

## CITY LIGHTS

## Hygiene In Five Easy Steps

Visitors to the American Centre at Marine Lines will have had occasion to be grateful to its library and wealth of information on scholarships and institutes in the United States. Even so, the security-conscious nature of the place can sometimes be an irritant. Visiting journalists, like all other entrants, are always scanned, their bags searched and any mobile with a camera confiscated. But some things might just be taking it too far.

For instance, did you think that there were only two important numbers in toilet etiquette ("Number One or Number Two?" as children are often asked)? Not in America. For, the ground-floor bathroom at the centre boasts not only the usual (lavatory, sink, soap) but also a special 'anti-bacterial solution' and a five-point list of instructions in Marathi on the back of the door, including items like 'Put soap on hands and rub for 20 seconds' and 'Rinse thoroughly until hands are clean'. Thank goodness they explained it all. It's a scary, germ-filled world outside the confines of the US, apparently. By the way, quotations are exact, being from memory. This reporter was too busy following all the instructions to scribble them down.



## Urdu Zindabad

The freshly whitewashed room was packed to the gills, and the mineral water, at just two bottles, fell a little short. Despite these discomforts, the mood at the inauguration of Urdu Markaz, a centre for literature, in teeming Bhandi Bazaar was upbeat. The founder of the organisation, Zubair Azmi, who bravely fought official



**THE DELIVERYMAN:** A bust of Temul Nariman, founder and chief physician, looks on at a deserted passage of the Parsi Lying-in-Hospital which he opened in the Fort area of the city. Started in the late nineteenth century, the maternity home was built to accommodate the then burgeoning population of the Parsis. The hospital is now shut and up for sale, testimony to the community's declining fertility rate and dwindling numbers

apathy and a financial crunch to set it up, earned accolades from the speakers even as many recalled Bhandi Bazaar's role in promoting the arts, especially Urdu poetry. Poet Abdul Ahad Saaz recalled the tiny room at Arcadia Building near JJ Hospital where poet-lyricist Jan Nisar Akhtar spent countless nights before Bollywood toasted him. Maktaba Jamia, a quaint bookstall in the area which still exists, had former president Dr Zakir Hussain among its patrons and attracted a galaxy of litterateurs, including Ali Sardar Jafri, Kaifi, Sahir, Majrooh and Nida Fazli.

Concern for the Urdu language ran high. As feisty writer and wife of the famous progressive Krishan Chander recalled nostalgically, "When Sadat Hasan Manto (many of his timeless stories are set in Mumbai and its underbelly) died, Kris-

han Chanderji paid him a tribute in just one sentence: 'Manto ek satayi hui zubaan ka sataya hua writer tha (Manto was an oppressed writer of an oppressed language). However, I must say even Urdu's enemies use the language's most famous gift, the evocative slogan Inquilab Zindabad.' Touche.

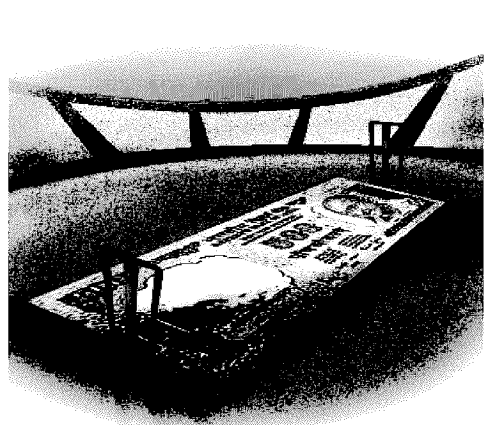
For those interested, Urdu Markaz holds meetings every Saturday (5.00 pm onwards) and it's open to all.

## In Better Times

Is betting in cricket a latter-day phenomenon? Not quite. A book called 'Parsi Cricket' by M E Pavri, written 116 years ago, shows that the blight existed even in those times (though match-fixing, fortunately, didn't). Legal eagle and cricket buff

Fredun De Vitre read out a para from the book at the launch of its reprint: "It is a great pity that the pest of betting which is a great enemy of cricket and which leads to a great deal of unpleasantness to the detriment of the interest of this noble and manly game of cricket is being lately introduced amongst the Parsis, though not openly. I will strongly advise the Parsi cricketers to leave it alone."

The reprinting of the book was undertaken by the KR Cama Oriental Institute. The institute's president, Muncherji N M Cama, tracing the history of Parsi cricket right from the time the first Parsi team left to play in England in 1886, produced a letter published in the Times dated April 23, 1886, written by Ardeshir Patel, secretary of the team, explaining why the tour was undertak-



en. It said: "We go to see English cricket so as to profit by it in the future and at the same time to show the British public that their noble game has admirers even in India." The team was outplayed. A hundred years later in 1986, the show was on the other foot when Kapil Dev's Indian team routed the Brits at their own game.

## Breezing In

For the last month or so, walking down the Bandra station overhead bridge from its east side has been a pleasure, a far cry from the nightmarish experience that it used to be. For one, the railway police seem to have weeded out the elements from the surrounding Behrampada slum who had appropriated half the overbridge for hawking, leaving train commuters with a suffocatingly narrow passage to walk in. Of course, the hawkers are probably around at off-peak hours and could be back in full force any day, depending on how the police are 'managed'.

Hawkers apart, the real joy comes from the fact that the railway authorities have removed the iron boards from the sides of the bridge, thereby letting in a wonderful breeze that buoys you on the most sweltering summer's day. It reminds you of summers gone by where even impossible temperatures were bearable because of the greenery and bountiful breeze from the sea. In today's builder-ruled Mumbai, skyscrapers are increasingly creating heat traps everywhere and Nature's natural air-conditioners, the trees, are being murdered for those few extra square feet of Built-Up Area, three little words that can enrich builders and BMC officials considerably. Thankfully sea breeze can't be sold...or can it? We wouldn't put anything past this government.

(Contributed by Anjali Joseph, Mohammed Wajihuddin, Pradeep Vijayakar and Radha Rajadhyaksha. Illustrations by Tuhin. Compiled by Radha Rajadhyaksha.)

## Rs 12 crore wasted as govt ignores CAG reports

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** Crores of taxpayers' money used every year to compile the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports go down the drain as the central and state governments have not replied to the CAG recommendations in years.

A whopping Rs 12,782 crore was spent on preparing the CAG report for 2005-06 alone. While Rs 4,371.21 crore was spent on the report for the Union government, the state governments and Union Territories (UTs) accounted for Rs 8,410.71 crore. This was according to the performance report of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department 2005-06.

In spite of undertaking such a voluminous task for the country's benefit, the administration is not responsive. The central and state governments have not replied to the CAG recommendations for years. It won't be any different this year too.

The top three states with the maximum number of pending action taken notices (ATNs) against their name are Bihar (4,582), Maharashtra (1,187) and Madhya Pradesh (1,011).

At the central level, the top three defaulting ministries and departments are finance (4,103), railways (331) and the banking division (113) ATNs pending against their name. In Maharashtra, major defaulters are the industries, energy and labour departments, followed by irrigation. AGENCIES

## PATIENTS AND A VIRTUE

Prasad Kumar



**DOING HIS BIT:** Actor Rajat Bedi interacts with children suffering from thalassaemia major at Andheri on Sunday, May 8 is World Thalassaemia Day

## Hypertension, diabetes dog city cops

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** Standing in the midst of Mumbai's traffic jams while directing vehicles seems to have taken a toll on the health of traffic cops. A health check-up camp for traffic policemen from Pydhonie police division on Sunday showed hypertension, diabetes, respiratory infections and backaches as the most prominent occupational hazards.

Of the 84 traffic policemen who underwent a thorough check-up on Sunday, 31 were patients of hypertension, 15 had spinal problems and seven showed symptoms of respiratory illnesses. Worrying-

ly, nine policemen were newly diagnosed with diabetes at the camp.

"The objective was to screen out hidden diseases among traffic policemen and guide them if they threw up positive findings," said Dr M

## POLICE HEALTH CHECK-UP CAMP

M Joshi from Panvel, who along with interventional cardiologist G R Kane examined the policemen.

The traffic department consists of 2000-odd policemen, most of whom spend their 12 hour shifts on their

feet in the midst of honking vehicles. They tend to forgo meals for a quick 'vada pav'.

Sunday's camp was conducted by the Maharashtra Heavy Goods Vehicle Owners' Association. "We are in close contact with traffic policemen and empathise with their working conditions. They are exposed to the worst form of vehicular pollution," said association president Shyam Darandale, adding that policemen often failed to avail of medical facilities available to them, for fear of losing their jobs or getting transferred.

But Sunday was reassuringly different. The policemen, mostly in the 30 to 50 age-

group went through a blood and lipid profile testing five days prior to Sunday's camp. Their diagnosis was done based on their medical reports. Joint commissioner of traffic police Satish Mathur told TOI that the traffic division held such camps for the welfare of staffers. "Police-men, particularly those staying far tend to ignore their illnesses, seeking temporary relief rather than treating their illness. We encourage them to seek help at government and medical colleges." He assured that those with medical problems were not victimised, but their problems rectified.

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## Software analyst commits suicide in Goregaon

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** A 25-year-old software analyst committed suicide at his rented apartment in Mhada colony, Goregaon (east) on Sunday. Police officials said they were clueless as to what drove Arpan Das to kill himself.

Das, a native of Kolkata, shared the apartment with two other room-mates, Saumen Bachhar (25) and Kunal Sharma (26). Both were out at the time of the incident.

Das was employed with Citigroup Global Services located at Nesco compound in Goregaon. He had rented the sixth-floor flat in Mhada colony's building 19-D only one month ago. The three youths had no relatives in Mumbai and would hang out together.

"The trio had the weekend off from work. Around 11 am on Sunday, Bachhar left the apartment to visit his friend at Wadala. A little later, Sharma—whose mother had come down from New Delhi to meet him—went to the domestic airport to drop her. Both said Das was fine when they left the apartment," inspector S Patil told TOI.

Around 1.30 pm, when Sharma returned from the airport, he found the door to the apartment locked from inside. Despite knocking continuously, Das failed to open the door.

"Sharma tried calling up Das on the latter's cellphone but he wouldn't answer. Finally, Sharma dialled

Bachhar and apprised him of the situation. Bachhar told him to wait outside for awhile and that Das must have gone off to sleep," said a police officer. Sharma waited and eventually summoned the watchman. A duplicate key was made to enter the house.

"Sharma was shocked to see Das hanging from the ceiling fan with a dupatta. Das had even put a couple of flower pots in front of the door, after latching it from inside, to prevent anyone from entering in," said the officer. No suicide note was recovered. The body has been sent for a post-mortem examination.

## MYSTERIOUS END FOR 25-YEAR-OLD

"We questioned Bachhar and Sharma whether Das had confided in them about his troubles, but they denied it. We are now waiting for his family and relatives from West Bengal to arrive. Only after questioning them would we know what drove Das to kill himself," said senior inspector U Kermod of Dindoshi police station.

Kermod added that many groups of bachelors took up apartments on rent in the Mhada colony. Most of them hailed from other towns and had few relatives here. Neighbours of Das, Sharma and Bachhar were also groups of bachelors.

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## Post-mortem centre in Govandi delayed

Rajiv Sharma | TNN

**Mumbai:** The delay in opening a new post-mortem centre at Shatabdi Hospital in Govandi is resulting in hardships for residents staying in far-off places in the eastern suburbs, since they have no other option, but to travel to the centre attached to Rajawadi Hospital in Ghatkopar.

In order to reduce congestion, the state government had started post-mortem units at several locations such as Bhagwati Hospital, Sion Hospital, Nair Hospital, KEM Hospital, GT Hospital and St George's Hospital. The location of these units was chosen in a way that residents would not have to travel long distances for an autopsy examination.

With this in mind, it was also decided to start a new post-mortem centre at Shatabdi Hospital in Govandi, in order to ease the load on the existing centre at Rajawadi Hospital. Though this plan was approved a long time ago, the actual work is yet to start and Rajawadi re-

**The official said the new centre is supposed to start in the premises of Shatabdi Hospital and will be built by the BMC**

mains overloaded with about 12-15 cases in a day; people have to sometimes wait for about two to three hours for their turn.

When contacted, Dr SM Patil, police surgeon, in charge of post-mortem centres, admitted there was an urgent need for a new centre in the eastern suburbs where the population was rapidly growing. "This makes it difficult for people from places like Chembur, Deonar, and Mulund," he said.

The official said the new centre is supposed to start in the premises of Shatabdi Hospital and will be built by the municipal corporation. Then, it was handed over to the state government. However, inquiries have revealed that only the place has been earmarked for the new centre, no actual work has started, he said.

Dr HN Shah, chief medical officer, Shatabdi Hospital, confirmed that a new centre was proposed on their premises and the place has been earmarked for this purpose. "It is now up to higher officials of the municipal corporation to take further action on this issue, so that the centre can be constructed as quickly as possible," she said.

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## This summer, kids chill out with workshop, nature trails, magic

Anahita Mukherji | TNN

**Mumbai:** Ten-year-old Paras Parmar pretends to cough vigorously as he hobbles towards his friend Subhash Hirwale. Both boys sit on the backs of two other boys who're acting as stools. Subhash, who's playing doctor, carefully examines Paras's eyes and mouth and holds an imaginary stethoscope to his chest. The boys are acting out what they want to be when they grow up.

The workshop is being conducted by internationally acclaimed theatre personality Manjul Bhardwaj, founder of The Experimental Theatre. The children aren't rich kids at a high-profile hobby class, but municipal school children from Bhandup, Vikhroli and Kanjur Marg at an exciting Summer Camp organised by Navnirmitti, an NGO working for the universalisation of elementary education.

The camp, attended by over 1,000 kids, includes a host of activities, from science experiments and cartoon making to theatre and nature trails. The workshops were con-

ducted in 10 civic schools in S Ward from April 23 to May 5. The children also got two meals a day at the camp.

"We want to provide a platform where these children can explore their hidden talents," said Dr Nandkumar Jadhav from Navnirmitti who is co-ordinating the camp. Over 200 volunteers from the local community have helped in organising the camp.

Dr Vivek Monteiro, an advisor to Navnirmitti, feels the summer camps will enrich the whole experience of going to school. He adds that the activities in the summer camp should be held in all schools round the year. "The world is such an exciting place to learn from. However, this is not reflected in the blackboard method of education that we see," said Monteiro.

"Through the medium of drama, I want students to express themselves and their desires. By acting out what they want to be in life, kids come a step closer to achieving their dream," says Bhardwaj, who has trained over 50,000 child-labourers in drama. His play *Mera Bachpan*



**NOT JUST FUN AND GAMES:** Children act out what they want to be when they grow up at a workshop conducted by theatre personality Manjul Bhardwaj

has been performed across India.

In another theatre workshop, seven-year-old Rakesh Mapekar walked round a classroom saying "Maroonga tujhe—ek thappad ma-

roonga." He wasn't being naughty, but simply parroting some lines taught by drama teacher Kanupriya Pandit. A ring of children then gathered around him shouting "Little

pankster" after which they all pretended to beat him up. "His teachers told me he was the naughtiest kid in class so I decided to use him in the play right away so that his energy could be channelised," said Pandit, who has studied drama from the National School of Drama.

If you walk into Mukim Tamboli's workshop, you'll be greeted by a roomful of kids shouting "hum sab cartooooooon". In his workshops, they learn to draw cartoons, make cut-outs of cartoons and, more importantly, act like cartoons.

A class full of children at the Tank Road Municipal School in Bhandup are enthralled by Siddharth Prabhakar, a 27-year-old magician who has performed at several elite Mumbai schools. They watch him miraculously join two pieces of ropes together to make a single rope, escape after being tied with ropes and pour water out of a steel tumbler which looks completely empty.

The show isn't complete until the kids are given the scientific reasons behind the magic. He shows them how the two ropes are joined to-