

1. India's best-loved radio show host Ameen Sayani draws a full house as he relates fond memories of Roshan, S D Burman and Kishore Kumar, among other film personalities, while host Swanand Kirkire plays hits like 'Mann re tu kaaha na dheer dhare', 'Piya tose naina laage re' and 'Jaanejaan' to go with the anecdotes. 2. Actor Sonali Bendre enlivens a discussion on a book by author Ashwin Sanghi. 3. Indian-American best-selling writer Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni dwells on her art of storytelling during the session 'All the World's a Story' with author Vinita Dawra Nangia. 4. Nandana Dev Sen and John Dougherty discuss subliminal messages in children's books at the session 'Catcher in the Young', with readings by school students Ryan Mama, Ananya Mohan, Svara Kasliwal and Kabir Karkaria

# 'As a 7-yr-old, I saw a citizen hanged and another shot'

### Writer Speaks Of Her Escape From N Korea

TEAM TOI

The repressive North Korean regime's insistence that citizens report against each other in criticism sessions still haunts dissident Hyeonseo Lee. Years after she crossed over to China at the age of 17 and then to South Korea, she still cannot tell her mother she loves her. "I don't know how to say it. We had grown up criticizing, we did not know how to compliment," she said in a session titled 'Escape from Kim' on Saturday at the TOI Litfest. The state-controlled atmosphere was such that there were no friendships and no trust even between spouses. "Once a student told the teacher that his friend suddenly had many new things in his house. The school informed the state. They found a relative had escaped to China and was sending money. The entire family was punished," said Lee.



There were no friendships in a state-controlled atmosphere, says Hyeonseo Lee



ose border was located across a river facing her home was indeed an accident. "I thought I would be back in a week. I did not think it would be years till I saw my family again."

In North Korea at the time, state terror, including public executions, were common. "I saw a man being hanged when I was seven years old. I saw another man shot by police." Citizens did not question such acts because state propaganda ensured they were not exposed to another way of life. "We thought this was the way things were. We did not know democracy." She crossed the border after seeing the impact of the famine in North Korea. She lived as an illegal immigrant for years before seeking asylum in South Korea. "I was arrested once in China as an illegal immigrant but managed to get away because I could read and write fluent Chinese. I changed my name with every city and school to escape recognition. In fact, Hyeonseo Lee is my seventh name. I hope it's my last." With her family in North Korea until she helped them escape, she lived with years of guilt. She, though, admitted that South Korea was also problematic for North Korean refugees. "South Korea is so developed and educated but they only respect people from rich countries. Chinese and South Asians are not treated kindly. North Koreans are treated worse than the Chinese." Once again she found herself hiding her identity. Despite her new life in South Korea, Lee finds it difficult to shed the fear of the past.

# What's the measure of a man's feminism?

TEAM TOI

Men really need to find ways to deal with rejection without going bananas," said English feminist author Laurie Penny, tickling both genders inside the cozy Tim Delhi Airport Hall at what turned out to be a juicy, hour-long dissection of the much-assailed topic feminism. Titled 'Sex and White Lies' and moderated by filmmaker Paromita Vohra—known for her works on gender and for her blood-red lipstick—the session lightly unpacked the various layers, pretenses and stereotypes surrounding the weighty subject including notions of union and privilege.



Laurie Penny

her meant "questioning what aspect of economic and social structures are keeping inequality between genders alive". What followed were many quirky insights: the friend zone is not such a bad place ("you haven't been rejected as a lover but chosen as a friend," said Vohra), men are "fragile" beings who should learn to eat ice-cream and move on after a rejection and that expression of female desire is seen as a betrayal of gender. "When I've been intimate with men, some are surprised and say: 'Wow, you're really enjoying this'," said Penny, eliciting guffaws.

A key point arrived when a man asked if it was bold to say he is a feminist. "Saying you are feminist is different from being (one)," said Penny. "A measure of a man's feminism is how he behaves when there are no women around or when he thinks there are no women around."

# REALITY CHECK: OLD, NEW, OTHER WORLDS



(Above) Poets Lisa Ray and Tishani Doshi discuss their old challenges and new freedoms at the session 'Girls are coming out of the woods.' (Right) The session 'VR the World', a masterclass to introduce first-timers to virtual reality. Audience got a sense of how VR films transport the viewer to the location of the story, recreate the atmosphere, and heighten empathy for subjects by creating a sense of immediacy and involvement in the stories. "The second you start working in VR, everything you know about making a film goes out of the window because you have to create a sphere of images," said Zain Memon, co-founder of new media studio Memesys

# Writers chart the course from paper to screen

TEAM TOI

Writers tend to be introverted, lonely people. Movies oblige us to work in a way we are not used to," said Argentine writer Eduardo Sacheri, part of a panel that saw four people whose written works have been adapted into films and TV shows discuss the vagaries of adaptation. Titled 'My Book Is An Open Film', the panel, moderated by poet and dancer Tishani Doshi, brought together Sacheri, Australian-Indian businessman Saroo Brierley (the inspiration for the film 'Lion'), Canadian-Irish author

Emma Donoghue, and writer Vikram Chandra (whose 'Sacred Games' is now being adapted into India's first Netflix series). Though all four harbour a secret affinity for the solitary creative process of literary fiction over the collaborative demands of filmmaking, they agreed that films must have enough wiggle room to make radical leaps from the book. The panelists also felt that though movies have their own strengths, they lack the density and philosophy of books. "Fiction doesn't need to

move as quickly as movies," said Donoghue, adding that if the thoughts of her protagonist—a young boy in captivity—were to be replicated in film as in the book, "it would look like something shot with a GoPro camera". This is why Chandra, whose protagonist spends the first 200 pages wandering and thinking and who spent nine years writing the book, chose to stay away from the writing room of the TV show. "I know how annoying the writer can be when they try to control what the film should be like," said Chandra, who felt neither film nor TV can transport you to another world like a book.

## LIT LIGHTS

### The Greene formula for writing fiction

Writing comes from a place of different compulsions. Most writers are uneasy in their own skin. They are trying to work out a complex and unsolvable calculus between the world and their place in it," said Indian-born author Neel Mukherjee, who resides in London, during his talk with Meru Gokhale, editor-in-chief, literary publishing, Penguin Random House India. But if one were to write a book, the most essential thing would be boredom. "I write 500 words every day. I read an article when I was small in a newspaper about Graham Greene. It said that he wrote 500 words before noon and then he hits whisky. So I write 500 words daily. On a very good day, I write 700; on a bad day 300 words."

# Can any topic get bigger than Stalin?

TEAM TOI

"What's a bigger subject than [Joseph] Stalin?" asked American historian, academic and author Stephen Kotkin during his session on the Soviet tyrant. "A biography of Stalin is a history of the world. He lined-edited novels, he pre-screened all the films, he decided all the foreign policy affecting Europe, Asia, sometimes Africa, the US and Latin America. Moreover, if you are interested in power, this is the gold standard of dictatorship. No one has ever accumulated or exercised more power than Stalin."



Princeton professor and Stalin biographer Stephen Kotkin

This explains why Kotkin has just completed his second of three planned volumes on the dictator. His first volume 'Stalin: Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928', was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and his latest, 'Stalin: Waiting for Hitler, 1929-1941', is a 906-page tome. Kotkin described Stalin in the early years as a diligent student with impeccable grades who was a devout Christian and sang in the church choir. He joined a spiritual seminary and almost became a priest but quit before giving his final ex-

am to join the revolutionary underground. A month after Stalin became general secretary of the Communist Party, Lenin suffered a series of strokes and was incapacitated. "The reality was Stalin had his hands on all the levers of power," said Kotkin. "So there was no succession struggle." The historian explained Stalin's complicated ties with Hitler and recited his quirks. Stalin collected watches, played skittles and doodled insults like 'scumbag' in the margins of key documents in different colours. He was full of contradictions—soft-spoken and foul-mouthed, a voracious reader who resented "fancy-pants" intellectuals, and a cynic who "lived and breathed" ideals.

# 'Pragmatic' voters choose what works

TEAM TOI

Mumbai: At a spirited discussion on whether 'Saffron' is the new blackened. Are the rights always wrong are the liberals always right? on Saturday, the panelists were of the view that voters will vie for what is best for them in a "pragmatic" way, irrespective of the ideologies the candidates represent. Deftly setting a moderate tone for a potentially contentious debate on right versus left was moderator Manu Joseph. To Joseph's question on resurgence of the right wing, senior journalist and panelist Pravin Kumar, author of a gripping book, Yogi Adityanath: The Rise of a Saffron Socialist, published by Times Group Books, the Books Division of the Times of India Group, said, "It is more about people's opposition to secular politics as we have been witnessing in the past 70 years." Kumar said there is "nothing good or bad in a right or left view" and that when a view moves to either side from the centre, it assumes a similar edge.

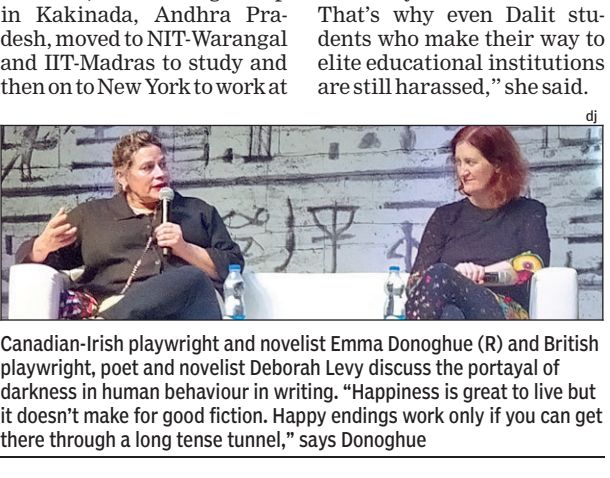
Mumbai Mirror editor Meenal Baghel, the other panelist, said, "Voters are pragmatic, smart and savvy they know what they're doing."

# 'Writing in NYC freed me of constraints'

TEAM TOI

Mumbai: Subway conductor-turned-author Sujatha Gidla and fellow panelist, writer and photographer Bill Hayes discussed their love for their adopted city at The Times Litfest at Mehboob Studios on Saturday. For Hayes, the move to the Big Apple at the age of 48, nine years ago, was a way to get over the loss of his long-time partner Oliver Sacks. "The people of New York draw me in with their stories, their lives," he said. Gidla, a Dalit who grew up in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, moved to NIT-Warangal and IIT-Madras to study and then on to New York to work at

age 25. Calling New York "the most tolerant city", Gidla who became the city's only Indian woman subway conductor said it was one of the reasons she felt free enough to write her book, 'Ams Among Elephants'. "If I had been in India, I wouldn't be telling my story because I wouldn't want to draw attention to my unacceptability," she said. New York freed Gidla from the particular constraints her family faced in India. "Hatred is not human nature. Discrimination of any kind is driven by economic factors. That's why even Dalit students who make their way to elite educational institutions are still harassed," she said.

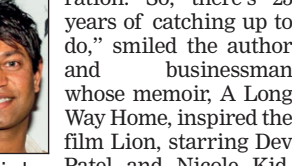


Canadian-Irish playwright and novelist Emma Donoghue (R) and British playwright, poet and novelist Deborah Levy discuss the portrayal of darkness in human behaviour in writing. "Happiness is great to live but it doesn't make for good fiction. Happy endings work only if you can get there through a long tense tunnel," says Donoghue

# Lost boy found mother using Google Earth after 25 years

TEAM TOI

At five, little Saroo fell asleep on a train and went on a ride into the unknown. The boy, from Madhya Pradesh, ended up alone on the streets of Kolkata—lost and scared—before he was put in an orphanage and then adopted by an Australian couple in Hobart. That was in 1987. Twenty five years later, Saroo embarked on a Google Earth-aided journey to trace



Saroo Brierley

trajectory of my life and everything else that's happened from living as a destitute, catching that train, the trials along the way and then moving to Australia... and then finding my family through digital interface, then the book and the movie... It's all expedited so quickly," said Saroo, who recently bought his birth mother a house and has been trying to help the Indian Society for Sponsorship and Adoption, the home in Kolkata where he was received in 1987.

# Money power, politics & economic theory

TEAM TOI

The session on crony capitalism, moderated by noted columnist Swaminathan S Aiyar, was a mix of money power and politics with business, with a fair dose of economic theory thrown in, starting with Adam Smith, the father of modern economics. Discussing abolition of net neutrality, author Sujit Saraf said, "Taking away net neutrality is crony capitalism. If this happens, it would be the death of the internet." Abolishing

net neutrality is a situation where powerful content producers pay delivery platforms like telecom service providers to slow down delivery from less powerful competitors. On whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been able to reduce crony capitalism in the past three and half years that he has been in power, it was a divided house. The panelists, though, were unanimous in their view that at least Modi was able to stop corruption of humongous proportions.

## SUNDAY December 17

### JSW HALL

**10am-11am**  
**Despts Then and Now | From Stalin to Trump** North Korean dissenter Hyeonseo Lee, Stephen Kotkin, Shashi Tharoor, Rajdeep Sardesai. Patrick French moderates

**11.15pm-12.15pm**  
**The making of a Poet** | How Gulzar inspired Vishal Bhardwaj

**12.30pm-1.30pm**  
**Partition and Poetry in Golden Slippers** | Gulzar speaks on being a novelist at 80 with Rakhshanda Jaii

**1.45pm-2.45pm**  
**Life is Not a Silo | Why we need the humanities** Princeton professor Stephen Kotkin, historian Patrick French, professor Supriya Chaudhuri. Sunil Khilnani moderates

**3pm-4pm**  
**Hanuman Or Karan? | What kind of loyalty do netas want?** Devdutt Pattanaik

**4.15pm-5.15pm**  
**It's Ok Not To Be Ok! | Mental illness has many forms, is everywhere** Neeraja Biriya, Anupam Kher, Sudarshan Ramakrishna

**5.30pm-6.30pm**  
**Seventy is the New Seventy | Who the hell wants to be thirty?** Shobhaa De, Hema Malini, Ramkamal Mukherjee. Srijana Mitra Das moderates

**6.45pm-7.45pm**  
**Empirical Evidence? | Did we really need the Brits?** Shashi Tharoor in conversation with historian Zareer Masani

**men and women really wired differently?** Science writer Angela Saini, techie Sujit Saraf, finance strategist Sandra Navidi. Moderated by Vaishnavi Chandrashekar

**4.15pm-5.15pm**  
**Miss Laila and Mister Manu** | Manu Joseph disarms Namrata Zakaria

**5.30pm-7.30pm**  
**MASTERCLASS** | Are you novel-ready? Ten tips from publisher Chiki Sarkar

### TIM DELHI AIRPORT HALL

**10am-11am**  
**Memories Are Made of This** | Head of History Robert Seatter describes how the BBC creates moments of celebration, exploration and revelation

**11.15am-12.15pm**  
**Dishing Up the Diaspora** | How Jews, Indians, and other wanderers changed the way world eats Veteran food writer Claudia Roden breaks bread with Vikram Doctor

**12.30pm-1.30pm**  
**Friend of My Youth** | Amit Chaudhuri reads from and discusses his new book with Sumana Roy

**1.45pm-2.45pm**  
**VR Film Screening**: BBC film Crossing the Sky directed by Anna Bressanin who talks about the making

**3pm-4pm**  
**The Single-Colum Assassin?** | How cartoonists kill it Cathy Wilcox, Sandeep Adhwaru and Hemant Morparia sharpen their pencils

**5.30pm-7.30pm**  
**Film Screening: The Secret in Their Eyes** followed by Eduardo Sacheri talking about the book behind the film

### HDFC LAWNS

**11am-noon**  
**PERFORMANCE**  
Morning riffs with Bombay Bairag. A blend of contemporary, classical, and Sufi music

**12.30pm-1.30pm**  
**Democracy's XI | Is cricket the ultimate Indian dream?** Journalist Rajdeep Sardesai on his new book

**1.45pm-2.45pm**  
**Where Sparrows Fall** | Bird-lover Bikram Grewal talks on the older kind of tweets

**3pm-4pm**  
**Travelling Light** | Navigating the bumpy bipolar terrain Shreevatsa Nevatia confides in Dr Shamsah Sonawalla

**5pm to 6pm**  
**PERFORMANCE**  
Readings by Vivek Oberoi and Richa Chadda

**6pm-7pm**  
**Into the Heart of Language: Gopal Gandhi delivers the keynote to our Lifetime Achievement Awards. We honour Bhalchandra Nemade, Krishna Sobti, Perumal Murugan, Dhurbajyoti Borah**

**7.15pm-8.15pm**  
**PERFORMANCE**  
Hungarian folk band Kalaka

### WORKSHOP HALL

**10.15am-12.15pm**  
**MASTERCLASS** | How to write a film script with Anjum Rajabali

**12.45pm-1.30pm**  
**CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP**  
**Totally Mumbai Bhehpuri**: Bringing the city alive through its yummy food stories

**1.45pm-3.15pm**  
**MASTERCLASS VR the World**  
Learning Virtual Reality With Memesys (for professionals)

**3.45pm-4.45pm**  
**CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP**  
John Dougherty sings and reads for children

**5.15pm-6.30pm**  
**CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP**  
Creative Expression with MPower. Experimental drums and art circle

**6.45pm-8.45pm**  
**MASTERCLASS A Taste for Stories** | Learning how to tell them with Vayu Naidu

Log on to [www.timeslitfest.com](http://www.timeslitfest.com)

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To register for children's workshops, write to [timeslitfest@gmail.com](mailto:timeslitfest@gmail.com)