

EXPRESS CHOICE

COMING on the heels of last week's jazz event - The String Trio of New York, this week brings more jazz but with a breath of known Indian flavour. It's India's Braz Gonsalves on his memorable saxophone, making a welcome return after a lapse of several years.



(L to R): Laura Gonsalves, Francois Nicoulaud (France), Hein C.R.M. Princen (Holland) and Braz Gonsalves

Playing with the "Jazz Cavalcade" which includes his wife Yvonne and two daughters Sharon and Laura, Braz, "India's No. 1 jazzman" is certainly most likely to bring a flow of fresh ideas to the swing of his jazz.

"These days he prefers the alto and soprano saxes to the tenor" we are told. From the man who was co-leader of the Jazz Yatra Sextet that made its own special waves, and has proved to be a successful ambassador of raga-jazz improvisations abroad, the music should prove uniquely interesting.

For Jazz India, the organisers, it's a Braz Gonsalves revival. The span of a long association that shares a mutual growth. For Braz himself it's been a long and fruitful journey. In it are included many performances in India and more particularly abroad. The Macao Jazz Festival, the Portugal Jazz Festival (to which he was invited twice), the Prague Festival and the Warsaw Jazz Jamboree and the Belgrade Festival

are among the many international events which have featured Braz. This time however, Braz will have to share the spotlight with his daughter Laura - whose multifaceted talent includes being a vocalist, "a first-rate pianist" and a composer and lyricist besides. The proceeds of the concert will in fact go towards funding a higher musical education

for this seventeen-year-old, in Paris, France.

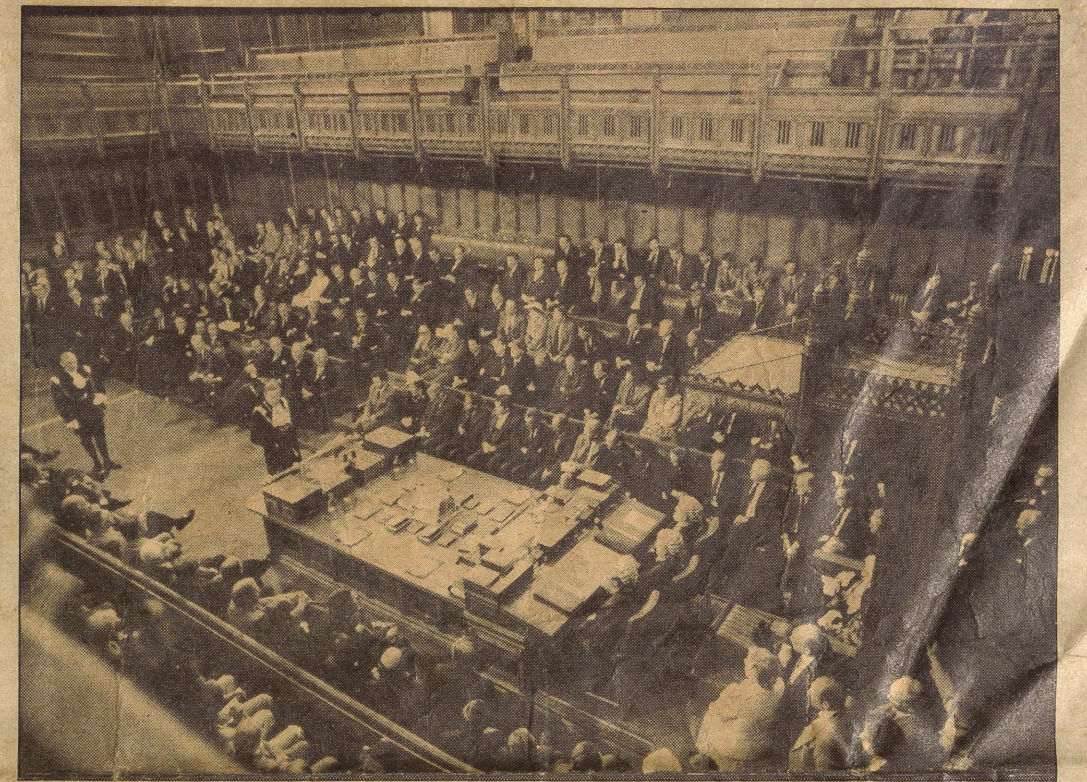
And then, joining the band that evening would be Jazz Cavalcade's guest artists - two diplomats who think that music makes the world go round. There's Francois Nicoulaud, the Consul-General of France on the trumpet and the Consul-General of Holland Hein C.R.M. Princen on the clarinet. The former rarely

misses an opportunity to play with a big band, back in Paris, and the latter was a member of a Dixieland band, while at University.

Now both look for opportunities to play jazz in Bombay whenever the occasion allows.

So Monday, June 22 at the Sophia Bhabha auditorium, 7 p.m. should prove jazz worth the while - at least for the music lovers.

MPs sometimes don't have seats



The interior of the House of Commons with the ornately carved Speaker's chair. The Government benches are to his right and the Opposition benches to his left.

IMAGINE it is 21.00 hours in the House of Commons at Westminster, on the north bank of the river Thames in the heart of London. An hour from now the division bells will ring and the fate of a British Government or the career of a minister may be at risk. Members of the House will then pass through the "aye" or "no" lobbies to be counted. Tension, excitement, and partisanship is beginning to build up for the closing speeches in the crucial debate.

Yet for the many spectators sitting above in the "Strangers' Gallery", the rather theatrical scene spread before them does not explain everything. It leaves one question after another unanswered. Why are up to 100 Members of Parliament unable to find a seat in the chamber and are therefore standing behind the Bar of the House, that barrier only MPs are permitted to cross when the House is in session? Why are many others sitting on the gangway steps, or else in an upper gallery next to the Press Gallery?

Overseas visitors and British voters alike, could be forgiven for thinking it was time the House of Commons had a chamber large enough to seat every one of its 650 members. After all, how many other democratically elected chambers would put up with such overcrowding, inconvenience, and apparent inefficiency? Virtually every other national assembly in the world has a round chamber providing a seat, a desk, and possibly a microphone for each occupant.

Is the undersized chamber of the House of Commons at Westminster a sort of British eccentricity? Or is it a question of making do with what happens to be available? Or does one find the explanation in the dead hand of history?

The fact is that the undersized House was a considered choice in which many centuries of history bore weight, including the living history of the wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who with nearly 64 years, was the longest serving member since the House's medieval origins.

In 1941 the House of Commons chamber was destroyed in a World War II air raid, and its members had to find temporary accommodation in Church House (a circular chamber) and then in Parliament's

upper chamber, the House of Lords, while they set afoot the rebuilding of their own.

There was never serious doubt about the essentials of the new design: it would be the same size as the burned out chamber, enough room on the green leather benches for about two-thirds of the MPs, and would have a rectangular shape as of old.

That kept faith with the history of the House since the 16th century. It also kept in tune with the feeling of MPs old and young. Nobody had more sway in the decision about the new Chamber - completed some years after the war - than the former Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who expressed himself in some characteristic sentences:

"It excites world wonder in the parliamentary countries that we should build a chamber, starting afresh, which can only seat two-thirds of its members. It is difficult to explain this to those who do not know our ways. They cannot easily be made to understand why we consider that the intensity, passion, intimacy, informality and spontaneity of our debates constitute the personality of the House of Commons and endow it at once with its focus and its strength."

He added mischievously that any MP "who was wounded by being deprived of the pomp and perquisite of a special seat and special desk for himself in the chamber might find himself fully consoled by the material comforts and conveniences which he can derive from his life underground." That referred to the floor below the chamber, the site of the dining rooms and the terrace overlooking the Thames.

So much for explaining the deliberate choice of too few seats in the new chamber for the MPs elected to sit there. But why a rectangular design intended to place the British Government and its backbench forces on the Speaker's right hand and all Opposition parties facing them on the Speaker's left?

HERE history is the guide. At least from the 14th century the evolving House of Commons met in the refectory or chapter house of Westminster Abbey. In 1547 King Edward VI moved its place of sitting to St. Stephen's Chapel in the nearby Palace of Westminster, and there the Commons dwelt until the chapel was destroyed

by fire in 1834. The atmosphere and the practice of the House of Commons were profoundly affected. St. Stephen's Chapel was quite small and therefore encouraged, or even made obligatory, a style of speech that could be reckoned conversational rather than tub-thumping or irrational. Oratory for oratory's sake was held in low esteem.

In the chapel's limited space it also became convenient for MPs to confront one another. If they supported the ruling ministers they sat alongside them, if they opposed they sat opposite. That is how the rectangular chamber came about, with its implication that the verdict of a general election could cause the Government and the alternative government - or opposition - to change sides.

The rectangular chamber thereby became a factor of major constitutional importance, particularly when the vote spread to every man and woman in the United Kingdom earlier this century. It symbolised the democratic truth that power could be transferred from the Government in power to the Opposition without revolution, violence, or dispute if the people, in a general election, declared that was their will.

Nor did the rectangularity of United Kingdom politics in the House of Commons exclude the possibility of coalitions. Historically too it was not impossible, indeed it was likely that MPs would change sides.

In that sense the British House of Commons has felt no need to follow mainland European practice and choose - as in the European Parliament - a circular chamber or hemicycle in which a variety of parties, large and small, may be accommodated, with coalition government or control in mind.

IN the end the ordinary voter will decide. The House of Commons has traditionally committed itself to the forms of a two party system, partly for historical reasons and partly for the practical convenience of the main two parties involved. Hence the rectangular chamber and much of parliamentary procedure. The great parliamentarians of the 19th century could re-enter today's House of Commons and feel that most of it was familiar.

David Wood

The Bustard is doing well

SCIENTIFIC study being conducted in Andhra Pradesh by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has estimated the number of the elusive and rare Great Indian Bustard at about a hundred.

Though the estimate may appear encouraging, the survey has determined that human and cattle disturbance during the breeding season and the consequent breeding failures is possibly the most significant factor for the rarity of the bird. The bustard is totally protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Enforcement of the law is, however, arduous particularly in the non-forested areas which the bustard inhabits.

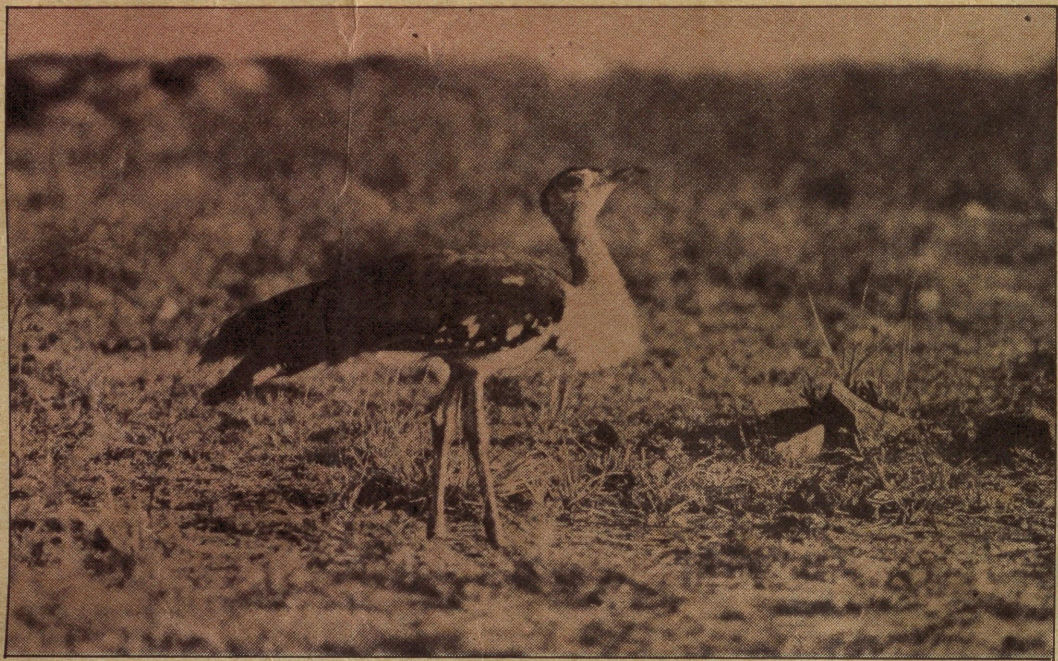
The long-legged drab-coloured bird has been sighted in at least nine areas in Andhra, with unconfirmed reports of its being spotted in other regions of Kurnool, Anantapur, Mehboobnagar and Cuddapah as well. A systematic statewide survey by the Forest Department during the monsoon to locate bustards was hence found imperative.

The Society established a camp at Rollapadu in Kurnool district in August 1985 and has been undertaking studies along lines similar to those at its field stations at Nannaj in Maharashtra and Karera in Madhya Pradesh.

So far two annual reports have been published by the BNHS on the Great Indian Bustard under its Endangered Species Project carried out at Nannaj and Karera. The third report pertains to the studies conducted at Rallapadu, a hamlet inhabited by 755 people and nesting in the plains between the Nallamalai and Erramalai ranges of the Eastern Ghats.

Titled 'Study of Ecology of Certain Endangered Species of Wildlife and their Habitats - The Great Indian Bustard, Annual Report 3', the report has been prepared by project scientist, Dr. Asad R. Rahmani, research biologist Ranjit Manakadam, project administrator S. R. Nayak and artist Carl D'Silva under principal investigator Dr. Salim Ali, eminent ornithologist, and co-investigator J. C. Daniel, curator of the BNHS.

The study was financed



A female Indian Bustard

by a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service received through the Union Department of Environment and conducted in collaboration with the AP Forest Department.

Till very recently, little was known about the bustard's current status in AP. R. W. Buron (1953) reported seeing a drove of 13 birds east of Guntakal junction. W. Elliot (1880) gave an account of falconers going for the bustard, the Latin name of which is *Ardeotis nigricaps*. C. A. Tostems (1887) saw a few in Kurnool district in the cold season. More recently, Pushp Kumar, when he was the AP Conservator of Forests (Wildlife Management) in 1980, offered a rough estimate of 15 birds based on information gathered mainly from hunters.

In August 1982, a few bustards were sighted by the Forest Department near Rallapadu and Banganapalle in Kurnool district, mainly owing to the efforts of Pushp Kumar. In July 1984, Rallapadu was back in the news with reported sightings of 35 and 38 more birds in close succession. The bird was subsequently located by both the Forest Department and the BNHS at various places in the districts of Kurnool, Anantapur and Rangareddy.

The bustard had been traditionally trapped by a colony of settlers at Nandikotkur town who trace their ancestry to Gujarat and be-

long to the same stock of people called Pardhis in Maharashtra. According to two former shikaris from this town, Jampa and Jaldada, they had been hunting the bird and other wildlife for about 15 years. They caught the bustards with the help of nooses, the traps being laid at waterholes, groundnut fields and at the display areas of the courting cocks.

They trapped about a dozen birds each year, the cocks fetching about Rs. 110 each and weighing between nine and 10 kgs, and the females weighing around half that much and sold at about Rs. 50 till a few years back. The Forest Department became aware of these illicit trappings in 1982 and managed to convert the two trappers into guardians of these vulnerable birds. They are now working with the Department as watchmen.

The report claims that the Forest Department's efforts at conservation have proved successful. There is no more poaching and a proposal has been submitted to the Government to declare the areas frequented by bustards as a sanctuary. Such a proposal was made in the case of Rallapadu two years back, but till date the territory has not been declared as one, the report regrets.

The Department has set up an 800-acre grassland enclosure north of Rallapadu, with two more enclosures of 300 and 100 acres intended to be set up west

of the village shortly. The report mentions that these enclosures would form the core areas of the Rallapadu Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary whenever it was established. The terrain is undulating and in most cases, the soil is blanketed by a layer of stones, such areas being locally known as 'rallabarkas'.

The vegetation of Rallapadu is classified as the tropical thorn forest type, but owing to biotic disturbances the region has scant forest and the landscape is one of crop fields, grazing lands or very little scrub. Most of the plants of Rallapadu belong to what are termed as 'monsoon ephemerals'. These plants manifest themselves in the landscape with the advent of the rains, changing the barren brown tract of land to one of lush greenery.

Flock composition at Rallapadu is similar to that of Nannaj, the sexes tending to keep to separate droves. Large droves are seen during early monsoon, disintegrating into smaller groups by late September. The BNHS scientists, however, discovered an interesting aspect regarding the breeding habits of the bustard at Rallapadu: the bird had two breeding seasons. While the bustard at Nannaj breeds during the monsoons and in summer at Karera, its brethren at Rallapadu breed during both these seasons.

The major breeding period is in the monsoon,

extending upto winter, the minor breeding season being in summer. The scientists surmise that the existence of two breeding seasons is not unique to Rallapadu but is also evident in other areas. According to their report, Khan Nizamuddin Khan, an avid egg hunter who gathered about a 100 bustard eggs from Rajasthan, found most eggs during the rains but also collected a few during summer. This was reported by E.C.S. Baker in 1921.

During the breeding season, the adult cock bustard establishes a vast territory into which no other male is permitted. He then selects some prominent area in his territory for courtship display which is performed in the mornings and evenings. During cloudy weather or in the presence of females, the display may be presented any time of the day. Females scour the diverse territories, mating with the cocks of their choice.

If a hen is successful in hatching the egg, chances are that she will nest at the same spot the following year. Three are few foxes, known predators of eggs, at Rallapadu. Hence there are no instances of depredation of eggs by foxes.

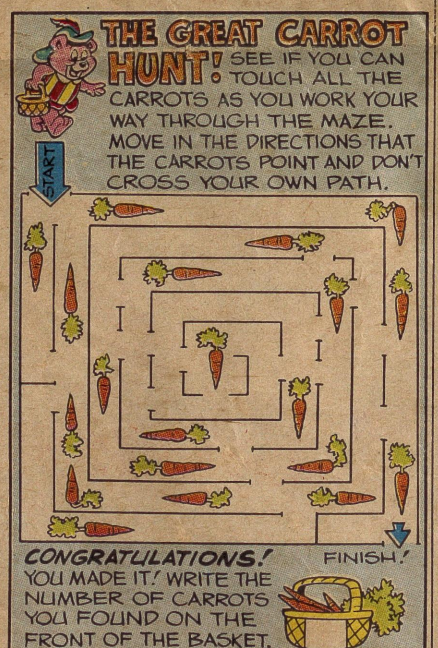
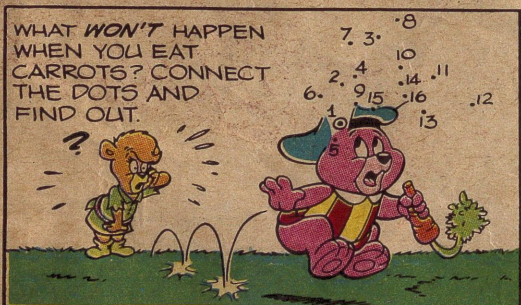
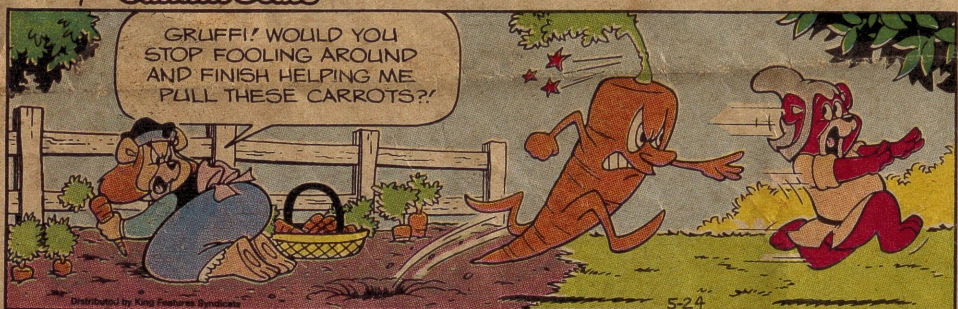
The project scientists have recommended that as the bustard inhabits grasslands, wastelands, grazing lands and crop fields, areas not generally under the control of the Forest Department, its conservation could be integrated with other pursuits such as wasteland development, drought prone areas programme, soil conservation and pasture development. Fires are still a problem at Rallapadu though the Forest Department has adopted measures to combat this, the report cites.

In conclusion, the naturalists warn: "It is probably that their (the bustards') numbers are decreasing with the destruction of their habitat as in the case of most places, owing to the demand for land, for agriculture and other human-related activities. Hence necessary actions will have to be taken immediately before it is too late."

It would be unfortunate indeed if we were to soon refer to the Great Indian Bustard as the Late Indian Bustard.

Sarosh Bana

Disney's Gummi Bears



WEEKEND MAIL

Viva Nehru
Sir - "Viva Nehru" by Anil Samarth (Express Weekend, June 6) was interesting and enlightening. Jawaharlal Nehru's half an hour sojourn at the Sada aerodrome on February 9, 1937 stirred feelings of patriotism in the people. Today when Goa has become a State, let all the people, of whatever faith, language and culture, join hands to make it a prosperous State!
Devendra Bharati
Nashik-42207

Boring
Sir - I refer to Telly Talk, "The Other Rajani" (Express Weekend, May 23). The serial, "Swayamsiddha" inspite of having talented characters like Priya Tendulkar and



L to R: Dr. V. Raiturkar, Jawaharlal Nehru and A.D. Mainkar
Shekhar Kapur and handled by the veteran Vijay Tendulkar did not save it from being a bore. The serial had no message whatsoever except that it was

often projected that a woman can pull on without a man.
One expected better things from the serial but was disappointed. Neither the young nor the old enjoyed "Swayamsiddha."
Prem K. Menon
Parel, Bombay-400012.

Correction
Sir - I refer to the Article Viva Nehru (Express Weekend' May 6). The photograph published was taken on the very day of Nehru's first landing in Goa i.e. on 9-2-1937 and not after liberation. Dr. V. Raiturkar expired before liberation of Goa. Shri. A.D. Mainkar, 82, lives in Vasco and attend his electrical business.
Narendra M. Kamat
Vasco-Da-Gama Goa