

Beacon

THE NEWSLETTER

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Quote–Unquote

“My undertaking is not difficult, essentially. I should only have to be immortal to carry it out.”

Jorge Luis Borges

Editorial

A jumbo packet of tissues for a sniffing nose, lozenges for an itchy throat, layers upon layers of clothes and blankets for the chills one gets are all common links that one may form in their head when they think of somebody who happens to be down with a cold.

The weather right now is such that it warrants for a talk on the Rhinovirus, a common yet unwelcome customer in the system of our health and well-being. Let's try to look at it in a different way.

After the popularisation of the Germ Theory of Disease in the nineteenth century, the lay person was able to begin to comprehend the enormity of the scale and spread of diseases through germs and subsequent contact with the same. This changed people's outlook on their ways of life, sanitation, city planning and many more things.

Keeping this in mind, the idea of quarantining the acutely sick became a prudent way to deal with disease outbreaks. Today, the fact that we tend to carry sanitisers with us everywhere we go just reinforces the potency of this theory.

Foregoing a discussion on germ warfare and other large-scale uses of this theory, let us focus on the everyday. The kind of conditioning we undergo with regard to germs is fascinating in its own, seemingly trivial way.

Think about it: the way we flinch when someone sneezes or coughs around us, the way wearing masks in public is not uncommon albeit not extremely popular; these are all just various kinds of manifestations of the kind of outlook we are conditioned to have.

Being sick is a role in itself too, some medical sociologists would say. A weak posture, low immunity and tiredness are among some of the many attributes a sick person may have. Various indigenous ways of dealing with a cold like a strong cup of tea with black pepper and ginger or perhaps steaming one's face or gargling with warm salt water are institutionalised if you think about it.

The way other people are to conduct themselves around the sick is also typecast in a way. The spaces around those who are sick are treated differently as well. For example, a person with a cold in the metro would probably be given a wide berth even if there happens to be a paucity of space, so to speak.

Looking at things like these from different angles will reveal that we are enmeshed in patterns and structures more than we think, that the bigger picture is in fact bigger than what we believe it to be.

So much for catching a cold.

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National News

UP LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS ON MARCH 3

On Friday, The Election Commission of India declared the schedule for biennial elections for the 36 seats in Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council from 35 local authority constituencies. These seats have fallen vacant following the expiry of term of previous members. The notification of the election will be issued on February 8 and February 15 will be the last date to file for nominations. Nominations will be inquired on February 16, February 18 will be the last date for withdrawal of candidature, polling will be held on March 3 and counting of votes will be done by March 6. The ECI declared the election after Chief Electoral Officer of UP informed it that the percentage of electors is more than 75 per cent which is the minimum requisite for the same. These 36 seats in the legislative council would be elected by members of Zila and Khetra Panchayat, Village Pradhans, Mayors of Municipal Corporations, Chairpersons of Nagar Panchayat and Nagar Palika Parishads and their corporators, local MPs, MLAs and members of the Cantonment Boards.

SOLDIER LOSES LIFE DURING MANHUNT

A terrorist was killed in an encounter with the security forces in Kupwara, Jammu and Kashmir on 28th January 2016. Upon receiving reports about 2 terrorists hiding in the Dardpora area of Lolab valley in Kupwara, a joint team of the police and 28 Rashtriya Rifles launched a manhunt in the region. A gunfight supervened between the security forces and terrorists resulting in the death of a militant. The authorities are still in pursuit of a multitude of ensconcing militants..

The Commanding Officer of 41 Rashtriya Rifles Colonel Santosh was critically injured when terrorists hiding in a dense forest area opened fire. Santosh, a soldier of the Para Commandos, was rushed to the hospital but unfortunately did not survive the attack.

RAHUL GANDHI VISITS HCU FOR VEMULA

Congress vice-president, Rahul Gandhi reached the Hyderabad Central University, on Saturday and partook in a candle light march by the students to mark the birth anniversary of Rohith Vemula, a Dalit research scholar who committed suicide two weeks ago. This was the second time in two weeks that Gandhi visited the campus and spoke to the protesting students. He arrived at 12:10 am, spoke to the students and lit candles in front of Rohith's picture. Interim vice-chancellor Vipin Srivastava has gone on leave amid the protests. Rahul Gandhi is scheduled to sit in a hunger strike from 6am till 6 pm on Saturday.

RAJKOT ON MISSION SMARTCITY

Rajkot failed to make the list of first 20 smart cities in the country this Thursday. Rajkot Municipal commissioner Vijay Nehra blamed the financial mismanagement and the lack of proper tax calculation methods. The commissioner said that the financial condition of Rajkot was not sound as revenue expenditure was going up but revenue income was not increasing simultaneously due to lack of charge on door-to-door garbage collection services. Nehra expressed his aim of being in the top 20 cities for cleanliness in the year 2016-2017 and redeveloping slums on the public-private-partnership model. The city got 52.33 marks out of 100, thereby ranking above Gandhinagar (46.27), Vadodara (44.41) and Dahod as declared by Union Ministry of Urban Development. Surat and Ahmedabad

made it to the list of the top 20 cities with scores of 68.16 and

International News

ZIKA CAUSES INTERNATIONAL HEALTH EMERGENCY

The World Health Organization is expected to declare an international health emergency due to the outbreak of the mosquito-borne virus Zika. Four million people are estimated to be infected till date. This virus was first detected in Uganda, in 1947. Last year, this virus was detected in America and as of now the infection has been reported in 23 countries. The most common symptom of the rampant spreading of this virus is the several cases of Guillain-Barre Syndrome in newly born babies. No treatment is known to cure it, however, several health organisations are spreading awareness about potential prevention measures.

THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

On the 14th of January, the US Republican presidential candidates attempted to communicate the inability of President Barack Obama to ensure national security; although they were unable to offer an alternative security strategy, further US military build-up was their only suggestion. Deviating from this banal suggestion, Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky voiced his support for less US military engagement overseas. Senator Ted Cruz of Texas condemned Obama's Iran policy by referring to the distressing picture of US sailors bent on their knees after being captured by the Iranians. The Republican candidates attempted to secure the support of potential voters by playing on the latter's fears.

DENMARK'S REVOLTING BILL

The bill concerning new Danish asylum rules has been compared to the Nazi practices during WWII.

This bill would allow Danish authorities to seize asylum seekers' cash exceeding 10,000 kroner (\$1,450) and any item valued at more than 10,000 kroner. Although valuables with a sentimental value, such as wedding and engagement rings, will not be seized. The most alarming proposal of this bill is the clause which legally coerces refugees to wait for three years after securing asylum before they can apply to be reunited with their families. Christoffersen of the Danish Institute for Human Rights said, "It is like a competition between countries to make it harder and harder to come to their country. Now that Sweden has closed its borders, Denmark had to take a step further."

REMEMBERING THE VIET MINH

On the 27th of January, Vietnamese war veterans recalled their war-scarred youth. The Viet Minh used guerrilla strategies of attack i.e. attacking French positions near Dien Bien Phu and retreating immediately. It was a difficult task for soldiers of the Viet Minh to move their weapons across the mountainous terrain so they, often, dug tunnels through hills surrounding French positions.

Vu Dinh Binh is haunted by the memory of stepping on the corpses of their fellow soldiers in order to travel through the tunnels. Eight years of fighting ended with the victory of a revolutionary force over a Western colonial power.

The Economy

THE BRICS BANK – A MYSTERY

The BRICS bank or the New Development Bank set up by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa was expected to begin operating this year, the bank does not have an official website. At the 6th BRICS summit in Fortaleza (Brazil), the establishment of this bank was announced with the aim of developing infrastructure. Negotiations regarding the functioning of the bank are happening on a government-to-government basis. There is little transparency and participation by civil societies.

INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE PROMOTION

President of Nigeria, Muhammad Buhari, called for the acceleration of economic integration across the African continent in order to intensify intra-African trade. In an attempt to promote economic development, African countries are being encouraged to replicate the expansion of trade relations between Nigeria and Kenya. Increase in Intra-African trade is expected to create millions of job opportunities within Africa.

OAS BANKRUPT

The Organization of American States, according to the chairman Sir Ronald Sanders, is facing a "serious existential threat". The Antigua and Barbuda Ambassador, while chairing the first meeting of the Permanent Council for this year, said that he felt "profoundly anxious about its capacity to continue to operate and to serve the interests of the people of its 34 member states". The OAS began this year with a deficit of US\$19.7 million.

DIPLOMATIC THAW WITH IRAN

The keenness of EU countries to boost bilateral economic ties with Iran has been reflected through the mega deals worth 17 billion Euros signed with Iran. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said, "We want to export 30% of what we produce in Iran." Rouhani views economic growth as a key step in defeating extremism in the Middle East. A fortnight following the lifting of financial sanctions on Tehran, the deals finalized with Italy include a contract worth 4 billion Euros for oil services group Saipem, approximately 5.7 billion Euros in contracts for steel firm Danieli, another 4 billion Euros for the infrastructure firm Condotte d'Acqua, a 4 billion Euros deal with rail and road company Gavio and 400 million Euros for planes from Finmeccanica.

Sports

INDIA WINS OZ/IND SERIES

India won the series-deciding second match with a 27-run win over Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground today. Rohit Sharma hit 60 runs in the beginning to give India a promising start along with partner Shikhar Dhawan (42). Kohli provided an assault with his unbeaten knock of 59, as well. India made an opening stand of 97 to reach 184 for 3 in their 20 overs. Making a strong start, Australian captain Aaron Finch (74) and Shaun Marsh added 94 for the opening wicket to keep Australia, but India's spinners took quick wickets to halt their winning. Australia could only manage 157-8 in their 20 overs. The final match of the series will be played in Sydney on Sunday.

KERBER WINS GRAND SLAM

On Saturday, Angelique Kerber (28) became the first German to win a grand slam title since 1990, after defeating Serena Williams in the Australian Open. Kerber proceeded to play superb defence which ultimately contributed to Serena's 23 errors. Kerber sealed the game in the seventh and took the lead. The second set proved to be good for both the players with Williams being an eminent threat to Kerber's first set lead. The championship turned in Kerber's favour as she led with 4-2 and won her fifth point. She extended that to 5-2 and was serving for the title at 5-3 before Williams fought back, though Kerber was eventually won her first grand slam.

MANCHESTER CITY IN FIFTH ROUND

Manchester City managed to reach the fifth round of the FA Cup after beating Aston Villa 4-0. ManC owes its win to teenager Kelechi Iheanacho who took over the goal scoring duties from Sergio Aguero, who watched from the bench. Iheanacho opened the scoring and hit a penalty in the first half before scoring again in the second half after a 30 yard long run. Raheem Sterling added the fourth goal just two minutes after that. City's coach gloated about Iheanacho's penalty taking skills and said that he was immensely proud of his hard work. Cup holder Arsenal and Tottenham made it to the fifth round as well while Liverpool did not.

Arts & Entertainment

DELHI'S SUFI FESTIVAL

The event is being organised by Zorba. It aims at providing a gateway for poets, artists, dancers, and musicians to share their experiences and come together at a place where art becomes a language. The festival will be guided by Shabda Kahn, the Pir of Sufi Ruhaniat International and Shaikh Kabir Helminski representing the Melveli tradition of Turkey. The two Pirs will collaborate as well as play separate tracks. The highlights of the event will include an Introduction to Whirling, talks about Sufism and Sufi concerts.

Date: February 9 – February 14

Venue: Zorba the Buddha, Mehrauli Gurgaon road, Delhi

SURAJKUND MELA

The annual Surajkund crafts mela boasts of an incredible array of food stalls, dance performances and arts and crafts from over 20 different states. The Chauls, Mela premises and open-air theatres will all showcase internationally renowned performers daily. The mela represents the strong support towards the traditional skills of the country and aims at promoting them as well. Over 1 million eager shoppers are expected to flock to the grounds in over 15 days and enjoy the festivities. For the 30th Surajkund International Crafts Mela, the state of Telangana has been chosen to be the theme state. Tickets can be bought online for the same.

Dates and Timings: February 1 – February 15 (10:30 am – 8:30 pm)

Venue: Surajkund Grounds, Faridabad



Photo was taken at Goa, in December 2015

Silhouettes are important. To show the light as against the dark and the sharply defined contours of an object as opposed to a more fluid mixing of colours, they are instrumental in showing to us the importance of minimalism.

The leading principle here is that of 'less is more'. To strip down objects and concepts to their bare basics is useful in not distracting the attention of the beholder from the essence of the object of his study. This is precisely what minimalism propounds.

A major school of thought within this perspective is that of Deflationism. In a nutshell, deflationism deals with

questions of what is true and what is false and how these distinctions are in fact superficial. This sets it apart from most of the other brands of philosophy given that they tend to attribute a supreme kind of metaphysical status to what constitutes the truth.

In the face of that, a deflationist would say that the statement 'Snow is white' is no different from 'It is true that snow is white'. Ergo, to assert that a statement is true is to just assert the statement itself. For a deflationist, the truth is no more that what one can observe and establish. There is no bigger realm of philosophical inquiry that may reveal to one

the nature of truth itself. The mistake is to assume that there is a nature of truth that one may abstract theories on.

The simple form of a silhouette may just be that aphorism that makes one think about the fact that perhaps the truth itself is not abstracted from what is before us.

Revisiting 67 Years of being a Sovereign Democratic Republic

On the occasion of India's 67th Republic Day, this piece will briefly look back on India's political history and the significance of the Indian constitution's red-letter day.

The significance of January 26 dates back to 1929 – the Indian National Congress' Lahore Session, presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru - when the tricolour was hoisted and the resolution of '*Purna Swaraj*' (complete independence) was adopted as an objective of the INC. Consequently, January 26, 1930 was determined as the first Independence Day of India.

After a little less than two decades, the British finally submitted to the external pressure to forego of its colonies and also the recalcitrant fervour of complete independence within India, amongst other factors. This led to deliberations between Lord Earl Mountbatten and the INC and the Muslim League, as by this time it had been well established that post-colonial India would be partitioned into India and Pakistan. After rejecting several other plans and missions, both the INC and the Muslim League agreed on the 'Mountbatten Plan'.

To initiate transfer of power from the British Government to India and also undertake partition, the British Parliament passed the 'Indian Independence Bill', which affirmed August 15, 1947 as the day of complete transfer of power. Hence, India celebrated its first 'Independence Day' on August 15, 1947, while Pakistan celebrated it on August 14, 1947. Until the adoption of the constitution in 1950,

India was under the purview of King George-VI.

In 1947, a Drafting Committee comprising 7 members was constituted, chaired by Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. The constitution encompassing 395 articles in 22 parts and 8 schedules – which became the world's lengthiest written constitution – was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949 (Currently, the Indian constitution has 448 articles in 25 parts, 12 schedules, 5 appendices and 98 amendments.)

The constitution came into effect on January 26, 1950. Through the enactment of the constitution, India reclaimed itself as a Sovereign Democratic Republic. Hence, in the truest sense, India became completely autonomous on January 26. In commemoration of India's status as a Sovereign Democratic Republic and adoption of the constitution, every year Republic Day is celebrated with fervour.

Republic Day is also sought to be an occasion of strengthening bilateral ties with other nations. This is ensured by inviting leaders from other nations as chief guests. The same was customarily witnessed during the period of India's active involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement, when President Sukarno of Indonesia was the chief guest in 1950, King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia in 1963, President Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia in 1968. Besides which; in 2015, President Barack Obama's (of the United States) visit as the chief guest led to the signing of a six-year long impending bilateral agreement which was resultant in a landmark civilian

nuclear deal between the two nations - hence, moving towards commercial cooperation on civil nuclear trade. This year—in 2016—French President, François Hollande's visit became the 5th time a French President graced the event as a Chief Guest. His visit resulted in the signing of 14 MoU's spanning from purchase of 36 Rafale Aircrafts, Thermal Infrared Earth Observation Mission, joint railway feasibility study, food safety, partnership agreement in public administration, cultural exchange programmes and that ensuring an understanding between French and Indian Universities (primarily IIT) for higher education and research.

All in all, Republic Day is a significant day in post-independence history as it marks India's transition into becoming a Sovereign Democratic Republic after a two-century long struggle for independence and a tearing partition.

<https://www.quora.com/Presently-2015-how-many-articles-parts-and-schedules-are-there-in-the-I>

<http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/26294/List+of+Agreements+MOUs+signed+during+the+State+Visit+of+President+François+Hollande+of+the+French+Republic+to+India+January+25+2016>

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