

Healthcare under Modi govt fared poorly: Report

Hyderabad: In a scathing attack, the premier medical science journal, The Lancet, on Friday criticised the Modi government for poor handling and the sorry state of affairs of public healthcare in India. The science journal censured the Centre for failing to deliver quality healthcare services to people most in need. "Healthcare under Modi has fared poorly, as described in this week's World Report. Overall, government spending on health has fallen and now hovers around an abysmal 1.2 per cent of gross domestic product, out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare remains extremely high, and flagship initiatives on primary healthcare and universal health coverage have so far failed to deliver services to people most in need," it said.

Titled 'India's elections: Why data transparency matter', The Lancet highlighted the Centre's reluctance to conduct major surveys that measure critical healthcare indicators and provide accurate and up-to-date data, which is essential for health policy, planning and

management. "The collection and publication of such data in India have undergone serious setbacks. The 2021 census was delayed due to Covid, and for the first time in 150 years, a whole decade has gone by with no official comprehensive data on India or its people. The census is also the basis for all national and state-level health surveys," it said.

"The periodic measurement of morbidity and out-of-pocket expenditure by the National Sample Survey Organisation is overdue, and there are no plans to conduct it. No reasons have been given for why the Sample Registration System survey report for 2021, which is India's most reliable source of data on births and deaths, is delayed, or for why completed poverty surveys are not in the public domain," the Lancet said. Why is the Government so afraid of showing the real state of health? And more importantly, how does the government intend to measure progress when there are no data? Without access to recent and reliable data, democratic choices



are impoverished, it said. The government's key policy, Viksit Bharat 2047, will be driven by people and services. India must therefore focus attention and investment on health and education. And this can only

be done with far more robust and open data. "The systematic attempt to obscure through the lack of data means that the Indian people are not being fully informed," the Lancet said.

ABVP activists stage protest demanding closure of college during summer vacation



Hyderabad: Demanding closure of college during summer vacation, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) activists staged a protest at a commerce college in Kacheguda here on Friday.

The protesters alleged that the college management has been running classes despite the State government announcing the summer vacation for the jun-

ior colleges till May 31. A verbal spat ensued between the student activists and management as the former gained entry into the college premises.

Sensing trouble, the local police swung into action and tried to control the protesters, who wanted entry into classrooms. The protesters questioned both the police and management as to why the

classes were being run when the government passed an order declaring summer vacation for the junior colleges. "Despite the vacation announced by the government, the college management is unauthorizedly organizing classes for the

intermediate students.

Following the protest, the management closed the college. We will register a complaint with the TSBIE over the issue," said Kamal Suresh, joint secretary ABVP Telangana.

OU student leaders urge administration for closed campus

Hyderabad: AISF Osmania University Council student leaders wanted the varsity administration to go in for a closed campus at the earliest.

In this regard, students submitted a representation to university registrar Prof. P Laxminarayana. Welcoming move by the university to construct a link road from NCC gate to Adikmet flyover, students said the road would enable the varsity to restrict outsider vehicles entry into campus.

The open campus, according to student leaders, damaged the academic environment and said some outsiders were engaging in anti-social activities on the campus.

"There are incidents of bike racing by outsiders besides some outsiders holding meetings on campus to settle their real estate issues. In view of all these issues, we want the administration to go in for a closed campus," said Nelli Satya, Secretary AISF OU.

How bad monkeys from the towns are corrupting good monkeys that live in the hills

There's an old story that's been around for years about how, during the days of the British Raj, the Brits got so fed up by the hordes of rhesus macaques plaguing their brand new Capital (New Delhi), that they had them trapped by the trainload and sent them off to the hinterland, where they were set free. The monkeys, unused to life in the wild and all that fresh air, promptly caught the next train back to the Capital.

Well, having lived alongside troupes of rhesus for more than 40 years in Delhi, I can vouch that rhesus do not (like many human equivalents) make ideal neighbours. But what's worse is that I see a resemblance between their insolent aggressiveness, and that of the average road user in Delhi. There's that same arrogant swagger and overweening sense of proprietorship. ('Abbe, do you know who my father is?'). When they enter your garden, you will leave. Monkey lovers will say, that it's the city's people that have made them behave thus: by feeding and stoning them in turn, they have made the monkeys insecure as to how to respond and behave. By trapping them and sending them off to exile to the Asola Wildlife Sanctuary or some such godforsaken wilderness, we break up closely-knit family groups and that's quite traumatic for them. Besides, there they would have to behave like primitive hunter-gatherers, can you imagine, not 21st-century millennium macaques that would like to saunter about in air-conditioned malls, helping themselves to cheesecake and cappuccinos. If you behave in a consistently civilised way with them, they will reciprocate and not waylay you, but will ask politely if you have any pistachios to spare... do turn out your pockets and empty your handbag please... right now... or else!

The problem is that the macaques also have pretty short and extremely incendiary fuses: if you don't give them what they want in about 15 seconds well, you're asking for trouble, bro. And that can be pretty serious trouble if they gang up against you – a deputy mayor in Delhi paid with his life after being chased off a rooftop by them. Their canines are more suited to sabretoothed tigers rather than vegetarian simians. Delhi apart, many towns especially in north India, like Agra, Mathura and Dehradun, are dealing with the same problem, and the macaques can truly behave like thugs who have heavy political backing. On a visit to Rishikesh, I was immediately advised to pocket my mobile and remove my spectacles, because they would be immediately snatched and held for ransom by the marauding monkeys. If you wore a gold chain, you might even have your throat slit.

Apparently, many of these hoodlum monkeys are still being trapped by the municipalities, and in the dead of night transported by the truckload to the hills where they are released in the surrounding forests. Most of these hoodlum monkeys are not able to cadge lifts back to the towns they were brought from – as apparently they did in the good old days.

Ah, rehabilitation back into the wild

you would say, how nice! But this has not gone down well with either the monkeys or the local human inhabitants of these salubrious places: The locals say that these city-raised monkeys have no 'tameez' (respect) for anyone, they indiscriminately destroy their orchards and crops, bite women and children, and in general behave just the way the 'badtameez' people of the plains do, whose crimes may be different: littering, buying up land, building hideous resorts and completely upsetting their gentle languorous way of life. Indeed many who have farmed land bordering these forested areas, have given up and been forced to hike down to the dusty towns in the plains in search of livelihoods. The hill people have for long regarded their plains-dwelling counterparts, with suspicion and hostility – not entirely unfounded. They fear these uncivilised, rude people are after their properties and have even accused them of deliberately setting the goonda monkeys loose on them to facilitate the process – just as debt-collectors set heavies after loan defaulters.

What is worse is that now these hoodlum townie monkeys are also corrupting the local population of 'good' monkeys who were gentler and got along with the local human population just fine. Talk about holding up a mirror to ourselves. So how does one deal with this issue? We can't shoot the monkeys or let leopards loose in the parks, langurs don't scare them very much (or else they just wait for the langur-



patrol to pass before it's business as usual) and using catapults against them, means that they will, gang up against you. Perhaps, the thing to do is to stop hosting papaya and parantha parties for them every morning in parks and gardens, as so many people do, fattening them up and encouraging them to have more babies because their future is so secure here. Feeding animals is all very well, but with animals as intelligent as the rhesus can you imagine the Whatsapp messages being sent from a hip Delhi-based simian to its country-

bumpkin cousin:

Scoffed big basket of kiwi, (imported), avocado (imported), blueberries (imported), and aloo-paranthe (local) for breakfast – as much as I could eat! Going for a swim now! Too jhatt se aa ja! This is the place to be! Chased 6 year-old bachchas and their mummijis all over the India Gate lawn – bahut mazza aayaa! Am going to visit the new Parliament House soon and see what I can do there. Ek dum jaldi aa bro aur family ko bhi lay aana!

Fasting, a sacred tradition spanning centuries and faiths

As the crescent moon wanes and the final days of Ramzan draw near, Muslims around the world prepare to bid farewell to a month of spiritual reflection, community, and fasting. For billions of people, Ramzan is more than just a religious observance; it is a profound journey of self-discipline, empathy, and devotion.

Followed by an approximate 80 per cent of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims, the practice is not only widespread, but also, increasingly accommodated. In April of 2021, players from both Leicester City and Crystal Palace opted to come together for a break during a Premier League fixture. The pause was scheduled to coincide with the moment the sun set, allowing Leicester's Wesley Fofana to break his Ramzan fast.

While Ramzan is arguably the largest and most visible instance of religious fasting, the practice extends far beyond the boundaries of Islam. From the abstention of food and drink in the Judaic tradition of Yom Kippur to the cleansing rituals of Buddhist monks, fasting serves as a common thread that unites diverse communities in their pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. On Thursday, many Hindus will also begin a period of fasting for the nine days of Navratri, a festival in honour of the god-

dess Durga.

History of fasting Fasting, as a practice deeply ingrained in the human experience, finds its roots in the very essence of survival. But the ability to abstain from food is not unique to humans; it is a skill shared by countless species across the animal kingdom. From reptiles to penguins, bears to seals, many creatures exhibit remarkable feats of fasting, enduring months without sustenance.

This physiological adaptability is not confined to the animal world alone. Research has shown that alternate-day fasting, and time-restricted feeding protocols can enhance lifespan and improve metabolic health markers in a variety of organisms, spanning from yeast to humans. Such findings underscore the deep-seated relationship between fasting and the survival mechanisms of our species.

Delving into our ancestral past, we uncover a time when food was not as readily available as it is today. Prior to the agricultural revolution around 10,000 BCE, early humans had to contend with prolonged periods of scarcity, navigating through days or even weeks without sustenance. These involuntary fasts were not just moments of deprivation but crucial adaptations for survival.

The therapeutic potential of fasting was recognized as far back as the fifth century BCE, with the Greek physician Hippocrates advocating for abstinence from food or drink to treat certain ailments. Indeed, some physicians observed what they called a 'fasting instinct,' where patients in diseased states naturally lost their appetites. In such cases, fasting was viewed as a vital aspect of the body's natural healing process.

Moreover, fasting held significant religious and spiritual significance across ancient civilizations. In cultures ranging from the Hellenistic mystery religions to pre-Columbian societies in Peru, fasting was employed as a means to prepare individuals to commune with the divine. Whether as a form of penance, a prerequisite for visions, or a ritual preceding major ceremonies, fasting served as a bridge between the earthly and the divine realms. Beyond its religious connotations, fasting has also been wielded as a tool for social and political expression. Mahatma Gandhi's use of fasting as a form of protest against British colonial rule in India remains a poignant example. Throughout history, individuals from various backgrounds have undertaken hunger strikes to advocate for causes ranging from civil rights to political recognition.

Heat waves will intensify, scientist makes a pitch to NDMA

Dr Roxy Koll, a scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) Pune, in his presentation to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) during a national workshop on heat waves earlier this month, shared insights on severe heat conditions during the month of April 2023 and current projections that set a grim backdrop for the 2024 elections. A 20°C night-time temperature gap in Delhi highlighting a stark temperature disparity for night temperatures—up to 20 degree Celsius difference between urban and rural areas in Delhi and surrounding regions for the month of May 2022, Dr Koll shared insights during the NDMA workshop emphasising this stark contrast due to the urban heat island (UHI) effect.

“Climate change is aggravating the heat everywhere but the urban heat islands that trap this heat are our own construction. The UHI effect is most visible in the night-time temperatures. Cities turn into urban heat islands when buildings, roads, and other infrastructure absorb and re-emit heat, causing cities to be several degrees hotter than surrounding rural areas,” said Dr Koll. During the day, however, the sun’s rays reach as shortwave radiation and heat the Earth’s surface. “At night, the heat escapes as longwave radiation. While shortwave radiation can easily penetrate through and reach the surface, the longwave gets trapped easily by concrete and clouds,” he said.

The high-rise buildings and concrete setups in the cities do not let the excess heat escape during the night. As the temperatures do not cool down, the heatwave continues into the night. “Open green spaces and natural environments with trees can help release the heat faster during the night. However, in India, we do not appreciate natural space as much as we appreciate skyscrapers. Add some haphazard city planning, poor architecture and unsustainable construction to it, and the recipe for an urban heat island is complete,” said Dr Koll. He also highlighted a similar increase in heat pockets due to the Urban Heat Island UHI effect from 2001 to 2021 in major Indian cities, including Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, and Bangalore.

“This analysis shows the expanding footprint of UHI and its exacerbating impact on urban temperatures, urging a re-consideration of urban development and green space integration to mitigate these effects,” said Dr Koll. “As we approach national elections, it’s vital that the Election Commission of India (ECI) recognises the threat posed by heatwaves and takes decisive action,” said Dr Dileep Mavlinkar, former director, the Indian Institute of Public Health-Gandhinagar. “Ensuring that election rallies, public gatherings, polling stations, and any other election-related events are equipped with cooling stations, ample shade, water stations, and medical facilities is critical for protecting the electorate. Specific recommendations and

awareness campaigns are needed to emphasise the importance of hydration and the signs of heat-related illnesses need to be made by ECI across every region.” The impending heat wave challenge “We need to realise that heatwaves are going to intensify in terms of the frequency, intensity, duration, and the area covered. This means that we need to be perpetually prepared for the heat stress from February to June in India. We should have policies with long-term vision in place that can protect our lives and livelihoods as the temperature rises,” said Dr Koll, adding that it is crucial that citizens observe the heatwave forecasts that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) will start disseminating from March onwards.

Dr Mrutunjay Mohapatra, director general, IMD said, “Starting March, IMD will release forecasts in our standard pattern, offering daily temperature forecasts over five days, along with biweekly and seasonal outlooks. These forecasts will comprehensively cover temperature, wind speed, humidity, and the heat index among other key parameters, ensuring citizens have full access to essential weather information for their daily lives, safety, and plan any movement according to advisories.” The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has indicated that the ongoing El Niño event (a climate phenomenon characterised by the periodic warming of sea-surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, affecting global weather patterns), expected to last at least until April 2024, will contribute to a further spike in temperatures both on land and in the ocean, exacerbating extreme weather conditions such as heatwaves, floods, and droughts. This phenomenon, alongside the record high land and sea-surface temperatures observed since June 2023, suggests that 2024 maybe even warmer, potentially surpassing 2023 as the warmest year on record due to the combined effects of El Niño and human-induced climate change.

“The El Niño is set to weaken by April–May and transition to La Niña (cooling of sea-surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, influencing global weather patterns with effects often opposite to those of El Niño) conditions by June. While El Niño is still active, global and Indian temperatures may continue to be high at least until the start of May,” said Dr Koll. The effects of La Niña are asymmetrical compared to the El Niño. “Recent La Niña years were hot and had some of the strongest heatwave events. However, the chances of a delayed monsoon are generally less if the La Niña teleconnection is strong,” added Koll.

How this impacts our body The human body’s tolerance to heat varies significantly across India, influenced by regional climatic conditions, humidity levels, and acclimatisation. In regions like the arid northwest, residents are adapted to high



temperatures, while in the humid coastal areas, even lower temperatures can feel intolerable due to high humidity.

The IMD defines a heat wave as a period of abnormally high temperatures, surpassing the normal maximum temperature, primarily observed during the summer season from March to June, and occasionally extending into July. The criteria, set by IMD, for declaring a heat wave vary based on geographical and climatic conditions. For plains, a heat wave is not considered until the maximum temperature reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius, and for hilly regions, the threshold is at least 30 degrees Celsius. A heat wave departure from normal is categorised as 5 degrees Celsius to 6 degrees Celsius for areas where the normal maximum temperature is less than or equal to 40 degrees Celsius, and a severe heat wave is declared when the departure from normal is 7 degrees Celsius or more. In contrast, for regions where the normal maximum temperature exceeds 40 degrees Celsius such as Churu in Rajasthan or Nagpur in Maharashtra, a heat wave is acknowledged with a departure from normal between 4°C and 5°C, and a severe heat wave with a departure of 6°C or more. Additionally, when the actual maximum temperature remains at 4 to 5 degree Celsius or above, irrespective of the normal maximum temperature, heat waves are declared. “We also need to take into account that some of these heat waves are overlapping with other climate extremes such as droughts or rainfall deficits, wildfires, and air pollution that when combined threaten the health of the population and also impact the food, water and energy security of the country,” Koll said.

On April 16, 2023, during a public event in Kharghar, Navi Mumbai in Maharashtra, a tragic incident occurred due to extreme heat, offering a sombre lesson in the lead-up to the 2024 elections. According to the district collector’s office, at least 14 people died, and another 600 suffered from heat stroke after being exposed to the sun for over six hours. In his presentation, he highlighted the lethal synergy of

high temperatures, elevated humidity, and prolonged exposure among vulnerable populations. The combination of high temperatures, recorded between 34-38 degrees Celsius by nearby meteorological observatories on the day, and a significant humidity level of 45%, created perilous conditions, said Dr. Koll. “When the air has high levels of humidity along with the heat, the body fails to regulate its internal temperature via sweating as it does not evaporate fast enough,” he said. “Though the heat is blamed, it is the lack of basic precautions that saw them die,” Koll said, pointing out the critical need for awareness and preventive measures against heat-induced health emergencies. “Hazards like heat waves become lethal when the most vulnerable sections of the population are exposed to it for prolonged periods.”

The health impacts of heat waves can range from mild symptoms like dehydration and heat cramps, characterised by edema and syncope with fevers below 39°C (102°F), to severe conditions such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke. “Heat exhaustion symptoms include fatigue, weakness, dizziness, and excessive sweating. In more severe cases, heat stroke can occur, with body temperatures soaring above 40°C (104°F), leading to delirium, seizures, or even coma, marking it as a potentially fatal condition,” said Dr Pradeep Awate, assistant director, Maharashtra Health Services.

A study on heatwaves and mortality Insights from a recent study published in the peer-reviewed journal Environment International, “Impact of heatwaves on all-cause mortality in India: A comprehensive multi-city study”, by Jeroen de Bont and his team at Karolinska Institutet along with authors from India reveal the underestimated mortality risks posed by milder heat waves. The research offered a comprehensive overview of heatwave patterns across different Indian cities, detailing the mean daily deaths, the number of heatwaves, annual frequency, and other critical metrics such as the average start day of the heatwave season, length, and intensity of heat waves.

This scientist has led the way in tapping into the quantum world for new tech

Dr Aditi Sen De, a physicist with the Harish Chandra Research Institute, Prayagraj, has won the 2023 GD Birla Award for Scientific Excellence. The award, given annually by the KK Birla Foundation since 1991, recognises outstanding contributions by Indian scientists who are under the age of 50 and living and working in India.

De, who will turn 50 later this year, is the 33rd scientist, and the first woman, to receive the award. A statement from the KK Birla Foundation mentions her outstanding contribution to the development of quantum technologies. At the Harish Chandra Research Institute, she is a professor in the quantum information and computation (QIC) group. QIC is a field that can revolutionise modern technology once its potential is tapped. In essence, it seeks to put the mysterious phenomena of quantum mechanics to practical use in fields such as computing, communication, sensing, and simulation. "It is a science at the crossroads of physics, computer science, mathematics, and information theory, and can potentially revolutionise the future of communication and computational technologies," De said.

Quantum physics appears mysterious because what happens in that world defies what we intuitively take as being natural. At the subatomic level, where the laws of classical physics cease to apply, a particle can occur in two states at the same time (superposition) while properties of one particle can be dictated by the properties of another (entanglement), no matter how far apart they are. While quantum physics is something to study and wonder at, quantum information science looks at putting these properties to practical use. One of the most widely followed targets is the quantum computer, with speed and storage far beyond that of a classical computer. This depends on superposition: a quantum bit (qubit) of information can simultaneously have two identities, so that more and more qubits would store exponentially higher and higher amounts of information.

"Quantum information and computation is one of the most fascinating fields of research around the world," De said. She broadly classified quantum technologies into two categories — quantum computers and quantum communication devices. By exploiting quantum mechanical laws, communication schemes (with or without security) can be enhanced, sometimes even qualitatively, she said. Here, quantum entanglement comes into play. Other potential quantum devices include quantum sensors, and quantum thermal machines such as batteries and refrigerators. "In this respect, I should also mention the National Quantum Mission which was declared by the Government of India to involve more scientists and industrialists to build quantum devices," De said. De, an MSc in applied mathematics from Calcutta University, went on to do her PhD in physics at the University of Gdansk, Poland, in the early 2000s. Her thesis was on the subject

that she is identified with today: 'Manipulations of quantum physics and their nonclassical applications'.

This was at a time when the world was just waking up to the potential of quantum mechanics. "I started my career around 2000 and so at the time, it was in the initial phase. For example, point-to-point communication [between a single sender and a single receiver] had very limited applications. Several quantum communication protocols were discovered around the 1990s or later, typically dealing with a single sender and a single receiver," De said.

Among other things, she is working on building a quantum communication network, a thriving area of research. The statement mentions her innovative concepts for such networks as well as her ideas for quantum batteries and quantum refrigerators.

"Our recent works include two proposals for quantum networks (or quantum internet (internet based on quantum physics)," she said. "Apart from that, I am also working on the design of quantum thermal



machines [such as batteries and refrigerators], quantum cryptographic networks involving several senders and receivers, and the characterisation of resources necessary for effective implementations of quantum communication and quantum algorithms. Another important direction that I am working on is to find suitable quantum systems in which quantum computers can

be built." De won the prestigious Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar prize (2018), given to researchers under the age of 45, and the Buti Foundation Award (2012) for theoretical physics. She is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy as well as the Indian Academy of Sciences. She is married to Ujjwal Sen, a physicist at the same institute.

5 reasons why pulses and green legumes should be a pantry staple

Looking to boost your health, embrace a plant-based lifestyle, or do your part for the planet? Look no further than the humble pulse and green legume! Packed with protein, fibre, vitamins, and minerals, these nutritional powerhouses offer a multitude of benefits that extend far beyond their delicious taste. Let's dive into the top five reasons why you should make these versatile ingredients a regular part of your diet:

1. Protein Power

As Dr K. Somnath Gupta, sr. consultant physician & diabetologist at Yashoda Hospitals Hyderabad, highlighted pulses and green legumes are excellent sources of plant-based protein, making them ideal for vegetarians, vegans, and anyone seeking to reduce animal protein intake. This protein is essential for building and repairing tissues, supporting muscle growth, and maintaining overall health.

2. Fibre Fantastic

Packed with dietary fibre, these legumes promote digestive health by preventing constipation, regulating bowel movements, and supporting a healthy gut microbiome. Fibre also helps manage blood sugar levels, lowers cholesterol, and contributes to a feeling of fullness, aiding in weight management. The ultimate guide to superfoods for weight loss Remember, your health, the planet, and your taste buds will thank you. (Source: File)

3. Vitamin & Mineral Vault



Don't underestimate the nutritional punch of pulses and green legumes! They're loaded with essential vitamins and minerals like iron, potassium, magnesium, folate, and zinc. These nutrients play crucial roles in various bodily functions, including energy production, immune system support, bone health, and cognitive function.

4. Heart-Healthy Hero

Regular consumption of pulses and green legumes has been linked to a reduced risk of heart disease. Their high fibre content helps lower cholesterol levels, while their potassium content helps regulate blood pressure. Additionally, they are low in saturated fat and cholesterol, mak-

ing them heart-healthy choices.

5. Earth-Conscious Choice

Beyond your plate, incorporating pulses and green legumes into your diet has positive environmental impacts. Unlike animal agriculture, which is resource-intensive and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, these legumes have a much lower environmental footprint. They require less water and land to produce, making them a more sustainable protein source. From protein-packed lentil soup to fibre-rich chickpea salad, the possibilities are endless when it comes to incorporating pulses and green legumes into your meals. Remember, your health, the planet, and your taste buds will thank you.

Who exposed big pharma and what do need to know about him?

I have been a fan of Patrick Radden Keefe ever since I read his stunning exposé, *Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty* (2021). And now I am to meet the man himself. I have mixed feelings. Will Keefe be as exciting a conversationalist as he is a writer and storyteller? On a cloudy Sunday in Jaipur at the literature festival held at the start of this month, I got a chance to find out. Keefe's session at the front lawns at Hotel Amer Clarke was packed, his audience clearly as enthralled as I am by his works. In *Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland* published in 2018, a reader is landed square in the middle of the Irish militancy. The book features incredible characters like the Price sisters who carry bombs and go on hunger strikes. It zooms into historical personalities I hitherto had a hazy idea of like Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Fein, and also examines the anatomy of a protest movement. What drives this investigative journalist across the world, writing on themes like art and arbitrage, institutionalised greed and violence, painting unforgettable pictures of real life characters? And how does he deal with threats of legal action (he was spied on by a private investigator during the writing of *Empire of Pain*)?

What was your childhood reading like?

My mother is a professor of philosophy. And she wrote books. I grew up in a house with lots of books. I read lots of mysteries and loved Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie.

When did you know you wanted to be a writer?

I went to high school outside of Boston, and the library had what they call a periodicals room, a room with all the magazines. I must have been 15 or 16, when I took the *New Yorker* off the shelf, and I was very taken with it. I thought I'd love to write for the magazine when I'm older. And of course, it took many, many years.

You decided at 16 to write for *The New Yorker*. When did it finally happen?

I was 29. I had been pitching to *The New Yorker* for seven years, and they always rejected me. In fact, in my office at home now, I have a framed rejection letter from 1998. And then in 2005, they accepted a pitch finally. Even then, they didn't actually say yes. Because the story was about Chinatown, the editor, who is now my editor for the last 19 years, said, 'Very interested in this. But you have to prove to us that you can get sources in Chinatown to speak to you.' And so I spent a month just going to Chinatown and knocking on doors and trying to meet people. And then eventually I came back and I said okay, I have these eight people who will talk to me. The story eventually came out in 2006, when I was 30.

And in the years you were trying to be a writer, you went to Yale Law School and

trained to be a lawyer?

What I really wanted to do is be a writer, but I wasn't sure I could. *The New Yorker* had been rejecting me, I wasn't sure I could make a living as a writer, so I thought I have to have a backup plan. After studying law, I joined a law firm and worked there for three months. I hated it. This was in New York. The law firm had an office in Rome. And so for six weeks, I was in New York and for six weeks, I was in Rome. And by the end of the summer, I thought I could never do this for a living.

Besides a law degree from Yale Law School, you have two masters degrees, from Cambridge and London School of Economics. How have these shaped you as a writer?

My education has been at a series of very elite institutions. But I always looked at those institutions with a little bit of scepticism, even though I was on the inside. You know, there's an expression that I love, which is to be the skunk at the garden party, you know this expression?

I was always very sceptical. I think I get it from my mother. Especially if it's a nice environment, a privileged environment, and I'm in it, and I'm benefiting from the privilege, there is always a little part of me uncomfortable with it, and wondering, you know, what are the real dynamics here?

You spoke earlier about ethics and unfairness and one thing that jumps at me about your work is how you write about right and wrong, whether it's the Sackler family in *Empire of Pain* or the drug lords, art smugglers or scamsters in your long form features. And I'm wondering, did it kind of relate to your mother being a professor of philosophy? Did you as a child growing up have these dining table conversations about right and wrong?

My mother is very interested in tricky ethical questions, and we have always had great, conversations about those types of things, like, why do right, why do wrong. My father comes from a Catholic family. But my mother is an atheist. And so even things like believing in God, we'd talk about these things. As a child, I sang in a church choir, not as a religious thing, but because the music was very beautiful. And at the church, they would have these classes.

One time they told the biblical story, of Abraham and Isaac, of God asking Abraham to sacrifice his child. And they went around the room, and asked the children, 'What would you do if God told you to sacrifice your parents?' And all the kids said, 'If God told me to, I would sacrifice my parents.' I was 10 years old then. And I came home and I told my mother and she said, we are taking you out of that class. Both my parents, they like to chew over a tricky issues. They are very good conversationalists.

Your first trip to Jaipur was to do a story on an art smuggler?

I picked up on the story when I read



The award-winning author of 'Empire of Pain' on what drives him to investigate and enjoy playing the skunk in the garden party

an article about the art smuggler Vaman Ghiya, who was being prosecuted. What was interesting to me about that story was that I learned that some of the idols that he removed from temples, are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and in very esteemed collections in the United States. And the funny thing is, a lot of these art collectors, like Arthur Sackler (from *Empire of Pain*) they were considered to be champions of Indian art, because at that time, for a lot of people in America, if it wasn't European painting, and sculpture, they didn't think of it as art at all. So these people who championed Indian or Chinese art, they may have been progressive, yet there was often something quite exploitative about their transactions. For people like Arthur Sackler, this was a kind of madness. On one hand, he's like a great champion of East Asian art, because he could appreciate the beauty and the value in the historic significance of these artworks. On the other it was about conquest, almost neo-colonial. And I have to tell you, in that story that I wrote about (Vaman Ghiya) one of the magical statues ended up in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. When I published that story, I thought that the Met would say, we will return it. They didn't.

You are a brilliant narrator in the audiobook of *Empire of Pain*. How did you prepare for this?

I spent a year doing *Wind of Change*. It's an eight-part podcast, which investigates the strange convergence of espionage and heavy metal music during the Cold War. And I was working with very good producers. In the studio, there's a glass window and you can see the producer on the other side, and they would kind of coach me on reading into a microphone and how to keep it lively. And then I did the audiobooks for *Empire of Pain* and *Rogues*.

Have you faced legal consequences for any of your stories?

Nobody has ever actually filed the lawsuit. They threaten to all the time. Just this past week, I got three legal letters because of the story that I'm working on.

What story is this?

It's about a boy in London, who was 19. And he died in 2019, he went off the balcony of a luxury building. And after he died, it turned out he had been pretending to be the son of a Russian oligarch.

And finally, what are you reading these days?

The best book that I have read in the last few years, is a novel by Claire Keegan called *Small things like these*. It's short, I read it in one sitting on a plane, I was on the middle seat, and when I was finished, I was crying. People must have been wondering.

How Mir Jafar's tainted legacy still haunts his descendants

"Why is this still not getting resolved? Haye Allah!," says 62-year-old Syeda Tarat Begum, an 11th generation descendant of Mir Jafar, out of exasperation. Her uncle, Wakir Ali Meerza, walks around their small courtyard, watching in despair as monkeys chew away all the flowers the family painstakingly grows in their small plot of land. 88-year-old Meerza, a direct descendant of Mir Jafar, is a little exhausted and doesn't talk much; only that the family have lost much of their wealth over the generations and how difficult a legal battle it is to get even some of it back. With less than a month to go for the Lok Sabha elections, the campaigns by political parties have witnessed the unexpected resurrection of Mir Jafar, the commander-in-chief of Bengal Army under Siraj ud-Daulah.

Last month, a row erupted after Sanjeev Sanyal, a member of the PM's Economic Advisory Council, blamed the people of Bengal for "poverty of aspiration". "The first time when he (Jyoti Basu) got elected, he had already carried out the Marichjhapi massacre... The question is, why did they keep getting him back despite his lack of performance? Some part of it was, of course, electoral malpractice. Booth capturing was converted into an art form. But I would argue that even more important than that was a poverty of aspiration," he said in a podcast interview.

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) condemned Sanyal's remarks, calling him "modern-day Mir Jafar". "The hate spewing Bangla-Birodhis of @BJP4India have crossed all lines of decency! PM @narendramodi's Chief Economic Advisor and a new addition to the list of modern-day Mir Jafars, Sanjeev Sanyal openly criticised the glorious culture of Bengal by accusing us of having a "Poverty of Aspirations", making a complete fool of himself! Following the footsteps of his Bangla-Birodhi overlords of the BJP, he mocked our cultural icon Mrinal Sen and the prolific culture of Kolkata, the city of joy," read a post by the TMC on 'X'. The use of the name 'Mir Jafar' in a manner similar to that of an insult or slander, still rankles, say his descendants, who live in Murshidabad and Kolkata.

Several weeks before the controversy erupted, on a warm February evening, indianexpress.com sat with some of Jafar's descendants in Murshidabad to talk about the legacy that the family continues to live with. They say they are tired of the many times their ancestor's name continues to come up in conversations and interviews, but particularly in a negative context, and they firmly believe that the Nawab of Bengal has been unfairly maligned over the course of history. Professor Bimal Kanti Ghosh, a retired academic, who previously taught at Jadavpur University's Department of History, says "Mir Jafar was the middle man and this is documented". "Facts are facts. There can be no denial of this... The family does not know historical facts very well."

Mir Jafar A brick wall and wrought iron gate behind which descendants of Mir Jafar

still live. (Express Photo: Neha Banka)

'Traitor's Gate' A six-minute drive from where the descendants now live is the Namak Haram Deorhi, or the 'Traitor's Gate', the former residence of Mir Jafar. Its present name is the most commonly used identification, although it also goes by two other names — the Jafarganj Deorhi and Jafarganj Palace. Some family members from the direct line of descent of Jafar live a stone's throw from the Hazarduari Palace, in the middle of crumbling palaces, on land that was once a part of expansive gardens but is now so overgrown that it resembles untamed jungles.

"What possessions will we have of our ancestors? Everything that remained is now in the Hazarduari Palace. I go like a tourist to see our ancestor's belongings in the palace these days," says Meerza. While the family still has some belongings and documents passed down over generations, objects of financial and historical value have largely become a property of the Indian government. "Over the years, I have never had to purchase a ticket to see Hazarduari, but I think I may have to now. I also worked there for some time because of the legacy. But changes are happening and it's all unwritten. There are too many restrictions in the palace now," says Meerza. While previously, the museum staff at Hazarduari knew the family well and never imposed any restrictions on them when they wanted to stop by the palace, Meerza says that many administrative changes have occurred over the past few years.

Mir Jafar Ali Khan was the Nawab of Bengal from 1757 to 1760 and again from 1763 to 1765. He was an Arab by ethnicity and was born sometime in 1691. His association with Bengal occurred through marital ties. His paternal aunt, Begum Sharfunnisa, was the wife of Nawab Alivardi Khan of Bengal who ruled over the province between 1740 to 1756. Following the death of Alivardi Khan, in the absence of a son, the successor to the throne of Bengal was his daughter's son, Siraj ud-Daulah, who was only 23 years old at that time. In many ways, trouble started when the young Siraj ud-Daulah ascended the throne. There were too many high-ranking court officials and relatives who resented his elevation in status and the power that came with it. The changes that Siraj ud-Daulah brought to the workings of the court fostered resentment amongst those who stood to lose the most. Among these individuals was Mir Jafar, who was removed from the post of the paymaster of the Bengal army after Siraj ud-Daulah discovered that he was a disloyal servant. Next, was Ghaseti Begum, the Nawab's maternal aunt, a wealthy woman in her own right with the power to pull strings in the royal court, so much so that Siraj ud-Daulah believed it was necessary to banish her from his court and keep her confined. Also included in this group was Jagat Seth, a wealthy merchant and banker who stood to lose financially from the administrative changes that Siraj ud-Daulah was bring-



ing about, along with other merchant bankers who were Seth's cohort. Mir Jafar An ancient brick wall near Hazarduari behind which is the home of the direct descendants of Mir Jafar. (Express Photo: Neha Banka) In 1757, when the British decided to overthrow Siraj ud-Daulah, Mir Jafar, along with a group of powerful merchant bankers and other court officials, joined hands with the British East India Company.

The memoirs of William Watts, who was an official with the British East India Company, provide some insight into the last days of Siraj ud-Daulah's rule as well as how the conspiracy unfolded. Like most Englishmen who arrived in the Indian subcontinent, Watts had humble origins as the son of a school teacher. His well-connected wife helped him secure a job as the chief of the Cossimbazar factory, a trading post of the British in what is modern-day Murshidabad. His entry into the court of Siraj ud-Daulah occurred when Robert Clive made him a representative of the Company. Working under the instructions of Clive, Watts was tasked with a confidential assignment: to find a replacement for Siraj ud-Daulah, by exploiting the fractures within the Nawab's court. This was a build-up to the Battle of Plassey in June 1757, that secured the victory of the British East India Company over Siraj ud-Daulah and his French allies, helmed by Clive and supported by Mir Jafar. The Battle of Plassey marked the beginning of British rule in India. Before this, the British had only been trading in India. Watts writes about the end of Siraj ud-Daulah's life, at the hands of Muhammad Beg, a co-conspirator, under orders from Mir Jafar's son, Miran: "It is certain that he was in a very low and distressed condition, with hardly any cloths upon his back... Be that as it will, the making him (Siraj ud-Daulah) prisoner was regarded as an event of great consequence to the new Suba (Mir Jafar). He was no sooner informed of it, than he committed that Prince to the custody of his son (Miran),

recommending to him earnestly in public, to take the surest methods to prevent his escape; but at all events to preserve his life. The young man (Miran), instead of paying that respect which was due to his father's commands (Mir Jafar), no sooner had him in his hands, than he caused him to be privately put to death..." "Such was the end of Suraja Dowlat, in the prime of his youth, being at the hour of his death scarce twenty-five years of age," writes Watts. The young Nawab had ruled for only 15 months.

In an introduction to Watt's memoirs, Professor Ghosh writes that "a conflict between the Nawab and the English became inevitable due to the political and commercial policy of the English Company which contributed to a great extent to the economic and political decline of Bengal". Mir Jafar, Siraj ud-Daulah, and Indian elections Back in modern-day India, another controversy began brewing with the TMC fielding the firebrand sitting MP Mahua Moitra from the Krishnanagar seat and the BJP deciding to field 'Rajmata' Amrita Roy, belonging to the erstwhile Krishnanagar royal family. Prime Minister Narendra Modi called up Roy — a conversation the BJP immediately made public — and told her he was working to ensure that the money "looted from the poor people of West Bengal" and attached by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) will be returned to them. Reacting to the conversation, Moitra, in a post on X, wrote, "Krishnachandra Roy's Samaj-sudhar works used to be taught to us" — Hon'ble PM @narendramodi tells BJP Krishnanagar candidate/ Confused between Social Reformer Raja Rammohan Roy & Krishnachandra? Bad homework, Sir . Tch. Tch." Moitra was referring to the royal family of Raja Krishnachandra Roy from Nadia. Amrita Roy is married to Soumish Chandra Roy, a descendant of the erstwhile Raja Krishnachandra Rao. Although her title is not officially recognised, like of many erstwhile royals,

Near Kutch Harappan graveyard, remains of a skeleton and the key to a puzzle

A human skeleton, degraded and in a flexed posture, found on the slope of a hillock in a Gujarat village could hold the key to a mystery that's been puzzling a team of archeologists. In 2018, archeologists from the University of Kerala, working in collaboration with Krantiguru Shyamji Krishna Varma Kachchh University, Bhuj, had unearthed a mass burial site with 500 graves on the outskirts of Khatiya village in Gujarat's Kutch district. The question then was: whose graves are these? Was this the burial ground — arguably the largest such — for a big human settlement in the vicinity or was it a common facility for a cluster of smaller settlements? Since then, the team has been looking for the remains of settlements in the vicinity.

Now, the presence of the skeleton, along with pottery artefacts and animal bones, that the team of archaeologists excavated from a hillock, locally called Padta Bet, point to the presence of a 5,200-year-old Harappan settlement that was 1.5 km from the mass burial ground of Juna Khatiya, an Early Harappan necropolis. The latest find bolsters the theory that the graveyard site may have served as a common facility for a cluster of several such smaller settlements. Rajesh S V, Assistant Professor in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Kerala and co-director of the project, told The Indian Express, "The hillock at Padta Bet may be one of the sites catering to the skeletal remains (in the burial ground) found at Juna Khatiya. Right now it suggests that this was one of the many settlements whose burial site was Juna Khatiya." The researchers believe that a network of such small Harappan settlements around the necropolis "might have played a significant role in the cultural formation of Early Harappan and subsequent occupations in this arid area."

Within the four-hectare area of Padta Bet, the researchers identified two localities where the archaeological deposits were found during excavation — Locality 2 with artefacts from the Early Harappan era (3,200 BC to 2,600 BC), Mature Harappan era (2600 BC to 1900 BC) and Late Harappan era (1900 BC to 1700 BC), and Locality 1 with artefacts dating back to Mature Harappan era and Late Harappan era. Festive offer Harappa Two in situ storage jars below the floor level of a structure; one of them is the new type of coarse red ware, and the other one is the typical known Harappan type. (Photo: Prof Rajesh SV and Abhayan GS) Professor Abhayan G S, Head of the Department of Archaeology at the University of Kerala and who led the Padta Bet excavation, said one hypothesis is that the population may have grown in the area, thus spreading out from Locality 2 to Locality 1 or that the inhabitants selected different areas to stay at different points of time. While the habitation site appears to have only a few structures, the researchers said it is possible that much of the structural remains were eroded due to the unstable nature of the landscape. Researchers said the pottery artefacts and the animal bones — representing cattle, sheep or goat and shell frag-



ments that point to possible animal domestication as well as shellfish "exploitation" — are an indication of the occupation of the Harappan people. One of the most striking features of the excavation are the ceramic artefacts, which could be from one of the unidentified pottery traditions of the Harappans, involving large storage jars to small bowls and dishes, they said. Harappa Within the four-hectare area of Padta Bet, the researchers identified two localities where the archaeological deposits were found during excavation. (Photo: Prof Rajesh SV and Abhayan GS) The team also found semiprecious stone beads made of carnelian and agate, terracotta spindle whorls, copper, lithic tools, cores and debitage, grinding stones and hammer stones. Archaeobotanical samples too have been collected from the site for further identification of plant exploitation and to understand agricultural practices.

The presence of the skeleton raises another question. If the mass burial site possibly catered to people in the settlement, why were the remains of this body here, and not at the Juna Khatiya burial site? Harappa While the habitation site appears to have only a few structures, the researchers said it is possible that much of the structural remains were eroded due to the unstable nature of the landscape. (Photo: Prof Rajesh SV and Abhayan GS)

Rajesh explains that while Juna Khatiya was a burial ground from the Early Harappan phase, the skeleton at Padta Bet possibly indicates a change in burial practice over time. "It is an intentional burial and it is possible that the skeletal remains (excavated at Padta Bet) are from the Late Harappan era or there might be a practice to bury within the habitation limits. We have not seen any burial from the Late Harappan era at Juna Khatiya (the mass burial ground)." Last year, Rajesh was awarded the Field Discovery Award by the

Chinese Academy of Social Sciences of Shanghai University for his discovery of the Juna Khatiya cemetery. The skeleton, along with the other artefacts, are currently in transit and are expected to reach Kerala in a week. Explore in-depth reportage from award winning journalists in Indian Express's Long Reads section. Dive into detailed articles on India's latest news,

politics, culture, and more. Our expertly written long-form content provides deep dives into the issues shaping India and the world. Whether you are interested in investigative journalism, detailed political analysis, cultural explorations, or significant events, Long Reads offers a platform for engaging, thought-provoking stories. Uncover the stories behind the headlines

Diarrhea and vomiting due to contaminated water on the rise

Hyderabad: It is summer time and government hospitals, private clinics and nursing homes in the city are reporting rise of acute diarrheal disease (ADD), vomiting and dehydration due to consumption of contaminated water and stale food.

A large number of children are reporting sick with vomiting, diarrhea and dehydration, as temperatures rise and access to treated water becomes difficult and food becomes stale because of the summer heat. To tackle diarrhea among children, which often leads to rehydration, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends ORS (Oral Rehydration Solution).

"These days, commercially occurring ORS juices have high sugar content, which worsens diarrhea, not only among children but even among adults. Do not use such products and make sure to read the labels properly," advises senior pediatrician, Dr Sivaranjani Santosh.

When children vomit for the first time, calm them down and take them to a cool environment, she advises adding, "Then give sips of cool recommended liquids like coconut water, ORS, water etc. alternately. Give one sip/one spoon of the liquid every



A large number of children are reporting sick with vomiting, diarrhea and dehydration, as temperatures rise and access to treated water becomes difficult and food becomes stale because of the summer heat.

five minutes and don't rush the fluids." Fever Hospital, which is the regional healthcare facility for seasonal ailments, has started receiving a large number of patients with such symptoms. "Water-borne ailments are usually associated due to lack of access to potable drinking water, the heat strokes are due to exposure to high temperatures of over 40 degree Celsius," says Superintendent, Fever Hospital, Dr K Shankar.

The wins and trials of a homegrown publisher

Rupa Books chairman Rajen Mehra decided to pen the journey of his publishing company during a hospitalisation a few years ago. Never Out of Print (Rs 500, Rupa), inspired by his granduncle Daudayal Mehra's leap into entrepreneurship in Calcutta back in 1936. The company is one of the few independent English-language book publishers in India today, and we speak to Mehra on what made that possible. Excerpts:

A big part of Rupa's story was coffee-fueled discussions about books, art and politics in Calcutta. As a publisher, do you miss such public spaces?

Our original office was in Albert Hall Building, which also housed the Indian Coffee House. In my college days, when people wouldn't get space in the café, they would walk into our office and buy books. Lot of intellectuals like Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen and MJ Akbar came, and I started interacting with them. Leftism was at its peak. I left all that when I left Calcutta. Delhi I would say is more bureaucratic, more political.

Your non-fiction catalogue is much larger than fiction. Are you going to invest more in fiction?

In the 1980s, we published best-selling authors like Sidney Sender, Agatha Christie, Alistair McLean. Our sales were internationally talked about. Youngsters like Anurag Mathur, Ranjit Hoskote, Sudipto Sen, Salman Rushdie were coming up. We had distributed *Midnight's Children* while availability and pricing were an issue. Fiction is very difficult, you have to get a plot, work it around, everyday things are changing so rapidly. How do you combat international publishers and their gradual consolidation? They dominate the market.

It's a blessing in disguise. We were the first to import Penguins into the country, and our relations with them were great from 1936 to 1992. But suddenly they decided to go away and we lost more than 50 percent of our business. We decided to become more independent. Collins joined us. You can't build publishing in a day. When Collins left us in 2002, we were ready with half the list we wanted. By 2015, we became totally dependent on our own publishing.

Are modern-day publishing targets and quotas diluting editorial quality or the choice of books published?

You don't get an author like Joel Lucas or Milan Kundera today. (Ideological) writing got over in mid-80s. In India it was after 1992's liberalisation. If you don't have an ideology, what do you do? What comes, you take it and forget about it. It's like fast food. The quality obviously has to go down. Crime writers like Ken Follet and Robin Cook and Jeffrey Archer have a commitment to write one book a year or two. An ordinary book takes more than 10 years to complete. It is also affecting the film industry. People like more fun and frolic,

with sex and music and dance.

Rupa started with Bengali publishing, but had to shut it down in the 80s. The translated catalogue isn't huge. Do you want to go there?

I was very keen to get into Hindi publishing. I invested a lot of money in promoting that but somehow it didn't click. Elder publishers like Rajkamal Prakashan and Radhakrishna survived because they have been in this line for a long time. You can only do translations when the quality of writing is good and long-lasting. It takes about two to three years to do it well. And writers like Mahasweta Devi, Ashapurna Devi, Sivasankari and Sarala Devi Chaudhurani are not easy to translate. At Aleph, we do lots of translations which are doing very well. How have you dealt with Amazon's influence on bookstores disappearing and the fall of book prices? Amid rising paper and distribution costs.

When you say Amazon has taken away the booksellers' margin totally, it's not correct. Booksellers have started disappearing also because real estate prices have gone up. In Connaught Place, you won't find in the inner circle any bookshop except Jain Book Agency. It used to be Book Home, Dalgotia, Ramakrishna and Sons, and New Book Depot. But they have all disappeared. Fortunately, in Khan Market, we have one or two shops around. Amazon probably lost money for 10 years to get into this market. If you have to give high discount to Amazon... it's not that the publishers are not sinners, they also increase their price accordingly. Not every book is going to be successful in Amazon. Some books people spend a lot of money to promote it. There has been opposition to a GST on books, whereas a GST exists on their raw materials. What's your position? Some people say that eventually book prices will increase, so why not impose?

I've discussed this with the government many times. GST is on author's royalty. It is not small, it is 18 percent. You pay GST on paper, printing, labour. What more do you want, on the final product? I think government understands that, which is why they don't let you put a GST on books. Our biggest problem is, if this book is 500 rupees, my publishers have to pay 90 rupees or 18 percent GST to government. That shouldn't happen. 18 percent on MRP is quite a lot of money.

Do you think self-help, a major market for Rupa, gets an unfair rap? Critics accuse it of propagating unscientific advice that caters to a small, privileged, urban, neurotypical audience. When a manuscript comes to us, we can only suggest to an extent what kind of audience it should have across A-tier, B-tier or C-tier cities. The A-tier cities are where books sell most. If, say, public libraries are strong in Kanpur, then obviously literature will go towards that. It's like a river. It makes its own passage.



Book fairs are often criticised today for not being disruptive enough, for inviting many establishment figures. Has their role been reduced to commerce and not championing marginalised voices?

I had a fight once in Jaipur, over a 1600-page history book of Rajasthan, by an author from Jaipur. It took her 10 years to write it but there was no review. I was invited to speak and I spoke of how the book wasn't talked about even in Jaipur. A huge gap is there. We should have more reading sessions. I remember actor Roshan Seth was one of the finest orators in Delhi. When there was a book launch, people would ask him to come and read it out. Sports memoirs have been a big part of Rupa's story, from Sunil Gavaskar to Mushtaq Ali to Vijay Merchant. A common complaint against the genre has been limited access to sources leading to one-sided stories of the celebrity. Have you tried to address that?

Publishing doesn't have a lot of money and you have to pay a lot to get sports memoirs written. And (athletes) can't (always) tell the truth because the contract is such. D Mehra was so saddened by Nehru's death that he wrote and published a book of couplets, and did the same for Lal Bahadur Shastri. Rupa has consistently published political memoirs, sometimes

ruffling feathers and inviting bans. How have Rupa's relationships with the current establishment been? Has the space to publish anti-establishment books shrunk in the past 10 years?

D Mehra had an emotional relationship with those leaders because it was the Independence movement. He even used to take slips in the night and give them to revolutionaries like Jaiprakash Narayan. On the current dispensation, talking about Advani or Jaswant Singh or anybody, we are not ashamed of doing anything if it is correct. We are not pressured by everybody. I'm very firm on this. I've fought for Salman Rushdie many times. You can ask Mark Tully, whose Mrs Gandhi's Last Battle was detained. I was under pressure. We had to pay very heavy damages. We sorted it out and printed 30,000 copies and the book sold. The person who wanted to pressure us ran away because they were afraid that they'd be exposed. I haven't come across anybody (opposing anti-establishment books). Today we talk about our current Prime Minister because he is a dominant force. There are many issues with him or anybody, which can only be answered hypothetically. When we published R Venkataramana, I said everything openly, how the Congress party behaved. And journalist Karan Thapar picked it up.

TSDCA raids unauthorized drug manufacturing unit in Hyd

Hyderabad: The Drug Inspectors of TS Drug Control Administration (TSDCA) conducted raids at Ovoid Pharmachem, Subashnagar, Jeedimetla, Medchal-Malakigiri on Thursday and Wednesday and detected that the facility was manufacturing drugs unauthorizedly. During the raid, DCA officers detected 19 drums containing stocks of 87 Kgs of Itraconazole 35 percent Pellets and 800 kilograms of Activated Charcoal 250 mg and Simethicone 80 mg Pellets, worth Rs 23.93 lakh, manufactured without a drug licence. The Director, Ovoid Pharmachem, Narasapally Ramudu, was present during the TS DCA raids. DG, TSDCA, V B Kamalasan Reddy in a statement said drugs can only be manufactured under a license issued by TSDCA in compliance with the standards prescribed under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.