

**Fearing Donald Trump,
Democrats pressure
Bernie Sanders to exit**



(Agencies) Washington : The sheer bitterness and rancour in the Republican Party in course of the nomination process for the presidential election had overshadowed the politics within the Democratic Party, (Contd on page 20)



Story ON Page 20

'My Name Is Sadiq Khan - I'm Mayor Of London'
The new London mayor is sworn in at Southwark Cathedral to rapturous applause and a standing ovation.

American Power Under Challenge

We cannot gain a realistic understanding of who rules the world while ignoring the “masters of mankind,” as Adam Smith called them: in his day, the merchants and manufacturers of England; in ours, multinational conglomerates, huge financial institutions, retail empires, and the like.

(By Noam Chomsky) When we ask “Who rules the world?” we commonly adopt the standard convention that the actors in world affairs are states, primarily the great powers, and we consider their decisions and the

relations among them. That is not wrong. But we would do well to keep in mind that this level of abstraction can also be highly misleading. States of course have complex internal structures, (Contd on page 20)

Life in jail worse than hell: Why Subrata Roy now wants freedom at any cost

(News Agencies) Last month, at a seminar in New Delhi, Arvind Datar, senior advocate of Sebi on the Sahara case, confessed having serious problems selling properties of the Lucknow-based conglomerate. In fact, Datar called it “a herculean task”. The Sebi counsel was referring to the 60 properties whose title deeds Sahara offered to Sebi in 2013 but the market regulator’s 700-strong pan-India work force was unable to execute a single sale. Ironically, a month later, the Supreme Court on Wednesday seemed convinced that even if Sebi failed to sell the properties, there was enough cash on the table to recover that was due from Sahara.



In fact, it was surprised at the extent of Subrata Roy’s wealth and asked his lawyer Kapil Sibal “why such a rich person didn’t pay a fraction of wealth and stayed in jail for two years”. (Contd on page 19)



Stars Align to make it a glamorous housefull



Endgame: Interpol arrest warrant for Vijay Mallya?

Enforcement Directorate has written to CBI for a Red Corner Notice against Mallya.

(Agencies) After Britain baron to make him join against Mallya. CBI acts as turned down India’s request investigations in connection the nodal office for execution to deport Vijay Mallya, the with a money-laundering of Interpol warrants in India. Enforcement Directorate case. An RCN is issued to (ED) approached Interpol Officials said ED has seek the location and arrest seeking an arrest warrant written to CBI to obtain a of wanted persons with a against the estranged liquor Red Corner Notice (RCN) (Contd on page 19)



WORLDLY WISE

■ Britain has raised the threat level from dissident Northern Ireland militants to 'substantial', meaning an attack on the British mainland is considered a strong possibility, Home Secretary Theresa May said.



It is not possible for us to accept any changes to the counter-terrorism law.

—VOLKAN BOZKIR, TURKEY'S EU AFFAIRS MINISTER

DONALD Trump claimed victory in both West Virginia and Nebraska GOP primaries as his race for the Republican presidential candidacy continues almost unchallenged.

The billionaire, who delivered on a promised blowout win in the heart of Appalachian coal country, is virtually assured of being the GOP's standard-bearer for the general election in November.

He faced little competition after his closest rival Ted Cruz announced he was dropping out after his defeat in Indiana last week. Fellow Republican candidate John Kasich followed him out of the race the following day.

Cruz had hinted that he could be persuaded to restart his campaign if he won the Nebraska primary. The Republican had the ability to jump back in the race, having only 'suspended' his campaign, and having gotten himself on the ballot in upcoming states.

But Trump's win in Nebraska on Tuesday crushes any dreams of Cruz returning to the presidential election race.

Cruz had previously admitted he had not been "holding his breath" before Tuesday's results.

"We launched this campaign intending to win. The reason we suspended our campaign was that with the Indiana loss, I felt there was no path to victory," Cruz told talk host Glenn Beck, who was a big supporter on the campaign trail.

"If that changes, we will certainly respond accordingly," Cruz added, saying he was not ready to support Trump.

Trump won 76.7 per cent of the vote on Tuesday's West Virginia primary and secured three delegates. The state win brings him ever closer to the 1,237 delegates he needs to officially close out the nomination.

Ted Cruz trailed behind in second with 9.1 per cent while John Kasich limped into last place with a meager 7 per cent.

Meanwhile in Nebraska, Trump took 61.4 per cent of the vote, winning 36 delegates, compared to Cruz's 18.5 per cent and Kasich's 11.4.

Following his sweeping victories, Trump said it had been an honour to win both states by such "massive margins".

Cruz's campaign hinged on Nebraska primary win

He added that time spent in Nebraska and West Virginia had been "enlightening" and he was hoping to repeat his success there in the primaries, during the general election.

"Likewise, my time spent last week with the great people of Oregon will hopefully lead to another victory next Tuesday," he added.

Exit polls had revealed that Republican voters in West Virginia were most concerned with the economy and jobs. Nebraskans had said they wanted a candidate who "tells it like it is" — indicating early potential support for the notoriously unfiltered Trump.

Voters in both states also believed that Trump may be able to beat Clinton in the presidential election in November while the majority of Republicans say they'd vote for Trump over Hillary.

Trump had been campaigning in West Virginia in the run up to Tuesday's primary.

On Thursday, he launched his first general election campaign in nearly a year that didn't take a single shot at another Republican.

"I actually wish the primaries were not over. It's no fun this way," the Republican Party's presidential nominee-in-waiting told an estimated 13,000 people in Charleston, West Virginia.



Donald Trump's wins in Nebraska and West Virginia crush any dreams of Ted Cruz (below) returning to the republican presidential election race.

Ted and buried! Trump sweeps 2 more primaries

PHOTOS: REUTERS



Series of primary elections held in each state form part of the nominating process of the US presidential elections

Donald tombstone artist identified

THE artist behind the Donald Trump tombstone that was placed in Central Park nearly two months ago has been identified. Police were able to trace the 420-pound chunk of granite to Brooklyn artist Brian A Whiteley, 33, after identifying where it was made, according to the New York Times.

The tombstone appeared to

be engraved with Trump's name with an epitaph: "Made America Hate Again", a wry take on his campaign slogan: "Make America Great Again". The tombstone appeared in the park on March 27. Police tracked the stone to monument dealer, Frank Cassara, 70, who gave them the customer's name and security

camera footage showing him loading it into a truck. Cassara and his son, Michael, said they had made the stone for a young man that Cassara called a "hipster". Police were able to track the stone after Gothamist published an interview with an anonymous artist claiming responsibility. Daily Mail

"But everybody's out. I'm the only one left!"

He even said no one needed to vote on Tuesday, claiming he had already "won all your delegates".

Despite his assurances, primary races will be fought out in every legislative district, including a hotly contested congressional contest.

Trump even donned a hard hat and pretended to shovel coal at the Charleston rally where he pledged to support the struggling coal mining industry. Daily Mail

SANDERS BESTS CLINTON



Democratic presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders.

BERNIE Sanders told an audience in Salem, Oregon, he was in it to win it after besting his rival, Hillary Clinton, in the West Virginia primary. "Let me be as clear as I can be," he said. "We are in this campaign to win the Democratic nomination."

"Now we will fully acknowledge — we are good at arithmetic — that we have an uphill climb ahead of us, but we are used to fighting uphill climbs," Sanders said.

As soon as West Virginia's polls closed, Sanders seized on an NBC News projection that said he'd won the state and sent out a celebratory email to his supporters. It took another two hours, however, for the other networks to rubber stamp the results, calling the race for the underdog who was widely predicted to win the only Democratic race.

With 95 per cent of the vote in, Sanders won comfortably, 51 per cent to 36 per cent.

Sanders had moved his campaign to next week's Oregon battleground, where he touted his West Virginia victory by boasting that Clinton had won the Appalachian state by 40 points back in 2008.

(Agencies) Barack Obama will become the first US President to visit Hiroshima in Japan later this month but he will not apologise for the United States' dropping of an atomic bomb on the city at the end of World War Two, the White House said on Tuesday.

Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize early in his presidency in 2009 in part for making nuclear non proliferation a center piece of his agenda, Obama on May 27 will tour the site of the world's first nuclear bombing with Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

With the end of his last term in office approaching in January, Obama will "highlight his continued commitment to pursuing the peace and security



presidential visit would be heavily criticised in the United States if it were seen as an apology.

The bomb dropped on August 6, 1945 killed thousands of people instantly and about 140,000 by the end of that year. Another was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9, and Japan surrendered six days later.

The majority of Americans view the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as justified to end the war and save US lives. Most Japanese see it as unjustified.

Obama's press secretary Josh Earnest said it was "an entirely legitimate line of inquiry for historians" when asked why the White House had decided not to use his Hiroshima visit to issue an apology.

He told reporters that while Obama understands the United States "bears a special responsibility" as the only country to use nuclear weapons in wartime, the President will emphasise Washington's responsibility "to lead the world in an effort to eliminate them". Abe, speaking to reporters in Tokyo, said he hoped "to turn this into an opportunity for the US and Japan to together pay tribute to the memories of the victims" of the nuclear bombing.

Obama to visit Hiroshima but won't apologise for atomic bombing

of a world without nuclear weapons", the White House said in a statement.

"He will not revisit the decision to use the atomic bomb at the end of World War II. Instead, he will offer a forward-looking vision focussed on our shared future," Ben Rhodes, Obama's deputy national security adviser, wrote in a separate blog.

The visit comes as part of a May 21-28 swing through Asia, which will include a Group of Seven summit in Japan and his first trip to Vietnam. The Asia trip seeks to reinforce his geopolitical "pivot" towards the region, though friends and allies there have sometimes questioned Washington's commitment.

The Hiroshima tour will

symbolise a new level of reconciliation between former wartime enemies who are now close allies. It will also underscore Obama's efforts to improve US-Japan ties, marked by an Asia-Pacific trade pact as well as cooperation against China's pursuit of maritime claims and the nuclear threat from North Korea.

On the final day of the summit in Japan, Obama and Abe will visit the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park near the spot where a US warplane dropped an atomic bomb 71 years ago.

White House debate

The decision to go to Hiroshima was hotly debated within the White House. There were concerns a US

Eradicating HIV IS possible

As Denmark all but eliminates the virus, experts reveal the simple solution - treatment!

(Agencies) Eradicating HIV is within our grasp, using the 'treatment as prevention' approach, experts have suggested.

Across the world, around 35 million people are afflicted and living with the virus.

The World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS said they plan to use the 'treatment as prevention' technique to eliminate the global pandemic.

The point will have been achieved, WHO experts say, when only one person in every 1,000 becomes infected each year.

Now, a nearly two-decade analysis by researchers from UCLA and Denmark, yields the first proof that the approach could be effective.

Reviewing Danish medical records, they found that the treatment-as-prevention strategy has brought Denmark's HIV epidemic to the brink of

elimination.

The study found that in 2013, the country had only 1.4 new HIV infections per 1,000 men who have sex with men, Denmark's major risk group.

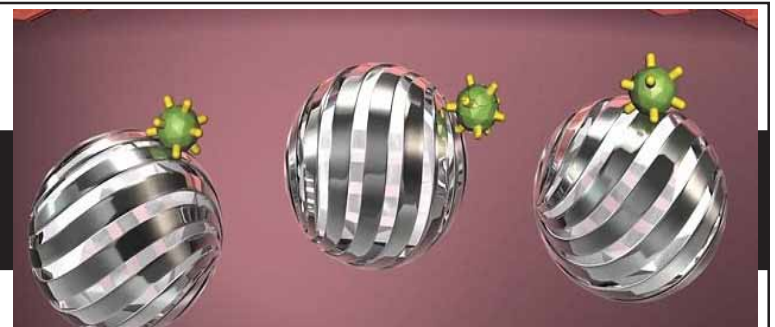
Professor Sally Blower, the study's senior author and director of the Center for Biomedical Modeling at UCLA, said: 'The Danes have done what nobody else in the world has been able to do.'

'They have almost eliminated their HIV epidemic, and they have achieved this simply by providing treatment.'

The paper notes, however, that the treatment programs in Denmark are exceptional.

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For the current study, the researchers used an approach called CD4-staged Bayesian back-calculation to determine the number of Danish men who have sex with men, and who had become infected with HIV each year between 1995 and 2013.

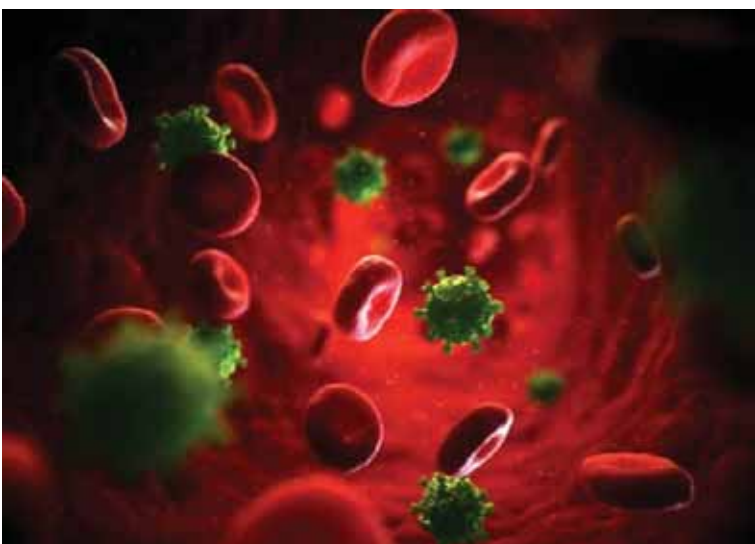
They found that the number of

infections has been decreasing since 1996, when effective HIV treatments were introduced in Denmark.

They then measured the correlation between the decrease in the number of HIV infections each year and the increase in the number of people who began treatment, and they found that the two were highly correlated. 'What we found was very exciting,' said

Dr Laurence Palk, a co-author of the study and a postdoctoral fellow in Professor Blower's lab.

'Our results show treatment as prevention has been slowly but steadily working to end the Danish epidemic.' The team calculated that by 2013, when the epidemic was close to elimination, there were only approximately 600 men in Denmark who have sex with men, and who were infected with HIV but had not been diagnosed.



'Anyone out there?' Nasa discovers 1,284 new planets to look on



Aeronautics and Space Administration) headquarters in Washington.

The unmanned Kepler space observatory, which launched in 2009, has been scanning 150,000 stars for signs of orbiting bodies, particularly those that might be able to support life.

It works by observing a dimming in the light of a star, known as a transit, each time an orbiting planet passes in front of it.

"Of the nearly 5,000 total planet candidates found to date, more than 3,200 now have been verified, and 2,325 of these were discovered by Kepler," Nasa said in a statement.

Of the new trove of 1,284, nearly 550 could be rocky planets like Earth, based on their size, the US space agency said.

"Nine of these orbit in their sun's habitable zone, which is the distance from a star where

orbiting planets can have surface temperatures that allow liquid water to pool." The addition of these nine means that 21 exoplanets now are known to be possibly circling their stars in the habitable zone, and may harbor life.

However, Kepler is a "statistical mission," Nasa scientists said, and is not designed to probe further into the conditions of certain planets that exist in the so-called "Goldilocks zone" of their stars — neither too hot nor too cold to sustain life.

That means even the most advanced space telescopes now being built, including the James Webb Space Telescope, may not be able to shed much more light on the nature of life on another of these exoplanets, if life does exist.

"Before the Kepler space telescope launched, we did not know whether exoplanets were

rare or common in the galaxy. Thanks to Kepler and the research community, we now know there could be more planets than stars," said Paul Hertz, astrophysics division director at Nasa headquarters.

"This knowledge informs the future missions that are needed to take us ever closer to finding out whether we are alone in the universe."

The latest trove of planets was confirmed by a new statistical method, instead of the time-consuming one-by-one process that was used previously.

This statistical analysis method can be applied to many planet candidates simultaneously, according to Morton, associate research scholar at Princeton University, and lead author of a paper describing the findings in *The Astrophysical Journal*.

(Agencies) Nasa announced on Tuesday the discovery of 1,284 new planets outside our solar system, more than doubling the number of known exoplanets found with the Kepler space telescope.

A statistical analysis led by Princeton University researcher Timothy Morton resulted in this huge new batch of planets, the biggest yet. And there are sure

to be more. Princeton's method puts the likelihood of true planethood at 99%.

Scientists say it's a first step in determining whether we are, indeed, alone in the universe.

"This gives us hope that somewhere out there, around a star much like ours, we can eventually discover another Earth," said Ellen Stofan, chief scientist at Nasa (The National

Shaking him off?

Stacey Flounders is seen dancing, drinking beer and getting close to a host of men on a girls' trip to Dubai as her paedophile footballer ex-Adam Johnson languishes in jail



(Agencies) The ex-girlfriend of disgraced footballer Adam Johnson was seen getting close to another man as she joined friends for a girls' trip to Dubai.

Dressed in a tight-fitting white playsuit, Stacey Flounders looked carefree as she sipped on drinks and showed off her moves at one of the city's newest nightspots.

The 26-year-old, who has a one-year-old daughter with Johnson, was later seen flicking her hair seductively as she danced close to a mystery man.

Miss Flounders accompanied Johnson through most of his child sex trial but revealed halfway through that

they had split, saying she could not live with the reality of his crimes.

Former Sunderland ace Johnson, who earned £60,000-a-week, was jailed for six years at Bradford Crown Court in March for grooming and sexual activity with a 15-year-old girl.

He is currently serving his sentence at HMP Moorland, near Doncaster.

But Miss Flounders appeared to have left all her worries at home as she soaked up the sun in Dubai last month, tweeting on her return: 'it was just what I needed'.

The mother-of-one has been pictured relaxing by the sea with friends and also found time to catch

up with Colleen Rooney. She also made sure to experience the city's legendary nightlife. Miss Flounders was photographed throwing her arms in the air as she danced the night away in the Lock Stock & Barrel Club, located in the upmarket Grand Millennium Hotel. The former air hostess couldn't keep the smile off her face as she chatted with a blonde girlfriend - all while sipping from a bottle of beer. But as much as Miss Flounders enjoyed her mini-break, she was also happy to come home to her and Johnson's daughter, Ayla Sofia. She tweeted: 'Enjoyed that little break in Dubai, just what I needed, now back home to my little girl sic'.

Knife attacker, shouting 'Allahu Akbar', kills one at Munich



(Agencies) A German national stabbed four passengers at a train station near Munich early on Tuesday, killing one man and injuring three, in an attack police said appeared to have an Islamist motive. Witnesses said the assailant, a 27-year-old man, shouted "Allahu Akbar" ('God is Greatest' in Arabic), according to police.

"The perpetrator made remarks during the attack which point to there being a political motive," Bavarian police said in a statement, adding he had been arrested and there were no further suspects. A 50-year-old died of stab wounds in hospital shortly after the attack. The other stabbed men, aged between 43 and 58, sustained lighter injuries, police said.

The attack took place at about 5 a.m. local time (0300 GMT) at the train station at Grafing, a commuter town about 32 km (20 miles) southeast of the Bavarian capital in southern Germany. Germany, which is playing a supporting role in the fight against Islamic State, has not suffered a major attack by Islamist militants on the scale of those that have hit neighbouring France and Belgium. But ministers have repeatedly warned an attack is possible and German security services are on alert. Over 800 home-grown radicals have left Germany to join jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq and about 260 have returned. Germany has also been a transit country for militants who carried out attacks in Belgium this year and Paris last year. There are concerns that some of the more than 1 million migrants who arrived in the country last year have slipped off officials' radar.



From Playboy To President

Trump's Past Crude Sex Talk Collides With White House Bid

(Agencies) Over 15 years, radio shock jock Howard Stern and his buddy Donald Trump periodically carried on like towel-snapping "bros" in a locker room, rating women's tops and bottoms, debating whether oral sex is "important," and egging each other on about whether they would like to go to bed with a number of people, from Cindy Crawford to Diane Sawyer.

"You could've gotten her, right?" Stern asked Trump on-air shortly after Princess Diana's death in 1997. "You could've nailed her."

"I think I could have," Trump

said.

How about singer Mariah Carey? "Would you bang her?" Stern asked. Trump replied, "I would do it without hesitation."

Trump's crude talk on-air with Stern between 1990 and 2005 was part of an image he cultivated as a Manhattan playboy who had so many women that he barely had time to sleep. He was often seen at trendy nightclubs with different women, appeared on the cover of Playboy magazine, wrote in his books about all the women chasing him and publicly boasted about his sex life.

That reputation was useful as

Trump, in his 40s and 50s, built a brand designed to equate his name with success and the high life. But it is problematic as Trump, 69, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, tries to wash away his tabloid past and fashion a more dignified persona - as a potential commander in chief and leader of the free world.

Although Trump promises to be "more presidential," his past statements have contributed to high negative ratings from women. Democrats have signaled they will make Trump's history a centerpiece of their

campaign against him and other Republicans this fall.

Trump's exchanges with Stern, many of which BuzzFeed posted online earlier this year, are featured in a new ad by the Democratic candidate in the U.S. Senate race in Arkansas.

The contrast between Trump's past and present behavior underscores the extent to which he has shaped and reshaped his identity as he has moved between business, entertainment and politics. And it points to a fundamental question about his candidacy: Which version of Trump might

America send to the Oval Office?

"Defining Donald Trump will be one of the real challenges of this campaign," said Ed Rollins, a veteran GOP consultant who last week began working for a pro-Trump super PAC. "Ten or 20 years ago, Trump was a rogue character... a younger version of Hugh Hefner. Today he is seen as a successful businessman and a celebrity and a good father."

Trump, in an interview, played down the significance of some of his past behavior.

"I never anticipated running for office or being a politician, so I could have fun with Howard on the radio and everyone would love it. People do love it," Trump said, sitting behind his Trump Tower desk piled with magazines featuring his face on the cover. "I could say whatever I wanted when I was an entrepreneur, a business guy." Trump also said his work was so "all-consuming" that he could not have been the libidinous playboy portrayed in the media. "People may be surprised that my life is much simpler than they thought," said Trump, with a Diet Coke in a plastic cup on his desk. "And they may be surprised that my life is much less glamorous than they thought, including every story about a supermodel." Trump said the media coverage of his personal life was "overblown." But it is clear that Trump played a role in shaping public perceptions.

China scrambles fighter jets as US sails warship near disputed island



(Agencies) BEIJING/HONG KONG: China scrambled fighter jets on Tuesday as a US navy ship sailed close to a disputed reef in the South China Sea, a patrol China denounced as an illegal threat to peace which only went to show its defence installations in the area were necessary.

Guided missile destroyer the USS William P Lawrence travelled within 12 nautical miles of Chinese-occupied Fiery Cross Reef, US defence department spokesman, Bill Urban said.

The so-called freedom of navigation operation was undertaken to "challenge excessive maritime claims" by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam which were seeking to restrict navigation rights in the South China Sea, Urban said.

"These excessive maritime claims are inconsistent with international law as reflected in

the Law of the Sea Convention in that they purport to restrict the navigation rights that the United States and all states are entitled to exercise," Urban said in an emailed statement.

China and the United States have traded accusations of militarising the South China Sea as China undertakes large-scale land reclamations and construction on disputed features while the United States has increased its patrols and exercises.

Facilities on Fiery Cross Reef include a 3,000-metre (10,000-foot) runway which the United States worries China will use it to press its extensive territorial claims at the expense of weaker rivals.

China's defence ministry said two fighter jets were scrambled and three warships shadowed the US ship, telling it to leave.

The US patrol "again proves

that China's construction of defensive facilities on the relevant reefs in the Nansha Islands is completely reasonable and totally necessary", it said, using China's name for the Spratly Islands where much of its reclamation work is taking place.

Foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said the US ship illegally entered Chinese waters.

"This action by the US side threatened China's sovereignty and security interests, endangered the staff and facilities on the reef, and damaged regional peace and stability," he told a daily news briefing.

China claims most of the South China Sea, through which \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have overlapping claims.

The Pentagon last month called on China to reaffirm it has no plans to deploy military aircraft in the Spratly Islands after China used a military plane to evacuate sick workers from Fiery Cross. "Fiery Cross is sensitive because it is presumed to be the future hub of Chinese military operations in the South China Sea, given its already extensive infrastructure, including its large and deep port and 3000-metre runway," said Ian Storey, a South China Sea expert at Singapore's ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute. "The timing is interesting, too. It is a show of US determination ahead of President Obama's trip to

Vietnam later this month."

Speaking in Vietnam, Daniel Russel, assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific, said freedom of navigation operations were important for smaller nations. "If the world's most powerful navy cannot sail where international law permits, then what happens to the ships of navy of smaller countries?," Russel told reporters before news of the operation was made public. China has reacted with anger to previous US freedom of navigation operations, including the overflight of fighter planes near the disputed Scarborough Shoal last month, and when long-range US bombers flew near Chinese facilities under construction on Cuarteron Reef in the Spratlys last November.

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In Maharashtra, farmers are raging like their bulls



Senior journalist Kumar Ketkar is very acerbic in his dismissal of the current dispensation in Maharashtra — Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis knows only to hobnob with the bold and beautiful, he says, and attends just fashion shows and beauty pageants “sponsored by creams and coloured cosmetics”.

Ajit Pawar of the Nationalist Congress Party, on the other hand, “wouldn’t be seen dead at any of these events”. He is quietly touring the drought prone areas of Maharashtra and staying connected with the people. So is Congress’ Ashok Chavan. These are the only two leaders visiting the distressed people in the rural areas. So when Fadnavis travelled to New Delhi last week to seek a `10,000 crore relief package for the state — which has not yet been granted — it was but natural that both Ajit and Chavan should dismiss this as mere theatrics and, even if the package was forthcoming, a case of too little too late.

I hate to admit this — in view of Ajit’s previous fascination for urinating into dams to irrigate the fields — he is today more connected with farmers and their distress, and they are looking up to him anxiously for solutions. “The NCP and the Congress got majorly voted out of power because it was this section of people — farmers along with OBCs — who had been sick of the rural elite (synonymous with Marathas and the Pawars particularly), who had voted for Narendra Modi during the Lok

Sabha elections. But now they are swinging back to them because in the last two years there is an understanding among the people that the current government has no measure of their distress,” says professor Prakash Pawar of the Shivaji University

at Kolhapur. The Shiv Sena’s opposition to the BJP keeps it relevant among the urban masses but, says Ketkar, even that party’s understanding of production and productivity is limited to the tertiary sector — builders and real estate. That farmers

in the hinterland are facing double jeopardy — of drought and a beef ban — escapes everybody’s attention. The ban on cow slaughter may be disputed in various ways but it remains a fact that including bulls and male calves within its ambit has contributed to farmers’ distress — in times such as these they were used to selling just one or two animals for `1 lakh or more. Now they have no water and no food for themselves — let alone for animals, and these are being abandoned by the dozens. So it is not surprising that farmers, having heard of the `10,000 crore package, are demanding maintenance cost for each animal they are forced to keep on their farm. Else, they say, in a startling recall, they will do

what Ajit’s uncle Sharad Pawar had advised them two decades back when the first Shiv Sena-BJP government had come to power in Maharashtra. Without such a drought in existence then, they had still not understood farmers’ distress and Pawar had given them the example of the ‘useless bull’. “When he refuses to get up, you first kick him, then beat him with a kathi. Then you stick a pin into him. When he still refuses to work, you push a rope through his nose and drag him to the cattle market and sell him off.”

An enraged chief minister Manohar Joshi had then responded, “Send your cow to us and we will show you what our bull can really do.”

The farmers had not taken Joshi up on his offer then. I do not think even Fadnavis has that luxury today.

All’s not well in the kingdom

There is no guarantee that Saudi Arabia’s new economic measures will succeed in a region grappling with regional setbacks, falling oil prices, and geopolitical conflicts

Saudi Arabia appears to be in a hurry to reshape its economy and reposition itself in West Asia. Deputy Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, who unveiled a plan late last month to diversify the country’s economy, says the kingdom will end dependence on oil in four years. Unlike the previous statements by the royal family on economic diversification, there’s at least a plan this time. Prince Mohammad, who has gained enormous influence over policy decisions since his father Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud ascended the throne early last year, has proposed to sell a stake in Saudi Aramco, the nation’s oil producer, and create the world’s largest sovereign wealth fund which will diversify into non-petroleum assets. The idea is to make investments, and not oil, the key source of Saudi Arabia’s government revenue.

The unprecedented urgency in Riyadh to shake up the economy speaks of the seriousness of the situation. For decades, the ruling Al Saud family used oil revenues to buy loyalty at home and influence abroad. It worked well when

prices were high and the power dynamics in West Asia were largely in favour of the kingdom. But now prices remain persistently low, the kingdom is grappling with regional setbacks, and the oil-geopolitics industrial complex, which has been the bedrock of the Saudi-Wahhabi system, is in jeopardy.

Oil shock

The fall in oil prices (from around \$110 a barrel in June 2014 to less than \$50 now) has left a gaping hole in Saudi Arabia’s budget, which is predicted to be \$100 billion this year. The government has taken several steps to deal with the crisis. It has cut spending, issued domestic bonds, and tapped its foreign exchange reserves which fell by around \$116 billion, or 16 per cent, to \$616.4 billion last year. In April, Saudi Arabia also turned to international banks for the first time in more than a decade for a \$10 billion loan. The political implications of this crisis could be enormous. It was wealth from the oil that helped the kingdom weather the Arab Spring in 2011. When people elsewhere rose against dictatorships, the late King Abdullah announced a

special economic package of \$70 billion to quell discontent at home. There is doubt whether the present monarch has any such economic leeway left to cope with unwarranted situations.

But despite the oil shock, the Saudis are not ready to cut production to pump up prices. At a recent meeting of oil producers in Doha to strike a deal on production freeze to stabilise price, Prince Mohammad made a dramatic last-minute intervention, saying the Saudis would not agree to any such pact unless the Iranians freeze output. Iran, busy reintegrating itself into the global economy after international sanctions against it were lifted early this year, is unlikely to do so. But Mr. Mohammad’s intervention has revealed the thinking in Riyadh. The Saudis are ready to live with lower prices for a longer time. The key reason is that Riyadh is afraid of losing market share to its rivals. Second, lower oil prices are hurting the shale oil producers in the U.S. worse than the Gulf countries. A vibrant shale oil industry is not in the long-term interests of the kingdom. Third,

lower oil prices will hit Saudi Arabia’s geopolitical rivals, mainly Iran and Russia, as well. So the Saudis have turned to a road not taken earlier — they want to reduce the dependency on oil while letting their oil-dependent rivals struggle.

The Salman doctrine

This is part of a long-term strategy. Ever since King Salman came to the throne, there has been a deliberate attempt to raise the kingdom’s regional profile through interventions and enhanced anti-Iranism. The Saudis have realised that the region is changing. Whether they like it or not, the nuclear deal is making Iran stronger in West Asia. Unless they change themselves, they will lose the so-called Cold War. So the Salman doctrine has two main components. The economic part is one, of course. An economy not vulnerable to oil fluctuations would put Saudi Arabia in an enviable position.

The second part is geopolitical. Today, Saudi Arabia and Iran are locked, though indirectly, in at least two conflicts — Syria and Yemen.

(Contd on page 21)

Always get up, stand up for our rights *Where stars shine, the media thrives*



It appears that the entire political spectrum may be preparing to muzzle the Right to Information (RTI) with the excuse that it is being misused. Some amendments may be introduced to muzzle it.

Samajwadi Party MP Naresh Agarwal has levelled a charge that Parliament passed the RTI Act under pressure from the US. NCP's Praful Patel matched this by saying that paanwallahs and chaiwallahs seek information under the RTI. Congress' Rajiv Shukla went along with this, almost repudiating his party's biggest achievement. All these people do not understand that they are public servants and are objecting to sharing information with the masters.

Everyone who values democracy must get together and give an effective message that they will not tolerate a regressive attack on the RTI. If they are allowed to shackle the RTI by labelling some applications as 'misuse', 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' they will refuse most information that reveals corruption and arbitrariness.

Generally, Public Information Officers (PIOs) refer to applicants who file RTI applications regularly as blackmailers misusing the RTI. I would divide those who file a large number of applications as: One, those who file applications with the hope of exposing corruption or arbitrariness and hope to improve governance; two, those who file applications repetitively to correct a wrong that they perceive has been done to them, and; third, those who use the RTI to blackmail people. The third category largely targets illegal buildings, mining or other illegal activity.

All three categories comprise around 10% of the total appeals and complaints. Nobody will deny that the first category deserves to be encouraged and is growing steadily. In the second category there are some who have been able to get corrective action and some whose grievance may defy resolution. Generally most of us have a strong aversion for the third category who make it a money-earning racket.

In the implementation of most laws some people will misuse its provisions. Police often misuse their powers to subvert the law, and so also criminals misuse our judicial system to prolong trials. The misuse of laws is largely dependent on the kind of people in a society and whether the justice system has the capability of punishing wrongdoers. There are people who go to places of worship with the sole objective of committing theft or other crimes. But society does not define these as their main characteristic. Nobody can ensure that only angels will use the RTI.

It is worth understanding that the RTI only gives access to the records in the government. Nobody has given instances where 'RTI misuse' has caused any significant harm to the nation.

Another argument that the RTI has resulted in reluctance to take decisions in the government is flawed. Honest officials admit that since the advent of the RTI they are able to resist orders that are not in the public interest by pointing out that the records may be sought under an RTI.

The powerful find the RTI upsetting their arrogance and hence try to discredit it by talking about its misuse. If it is muzzled by asking people to define why they want information, soon we will have to provide reasons for speaking. Our fundamental right of freedom of expression is at stake.

We must be vigilant and rebuff this attack on our democracy. Three attempts to amend the RTI Act were stalled by citizens. We cannot allow our RTI to be enfeebled.

You're on your way to a restaurant in the family car. A beggar taps on the window. You get guilt pangs, hand her a tenner, and get on with your evening. Similarly, you're on the way to the airport when your news app tells you there's been an earthquake in another part of the country. You don't cancel your vacation to mourn the dead. It's not that you're insensitive or immoral: It's just that you feel your personal sacrifice will not benefit strangers. These days, it's more complicated. Our collective conscience is being prodded all the time by TV channels that have made moral outrage an industry. So when parts of Maharashtra suffer from severe drought, the media creates a fuss about the water that would be used to prepare the ipl pitch.

Questions are raised about golf courses and swimming pools, with everybody saying the rich should give up luxuries that guzzle water. The glamorous ipl with its filmstar quotient is brought to its knees.

We exult, feeling we have done our bit to alleviate the lot of the less fortunate. But is the same water poured into a tanker and sent down to parched lands? Certainly not. Stopping water wastage at Point A does not enable taps to gurgle at Point B. We could have brought about more social good by asking juice and bottled drink factories to take a summer vacation. So why didn't we? It's because news channels are telling us what to feel guilty about and what to turn a blind eye to. One day, television will make the drought in Bundelkhand a cause célèbre, probably when fair and lovely Rahul Gandhi pays a visit. This arid region is being neglected since it hasn't produced a single goodlooker since the Rani of Jhansi. Whom would cameras capture? The fuss over IPL reminds this columnist of what happened in 1996, when the Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Ltd (ABCL) decided to bring the Miss World competition to India. The superstar was in dire financial straits and the event was meant to bring in serious money. But all hopes were dashed by us, ladies and gentlemen of the Bangalore media. At the first press conference held in the Secretariat, Big B fans from the media turned out in full force. There was no raised platform, so when he entered the room, all we could see were the backs of a battery of photographers. He climbed on a chair and took the mike. The first "Hello" in his deep baritone sent a whoosh of admiration round the room. The air was electric. But when we returned to the newsroom, we shook off the stardust. Some bright spark raised questions about how the government could extend official facilities for a press conference by a private company. The media went hammer and tongs at ABCL, instead of being flattered that this cantonment town had been chosen over the four metropolises. We each got our pound of flesh: 10-minute solo interviews with Big B. For six weeks before the event, we bashed the hero-turned-villain who would cause the city's fragile infrastructure to collapse. Then we the local media, having exercised our power to destroy the event, made sure we got our press passes for the event, and enjoyed the show. Former Miss World Aishwarya Rai (then not a Bachchan) made us gasp. We walked back from Chinnaswamy stadium satisfied with a job well done.



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The meek shall inherit the Earth: London's mayoral elections and India



Dipankar Gupta

What could be common between Sadiq Khan, the new mayor of London, and Narendra Modi, India's prime minister? On the other side, what is it that is similar between Zachariah 'Zac' Goldsmith (Khan's rival) and Rahul Gandhi? If Modi's father ran a tea shop, Khan's dad was a London bus driver. Flip over the candidates, and once again the similarities are striking. Modi's opponent was the affluent, well-shone, Gandhi, while Khan faced the millionaire Goldsmith, whose Hollywood looks and fabled millions were the stuff of envy. These parallels are important for they tell us a lot about what people are looking for when they vote. Privately, most of them might admire a rich, handsome candidate, but come election time, they usually trust a person closer to average; someone whose life might intersect theirs. In today's world, to win an election, fair and square, it is pure toxic to be rich.

On the policy front, there was very little to distinguish between Goldsmith and Khan. They both campaigned for better transport, better housing, and cleaner air. If Khan won by a unanimous verdict, in excess of 30,000 votes, it is because of perceptions. People believed what he said because they saw him as an ordinary chap, much like the average British citizen.

Goldsmith lost points here because he let his guard down. Instead of 'de-classing' himself, he openly hung out with the super rich. That this made such a difference was because Lord Michael Ashcroft's recent biography of David Cameron laid out the debauched and drunken lifestyle of Britain's self-indulgent upper crust. Suddenly, being rich and powerful became a political handicap. As Goldsmith was hardly prepared for this, he soon found himself on the ropes.

Ashcroft's unauthorised biography of Cameron, entitled

Call me Dave, revolted the ordinary person. This book listed what the British prime minister did in his younger days along with David Osborne, the chancellor, and ex-mayor Boris Johnson. Not only did all of this make for dirty reading but it also hurt Goldsmith bad; these gentlemen were his most prominent supporters. To fill in the details, back in the day, they were chartered members of the Bullingdon Club — a fraternity meant for rich Etonian males in Oxford. Apparently, the 'Bullers', as these young men were called, engaged in many misogynist and mindless rituals, such as burning a 50 pound note in front of a homeless person.

There was more. Rarely did 'Buller' drinking binges leave

pubs intact, making owners of these establishments wary of letting such 'posh' people in. They were often fooled at the start for the 'Bullers' looked so polished in their regulation, blue-trimmed, 3,500 Pound suits, but at the end, very often, the police had to be called in. After Ashcroft detailed these pranks, some involving animals, the British upper class looked like a load of trash. That the 'posh' lot could do all this, without even their shins getting kicked, was a horrifying thought. Goldsmith could hardly wriggle his way out of this. Cameron, Osborne and Johnson were not only one time 'Bullers' but were currently Goldsmith's fulltime supporters. If there was any doubt left about how the posh set behaved, it was finally sealed and delivered when Cameron taunted Jeremy Corbyn, the Opposition leader, for his ill-fitting suits and untidy ties. This was above the top, low snobbery. Now it no longer mattered if Khan was a Muslim or a Buddhist; he was, any day, preferable to the 'posh' Goldsmith and company.

From that time on, Goldsmith's best friends became his worst enemies. People forgot

his steady hand environmentalism and his otherwise good record as member of parliament. Soon other recipe malfunctions popped up. Did Goldsmith earlier classify himself as 'non-domiciled' to evade taxes? Did he really believe in non-polluting vehicles given the kind of lifestyle he led? Worse, he had some scary pre-election jitters, much like Gandhi, and muffed easy questions put by the press.

First, Goldsmith made a grand confession to Indian-origin voters that he loved Bollywood, but failed to name a single Hindi film. Nor did he measure up to being a real Londoner on two vital points — sport and the Underground. Goldsmith tried hard, but could not name the local football team, or the tube station one should get off at for the London Museum. When the same reporter asked Goldsmith's rival similar questions, Khan came out top of the class: He knew all the answers pat. It is not as if London is in the Labour Party's back pocket either. Khan's immediate predecessor, Boris Johnson (a 'Buller') is a diehard conservative. Impressively, Khan gained

territory by taking hitherto conservative constituencies, like Ealing and Hillingdon, or Merton and Wendsworth. London may have 12% Muslim voters, but that still leaves 88% on the other side. It is tempting to conclude that Khan won because Londoners are secular; that sure makes for good headlines. Actually, London voted him as mayor because he was unspectacular and quietly upright. This bonding sentiment overtook religious divisions by a mile; so sick were the British of upper-class ways. Khan is lucky: He is neither rich nor gifted with knee-weakening good looks. It is precisely these qualities that worked against the flamboyant, multi-millionaire Goldsmith. Politics today is weighted in favour of the underdog, the outsider. This was as true of Modi in 2014, as it is now of Khan. When Modi put on upper-class airs, it worked on him like an instant poison potion. Arvind Kejriwal came in from the outside and swept the capital.

Democracy is now taking on Biblical overtones and all political aspirants better take heed: "The meek and the plain and the frayed white collar shall inherit the earth."

Why Having Children Is Bad For Your Marriage

Lots of women look forward to motherhood - getting to know a tiny baby, raising a growing child, developing a relationship with a maturing son or daughter. All over the world, people believe that parenting is the most rewarding part of life. And it's good that so many mothers treasure that bond with their child, because the transition to parenthood causes profound changes in a woman's marriage and her overall happiness... and not for the better.

Families usually welcome a baby to the mix with great expectations. But as a mother's bond with a child grows, it's likely that her other relationships are deteriorating. I surveyed decades of studies on the psychological effects of having a child to write my book "Great Myths of Intimate Relationships: Dating, Sex, and Marriage," and here's what the research literature shows.

When people marry, they're usually in love and happy to be tying the knot. But after that, things tend to change. On

average, couples' satisfaction with their marriage declines during the first years of marriage, and, if the decline is particularly steep, divorce may follow. The course of true love runs downhill. And that's before you factor in what happens when it's time to start buying a car seat and diapers.

For around 30 years, researchers have studied how having children affects a marriage, and the results are conclusive: The relationship between spouses suffers once kids come along. Comparing couples with and without children, researchers found that the rate of the decline in relationship satisfaction is nearly twice as steep for couples who have children than for childless couples. In the event that a pregnancy is unplanned, the parents experience even greater negative impacts on their relationship.

The irony is that even as the marital satisfaction of new parents declines, the likelihood of them divorcing also declines.

So, having children may make you miserable, but you'll be miserable together.

Worse still, this decrease in marital satisfaction probably leads to a change in general happiness, because the biggest predictor of overall life satisfaction is one's satisfaction with their spouse.

While the negative marital impact of becoming parents is familiar to fathers and mothers, it is especially insidious because so many young couples think that having children will bring them closer together or at least will not lead to marital distress. Yet, this belief, that having children will improve one's marriage, is a tenacious and persistent myth among those who are young and in love.

It seems obvious that adding a baby to a household is going to change its dynamics. And indeed, the arrival of children changes how couples interact. Parents often become more distant and businesslike with each other as they attend to the details of parenting. Mundane

basics like keeping kids fed, bathed and clothed take energy, time and resolve. In the effort to keep the family running smoothly, parents discuss carpool pickups and grocery runs, instead of sharing the latest gossip or their thoughts on presidential elections. Questions about one's day are replaced with questions about whether this diaper looks full.

These changes can be profound. Fundamental identities may shift -- from wife to mother, or, at a more intimate level, from lovers to parents. Even in same-sex couples, the arrival of children predicts less relationship satisfaction and sex. Beyond sexual intimacy, new parents tend to stop saying and doing the little things that please their spouses. Flirty texts are replaced with messages that read like a grocery receipt.

With nearly half of all births being to unmarried couples, some parents may think they have gamed the system by skipping the wedding.

(Contd on page 21)

Why India loves to vote

The explanation for increasing turnouts in elections is simple: for the vast majority, being able to cast a vote freely is an affirmation of their status as equal citizens of the country

Indians clearly like to vote. Evidence from the ongoing Assembly elections shows that turnouts are above 80 per cent and are likely to be similar when two more States and a Union Territory hold elections next week. Indians seem also keener to vote than ever before. Statistics show a steady rise in the turnout figures over the last three decades in several parts of India. The gap between women and men voters has also steadily reduced and in some States female voters outnumbered males.

But what does this enthusiasm for voting actually signify? One popular theory proposes that poor people vote because they are intimidated into doing so. Intimidation occurs for sure, but why then do voters in places where there is no intimidation do so? Another theory is that people vote in return for inducements. But recent research across India has shown that those who spend the most do not always win elections and voters do not feel any obligation to vote for those handing out freebies. In fact, they often accept the goodies from all parties but vote for only one.

Development, a vote-winner So do people really vote because they are keen to express their support for a particular candidate or party? This is certainly true; using your vote to express your choice — as captured in the Hindi word for vote, *matdan* — indicates. Several factors determine voter choice and as a current three-year study by an Indo-European network of scholars from the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, London School of Economics, King's College London and CERISciences Po shows, more and more people vote for development interests rather than merely to support the party that projects their ethnic or caste identity.

Political parties, on their part, tend to get very excited when turnouts are high and hope that a surge in voter numbers will add to their tally. Again, research has shown that historically high percentages in voting do not provide any indication of results and dramatic upsets have been caused both by low turnouts and

high ones.

Some institutional factors have, however, contributed to the rise in voter turnouts that we are seeing currently, namely the cleaning up of electoral rolls and the voter enrolment and awareness drives undertaken by the Election Commission. First-time voters are particularly targeted and deceased voters are being removed from lists. But what about the rest of the electorate? How do we explain the significant number of votes that are registered on the NOTA (None of the Above) button introduced only recently? In some seats, the votes for NOTA have been larger than the winning margin, thereby determining the result. Do people take the trouble to go and vote only to register their rejection of every candidate? What are they voting for? Why are people in tears when they are unable to vote? How do we explain a middle-aged pot-bellied policeman in Kolkata expressing blissful satisfaction at being able to vote and

approvingly pointing out that he was asked for his Elector's Photo Identity Card despite his uniform? Why did he think this was a good thing? Even more astonishingly, he went on to describe the vote he cast as "beautiful".

The use of the word "beautiful" to describe a vote should give us pause for thought. Elections globally can be dry affairs dominated by numbers, percentages and tallies. In India, election campaigns are rambunctious events, full of sound and fury, as the world is turned upside down, candidates trade insults, untold sums of unaccounted money change hands, electoral brokers use every trick in the book to deliver the votes they have promised to the party that pays them. Yet despite this mad carnival that could cause cynicism and apathy and turn people off politics altogether, when polling day arrives millions dutifully show up with their identity cards and cast their vote, and some even describe it as a

"beautiful" experience. How do we explain this?

In my book *Why India Votes?* I presented some explanations. Based on research conducted by a team of researchers across India, we show that to understand the significance of elections and high voter turnout rates, we need to pay attention not just to politicians but also to the voters themselves. Research revealed that the act of voting itself holds enormous significance for people because on election days the most important actors are not the politicians but the voters. While politicians seemingly dominate campaigns, people point out the irony of even the most arrogant heads being bowed to beg for votes and the most corrupt of them being unable to buy a victory — thereby conceding that it is ordinary people who hold power at least during elections. Many noted that it is also the only time they see the administration doing their work free from political interference, thanks to the Model

Code of Conduct imposed on the political establishment. It is the world they crave for.

People are of course clear-eyed that politicians are crooked and corrupt and try to buy their votes but they point out that as long as they have the secret ballot they can ultimately vote for whom they like. "The vote is our weapon," as many put it. In response to sceptical looks from the researchers, they offer examples from the past in which those who spent the most were not victors and the many surprise upsets. So do they simply vote in the vain hope that things will get better? Hope is oxygen, they reply, for to not hope is a luxury few in India can afford. In a philosophical vein, we were reminded of the meaning of the word *dan* in *matdan*: to give without expectation is the real virtue, and so it is with the vote. So what kind of virtue is this that is not quantifiable and cannot be depicted on graphs and tables? The simple answer is that being able to vote gives people self-respect and dignity. For the vast majority of the impoverished and ostracised population of India, being able to cast a vote freely is an affirmation of their status as human above all and as equal citizens of India.

(Contd on page 21)

US elections: No safe zones anymore

History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce." Karl Marx said that in the 19th century and over more repetitions than *Seinfeld* reruns, this has turned into one of those saws most have seen enough of. Hillary Clinton, the presumptive nominee for president on behalf of the Democratic Party in November (despite a pesky Bernie Sanders plugging on), should certainly be aware of this Marxist line, though in her case, she would like to describe it as *Herstory*, the word that T-shirts on her campaign website are emblazoned with. However, whatever gender assignation is given to the word, Clinton ought to be wary of repeating history (or *herstory*).

In 2008, few doubted there would be significant obstacles to her march to the White House. However, there was a hurdle she couldn't leap over: A skinny freshman senator from Illinois, Barack Obama. As with election years, that too was a leap year, except the one making the jump to the presidential contest once the primary accounts were settled, was Obama. Something

similar is occurring in 2016. Donald Trump, obnoxious if not simply noxious, is nothing less than a phenominee, a candidate who emerges out of nowhere. Somewhat, one could argue, like Obama in 2008, or even a young governor of Arkansas in 1992, called Bill Clinton.

As a builder, Trump knows the sort of material he requires for a solid foundation to the edifice of his campaign. In fact, he is borrowing so much from the Obama playbook, he ought to be charged with plagiarism. There's Hillary's vote on the Iraq war for one. No Republican would have gone there. But The Donald, who puts the con in conservative, isn't just replaying that scratched record, but even needling the party's own, former President George W Bush. Obama rode his opposition to the Iraq war and the contrast with Hillary's aye to bombing Baghdad, to the Democratic nomination. Obama also didn't spare former President Clinton during the 2008 primaries, articulating the anguish felt by those left behind by trade pacts like NAFTA, signed during Clinton's tenure.

That has now become part of Trump's siren cry to the unemployed and underemployed.

As Obama proved once (and Trump has dittoed) antiestablishmentarianism is a long word but a shortcut to success in the world of politics.

In each instance, Hillary's principal line of offence has been to take offence on being targeted for being a woman. People forget how the charge of sexism was hurled repeatedly at Obama. The late Geraldine Ferraro, the Democrats' running mate to Walter Mondale in 1984, and a Clinton surrogate, told the *New York Times*: "I think Obama was terribly sexist." This year, we have another Hillary meme, the woman card (that one showing her staring intently at her smartphone has gone terribly wrong). This tactic may have worked if she weren't facing a wild card (some may have said a joker, but we're past that phase). If her strategy is based on this being her ace, she may even get Trumped.

We live in an age where safe zones exist on university

campuses in the United States; and where micro-aggression is a thing. Millennial women are not given to making excuses for alleged bad behaviour, as they may have done 24 years ago. If candidate Clinton, William Jefferson that is, had been in the contest in the age of social media, he would have been trolled into the ditch of electoral obscurity.

With plenty of ammo in her arsenal against the very flawed Trump candidacy, you have to wonder why Hillary is recycling tropes that cost her dearly in 2008. Perhaps Clinton will seek solace in another quotable quote, the original automobile baron Henry Ford's "History is bunk." Though what he actually said almost exactly a 100 years ago in a newspaper interview, was this: "History is more or less bunk. It's tradition. We don't want tradition. We want to live in the present and the only history that is worth a tinker's dam is the history we made today." If the rabble isn't roused by tradition, then the November race could go to the unorthodox.

Former Pak PM Yousaf Gilani's son rescued 3 years after abduction



(Agencies) Former premier Yousaf Raza Gilani's son, Ali Haider Gilani, was recovered in a joint operation by Afghan and US forces in Afghanistan on Tuesday, three years after he was abducted from Pakistan's Punjab province.

Afghan officials said four men were killed during the raid that targeted an Al Qaeda cell. Ali, 30, was sent to the Pakistan embassy in Kabul and would be flown home on a special plane, they said. The Afghan ambassador in Islamabad, Omar

Zakhilwal, told the media Ali "is well and will be repatriated to his family soon". Giving details of his telephone conversation with Yousaf Raza Gilani, the envoy wrote on Facebook: "He was ecstatically delighted as expected and grateful of President Ashraf Ghani's personal attention to his son's safe release." Pakistan's foreign office said in a statement Ali was recovered "in a joint operation carried out by the Afghan and US security forces in Ghazni". Afghan National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif

Atmar informed Sartaj Aziz, the Pakistani premier's advisor on foreign affairs, about the rescue. Ali's brother Abdul Qadir Gilani told the media he was "so happy today that I can't explain it in words". Dozens of people of all ages gathered at the main junctions in Multan, waving Pakistan People's Party flags and distributing sweets. At the time of his abduction, Ali was contesting the general election from a constituency in Multan. Pakistan People's Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari tweeted about the recovery.

Jamaat chief Nizami hanged for 1971 war crimes in Bangladesh

(Agencies) Authorities in Bangladesh have executed Motiur Rahman Nizami, the chief of Bangladesh's largest Islamist party, for his role in genocide and other serious crimes during the country's independence war against Pakistan in 1971.

Minutes after Tuesday midnight, Bangladesh home minister Asaduzzaman Khan said that Jamaat-e-Islami party's Nizami was hanged inside Dhaka central jail

amid tight security at 12:10 am. The execution came after the country's Supreme Court upheld the death penalty ruling made against him by a special tribunal.

The 73-year-old is the fifth man to be hanged as three other senior colleagues from his Islamist party and another senior leader of main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had faced the gallows earlier.

Pakistani soldiers aided by local collaborators killed 3 million people, raped 200,000 women and forced some 10 million people flee the country during the nine months of war in then east Pakistan, now Bangladesh. Sheikh Maruf Hasan, a deputy inspector general of police, told reporters a few minutes before Tuesday midnight that Nizami's body would be handed over to his family for burial in his ancestral home in northwestern Pabna district.



India & Mauritius amend treaty to plug tax loopholes



(Agencies) NEW DELHI: After years of protracted negotiations, India and Mauritius on Tuesday agreed to amend their 32-year-old bilateral tax treaty in an attempt to check 'round-tripping' of funds and ensure that no entity gets away without paying taxes in either country.

In addition, the new agreement provides for an updated system for exchange of information, which will ensure that the names of entities investing funds through the island nation are easily available to tax authorities.

Round-tripping - which is used to take unaccounted funds out of the country to avoid tax before being brought back using a web of transactions through Mauritius has been a major concern for enforcement agencies.

With no capital gains tax payable in either country, investors had been routing funds into India through Mauritius, which is the biggest source of inflows into the country. The revision of the double tax avoidance agreement (DTAA) will also impact other treaties such as the one with Singapore, where

the benefits are linked to Mauritius. Over the last 15 years, these two countries have accounted for nearly half the FDI flows into the country, driven primarily by favourable terms in the tax treaties. India has been trying to renegotiate the Mauritius treaty since 1996 but talks collapsed in 2002. It was after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took up the issue during his visit to the African nation last year that discussions resumed. What also worked were new international frameworks such as Base Erosion and Profit Sharing

to ensure that multinationals did not get away without paying taxes across the globe. Given India's relationship with Mauritius and a strong presence of people of Indian origin there, renegotiating the treaty has not been an easy task with New Delhi trying to ensure it does not upset an ally. The new provisions will kick in two stages. In phase I, from next April for two years, capital gains tax will be imposed at 50% of the prevailing domestic rate. In the second phase, from April 2019, full tax will be levied, the finance ministry said in a

statement after the amended protocol was signed in Port Louis. But to be eligible for the concessional levy, a company which is a 'resident' of Mauritius for tax purposes has to prove a minimum spending of Rs 27 lakh (over \$40,000) during the preceding 12 months. Else, it would be treated as a 'shell' or conduit company and not be entitled to tax benefits. Indian tax authorities have accused several international investors of operating 'post box' companies just to avail of the benefits of the tax treaty.

Italy arrests Afghan suspected of plotting attacks

(Agencies) ROME: Italian police on Tuesday arrested an Afghan suspected of plotting attacks in Italy, Britain and France after finding incriminating evidence on his mobile phone.

A second Afghan has been arrested for alleged people trafficking while warrants have been issued for three other people, two Afghans and a Pakistani man, police said.

The investigation began in December after four Afghans were spotted taking videos inside a shopping centre in Bari in

southern Italy, and a police search of their phones uncovered other images of the city's airport and port, as well as sites in Rome, Paris and London.

"It was clear these were not tourist images. They appear to have been scouting sensitive sites," prosecutor Roberto Rossi said at a news conference in Bari.

The phones also contained images of Italian and Afghan military vehicles and weapons, as well as Taliban propaganda videos and "a series of chants

traditionally sung in preparation for martyrdom", he said.

One of the defendants was also seen in a photograph posing with an MS16 semi-automatic rifle, which Rossi said was "not an easy weapon to find on the market". He also had links on his smartphone to websites "only accessible to those with connections to the international jihadist network".

The suspects had been taking expensive trips around Europe, which they had paid for in cash, Rossi said.

Fake notes worth Rs 400 crores in circulation

(Agencies) NEW DELHI: 250 in every 10 lakh notes in circulation in India are fake and Rs 400 crore worth of such fake currency is in circulation in the country at any given point of time. The first ever study of counterfeit currency has unearthed fake Indian currency notes (FICN) worth Rs 70 crore are infused into the Indian market every year with agencies only being able to intercept one third of them. These shocking revelations are part of the study on "Estimation of the quantum of FICN in circulation", conducted by the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) Kolkata, which has asked the government to take "immediate steps", since these figures are only indicative of the extent of the menace. The

findings have been accepted by the government and a series of strong measures to counter this 'economic terrorism' is being planned in consultation with the primary FICN detection and probe agency, National Investigation Agency, besides other security and intelligence agencies including CBI, IB, DRI, R&AW and state police departments.

The study has further revealed that the detection rate of fake 100 and 500 rupee notes were found to be about the same and higher than the detection rate of 1000 rupee notes by about 10%. It added that fake 1,000 rupee notes constitute about 50% of the total value of FICN. The ISI study was based on volumes of FICN detected and cash transaction in the

banking sector. The study said that "the detection of FICN is carried out primarily by commercial banks. However, their reporting is irregular too and only three banks - Axis, HDFC and ICICI report about 80% of the detection". ISI, however, concluded that "the existing systems of seizure and detection are enough to flush out the quantum of FICN being infused". The institute says that if detection can be improved, the value of FICN in circulation can be reduced by at least 20% annually. As per the NIA probe, which has a Terror Funding and Fake Currency Cell, Pakistan is the major supplier of FICN in India. "In 2015 alone, some 9-10 cases have come to the notice where FICN has come by sea or air from Pakistan," said NIA inspector general Alok Mittal.



No negative balances in savings accounts: RBI



(Agencies) MUMBAI: Negative balances in savings accounts due to penalty charges are now history following a directive from the central bank. The RBI has asked banks to stop imposing charges for non-maintenance of minimum balance

once the balance in a savings account touches zero.

Although the norms came into effect last year, some banks were continuing with the practice of creating negative balances in savings accounts until recently. According to the RBI, if any bank continues to debit charges on a savings account creating a negative balance, customers can approach the banking ombudsman. Most banks contacted by TOI said that they do not create a negative balance in savings bank accounts.

Savings accounts usually go into negative balances when the customer changes his job and his 'salary account' ceases to receive funds. Most banks offer special facilities for salary accounts, waiving the minimum balance requirement. But when the customer quits his job, the account ceases to be a salary account and

the bank begins to apply minimum balance requirements. Since there is no regular salary flowing in, The bank begins to debit a penalty for non-maintenance of minimum balance, which often results in the balance turning negative. Although banks do not pursue recovery of the amount due under negative balance accounts, the customer stands to lose if he deposits funds into the account. In response to an email sent by TOI, HDFC Bank said it "does not allow the balance in a savings account to go negative due to imposition of charges for non-maintenance of minimum balance". The statement added that there are no charges for reactivation of the account in future. Axis Bank said that as a policy it does not accumulate charges for non-maintenance of balance. "In case the account has no balance and has no customer-induced transaction during the

month of observation, service charge related to non-maintenance of balance is not applied, nor is any lien/negative balance created," the bank said in an emailed response to a query. An ICICI Bank spokesperson also said that it does not create negative balances in savings accounts. The RBI had in 2014 revised its guidelines for banks imposing penal charges for non-maintenance of minimum balance in a savings bank account. Subsequently, with effect from April 1, 2015, it had asked banks not to take undue advantage of customer difficulty or inattention and to give an advance notice to the customer before deducting charges from their bank balance. It had asked banks to send notice either by SMS, email or a letter. However, some banks had continued to impose charges resulting in the balance in a savings account turning negative.



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(Agencies) In an emotional response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's jibes at her Italian origins, Sonia Gandhi tonight said India is her home and "it is here that my ashes will mingle with my loved ones".

The Congress President used an election rally here to hit back at Modi after the Prime Minister raked up her Italian roots twice in the last three days while making a veiled attack on her over the controversial AgustaWestland chopper deal.

Sonia's response came while concluding her speech when she said she wanted to share something personal, not politics, about the Prime Minister's statement "about Congress and particularly about me".

"Yes, I was born in Italy. I



India is my Home and I Will Breathe My Last Here: Sonia Gandhi

came to India in 1968 as the daughter-in-law of Indira Gandhi. I have spent 48 years of my life in India. This is my home. This is my country," Sonia said while referring to Modi's sarcastic queries to the gathering at his two poll rallies in Tamil Nadu and Kerala on Friday and Sunday whether they had any relatives in Italy.

Sonia said that all her 48 years in India, RSS, BJP and some other parties had always "taunted me to shame me for my birth". "I was born to proud and honest parents. I will never be

ashamed of them. Yes, I have relatives in Italy. I have a 93-year-old mother and two sisters. But it is here, in my country, India, it is in this part that the blood of my loves is mingled.

"It is here that I will breathe my last. It is here that my ashes will mingle with yours and my loved ones," she said, pointing out that the sole objective of Prime Minister Modi was to "indulge in character assassination of his adversaries and 'spread lies'".

The Prime Minister can "sink to whatever depths" to challenge

my integrity, she said, but he cannot take away the truth from my commitment and love for India.

"I cannot expect Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi to understand this feelings. But I know, I am sure you will," she told the gathering at her second rally on the first day of her campaigning in poll-bound Kerala.

Without naming Congress or any leader of the party which has launched a counter attack on his government for dragging Sonia's name, Modi had asked "if the

court in Italy has said that people from the last government in India have eaten money, why then are you troubling us here?" "Does anyone of your relatives live in Italy? Does any of my relatives live in Italy.... I have not seen Italy. I have not been to Italy. Nor have I met anyone in Italy. If Italians have accused them what should we do?" Modi said.

Continuing her tirade against Modi, Gandhi said the BJP-NDA was afraid because Congress stood for the rights of the minorities, poor, farmers, dalits, tribals and women.

On the PM's statement that Kerala had lagged behind in every sphere, she said, "I challenge him to show us at least one BJP-ruled state that has better health, educational achievements than Kerala".

Sonia also alleged that Modi had betrayed the mandate given by the people by not implementing any of the promises during the election campaign.

"Before the election, he took your votes by selling you hopes and promises. As soon as he became Prime minister, he betrayed your mandate."

Pointing out that Modi had promised "lakhs and lakhs of jobs and money in your bank accounts and that he will decrease prices of essential commodities", she said not even one of these promises have been fulfilled. "Prices of dal have doubled in two years, the BJP's government's biggest revenue generation is from taxing poor, price of petrol and diesel has come down drastically, but not the excise duty along with it."

Referring to beleaguered liquor baron Vijay Mallya departure from the country, she said "rich businessmen who defaulted banks of thousands and thousands of crores of rupees were allowed to run away from the country under the very nose of Prime minister Modi". "But we shall not bow down to their pressure and harassment and will continue our fight which we feel it is good for the country."

Government Unearths Indirect Tax Evasion Of Rs 50,000 Crore In 2 Years

(Agencies) New Delhi: As much as Rs 50,000 crore of indirect tax evasion and another Rs 21,000 crore of undisclosed income has been unearthed by the government in the last two years.

The Finance Ministry in a statement on Tuesday said the crackdown on black money has led to seizure of Rs 3,963 crore of smuggled goods in two years - a 32 per cent jump over a similar period previously.

"Enhanced enforcement measures have resulted in unearthing of tax evasion of approximately Rs 50,000 crore of indirect taxes and undisclosed income of Rs 21,000 crore," it said.

Listing steps taken by the government to curb the menace of black money both within and outside the country, it said a new Blackmoney Act has been enacted with strict penalty provisions.

Also, a Special Investigation Team has been constituted, chaired by former Supreme Court



Judge M B Shah.

"Many recommendations of SIT have been implemented since then," it said adding prosecution has been launched in 1,466 cases as against 1,169 cases in the previous two years (25 per cent increase).

Besides, a new Income Disclosure Scheme is formulated for those holding undeclared assets to pay a total tax and penalty of 45 per cent and come clean.

Amendments have been made

in Prevention of Money-laundering Act to enable attachment and confiscation of equivalent asset in India where the asset located abroad cannot be forfeited in case of proceeds of crime.

"Section 8(8) has been inserted in PMLA providing for restoring confiscated property or part thereof, on the directions of Special Court to claimants with a legitimate interest in the property, who may have suffered a quantifiable loss as a result of the offences of money laundering,"

the statement added.

Section 132 of Customs Act which deals with offence relating to false declaration / documents in the transaction of any business relating to Customs has been made predicate offence under PMLA to curb trade based money laundering.

"The offence of wilful attempt to evade any tax, penalty or interest referred to in section 51 of the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015 has been made a scheduled offence under PMLA," it said.

Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999 has also been amended to provide for seizure and confiscation of value equivalent, situated in India, in case any person is found to have acquired any foreign exchange, foreign security or immovable property, situated outside India, in contravention of FEMA.

(Agencies) The Supreme Court ruling in favour of Mumbai's dance bars came as a relief not just to the establishments that have remained closed since 2005 but also to starry-eyed village girls in far off states.

Badnapur, a nondescript village in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior district, is what one would call a red-light area — a place with a concentration of prostitution and sex-oriented businesses — and Mumbai offers its girls a chance at a "respectable life".

"Our area is known as a red light area but we know how dark it is and there is no end to darkness here," said Gudiya.

And the impact Mumbai has had on Badnapur is apparent from the grand houses and SUVs



Mumbai dance bars promise dignity, money to sex workers

that punctuate the line of thatched huts. "After closure of the dance bars in Mumbai, a good number of women returned to the village with a considerable amount of money and built the

houses. But to sustain, they had to do something. Hence, they were compelled to choose prostitution," she said.

No wonder the SC order to open the dance bars a decade

after they were banned by the Maharashtra government was welcomed with joyous dance to the latest Bollywood hits. "About 25 girls have already left for Mumbai and the rest are

practising," said Gudiya.

A similar sense of relief prevailed in villages in Rajasthan's Ajmer district. Girls here share the same story of poverty, hardship and

prostitution, and the hope of a good life in Mumbai.

Priti, who belongs to a denotified tribe in Badgaon, used to earn Rs 30,000-Rs 40,000 a month as a dancer until she, like many others, was forced to return to her earlier life as a sex worker after the bars closed. But now, she hopes to return.

"The younger and prettier girls opt for Mumbai as they can earn well," Priti said, adding that those who don't leave will continue to cater to truck drivers on the Ajmer-Jaipur highway.

In addition to being profitable, Mumbai also offers these women a chance to lead a life of dignity. "In our community, girls are born into prostitution. Even for men it's difficult to live a dignified life. People always look at us with suspicion," said a man in Badnapur.

"This is the last chance for us," said Gudiya.

The girls now hope to earn enough to never have to go back to flesh trade, so the next generation doesn't have to face the stares and judgement of society that considers their profession immoral.

Patanjali's thrust pushes FMCG rivals into ayurveda mode



(Agencies) With Patanjali Ayurved growing aggressively in the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) space, rivals Emami and Himalaya, with their own strong Ayurveda focus, are now planning to speed up their plans to enter new segments and expand distribution and retail reach across the country.

Baba Ramdev-promoted Patanjali, which reported '5,000 crore sales in the fiscal year ending March 2016 and has doubled its revenue within two years, has spurred even Hindustan Unilever, the largest consumer goods maker in the country, into taking action with CEO Sanjeev Mehta admitting that as HUL is under represented in ayurveda it needs to grow there.

"Naturals is a global phenomenon and not a trend playing out only in India. That's a trend that is clearly being picked up, and recognising that trend, we are upping our game

in naturals," Mehta told reporters on Monday. Emami, which is already a strong player in the natural/ayurvedic space through its Zandu brand, is targeting rising cases of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, joint pains and

digestion problems, to launch new products. "We plan to launch natural healthcare products for lifestyle diseases and are test marketing a few products," said Naresh Bhansali, CFO, Emami. The company has seen a 30-35% growth and will continue to grow aggressively, added Bhansali.

Bangalore-based Himalaya Herbals is charting plans to expand into the men's grooming segment, to counter measures to build a presence and rival Patanjali. "Men's grooming is a '5,000 crore segment and there are a lot of white spaces where we see opportunities," said Himalaya business head Rajesh Krishnamurthy.

The company has also increased advertising and marketing spends to around 13% of sales, from 10-11% and recently launched a marketing campaign for men's facewash range roping in players from IPL franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore. Himalaya sells its products through 1.5 million outlets and is expanding to reach 2 million outlets in two years. It will also expand its own company-owned stores to 200 from the current 150.

Analysts say the Ayurveda segment is growing ahead of the market, so its natural that more companies will look to enter this space. "Companies with herbal positioning are

growing 1.5 times the industry," says Percy Panthaki of brokerage house IIFL. "Focus on health and wellness as a category will increase since it remains under penetrated," he added.

Another multi-national Colgate Palmolive, which is facing the heat from Patanjali's Dant Kanti in the toothpaste segment, is also upping the ante. "The natural segment in India has been growing rapidly. And to capitalise on this, we're revitalising our Active Salt toothpaste. We're also launching Colgate Sensitive clove essence toothpaste," said Ian Cook, chairman of Colgate Palmolive.

Panama Papers reveal 746 more Indian links

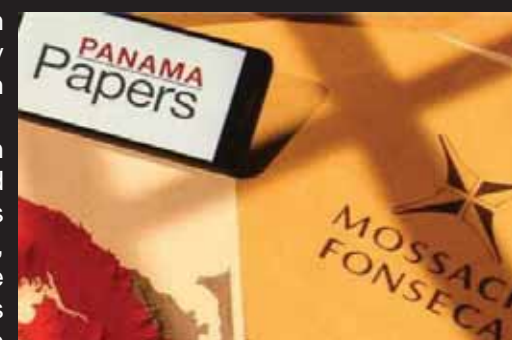
(Agencies) In a new installment of the Panama Papers, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) has released a searchable database of nearly 2,14,000 offshore entities, which involve 3,60,000 names of people and companies that had stashed away wealth in offshore accounts. Included in this are about 746 Indian persons, companies and intermediaries and just plain addresses.

The new release adds to the names released in 2013 as a part of its Offshore Leaks expose, which contained about 1,200 Indian names. The latest release comes in the wake of worldwide criticism that ICIJ and its collaborative institutions had kept secret and inaccessible the 11.5

million leaked files of Panama-based firm Mossack Fonseca, and adopted a policy of releasing it in bits and pieces through select media outlets.

The names and addresses released on Monday by ICIJ are in searchable form and are accompanied by graphic diagrams depicting linkages between companies, intermediaries and named persons. Some of the accounts are still active, while others were reported as closed or inactive. The Indians named are mostly from the four big metros, but a significant number of them are also from smaller towns.

While releasing the database, ICIJ said: "...Not disclosing raw documents or personal information en masse. The



database contains a great deal of information about company owners, proxies and intermediaries in secrecy jurisdictions, but it doesn't disclose bank accounts, email exchanges and financial transactions in the documents."

Hired guns for polls

Meet the bomb-makers of West Bengal



Now, both pro and anti-establishment forces rely on bombs. With splinters, they are lethal. Without them, they are scary. They serve as a cheap and convenient weapon for political parties to fight each other and, most important, scare away the interfering public.

Plus, its ingredients are cheap and available in open markets and it's easy to mass-produce and carry and use, while guns and bullets are expensive. Charles Cocksam, a British police officer — who was posted in Calcutta during the early years of the 20th century — said, "A bullet is meant for one person — friend or foe, so to speak. But a bomb can hit as many as you want. And at no greater cost. That's the logic." Bombs, even during the early years of terrorist movements, used to be manufactured in college labs — obviously, with blessings from nationalist professors. It was an expression of nationalism — although not of the drawing room variety.

The Naxalite movement of the 1970s — essentially a guerrilla uprising in Bengal — also relied



on the power of bombs. One of the party members, a Chemistry professor in a Calcutta college, even taught his students to make the Molotov cocktail, a petrol bomb named after Russian communist leader Vycheslav Molotov and favoured by the Bolsheviks. During each regime in Bengal — ruled either by the Congress, or the Left Front, or the Trinamool Congress — the strength to grab and stay in power came not from the barrel of the gun, but from the splinters of the bomb. Even recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at an election rally: "There is no industry in Bengal. The only one worth talking about is the industry of making bombs." Why have political activists — right from the pre-independence revolutionaries to Anubrata Mondal — always favoured the innocent-looking

bomb? Simple. Besides being cheap and easy to handle, one can get master bomb-makers in almost every district in Bengal. The driving forces: Tradition and obscene poverty.

Mondal said the most daring bomb makers came from the bordering district of Murshidabad. "Give them Rs 10,000 and they will do anything you want. They're so poor that that much money is almost like a dream for them." Even children are employed in bomb making, since they have nimble fingers and nagging hunger to take care of. Mondal's own district, Birbhum, however, emerged as the main flash-point in the 2016 assembly elections. An HT team scoured the districts just before and during the elections to find out and meet the master bomb-makers, who make democracy tick in Bengal.

(Agencies) "Don't get so worked up about bombs being used in Bengal elections. It's part of our heritage and culture, like rosogolla, Rabindranath, Netaji and ilish maachh." That was Anubrata Mondal, aka Keshto-da, the most talked about fighter-bomber and Birbhum district chief of Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress.

Mondal, in a way, is right. While other elements of Bengal's history — both recent and not-so-recent — have been discussed, bragged about and

showcased to the point of boredom, the bomb has always been a loosely guarded secret. It protects and nurtures Bengal's darkest secret — violent, mean and shallow politics.

Bomb has been rhyming with Bengal for quite some time. In fact, since the first awakening of nationalism and terrorist movements against the Raj in the latter half of the 19th century, bombs were the revolutionary's main weapon. But the scene has changed. It has lost the lofty cause and become simply a tool to capture and retain power.

Amit Shah questions Sonia Gandhi's 'love for India' talk

(Agencies) THRISSUR/PALAKKAD: BJP president Amit Shah countered the assertions made by Congress president Sonia Gandhi on her love for India and alleged that she was trying to divert public attention from corruption charges levelled against the previous UPA regime.

The BJP president, who campaigned at Kanjani in Thrissur and Koduvayur near Palakkad on Tuesday, asked: "Where was your love for the nation when the UPA regime allowed huge corruptions?" Shah recalled the 2G spectrum and coal scams, National Herald case, National Games and Adarsh flat issues to drive home his point. He wanted to know why Sonia became emotional on the impending arrest of corrupt people involved in the AugustaWestland deal.

He added that there was no corruption charges against the NDA government at the Centre. "The 10-year UPA regime was the most-corrupt one in Indian history. There is no point in becoming emotional when such issues are raised," he said.

Sonia Gandhi had stated during her election campaign in Thiruvananthapuram that Modi and other BJP-RSS leaders were trying to shame her for being born in Italy. She had asserted that her commitment to India was so deep that she wanted to die in this

country. Shah refuted her. "There is no vendetta here. But we will not spare those who indulged in corruption, whatever be their clout," he said.

The BJP president had two questions for former defence minister A K Antony on the

AugustaWestland deal.

"Antony should explain on whose advice the tender for the helicopter changed. He should tell us who decided that the trials of the helicopters would be done in Italy," Shah demanded. He said the UDF government in

Kerala was following the path set by the UPA regime. "The UDF government is also involved in major scams like bar bribery case, solar scam, and gifting land. Our agenda is to uproot the corrupt UDF government on May 16," he said.

Ola, Uber put educated cabbies on road to prosperity

(Agencies) From B.Tech. to professional diploma holders, Delhi taxi aggregators are attracting highly qualified drivers

A B.Tech. graduate, a Ph.D student and a hotel management diploma holder are all busy clocking miles — as cabbies in the national capital. They are part of the growing ranks of educated drivers looking for new prosperity through taxi aggregators like Ola and Uber. Sarabjeet Singh, an engineering graduate, quit his job as a technical executive at an automobile showroom to hit the road. "After deducting fuel and maintenance costs, I am left with around Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 50,000 a month," says Mr. Singh, who drives a Uber X Maruti Wagon R cab.

Good returns

Life has been bumpy for Mr. Singh, who took his B. Tech through distance learning. During a peak hour ride from ITO to Gurgaon, he reveals that he moved from Punjab to Delhi in 2013 in search of a job, after delivering newspapers and working at petrol pumps. "For now, I am content. Earlier, I would put in the time, but not make enough [he made about Rs. 25,000]," he says. Anand Subramanian, Director, Marketing Communications, at Ola Cabs, says his company wants to promote entrepreneurship. "More than 20 or 25 per cent of our 33,000 drivers are professionals or students." The youth get training and run the cabs as their own business. They get help with

loans and better interest rates. Santosh Rai, 27, is pursuing a Ph. D from IP University and earns Rs. 35,000 a month. He wants to sponsor his own education, and the driving provides him with the opportunity to pursue his dream.

Flexi-timings

Manish Rao, a 25-year-old student from Mumbai, sponsors his studies with earnings from an Ola cab. "As they do not follow work timings, the option of when to drive rests with us. This makes it a feasible job. During exams, I take 15 days off. On an average, I earn around Rs. 35,000 a month," he says. This new wave of enterprise is being seen as a way to create a sense of independence, a supplementary source of income and as the

launch pad for entrepreneurship. Kamender, 30, from West Delhi, holds a hotel management diploma and works as a chef. He also drives his Suzuki Swift Dzire under Ola for extra cash. "In the near future, I want to open my own restaurant in Delhi. My present income does not support me, so I enlisted with Ola," he says, adding that his wife is fully supportive. "I earn close to Rs. 60,000 a month, more than my current job." It is not all hunky-dory though. Manoj Kumar (28), a Delhi commerce graduate, rented a car and joined Uber two years ago with great hopes. His income, however, has come down by half. "The incentive payouts act as a boost to complete a certain number of rides each day but due to heavy traffic, we are unable to do that."

Free grains likely for 25 million poorest of poor families



NEW DELHI: The Centre is likely to provide 'free of cost' foodgrain to the poorest of the poor families under the Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY) which would benefit nearly 25 million families across the country. This is being seen as yet another

step by the government to push its 'pro-poor' image just days before it completes two years in office. Sources said the food ministry will present this proposal under a "New Scheme for Food Security" on Wednesday when the PM takes up improvements in the present National Food Security Act (NFSA). TOI on Tuesday first reported how there is a proposal to include this new scheme in the NFSA through legislation, which may be named after a freedom fighter.

At present, AAY families get 35 kg of foodgrain per household per month while the rest of the people covered under the Act (priority families) get 5 kg per per-

son per month. The rates are Rs 3, Rs 2 and Rs 1 per kg for rice, wheat and coarse grains, respectively, for both categories. Under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), AAY was introduced in 2000 by the Vajpayee government to address the problem of hunger among the poorest of the poor. The proposed supply of foodgrain to AAY families will increase the subsidy burden, which is at present about Rs 1.39 lakh crore. "Currently, the Centre bears almost 90% of the cost of foodgrain provided under NFSA. But, simply by paying 5-8% subsidy, the states have been claiming credit for providing foodgrain almost free. The new

scheme will put the record straight," said a government source. In fact, though the Modi government has pursued several systemic changes for success of NFSA, which already covers over 700 million people, it doesn't seem to have reaped political benefits. Sources said the new scheme would include many of these initiatives, including greater use of IT, to ensure identified beneficiaries get their entitlement.

Recently, food minister Ram Vilas Paswan told the Lok Sabha that states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have contributed little for implementation of NFSA and yet try to claim credit for the scheme.

PM's degree authentic, says DU, but AAP refuses to buy it



(Agencies) NEW DELHI: Delhi University said on Tuesday that the BA degree in political science conferred on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 1979 was authentic and downplayed the discrepancy in names in the two marksheets made public by BJP on Monday, calling them "minor errors". An official of the exam branch said such errors were common and "are rectified on request". His clarification from the university came even as an AAP team - including Ashutosh, Ashish Khetan, Sanjay Singh and Dilip Pandey - returned to DU to 'inspect' the genuineness of the degree. However, they were turned away by the university as they did not have an appointment with the vice-chancellor. They were asked to meet the VC at 3pm on Wednesday. Claiming that the university has maintained a silence on the issue so far in order to "maintain privacy of

any student", registrar Tarun Das said, "We have checked our records and there can be no doubt over the validity of the certificates awarded to the PM. He cleared the examination in 1978 and was awarded the degree in 1979." AAP, which has said it will produce further proof on Wednesday to prove the degree is forged, said DU was lying, questioning why the varsity and BJP were speaking to the media and not to them despite the CIC having asked the institute to share details of the degrees with CM Arvind Kejriwal. Ashutosh said the Emergency was clamped in 1975 when, as BJP chief Amit Shah and finance minister Arun Jaitley claimed on Monday, Modi stayed at the ABVP office while taking the exam. "By Modi's own admission, he was underground during this period and was living in disguise as a Sikh. Did he write the exam under his real identity or in the guise of a Sikh?"

In Modi's brand of diplomacy, religion too plays a key role

(Agencies) BHOPAL: PM Narendra Modi would address the concluding session of an international inter-faith symposium on the sidelines of Simhastha Kumbh in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain on Saturday as part of his cultural diplomacy with religion as its centrepiece.

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena would attend the symposium along with diplomats and delegates from Nepal, Bangladesh and Japan. Successive Indian governments have largely kept religion out of the diplomacy. But Modi sees religion as an integral part of India's engagement with the world. Modi had earlier invited Japanese PM Shinzo Abe for Ganga worship in Varanasi last year. He has offered prayers at the Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu and Dhaka's Dhakeshwari temple besides visiting Buddhist temples in Japan as part of his efforts to integrate religion into diplomacy.

A BJP functionary said issues related to Hindus in India as well as in neighbouring countries would be discussed at the symposium. He said environment, women empowerment and gender equality would be discussed as well. Rajya Sabha MP and RSS functionary Anil Madhav Dave, who is in-charge of the event, said the purpose of the symposium was to make the world a more peaceful and beautiful place to



live in. "We have invited foreign delegates because we are in search of the path that can lead us to a better tomorrow," he said.

Aadhaar helped plug Rs 27,000 crore leakage in FY16

(Agencies) NEW DELHI: Usage review meeting on the progress of DBT, PM Narendra



Modi was informed that in 2015-16, Rs 61,000 crore was distributed to over 30 crore beneficiaries using DBT. The PMO said over 1.6 crore bogus ration cards have been deleted, resulting in savings of about Rs 10,000 crore and 3.5 crore duplicate

beneficiaries were weeded out in the PAHAL scheme, resulting in savings of over Rs 14,000 crore. In MGNREGS too, a saving of Rs 3,000 crore has been estimated in 2015-16.



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Paradise Lost

Bagh-i-mehtab was a mythical place for us all. A place that existed in a time warp where Kashmir was still a paradise.



While growing up, our old family home was mentioned daily, almost religiously, like an incantation in the everyday conversations between my father and grandfather. I had heard stories about its houseboat shaped stairs, about the famous tang kul (pear tree) which bore the biggest and juiciest pears in the Bagh-i-mehtab area and about the stream which flowed next to it. My Grandfather, a humble and hardworking man, had toiled for decades to put together enough money to buy land and build a house for his family in Srinagar. As fate would have it, within three years of its completion the conditions in Kashmir turned hostile, and we had to abandon the house.

Even though I had spent the first three years of my life in this house I had no recollection of it. My younger brother and our cousins were born in Jammu, Chandigarh or Delhi. So, this house was a mythical place for us all. A place that existed in a time warp where our parents were still young and Kashmir was still a paradise. It was a place of hope and dreams, far away from the bitter truth of reality. A place that existed in our imagination only. Till now.

The surprising thing was we had not even planned to visit our old house. We were in Kashmir primarily because my mother had been ill for some time and had vowed to do a Havan at Kheer Bhawani if she recovered. After the Havan was over, we decided to visit Pehalgam for a night. It was on our way there, near the outskirts of Srinagar, that we crossed a broken road with rubble strewn all over. My father recognized it as the road that led to the Bagh-i-mehtab. On an impulse, he decided that we should all go

and see our old home. "You must know a little bit about your roots", he said.

We entered the locality and drove around. My father felt a little lost because the whole landscape of the place had changed. This was his first visit to Kashmir in 25 years. Like lakhs of Kashmiri Pandits he too had been forced to leave Kashmir in late 1980s. During these long and dusty years in which my father had fought to make a life outside Kashmir, the locality where my Grandfather had built our house had changed beyond recognition. Time had altered the landmarks that my father was used to and hence he was struggling to pin down the exact location of our house. After a few minutes of wrong turns and dead ends we finally reached an intersection familiar to my father. He got down and started asking for directions.

From the rear seat of the Tavera, where I sat sandwiched between two burgeoning suitcases, I saw my father approach a thin, elderly Muslim man wearing a Khan dress and a pristine white skull cap. My father spoke to him for a few minutes. For most of the time, the old man kept scratching his beard and shaking his head. It was clear that no progress was being made. Suddenly, the old man started nodding his head vigorously and pointed in the direction of an alley. My father thanked him and walked excitedly towards us.

"He doesn't know where our old house is. But he knows where Abdur Rehman lives."

"Who is Abdur Rehman?" I asked my father.

"Abdur Rehman was a dear friend of your Grandfather and our neighbour. He was the one who helped us sell off the house when it became clear that there was no future for Pandits in Kashmir. He'll take us to see our old house."

We got out of the car. There were four of us, a typical modern day nuclear family unit, Mom, Dad and two sons. We walked towards the alley the gentleman had pointed out. It was surreal to be there. Not too long ago, my grandfather, father, mother, uncles and aunts had walked in these alleys daily, going about their chores nonchalantly and happily. And then one day they were suddenly and brutally uprooted from there in a clean surgical maneuver which left no traces of our community behind. From the moment we had set foot in Kashmir I had instinctively known I was home. I felt a strange familiarity with the people and place. Even when I was not in Kashmir, I could spot a Kashmiri in a crowd of thousands. And this had nothing to do with features or language, it was a primal code, passed from generation to generation, embedded deep within my genes.

We reached a house with a large wrought iron gate. My father pushed it open and went inside. I followed him. Inside the gate was a compound, presumably for car parking, but it was empty at the moment. There were two men inside. The older one was in front. He must have been in his late seventies. He wore a light grey Khan dress, his white hair was closely cropped and his beard was predominantly white with a few shades of black thrown in. My father looked at him and said,

"Abdur Rehman, do you remember who I am?"

The old man who was watering the plants put the pipe down, wiped his hands off a towel and said, "I don't. But if you come a little closer I will."

It was at this moment that I heard a joyous cry. "Kaka ji!!" the man in the background shouted. It was my father's childhood name. That cry was so human, so full of longing and happiness that it's still ringing in my ears.

On hearing his son's cry, Abdur Rehman realized who my father was. He stepped forward and locked him in an embrace. Fat, pearl like tears rolled down his cheeks as he recited chants of thankfulness in Kashmiri. I was transfixed by the scene in front of me. Abdur Rehman, still hugging my father, asked him about the well being of my grandfather. They had been great friends who had embarked on their domestic journey together. They had bought land, built homes and married their sons. So, Abdur Rehman was distraught when my father told him that Grandpa had passed away a few years back. His eyes fell on me and he said, "Is that Billu?" I stepped forward and said, "Yes." Abdur Rehman locked me in a vice like embrace and continued crying. He smelled of milk and cheese, of hard labour and dignity.

"He has grown up so much. He used to be this tiny when he was here. The whole day he used to play with Mushtaq and Faiyaz." He said looking at me and brushing my shoulders with his hands. Faiyaz came up to me. A young man in his early thirties, he was wearing a white Kurta pyjama and had a long black beard like a Maulvi. On top of his head rested a green skull cap and on his face was the most serene and peaceful of expressions. He asked me if I remembered him. Embarrassed, I shook my head and said, "I am sorry, I don't. I was too small then." "Of course. Of course. How are Bolji and Bitoo ji?" Faiyaz enquired about the well-being of my uncles.

"They are both doing well. Bitoo ji is settled in Delhi and Bolji is settled in Chandigarh." I replied. My father requested Abdur Rehman if we could see our old house. "Of course you can. But please first come in and refresh yourself." So, we walked into their home. The drawing room was like that of any Kashmiri house, exquisitely embroidered carpets covered the floor and various cushions were

placed along the walls. There were no sofas, tables or unnecessary decorations. On the walls there were huge frames and posters of Mecca and Medina. The light and airy curtains danced to the tune of the breeze. We were served Mountain Dew and Fanta in a tray.

Both Abdur Rehman and Faiyaz were a little taken aback with my mother's appearance. When she had come to Bagh-i-mehtab as a newly wedded wife she had been young, radiant and beautiful. But time and illness had taken its toll on her appearance. And though still graceful and beautiful she was no match for her younger self. We were soon joined by Faiyaz's wife. A fair, moon faced woman who came and sat down shyly. Abdur Rehman's eyes were still red and a little wet. With great anguish he spoke, "What has happened to us? Old friends and families all separated. This land is cursed. I wish another great flood would come and just finish all of it." My father calmed him down saying that whatever happened was God's will. After finishing our drinks Abdur Rehman and Faiyaz decided to show us the old house. But first we had to meet some other old friends. My father had told me stories about the Milkman of Bagh-i-mehtab, a diminutive, portly man with a tongue as sharp as a razor's edge. Apparently as a kid I would run up to him when he came to sell the milk and say, "Duddhu! Duddhu! Duddhu!" We walked to his house, a huge double storied mansion with a large garden in front of it. He has done well for a milkman, I thought. There was a girl in the garden nursing a young child. Abdur Rehman proudly went to her and said, "Pandit ji's son has come. Go call your father." She went in and after a few seconds a short man came to the door and stood akimbo.



Two Years Of Achhe Din



Narendra Modi completes his first two years as prime minister of India. Looking at popularity, we should admit that Modi's term has so far been a success.

This month, Narendra Modi completes his first two years as prime minister of India.

Let's have a look at how he has performed. He won the general election impressively, on the strength of his personality and his record. So let us start there.

Political record: Modi is and remains our most popular politician by far. The aura he had two years ago, he retains. Every opinion poll in the last years has shown his popularity at around 70 per cent. This is what Americans call approval rating, and 70 per cent is an incredibly high number. Particularly because opinion polling in India has become accurate in the last decade so this number is believable. Modi may be assisted by the fact that his rival Rahul Gandhi is not charismatic or competent, and that regional

leaders like Nitish Kumar and Arvind Kejriwal do not have a large enough stage to project their talents. But even with this admission, it must be accepted that Modi has a credibility with Indians as nobody else has. The Bharatiya Janata Party lost state elections in Delhi and Bihar but its march towards dominance and the Congress's march towards irrelevance continues under Modi.

Economy: I was in conversation with former Finance Minister P Chidambaram a few days ago, at an event to launch his book on his time in Opposition. I asked him whether his analysis on Modi's economic policies was not overly harsh. Even if the data on exports and manufacturing and companies' profitability was grim, as he has been writing it is, surely two years is too little a span of time to judge Modi on economic

performance? That is what I asked. No, Chidambaram said, it is 40% of the term. It is fair to say that here the government has promised more than it has delivered. The breakout phase

Life in jail worse than hell: Why Subrata Roy now wants freedom at any cost

Sibal had submitted details of all the properties of the Sahara group in India and abroad.

Roy, once banker to India's poor, has been the subject of intense gossip in the Capital over his two-year-plus stay in Asia's largest Tihar prison. Many wondered what was keeping him inside, speculations ranging from family feud to a deliberate move to avoid creditors to inability to get the right price for prime properties.

But this time around, Roy, who told his confidants life in jail was worse than hell, had to seek bail at any cost.

Interestingly, Thursday was the day slated for the very bail arguments and Roy was prepared with all that he had in his possession - weighed in euros - but he had walked out on 6 May, after his mother died and the Supreme Court granted him a four-week parole on humanitarian grounds. He was also allowed to visit Haridwar and Ganga Sagar for the rites and ceremonies.

On an earlier occasion, the Sahara lawyers were confident of securing bail for Roy and had all the preparations in place to convince the court. Sibal, however, had a bigger assignment in Uttarakhand where the Congress was in deep crisis and could not attend the court.

This time around, the court appeared convinced of Roy's intentions. The court has not disclosed what it saw inside the envelope—a move similar to the BCCI hearing in which names of tainted cricketers were not

into double-digit growth, more jobs, an escape from 'socialist' schemes like NREGA and Aadhar that Modi promised has not come. Indeed, he has embraced some of the policies he promised to end. I still believe that though the numbers indicate otherwise, Modi must be given time, at least another year if not 18 months, to show whether he has made a difference economically.

Corruption: This was one of the items on which the 2014 election was fought. It is said that Modi has either ended big ticket corruption in the Central government or news of it has not yet come out. As in Gujarat, he has been personally involved in this issue. I have known businessmen in Gujarat who have had to face corruption demands from those lower down, because it is impossible for one individual, however well-meaning, to change centuries of a culture. However, just as in Gujarat, I know Modi regularly calls people to ask if they are facing a problem from his

ministers and bureaucrats, and he asks them to inform him if they are. He is active and well-meaning.

Legislation and governance: The role of a Central government is primarily to make new law. Governance, in the way we understand the word, meaning controlling the structure of the state, is secondary. I say this because any Union government governs India through a few hundred IAS officers. Given the smallness of the apparatus, it is not possible for there to be much difference in the governance performance of one party over another. On legislation, it is not easy to name successes because a theme is missing. If we look at the Manmohan Singh government's legislative focus, we can identify the following: Right to Information, Right to Food, Aadhar, Direct Benefits Transfer, Right to Education, Right to Work and so on. There is a clear narrative here: these laws are aimed at the poor. Modi's record lacks such focus.

revealed—but the judges were convinced Roy meant business and was serious in his promise.

A top source said the amount offered by the Sahara group was a little over Rs 200,000 crore.

Tired of his two-year-plus stay within the prison, Roy—it is reliably learnt—told his family members to give away everything for his slice of freedom. In a personal letter to his staffers, Roy had written: "I will resolve your problems by June, 2016."

Sahara insiders claim there was a need to build the burgeoning network the group once enjoyed in India. Barring veteran film star Amitabh Bachchan and his son, Abhishek, and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, there were no big names in the funeral procession of Roy's mother last week.

The insiders claim Roy could soon make a big-bang announcement to win back confidence of his investors. "He has been upset at the way people were looking at Sahara, he has told his key people he will turn it around," said the insiders. "He has been upset at budgetary issues bothering his group, he has not liked the way some people have left the group, how the guest list at Sahara City had dried up. He not even liked the way the Swiss cottages have been maintained, and the way tall grass has filled portions of what was a fine cricket field within the Sahara City. He wants to be

hands on, he wants to take total charge," said the insiders.

Roy had no other way but to offer the family silver to secure his bail.

The bench comprising Chief Justice TS Thakur and justices AR Dave and AK Sikri, is now hearing a plea from Sibal seeking extension of interim parole for Roy till 4 August 2016 on condition that Roy would pay a substantial amount of money in a span of 180 days.

The court has given Roy extension until 11 July 2016 and permission to travel anywhere in India, asking him to pay up Rs 200 crore to Sebi before that date. If he fails to do this, he will be jailed again.

Sibal reportedly submitted two cheques - of Rs 500 crore that can be encashed in August and another Rs 4,500 crore as a guarantee.

While one part of the crisis is over, the other seems difficult to handle. Sebi will have serious problems in selling the properties listed by Sahara.

"The Indian real estate market is going through one of its worst lows, finding high value for such properties would not be easy," says Ravi Sodhi, who analyses the property market on behalf of a top north Indian realtor group.

The market regulator has approached two financial institutions to set in process the Sahara land and property sale. "But the rates of realisation could be very low, the markets are down," says a Sebi source. If the real estate sale fails, one of the biggest and strangest legal cases in India will go nowhere.

Endgame: Interpol arrest warrant for Vijay Mallya?

view to extradite or initiate similar lawful action in a criminal case probe. Once the said notice is issued, the Interpol seeks to arrest the person concerned, in any part of the world and notifies that country to take his or her custody for further action from their end. The agency has been wanting to make Mallya join investigations in the Rs 900-crore IDBI loan deal, in which it had registered a criminal case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) earlier this year. It has virtually exhausted most of the legal options to make Mallya join the probe, including issuance of a non-bailable warrant against him from a Mumbai court, based on which it made the requests for the revocation of his passport and subsequent deportation bid to bring back the businessman from UK. However, Britain made it clear that Mallya could not be deported and asked India to seek his extradition instead. The British government said it acknowledges the seriousness of allegations against Mallya and was keen to assist the Indian government in this case. ED is also mulling attaching domestic assets and shares worth around Rs 9,000 crore owned by Mallya in this case. Revenue officials in Goa have allowed the lenders of Kingfisher Airlines to take physical possession of Kingfisher Villa in Candolim. The North Goa Collector has given an order in favour of banks to take physical possession of the Villa valued at Rs 90 crore and which used to be Mallya's base in Goa. It was also the venue of many of the famous parties hosted by him during the 'good times'. Advocate Parag Rao, who appeared on behalf of United Spirits, had said that the company had withdrawn its claim before the collector.

'My Name Is Sadiq Khan - I'm Mayor Of London'

Sadiq Khan has been sworn in as London mayor - telling supporters at Southwark Cathedral: "I can't believe it." He stood at the lectern and declared: "My name is Sadiq Khan and I'm the Mayor of London." The response was huge applause and cheering from family, friends, and supporters who included film stars and the former Labour leader Ed Miliband - but current leader Jeremy Corbyn was absent. Mr Corbyn was later seen congratulating Labour's Marvin Rees, who has been elected the new mayor of Bristol. The Labour chief's absence from the high-profile ceremony in London raised some eyebrows and he denied there was a rift. He said: "I am meeting Sadiq over the weekend, I have been in touch with him. We are getting on fine. I have sent him a

message of congratulations." Mr Khan beat off competition for the job from Conservative Zac Goldsmith, who has been accused of carrying out a dirty campaign, and 10 others. He was introduced for his speech by Doreen Lawrence, mother of Stephen Lawrence, the teenager murdered in a racist attack in South East London in 1993.

Mr Khan, who confirmed to Sky News he was now standing down as MP for Tooting, said he wanted to represent "every single community in the city". "You may not know this, but I grew up on a council estate, not far from here," the new mayor said to laughter, alluding to the repeated focus on his background during the campaign. "Back then, I never dreamt I could be standing here today as Mayor of London. "I promise you I will always do

everything in my power to make our city better." Outside the cathedral, Mr Khan said he looked forward to campaigning for neighbourhood policing and affordable transport and housing, adding that he will continue to voice his support for the Remain campaign ahead of the EU referendum. But he went on to attack the "negative, divisive and desperate" campaign of his main competitor Mr Goldsmith. The Labour candidate had to wait six hours for the result to be confirmed because of what were described as "discrepancies" in the count.

But shortly after midnight the returning officer announced the former Labour frontbencher as the winner on the second round of voting. He received a total of 1,310,143 votes - 57% of the total - compared to Zac Goldsmith's

994,614, after the capital had its largest ever turnout at 45.6%. At his acceptance speech on Friday, Mr Khan said: "Thank you London. London is the greatest city in the world. I am so proud of our city. I am deeply humbled by the hope and trust you have placed in me today." Among those to offer congratulations to Mr Khan was the US presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton. The frontrunner for the Democratic nomination praised the Labour mayor as a "champion of workers' rights and human rights". Her post on Twitter, signed H to indicate she had written it herself, followed similar messages from the mayors of New York and Paris and the French prime minister.

Mrs Clinton said: "Son of a Pakistani bus driver, champion of workers' rights and human rights, and now Mayor of

London. Congrats, @SadiqKhan." New York mayor Bill de Blasio also tweeted: "Sending congratulations to London's new Mayor and fellow affordable housing advocate, @SadiqKhan. Look forward to working together!" Meanwhile, Conservatives have been defending Mr Goldsmith's mayoral campaign, which was criticised for linking Mr Khan to Islamic extremists. Defence Secretary Michael Fallon, one of those who hit out at Mr Khan, said it was all part of the "rough and tumble" of an election campaign. Mr Goldsmith congratulated his opponent. Mr Khan did not mention Mr Goldsmith by name in his acceptance speech but he did make mention of negative campaigning - which some Tories have described as "dog whistle" tactics.

American Power Under Challenge

and the choices and decisions of the political leadership are heavily influenced by internal concentrations of power, while the general population is often marginalized. That is true even for the more democratic societies, and obviously for others. We cannot gain a realistic understanding of who rules the world while ignoring the "masters of mankind," as Adam Smith called them: in his day, the merchants and manufacturers of England; in ours, multinational conglomerates, huge financial institutions, retail empires, and the like. Still following Smith, it is also wise to attend to the "vile maxim" to which the "masters of mankind" are dedicated: "All for ourselves and nothing for other people" -- a doctrine known otherwise as bitter and incessant class war, often one-sided, much to the detriment of the people of the home country and the world.

In the contemporary global order, the institutions of the masters hold enormous power, not only in the international arena but also within their home states, on which they rely to protect their power and to provide economic support by a wide variety of means. When we consider the role of the masters of mankind, we turn to such state policy priorities of the moment as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, one of the investor-rights agreements mislabeled "free-trade agreements" in propaganda and commentary. They are negotiated in secret, apart from the hundreds of corporate lawyers and lobbyists writing the

crucial details. The intention is to have them adopted in good Stalinist style with "fast track" procedures designed to block discussion and allow only the choice of yes or no (hence yes). The designers regularly do quite well, not surprisingly. People are incidental, with the consequences one might anticipate.

The Second Superpower The neoliberal programs of the past generation have concentrated wealth and power in far fewer hands while undermining functioning democracy, but they have aroused opposition as well, most prominently in Latin America but also in the centers of global power. The European Union (EU), one of the more promising developments of the post-World War II period, has been tottering because of the harsh effect of the policies of austerity during recession, condemned even by the economists of the International Monetary Fund (if not the IMF's political actors). Democracy has been undermined as decision making shifted to the Brussels bureaucracy, with the northern banks casting their shadow over their proceedings.

Mainstream parties have been rapidly losing members to left and to right. The executive director of the Paris-based research group EuropaNova attributes the general disenchantment to "a mood of angry impotence as the real power to shape events largely shifted from national political leaders [who, in principle at least, are subject to democratic

politics] to the market, the institutions of the European Union and corporations," quite in accord with neoliberal doctrine. Very similar processes are under way in the United States, for somewhat similar reasons, a matter of significance and concern not just for the country but, because of U.S. power, for the world.

The rising opposition to the neoliberal assault highlights another crucial aspect of the standard convention: it sets aside the public, which often fails to accept the approved role of "spectators" (rather than "participants") assigned to it in liberal democratic theory. Such disobedience has always been of concern to the dominant classes. Just keeping to American history, George Washington regarded the common people who formed the militias that he was to command as "an exceedingly dirty and nasty people [evinced] an unaccountable kind of stupidity in the lower class of these people."

In *Violent Politics*, his masterful review of insurgencies from "the American insurgency" to contemporary Afghanistan and Iraq, William Polk concludes that General Washington "was so anxious to sideline [the fighters he despised] that he came close to losing the Revolution." Indeed, he "might have actually done so" had France not massively intervened and "saved the Revolution," which until then had been won by guerrillas -- whom we would now call "terrorists" -- while Washington's British-style army "was defeated

time after time and almost lost the war."

A common feature of successful insurgencies, Polk records, is that once popular support dissolves after victory, the leadership suppresses the "dirty and nasty people" who actually won the war with guerrilla tactics and terror, for fear that they might challenge class privilege. The elites' contempt for "the lower class of these people" has taken various forms throughout the years. In recent times one expression of this contempt is the call for passivity and obedience ("moderation in democracy") by liberal internationalists reacting to the dangerous democratizing effects of the popular movements of the 1960s.

Sometimes states do choose to follow public opinion, eliciting much fury in centers of power. One dramatic case was in 2003, when the Bush administration called on Turkey to join its invasion of Iraq. Ninety-five percent of Turks opposed that course of action and, to the amazement and horror of Washington, the Turkish government adhered to their views. Turkey was bitterly condemned for this departure from responsible behavior. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, designated by the press as the "idealist-in-chief" of the administration, berated the Turkish military for permitting the malfeasance of the government and demanded an apology. Unperturbed by these and innumerable other illustrations of our fabled "yearning for democracy,"

respectable commentary continued to laud President George W. Bush for his dedication to "democracy promotion," or sometimes criticized him for his naïveté in thinking that an outside power could impose its democratic yearnings on others.

The Turkish public was not alone. Global opposition to U.S.-UK aggression was overwhelming. Support for Washington's war plans scarcely reached 10% almost anywhere, according to international polls. Opposition sparked huge worldwide protests, in the United States as well, probably the first time in history that imperial aggression was strongly protested even before it was officially launched. On the front page of the New York Times, journalist Patrick Tyler reported that "there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion."

Unprecedented protest in the United States was a manifestation of the opposition to aggression that began decades earlier in the condemnation of the U.S. wars in Indochina, reaching a scale that was substantial and influential, even if far too late. By 1967, when the antiwar movement was becoming a significant force, military historian and Vietnam specialist Bernard Fall warned that "Vietnam as a cultural and historic entity... is threatened with extinction... [as] the countryside literally dies under the blows of the largest military machine ever unleashed on an area of this size."

Fearing Donald Trump, Democrats pressure Bernie Sanders to exit

but the acrimony, while less ugly and less public, is no less. Pressure from the party establishment is now mounting on Vermont senator Bernie Sanders to quit the race even as his supporters are producing polls showing he is better placed to defeat Donald Trump than Hillary Clinton is. Democratic lawmakers who hope to make a dent on the Republican majority in Congress on the coattails of the presidential elections are starting to worry that Sanders' prolonged stay in the race is debilitating to Clinton and the party, particularly after Trump's opponents in the GOP have folded before him, leaving a clear path to the nomination. "It's actually harmful because she can't make that general-election pivot the way she should,"

Clinton supporter Dianne Feinstein was quoted as saying about Clinton's albatross. "Trump has made that pivot." Clinton herself has resisted asking Sanders to back down because she went the full distance when she fought Barack Obama for the Democratic nomination in 2008. But she has pointed out that she leads Sanders by three million votes in the nomination process whereas she was neck and neck with Obama. But Sanders supporters are pointing out that they have won 19 states now and are poised to win even more as the electorate realises that he is better placed to defeat Trump. Indeed, some polls show Sanders doing better than Clinton against Trump in the so-called rust belt states. While the Sanders campaign has

indicated that he will go all the way to the final primary in California on June 7 where Clinton leads in polls, many supporters are reconciled to his eventual bowing out. But they are fighting to influence Clinton's campaign platform (manifesto in Indian political parlance) to the left, even as Clinton herself is trying to appeal to Republican voters who may not favour Trump. On Friday, the LA Times put itself behind Clinton with a grudging endorsement. "For all her faults, Hillary Clinton is vastly better prepared than Bernie Sanders for the presidency," it said, even as Sanders' supporters feel the burn of party establishment. While Trump appears to have bullied the establishment into submission, Sanders has come up short.

Why India loves to vote

Where all are equal

A polling station in India is the only public space of its kind where there is genuine social diversity, where women are unafraid, where VIPs cannot be ushered to the front of the queue and where people are forced to stand shoulder-to-shoulder regardless of caste, class, skin colour or the richness of their attire — and women have to queue behind their domestic servants and men wearing gold watches stand behind one without shoes on his feet. No sense of entitlement or privilege works. Given India's pernicious and vicious inequality, this is a radical arena. The procedure inside the polling booth reinforces the dignity of the voter further where she is treated politely and efficiently by officials, has her name called out without mention of her father or husband, sees her name on an official record, proving she is an individual in her own right.

Each of these actions reaffirms the identity of ordinary people as equal citizens of India, each of whom counts and is worthy of respect — and this alone for many was a good reason to vote. In fulfilling their duty to vote, people noted they had claimed their most fundamental right as citizens. It should not surprise us therefore that people proudly display their inked fingers after voting, for it is a material manifestation of a bundle of emotions that entering the polling booth brings with it. As one Dalit man put it, "After voting I walked tall, as I felt I too had some value in society."

So in India, elections are the most important constitutionally radical moment in public life. By exercising their franchise, voters are able to reacquire themselves with the values that democracy promises — equality, dignity and civility — values that sadly only manifest themselves on election days. We need to preserve their integrity at all cost.

All's not well in the kingdom

Though it was the late King Abdullah who envisioned the Syrian strategy — help the rebels topple the rule of Bashar al-Assad — the Salman regime has relentlessly pursued the anti-Assad agenda. In Yemen, the Saudis want to defeat the Iran-backed Shia Houthi rebels and reinstate a Sunni regime. The flip side of this anti-Iranism is its sectarian overtone. The execution of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a Shia cleric of Saudi Arabia, early this year despite strong protests from Tehran underscores the argument that Riyadh doesn't mind playing the sectarian card in its rivalry with Iran.

New reality

But the problem is that none of the Saudi interventions is paying off, at least on the geopolitical front. For more than five years, the Saudis and their friends in the Gulf have invested in Syria to topple the Assad regime. They armed the rebels and succeeded in protracting the civil war. But they were never close to unseating President Assad. In Yemen, the ill-planned air strikes turned out

to be disastrous both for the Saudis and the Yemenis. After a year-long campaign, the Houthis are still in Sana'a. At this point, the Saudis seem clueless about how to get out of the mess they have created in Yemen. Moreover, Saudi-U.S. relations are at the crossroads. U.S. President Barack Obama in a recent interview referred to the Saudis as "free riders". The U.S. Congress is discussing a bill that, if passed, would let the families of the 9/11 victims sue Saudi Arabia for its alleged financial support to al-Qaeda. If the chill in U.S.-Saudi ties spills into the next U.S. presidency, it would pose an unprecedented regional challenge to Riyadh.

Even on the economic front, there's no guarantee that the reform measures unveiled by Prince Mohammad will succeed. Last year, oil provided 73 per cent of state revenue. The promise to overcome this dependence in four years sounds unrealistic, given the practical and

structural challenges. Ironically, an International Monetary Fund report last year had predicted that the kingdom could be bankrupt within the same time period, given the spending sprees and low oil prices. Saudi Arabia has other challenges as well. The youth unemployment rate is 29.5 per cent, according to the World Bank. The embers of Arab Spring are yet to be put out. The kingdom also faces radicalisation of its youth; several of them have travelled to Syria to join the Islamic State. If the new economic reforms shake up the base of the rentier system, would the monarch succeed in keeping popular discontent within permissible limits? What appears now is that the royals are ready to prepare Saudi Arabia for a long game in West Asia. But the transition will be painful — it could weaken Riyadh's regional influence further, at least in the short term, while throwing up more challenges for Al Saud at home. It's a new reality for the king of Arabia.

Why Having Children Is Bad For Your Marriage

Not so. The relationship burden of having children is present regardless of marital status, gender orientation or level of income. In addition, the adverse impact of becoming a parent is found in other countries, including those with greater rates of nonmarital parenting and more generous family policies.

Not surprisingly, it is mothers, not fathers, who bear the heaviest cost of becoming parents. Even when both parents work outside the home and even in marriages in which both spouses describe themselves as sharing the burden of household chores, most parents slide toward gender-stereotypical ways of parenting. Women are more likely to become the "on call" parent, the one who gets up in the night to bring a child a tissue or who's called by the school nurse.

As part of this pattern, new mothers tend to cut their hours in outside work, which often leads fathers to feel more of the burden of financial responsibility. A common pattern emerges in which dads start spending more

time and energy on outside work and moms start doing an increasing percentage of the child care and housework. Cue the feelings of frustration, guilt and distress for both parents.

New mothers often talk about their social isolation, becoming disconnected from friends and colleagues and how their world feels like it's shrinking. All of these changes lead to fundamental and long-lasting effects on new mothers' circle of support, including with their spouses.

The consequences of the relationship strain can be serious. Marital stress is associated with many serious physical health problems as well as symptoms of depression and other mental health problems. The link between psychological and marital problems is strong enough that researchers have found that couples therapy is one of the most effective ways of treating depression and some other mental illnesses. If the arrival of children is hard on marriages, is the departure of children good

for marriages? Some marriages do improve once the children leave the nest. In other cases, the successful launch of the children leads spouses to discover they have few shared interests and there's nothing keeping them together.

These downsides to having children may partly explain why more and more women in the United States and around the world are choosing not to procreate. According to the U.S. Census, the percent of childless American women (ages 15-44) increased a staggering amount in just two generations: from 35 percent in 1976 to 47 percent in 2010.

Despite the dismal picture of motherhood painted by researchers like me (sorry, Mom), most mothers (and fathers) rate parenting as their greatest joy. Much like childbirth, where nearly all mothers believe the pain and suffering was worth it, most mothers believe the rewards of watching their children grow up are worth the cost to their romantic relationships.

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Russian servicemen march during the Victory Day parade, marking the 71st anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two at Red Square in Moscow, Russia on Monday.

All in a Victory Day's work: Putin warns West



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends the Victory Day military parade at Red Square in Moscow on Monday.



VLADIMIR PUTIN has issued a warning to the West and Nato over their 'double standards' as Russia displayed its military might in a Victory Day parade.

The Russian president spoke out during an hour-long parade in which huge tanks and rocket launchers were driven through Red Square in Moscow.

Thousands of male and female military personnel marched through the square during the event, which concluded with a flyover by dozens of aircraft.

During a short speech at the parade on Monday, Putin said he wanted to help build an international security system that tran-

scended military blocs as part of a move to combat global terrorism.

He made no specific accusations - but both the accusation of double standards and the call for a 'non-bloc system of international security' echo Russia's frequent criticism of the West and the NATO alliance.

The parade saw military equipment including the advanced Armata tank and the Yars ICBM launcher lumbered across the square, before helicopters, long-range bombers and Su-35 fighter jets used in Russia's Syria campaign flew overhead.

The event was part of nationwide celebrations to mark 71

Putin, during his speech at the Victory Day Parade, accused the West and Nato of having double standards

years since the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in the Second World War.

Some 10,000 troops, tanks and nuclear missile systems swept across Red Square's cobblestones in front of Putin, senior officials and a handful of war veterans.

Putin also addressed the troops, congratulating them on a holiday that

traditionally unites Russians across political divides.

A smaller-scale parade was held on Russia's Hmeimim airbase in Syria, where Moscow is conducting air strikes it says are aimed at extremist groups like ISIS. May 9 festivities also took place in some former Soviet republics.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev sat beside Putin at the Moscow parade, but other foreign leaders were not among the honoured guests.

Western leaders last year snubbed invitations to attend the 70th anniversary celebrations over the Ukraine crisis, leaving Putin to mark the day in the company of the leaders of China, Cuba and other Moscow-friendly figures.

An estimated 27million of the former Soviet Union's soldiers and civilians were killed in the Second World War and the Red Army's triumph is viewed as a huge source of pride in Russia.

Assange's kids find him new company

WIKILEAKS founder Julian Assange has been given a kitten by his young children to keep him company as he approaches his fourth year living at the Ecuadorian embassy in London.

The unnamed ten-week old female kitten, which descended from the original European wildcat, is said to sleep in a top hat for most of the day and prowl the embassy at night.

Australian Assange, 44, has been taking refuge since June 2012 at the embassy in Knightsbridge, West London, and will now be joined by his pet, who will be 'tweeting' at @Embassy-Cat. Assange revealed last Octo-



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange holds up his new kitten at the Ecuadorian Embassy in central London.

ber that the wall of his room was plastered with letters from children outlining 'well-drawn' and 'very well detailed escape plans' of him on a flying fox over to Harrods.

But the identities of his children are something of a mystery. The only major clue, given

by an ex-colleague in 2011, is that he has at least four who live in Australia, with the youngest aged five.

Most is known about his eldest son, who is believed to be a software designer in his mid-20s named Daniel.

Daily Mail

Have we reached universe's limit?

IT IS impossible to comprehend the scale of the universe.

But even though we have a potentially infinite space to look out to and measure, there are still some limits to what we will be able to learn. Now, physicists have warned we could be getting close to knowing everything we may ever know about certain traits of our universe, without ever understanding everything.

We are used to pushing the boundaries of quantum physics, but the boundaries of cosmology might soon be in reach too, according to a new paper.

The formation of galaxies and the evolution of the universe can be simplified down into a model that relies on just six numbers.

That means if the Big Bang was to happen all over again, because of the consistency of these numbers, the universe would end up looking almost exactly the same.

"One can consider that the information contained in the data is compressed down to the combined constraints on these cosmological parameters," the researchers said.

Yin-Zhe Ma from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa and Douglas Scott from the Uni-

Revelation made in new research paper

versity of British Columbia published a paper suggesting when we might 'hit a wall'.

"Once we completely map out the 3 dimensional volume of the universe with galaxy survey and neutral hydrogen survey, we will run out of universe to measure," co-author Yin-Zhe Ma told MailOnline.

WORLDLY WISE

North Korean strongman Kim Jong-Un cements control over his ruling Workers' Party on Monday as he got coronated as General Secretary of the party.



Europe is our immediate neighbourhood. The stronger we are in our neighbourhood, the stronger we are in the world.

—DAVID CAMERON, BRITISH PM



Prince Harry and Michelle Obama (left) at the opening ceremony. (Above) Harry speaks to Morgan Freeman.

HOW PRINCE HARRY LEARNED ABOUT THE TRUE COST OF WAR

PRINCE Harry gave an emotional speech about the sacrifices soldiers make on the battlefield and spoke of his own harrowing experiences of war as he opened the Invictus Games in Orlando on Sunday.

Harry said war had made him realise just how 'privileged' he is to be a prince — and that his service in Afghanistan inspired him to set up the competition to help his 'military family'.

"I learned about the importance of teamwork and camaraderie in a way that only military service can teach you," Harry said, speaking from his heart. And when I traveled back from the battlefield on a plane carrying the body of a Danish soldier and three young Brits fighting for their lives, I began to understand the true cost of war. When I joined the Army I just wanted to be one of the guys. What I learned through serving were the extreme privileges of being a

prince and the opportunity I have to help my military family."

Prince Harry was joined by First Lady Michelle Obama, former President George W Bush and a host of celebrities as the games officially got underway. All three — including Bush, who was president when a number of those taking part in the games served in Iraq and Afghanistan — paid tribute to the veterans in touching speeches. Also at the ceremony was Morgan Freeman, as well as singer James Blunt and soprano Laura Wright, who both had the crowd on their feet with stunning performances. The Prince then took to the stage, telling the gathered veterans, their families and supporters that he felt like he was at home among so many familiar faces. "I spent 10 years in the British Army and I was deployed to Afghanistan twice," he said.

Al-Qaeda caliphate to counter ISIS

AL-QAEDA is starting its own rival Islamic state in a direct challenge to ISIS in war-torn Syria

The terror group's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has backed a plan to create its own 'caliphate' in the country as a direct challenge to ISIS. Although it has lost land in both Syria and Iraq, ISIS still holds large parts of the two countries where as many 10 million people live under their control.

Osama bin Laden's successor, al-Zawahiri, announced the plan in a speech posted online.

There have been reports that al-Qaeda commanders have been sent to north-west Syria to begin their operation. Saif al-Adel, a veteran Egyptian jihadist, seen as his deputy and operational field commander, is one of the men who has been sent. He was reported as being held under house arrest in Iran until he was released late last year.

The Jabhat al-Nusra terror group, which is allied to the al-Qaeda, would be responsible for the plan to take territory in Syria. ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi set up the group but it split from him in 2013. It is known for being particularly brutal in enforcing Sharia Law. The US and its allies are concerned it could use Syria to launch attacks on the West like bin Laden did in Afghanistan.

Al-Qaeda has been concerned Jabhat al-Nusra could be persuaded by Gulf states like Qatar to sever ties with them and disband in return for aid.

Zawahiri said he was 'proud' of Jabhat al-Nusra and its link to al-Qaeda in the video.

According to the Daily Telegraph, he said: "If they create their government, and choose their emir, what they choose is our choice."

He criticised the ISIS and compared them to a centuries old Islamic group, Khawarij, which was brutal against fellow Muslims. "The Islamic nation in Greater Syria has backed (al-Nusra), realising the difference between the correctness of its methods and the methods of the new Khawarij," he said.

Zawahiri, an Egyptian doctor, had taken over al-Qaeda after bin Laden was killed. Daily Mail



Zawahiri (right) has deputed some of al-Qaeda's top leaders to parts of Syria to halt ISIS (above)..



NEW SENTENCE: STABBING IN THE HEART

SICKENING new pictures have emerged of a new form of ISIS execution — stabbing prisoners directly in the heart to kill them for their 'crimes against the caliphate'.

Images show a executioner holding a knife against the chest of a man dressed in an orange jumpsuit in the terror group's stronghold, Raqqa. The man, named by the

news agency ABNA as Abdulhadi Essa al-Salem, was knifed in the heart before a shot was fired into his head. Shocking photos — posted on Twitter by Syrian activist group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently — then show the victim being crucified in public. According to ABNA, he had been accused of co-operating with the US-led coalition.

Mayor Khan finds a new admirer in Captain Kirk

SADIQ KHAN seems to have struck up an unexpected friendship with Captain Kirk in the wake of his historic victory in the London Mayor election.



The Labour MP has been hailed by Star Trek star William Shatner, who deployed one of his most famous lines in a bizarre tribute. Posting on Twitter after a wave of requests from fans, Shatner wrote: "@SadiqKhan Khaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaannnnnnnnnn!! Congratulations Mr Mayor! Bill!"

He then appeared overjoyed later when the new London Mayor followed him on Twitter: "Go to Red Alert!" he posted. "Khan followed!"

The quote comes from 1980s Star Trek movie The Wrath of Khan, about genetically-enhanced baddie Khan Noonien Singh who tries to take revenge on Captain Kirk.

Sadiq Khan comfortably defeated Tory rival Zac Goldsmith in the mayoral elections last week after a bitter battle during which he was repeatedly accused of having links to extremists.

A series of senior Tory figures and even Goldsmith's sister Gemma have criticised the way the campaign was conducted.

While Khan appears to have welcomed the endorsement from Shatner, he has seemed less willing to be seen with Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. In an interview on Sunday he savaged Mr Corbyn for obsessing over Left-wing causes while ignoring swathes of the electorate.

The dubious MARRIAGE DEAL

GOD'S OWN Country was hot and humid when I landed. But far more scorching was the fact that I was over 25 years old — and still unmarried. Weddings are an elegant affair in Kerala, especially the part where I hail from. Gold is measured and given in kilos. A variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian delicacies lines the tables set to accommodate over a thousand guests. Aunties in colourful silk saris compare their jewellery and measure the bride. And I was depriving my extended family of all these simple pleasures.

So, the moment I reached home in Kerala, I discovered to my horror that my grandfather had arranged for a marriage broker. "She is not even 5'5"," the broker asked my grandfather looking at me, who to my surprise appeared apologetic. "No, I am not," I said, trying my best to stay calm. "Not even 5'3?" he asked hopefully. "I am barely 5 ft," I retorted and asked him to take a seat.. What happened next was even more disappointing for the broker. "So, you are 25. It's too late to marry and every guy gets married by 25 in Kerala!"

By the end of it all, I was fuming at the broker. But on afterthought, why blame him alone when the problem is societal? The state has internalised this malaise, with 21-year-olds often made to stand the humiliation and feel inadequate by those quoting the length of their torso and the colour of their skin.

IRONICALLY, this is happening in Kerala, one of the most literate states and, worse, progressive families still fall at the mercy of such brokers who would deliberately show you down for a fat commission. Instances of dowry abuse are still plenty in spite of fathers 'gifting' the groom gold equivalent to the weight of his daughter. And no one talks about this.

Teenage marriages, even after years, are on a spurt in the state. According to data from the last Census in 2011, there were 23,183 married girls below the age of 15 years in the state. And this resulted in as many as 10,175 child births. Around five

years ago, Kerala State Women's Commission had considered placing a proposal before the National Women's Commission that advocated raising the minimum age for marriage for women from 18 to 25 and that of men from 21 to 28 or more. But the commission did not favour the proposal owing to 'socio-economic' factors. Majority of the state still follow leaders who make speeches about how women cannot be surgeons or warriors. Such a speech created no hue and cry.

When students protested against gender segregation in Farook College, Calicut, many of these leaders, including ministers, supported the administration's decision for separate chairs for girls and boys. Keralites would proudly boast of how a 'Nirbhaya' will never happen in the state, but the heinous Jisha murder did happen. Figures reveal that crimes against women in Kerala are higher than the national average. Not to speak of the sheer injustices meted out to them.

How many times have we heard of pregnant girls making

it to the Board exams in Kerala and brides rushing to exam halls just after the ceremony? In a closely knit, nosy society like Kerala, surprisingly, no neighbour raises a voice — and friends advise you to keep mum and not get into 'unnecessary' hassle.

MY AUNT said there were a few people who waited till their kids turned 18 only to avoid legal issues. As I smirked and told my sister that I was 'a dying commodity' in the marriage market, I wished I could shout out to every girl in the neighbourhood and warn them of the trap that is on its way.

I wanted to tell them to live life like they wanted and never let anyone dictate their 'marriageable age.' The next day, I packed my bags, hugged everyone and headed for the airport, silently hoping that things would change for the better the next summer.

Kerala may be the most literate state in India, but girls still find a raw deal there



Regulating digital maps won't do much good

FOR REPRESENTATION



The implications of putting digital maps under licence raj are huge.

INDIA has a digital map problem. On some occasions, the country's maps have been depicted inaccurately on the web. It is a genuine problem and no country will like to see its borders shown wrongly. Unfortunately, the solution the Indian government is proposing is terrible. It is bringing a bazooka, that is bound to destroy everything around it, to a fight where a kitchen knife will do.

This solution is called the Geospatial Information Regulation Bill. Its draft was published this week and it is a cautionary tale in how not to prepare a policy. There are several problems with the proposed bill but the biggest one has to do with the licensing part. Irrespective of the company or individual, anyone sharing geospatial information, or in the other words, maps in India will have to first take the licence from a special committee that government hopes to establish.



This is basically return of the licence raj at a time when the world is digital and accessing digital maps is as easy as tapping on an app in a phone. And if you thought that the licence raj was bad in Congress era, this one is going to be worse because it attempts to control something that can't be controlled — digital data. The implications of putting digital maps under licence raj are huge. Not only it is going to create hurdles for hundreds of business that use digital maps — Google, Apple, food apps, courier companies, taxi apps etc — but

also effectively kills the real-time nature of the digital maps.

If the proposed law goes through, every map, every change made to it, every new service built on top of a map will be vetted by government officials before it reaches consumers. The draft bill also has some other loose proposals. For example, it aims to make everyone associated with the map a culprit in case of an error, and they then can be punished with fine of up to ₹100 crore as well as jail term of seven years. And no, none of it applies on government bodies.

The solution, instead of bringing the licence raj back, ought to be just a curt communication to any entity that shows a wrong map. Google, Apple, Twitter, none of the tech companies show a wrong map knowingly. It's often an error. Creating a whole government apparatus to check it is just useless (and even harmful) exercise.

Why Having Children Is Bad For Your Marriage



(Agencies) Lots of women look forward to motherhood - getting to know a tiny baby, raising a growing child, developing a relationship with a maturing son or daughter. All over the world, people believe that parenting is the most rewarding part of life. And it's good that so many mothers treasure that bond with their child, because the transition to parenthood causes profound changes in a woman's marriage and her overall happiness . . . and not for the better.

Families usually welcome a baby to the mix with great expectations. But as a mother's bond with a child grows, it's likely that her other relationships are deteriorating. I surveyed decades of studies on the psychological effects of having a child to write my book "Great Myths of Intimate Relationships: Dating, Sex, and Marriage," and here's what the research literature shows.

When people marry, they're usually in love and happy to be tying the knot. But after that, things tend to change. On average, couples' satisfaction with their marriage declines during the first years of marriage, and, if the decline is particularly steep, divorce may follow. The course of true love runs downhill. And that's before you factor in what happens when it's time to start buying a car seat and diapers. For around 30 years, researchers have

studied how having children affects a marriage, and the results are conclusive: The relationship between spouses suffers once kids come along. Comparing couples with and without children, researchers found that the rate of the decline in relationship satisfaction is nearly twice as steep for couples who have children than for childless couples. In the event that a pregnancy is unplanned, the parents experience even greater negative impacts on their relationship.

The irony is that even as the marital satisfaction of new parents declines, the likelihood of them divorcing also declines. So, having children may make you miserable, but you'll be miserable together.

Worse still, this decrease in marital satisfaction probably leads to a change in general happiness, because the biggest predictor of overall life satisfaction is one's satisfaction with their spouse.

While the negative marital impact of becoming parents is familiar to fathers and mothers, it is especially insidious because so many young couples think that having children will bring them closer together or at least will not lead to marital distress. Yet, this belief, that having children will improve one's marriage, is a tenacious and persistent myth among those who are young and in

love.

It seems obvious that adding a baby to a household is going to change its dynamics. And indeed, the arrival of children changes how couples interact. Parents often become more distant and businesslike with each other as they attend to the details of parenting. Mundane basics like keeping kids fed, bathed and clothed take energy, time and resolve. In the effort to keep the family running smoothly, parents discuss carpool pickups and grocery runs, instead of sharing the latest gossip or their thoughts on presidential elections. Questions about one's day are replaced with questions about whether this diaper looks full.

These changes can be profound. Fundamental identities may shift—from wife to mother, or, at a more intimate level, from lovers to parents. Even in same-sex couples, the arrival of children predicts less relationship satisfaction and sex. Beyond sexual intimacy, new parents tend to stop saying and doing the little things that please their spouses. Flirty texts are replaced with messages that read like a grocery receipt.

With nearly half of all births being to unmarried couples, some parents may think they have gamed the system by skipping the wedding. Not so. The relationship burden of having children is present regardless of marital status, gender orientation or level of income. In addition, the adverse impact of becoming a parent is found in other countries, including those with greater rates of nonmarital parenting and more generous family policies.

Not surprisingly, it is mothers, not fathers, who bear the heaviest cost of becoming parents. Even when both parents work outside the home and even in marriages in which both spouses describe themselves as sharing the burden of household chores, most parents slide toward gender-stereotypical ways of parenting. Women are more likely to become the "on call" parent, the one who gets up in the night to bring a child a tissue or who's called by the school nurse.

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Newly-weds! The cause of your dissatisfying sex life is your smartphone

(Agencies) If you are spending more time clicking away on that smartphone of yours at the cost of your partner, it's time for a reality check.

Doctors from leading psychiatry institutes say smartphone addiction is hampering the married life of newly-wed couples in India and reducing sexual intimacy among partners as early as a month after marriage.

The Ranchi Institute of Neuro Psychiatry and Allied Sciences (RINPAS), popularly known as the Ranchi asylum, has treated at least seven such patients, who gave more time to their smartphones than their newly-wed spouses causing serious rifts in their relationship, in the past one year. The Central Institute of Psychiatry (CIP) in Ranchi, one of the few centre-run psychiatry care units in India, also witnessed at least three such cases in the past six months.

"In a majority of these cases, the partners lost interest in each other as they remained engrossed in their respective smartphones, either surfing the net or playing video games. Many complained that there was no sexual or emotional intimacy between the couple, creating distance and differences between the partners," Dr Neha Syed, associate professor of clinical psychology at CIP, said. According to a report by Counterpoint

Research released earlier this year, India is the second largest smartphone market in the world with 220 million active smartphone users.

People are busy connecting more with the world around via social networks not only in metropolitan cities but also in semi-urban areas despite poor internet

connectivity.

This 'overindulgence' in the virtual world is taking people away from the real world and pushing them towards unstable mental health, fear doctors.

Dr Amool Ranjan, head of the clinical psychology department of RINPAS, said some of these couples living in the metros were unwilling to come out of their respective virtual worlds. "Parents of two such couples contacted me in the past month or so seeking counselling for their children. The couples admitted the fact that they hardly interacted with each other and had become used to spending time with their respective gadgets," Ranjan said.



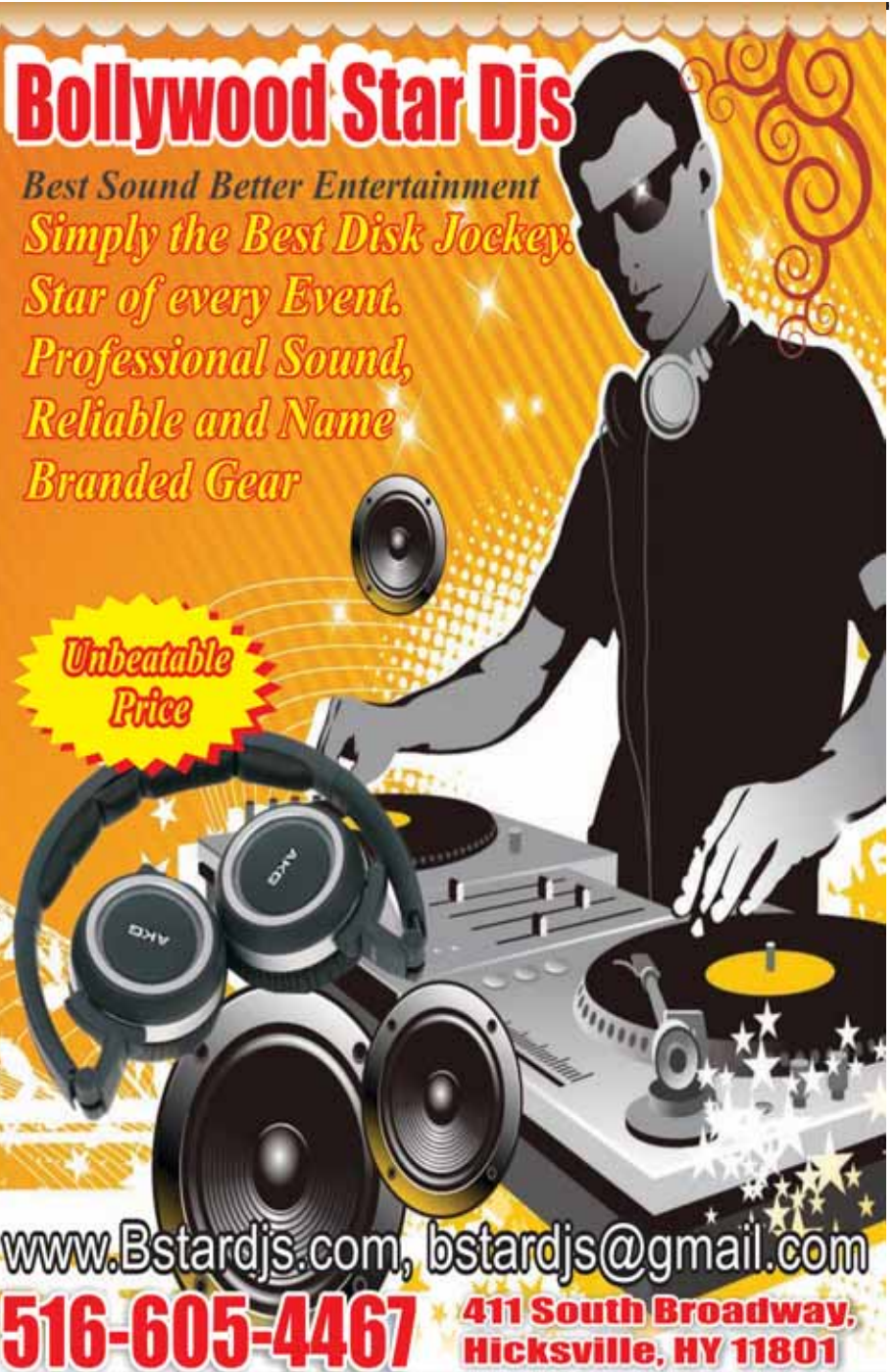
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Humour in a holy mess

TWINKLE Khanna clearly forgot a basic fact: Too many Indias exist within India.

Her sophisticated social media fan base, which her witty tweet on Art of Living guru Sri Sri Ravishankar typically caters to, lives in a wholly different plane than the grassroots filmy type that hubby Akshay Kumar is banking on, to make his upcoming mass entertainer *Housefull 3* a blockbuster.

It is a fact Sri Sri loyalists are smartly aware of, though. So, when it came to getting back at Twinkle, they chose to strike on Akshay's film instead of attacking her on Twitter directly. They threatened to jeopardise the release of *Housefull 3*, which is round the corner. Twinkle did not exactly say sorry, but she promptly went as far as to concede her tweet on Sri Sri was "an error of Judgement".

To refresh, the tweet was borderline cheeky but certainly not in bad taste. "Sri Sri got his noble foot and half his beard stuck in his mouth in a yogic pose that Baba Ramdev perfected a while ago #HolyMenAndHairyTales (sic)," she wrote, reacting to the godman's criticism of Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Peace Prize win.

Holy men and their hairy tales are clearly not funny business in India. Twinkle should have realised that like God, who is eligible for a blanket relief from jokes in this country, godmen too demand such a special status.

In the past weeks I have coincidentally interacted with three of India's funniest men. Chatting up Kapil Sharma, Cyrus Sahukar and Cyrus Broacha, each conversation invariably veered towards how comedians — more than other artists — frequently end up at the wrong end of the intolerance stick in this country.

The Twinkle-Sri Sri episode finds an echo in Sharma's observation that comedians in the West have the luxury of cracking jokes on just about anything — religion and country included — and not be heckled for it. That sort of a reality, he noted, does not seem to be happening in this country.

Perhaps it has become a fashion to be offended these days. Perhaps it is a way to wield clout.

JEST TOO VARIED: Indians react differently to the same humour, Twinkle Khanna must realise after her tweet fiasco.



HIMANSHU SHARMA

Silencing a joke aimed at you, after all, is also a way of silencing criticism that may be coming your way. Humorously, Broacha calls for an anti-offence law, to ban people from getting offended. "We as a nation are happy only when the joke is on someone else. People are too quick to take offence if they are the butt of a joke," he said.

Maybe, different societal strata in our country are brought up to react differently to the same humour. 'India's reaction', as Cyrus Sahukar says, is a nebulous entity. "So many cultures coexist in our

Threat to boycott Akshay Kumar's loud slapstick Housefull 3 over wife Twinkle's posh wit on Twitter could work as publicity stunt for the film



EVIL CALLING: Priyanka Chopra on the set of *Baywatch*.

GOOD TIME TO BE BAD FOR PC

TWIST of coincidence, but as Priyanka Chopra gets ready to play the bad girl in next year's *Baywatch*, she could not have missed this fact: The last time an Indian Miss World went for the Hollywood kill she too had played the villain.

That was 2009, when Aishwarya Rai-Bachchan essayed a villain in *The Pink Panther 2*. Priyanka sure will hope to create a bigger bang.

The stakes have changed, of course, between then and now. Hollywood always loves a foreign dash when it comes to casting villains, best highlighted by the industry's fetish for signing British actors for negative roles. Lately, the trend of casting female stars as antagonists has increased. Angelina Jolie in the *Maleficent* series, Kate Winslet in *Triple 9* and the *Divergent* series, Charlize Theron in *The Huntsman* series and the upcoming *Fast & Furious 8*, Jodie Foster in *Elysium*, and Julia Roberts in *Mirror, Mirror* have been among actresses who made evil a hot deal for the ladies lately.

Priyanka's bad girl turn in Hollywood seems better timed than Ash's.



CELEBRITY.COM

HOW does an absolute favourite blockbuster become unwatchable? Changing cinematic trends can make that happen, or it could be because you watched the film too many times.

Popular website Loooper has come out with an interesting Top 10 list of hits that have aged horribly. The list, in no particular order, includes Oscar winners *Titanic* (in pic), *Forrest Gump* and *Braveheart* for being films that lacked a deeper context and naturally became jaded once the hype dipped.

Genre-benders as *The Blair Witch Project* and *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom* are also on the list because the trends these films ushered seem overused now. *Superman* (1978), *Batman* (1989), *Tron*, *Top Gun* and *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves* made the list, too.

country. There is always a group of people who will be offended by anything and everything," he explains.

Sahukar's take actually brings to fore an interesting aspect about the Twinkle episode. If Twinkle has thrived doling out fine humour as @mrsfunnybones

on Twitter, Akshay's *Housefull 3* will be a slapstick flick catering a bag of corny gags. The last laugh in all this will ironically belong to the film's producer Sajid Nadiadwala, if the entire hullabaloo over Twinkle's posh humour works as publicity gimmick for Akshay's ribald farce.

How the comic book Civil War was won



ROUND one to Marvel then, but be sure the comic book civil wars are only starting now.

Captain America: Civil War (in pic) has let Marvel leap ahead, and rivals DC must be frowning after landing with egg on the face post *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*.

Where did *Civil War* get it right that *Dawn Of Justice* slip up? Both films were similar in intent, hawking sombre socio-political subtexts beneath 3D action razzmatazz. But while

the Marvel effort unfolded its tale with style and lots of humour, DC's idea of using *Batman* and *Superman* to set up an allegory backfired owing to the film's dull narrative.

The other aspect involved the new faces the two faces introduced. While Tom Holland's all-new *Spider-Man* in *Civil War* has been a smash hit with the fans, Gal Gadot as *Wonder Woman* in *Dawn Of Justice* hardly managed to create an impact.

DESPITE doing everything right — be it a healthy brunch or an afternoon run — some people find they simply cannot fall asleep on a Sunday evening.

But they are not alone, with close to 60 per cent of people suffering from “Sunday Night Insomnia”.

Mindfulness experts spoke to Femal about to find out how to cure Sunday night sleeplessness.

According to them, as well as countless other sleep experts, there are a number of things at play when taking into account why we sleep so badly on a Sunday.

As well as the biological rhythm your body is used to and your natural sleep and waking pattern being altered at the weekend, often people find themselves lying awake thinking about what they have to do and accomplish that week on a Sunday: “Sunday night is to-do list night,” the experts said.

“Our brains automatically start mulling over the week ahead of us, which makes it hard to sleep while we have so much brain activity.”

Experts said that on a Sunday, “good sleep hygiene” is more important than ever.

“Banning smartphones and devices from the bedroom might sound like a cliché, but it really works,” experts said.

“Also, try to go to bed at your regular weeknight time and have a relaxing bath before you head into your room.”

“Things like keeping the bedroom dark help, too. I recommend doing some gentle yoga poses like placing your legs up the wall, or listening to a restful meditation podcast to get your body and mind primed for sleep.”

“If you have too many thoughts running around your head when you switch off the light, don’t try too hard to sleep. In fact, do the opposite and it’s amazing how quickly sleep will happen.”

WHILE there is no direct science as to why some people sleep badly on a Sunday, the experts all agree that the reason why every office worker is so bleary-eyed at 9am on a Monday morning is down to the shock of going back to the regular routine.

“Sleeping in and staying out late over the weekend definitely affects our bodies and the quality of sleep we get,” says sleep expert Clarissa Hughes.

“The human body likes routine and when we mess with the routine, our sleep pattern struggles.”

While she says we can usually overcome one bad night’s sleep pretty quickly, if we have a few or even a couple in a row, we start to suffer from “sleep deficit”, which is hard to make up and leaves us cranky by mid Monday afternoon, as well as craving sugary foods.

Stress is also a factor, and fretful nights spent thinking about meetings and deadlines the next day, are not good for the body.

When it comes to tips for banishing your Sunday night sleeplessness, experts advise:

“Prepare for sleep earlier in

the evening by eating a light dinner at a reasonable time. Don’t drink too much before bedtime, and turn off the TV at least an hour before bed, before having a bath or shower.”

They also say that changing into your pyjamas is useful, too,

as it tricks the mind into thinking it’s time to switch off.

“Make your room a gadget-free zone without smartphones or TVs that emit blue light,” she says, and before you go in, listen to a little soothing music.

Finally, experts say that people’s bedrooms should always be kept at a “good temperature of around 20 degree Celsius”.

That being said, the bed and duvet should be warm, to stop you from shivering underneath it.

So why don’t you give it a try this Sunday night?

That way, by the time Monday morning rolls around, with any luck you won’t be half as heavy-lidded and sluggish as the rest of your colleagues.

Put on pyjamas & ban your phone for a good night sleep

PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION



Experts say banning smartphones and devices from the bedroom might sound like a cliché, but it really works.

Lack of sleep can leave you ‘functionally drunk’

FAILING to get enough sleep can leave a person “functionally drunk”, in a matter of days, experts on Sunday warned.

They note sleep is much more important than many people realise.

Even if a person achieves six hours a night, they are building up a sleep debt, Olivia Walch from the University of Michigan said.

Her warnings come as a new study, co-authored by Walch, reveal the sleep patterns of people across the world.

The findings show middle-aged men are the most likely to be sleep deprived, often failing to get the recommended seven to eight hours shut eye.

Researchers found women are more concerned with scheduling their sleep, planning around 30 minutes more a night, on average than their male counterparts.



PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION
Even with six hours a night, you are building up a sleep debt.

Women tend to go to bed earlier and wake up later, especially those aged between 30 and 60, the study found.

Those people who spend time in sunlight each day tend to go to bed earlier and get more sleep

than those people who spend most of their time cooped up inside all day.

Walch said: “It doesn’t take that many days of not getting enough sleep before you’re functionally drunk.”

“Researchers have figured out that being overly tired can have that effect. And what’s terrifying at the same time is that people think they’re performing tasks way better than they are.”

“Your performance drops off but your perception of your performance doesn’t.”

Researchers collated their data using a free smartphone app that helps reduce jetlag.

It allowed them to gather robust sleep data from thousands of people across 100 countries.

The researchers examined how age, gender, the amount of light and home country affect the number of hours sleep people around the globe get each night.

They also looked at when people went to bed, and when their

alarms go off in the morning.

Researchers found that cultural pressures can override natural circadian rhythms, with the effects being most markedly seen at bedtime.

While morning responsibilities, such as work, children and school, play a role in a person’s wake-time, the researchers said they are not the only factors.

Dr Daniel Forger, who also took part in the study, said: “Across the board, it appears that society governs bedtime and

one’s internal clock governs wake time, and a later bedtime is linked to loss of sleep. At the same time, we found a strong wake-time effect from users’ biological clocks — not just their alarm clocks.

Middle-aged men are most likely to be sleep deprived, often failing to get the recommended eight hours shut-eye

STARS ALIGN TO MAKE IT A GLAMOROUS HOUSEFULL

PHOTOS: YOGEN SHAH



By Mail Today Bureau

IT WAS quite a full house at a suburban mall in Mumbai, when the stars of the upcoming slapstick *Housefull 3* turned up to launch a crazy dance number of the film.

Akshay Kumar, Abhishek Bachchan, Riteish Deshmukh and Jacqueline Fernandez were greeted by frenzied fans as they made their way into the crowded mall to unveil *Taang Uthake*, a peppy dance number that promises to be quite a rage over the weeks to come.

Nargis Fakhri and Lisa Haydon, the film's other two heroines, were missing from the do, but Jacqueline more than made up for their absence, getting into the groove with the three heroes as playback star Mika belted out the song live. Jacqueline struck a killer pose for the photo-ops in a little black number accessorised by sexy boots.

The guys turned out casually, and Akshay in particular had the fans screaming for more as he took to addressing the crowds. The stars also engaged in some impromptu singing as Mika rendered the song, besides shaking a leg.

The Friday frolic mood at the mall would seem perfect for the song launch of a *Housefull* flick — given that the series has always been high on the mindless LOL quotient. As the stars got the crowd moving to the beat of the song, producer

The actors gathered at a suburban mall in Mumbai to launch a new song from *Housefull 3* — *Taang Uthake*



Jacqueline breaks into a jig at the song launch. (Above) Sajid Nadiawala, Riteish Deshmukh, Mika, Abhishek Bachchan and Akshay Kumar at the launch.

Sajid Nadiawala and the film's director duo Sajid-Farhad were also seen letting their hair down.

Abhishek, who is recuperating from a slipped disc wouldn't let pain stop him from joining all the fun. He, along with Jacqueline and Riteish, was seen cracking jokes.

Taang Uthake has been sung by Mika along with Sohail Sen, Neeti Mohan and Mamta Sharma, and is a wild party song.

The song has been set to tune by Sohail and Mika, while the lyrics have been jointly penned by Sameer Sen, Sajid-Farhad, Mamta Sharma and Sanjeev

Chaturvedi.

While *Taang Uthake* is being pitched as the main song in the promotional run-up ahead of the film's June 3 release, the romantic number *Pyar Ki* was launched earlier in April.

The trailer of *Housefull 3* was launched a while back and has elicited positive response among fans, especially in the net.

The video of *Taang Uthake* is expectedly a funky one, with Akshay, Abhishek and Riteish in full groove. The three ladies — Jacqueline, Nargis and Lisa — are also at their scorching best. Don't miss the funny Govinda tribute inherent in the dance.

Akshay Kumar & Jacqueline Fernandez

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