

INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE **II** **Diary**

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October – November 2023

Olympics beyond Sports

FESTIVAL: *Olympic in Reel Life—A Festival of Films and Photographs*

COLLABORATION: *Film Heritage Foundation and Olympic Museum*

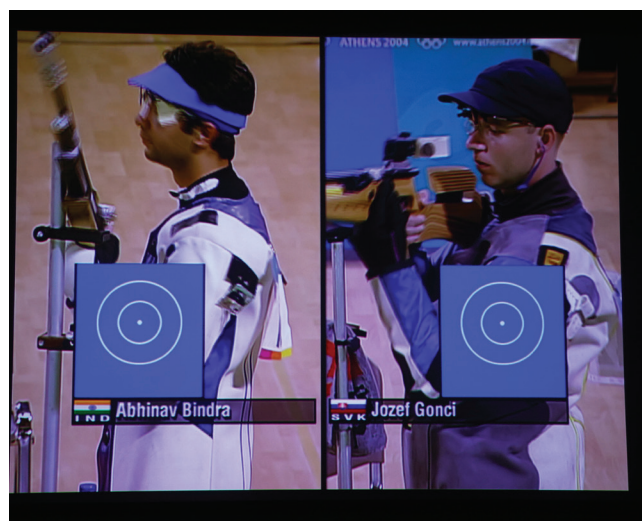
7 to 14 October 2023

With India hosting the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Session for the first time since 1983 and amidst talk of Indian interest in hosting a future edition of the Olympic Games, a first-of-its kind two-week festival was organised.

The festival consisted of three strands. Firstly, it included a screening of 33 films and 10 series beginning from 1912. Curated by Shivendra Singh Dungarpur and Robert Jacquier from the collection of the Olympic Museum, the screening included official Olympic Games films made by directors like Kon Ichikawa, Miloš Forman, Carlos Saura, Leni Riefenstahl and John Schlesinger, and series from the Olympic Channel that included India's journey at the Olympics.

The second strand was 'Olympic Made Visible', an international photography project to explore the role of sport in society as a catalyst for social development and peace, featuring the works of renowned photographers like Poulomi Basu, Dana Lixenberg and Lorenzo Vitturi. And lastly, 'Indians in Olympics' showcased iconic photographs of Indian sportspersons at the Olympics over decades.

At the inauguration, Dungarpur was in conversation with Indian Olympians Abhinav Bindra, Vijender Singh, Karnam Malleswari and Zafar Iqbal. Dungarpur recounted the inception of the project during an ad shoot with the late Milkha Singh and the tremendous effort mobilised towards



preserving and restoring many of the films. Emphasising the necessity of showing the lives of athletes beyond the glamour of events, he talked about the role of these films in acquainting the audience with the social and historical contexts of various sporting events and cultures.

For instance, *The Games of the V Olympiad Stockholm, 1912* by Adrian Wood, which was one of the earliest films in the festival, showcases not just individual events but also the ceremonial ones before, during and after the Games, which offer a vivid impression of Swedish society before World War I. Alberto Isaac's *The Olympics in Mexico* from 1969 covers one of the most politically charged Olympic events with iconic images of Americans Tommie Smith and John Carlos on the winners' podium for the 200 metres, their heads bowed, raising clenched, black-gloved fists to the sky in a dramatic gesture of black power and, as Smith has said, of frustration. *Beijing 2022* by Lu Chuan takes the viewer behind the scenes of the Beijing Winter Olympics and the challenges of hosting the event amid the global pandemic.

■ DIGVIJAY NIKAM

Immortalised by His Verses

PLAY: *Majaz Zinda Hai*

SCRIPT, DESIGN AND DIRECTION: *Salima Raza*

PRESENTED BY: *D for Drama in Hindi and Urdu*

ARTISTS: *Farrukh Seyer; Paayal Kapoor Nair; Anaamika Tiwari; Tarique Hameed; Navendra Mishra; Snigdha Anand Prakash; Anant Srivastava; Jipal Pathak; Kirti V. A.; Arhan Willson; and Rigved Singh*

COLLABORATION: *D for Drama*

23 November 2023

Dfor Drama's *Majaz Zinda Hai* was a memorable production with live mellifluous music composed by Subhradeep Sahoo and Shashi Bhushan Samad.

The poet, Asrar-ul-Haq—pen name Majaz Lakhnavi—was born in 1911 in Rudauli, Uttar Pradesh. The opening song was like a self-introduction of the poet, 'Khoob pahachaan lo Asrar hoon main'.

The narrators announced that Majaz, a delightful persona of youthful freshness and rebellion, was like a comet traversing the dark night sky. They introduced him as somebody who would probably be considered bipolar if he were living in the 21st century.

The late literary legend Ismat Chughtai was recognised by Tarique Hameed in the audience and brought on stage to lead the narration. Known to be an author who held a mirror to the readers, in a lighter vein, she introduced herself as a good woman who said bad things. She admitted that she died in the 1990s but felt maladjusted in heaven and had to return to earth.

Chughtai invited students from Aligarh Muslim University to sing their anthem, 'Ye mera chaman hai', composed



by Majaz himself when he was a student there. After the anthem, students from Abdullah Girls College hostel sang 'Aawara'.

At the principal's invitation, Majaz came to the class to teach students poetry and sang his poem, 'Parcham', to Mariyam and Shehnaz.

'Somebody offered one lakh rupees to me to give up alcohol,' Majaz quipped humorously to Shehnaz, 'I told them, if you give me that money after I abandon the booze, what the heck will I do with that money.' Thus began a romance between Majaz and Shehnaz as he punctuated his love (in the play) with Hasrat Jaipuri's 'Chalke teri aankhon se sharab aur bhi zyada'. Although Shehnaz too was attracted to him, she was already betrothed to someone else. As a result of this discovery, he went through depression and became a bipolar patient.

Amidst his personal battles, Majaz found solace in the care of his sister, Hameeda. She became his unwavering support, offering him love and devotion throughout. Tragically, Majaz met his end on the rooftop of a Delhi tavern, succumbing to the harsh elements.

■ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI

No Solution for Now

DISCUSSION: *The Crises in India–Canada Relations*

PANELLISTS: *Aprajita Kashyap; and K. P. Fabian*

CHAIR: *Come Carpentier de Gourdon*

5 October 2023

There is something about Justin Trudeau, something about having a prime minister as callow and intemperate as him, was the verdict. If Indo–Canadian ties, never entirely warm, have turned icy, it is Trudeau's doing, all three speakers concluded. 'Trudeau doesn't have the stature of his father, Pierre Trudeau, or Stephen Harper (both former prime ministers of Canada),' Aprajita Kashyap declared. 'Trudeau was wrong... he made a mistake,' said K. P. Fabian. And the chair, Come Carpentier de Gourdon, dismissed Trudeau as 'a rather immature person...quick tempered, vengeful' and 'a complete convert to wokeism'. There were rumours, he added, about Trudeau's alleged cocaine fixes.

So, Trudeau's outburst in Parliament about 'credible' allegations of a potential link between agents of the Indian government and the killing of Khalistani Hardeep Singh Nijjar was over-the-top outrageous. India dismissed the charges as 'absurd' and asked over 40 Canadian diplomats to leave.

Indo-Canadian ties have been unsteady for decades, Ottawa being furious after Pokhran I and II and India increasingly agitated about inaction against the Khalistanis entrenched in Canada. Trudeau lacks political elbow room, said Fabian. 'He's unpopular, there's a China problem and his political ally, the NDP, is a staunch supporter of Khalistan,' he added. Instead, a quiet word

with India would have helped; New Delhi would have recalled the diplomat Ottawa is perturbed with. Dialogue between special representatives of both countries to find a solution was one possibility, instead of the fire and brimstone inside Parliament.

Stuck in the middle is the United States of America—Canada is a neighbour and ally, and India is a close friend. Also, there are thousands of Indians at or about to go to Canadian universities; many more have families there and quite a few want to emigrate to Canada. That's the human angle, said Fabian. Trade ties are affected, tourism will suffer, and for now, there is no solution to the problem.

■ SRINJOY CHOWDHURY

Magical Music

PERFORMANCE: *Classical Guitar Concert by Roger Tristao Adao, Featuring Madhavan Somanathan*
16 October 2023

On an evening when gusty Himalayan winds breezed through Delhi, inside the auditorium other landscapes unfolded via an enchanting virtuoso performance by Roger Tristao Adao. Hands and fingers moved blithely over his classical guitar, extracting an incredible range of sounds in the evening's selection of vibrant and beautiful melodies.

Adao's love for landscape and local dances engulfed the audience. Woven into fine classical pieces by Enrique Granados, Isaac Albeniz, Manuel Cardoso and other composers, one could almost see strong waves pounding the shore, or gentle ebbing of languid waters, undulating hills, swoosh of dancers' dresses, or arms of dancers extending in dramatic flourish. It was hard to remain seated during these energetic pieces.

A six-minute piece composed by Leo Brouwer, 'Cuban Landscape with Bells', requiring tuning adjustments while playing, was exceptional. Any guitarist less skilled may have fumbled, using the range of techniques Adao used, pulsating from strong and fiery to slow and melancholic. As a true maestro, he could fade out a gentle composition, keeping the audience rapt beyond the last note as his fingers teasingly continued strumming farther and farther away from the strings.

Often playing with his eyes shut, he still engaged deeply with the audience, describing his personal understanding as he introduced each piece. Two duet pieces showcased



Madhavan Somanathan with humility and love. One could understand why his students, many of whom were in the audience, adore him.

The second half of his concert featured South American music, where the energy of Spanish flamenco became more nuanced, and Argentinian tango brought regularity to rhythms. The concluding piece was the famous Portuguese song, 'Tico Tico', about a common city bird who steals food.

Such a concert naturally received an enthusiastic encore. This elicited another morsel of magical music to reverberate into the night.

■ BHARATI MIRCHANDANI

A Navratna

TALK: *Kab Tak Pukarun: A Dramatised Presentation of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's Writings*

PERFORMATIVE READINGS BY: Mahmood Farooqui; Sunit Tandon; Darain Shahidi; Meera Rizvi; Lokesh Jain; and Syeda Hameed

INAUGURATION BY: Hamid Ansari; and Meira Kumar

DISCUSSANTS: S. Irfan Habib; and T. C. R. Raghavan

COLLABORATION: Khwaja Ahmed Abbas Memorial Trust; Rajendra Prasad Academy; and Working Group on Alternative Strategies
21 November 2023

The dramatised presentation of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's persona in a setting defined by banners bearing portraits and quotes, with readings by *dastangos* and theatre personalities, compered by Syeda Hameed and Mahmood Farooqui, recreated the greatness of the scholar-statesman, sufi-revolutionary and musician-rasik, showing how rare, and how needed, such people are.

It seems that whenever India has produced a winning team, it has been due to the coming together of the best from around the country. The word *navratna* is apt. One such precious gem in the freedom movement was Maulana Azad, an erudite intellectual with a precocious talent for poetry and literature. His poetry was published, and he was writing articles and even editing from early teenage.



Entirely homeschooled, he was well-versed in mathematics, sciences and the philosophies of Greece, Europe and India. A linguist, he knew Persian, Arabic, Hindustani, Bengali and English. He wrote ardently against the injustices of the British rulers and was often interred for long spells. Deeply enlightened, he understood Allah as the infinite divine power, Lord not merely of his or other peoples but of the entire humanity, as well as of unknown worlds across the cosmos.

His voice remained relatively unheard, even during his lifetime. The division of the country and the accompanying violence saddened him deeply. Rising out of depression, as education minister, he laid the foundation of solid basic education as a right for each child. The concept of initiating five IITs was his. He continued to voice his objection when fellow Congressmen acted unfairly or biased. But this continued active involvement with politics kept him away from his favourite project—an exegesis of the Quran, planned as a multi-volume work, remained confined to a few chapters of only the opening verses.

■ BHARATI MIRCHANDANI

The Grandeur of Raga Darbari

PERFORMANCE: *Darbari Festival: Celebrating the King of Ragas*

SAROD RECITAL—RAGA DARBARI: Biswajit Roy Choudhary, Accompanied by Ram Kumar Mishra

HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL VOCAL: Sanjeev Abhayankar, Accompanied by Vinod Lele (tabla); and Abhinay Ravande (harmonium)

COLLABORATION: Navras School of Performing Arts

5 October 2023

Raga Darbari, a creation of Mian Tansen, the legendary court musician and one of the navaratnas (nine jewels) of Emperor Akbar, still has a popular appeal, was proved by the enthusiastic response of the pouring audiences.

Introducing raga Darbari as the 'emperor of ragas and raga of emperors', Ajit Pradhan invited Biswajit Roy Choudhary to open the festival with his sonorous Sarod recital. The seasoned Sarodia is the senior most *shagird* of Amjad Ali Khan and a disciple of the late Mallikarjun Mansur, the doyen of Jaipur—Atrauli Gharana. No wonder Choudhary has a treasure trove of traditional compositions. Accompanied on tabla by Ram Kumar Mishra, the ace player of the Benaras Gharana, he opened his soul-stirring recital with a contemplative 'alap-jod-jhala', and followed it by several 'vilambit', 'madhya'

and 'drut' (slow, medium and fast tempo) compositions with deep involvement and understanding of the majestic raga.

Sanjeev Abhayankar, a vivacious vocalist of Mewati Gharana, presented raga Darbari and a few rare variants of Kanada thereafter. With Vinod Lele on tabla and Abhinay Ravand on harmonium, Abhayankar opened with a brief introductory 'alap' and presented 'Vinati Suno Mori', a composition set to slow 'jhaptal'. The gradual elaboration of the raga with alap, Sargam and 'bol-alap' had the desired restraint. Abhayankar took care of the texture of the raga and its feeling even while rendering the 'aakar', Sargam and 'bol-taans' with effortless ease.

The Tulsi pada 'Jaaun Kahaan Taji Charan Tihaare' sung as a 'chota khayal' in Teentala was studded with geometrically sculpted *taans*. The second raga was Nagadhwani Kanada, which sounded like raga Suha-Sughrui. Abhayankar's riveting rendering of Pandit Motiram's composition 'Humko Bisaar Kahaan Chale Salone Saiyaan', immortalised by Pandit Jasraj, was nostalgic.

The fascinating raga Hussaini Kanada next was another rare variety before he concluded with the song 'Mata Kalika' in raga Adana popularised by Pandit Jasraj.

■ MANJARI SINHA

A Caboodle of Memories

DISCUSSION: *Lest We Forget* by Indira Varma (Westland Books, 2023), Launch of the Book

DISCUSSANTS: Amitabh Kant; Pawan K. Varma; Kishwar Desai; and Roopy Mathur

COLLABORATION: Westland Books

5 October 2023

Tell all the truth, but tell it slant—this overarching metaphor is palpably exuded in Indira Varma's arrestingly original *Lest We Forget*.

With a kaleidoscopic prism, Varma encapsulated a palimpsest of yarns, vignettes and memoirs that artfully intertwined history, reminiscences, recalls and nostalgia. Her suturing of the cataclysmic partition orchestrated a series of bravura sequences—she let us see the idyllic pre-1947 saturated Peshawar and then got us to hear its susurruses. From sound, she turned to the quintessential Pishori *pashlara saag* smell and finally to touch—the homely cadence of *geet* and *gurbani*.

Some memories are forever, and Varma's personal testimony articulates the sinews of human experiences to retrieve past fissures from historical amnesia by pegging them in the minutiae sieve of remembrance, of making remembering an ethical act wafted across, challenging existing paradigms and nudging at making new conversations about what our history should be.

Lauding the bonds of enduring sisterhood, wondrously epitomised by the epic trio of Indira and her two sisters to the carnage and its morbid aftermath, Amitabh Kant



described Varma's book as emblematic of an unmatched emotive sensibility and a harbinger of helical hope, resilience and stoicism.

For Kishwar Desai, Varma's tome captures the pulse of partition and its division of topography, time and timbre as well as stranded childhoods. For her, this work is an elegiac exemplar of how to dig deep and long into quotidian lives for their swathes of extraordinary stories. This attempt to unravel the wrenching episodes anew with a gentle wistful sorrow and yet an animated intense desire to lay bare the profound truths, Desai stressed, is the ambient leitmotif of Varma's chronicle.

Poised as a ledger of memory, this immersive narration, as asserted by Pawan Varma, showcases a humane face to recorded history, braiding equipoise, grace and sensitivity, thereby unveiling the veil of silence.

A valuable historical handrail from the past that extends into the present—Indira's book needs to be read, looked at and thought over. The book throbs to life a *yaadgar* extraordinaire. As is said, nothing perfect lasts forever, except perhaps in memory.

■ BEEBA SOBTI

In Need of a Lasting Solution

DISCUSSION: *The Israel–Palestine War 2023*

PANELLISTS: C. Uday Bhaskar; Navtej Singh Sarna; and Sagari Chhabra

CHAIR: K. P. Fabian

16 November 2023

The discussion started with a prayerful silence for the victims of the October terrorist attack and its aftermath in Israel and Gaza. K. P. Fabian set the tone by stating that what is happening in Gaza is a dance of death; Gaza has become an open-air prison.

Sagari Chhabra, with her soulful poems, brought out the disturbing plight of children and the helplessness of mothers. Her dramatic rendition, as Fabian pointed out, was more forceful than many videos.

Navtej Singh Sarna said it is a universal human tragedy. He brought out various historical facts. When attacked in 1963, Israel similarly reacted with anger in self-defence. Israel's taking over Gaza in 2007 led to the cantonisation of the West Bank. Nothing happens in a vacuum. Every act has a history. Is a two-state solution to the West Asian conflict possible? He stressed the need to find a lasting solution. The US alone can play a decisive role in ending

this conflict. The current crisis puts the Arab world in a difficult position, but it has also presented an opportunity to find lasting peace.

C. Uday Bhaskar explained the three failures or inadequacies and opined that Israel's retribution is disproportionate. Persistent political inadequacies and cynicism are displayed by all the major players by abdicating their roles. The Oslo Accords got torpedoed. He stressed the need to study sentiments, emotions, views and counterviews and deal with human beings with compassion. He seconded the two-state solution and emphasised ethics—the evil of ethics and the ethics of level. States need to invest in equitable peace and not opt for the use of force.

While condemning the terrorist activities of Hamas in October, the speakers unanimously endorsed that diplomacy and negotiations should decide the issues.

Stimulating discussion provoked students and scholars during the question and answer session. Questions were asked about the need for an immediate ceasefire, lack of political imagination, the role of a state and how to get unbiased knowledge. Panellists' response was that land to Palestine cannot be ignored, the US has to take a call, that everything is being recorded, and ultimately, we get to know the truth.

■ SANTHANAM PRABHAKAR

A Mughal Marvel

DISCUSSION: *Light, Air and Shadow through the Jali*

PANELLISTS: Navina Najat Haider; Mitchell Abdul Karim Crites; and Abhinav Goswami

MODERATOR: Pramod K.G.

COLLABORATION: Mapin Publishing

9 November 2023

The discussion took us through the story of *jali* as a form and function in the architectural styles in South Asia.

Navina Najat Haider, the author of the book *Jali: Lattice of Divine Light in Mughal Architecture*, spoke on how jali became one of the many extraordinary features in Mughal architecture, and in an architectural setting one cannot but see perfection in Mughal vision, with other equally decorative features in cohesion. The discussion also touched on how the book tries to bring the jali out from that unified context and examined its story as a work and style of art in its own right, its sculptural and metaphorical

qualities when illuminated. The different patterns of lights and shadows that are created around a shrine or tomb are aesthetically powerful and also speak to the symbolism of light itself, which bears many meanings and allusions in Mughal architecture. The book has assembled over two hundred jalis in India, ranging from Delhi's examples from the 14th century to modern pieces created by artists across the globe, influenced by historical designs.

The panellists highlighted how jalis, in addition to enhancing closed areas with filtered light and ventilating a space, also accentuate the atmosphere. They pointed out that the book has covered a broad range from the designs of Gujarat sultanates' temples, the adaptations of jalis in Rajasthan and central India, the calligraphy in stone relief and pierced stone in the Deccan, to the imperial symbolisms and sufi allusions in Mughal jalis. Apart from Haider, essays by eminent contributors like George Michell, Ebba Koch, Mitchell Abdul Karim Crites and James Ivory deliberate on the issues of the viability of the usage of jalis today as a means of climate adaptation, keeping sustainability in mind.

■ PRERANA PURNIMA ROY

Global India Making Inroads

DISCUSSION: *India–Middle East–Europe Corridor: The Challenge Ahead*

SPEAKERS: *C. Raja Mohan; Ummu Salma Bava; and Omair Anas*

MODERATOR: *Muddassir Quamar*

COLLABORATION: *Asia Society Policy Institute, Delhi*

6 October 2023

The G20 Summit in New Delhi saw the signing of an MoU to establish the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a multimodal transport and energy corridor. Commentators and world leaders have hailed it as a historic agreement and a watershed moment for India. It marks India's quest for more connectivity with West Asia and Europe. The panel gathered to deliberate upon the significant geopolitical implications as well as challenges in the implementation of this alternative transport route.

Muddassir Quamar, in his opening remarks, highlighted the revival of this historical trade route and the geopolitics

of connectivity that it is laden with in contemporary times. Talking of the challenges, he outlined Turkey's opposition, Iran's apprehension and Egypt's disappointment. Omair Anas contextualised this opposition in the competitiveness of several corridors. In lieu of such a power tussle and a security vacuum in West Asia, it is 'Global India' that is making inroads and furthering its ties with the region. Ummu Salma Bava argued about the refashioning of this economic corridor and its underlying interconnected and interdependent nature. She spoke in detail about the EU and how its normative stance witnessed a departure with IMEC, owing to the economic necessities as the project has ushered in a new multipolarity of connectivity. C. Raja Mohan termed the agreement as India's effort to expand its connectivity within the Arabian Peninsula. He emphasised India's changing relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, leveraging Gulf capital and efforts to reorient the economy as well as connectivity in the region.

Major challenges that were highlighted included, but were not limited to, economic viability, increased volume of trade and share of China's trade. The discussion concluded with an agreement over the shift in the mental map of Indian strategic thought with a futuristic vision to lead the way.

■ SAURYA MISHRA

The Hot Topic

DISCUSSION: *The Return of Nawaz Sharif: How it Will Change Election Scene in Pakistan*

PANELLISTS: *Shalini Chawla; Sharat Sabharwal; and Kamal Davar*

CHAIR: *Ashok K. Mehta*

29 November 2023

This discussion in the 'Neighbourhood First' series was set against former Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif's return to his homeland, permeated by a battered economy and surging inflation. Ashok K. Mehta's eloquent quizzing skills captivated the audience on what he called the 'hot topic'. He entreated the panellists to unravel the 'whys' and 'hows' behind this return and its repercussions on the February 2024 elections, the ousted leader Imran Khan, the economy, and the foreign relations of Pakistan.

Kamal Davar termed this return a 'fixed match', whereas Sharat Sabharwal called it a 'managed election'. Shalini Chawla categorically defined this as the 'classic cycle' of a political leader being picked by the army only to be abdicated when they cross the red line, as evident in the recent ouster of Khan. His removal from office has created

a deep fragmentation in Pakistani society, where he would not be welcomed back into the political space despite his popularity.

Sharif's return in such a context is overshadowed by the legal obstacle in the form of his disqualification in 2017. His return also comes at a time when the economy of Pakistan is in grave need of an overhaul, and the army has placed its hopes on Sharif's good relations with Saudi Arabia, which can be leveraged for substantive financial support.

During the discussion on the India–Pakistan relationship, there was a consensus amongst the panellists that the back channel talks leading up to the 'four-point formula' from April 2007 were the most forward-looking agreement, which failed owing to Pakistan's dysfunctionality. In his concluding remarks, Mehta expressed optimism about PM Narendra Modi's interest in taking a big step towards reviving cross-border relations with Pakistan during his third term.

The interaction with the audience highlighted the possibilities of renewed efforts to improve ties with our neighbour and its changing relations with the USA, China and Afghanistan, as well as the troubled state of affairs domestically.

■ SAURYA MISHRA

Secrets of Hinduism

TALK: *The World Renouncer and Man-in-the-World: Revisiting an Old Paradigm*

SPEAKER: Patrick Olivelle

CHAIR: Upinder Singh

COLLABORATION: Ashoka University

20 October 2023

Patrick Olivelle's lecture explored whether the 'secrets of Hinduism' lie in the opposition of the man living in society and the world renouncer, an assertion famously made by Louis Dumont. The man in society, Dumont opined, was bound by caste and had no individuality. By leaving society, he regained agency becoming closer to the 'Western thinker'. Olivelle proceeded to nuance Dumont's assertions through a close historical and philological reading of the texts.

The term for the man in society or householder, *grihastha*, is to be found in the Dharmashastras and subsequent Brahmanical literature, but was completely absent in the Vedic corpus which used the term *grihapati* meaning house-lord. However, prior to its use in Sanskrit vocabulary as *grihastha*, it was used in its Prakrit form in the edicts of Emperor Ashoka as *gahatta*. Here, it was conceptually different from *grihapati*; it meant stay-at-home and often occurred with the term *pravrajita* or the ascetic who has gone forth from home. Olivelle argued that whilst linguistically contrasted they are contextually united; both are part of the *pashanda*. Pashanda, as it appeared in



Ashoka's edicts, was a neutral term to refer to organised religious groups. The *grihastha*, then, is not simply a paterfamilias, but a man who leads a religious life at home.

Olivelle's studies of the Dharmashastras and his early work on the Asrama system led him to conclude that there was a distinct aspect of choice in the life one wished to follow or *vikalpa* imbuing the *grihastha* with individuality. Reading the silences in the sources, Olivelle observed that the notion of caste in the early centuries of the Common Era had not crystallised as a rigid four varna order. The Dharmashastras extolled the ideological projections of its Brahmanical authors and were not statements of reality. Reminding us of the absence of the term *varna-jati* in Ashoka's edicts as well as later inscriptional evidence, Olivelle comments that both texts and inscriptions are tainted by the quest for fame of the author and represent desires more than they proclaim literal truths.

Dumont's assertion, Olivelle noted, may not have unveiled the 'secrets of Hinduism' but certainly highlighted an area of study that demanded close historical inquiry.

■ MAYUKHI GHOSH

Bridging Architecture and Anthropology

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP: *Indigenous Habitats: Vestiges of Ancestral Life in India's North East* by Shyamal Datta and Ronojoy Sen

DISCUSSANTS: Harpreet Singh; Mithul Baruah; Ronojoy Sen; and Shyamal Datta

CHAIR: Shri K. N. Shrivastava, Director, IIC

4 October 2023

Written by Shyamal Datta and Ronojoy Sen, *Indigenous Habitats: Vestiges of Ancestral Life in India's North East* traces the contours of house and community-built spaces and how that interacts with the socio-cultural,

religious and traditional structures of a selection of northeastern tribes and communities.

While introducing the book, Sen drew on the prophesising words of Lucien Steil that traditional architecture, its superiority, design and success, will become clear in the long term. The discussion underlined the need to engage with the habitat of indigenous groups and expanded to recreate the day-to-day life of the tribes in their ancestral milieu and habitat.

Sen lucidly defined the process that led to writing the book, highlighting that it was an effort to document the villagers through consultations with village elders and persons of knowledge. One of the interesting aspects that came up was how architecture could be used as a segue to investigating rituals and practices of building a traditional way of life. Sen also drew attention to the tradition of community building of houses and

how that was fundamental to identity formation and cultural consciousness.

While calling it a celebration of traditional northeast India, Mitul Baruah drew attention to three issues—the use of local materials from the natural environment, the construction of ecologically sustainable architecture and, most importantly, the labour question. He highlighted that moral economy was at the heart of the study.

The discussion was followed by a brief question and answer session, and the evening ended on a celebratory note with a cultural programme showcasing traditional dance and music from the northeastern states. Programmes like this are the need of the hour to bring to light the hitherto unexplored geographical and socio-cultural milieu of the northeastern region of India.

■ MERCY DUTTA

Story of the Great Climb

TALK: *A Historical Perspective of the Discovery, Exploration and Attempts on Mount Everest, Leading to the First Ascent in 1953*

ILLUSTRATED LECTURE BY: Ashok Abbey

GUEST OF HONOUR: Shri N. N. Vohra,
Life Trustee, IIC

CHAIR: Shri Shyam Saran, President, IIC

MODERATOR: Maninder Kohli

6 October 2023

Quite some years ago, Ashok Abbey met me to request admission to membership of the Himalayan Club. Delhi being the prime international gateway to the Himalayas, a robust partnership had ensued between the Club (founded 1928) and the IIC.

Thus, the IIC's *Himalaya: Aspects of Change*, jointly edited, remains a reference source. Secondly, the Club's priceless collection of 2,500 vintage volumes is housed in the IIC Library.

Thirdly, by timely alerts over 20 years, a series of approximately 200 programmes on the Himalaya–Karakoram and the world's other great outdoors was initiated by the Club in the IIC from the mid-1970s featuring the world's best-known names. In this process, the

Himalayan Club's widely appreciated golden jubilee was convened in the IIC in February 1978.

As Abbey demonstrated, piecing together the Everest jigsaw in its biblical three score and ten merits a step back for perspective. An attempt on Everest was first mentioned by the Great Game warmonger, Francis Younghusband, to Charles Bruce as they marched to Chitral in 1895. The ostensible reason for the suggestion? Though some distance then, the year 1907 would mark the golden jubilee of the Alpine Club, of which Bruce had become President.

The British Everest obsession, laid out by Abbey, had risen with Radhanath Sikdar's estimation in the Survey of India of its summit as the highest point on earth.

Two sides of the imperial coin had emerged—heads meant an opportunity to hoist on the top while tails threw up the Everest veil astride the Great Game. None of them foresaw the third side, the rim, which brought the Great Game to an end, via the Anglo–Russian Convention of 1907.

Tragically, as Mick Conefrey's *Everest 1953: The Epic Story of the First Ascent* (Mountaineers Books, USA, 2014) reveals, 'what has gone down in history as a supremely well-planned expedition was actually beset by crisis and controversy.'

Abbey trod this trail, fully alive to the demands of the Third Pole.

■ SUDHIR SAHI

Secularism or Illusion?

TALK: *Secularism as Misdirection: Critical Thought from the Global South*

SPEAKER: Nivedita Menon

CHAIR: Tanika Sarkar

24 November 2023

Nivedita Menon gave a crisp overview of her recently published book, *Secularism as Misdirection: Critical Thought from the Global South* (Permanent Black, 2023). She observed that in the performance of a magic trick, misdirection draws attention away from where the trick is happening to another place, which appears more fascinating. The book addresses the grid of meanings secularism produces, which effects such a misdirection, causing certain features to become hypervisible (religion,

women) while others are obscured (caste, capitalism, the non-individuated, non-rational self).

By examining ascendant Hindu supremacism as a state project in India, the book tries to understand the ways in which the construction of religion functions under conditions of majoritarianism. The three key elements in the co-construction of religion and the state are the essential religious practices test, the idea of religious institutions or deities as juristic persons, and the state's role in managing the finances of religious institutions.

Caste, one of the critical elements in this region, is also obscured by the celebration and practice of secularism, and the grid of secularism that focusses on 'religious' identity enables the omission of caste, thus normalising the label 'Hinduism' legally and socially. Menon put Latin American decolonial theorists in conversation with Asian and African thinkers to examine 21st century global

re-imaginings of selfhood, constitutionalism, citizenship, and anti-capitalist existence. She draws attention to psychoanalysis in the global South, where it was most committed to drawing on specific locations in the project of understanding the self, and thus offered fundamental challenges to Freud in his lifetime itself, rejecting any idea of a de-contextualised human.

The book does not argue for an abandonment of 'secularism' but highlights that it in itself is not a positive value and nor is its meaning self-evident. While secularism can serve majoritarian, anti-minority politics and capitalist transformation, it can equally be invoked to sustain democratic politics that respects heterogeneity, social justice and ecological concerns. In India, the understanding of secularism as *sarva dharma sama bhava* alone is legitimate from the perspective that this book adopts.

■ SUSAN VERMA MISHRA

Peruvian Pride

EXHIBITION: *The Pucara Bull: Ambassador of the Peruvian Highlands*

COLLABORATION: *Embassy of the Republic of Peru*

7 to 13 October 2023

An exhibition featuring the Pucara bull, a cultural and ancestral expression of the Puno region of southern Peru, was organised to mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Peru and India.

Pucara is a small village nestled in the Andes not far from Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world. Showcasing the values, symbols, tradition and popularity of the Pucara bull, the exhibition also explored works and perceptions of the bull by six Peruvian artists—Jose Sabogal, Ricardo Grau, Teodoro Nunez Ureta, Julia Codesido and Carlos Quizpez Asin. Indigenous artist Sabogal considered the bull an emblem of the country's cultural fusion and placed it in an unreal geography between two mountains in an obvious allusion to the Andes. Doused in myth and history, the origin of the bull is not clearly known; the animal itself is a Spanish induction onto Peruvian soil, much to the bewilderment of its people. It was when Sabogal first encountered peasant women selling large numbers of these traditional bull sculptures to tourists at the Pucara railway station that its name got popularised as the Pucara bull. Several dying arts and



traditions were similarly revived and brought back to life by this artist.

The image of the Pucara bull is potently noble and symbolic in every detail. The commonly found pair on roofs of homes represents negative and positive energies for the protection and happiness of families.

The meticulously crafted reed boat is another important feature of life on Lake Titicaca, fashioned entirely from totora reeds, each boat a work of art, facilitating transportation, fishing and daily activities, their construction techniques handed down the ages. Colourfully attired mannequins in traditional dress also made an attractive feature of the show.

The exhibition effectively traced the evolution of the Pucara bull over time. The initial terracotta bulls gave way to ceramic ones, beautifully glazed, highly ornate and detailed. Endearing in their wide-eyed, childlike innocence, they made for an altogether unforgettable experience!

■ ARUNA BHOWMICK

A Multifaceted Artist

EXHIBITION: *Ballad of the Known and the Unknown: An Exhibition of Works by Asavari Gurav*

COLLABORATION: *Purushottam Public Trust*
25 to 30 November 2023

The exhibition featured a variety of methods practised by Baroda-trained multidisciplinary print artist Asavari Gurav. She displayed an overwhelming range of print methods, tantalising with their techniques and variety of subjects.

The sources of her imagery, she said, 'come from various folk tales from my collection, and poems I write, themes being the imagined, as also personalised metaphors drawn from life. Things I see around me, like portraits, objects, or humour, get marked and become a subtle satire. Memories are captured in marks and objects that float in space. Images of women and a dream-like space are what I strive to discover. Characters evolve and respond to space; it is their habitat which is imagined by drawing them there,' lending to the show a rather esoteric character with a personalised idiom not easily comprehensible; the dreamer in her comes alive in the titles.

As a part of the exhibition, a 'Presentation of the Artist' and a discussion about her artistic practice were organised.

A 'Monotype Workshop' consisted of taking a unique impression of an image to teach the participant techniques and unconventional ways of making marks and obtaining magical impressions, with the medium showing how to bring in the painterly elements within a print. Gurav read from her poems, discussing the inspirations behind some of those poems.

'Instagram Live', a walk-through with Gurav, revealed other dimensions of her artistic pursuits.

'Action and Images—A Performance Art Workshop' for those interested in theatre, visual art and performance comprised a brief introduction to performance art, followed by a workshop that included exercises related to image theatre, acting exercises, performance art activities, improvisations and writing techniques. The concluding programme, 'How to Draw a Lullaby for the Sun', was a performance by Gurav.

■ ARUNA BHOWMICK



A Colour of Optimism

EXHIBITION: *Happy Colours: An Exhibition of Paintings by Tamana Chona*
17 to 21 November 2023

The exhibition featured abstract paintings and products made with the paintings, like work bags, by Tamana Chona.

A recipient of the National Award (2015) for the best employee with disabilities in the cerebral palsy category, Chona started painting during the pandemic and could not stop practising and sharing them with her family and friends. Her designs were also showcased at a fashion show in 2022, where they were printed on saris and fabrics. Many of the paintings in this exhibition were created using flower petals, vegetables, blocks and leaves, as well as brush strokes, finger and thumbprints, and were an



explosion of colours. Chona mentioned she finds beauty in everything she sees, touches and holds. 'When I paint, I feel as if I am praying and playing with the colours of God, like in nature—the blue sky, green trees, flowers, twinkling stars, the shining moon, etc.,' she said.

■ RITIKA KOCHHAR

Technological Advancements

TALK: India's Digital Public Infrastructure Initiative

SPEAKER: Ajay K. Sood

DISCUSSANTS: Ambuj Sagar; and Rajesh Gopinathan

CHAIR: Shri Shyam Saran, President, IIC
19 October 2023

The discussion unfolded the rising development of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), which pursues technological advancements to secure an inclusive, well-coordinated, secure relationship between the government, citizens and businesses. Ajay Kumar Sood spoke about its progress, challenges, and impact on policymaking and the economy.

Digital Public Infrastructure is a series of open-access and interoperable platforms created by the government, which are available to the private sector to build upon and take to the public. It is, ultimately, premised on a 'public-private partnership' model, where the private sector must take advantage of and apply entrepreneurial skills to the digital infrastructure the government creates. Sood identified three components of India's DPI—the identity, the payments and the data. While the first seeks to ensure that each citizen and corporation has unique and identifiable information, the latter two facilitate transactions and ensure the constant availability of key data. Aadhaar, e-KYC and GSTN are key components of the first layer; UPI and Bharat Bill Payment System of the second; and DigiLocker of the third.

Sood highlighted the DPI's role in fostering private sector innovation, proposing that the dawn of digital infrastructure



democratises the start-up space. He also remarked that DPI is vendor-neutral and is equally available to all players—irrespective of their present size and market power—to use and develop.

He noted DPI's transformative impact on financial inclusion, highlighting its role in reducing the gender gap in access to bank accounts. The Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile (JAM) trinity, he noted, has facilitated the transparent delivery of government services, seen in initiatives such as PM Jan Arogya, Ayushman Bharat and FASTag.

Sood concluded by emphasising the innovative and convenient services that DPI facilitates, highlighting its role as a key enabler of businesses. The recent G20 summit, hosted by India, would take its DPI success to the global stage. He also recommended the establishment of a working group on DPI under the G20 Sherpa.

The discussants, Rajesh Gopinathan and Ambuj Sagar, highlighted DPI's scope for future growth, its ability to leverage 'network effects', as well as the advancement of SDGs through DPI.

■ KARTIK KALRA

A Marvellous Journey

TALKS: *A Pottery Story: The Work of Ira Chaudhuri* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2023),
Release of the Book by Raj Kubba

SPEAKER: Kristine Michael

MODERATOR: Ina Puri
21 November 2023

The launch of the book on the master potter Ira Chaudhuri was moderated by Ina Puri, who introduced the book as a 'simple commemoration' of Chaudhuri's seven-decade career. Comprising more than 150 exquisite images of the works juxtaposed with quotes from the artist, the book also includes critical writings by fellow artists and critics like Neelima Sheikh, Trupti Patel and Ella Datta, along with an essay at the end by Chaudhuri herself describing her journey as a self-taught potter.

Releasing the book within the packed hall, Raj Kubba stressed that the book was a step towards the immense

responsibility of safeguarding Chaudhuri's legacy. Calling her a 'miracle on two legs', he lamented the lack of appreciation for ceramic art in India and proclaimed that had Chaudhuri been in Japan, she would be a national treasure.

The launch was followed by Kristine Michael's presentation on the artistic career of Chaudhuri. She began by discussing Chaudhuri's introduction to pottery at Baroda and her training later at Shantiniketan under the tutelage of prominent figures of Indian art. Michael went on to delineate the artistic temperament and stylistic features of Chaudhuri's art, which draw upon an eclectic range of sources, for instance, handloom practices, Alpana painting, and folk-art traditions of India.

She also touched upon the unique aesthetic of the undecipherable script developed by Chaudhuri called 'Iramese', visible in many of her works. Situating her art as a crucial juncture within the development of ceramic

art in India, Michael argued that Chaudhuri's experiments with clay and pottery and her innovations in creating a distinctive visual language epitomised early modernism in India.

With her remarkable simplicity and charming humour, Chaudhuri addressed the audience briefly and thanked the individuals and institutions associated with her work and the book. The epigraph to the book carries Chaudhuri's words, aptly telling of her artistic personality:

I pot because it bothers me not to,

Since I take my work seriously,

I do not take myself seriously

And no one does.

■ DIGVIJAY NIKAM

Comprehensive Kaleidoscope

TALK: *Carnatic Music Workshop: Come, Let Us Enjoy Carnatic Music!*

SPEAKER AND VOCALIST: *S. Sundar*

VOCAL SUPPORT: *J. B. Keertana on Vocal, with J. B. Sruthi Sagar on Flute and N. Padmanaban on Mridangam*

MODERATOR: *Usha Bharadwaj*

COLLABORATION: *Carnatic Music Forum*
17 November 2023

This lecture–demonstration imparted valuable insights into the nuances, formats and styles of Carnatic music, with a focus on demystifying the performance on stage rather than delving into theoretical aspects.

It was an illuminating exposition of various elements of Carnatic music, including Abhyasa *gana*, Sabha *gana*, Kalpita *sangeetam*, Kalpana *sangeetam*, Manodharma, *varnam*, *pada varnam*, Charnam, Pallavi, Anupallavi, Keertanam, *kritis*, Tevaram, Naalayira Divya Pabandham, *javalis*, and newly evolving fusion formats. Sundar traced the historical evolution of Carnatic music, highlighting its roots in devotion to deities and development from Saamaveda to Tevarams (Shaivite) and Divya Pabandhams (Vaishnavite) devotional compositions. He also explained the structure of Carnatic compositions.

The workshop also highlighted the role of notable figures like 'Sangeet-Pitamaha' Purandara Dasa and the great 'Trinity'—Tyagaraja, Shyama Shastri and Muthuswamy Dikshitar. This prolific Trinity created new ragas and talas and ushered in the golden period of Carnatic music. They used raga names within their *kritis* and also put their distinctive *mudras* into their compositions. Sundar explored the interactions between Carnatic and Hindustani music, noting similarities in ragas and time theory. He emphasised the collaborative nature of Carnatic performances, detailing the coordination between the main singer or instrumentalist and percussionist.

The question and answer session with the active participation of many connoisseurs unravelled a few other layers. The responsibility of the audience, alongside musicians, in preserving Carnatic tradition was also aptly emphasised.

Rasa-bhava of this erudite discourse was accentuated by soulful musical renditions of compositions of Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna, Purandara Dasa, Tallapaka Annamacharya, Periyalwar, Tyagaraja and others, recreating the magic of the artistry and aesthetics of Carnatic music. These were the sweetest takeaways of the workshop.

The workshop enlightened the audience with a deeper understanding of Carnatic music, beautifully bringing out its rich tradition, historical evolution and the collaborative dynamics integral to its performances.

■ AMITABHA KHARE

Food for Thought

FESTIVAL: *Bhoomi Festival 2023*

PANEL DISCUSSION: *Climate Change and the Future of Food*

WELCOME REMARKS: *Maya Goburdhun*

MODERATOR: *Vandana Shiva*

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS: *Shri Shyam Saran, President, IIC*

COLLABORATION: *Navdanya*

1 October 2023

In her welcome remarks, Maya Goburdhun said that the Bhoomi Festival was started to save Earth by highlighting the impacts of climate change through exhibitions and cultural programmes. 'Climate change will affect agriculture, food and health,' she said.

A bitter critic of the Green Revolution, Vandana Shiva, said, 'The cost of GMO foods is lower; they are cheaper because they are subsidised. Young people should know how food is produced. GMO is a new kind of pollutant.' 'The West is totally captured by multinational corporations. Monsanto got a patent on wheat. More money is spent on climate disasters. Organic farming, which is more nutritious, is the superior way of farming,' she added.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), overexploitation of resources and agriculture are the 'big killers' with the greatest current impact on biodiversity. The interrelated aspects of the ecological crisis are creating new vulnerabilities for food and farming. According to a recent Living Planet

report from WWF 2018, since 1970, when industrial agriculture and chemicals spread, 60 per cent of the animals on the planet have been wiped out, and freshwater species

have declined by 83 per cent. Since 1960, the global ecological footprint has increased by more than 190 per cent. According to the UN, 75 per cent of agrobiodiversity has been pushed to extinction, including pollinators that provide one-third of the food we eat.

Shri Shyam Saran, President, IIC, who could not attend the Festival in person, in his written message said, 'The fragile threads that sustain life are enabled by the Earth's enormously rich biodiversity. If even one seemingly small and humble link is injured, the entire chain is threatened. If bees are not there to pollinate flowers, the world will soon starve. If the small planktons were to become extinct or their numbers severely reduced, the whole marine food chain would collapse.'

Shiva emphasised that the corporate industrial food system driven by greed is robbing us of real food and forcing fake food through fake knowledge and pseudo-safety rules. Pseudo-food safety regulating bodies are facilitating the food transition from good fat to fake fat, good protein to fake protein with melamine polymer (which is also responsible for kidney failure), and from real fibre to fake fibre like Keratin.



A Classical Feast

PERFORMANCE: *The IIC Double Bill: Dance Recitals*

SATTRIYA RECITAL BY: *Dimple Saikia from Assam, disciple of Gobinda Saikia*

BHARATANATYAM RECITAL BY: *Raktim Chanda from Kolkata, disciple of P. T. Narendran*

8 November 2023

In the opening performance of the evening, Dimple Saikia presented three pieces composed of *shlokas*



and *abhinaya* from the mythological lives of Krishna and Sita, respectively. Her performance was compact and precise as she made graceful movements where her *mudras*, accompanied by her changing facial expressions, conveyed the emotions of the stories she retold. Especially commendable were her circular movements covering the entire stage, and her footwork was gentle yet nimble. She was dressed in a beautiful dance costume of creamy-white Assamese silk highlighted with woven purple motifs. Her stoles on both shoulders captured at the waist by a *kamarband*, gave particular beauty to her movements, often reminiscent of dance poses in classical paintings. Saikia danced to recorded music and lyrics, whereas the choreography was done by her father and guru, Gobinda Saikia.

Born into a family of dancers, Saikia stated that she has been learning this dance form since the age of five and received scholarships from the Sangeet Natak Akademi and Ministry of Culture.

Raktim Chanda, an exponent of Bharatnatyam, gave a captivating performance in the second part of the evening. He has received training from senior gurus in Kalakshetra Foundation, Chennai, and Kalashrishti, Kolkata. His dance compositions were full of vigour and passion as he presented several short compositions which he explained in his introduction to each piece. He too danced to recorded music and his second piece on 'Nayika', dedicated to Lord Shiva, was particularly fascinating.

Chanda's hand movements, especially when outstretched in typical Bharatnatyam poses, were beautiful and precise, as were his foot movements. His traditional costume of *dhoti* and bare torso emphasised with the silken *angavastram* was reminiscent of the dance performed in a temple courtyard. Chanda's flashing eyes matched the music and beats he was dancing to, and he swayed his audience into the crescendo he was creating on stage.

■ AJANTA DUTT

DEPARTURES

We are deeply saddened by the passing away of the following Members of the IIC family, and convey our heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved families.



PROF. M. S. SWAMINATHAN
L-0299



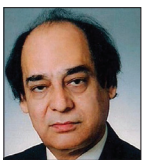
SHRI KRISHAN MOHAN
M-0319



SMT. GURSHANTI NATH
M-2515



DR. MANOHAR SINGH GILL
M-2835



SHRI T. K. MALHOTRA
M-4045



DR. ANIL BHATTI
A-2594



MS. USHA JOSHI
A-3973



SHRI ASHOK KUMAR CHOPRA
A-7123



SMT. KAMLESH KUMAR
A-7859



SHRI ANIL REVRI
OA-487



SHRI SANJEEV NANAVATI
OA-491



Message from the Director

The end of the year brings with it the festivities. The Centre marks the beginning of these festivities with 'The IIC Experience: A Festival of the Arts'. This year's Festival, recently concluded, touched many corners of the world. Starting at home, with its theme 'Dakshinayan: Celebrating the Lived Traditions of South India', the cultural programmes and exhibitions were centred on southern cultures. The films showcased Western cinema through 'Hollywood Bonanza', while the food boasted the many choices of cuisines of the G20 countries.

In addition to the Festival dinners, the Centre also marked Navratri through a special menu using ingredients like *kuttu atta*, *singhara atta*, fresh vegetables, milk, yogurt and *makhana* for the nine days of the festival, and curated Diwali gift hampers for the festival of light.

The third phase of digitisation covering the records of IIC's programmes has been completed. The audio and video files, after requisite editing, are being uploaded on the DigiLib portal as a separate community that can be accessed by the users. There are over 5,300 audio-visual sequences for which metadata have been created, factoring intuitiveness in the search and discovery of relevant records. For an enhanced audio-visual experience, a streaming server has been configured and installed. The community will soon be available for search and access.

The upgradation of the audio-visual and lighting systems of the C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium has commenced and is expected to be completed by the end of December. The renovation of Committee Rooms 1 and 2 in the Annexe is underway and will be completed towards the end of January 2024. The main electrical installation is being updated to a more robust system which will also accommodate any future expansions.

Regarding the renovation of hostel rooms, an Interior Design Consultant (IDC) has been appointed who, in consultation with the Centre's Architecture and Design Advisory Committee (ADAC), will finalise suitable designs for the various categories of rooms. The renovation work will commence in April, 2024.

A census of all the trees at the Centre has been completed, and a digital book comprising information on these trees will soon be available. Additionally, each tree has been labelled with a QR code on a metallic plate that can be scanned by the mobile phone to view various kinds of information such as their names and descriptions, when they were planted, their flowering and fruiting seasons, etc.

Last year, the Centre obtained NDMC clearance for a few construction activities undertaken in the past few years. Along with the clearance, NDMC had also permitted the construction of a toilet near Gate No. 3 under the Swachh Bharat Mission and a fire exit staircase. The construction of the toilet has begun and is expected to be completed in March, 2024. It will be accessible to all visitors.

Significant progress has been made in the development of the new ERP software. Four modules have been developed so far and extended to the users for testing. Based on their responses, the modules would be suitably tweaked. Development of the remaining modules are under progress. The new ERP software will be fully operational from the next financial year, i.e., April 2024.

Following the members' suggestions regarding the internet, the Wi-Fi is being upgraded by increasing the spectrum bandwidth, simplifying its access process through OTP and strengthening the Wi-Fi signals at the premises.

K. N. SHRIVASTAVA

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