

Experience vintage Mumbai's old-world charm at this new place in Hyderabad!

Hyderabad: Taste Budders Hospitality unveiled its latest and one of its kind watering hole, Peanuts Bar at RMZ SkyView 10, opposite IKEA, Hitec City. This new venture is the latest addition for Taste Budders family, joining the ranks of brands such as Fat Pigeon Bar Hop, with locations in both Hyderabad and Pune, and Chubby Cho Fun Asian Table. Peanuts Bar is a nostalgic homage to the old-world charm of Mumbai's bustling streets and the timeless elegance of vintage cafes from the 80s and 90s. Every detail of the bar's interior has been meticulously chosen to evoke a sense of vintage allure, creating a space that feels both historic and fresh, a press release said.

The decor is super vintage, featuring timeless elements like classic lighting fixtures, and nostalgic memorabilia that trans-

port guests back to a bygone era. Vintage posters adorn the walls, and the soothing tunes of retro music fill the air, creating an atmosphere that feels vibrant. Peanuts Bar is a 200-seater with multiple formats of seating, including indoor, outdoor, and private dining sections. The menu is a culinary homage to classic bites that have been cherished for generations. From beloved street food delights to hearty home-style dishes, there's something to delight every palate. Samir Kumar Oruganti, co-founder of Peanuts Bar, said, this is our latest outlet and a place where the software crowd can relax and let their hair down. Ketan Agarwal, co-founder of Peanuts Bar, said, the place is designed to be a versatile space where people can simultaneously work and play.



Cadaver liver transplants save two lives in one day in Hyderabad



Hyderabad: In a unique record, a team of over 40 care givers led by senior transplant surgeons from Hyderabad-based South Asian Liver Institute, conducted two cadaver liver transplants in one day and saved two patients suffering from end-stage liver disease. The team comprising over 10 senior anesthesia specialists, surgeons, over 20 nurses and paramedical staff, led by senior liver surgeon and founder, Dr Tom Cheriaan worked non-stop for over a day to ensure the two vital donor liver organs were transported from different locations to Hyderabad and transplant surgery taken up here.

Last week, the hospital received an alert about availability of a cadaver donor

liver in Nagpur. In the middle of retrieving the donor organ and transporting it to Hyderabad by a flight, the hospital was alerted again about the availability of another cadaver donor liver in Hyderabad. "Although this meant that the care giving team would have to work without rest for over 36 hours, as our patients cannot survive long without a liver transplant, we decided to bring in the resources to make it happen," says Dr Tom Cheriaan. By deploying transplant coordinators, extra staff, ground logistics for transportation of donor organs, the team conducted two liver transplant surgeries and both the liver recipients, post-transplant surgery were doing well and will be discharged soon.

Congress misses VC appointment deadline at 10 State Universities

Hyderabad: The Congress government has failed to meet its own deadline of appointing regular Vice Chancellors (VCs) to 10 State universities. While recently appointing bureaucrats as VCs in-charge, the government had decided to appoint regular VCs to 10 varsities by June 15. For instance, the government orders for Osmania University (OU) issued on May 21 appointed MA&UD department Principal Secretary M Dana Kishore as in-charge VC with immediate effect till the regular Vice Chancellor is appointed, or till June 15, 2024, whichever is earlier. Like the other

nine universities, not much has progressed since then, though in terms of technicality, Dana Kishore's term as OU incharge VC is over, since the mentioned date happened to be June 15. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy is learnt to have directed Education department officials to select the regular VCs before the tenure of outgoing VCs ended on May 21. However, the process for regular VCs selection appears to have remained on the back burner, despite forming the mandatory university-wise search panels on May 15. Each search committee comprises one each nominee of the State

government, University Grants Commission and respective university's executive council. According to sources, while the search panels were formed on May 15, the information was communicated to the committee nominees in the last week of May. "The order copy has mentioned that the search committee meeting will be scheduled shortly.

So far, there is no progress on the committee meeting nor the government has asked for dates for such a meeting. I have no idea why there is a delay in holding the meeting," one of the nominees of a

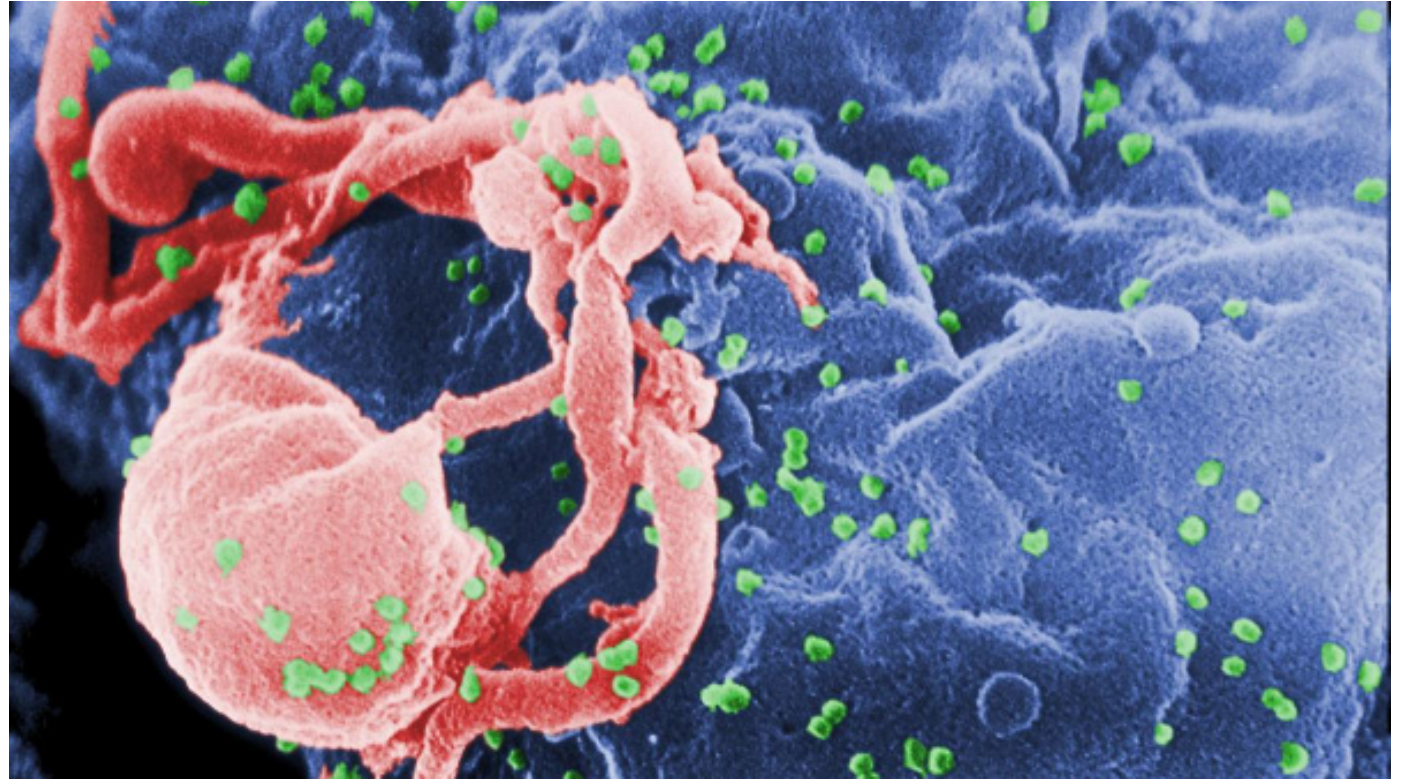
search panel told 'Telangana Today'. As per the rule, university-wise search committee shortlists three names from the eligible applicants for the appointment of VC position and forwards to the government, which in turn sends them to the Governor, who is also chancellor of the universities, for appointment from the given names. The government had on January 27 issued a notification inviting applications for the 10 state universities. In response to the notification, a total of 1,382 applications were received from 312 candidates, some of whom applied for multiple universities.

Four new studies report progress towards long-awaited HIV vaccine

A false-coloured scanning electron micrograph of HIV-1 budding (in green) from cultured lymphocyte, 1984. HIV has more variants circulating in a single patient at any given point of time than influenza cumulatively generates in one year in all influenza patients around the world combined, creating a vaccine development nightmare. A false-coloured scanning electron micrograph of HIV-1 budding (in green) from cultured lymphocyte, 1984. HIV has more variants circulating in a single patient at any given point of time than influenza cumulatively generates in one year in all influenza patients around the world combined, creating a vaccine development nightmare. | Photo Credit: U.S. CDC

In early 1981, Michael Gottlieb, an assistant professor at the University of California Los Angeles Medical Centre, wanted to teach some tenets of immunology to a post-doctoral fellow in his laboratory. Dr. Gottlieb asked the post-doc to select a patient from the hospital who displayed some immunological features that they might find interesting. The post-doc found a patient who had a relatively rare infection called pneumocystis pneumonia and had been admitted after sudden, unexplained weight loss. During the course of their discussion, the hospital doctors referred four more patients with the same infection. Dr. Gottlieb published a paper detailing these five cases in a small American journal called *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly*. At the time, Dr. Gottlieb had no idea his paper was about to change the field of immunology forever. That paper was the first report of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Today, nearly half a century after Dr. Gottlieb's landmark publication, AIDS still has no vaccine or cure. This anomaly in humanity's otherwise remarkable track record in tackling major infectious diseases is a result of several factors. Chief among them is that the replication of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, is an incredibly error-prone process that results in multiple variants of the virus circulating. The sheer number of all the different strains circulating in the world is in fact the biggest challenge to an HIV vaccine today. To put it in perspective, HIV has more variants circulating in a single patient at any given point of time than influenza cumulatively generates in one year in all influenza patients around the world combined. And influenza is the second-best virus in terms of genetic variation.

Starring role for B-cells When the immune system encounters a virus, one of its responses is to produce antibodies highly specific to proteins on the virions' surface. Each antibody is unique to a small piece of a given protein, and the immune system can generate antibodies against any given fragment of any protein. The immune system does this by starting with a pool of specialised cells that produce antibodies, called B-cells. Each B-cell produces an antibody unique to one protein fragment. When a B-cell encounters a similar protein fragment on a foreign object — say, a virus or a bacteria — it begins to divide and refine the antibody until it binds perfectly to



Researchers have unearthed two promising vaccine candidates that could engage B-cells to make broadly neutralising antibodies to attack HIV

the target. These antibodies then bind to their corresponding pieces on the viral surface, rendering them incapable of further infection. The body then retains some of these specific antibody-producing cells in case of a future infection.

A vaccine aims to generate these antibodies prior to viral infection so that whenever a virus enters the body, the antibodies can neutralise the virus and prevent it from initiating an infection. The vaccine basically provides the immune system with a head-start by allowing the body to make antibodies without an infection with the real virus. However, when multiple variants of the same virus exist, generating antibodies against all the different variants simultaneously becomes very difficult. In the case of most viruses, the immune system ultimately does catch up. But against HIV, it doesn't because of the sheer volume of different variants that are circulating, overwhelming the immune system's ability to generate new antibodies. In fact, by the time the immune system makes antibodies against a few strains, the virus will have produced hundreds more. In the early 1990s, scientists noticed that in a small subset of HIV-infected individuals, a new kind of antibody was being produced that could neutralise a large number of circulating viral strains. These broadly neutralising antibodies (bNAb) worked by targeting areas of the viral proteins that the virus couldn't afford to change, since doing so would make it lose infectivity. Scientists have since discovered many bNAbs,

and they are classified into different groups based on the region of HIV they target. Some of these bNAbs can effectively neutralise more than 90% of circulating strains. But there is a catch: a body usually takes years to make bNAbs, and by then, the virus has already evolved to escape them. It takes years because the parental B-cell that makes the bNAbs is incredibly rare in the starting pool.

The challenge, therefore, has been to make the immune system produce these bNAbs in large numbers in response to a vaccine. The route to doing this, called germline targeting, has three steps. In the first step, those B-cells that can mature into cells that can produce bNAb are identified and engaged to increase their population and prepare them for the second-step, where a booster dose will guide these cells into generating stronger bNAbs against HIV. The third and final step is to refine these bNAbs such that they can neutralise a wide range of HIV strains. After years of painstaking failures, researchers have established a possible roadmap for the first two steps of germline targeting for two groups of bNAbs. Four papers recently published in *Science* journals outlined two promising nanoparticle-based vaccine candidates: N332-GT5 and eOD-GT8. The teams, based out of the Scripps Research Institute and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, both in the U.S., showed that using these novel vaccines, it may be possible to engage B-cells to make two different classes of bNAbs.

HIV demands patience. The teams demonstrated the efficacy of their vaccine candidates in two forms, protein and mRNA. The latter is important because mRNA vaccines are easy to develop and produce. In both cases, the antibodies generated in response to the vaccine were shown by structural analysis to bind to the HIV proteins in a manner similar to that of established bNAbs. Further, the groups also demonstrated the efficacy of their vaccine candidates in two different animal models, mice and macaques. These animals can now be used as model systems for future studies. The candidate vaccines are currently being evaluated in a phase-1 clinical trial to assess their performance in humans. The research groups have also reported a possible candidate for step II of germline targeting. A protein fragment called g28v2 appears to be able to guide the cells into making bNAbs. Further research in this direction to evaluate its properties is ongoing. While these four papers do imply progress in developing a B-cell based vaccine for HIV after decades of frustrating wait, we must refrain from celebrating too early. Results from mouse and macaque models don't always translate to positive results in the human system. The strategies reported by these publications do have enormous potential for vaccine development against other RNA viruses such as influenza, various coronaviruses, and hepatitis C — but our past failures have also taught us to remain sceptical with HIV until the very end.

JSW MG Motor India Partners with Tata Capital to enhance Channel Finance Options

JSW MG Motor India has signed a partnership with Tata Capital, the flagship financial services company of the Tata Group, to bolster channel-financing options for its dealers. The collaboration aims to support JSW MG Motor India dealers with Working Capital, Term Loans, Demo Car Loans, Leasing solutions and off-Balance Sheet structured solutions, catering to their growing business needs. Leveraging Tata Capital's expertise in providing need-based financial solutions, JSW MG Motor India aims to facilitate seamless access to financing resources, fostering a conducive environment for dealership expansion and development. Each of the channel financing options offered carry the benefits of customization, flexible repayment tenure options and competitive interest rates. This collaboration will enhance operational efficiency, promote business sustainability, and ensure foster long-term success for all stakeholders.

Commenting on the partnership, Satinder Singh Bajwa, Chief Commercial Officer at JSW MG Motor India, said, "We are delighted to partner with Tata Capital to expand our channel financing options.

This strategic partnership underscores our commitment to supporting our dealer partners with financial solutions, encouraging them to grow their businesses sustainably." Speaking on the partnership, Narendra Kamath, COO, SME Finance from Tata Capital said, "Our strategic partnership with JSW MG Motor India resonates with Tata Capital's vision of growing through collaboration. Our tailor-made products will cater and enable the distribution network of JSW MG Motor India with the apt resources to leverage emerging prospects seamlessly." About MG India: Founded in the UK in 1924, Morris Garages vehicles were world-famous for their sports cars, roadsters, and cabriolet series. MG vehicles were much sought after by celebrities, including British Prime Ministers and even the British Royal Family, for their styling, elegance, and spirited performance. The MG Car Club, set up in 1930 at Abingdon in the UK, has thousands of loyal fans, making it one of the world's largest clubs for a car brand. MG has evolved into a modern, futuristic, and innovative brand over the last 100 years. JSW MG Motor India's state-of-the-art manufacturing facil-



ity in Halol, Gujarat, has an annual production capacity of 1,00,000 plus vehicles and 6,000 direct and indirect employees. Driven by its vision of CASE (Connected, Autonomous, Shared, and Electric) mobility, the innovative automaker has augmented across-the-board 'experiences' within the automobile segment today. It has

introduced several 'firsts' in India, including India's first Internet SUV – MG Hector, India's first Pure Electric Internet SUV – MG ZS EV, India's first Autonomous (Level 1) Premium SUV – MG Gloster, the Astor – India's first SUV with personal AI assistant and Autonomous (Level 2) technology, and MG Comet – The Smart Electric Vehicle.

New Zealand top of the world in university sustainability stewardship



New Zealand universities have come out on top of the world for sustainability stewardship in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2024.

New Zealand universities' approach to sustainability and equality has been announced as world-leading by Times Higher Education (THE) in its most recent Impact Rankings (2024). The stewardship rankings saw New Zealand score an average of 85.3 to come out ahead of Australia (84.4) and Hong Kong (81.9). All eight New Zealand universities participated in the rankings. Now in its sixth year, the Impact Rankings is the only ranking system in the world that measures universities' contributions to the United Nations' Sustainability Goals (UN SDG's). The Rankings assess the commitment made by universities to sustainability across four broad areas: research, stewardship, outreach, and teaching.

In topping the table for sustainability stewardship, New Zealand's universities have scored well against indicators such as tracking food waste and having sustainable food choices on campus (SDG 2), the proportion of senior female academics (SDG 5), having water reuse policies and measurements (SDG 6), ensuring energy efficiency with renovations of buildings (SDG 7), and guaranteeing a living wage (SDG 8). New Zealand universities also

came second equal in the world against sustainability outreach, meaning high scores were achieved for contributing to policies addressing poverty (SDG 1), collaborating with health institutions (SDG 3), providing programmes for the local community to learn about energy efficiency (SDG 7), participating in cooperative planning for climate change disasters (SDG 13), and providing expert advice to government (SDG 16). ENZ's Acting Chief Executive Dr Linda Sissons welcomed the results and said the global recognition for New Zealand's universities working hard to make a positive impact in the face of pressing environmental and social challenges world-wide was significant.

"New Zealand's education system is guided by Kaitiakitanga (the Maori concept of guardianship). This principle instils a deep sense of connection to our land and a commitment to ensuring its health and vitality for future generations. "Kaitiakitanga informs the approach taken by our universities to resource management, conservation, and sustainable development that all contribute to the UN's SDGs particularly in the areas of food security, bioenergy, sustainable urban devel-

opment, and climate change," said Dr Sissons. Dr Sissons added "It is incredibly positive to have our approach to sustainability stewardship and outreach recognised as world leading. This is particularly important to us as we know that students around the globe are increasingly prioritising environmental and social re-

sponsibility and choosing to study at institutions that align with their personal values." In this year's Impact Rankings, a record 2,152 universities from 125 countries/regions were assessed. Progress is measured for each of the individual 17 SDGs, and across the goals as a whole. View the full Impact Rankings 2024 results here.

Gurukul student wins silver medal in national athletics event

Gurukul regional coordination officer T Venkateswara Raju and Tribal Gurukul principal M Devadasu congratulated the student for excelling at the national level and wished her success in the future events.

Kothagudem: Bhadrachalam Tribal Gurukul student T Sri Teja has won a silver medal in the 19th National Youth Athletics Championship held recently at Bilaspur of Chhattisgarh. She is studying second year HEC. Gurukul regional coordination officer T Venkateswara Raju and Tribal Gurukul principal M Devadasu congratulated the student for excelling at the national level and wished her success in the future events. Devadasu informed that Tribal Gurukuls secretary K Seethamahalakshmi also appreciated Sri Teja for displaying the best performance at national level and winning a medal for Telangana.



PhonePe Payment Gateway Launches Referral Program

The PhonePe Payment Gateway today announced the launch of its referral program. PhonePe PG Partner Program is designed for anyone helping a business grow online. As a referral partner, they can refer their clients to accept online payments from their customers and accelerate business growth. The program offers businesses one of the most competitive commission rates in the industry, which is applicable for every transaction helping significantly boost their referral earnings.

Businesses can join the PhonePe PG Partner Program to offer their merchants best-in-class payment solutions. This partnership boosts credibility and helps businesses become the preferred vendor for clients, fostering trust and fueling business expansion. The program is open to various businesses, including developers and digital agencies to technology platforms like ERP, CRM, and SaaS companies. Partners benefit from scheduled monthly

payouts, exclusive invitations to events hosted by the PhonePe PG, and a dedicated account manager to assist with any queries. Technology partners will receive additional support, including technical assistance for seamless integration with their products. Speaking on the launch of the program, Ankit Gaur, Head PhonePe Payment Gateway & Online Merchants, said, "With the launch of PhonePe PG Partner Program, we are reaffirming our dedication to empowering businesses through cutting-edge payment solutions and rewarding partnerships. We've already witnessed over 10x growth in adoption of our referral program since launch. With this initiative, we seek to empower merchants to utilise cutting-edge fintech solutions and offerings to enhance the success of their online business."

The PG referral program was launched at a grand event called Confluence in Ahmedabad. The event saw



sessions led by Ankit Gaur, Head of PhonePe Payment Gateway, followed by networking opportunities. The event centred on knowledge exchange. Potential referral partners actively participated in discussions, sharing solutions for the common challenges businesses face when accelerating their online growth. To join the

program, just visit the PhonePePG Partner Program page and register. Post registration, a PhonePe representative will assist with the KYC and onboarding process. Upon completion of the process, merchants will receive a referral link via their registered email, enabling them to start referring clients and earning commissions immediately.

International Day of Yoga: What is Yoga?



Hyderabad: Yoga means linking up with the Supreme. Yoga also means connection, addition or union. When one endeavours to connect or link up with Krishna, the Supreme Lord, that is called Yoga. Lord Krishna makes it clear in BG that "Only through devotional service one can know me as I am." Rendering of transcendental loving service to Krishna is called Bhakti-Yoga which is the topmost perfection of Yoga. Yoga Ladder: Srila Prabhupada, the founder acharya of the worldwide Hare Krishna Movement, explains various Yogas mentioned in Bhagavad-Gita: Besides bhakti-yoga, the Bhagavad-gita also describes karma-yoga, jñana-yoga and dhyana-yoga. Yoga means linking with the Supreme Lord, which is possible only through devotion. Fruitive activities ending in devotional service, philosophical speculation ending in devotional service, and the practice of mysticism ending in devotional service are known respectively as karma-yoga, jñana-yoga and dhyana-yoga. "In some other place, he explains: "So any yoga system

means an endeavor to connect our relationship with the Supreme Lord. That is called yoga. So someone is trying to make the connection, karma-yoga. Someone is trying by jñana-yoga. Someone is trying ha?ha-yoga. But the real aim is bhakti-yoga. Just like different steps: You are on the first step, and other is on the second step, and other is on the third step, and other is on the fourth step. But the ultimate goal is bhakti-yoga. You cannot understand God, or K??a, by any other yoga. It may be a step forward, but ultimately you have to come to the bhakti-yoga. Benefits of Yoga: While Yoga asanas, breathing exercises of Ashtanga Yoga keeps one healthy & fit, Bhakti Yoga gives the deepest connection and satisfaction of the heart! All other Yogas have many benefits and profits but they keep the person dissatisfied and restless. But, one attains the topmost ladder of the Yoga, crossing all the steps, which is rendering devotional service to Krishna, which is called Bhakti Yoga, by which one mystically experiences deep satisfaction and happiness. Yoga means only

Bhakti Yoga: In Bhagavad-Gita, contrary to popular opinion, Krishna did not explain many competing Yogas! In each and every chapter He reiterates the importance of Bhakti-Yoga. He emphatically declares that Yoga is nothing but revival of lost relationship with Him. When we revive our relation with God, which is forgotten now, it makes us jubilant and satisfied. But, some people are very attracted to work. They work day & night and conclude that work is worship. Krishna explains Karma-Yoga in order to bring such dedicated workers to Bhakti-Yoga which is the only platform of connection with God. Krishna explains the process of Karma-Yoga in BG 9.27: O son of Kunti, all that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me. "Some people are attracted to jnana and knowledge acquisition. Krishna teaches them Jnana-yoga to show how they can reach him through such jnanic exercises. Krishna declares in BG 7.19 the ultimate status of a real jnani: "After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare." Within the Jnana-yoga path, some are attracted to practice of Asanas, meditation, breathing exercises under the processes of Dhyana Yoga or Ashtanga Yoga or Hatha Yoga. Krishna explains about the greatest yogi in BG 6.47: "And of all yogis, he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshipping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all." You can see above, all types of yogic methods are stepping stones to connect with Krishna or unite with Krishna and that is the final goal of Yoga. Without Bhakti, these yogas will give partial perfection: If one practices Jnana-

Yoga, cultivation of knowledge on the strength of his own ability to understand the Vedas, then one may end up with an "impersonal" aspect of the Supreme. But, if the Jnani realises that this impersonal Brahma Jyoti is the bodily rays of Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then he attains Bhakti Yoga. If one practices Dhyana -Yoga path without devotion to Krishna then he will end up realising the Paramatma feature in the heart. But, when he understands that this Paramatma is a feature of partial expansion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then he attains Bhakti-Yoga and renders transcendental service to Krishna. Bhakti-Yoga is suitable for all: Karma Yoga requires expertise in doing intelligent Karma. Jnana Yoga requires mental & intellectual skills. Dhyana Yoga requires tapas and practice of complicated asanas and exercises.

These are not possible for everyone and finally they also reach Bhakti Yoga if done perfectly! One important aspect of Bhakti Yoga is to chant & hear the Holy Names of Lord Sri Krishna. These processes are technically called Sraavanam and Kirtanam. To chant Holy names one requires a tongue! To hear the Holy Names one requires an ear! But this chanting and hearing brings one closer to Krishna quickly. One can directly experience the mystical presence of Lord Krishna as soon as one chants His Holy Names! Srila Prabhupada spread Bhakti-Yoga to one and all: Srila Prabhupada, the founder of the worldwide Hare Krishna Movement, gave the real yoga process which is Bhakti Yoga to one & all irrespective of color, race, creed, sex, caste, country or any other limitations. He induced everyone to take up chanting of God's Holy Names and hear attentively. This Yoga will connect to the Supreme Lord and bring in deep satisfaction, safety and pleasure.

Priyanka Gandhi's entry in Wayanad bypoll may be a gamechanger for Congress-led UDF in 2026 Kerala Assembly polls

The decision of the Congress to nominate All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for the bypoll from the Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency, following Rahul Gandhi's relinquishment of the seat, appears to be aimed mainly at boosting the United Democratic Front (UDF)'s prospects in Kerala for the 2026 Assembly elections. Congress party sources said the decision to field Ms. Vadra was unsurprising, given the Congress' yearning to consolidate its gains in the Lok Sabha elections, unlike in the 2021 Assembly elections when it failed to return to power in Kerala. The shift in minority community votes, especially among Muslims, to the Congress has helped the UDF secure leads in 110 out of the 140 Assembly segments.

Many believe that Ms. Vadra's charismatic presence will unify the warring factions of the Congress and stem the flow of leaders to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Besides, Ms. Vadra would rekindle the memories of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, her grandmother, who had shared an emotional bond with the people of Kerala. Already, the handle of Congress Kerala has tweeted on X (formerly Twitter): "This is history! It is not Priyanka Gandhi who is coming to Wayanad, but India's iron lady, Indira Priyadarshini."

Wayanad a safe seat Sources said Wayanad, with a demographic composition of about 60% minority communities, including 45% Muslims, remained a safe seat for solidifying the Nehru family's influence in South India as well as leveraging the Congress's minority voter base in Kerala.

With the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) leaders Sayed Sadik Ali Shihab



Thangal and P.K. Kunhalikutty wholeheartedly endorsing Ms. Vadra's candidacy for the Wayanad bypoll, this has firmly signified that the Congress' steadfast ally, frequently courted by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI-M], will loyally stay within the UDF fold. Even when the Left parties and the BJP criticise Mr. Gandhi for relinquishing the Wayanad seat, the Congress leadership thinks otherwise. If he had vacated the Rae Bareilly seat in Uttar Pradesh, there is no guarantee a Congress

candidate or even Ms. Vadra would retain that seat as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has secured power for the third time and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath would, in all likelihood, marshal his resources to ensure a BJP victory, sources said. With Ms. Vadra's electoral debut in the bypoll, Kerala is likely to have a woman representative in the Lok Sabha. Perhaps, her victory is a foregone conclusion. Mr. Gandhi had won the seat by a margin of 4.31 lakh votes in 2019, and this

time, his margin decreased to 3.64 lakh votes. Debate on political dynasty Just as Mr. Gandhi's candidacy from Wayanad catapulted the constituency into the national spotlight in 2019 and 2024, the upcoming bypoll will closely monitor Ms. Vadra's performance. However, her entry into the electoral arena has reignited the debate on political dynasty. Their mother, Sonia Gandhi, who opted out of the electoral race from Rae Bareilly, is currently a member in the Rajya Sabha.

Social media warning label sought by U.S. surgeon general Vivek Murthy, asks congress to act

"It is time to require a surgeon general's warning label on social media platforms, stating that social media is associated with significant mental health harms for adolescents. A surgeon general's warning label, which requires congressional action, would regularly remind parents and adolescents that social media has not been proved safe," Murthy said. "Evidence from tobacco studies show that warning labels can increase awareness and change behavior." Murthy said that the use of just a warning label wouldn't make social media safe for young people, but would be a part of the steps needed.

Social media use is prevalent among young people, with up to 95% of youth ages 13 to 17 saying that they use a social media platform, and more than a third saying that they use social media "almost constantly," according to 2022 data from the Pew Research Center.

"Social media today is like tobacco decades ago: It's a product whose business model depends on addicting kids. And as with cigarettes, a surgeon general's

warning label is a critical step toward mitigating the threat to children," Josh Golin, executive director at Fairplay, an organization that is dedicated to ending marketing to children, said in a statement. Last year Murthy warned that there wasn't enough evidence to show that social media is safe for children and teens. He said at the time that policymakers needed to address the harms of social media the same way they regulate things like car seats, baby formula, medication and other products children use.

To comply with federal regulation, social media companies already ban kids under 13 from signing up for their platforms — but children have been shown to easily get around the bans, both with and without their parents' consent. Other measures social platforms have taken to address concerns about children's mental health can also be easily circumvented. For instance, TikTok introduced a default 60-minute time limit for users under 18. But once the limit is reached, minors can simply enter a passcode to keep watching.

Murthy believes the impact of social media on young people should be a more pressing concern. "Why is it that we have failed to respond to the harms of social media when they are no less urgent or widespread than those posed by unsafe cars, planes or food? These harms are not a failure of willpower and parenting; they are the consequence of unleashing powerful technology without adequate safety measures, transparency or accountability," he wrote. In January the CEOs of Meta, TikTok, X and other social media companies went before the Senate Judiciary Committee to testify as parents worry that they're not doing enough to protect young people. The executives touted existing safety tools on their platforms and the work they've done with nonprofits and law enforcement to protect minors. Murthy said Monday that Congress needs to implement legislation that will protect young people from online harassment, abuse and exploitation and from exposure to extreme violence and sexual content. "The measures should prevent platforms from collecting sensitive data

from children and should restrict the use of features like push notifications, autoplay and infinite scroll, which prey on developing brains and contribute to excessive use," Murthy wrote. The surgeon general is also recommending that companies be required to share all their data on health effects with independent scientists and the public, which they currently don't do, and allow independent safety audits. Murthy said schools and parents also need to participate in providing phone-free times and that doctors, nurses and other clinicians should help guide families toward safer practices. While Murthy pushes for more to be done about social media in the United States, the European Union enacted groundbreaking new digital rules last year. The Digital Services Act is part of a suite of tech-focused regulations crafted by the 27-nation bloc — long a global leader in cracking down on tech giants. The DSA is designed to keep users safe online and make it much harder to spread content that's either illegal, like hate speech or child sexual abuse, or violates a platform's terms of service.

Cleared in child trafficking case, Bihar madrasa teachers say: Stains washed off, but stink remains



What is the cost of a “misunderstanding”? For Mohammed Anzar Alam, 35, it is a jail stint for a crime not committed, a younger brother failing his Class 12 board exams, the loss of a family’s only source of income and a debt of over Rs 1 lakh, besides the stink of suspicion that refuses to dissipate. Alam was one of the five madrasa teachers “mistakenly” arrested on charges of trafficking 59 children from Bihar to Maharashtra on May 30, 2023. The teachers were travelling on the Danapur-Pune Express when they were detained by the Government Railway Police (GRP) at Maharashtra’s Manmad and Bhusawal railway stations on the suspicion of supplying child labourers.

In May 2024, GRP officers said the case against the five teachers had been closed in March this year, 10 months after their arrest, when it was concluded that the First Information Reports (FIR) was lodged due to a “misunderstanding”. Sharad Jogdand, inspector, Manmad GRP, said, “After due verification, we ascertained (that) there was no human trafficking and filed a C-summary (closure report) in court.” For Alam, however, everything has changed. He says, “Aapke kapde se daag agar hatt bhi jaaye, lekin uske nishan reh jaate hain. Log ab hume shaq ki nazar se dekhte hai (The stink stays on even when the stains wash off. People look at us with suspicion now).” While Alam claims he spent three months in jail, teachers Saddam Hussain Siddiqui, 23, Noman Alam Siddiqui, 29, Ejaz Ziyabul Siddiqui, 40, and

Mohammed Shahnawaz Haroon, 23, spent 12 days in police custody and 16 days in Nashik jail.

On May 30, 2023, 59 children aged between eight and 17 years from Bihar’s Araria district were travelling with their five teachers to Pune and Sangli to study in madrasas. Acting on a “tip-off” by a senior officer linked to the Juvenile Justice Board in Delhi and the Railway Board, the Railway Protection Force (RPF), along with an NGO, “rescued” these children and arrested the teachers. At the time of the arrests, RPF officials had claimed the five men had failed to provide adequate documentation for their travel, leading to the filing of an FIR under Sections 370 (trafficking of persons) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code. The children were taken to shelter homes in Nashik and Bhusawal for 12 days since officials suspected they were being trafficked. When their angry parents demanded their return, the children were escorted back to Bihar by the Nashik district administration. Meanwhile, labelled “child traffickers”, the teachers say they are still struggling to get their lives back on track. An upset Alam told The Indian Express on the phone, “I was shocked when a friend of mine, who has known me for a decade, asked me, ‘Kyon kiya aisa? (Why did you do this)?’ Before his arrest, Alam taught in a madrasa based in Walwa, Sangli. The sole breadwinner in a family of eight, including his three children, he earned Rs 23,000 per month. Stating that he is still

looking for a job with a stable income, Alam says the madrasa gave his job to another teacher while he was in jail. The resident of a village in Bihar’s Araria district adds, “After my arrest, my younger brother came to Maharashtra and ran from pillar to post to get me bail. This was an important year for him since he was in Class 12. He ended up failing his exams. The false case cost him a year.” While his brother was trying to get justice for him, Alam’s family was forced to survive on money borrowed from friends and relatives. “On top of everything else, this case has left me with a debt of Rs 1.05 lakh. The government should compensate me for the harassment I faced,” Alam says. His colleague Noman believes that they were profiled by the police because of their religion. “Had the suspects belonged to some other community, the police would have made a case after conducting preliminary inquiries,” says an angry Noman, also a resident of Araria district. Being the only breadwinner in a family of 13, he says he was worried about them the entire time he was in jail. “My family had to borrow money to survive for those four weeks. I have managed to repay that loan somehow,” he says, adding that he is currently teaching in madrasas in Bihar. As a teacher, he appreciates the quick action by the police since the matter involved children, yet, he says “such promptness should be reserved for an actual crime”. Noman adds, “Some of the parents even arrived in Nashik a few days after our arrest and gave statements in our favour, but those fell on

deaf ears.” Calling it the “most horrific phase of his life”, Ejaz says his nine-year-old son was among the children on the train that day. “While we were detained at the railway stations, they checked our bags saying that we were smuggling charas and ganja (drugs). We were just taking the children from Bihar to a madrasa in Maharashtra so they could get good religious education, food and shelter,” says Ejaz, adding that his parents, farmers in Araria district, struggled to make ends meet while he was behind bars. Even getting bail was not the relief he had hoped for, he says. “For eight weeks, I was required to visit local police stations in Araria to give hajri (attendance). At the station, I would be made to sit for 2-3 hours just to sign the hajri register. If this is not harassment, I don’t know what is,” Ejaz adds. The “misunderstanding” has had a severe impact on Shahnawaz’s life too. The Sangli-based teacher says, “The criminal case will vanish from government records, but not people’s memories. Though they know the case was false, the FIR and arrests changed their perceptions of us. My family is so frightened that they have asked me to reconsider my decision to apply for a job in Saudi Arabia.” Teacher Saddam, also from Araria, says his parents were so distraught after the incident that they did not eat for days. He says, “I had the documents of all the children and offered to connect the police with their parents via video calls, but they demanded an authority letter from the local sarpanch or parents.

Who are the Satnamis, the Dalit religious community with a history of protests

Members of the Satnami religious sect set fire to the office of the Superintendent of Police and pelted the office of the District Collector with stones in Baloda Bazar in central Chhattisgarh on Monday after alleged inaction over the desecration of a religious site at Amar Cave in the district. Members of the mostly Scheduled Caste Satnami Samaj or Satnam Panth live mainly in Chhattisgarh and contiguous areas of Madhya Pradesh. The desecrated shrine, known as Jaitkham, is located about 5 km from Giraud village in Baloda Bazar district, at the birthplace of Guru Ghasidas, an 18th century saint to whom the Chhattisgarh Satnamis trace their theological lineage. Guru Ghasidas was born in 1756; however, the antecedents of the sect lie further back in history. The expression sat naam (literally “true name”) was popularised by the 15th century Bhakti poet Kabir, but was likely coined earlier. Kabir, who rejected idolatry and the orthodoxy of organised religion, was a torchbearer of the nirguna bhakti tradition — the worship of an immanent, formless Absolute, which he referred to as sat naam or satya naam in several of his poems. In 1657, a mendicant named Birbhan, who was inspired by the teachings of Kabir, founded a Satnami community in Narnaul in present-day Haryana. The Mughal court historian Khafi Khan (1664-1732) wrote that the Satnamis were “some four or five thousand householders in the pargana of Narnaul and Mewat... their livelihood and profession is usually agriculture and trade in the manner of Banyas [or tradesmen] with small capital” (Irfan Habib: The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707). “Ritual and superstition were condemned, and allegiance was explicitly rendered to Kabir... Caste distinctions within the community of believers were forbidden... An attitude of sympathy with the poor and hostility towards authority and wealth is apparent [in Satnami preachings],” Habib wrote in his classic 1963 work. Initially, most Satnamis belonged to an “untouchable” caste engaged in leatherwork. The community has, however, moved away from the profession over time.

Revolt against Aurangzeb “If anyone should want to impose tyranny and oppression upon [the Satnamis]... they will not tolerate it; and most of them bear arms and weapons,” Khafi Khan wrote. In 1672, Satnamis living in present-day Punjab and Haryana rose in revolt against Aurangzeb’s ever-increasing tax demands. “The revolt... began as a rural affray,” Habib wrote. “One of the Satnamis was working in his fields when he exchanged hot words with a [Mughal] piyada (foot-trooper), who was guarding the corn-heap. The piyada broke the Satnami’s head by a blow from his stick. Thereupon a crowd of that sect mobbed that piyada and beat him so much as to reduce him almost to a corpse.” (Habib: Agrarian System). When the local Mughal shiqdar (police chief) sent troops to arrest the culprits, open rebellion broke out. The rebels occupied Narnaul and Bairat for some time, but the Mughals eventually crushed the rebellion and killed thousands of Satnamis. Despite lacking weap-



ons and equipment, the Satnamis fought valiantly and “repeated scenes of the great war of Mahabharata”, the Mughal chronicler Saqi Mustad Khan wrote in the Maasiri-Alamgiri. Revival under Ghasidas Aurangzeb all but wiped out the community, which would see a revival only in the mid-eighteenth century — in present-day Uttar Pradesh under Jagjivandas, and in present-day Chhattisgarh under Ghasidas. There are several theories as to the sources of Ghasidas’ inspiration and spiritual development — from Sant Ravidas (15th or 16th century) to Kabir. However, “most present-day Satnamis either deny or know nothing of a connection between Ghasidas and the previous Satnami movements” in northern India, religious studies scholar Ramdas Lamb wrote in Rapt in the Name: The Ramnamis, Ramnam, and Untouchable Religion in India (2002). Nonetheless, the religious philosophy of Guru Ghasidas echoed that of the older Satnamis. His “first and foremost rule was the worship of one true God, through the chanting of his name, ‘Satnam’, and the abolition of any form of image worship,” Lamb wrote. This rejection of deity worship effectively allowed the ‘untouchable’ Satnamis to transcend the restrictions on temple-entry. Ghasidas also asked his followers to abstain from eating flesh (and flesh-like fruits such as eggplant), and consuming alcohol, smoking, or chewing tobacco. He asked them to use brass utensils instead of clay, stop working with leather and carcasses, and to wear a necklace of beads made from tulsi, like those worn by the Vaishnavas and Kabirpanthis. He also told his followers to drop their caste names and use ‘Satnami’ instead. The

Satnamis today At the time of Ghasidas’ death, his following was estimated to be nearly a quarter million strong, belonging almost entirely to a particular Scheduled Caste. He stipulated a lineage of gurus who would lead the sect after him, starting with his son Balakdas. According to Lamb, by the late 1800s, a two-tiered organisational structure developed with the guru at the top, and several village-level priests below him. This structure broadly persists even now. “These priests performed marriages, mediated disputes, meted out penance as well as acted as intermediaries in the organisation,” Lamb wrote. Over the years, many Satnamis adopted caste-

Hindu practices, beliefs and rituals, and came to see themselves as part of the Hindu religious mainstream. Some started to worship idols of Hindu Gods, and claimed to be of Rajput or even Brahmin lineage. Satnamis are now an increasingly assertive political force.

Satnami leaders enjoy clout over not just members of the sect, but also over the rest of Chhattisgarh’s 13% SC population. The sect has been historically associated with the Congress, but since 2013, some Satnami gurus have shifted allegiance multiple times. The Satnami vote is today divided among various political parties in Chhattisgarh.

Osmania Arts College to undergo major restoration and enhancement

Hyderabad: The iconic Osmania Arts College building is all set to undergo a major transformation soon. The Osmania University has decided to facelift the college with major repair works and painting to enhance its aesthetics. The initiative of the administration is aimed at restoring the past glory of the college that has been neglected over the several years, taking a toll on the structure. The outer and interior walls of the 84-year-old building took a beating with cracks and visible beams at several places besides appearing damp at places due to rain water leakage.

To address this issue, the university

administration recently used a modern-age waterproofing system and stopped seepage of water from the roof top without altering the structure. Further to beautify the college building, MA&UD principal secretary and Osmania University (OU) in-charge Vice Chancellor M Dana Kishore announced HMDA funds for taking up painting and repair works of the college. Kishore, who visited the college on Wednesday, instructed the OU chief engineer and HMDA officials to prepare the necessary estimates immediately. He also directed the development of new fencing around the college and a new lawn in front of SBI beside the college.

Theatre veteran MK Raina explores importance of cultural education, Kashmir and healing power of stories in memoir

As the counting of votes began on the morning of June 4, theatre veteran MK Raina was wondering if the new government would stop artistes from doing the kind of anti-establishment work he liked to make. He had a solution up his sleeve in case things turned worse. "I told myself, 'I will create a new group of actors and we'll do the classics of Sanskrit, Greek and European drama'. Under the garb of great plays, these stories talk of the values that we have seen eroding under an authoritarian regime. The final battle for a society is how to make educated people cultured. You cannot have the development of a country until you have cultural development," he says. Blunt, packed with anecdotes and socialist to the core, Raina pursues performance as a form of resistance. An old play of his, *Stay Yet a While*, which is now being revived, focuses on the importance of opposition. It is based on the correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore in the background of the freedom movement. The play shows that, though the stalwarts were great friends, they never agreed on much.

Raina says that he would like Indians to understand that the nation was built on the foundations of pluralism and sacrifice. It is with that purpose that he has penned his memoir, *Before I Forget* (Penguin). "Our contemporary times have started interpreting our past on very narrow and sectarian lines. I feel the need to record my eye-witness account of events while growing up and how they shaped me," he says. In 1948, when Raina was born, India and his state were emerging out of partitions. He begins his story at Sheetal Nath Sathu, a middle-class mohalla in Srinagar, which was populated by Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. This is where Raina had his earliest experience of syncretic living and watched his first plays at a local school. Raina's generation would see Kashmir's slide from harmony to chaos and the book becomes a personal record of the times, especially the exodus of Raina's community, the Kashmiri Pandits. "There is a saying in Kashmiri Pandit homes that, from birth to death, the participation of Muslims in our lives has been a custom for centuries," he writes.

MK Raina MK Raina directing Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*

What Raina does not mention in the book is that he was built to be progressive from childhood. His father, Janki Nath Raina, a dentist popularly known as Jana, had been a part of the Quit Kashmir movement as a child. Jana was in the political movement after the Partition, which was very progressive, and was the person who was called upon to resolve the problems of the neighbourhood. "I still look at his letters which he wrote to me. He was so confident that the reign of pluralism would never disappear from Kashmir. I like to believe he was right and this little muck on the top needs to be cleaned," says Raina. Political turbulence kept unfolding in the background as Raina grew up, especially the dismissal and arrest of the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, and his release after 11 years. The exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits



The politics of Kashmir would prove formative for Raina, for what he refused to become. "While many Kashmiri Pandits turned bitter, even communal, it is amazing that Raina remained totally committed to a secular nation state. He retained his secular ideas through very difficult circumstances," says photographer and curator Ram Rahman.

is depicted through his family's painful departure. Srinagar was shut down due to violence the day his mother passed away. "Through those pitch-dark roads, without headlights and with no street lights, my brother brought the remains of my mother home," he writes. Within days, his family locked their house and left Srinagar. "My father was not the same person after that. Once, I took him for a drive in Delhi to cheer him up. He looked at me and said, 'I have lost'," says Raina.

The politics of Kashmir would prove formative for Raina, for what he refused to become. "While many Kashmiri Pandits turned bitter, even communal, it is amazing that Raina remained totally committed to a secular nation state. He retained his secular ideas through very difficult circumstances," says photographer and curator Ram Rahman. Raina was introduced to theatre and classical music as a child in Srinagar. His principal at school was the legendary poet and social activist Dinanath Nadeem, and one of Raina's first performances was for a children's musical play, *Neki Badi*, written by Nadeem. Raina was a sought-after child actor for the dozens of amateur theatre groups in Srinagar. In 1968, he was accepted into the National School of Drama (NSD) in Delhi, supported by scholarship from the state of Jammu and Kashmir. NSD was helmed by Ebrahim Alkazi, the doyen of modern Indian theatre, who threw students into an ocean of world drama, from Greek and Asian to Sanskrit and modern Indian writings. Alkazi, a fighter in his own right, dreamed of major theatrical breakthroughs and turned NSD into a

crucible of experimentation and innovation. Theatre veteran MK Raina on his recent memoir, why cultural education is important, events in conflict-ridden Kashmir that shaped him and how stories balm a society's pain

Raina began to make plays to highlight the plight of the suffering people. *Karmawali* is about the Partition but its real tragedy is that the violence is still happening. *Banhatt ki Atmakatha*, one of the great successes of the NSD Repertory Company, was about ancient India but also about a modern vision. *Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein* showed the 14-15th century poet-saint as a fearless fighter who took on the high priests of temples and mosques. Long before Oppenheimer became a film, Raina had directed and played the nuclear scientist in the play, *The Trial of Oppenheimer*. He went into conflict zones, from Kashmir to Ladakh to Manipur, to create theatre often with actors and audiences who have been victims of oppression. "Stories are a balm, a healing ointment, which all theatre people carry and it works," he says. After the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, Raina worked in the camps and talks about it in the book. When he isn't making plays, Raina is organising events. "One of the major interactions I had was when he organised, with INTACH, a workshop for school children in Srinagar that included theatre, photography, painting, literature and music. He took us, senior practitioners from different parts of India, to live in Srinagar for two weeks and interact with school children, who were brought from all over the Valley. It is more than 15 years but

I am in touch with the children. It is amazing that they are continuing with their photography or other art forms even when they are working in motorcycle repair shops and so on," says Rahman.

After Safdar Hashmi, the hugely talented and committed theatre activist, was attacked while performing a street play, *Halla Bol*, about class struggles, in Delhi in 1989 and lost his life, Raina was at the forefront of setting up the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (Sahmat). For 30 years, Sahmat has been the loudest voice of the country's artistic community in upholding creative freedom and democratic rights and calling out transgressions of the political classes. Sahmat went to Ayodhya after the demolition of the Babri Masjid and put up a 17-hour show, *Mukt Naad*, to showcase communal harmony. After the event, Raina walked up to Atal Behari Vajpayee and said, "You have accused us of being anti-national. Here are two cassettes of our anti-communal campaign concerts. Please listen to them and make up your mind about us." Today, as India's tryst with destiny enters another uncharted territory, Raina has a new avatar as a writer. The deathly silence of Delhi roads during the pandemic had reminded him of Srinagar and Imphal and inspired his memoir. The writing bug has caught him. There are more books lined up – a compilation of writings by others on his theatre in English and Hindi, and an academic work on *Bhand Pather*, a traditional performance form of Kashmir. There are also letters from his father. "I might publish them and call it, *The Letters Never Answered*," he says.