, large enough to collect six lakh litres of rainwater. To prevent loss by seepage, the pond was lined with a polythene sheet and a shade net was used as cover to help arrest loss by evaporation. The pond gets filled up with 3 days of rain. The water saved in this pond is sufficient for the crop needs for one season.

IMPACT: Muniraj is now financially secure and earns more than ₹30,000 per month. He has built a pucca house and also bought a car. He has become an expert on rainwater harvesting and offers advice to several villages in the area.

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‘Sanitation is the fortune at the bottom of the toilet’

Civil Society News

New Delhi

THE Union government's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or Clean India Campaign has had several impacts. It has created awareness about hygiene and has led to more toilets being built than ever before across villages, towns and cities.

As the campaign has unfolded, a sanitation economy is taking shape. It is estimated to be worth tens of billions of dollars. Private investment is needed in sewage treatment technologies, user facilities at public toilets, fittings, water conservation, financing options and more.

The Swachh campaign apart, a policy on the management of sewage and faecal sludge provides the framework within which enterprises can engage with the national priority to speed up cleanliness.

To avail of the opportunity, global companies under the Toilet Board Coalition have begun reaching out to local bodies and state governments. The first formal collaboration is with the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) to develop Pune into a Smart Sanitation City.

Cheryl Hicks, executive director of the Toilet Board Coalition, was in New Delhi to attend the India Sanitation Conclave at FICCI. She spoke to Civil Society.

What is the Toilet Board Coalition?

We are a corporate-led coalition started because companies saw a business opportunity in sanitation. The 2.3 billion people without toilets are customers that they don't have. So companies are very motivated to invest in universal access to sanitation. But businesses need a business case to keep investing. Our role in the Toilet Board Coalition is to reinforce that business case and help a range of businesses to invest in sanitation.

The toilets themselves are the first market for companies in the toilet business or in toilet products. But even more interesting and exciting is the demand for resources from toilets — the biological resources which are becoming scarce to many businesses. As their resources get more and more scarce they are looking to mine sewage.

The third area is smart sanitation — the digital economy. We are very interested in digital health, preventive health and the health information that comes out of this system. Until now we have not mined our toilets for information about our health. We go to the clinic or the hospital. The first thing they get us to do is to take samples. But if we can skip that step, we can save the economy money and have more direct access to health information.



Cheryl Hicks: 'Our role is to help a range of businesses invest in sanitation'

So these are the areas we are looking at — areas where there is value in the system for businesses to invest and then create an investment case for universal access to sanitation. Sanitation has huge costs and that's why we don't have it for everyone.

Tell us about your collaboration with the PMC.
The idea is to connect sanitation to the Smart City campaign. In India, the Swachh Bharat Mission, the Smart City campaign and the Housing for All campaign are all related to sanitation. In smart sanitation we believe we could accelerate universal access to sanitation because of the speed with which

'Pune would be the first city to provide us a complete set of data on sanitation from toilet usage. Smart sanitation can give us data-driven decisions.'

new technologies can scale up some of these newer business models.

We had a very good relationship with Kunal Kumar (former commissioner of the Pune Municipal Corporation). He was launching the Smart City campaign and in a conversation he said he wanted Pune to be the first Smart Sanitation City. How can we do that, he asked us. We came back with a proposal that would engage the private sector — large businesses and entrepreneurs — in delivering smart sanitation.

We believe smart sanitation can give us data-driven decision-making. In sanitation a lot of those numbers we have are assumptions. They aren't based on tracking actual usage through sensors. It is based on hearsay or rough estimates. But to make business decisions and truly understand costs and therefore revenues we need to understand what exactly is happening in the system in the city and in peri-urban areas.

So, Pune would be the first city to provide us a complete set of data on the sanitation system from toilet usage. This would include community and public toilets, waste management, the amount of resources going through that system, repair, maintenance and where the system is breaking

down. In addition, health information and public health information need to be captured.

The project is about showing new models, including linkages to Smart City applications where we can get real-time data from the sanitation system. We can deploy new business models to scale up access, usage and behaviour change.

Are you empowering the PMC to do this? Is this a cut-and-paste model being offered by your consultants?

Not at all. This has never been done before and there are no consultants involved. These are businesses delivering services and innovating with the PMC.

So the opportunities are in the distributed systems in small STPs linking, say, 50 houses and so on?

That is where the innovation is. But the Toilet Board Coalition's model is to get the best of both worlds — link innovators on the ground serving small communities with those companies who know how to operate on a large scale.

What would this sanitation economy be worth?
It would be worth \$62 billion by 2021 in India.

Would this include the whole system — toilets, sewage, services?

Construction is obviously a huge opportunity right

'The sanitation economy would be worth \$62 billion in 2021. We did this study in India first to see the size of the opportunity here. India should be a proxy for other markets.'

now because of the Swachh Bharat Mission. But after that there will be opportunities in ongoing maintenance and upgrade. We found 50 percent of those with a new toilet wanted to upgrade within six months.

There is some infrastructure too in the case of waste management and some new waste-to-wealth models that will require capital investment, but first the city has to be willing to buy that because they already have a tender anyway to pilot these new projects. About 11 new STPs are being brought in.

Which private companies are keen to invest?

Some of our partners like Unilever, Kimberly Clark and Fermenich. They are working with public and community toilet service providers in Pune. With wi-fi enablement and with this new data opportunity

they are looking at how we can drive behaviour change campaigns and test new concepts like a laundry facility. In Mumbai, Unilever is testing concepts like adding laundry facilities, hairdressers and other services. One of the public toilets for women has specific services for breastfeeding, nappy changing and female hygiene.

Lixil has a low-cost toilet for rural areas. This is being deployed in peri-urban areas where there isn't anything at the moment. They are working with one of our entrepreneurs who has a biodigester system that can be added on. So, decentralised models that don't reach the sewage system are ready and available and are being deployed.

Would this also require an integrated sewage

system?

That doesn't exist in most of our cities.
In fact, when we were looking at different cities we weren't planning on the basis of sewage systems. We were more interested in decentralised solutions.

Veolia is an expert in large sewage systems but they are also interested in decentralised systems and how these can be linked. Sewage systems cost a lot of money and time to build but decentralised systems can be up and running in three months. One of our entrepreneurs working in Pune and now in Leh put up a decentralised waste management system in three months and it is already profitable.

So the opportunities are in the distributed systems in small STPs linking, say, 50 houses and so on?

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to reinforce these opportunities for businesses to invest.

You have been helping local entrepreneurs through your Accelerator Programme. What innovations have you been supporting? What are you giving priority to?

This is the third year of our programme. Our focus has been on India partly to feed the Pune project because we wanted innovators for it. One innovation is a toilet for women on a bus that has services around it. Biomass Controls is another one. It is a small-scale waste treatment mini-grid that can also upcycle toilet resources. There is the Blue Water company which set up a small STP in three months in Leh. Another innovation is Garv Toilet, a smart toilet that uses flush sensors that clean the toilet after use. Then there is Tiger Toilet. Their core technology is a low-cost digester linked to a mixer. They are looking for joint production opportunities which could then bring both of these to scale for the poor and be a waste management solution for rural areas.

What is the size of these enterprises?

They are small. We have intentionally looked at small because of innovation. But they do have sales so they are not at venture stage or in R&D stage.

'The sanitation economy would be worth \$62 billion in 2021. We did this study in India first to see the size of the opportunity here. India should be a proxy for other markets.'

They are businesses that are now looking to scale up.

Where does investment come from?

It comes from a variety of sources, mostly donor-driven. Our mandate is to move them from donor-driven to commercial investment.

Sanitation isn't a sector with much prestige in India. What will you do about that?

Well, that was partly the reason the Toilet Board Coalition was formed. We are showing that there is opportunity and money in this business. Sanitation is the fortune at the bottom of the toilet that nobody is looking at. We create support for young entrepreneurs, give them access to finance and expertise from multinationals so that they have incentives to get into the sanitation sector.

Do entrepreneurs in India face issues that you can't deal with? In terms of policy and process?

There are a couple of things like standards. Many new technologies in sludge management do not have standards. New toilet designs don't have standards. If a large company wants to buy fertiliser from faecal sludge there aren't global standards for them to do that even if they see value in doing it. ISO and Indian national standards are working on some standards. We and the Gates Foundation are involved in that process to make sure it is business-friendly. The other is data. There hasn't been reliable data so that's another barrier everyone seems to face. Finally, trust that comes from overcoming those barriers of standards and data. ■

Is Plunes a plum idea?

Civil Society News
Gurugram

IMAGINE this: You have paid a lot upfront for a builder flat but it is nowhere near ready. The builder won't take calls and because it is one of those four-storied structures, it is not a big company you are dealing with. You need a lawyer quickly for advice and further action, but where do you find one?

Imagine this, too: You are in Gurugram for business meetings which have been set up in advance. But you are laid low with a fever. The meetings can't be cancelled. The guest house you are staying in can't recommend a doctor. Friends you have in Bengaluru are either away or don't have a doctor near where you are. What do you do?

Plunes.com says it could just be the answer to your problems. It can get you legal and medical advice wherever you are whenever you need it and in case you aren't satisfied with the first consultation it can get you a second opinion.

But 'Plunes', what's that, we can hear you ask. We can understand because it was our reaction too when the Plunes.com email popped into our inbox along with the innumerable others that arrive, seeking coverage.

Well, to get down to basics, Plunes stands for 'providing law, utility and essential services'. Its founder is Chander Verma, an energetic 26-year-old with an elaborate moustache. He looks fit and says he can do 50 push-ups at one go.

In the shared office space that he uses in Gurugram, Verma occupies a cabin. Outside the cabin, using tables to his left, is his team, as young as him. There are a couple of engineers and the rest are into data mining, social media and outreach in general.

You could walk away saying this is just another flghty start-up. By the time the story gets printed, the idea could be dead and the company gone. We see that all the time.

But Verma has got something undefinably engaging about him. In the blink of an eye you would like to give him a chance. Blink again and you spot Nehru's autobiography on his table with another book on something to do with Islamic culture.

It is strange and once the coffee arrives and his initial pitch on Plunes is over, one just has to ask. It transpires that the Nehru autobiography has been brought to the office to convince young members of the team that Nehru wasn't a Muslim!

You see, fake news has it that Nehru was a Muslim and such is the influence that fake news on the

internet has on young minds that they end up believing nothing else.

Verma is concerned. Among the things that he would like Plunes.com to be is a platform where people, particularly the young, can interact and find meaning and purpose in life. To this end he is already on 50 college campuses where there are Plunes brand ambassadors. If young people have platforms where they can talk, perhaps they can get away from the perniciousness of fake news.

Plunes.com is just about a year old. Verma is mostly burning his own cash on it and since that is not much of a pile, he is, like most entrepreneurs, juggling dreams and realities and



Chander Verma: 'I decided that what was needed was a platform where you could get a lawyer instantly'

staring at deadlines.

In the short while that he has been at it, Verma says he has brought 40,000 plus users to the website. There are 1,700 lawyers who are registered and about 500 doctors.

Verma comes from Shimla and has a small town but liberal upbringing. Even as he was studying to be a mechanical engineer, he became an entrepreneur and created a business in machinery parts.

He went from that to setting up a courier business and it was here, as he struggled to get people who owed him money to pay up that he realised how difficult it is to find a lawyer.

"It was February 2016 and I was running Phoenix Mail Services, a logistics company. Every now and then we used to face a lot of legal problems regarding the delivery of the parcels across India. There was no platform available for instant legal solutions to any minor or major problems. I was left with no other option than searching on Google," he recalls.

"It was really time consuming, as you need to skim through a lot of information and there was no authenticity and guarantee of the information provided to you," says Verma.

"Most of the platforms available were mere mediators and were charging between ₹5,000 and ₹50,000 for a 30-minute consultation," he remembers. "I found it appalling. There was no means to validate the consultation that you received, no second opinion option was available. You had to pay again."

In the summer of 2016, he ended up losing a lot of money because of these issues. It was almost impossible getting a good lawyer. He did some research and spoke to lawyers and it was then that the idea of Plunes came to him.

"I decided that what was needed was a platform where you could get a lawyer instantly and a second

opinion as well. Lawyers could benefit from being on the platform and users could stay connected with lawyers of their choice," he says.

"Today we have more than 40,000 users finding solutions to their legal problems like domestic violence, pesky neighbours, landlord harassment, parking problems, messy tenants, sexual harassment, police harassment, online fraud, traffic challans and so on."

The decision to add on doctors came later as Verma found he had the opportunity of growing a community on the platform. Getting to lawyers was easy because of their bar licences. With doctors it has been more difficult.

Currently, Plunes charges nothing from users. Users pay the lawyer or doctor just ₹460 for a consultation. Verma says lawyers and doctors who register with Plunes agree to these terms.

Over time, as usage picks up and people find the platform useful, Verma hopes to be able to take a small commission on each paid consultation. His revenue model is based on volume.

Verma stresses that in his vision the real value of Plunes will be in being a utility network. On the one hand it will provide solutions and on the other it will promote productive engagements.

It will enhance skills and knowledge and encourage meaningful interaction through debates — particularly among the young on campuses. It is here that something like telling people Nehru was not a Muslim fits in.

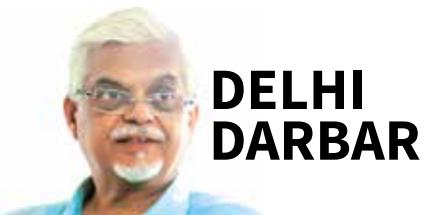
Verma's idea is to create a community of users who get proven value out of their interactions as opposed to the fluid anonymity of the internet. An example is the device of the video CV so that you know who you are going to be consulting.

Much of Plunes.com is currently work in progress. But it is still worth checking out and if Verma's inventiveness is anything to go by, chances are that the business will cover much of the distance he envisages it will. ■

INSIGHTS

OPINION | ANALYSIS | RESEARCH | IDEAS

Friends with benefits



DELHI
DARBAR
SANJAYA BARU

A few months ago I had to discontinue this column when I took up an assignment that did not give me the time to write. I am happy to resume this at the invitation of Rita and Umesh Anand.

The ambiguous results of elections to the Karnataka assembly, with no one political party securing a clear majority, have once again raised questions about the morality of 'post-poll' coalition formation. During the campaign itself some political commentators raised eyebrows at the prospect of H.D. Deve Gowda's Janata Dal Secular (JDS) joining hands with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been criticised for praising Mr Gowda now after having spoken against him in 2014. Such innocent commentary is touching.

Consistency has never been a virtue in coalition formation the world over. In India the word 'secular' was often used to lend a moral edge to a coalition but no politician took these words too seriously. Coalitions, by definition, are an alliance of the willing and subject to constant flux. Coalition building is, in the end, more of a numbers game than a morality play.

Mr Modi's praise for Mr Gowda during the Karnataka campaign as opposed to his criticism of the man in the past is not out of line. It is very much the kind of readjustment in thinking that politicians are required to do to enable them to form governments. After all, it is the very same Congress party that unseated Mr Gowda from prime ministership that rushed to secure the chief minister's chair for his son.

There are scores of such examples of yesterday's rivals being today's allies. Consider the fact that in 1996 many in the Congress party refused to join hands with the DMK on the grounds that the Dravidian party had been supportive of the Tamil Tigers — "the killers of Rajiv Gandhi". By 2004 the Congress was ready to form a government in New Delhi with the support of the DMK. The Left Front has remained an unrelenting critic of the 'neo-liberal' economics of Manmohan Singh and yet it is



There are scores of examples of yesterday's rivals being today's allies. The Left Front has remained an unrelenting critic of the neo-liberal economics of Manmohan Singh and yet it is thanks to the Left that Dr Singh became Prime Minister in 2004.

Bihari Vajpayee. None of Mr Rao's ministers, including 'diehard secularists' like the late Arjun Singh, objected to this. As long as they could remain ministers and enjoy the perks of power in the Delhi Darbar why bother about who is helping keep the government in office.

The only interesting political question for 2019 is whether Prime Minister Modi and BJP's party president Amit Shah have raised the bar for such tacit or explicit support of other political parties in case the BJP needs it. If the BJP falls short of a majority will there be enough number of MPs from other political parties willing to support it? Managing this 'untouchability' factor and ensuring that he remains acceptable to a wide cross-section of political opinion in the country is the only challenge before Mr Modi as he moves towards 2019.

In Karnataka many had assumed that the BJP would reach out to Mr Gowda and form a coalition government. But the Congress beat the BJP and rushed to Mr Gowda. This does not mean that at a later date Mr Gowda may not favour an alliance with the BJP. It is a free for all. The Karnataka result has shown that neither the Congress nor even the BJP can ignore the egos of lesser parties. Everyone should be kept happy. Who knows whose friendship would come in handy at what point. The only political fact that seems clear is that the BJP is the dominant national political party today. All others, including the Congress, are regional parties. The question for 2019 will be whether a dominant national political party would form the government in Delhi or whether some sort of a coalition will once again come into being.

Many political analysts had assumed that the so-called 'Era of Coalitions', that began in 1989 with the V.P. Singh government had finally ended with Mr Modi's decisive victory in 2014. That judgment may well be proved right if the BJP secures an absolute or near absolute majority in 2019. This cannot be ruled out. However, if the BJP falls short of a majority and India is once again back into the 'era of coalitions' one should expect to see strange bedfellows readjusting their pillows and getting comfortable with one another. A BJP coalition with a breakaway faction of the JDS in Karnataka, a CPI(M)-Congress coalition in West Bengal, a BJP-DMK alliance in Tamil Nadu, a BJP-YSR Congress alliance in Andhra Pradesh. Anything is possible. After all, in politics, as in modern social life, the idea of 'friends with benefits' has long taken root. ■

(Sanjaya Baru is a writer based in New Delhi.)

Involve teachers in decisions



BACK TO SCHOOL

DILEEP RANJEKAR

THE head teacher greeted us with a broad smile — as if she knew us for years — though I was meeting her for the first time. It was a school with 90 students across five grades. The same old story of very inadequate infrastructure, but nicely decorated by the teachers and students. The head teacher's room was an apology of an office and yet appeared very cheerful. It was merely an 80-square-foot room stuffed with a table, four chairs and a bench on which three teachers had somehow fitted themselves. The rest of the place was occupied by students' records and other papers. What made the room most cheerful was that the children were happily dropping in with all kinds of silly issues without any fear and the head teacher was pleasantly responding to each one of them, many times, interrupting the conversation she was having with us.

Compare this with some of the private schools where the principal's room is like a fortress for the children. I mentioned this fact to the head teacher and she proudly said, "In our school, the children are not scared of approaching us, asking questions and also providing responses if someone asks questions!" It reflected the culture they had encouraged in the school. Our main purpose in meeting them was to understand their experience with the Teacher Learning Centre of the Azim Premji Foundation and seek suggestions to improve our engagement.

The teachers told us that after their engagement with the Foundation, they decided to move away from memory-based learning as much as possible. Constraints and difficulties created by the administration would continue to exist and they had to find their own methods of running their school for the development of the children. We loved their spirit.

There have been several levels of difficulties that the state administration has currently created for them.

First, they have to ensure Aadhaar card registration for each child. While they think this has some utility in the long run to track the child, it creates a significant immediate overload on the school. Even today, many children don't have Aadhaar cards despite persistent follow-up with the parents.

Second, once the Aadhaar card is done, the school has to ensure that each child opens a bank account, jointly with one parent so that various amounts such as reimbursements for textbooks, uniforms and the like are credited to these accounts. This is a huge amount of work — involving follow-up with parents — first to get the parent's account opened, then the one for the child. Many parents don't

understand the need for the bank account. The banks, on their part, create several levels of difficulties in opening an account — rather than facilitating it.

The new academic year has already begun in this state but the accounts for all the children have not been opened. Therefore, amounts towards books and uniforms have not been deposited — and the children have not been enabled to buy the new textbooks or uniforms. Apart from the non-teaching work of opening bank accounts and so on, the important details are (a) there is a difference in the amount deposited for textbooks and the price at which the books are available (this problem did not arise earlier, since the school was providing the textbooks) (b) Just because the amounts are deposited in the children's (joint) bank account is no guarantee that the books or uniforms will be bought. Parents can easily influence the child to

they did not know, while others said it had something to do with ABL. They explained that the material had arrived six months earlier but they did not know what to do with it — since there was no information from the Education Department as to what it was all about. This was another example of the state making huge investments in centrally manufacturing teaching-learning material and sending it to schools without consulting, informing or preparing the teachers to use it for the intended objective. Just two years later, the minister changed, the Education Secretary changed and ABL made an exit from the state — as fast as it had entered.

The government and the Education Department are expected to do everything to empower and enable schools, principals and teachers through their consistent actions. However, the picture on the ground is almost the opposite.

There are several policy decisions administrations

There are policy decisions administrations have made without consulting and preparing the teachers at the national and state levels. These include important provisions of the Right to Education Act. Any good decision must be made after involving the stakeholders and preparing them to implement the decision.

withdraw the amount for different legitimate and illegitimate purposes — such as monthly groceries or alcohol (c) Earlier, the uniforms were directly provided by the schools. Within the same funds, the schools would negotiate with the supplier and get uniforms for all the children. Now, only some children get the uniforms — creating a divide and clearly identifying the children belonging to SC/ST categories.

Third, the State Education Department has decided to replace the existing state books with the NCERT textbooks. While the new textbooks may be good, the teachers have neither been consulted nor been prepared on how to use them more effectively. The minister has decided that the new books will improve the quality of education and also stop the movement of children from government schools to private ones.

The head teacher and the other teachers were not complaining. They were simply explaining the additional time investment in non-teaching work. And their biggest sorrow was that the state did not take them into confidence and enabled them to do this additional work.

This reminded me of my experience in another state in 2007, where the state had decided to implement Activity Based Learning (ABL) across all schools. During my visit to two of the schools in the district where we were working, I found a lot of unpacked material in a classroom. Since the material had reduced the space available for the children, I asked the teachers what it was. Some of them said

have made without consulting and preparing the teachers at national and state levels.

These include some important provisions of the Right to Education Act, 2009, such as coverage of children only upto Class 8, the provision for 25 percent reservation for students from the underprivileged classes, the provision for continuous comprehensive evaluation, the provision for no detention of children. They were all done without consulting or preparing teachers. I am not discussing the merits of each provision. The point I am making is that any good decision must be made after involving stakeholders and thoroughly preparing them to implement the decision in its spirit and letter.

One of the key aims of education, as enunciated by our National Education Policy 1986, is to promote education that develops constitutional values — such as democracy, socialism and secularism. Where are these principles being followed while implementing education policies across states and the nation? Why are teachers and school leaders not being taken into full confidence and, more important, being equipped to achieve the end objective of each policy? Assuming politicians and bureaucrats decide to introduce some policy for the "good of education", why is it not done by creating sufficient enabling conditions in the schools? These questions must be answered before we spring surprises on the schools and the most important stakeholders — teachers and parents! ■

Dileep Ranjekar is CEO of the Azim Premji Foundation

Another SEZ exemption



FINE PRINT

KANCHI KOHLI

ON 27 April, the environment ministry issued an Office Memorandum (OM) clarifying how projects operating within existing industrial estates, parks and regions could be exempted from the requirement of carrying out public consultations.

Any circular mentioning the word 'exemption' becomes suspect. More so at a time when environment regulation is being constantly tweaked and changed to create space for 'ease of doing business'.

Alarm bells go off even more when a government missive mentions public consultations. After all, this process under the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) notification has opened up a critical space for affected communities, researchers and civil society organisations.

In fact, the public hearing — one component of this consultation process — is the only opportunity that allows citizens to come face to face with government authorities, project proponents and the consultants who prepare EIA reports. It is also an important step because it can inform the expert level appraisal whether an environment approval should be granted or not.

THE 2006 NOTIFICATION: When the EIA notification was revised in 2006 it formalised the requirement for industrial estates, parks, regions and special economic zones (SEZs) to seek an environment approval before initiating construction activity. This, despite the fact that the land might have been purchased or SEZ status might have been accorded under the controversial 2005 SEZ Act.

However, the notification had two exemptions. First, all projects and activities within an already approved SEZ, industrial estate, park or region as defined in Section 7 (c) of the EIA notifications schedule of industries, did not need separate public consultation.

The second exemption related to whether individual units within already approved SEZs required environment clearances.

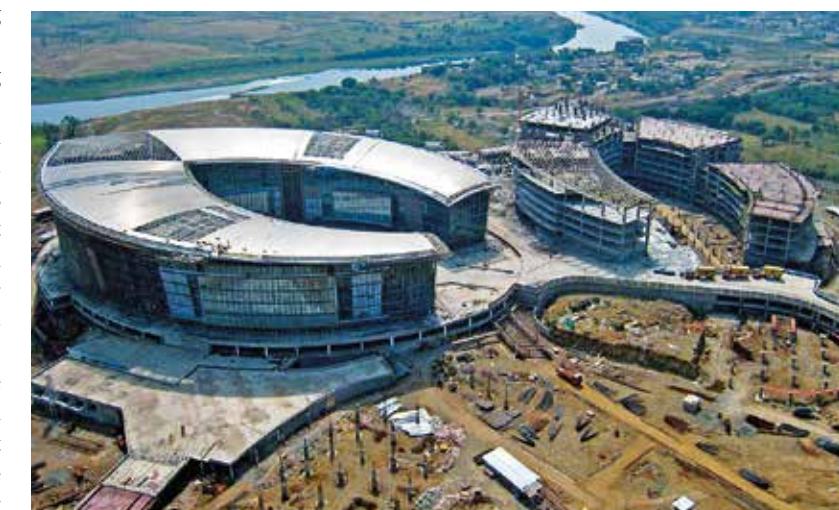
The 2006 notification mentioned that if these individual units were homogenous types of industries or a 'pre-defined set of activities' within the zone or park, then they did not need a separate

environment clearance.

THE APRIL MOVE: The recent OM lays out all those instances where public consultations will not be required for individual projects located within zones, estates or parks, as defined in Section 7 (c) of the EIA notification. These are:

The exemption from public consultation is for projects and activities located within estates or parks notified even before the 2006 EIA notification was issued and those which received environment clearance after this notification.

The exemption is also applicable for projects and activities which have been issued a Terms of Reference (ToR) for an EIA, even before an industrial estate or SEZ (as defined in Section 7 (c)) was granted environment clearance. This is as long as their ToR is valid.



A public hearing allows citizens to come face to face with government authorities, project proponents and consultants who prepare EIA reports. It is a critical space for communities, researchers, NGOs.

However, this exemption will not apply for 13 categories of individual units even if they are operating within an estate or park with an environment clearance or where there is a valid ToR. These are thermal power, nuclear power, coal washeries, cement plants, pulp and paper, sugar, asbestos, petroleum refining, coke oven plants, skin/hide processing, distilleries, mineral beneficiation and metallurgical industries.

Many of us might have simply missed seeing this clarification. The ministry does not tell us what prompted it. Was it the urgent requirement of a particular project that led to the exception being extended? We may never know unless we try to find answers. So let's keep an eye on how this is going to pan out. The implications might take us by surprise the next time we are tracking a project, participating in a public consultation or doing research on it under India's EIA notification. ■

notified prior to the 2006 EIA notification. And on 4 April 2016, the ministry clarified that public consultations will be required for 13 sectors that also find place in the 2018 OM.

A reading of this gives us a sense of how exemptions from public consultations have been gradually extended and expanded for individual units within SEZs, industrial zones and parks. Thirteen specific sectors were called out, so the exemption from public consultations will not be applicable to them. But this also came only in 2016, 10 years after the exemption was first put in place.

POSSIBLE IMPACTS: The latest OM pulls together all earlier clarifications. In doing so, it also adds one more exemption — individual units within SEZs and parks can go ahead with seeking approvals without a public consultation as long as they have a valid ToR. This is even if they are not part of the pre-defined set of activities in the industrial park or SEZ, which might have been at a later date.

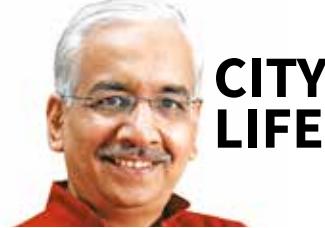
In addition it reads: "The exemption from public consultation, as provided under para 7(i) ill State (3)(i)(b) of the EIA Notification, 2006, is also applicable to the projects or activities (located within the industrial estates and parks), which were granted Terms of Reference (ToR/Standard ToR) prior to environmental clearances to such industrial estates/parks, subject to the validity of the ToRs."

This could lead to a situation where ports and harbours, shipbreaking yards, airports, pesticide manufacturing units or chemical industries can go ahead with environment clearances without public consultation, even if the industrial estate, park or SEZ has been granted approval for another purpose, for example, petrochemical, oil or even biotechnology. This is because their ToR for an environment clearance pre-existed and is valid.

If this is indeed the case, then citizens' scrutiny of the clearance is imperative. We might think that an industrial estate is being set up only for biotechnology but suddenly find a chemical industry or soda ash industry being set up instead because their ToR pre-existed the SEZ's environment clearance.

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Citizens got candidates to listen



CITY
LIFE

V. RAVICHANDAR

IN the run-up to the Karnataka elections, one was reminded of the song from *The Sound of Music* — “how do you solve a problem like Maria, how do you catch a cloud and pin it down ... how to make her stay and listen to all you say...” This certainly was the case with the candidates. How does one get them to commit and be held accountable when they are masters of doublespeak, pinning blame on others and evading responsibility?

There was the purists' view about the state's legislators being responsible for passing laws and that expecting them to solve local civic issues was not justified. But the reality in our cities is that the state government calls the shots and citizens expect MLAs to mediate between the corporators and the multiple government agencies to get a better deal for the constituency. If the MLAs did not wish to get involved in fixing local civic problems, then they needed to pass laws to truly empower the third tier of city government. And for the record, the crowds outside an MLA's place expecting local solutions are an indicator of citizen expectations.

So, in Bengaluru and other parts of the state there were the usual cries for accountability given that the candidates were ready to sing

for their supper. Traditionally, we have struggled with how to hold elected leaders to account except for voting them out. Bengaluru has its share of problems, but it arguably has more involved citizens per capita than any other Indian city. The Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), Apartment Federations, Citizens for Bengaluru (Cfb), Bengaluru Political Action Committee (BPAC), Namma Bengaluru Foundation (NBF), Citizen Action Forums, Janagraha and multiple NGOs are active in demanding a better city and greater accountability.

This time around the groups got innovative about getting candidates to commit to their plans. Thanks to social media's reach many groups did one-to-one interviews with the candidates.



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candidate's name. The citizens were interested in knowing what the individual could achieve for the constituency and party affiliations did not matter. They also let folks know that the winning margin the last time was a few thousands and exercising voting choice could result in a better constituency. There was a desire to counter the oft-stated view that the middle class does not vote. Many associations ran successful voter registration drives this year. Another innovation was that candidates were not allowed prepared opening remarks. They were told that they needed to listen to all views and would be allowed short closing pitches.

Many of these new age community managed debates stayed away from past track records since that makes for acrimonious finger pointing and citizens are best placed to assess past performance on their own. So the debates focused on the future in terms of the pressing problems in the constituency,

fixing. These typically related to roads, traffic, garbage, water, environment, open spaces, safety, commercial establishments in residential areas and so on. They evolved their own manifestos which they wanted candidates to sign up for. And they often succeeded.

Next, many of the groups with shared interests held town hall sessions with the leading candidates. The first striking thing about these sessions across the city was that the candidates came on time for the discussions. It gave one the idea that we need to find ways and means to keep leaders in perpetual candidate mode! One constituency RWA conducted the session sans any party mention against the

candidates' solutions and specific commitments they were willing to make. In one group there was an interesting question posed — all candidates spoke about what they would do if they won. But what if they lost? Most candidates were not clear how they would engage with local issues if they lost. One felt there is a case for a shadow MLA to keep the elected one on his toes. Another interesting commitment one group got from their candidates on record was their willingness to supervise projects and put their supervision reports online. If such 'on camera' promises result in transparency in governance, it would be a major achievement.

These discussions led to some interesting lines of thought. Citizens wanted MLAs who could deliver under constraints. For instance, citizens were tired of hearing excuses that an MLA could not be effective since his or her party was not in power at the corporation or state level. Or, the MLAs' inability to work with corporators of another party in their area. They wanted their representative to show intent and capability to provide desired outcomes in a dysfunctional system. While the sessions typically lasted 90 minutes, the videos put out in the groups were 10-minute clips covering the views of all candidates on a subject or their closing pitches.

The Bengaluru Restructuring Committee (of which this writer is a member) had made the case for a separate Act for Bengaluru allowing for political and administrative decentralisation through multiple corporations, strengthening ward committees and integration at the city level through a Greater Bengaluru Authority. The interesting development was that all parties and many candidates agreed that

they supported the idea of a separate Act for Bengaluru. But, reading between the lines, it was clear that they had different ideas on what the Act would contain in terms of politico-administrative or just administrative decentralisation. What sounds like a winning commitment depends on how it finally pans out!

The key takeaway from the community-led candidate events was that it was possible to have informed, civilised dialogue among political parties. This is possible if the candidates are willing to provide thoughtful answers to data-driven questions and if the outlook is to find solutions that are fair and equitable. In the age of slug fests and name calling on TV, it was a refreshingly civilised exercise. In coming years one will hopefully see a shift to these kinds of engagements between citizens and candidates, particularly in urban areas. ■

V. Ravichandar is an optimistic, self-styled civic evangelist

LIVING

BOOKS | ECO-TOURISM | FILM | THEATRE | AYURVEDA



Girls of the Sun: Female Kurdish fighters reclaim their town, captured by ISIS militants

A world at war comes to Cannes

Many films at the festival probed conflict

Saibal Chatterjee
Cannes

FROM first-time directors to 88-year-old agent provocateur Jean-Luc Godard, a slew of filmmakers in the official selection of the 71st Cannes Film Festival addressed politically and socially urgent themes, reflecting upon the state of the world in general and their respective nations in particular. In exploring the repercussions of geopolitical adventurism, questions of gender identities and constant attacks on individual liberties, these films reflected the sense of disquiet that is sweeping across the globe today.

Not every one of these films, however, garnered critical favour. French filmmaker Eva Husson's *Girls of the Sun*, a dramatised account of a true incident in which female Kurdish fighters reclaimed their captured town after it was overrun by ISIS militants in the winter of 2015, received mixed reviews.

The film, which generated huge pre-premiere buzz, was screened after 82 female film professionals

from around the world, including director Husson, lead actresses Golshifteh Farahani and Emmanuelle Bercot and Cannes competition jury chairperson Cate Blanchett walked the red carpet to express solidarity for gender parity in the world of cinema.

But *Girls of the Sun* left the press corps rather cold, if not completely baffled that a film made by a woman about a real recent tragedy would seek to trivialise it with superficial, exploitative brush strokes. But that is Cannes. It can be brutal to film directors who take the wrong turn.

One filmmaker who certainly did not was Belgium's Lukas Dhont, whose sensitive, beautifully lensed transgender drama, *Girl*, is an emphatic appeal for societal understanding, transparency and inclusion in dealing with people at the gender crossroads. The film tells the story of a 16-year-old Brussels girl who aspires to be a ballerina but discovers that her body isn't as supple as it should be. She was born a boy.

Girl probes the protagonist Lara's mental state as she takes hormone treatments while she anxiously

waits for her sex-reassignment surgery. The film's distinguishing feature is that the director refrains from putting his pivotal figure in any of the situations that such characters are made to usually encounter in cinematic tales about transgenders. It is an unwaveringly sympathetic coming-of-age story that creates a believable portrait.

Iranian-born Danish filmmaker Ali Abbasi's *Border* probes larger questions of identity in the context of individuals who do not fit into the established order of things, who experience the state of being in a minority. The film is about a female customs official who develops a special bond with a suspect whom she is investigating. As the reality of the stranger that she is dealing dawns upon her, she also discovers who she really is and why she is an 'outsider' in the community she lives in.

Inspired by Nordic folklore, *Border* is a drama in which a 40-year-old woman confronts herself and the world around her as she begins to figure out her identity. The director explained to a trade journal

Continued on page 30

Continued from page 29

covering the festival: "Through this supernatural journey you always feel this Nordic melancholy of a person who is connected with everything around her in nature but not with human beings. That's the experience of being a minority."

For Ali Abbasi, that experience is obviously personal. He lived in Iran for 20 years of his life before moving to Sweden to study architecture and then relocating to Copenhagen, where he studied cinema at the National Film School. In *Border*, he is speaking for all outsiders.

Wanuri Kahiu's lesbian love story *Rafiki*, the first Kenyan film ever to make it to the Cannes official lineup, has got into trouble with the authorities back home but that did not dampen the spirit of either the director or her two actresses, Samantha Mugatsia and Sheila Munyiva, who received a standing ovation after the screening in the festival's Un Certain Regard section.

"Even though this film cannot be shown in Kenya, we are here to show it to you," Kahiu said in her introduction to *Rafiki*, a Swahili word that means friend. "We are here to celebrate love. I hope the film makes you fall in love with Kenya as much as we are with it." The remarkable thing about this low-budget, independent first film is the lightness of touch that the director brings to bear upon a serious theme. Homophobia is official policy in Kenya and *Rafiki* has been banned because of its "homosexual theme and clear intent to promote lesbianism contrary to law".

Kahiu told *Screen Daily*: "There are very few love stories that come out of Africa. Love from here is always depicted as hard and combative and full of conflict, and this (film) wasn't. This was a sweet, innocent love story about two girls." In terms of where it goes, *Rafiki* is indeed a ground-breaking film in the African context.

Based on an award-winning short story by Monica Arac de Nyeko, *Jambula Tree*, is about two girls in a Nairobi housing estate, daughters of two political rivals, who fall in love with each other. As things go out of hand, the young rebels must "choose between love and safety against a backdrop of insular gossip, local politics and burgeoning maturity".

Girls trapped in a cage created by patriarchy, misogyny and oppression are at the heart of two

other important films that played in Cannes this year — Paris-based Syrian writer-director Gaya Jiji's *My Favourite Fabric* and Iranian auteur Jafar Panahi's *3 Faces*.

My Favourite Fabric is set in an on-the-brink Damascus in 2011. As the turmoil on the streets

the sexual dualities that women are subjected to in a conservative, hidebound society.

As the nation sinks into civil war, Nahla grapples with unsettling emotional angst. The film moves back and forth between the personal and the political, not always convincingly, to capture the upheavals within and outside.

Panahi, who is barred from travelling out of Iran and therefore could not make it to Cannes, delivered a strong statement highlighting the status of women, especially actresses, in his country. His genteel cinematic essay centres on a village girl who has gone missing after sending an impassioned appeal via a video to an established film and television star seeking help from her to fulfil her dream to be an actress. The older actress enlists Panahi's help and the two drive up to the village to figure out what exactly happened to the girl.

As he gently peels layer after layer from the surface of suppressed animosities, Panahi not only throws light upon his own place in Iranian society as a filmmaker, but also ruminates on the rules that men impose upon women in order to keep them in check, illustrated here as much by the aspiring actress and the established star as by a movie diva who held sway in the years before the Islamic Revolution but now has to live in isolation on the edge of the village, shunned by an orthodox community. We see two of the faces; the third one stays off-camera. But the three women seem to share a common fate in a country where actresses who dare are too readily demonised.

Economic distress was the theme of French director Stephane Brize's competition entry, *At War*. The film is about 1,100 French workers of an automotive parts factory that is closed down by the German holding company, leading to a long standoff between the labour force and the corporate

headquarters, with a special adviser to the country's president playing ineffectual interlocutor.

At War is a powerful, sustained critique of capitalist profligacy fueled by greed and the desire to protect the bottomline and shareholders at all cost. The industrial action in the film is led by Laurent (Vincent Lindon, winner of the best actor prize in Cannes for Brize's previous film, *The Measure of a Man*). He has to contend not only with his insensitive employers but also with co-workers all too willing to throw in the towel without a fight. ■



Girl: Lukas Dhont's sensitive, beautifully lensed transgender drama



Border: A female customs officer develops a bond with a suspect whom she is investigating



Rafiki is the first Kenyan film to make it to Cannes and received a standing ovation

intensifies. Nahla, played by French-Lebanese actress Manal Issa, hopes to marry a Syrian man who lives in the US and escape the impending disasters that face Syria. But the man takes a liking to Nahla's sister, Myriam.

The ensuing sibling rivalry is the least of the problems the two girls and their younger sister must confront. "Fear is the only thing that we have left," says one of them as they struggle to break free from their lot in life. *My Favourite Fabric*, which has autobiographical undertones, throws firm jabs at



Taking a stroll along the one-km lane in Chanthaburi

SUSHEELA NAIR

Chanthaburi heritage and Pattaya's 3D art

Susheela Nair

Chanthaburi (Thailand)

THE Indian tourist has evolved and matured. When destination fatigue sets in, Indian tourists scout for off-the-beaten track destinations, new experiences and experiential travel in the 'Land of Smiles'. Cashing in on the changing demands, perspectives and consumer patterns, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has come up with innovative ideas for attracting tourists. Currently, TAT has embarked on a marketing spree to promote and showcase niche destinations like Rayong and Chanthaburi in eastern Thailand which are not as flamboyant as those in southern or northern Thailand.

Weary of the bustling nightlife, world-class shopping, spectacular shows, top-notch leisure and entertainment facilities of Bangkok, we set out to explore Thailand's cultural heritage in the ancient town of Chanthaburi, and then hopped over to the picturesque Ko Samet island in Rayong province. We gazed admiringly at art in a 3D art gallery and watched the spectacular visual extravaganza of the KAAN show in the bustling neon city of Pattaya.

A visit to the quaint, multi-cultural Chanthaboon Waterfront Community, an old town overlooking Chanthaburi river, is a voyage of discovery. Exploring the narrow streets lined with old wooden and brick shops and houses we felt we were travelling back in time. Every nook and cranny of Chanthaboon had a story to tell. Chanthaburi means 'Moon City'. We strolled past a Christian church, a Chinese shrine, a Buddhist temple, wooden houses, timeworn mansions and old houses lining the waterfront. The most prominent landmark in Chanthaburi is the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception,



Thailand's largest Catholic church. The cathedral, with its two towers, is visible from anywhere along the Chanthaburi river waterfront.

Chanthaburi has another claim to fame. It has been the hub for Thailand's gem and jewellery trade since the old days. Like its eastern compatriot, Rayong, Chanthaburi is sometimes hailed as the 'Land of Fruits' or the 'Orchard of Thailand' by locals for the abundance of fruits the province produces. Ambling along the narrow alleys, we passed by many private homes, art galleries, coffee shops and tasty snack stalls luring visitors. We came across some restaurants, and noodle shops peddling local dishes like *moo liang* noodle, a Chanthaburi-style fried noodle, *chamuang pork* curry, and fresh seafood dishes with tasty local seasonings.

From the ancient town, we headed to Koh Samet, an eight-square-mile island in the Gulf of Thailand. Located in Rayong province, it is part of the Khao Laem Ya-Mu Ko Samet National Park. As our motor boat approached the island, two statues loomed into view. They were of the flute-playing Prince, the

hero of an epic poem, *Phra Aphai Mani*, and a mermaid. The poem chronicles the wanderings and romantic adventures and misadventures of Prince Aphai Mani and how a mermaid saved him from an ogress by guiding him to this island. There are other legends as well. Interspersed with coconut palms and the occasional white-flowered Cajeput trees which gave the island its name, 'Cajeput Isle' became known as Ko Samet.

Though it is not on the regular tourist radar, locals from neighbouring places come in hordes to have their ubiquitous dose of fun and adventure on Koh Samet, a weekend getaway just a four-hour drive from Bangkok. It is famed not only for its sun, sea and sand but is redolent with scenic beauty, myths and mythology. It has something for everyone — beachcombers and backpackers, sun worshippers and solitude chasers. With its aquamarine waters, sandy shores, a series of bays, secluded cosy coves separated by rocky outcrops that dot the length of the island's eastern side, it is the favourite haunt of Bangkok's residents. There is a host of activities to indulge in — watching firejuggling shows, savouring beach barbeques and experiencing the thrills and spills of aqua sports.

The incredible interactive Art in Paradise Museum in Pattaya merits a visit. If you want to flaunt your vacation selfies posing as an angel, feeding elephants or balancing on a precarious footbridge over a treacherous canyon, do visit. It is the brainchild of Shim Jae Yeoul, a Korean businessman who along with 10 artists reclaimed an old nightclub and curated amazing optical illusions, 3D paintings that you can put yourself right into. The art gallery is divided into 12 zones with themes such as the ocean, the wonders of the world and nature.

Take photos of yourself as you explore the exhibits in each of the 12 distinct galleries and interact with art like never before. Here you can paint new eyebrows on Mona Lisa, be featured on the cover of *Time* magazine, get your picture clicked among the ruins of Ayuthaya or in the deserts of Egypt. You can put yourself under the ocean, atop precarious cliffs, or balance with friends over raging waterfalls or pose with racing zebras. You can laugh out loud gazing at the picture of an elephant sitting on a potty with its trunk reaching out for toilet paper.

The highlight of our trip to Pattaya was the KAAN show, a 75-minute show based on Thai mythology and folklore. It's a juxtaposition of spectacular cinematic live experience, stage performance and world-class technology which transported us to a realm of make-believe inspired by classic Thai literature, creatively adapted into a show. It is the world's first levitation theatre presented by Sigha Corporation at D'Luck Theatre in Pattaya. We sat glued to our seats gazing in wonder at the eight-metre-high Ravana robot in the midst of an epic battle, the mythical beasts from Thai literature and the huge pirate ship that set sail right in front of our eyes. The dazzling costumes, special effects and the computer generated imagery projected on an area of over 1,500 sq m had us spellbound. ■

FACT FILE

11 airlines operate 240 weekly flights between Thailand and 17 major cities in India. It is a 365-day destination.

Hindi and English in Banaras

BANARAS was the epicentre of the movement during the freedom struggle to make Hindi the official language of India. In that sense, the Hindi we study today comes from Banaras. But how does the Banaras of today use Hindi in school education and in the socio-economic life of communities there?

Nirmali Goswami has tried to find an answer to that question through her research which is available in her book, *Legitimising the Standard Languages*. She is an assistant professor of sociology at Tezpur University in Assam.

Goswami takes us through the political history of Hindi and the kind of standard ideology and composite culture the state was keen to propagate after Independence. The question of making Hindi the official language of India was debated by the framers of the Constitution. Goswami dwells on the reasons why such a status became contested terrain.

If it is the State and its power structures that decide the status of a language, the main reason Hindi could not become India's dominant language over the years was because of its weak links with employment.

The job market plays a crucial role. And the irony is that in the city which was the site for the Hindi movement, English is seen as the language for progress.

garments. Because of the crisis hitting the weaving community, Muslims are shifting their children from madarsas to formal schools and then to higher education and skilling courses. More girls are going to school.

This upward mobility impacts language. As families aspire to change their economic status, the informal language they speak at home is discouraged in favour of *shudh* Hindi and English. Families want their children to be trained in skills that would be useful for the sari-garment business. They aspire to send their children to Bengaluru to learn how to design, using computers. Parents see the school as a tool to achieve social mobility and therefore urge the principal to convert it to an English-medium one affiliated to the CBSE.

Goswami studies the school's structures and practices, how it handles, class, community, gender and the relationship of Hindi with Bhojpuri, Banarsi and Julehti in the classroom. What emerges is that the school cannot fulfil the aspirations of parents for their children. Teachers are poorly paid and don't enjoy much status. They become a floating population relying on coaching centres and tuitions to make ends meet. Neither do they have access to training or a better curriculum. So economic and social progress is stymied by school education which is not up to the mark. ■

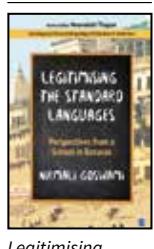
of the population.

Bhojpuri and Banarsi, both variants of Hindi, are the languages spoken on the street and within homes. As Goswami dug deeper she found that Teth Dehati Julehti, another language, was also spoken, mainly by the Muslim community.

How does the city impact language education in schools? After doing a brief survey of schools Goswami undertakes a detailed study of the Hind Kishor Higher Secondary School, described as a 'standard' school in the city.

Hind Kishor is a private Hindi-medium school affiliated to the UP Board of Secondary Education. It is run by a trust of the Bakhtiyar family. The school is located close to the weaver community's *mohalla* and is surrounded by wholesale stores. It caters mainly to the children of traders, shop owners and the weaving community – the middle class and the lower middle class or the 'medium' class, as they describe themselves.

But the distinction between the working class and the middle class is amorphous. The Ansaris, for instance, who dominate the weaving community, are gradually becoming traders and exporters. Those in the sari trade are transiting to readymade



Legitimising
the Standard
Languages
Nirmali Goswami
Sage
₹895

The job market plays a crucial role. And the irony is that in the city which was at the core of the Hindi movement, English is seen as the language for progress.

Museum catalogue. And so "You needn't go anywhere." He collected documents on Job Charnock from Fort St George in Chennai which dispelled myths about the man who reputedly founded the city.

Nair has, however, mellowed. When I interviewed him last in 1999, Nair did not tire of repeating excitedly how Jyoti Basu had cut him to the quick by asking him if he had really authored the commissioned book on the KMC. This time he had to be reminded about it.

Nair was born in 1933 at Manjapra in Ernakulam district near Kalady where Adi Sankaracharya was born. In school, the focus was on Sanskrit, although he was taught English and his mother tongue as well. Armed with a certificate in shorthand and typing, he arrived in Kolkata in 1955. He used to live with friends near Deshpriya Park and after working as a stenographer in Dalhousie Square, he landed a job with the Anthropological Survey of India.

Nair still leads a spartan life in his two-room home in quiet Kansaripara of Bhowanipore, where he has been living since 1955. When I went to meet him after a gap of several years, his wife, Seetha, a retired teacher, welcomed us in. The only physical difference I noticed in Nair was his straggly beard. All of 85, he is still as spry as before, walking to the National Library almost every other day. "The National Library just takes 10 minutes to walk from here," he says casually, adding, "It is easy to travel anywhere in the city from here. You can get all the buses from here."

Nair emphasises that the National Library has a treasure trove of material on the city — a 300-volume Union Catalogue of the American Library of Congress and the 100-volume British Library of Congress and the 100-volume British

Finding P.T. Nair, Kolkata's barefoot historian

Soumitra Das
Kolkata

AT a time when every armchair heritage activist cries "blue murder" whenever an alleged ancient building is torn down in Kolkata, few have even heard of P.T. Nair. Way back in the 1970s, he was one of the first urban historians to make those who live in this relatively young city conscious of its eventful past, and of its legacy.

Parameswaran Thankappan Nair does not even have the requisite academic qualifications — he is only a bachelor of arts and a non-practising lawyer. Yet in the 2015 book *Calcutta: The Stormy Decades*, edited by Tanika Sarkar and Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, the latter wrote "...Calcutta owes a great deal to its resident Malayali scholar, P. Thankappan Nair, whose wide-ranging scholarship explored practically every aspect of the history of this metropolis, from the 17th century to the 19th century — touching on the origin of its name, history of its streets, the beginning of its press, the story of its High Court and its police system, and its more modern south Indian diaspora." Nair has 62 books and 600 articles to his credit.

If he is described as an "archivist", as opposed to historian, as some pettifoggers do, Nair should take pride in it. For a good part of his life he has spent hours in libraries and archives, poring over obscure documents to bring history alive.

He had a prodigious personal collection of 3,000 rare and valuable books, which he sold to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) quite some time ago. Included among them were old directories of Kolkata. "When particular buildings were constructed directories gave their history," Nair says. His collection contained a complete set of *Bengal Past and Present* from 1907 up to present times. The books are preserved in the Town Hall library. "Most of my books were collected from the Dharamtala-Wellington crossing and College Street. At Dharamtala you can still get books on a particular subject, whereas in College Street books on various subjects are available," he says.

Nair still leads a spartan life in his two-room home in quiet Kansaripara of Bhowanipore, where he has been living since 1955. When I went to meet him after a gap of several years, his wife, Seetha, a retired teacher, welcomed us in. The only physical difference I noticed in Nair was his straggly beard. All of 85, he is still as spry as before, walking to the National Library almost every other day. "The National Library just takes 10 minutes to walk from here," he says casually, adding, "It is easy to travel anywhere in the city from here. You can get all the buses from here."

Nair recalls his early days. "From the day I came to Calcutta I started taking interest in it. Whenever I saw a building or monument I started collecting material on it — and in depth from other sources," he says. He used to take the tram from Kalighat to reach his office. "Dalhousie Square has not changed much in the last 50 years. No new building



Nair at home : A spartan life in his two-room home in Kansaripara in Bhowanipore

He had a prodigious personal collection of 3,000 rare and valuable books, which he sold to the municipality quite some time ago. Among them were old directories of Kolkata.

has come up except for Telephone Bhavan," he stresses. He concedes that Kolkata has expanded and changes have taken place mostly in the Salt Lake area. Nair's typing skills have stood him in good stead. Even now he uses his battered typewriter to dash off his books and articles.

He started his career by writing on things of "topical interest" like Christmas celebrations in Kerala, which was the first state in India to become

"Christian", he says. He would make three or four copies of each article and submit them to various newspapers. When one newspaper published it, he withdrew his submission from the others. In 1967, he left his job and began working as a journalist. He began writing and editing for *Engineering Times*, whose office was behind the Indian Airlines office in central Kolkata. "Although I am not a technical man, I based my writing on common sense," Nair explains.

He feels that the city has changed very much, in the sense that "the days of political turmoil" are over. "There are few processions and now I can sleep peacefully," he says, without betraying a hint of humour.

On the question of Kolkata's built heritage, does Nair believe that all old buildings should be preserved? He makes it clear without equivocating: "All heritage buildings must be preserved and strengthened. Other buildings which have no heritage status can be demolished." Nair is in favour of development.

However, he added: "Beautiful buildings should be preserved. If the owner can't preserve it, the government or the Corporation should come forward to preserve it. Old buildings can never be built again." Nair's latest book related to Kolkata is almost ready. It is on Gandhi in the city. ■



**AYURVEDA
ADVISORY**
Dr SRIKANTH

Easing migraine

ALMOST all of us have been victims of a headache at one time or the other. Although headaches are the most common type of pain, all of them aren't alike. Technically, there are more than 100 types of headaches!

Migraine is a type of headache that causes intense throbbing or pulsating pain in one area of the head. It may be accompanied by symptoms like nausea, watery eyes, runny nose, vomiting and sensitivity to light or sound.

The exact cause of migraine remains unknown, but research suggests that genetic and environmental factors may play a role.

A migraine attack will typically last from four to 72 hours. However, a migraine headache can last for several days too. The frequency of attacks varies from person to person. Some people experience migraines several times a month, others less frequently. Migraines are about three times more common in women than in men.

CAUSES: Stress or anxiety at work or home can cause migraine. So can extremely bright or flickering lights (such as sun glare), loud noises, strong smells (from perfume, room fresheners, cleaning products, paint, diesel/kerosene or smoke from incense sticks or cigarettes) and insufficient sleep. Even a change in weather can trigger a migraine.

Migraines can also be set off by chocolate, artificial sweeteners like aspartame and foods with monosodium glutamate (MSG).

Some drugs, especially oral contraceptives, have been linked to migraine. Intense physical exertion may also trigger an attack.

Other lifestyle habits that can contribute to headaches include staying up late at night, working with computers or watching television for extended periods.

Although there is no cure as such for migraine headaches, pain management can be achieved with a combination of diet and lifestyle advice. Personalised medicines may be necessary in chronic and severe cases.

DIET & LIFESTYLE: Since faulty digestion is the root cause of most headaches, it's wise to eat lighter food. Opt for freshly-cooked, wholesome, organic foods that are served warm and are easy to digest. Here are some suggestions:

- ❑ Don't miss or skip meals. Have timely meals. Strictly avoid fasting.
- ❑ Avoid hot, spicy foods, fermented foods, refined foods, sour or citrus fruits as well as aged cheeses, butter, red meat, leftovers and processed, frozen, canned and packaged foods.
- ❑ Drink about 2.5-3 litres of water a day and eat more fibre, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- ❑ Avoid excessive sugar, salt, coffee, tea and alcohol.
- ❑ Avoid direct exposure to the sun and reduce the brightness of electronic gadgets.
- ❑ Never suppress natural urges of micturition, the bowels, sneezing and the like.
- ❑ A 10-15 minute head massage with coconut oil or castor oil is beneficial.
- ❑ Reflexology can be quite helpful.
- ❑ Get adequate sleep but don't oversleep.
- ❑ Avoid painkillers, reduce stress, practice meditation and exercise daily.

HOME REMEDIES: If you have a burning headache, apply a thin layer of sandalwood paste made with rose water over your forehead and keep it on for 30 minutes. Wash off

with cold water.

Grind some black pepper with sufficient water and heat it in a spoon on a low flame for about a minute. Apply this paste on your forehead and remove after 20-30 minutes. This is effective for a pounding headache.

Take one teaspoon of a coarse powder of coriander seeds. Mix in a glass of water (150 ml) and leave overnight. Drink this on an empty stomach the next morning. Regular consumption of this helps prevent migraine.

Soak five raisins and five almonds in water or milk overnight. Consume the next morning on an empty stomach to prevent migraine attacks.

AYURVEDIC MEDICINES: Gently massage your scalp with Bhringaraja taila/Chandanadi taila for about 10 to 15 minutes. Regular scalp massage (at least twice a week) will help reduce the frequency of migraine attacks.

❑ Sutashekara ras/Kamadugha ras (Baidyanath/Dhootpapeshwar) 2-2-2 pills along with Godanti bhasma (Baidyanath/Dhoottpapeshwar) 2 pinches (250 mg), thrice daily with ghee will give immediate relief from migraine pain.

❑ Ashvagandha, Yashtimadhu and Amalaki tablets (Himalaya) — 2 tablets each, twice daily before meals for about three months will help reduce the frequency and severity of migraine.

❑ Pathyadi khada (Sandu)/Pathyakshadhatryadi kashaya (Kottakkal)/Pathyadi shadangam Kashaya (Vaidyaratnam) — 2 teaspoons, mixed with 6 teaspoons of boiled and cooled water — twice daily, preferably on an empty stomach, before breakfast and before dinner for about 2-3 months will keep you migraine-free for many months.

In migraine associated with complaints of gastritis and constipation, Triphala and Yashtimadhu tablets (Himalaya) 2-2-2, before meals for about 45 days will be beneficial. ■

Dr Srikanth is a postgraduate in Ayurveda and has been a consulting physician for the past 17 years. He is currently National Manager, Scientific Services, at The Himalaya Drug Company

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PRODUCTS

Zesty pickles

THE Little Farm Co makes pickles like your grandmother did, handcrafted, free of preservatives and big on taste. The enterprise originated from Krish Farms, a sprawling 400-acre farm in Madhya Pradesh owned by a businessman, Vikram Bhargava, who decided to become a farmer. The farm grows fruits, vegetables and spices. Bhargava's daughter, Niharika, and son, Aditya, decided to value-add their farm produce by making pickles.

Age-old recipes were dug out and after experimentation, a method of making pickles was worked out. Local women are employed and trained in pickle making.

Little Farm Co uses jaggery instead of sugar, rock salt instead of white salt and natural vinegar extracted from sugarcane. The spices and oils — sesame and mustard — are from the farm. The result is an amazing range of pickles: three types of lemon, green chilli, stuffed red chilli, mandarin orange, mango gur, jalapeno and many more flavours.

Little Farm Co displayed their products at Dastkar's Evening Nature Bazaar at Kisan Haat, organised every weekend from May to July, for entrepreneurs. ■



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