



Story  
 ON Page  
 32

# Chabahar Port

## A game-changing deal



*As the situation prevails now, India figures very insignificantly on the list of countries doing trade with the Central Asian nations, though there is a huge potential to be tapped for both sides.*

India's trade with these countries besides providing strategic advantages in Afghanistan. As the situation prevails now, India figures very insignificantly on the list of countries doing trade with the Central Asian nations, though there is a huge potential to be tapped for both sides. These countries' trade with India is hardly 1 per cent, though they are very rich in natural resources, particularly in oil and gas, required by India's fast growing economy. But the supply route-related problems have been discouraging these nations to increase their trade with India. The situation is bound to change with India entering into the deal with Iran over Chabahar port. India's role in Chabahar can provide a new momentum to the country's economic march. The Chabahar deal, no doubt, is a major achievement of the Modi government. Besides the advantages that it will bring from Central Asia, it will help India consolidate its gains in Afghanistan, where New Delhi has been investing considerably in various fields to rebuild that war-torn country. The only land route for India to reach Afghanistan is through Pakistan which is not available to it because of Islamabad's suspicions and a short-sighted approach. (Contd on page 21)

(News Agencies) India had been anxiously waiting for the opportunity that came its way when the US, the UN and the European Union lifted in January this year most of their sanctions against Iran following a positive report by the International Atomic Energy Agency over Tehran's controversial nuclear programme. New Delhi soon began negotiations with Tehran and in May, it reached a strategically significant agreement with the Persian Gulf nation to develop its Chabahar port and related infrastructure to bring it to a level when it can easily compete with

Pakistan's Gwadar port, located at a distance of just 72 km in Balochistan. Of course, India's involvement in the Iranian project with a credit line of \$500 million is not as big as that of China in Gwadar port, but the deal, signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Tehran, is considered a game-changing development in the region.

India has now got an assured and direct access to Afghanistan and Central Asia — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. The development is bound to push up



Story  
 ON Page  
 31

**Of love & Laurels**



# New York City Mayor's Office Announces \$1 Million Grant

**Grant will provide low-cost training for journalists to improve familiarity with new digital technologies State-of-the-art broadcast facility to be officially named the "Made in NY Broadcast Center"**

(Press Release) NEW YORK – Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment (MOME) Commissioner Julie Menin and CUNY Graduate School of Journalism (J-School) Dean Sarah Bartlett today announced that MOME will grant \$1 million to the J-School to create new programs to help New York City's community and ethnic media outlets stay competitive in the current media landscape, and bring them further into the digital age. This funding will allow a major expansion of training opportunities for journalists working at these publications, which have an enormous readership and are of vital importance to communities around the city. In addition, the J-School's broadcast facilities will be officially renamed the "Made in NY Broadcast

Center" in recognition of MOME's commitment to this important element of New York's media sector.

"The diversity and breadth of New York City's community and ethnic media reflects the diversity of our city as a whole, and it is crucially important to keep these outlets thriving," said MOME Commissioner Julie Menin. "These publications add key perspective to our local news landscape, and they keep New Yorkers in the know – whether their native language is English or Bangla. We look forward to collaborating with the J-School on this important initiative, which builds on their history of providing excellent training for journalists at ethnic and community publications."

"Since 2006, the CUNY Graduate

School of Journalism has been dedicated to opening doors for a diversity of reporters and ensuring that everyone in the media industry has access to the new tools of the trade," said CUNY J-School Dean Bartlett. "This partnership with the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, which ensures that the community and ethnic press throughout New York City will have many opportunities to benefit from professional training sessions, recognizes and builds on the CUNY J-School's track record. We look forward to working together and feel assured of the many positive results in the community and ethnic media sector to come."

"We are thrilled to see this investment in CUNY's Center for Community and

Ethnic Media, who are tremendous partners in building bridges between ethnic and community media outlets and city agencies. Mayor de Blasio's administration has deepened its commitment to ethnic and community media outlets in terms of both earned and paid media outreach, and today's announcement is a significant expansion of these efforts," said Commissioner Nisha Agarwal of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. "This MOME grant will build the capacity of ethnic and community media to build successful digital operations. These outlets play a crucial role in informing immigrant communities of city services and news."

## ***Curtain Raiser held for 2016 Hicksville INDIA DAY PARADE***



(Press Release) Long Island- From a great beginning to an exciting start, India Day Parade 2016 launched the parade activities with its curtain raiser event in the presence of CHair Been Kothari & her team. A special guest Dr. Udit Raj, Member of Parliament, India and several organization and community leaders & representatives from Indo-American business, professional, trade, religious, and cultural organizations too part in the event. During the vent it was announced that this year, India Day Parade in Hicksville will be held on Saturday, August 6, 2016 from 3PM onwards. Parade will start from starting from 415 S. Broadway & will be followed by cultural & entertainment events.

## ***Top ISIL leaders killed in US airstrike: Pentagon***

Washington: Two top ISIL commanders have been killed in the US airstrike in the Iraqi city of Mosul, the Pentagon has announced and hoped that this would help in liberating Mosul from the control of the dreaded terror group. "Coalition forces conducted an airstrike against two ISIL senior military commanders on June 25 near Mosul, resulting in their deaths," the Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said yesterday.

"The precision strike killed Basim Muhammad Ahmad Sultan al-Bajari, ISIL's deputy minister of war, and Hatim Talib al-Hamduni, an ISIL military commander in Mosul," Cook said. These deaths are the latest in coalition efforts to

systemically eliminate ISIL's cabinet wherever they hide, disrupting their ability to plot external terror attacks and hold onto the territory they use to claim legitimacy, he said in a statement. Cook said the international coalition fighting ISIL, working with local, capable, and motivated forces on the ground in Iraq and Syria, continues to make sustained progress in our campaign to deal ISIL a lasting defeat.

"In recent days, the coalition has freed Fallujah from ISIL's grip; launched devastating strikes against ISIL forces fleeing that city; completed the encirclement of Manbij, a key node in the flow of foreign fighters between Syria and Turkey; and started to clear

key terrain south of Mosul of ISIL forces," he added. "In addition to making operationally significant strides in our campaign to defeat ISIL, we continue to look for - and seize - every opportunity to hasten it," Cook said.

Al-Bajari was an experienced terrorist, a former member of al-Qaeda who brought his military skills into ISIL's terrorist network. He oversaw ISIL's June 2014 offensive to capture Mosul, and has also led the ISIL Jaysh al-Dabiq battalion known for using vehicle-borne IEDs, suicide bombers and mustard gas in its attacks. He used his military experience to consolidate ISIL's control over Mosul, where they have engaged in dictatorial rule and sectarian murder and oppression since 2014.

Hatim Talib al-Hamduni was an ISIL military commander in Mosul and the head of military police for self-proclaimed Ninawa state. "Their deaths, along with strikes against other ISIL leaders in the past month, have critically degraded ISIL's leadership experience in Mosul and removed two of their most senior military members in Northern Iraq," Cook said.

## ***Indian-Origin Web Expert Faces Jail For Fraud In UK***

LONDON: A 31-year-old Indian-origin web manager charged with siphoning off nearly 100,000 pounds from his boss' firm is facing jail in the UK. Gaurav Sachan, who worked as digital head for home improvement firm Alison At Home, pleaded guilty to fraud by abuse of position and was on Tuesday released on bail to appear before Southwark Crown Court in London next month. Gaurav is accused of stealing 91,568 pounds from celebrity interior designer Alison Cork. The fraud occurred between March and December 2014 by reported. Gaurav helped divert the funds into someone else's account by altering the account details held in the

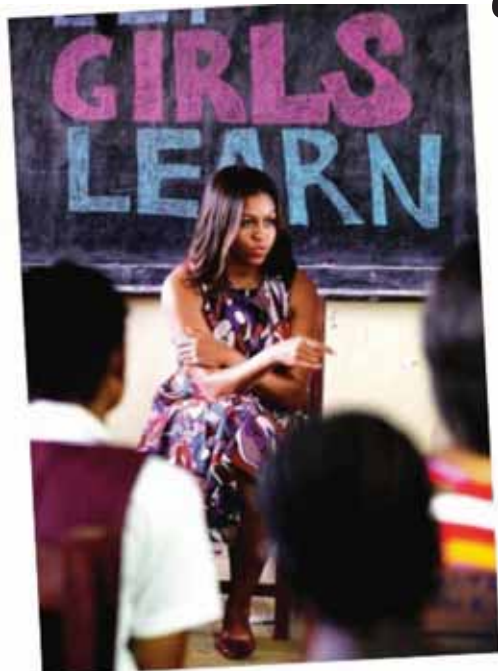


firm's name. Prosecutors accepted his guilty plea ahead of a proposed trial this week and Gaurav will now be

sentenced on July 25. Another accounts manager at the business was jailed in February last year for stealing 23,000 pounds from the company. Abeyomi Ogunagbadaro, 45, was given a 16-month sentence for embezzling the cash and then laundering it via two of his friends' bank accounts. Ogunagbadaro had been sacked after only two months back in 2014 for poor performance but his fraud only came to light once he had left the firm. Alison Cork, who launched the home improvement business in 2012, is a well-known interior designer and also appears on television makeover shows in the UK.



# Morocco's royal welcome to Michelle & daughters



(Agencies) MICHELLE Obama and her daughters touched down in Morocco on the next leg of their six-day trip to promote education in Africa on Monday evening, where they were welcomed by King Mohammed VI's wife Princess Lalla Selma at the airport. The first lady and her family landed at Menara Airport in Marrakesh after spending the day at a leadership camp for girls in Liberia, where she urged the teens in one of the world's poorest countries to keep fighting to stay in school. With her own teenage daughters Malia and Sasha joining her, Obama told the girls she was "just so thrilled to be here with you." "I'm here to shine a big bright light on you," she said. Education for girls is the central theme of the first lady's six-day trip, which also includes a stop in Spain after Morocco. Michelle, who is travelling with her mother Marian Robinson and her daughters Malia, 17,



who recently graduated from high school, and Sasha, 15, was welcomed on her arrival in Liberia with a red carpet and traditional dancers. In connection with the first lady's visit, USAID announced up to \$27 million in funding in Liberia programming for Let Girls Learn, an initiative launched by Michelle and President Barack Obama last year. She has since travelled the globe to call for greater support for the millions of girls kept away from school or forced to abandon their studies.

Liberia was battered by civil wars between 1989 and 2003. Ebola swept the country in 2014, killing more than 4,800. Schools were closed for months. The country was founded as part of an effort to resettle freed American slaves and has deep ties to the United States. The country's oldest vocational high school, located in Kakata, is named for African-American civil rights activist Booker T Washington. The school



suspended midterm exams scheduled to start Monday "to allow the students to give Mrs Obama a rousing welcome to appreciate what the United States has done for us," principal Harris Tarnue said. "She will be a real inspiration to the young girls around here," he said.

## US-led strikes pound Islamic State in Iraq, kill 250 fighters

(Agencies) US-led coalition aircraft waged a series of deadly strikes against Islamic State around the city of Falluja on Wednesday, US officials told Reuters, with one citing a preliminary estimate of at least 250 suspected fighters killed and at least 40 vehicles destroyed. If the figures are confirmed, the strikes would be among the most deadly ever against the jihadist group. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the operation and noted preliminary estimates can change. The strikes, which the officials said took place south of the city, where civilians have also been displaced, are just the latest battlefield setback suffered by Islamic State in its self-proclaimed "caliphate" of Iraq and Syria. The group's territorial losses are not diminishing concerns about its intent and ability to strike abroad though. Turkey pointed the finger at Islamic State on Wednesday for a triple suicide bombing and gun attack that killed 41 people at Istanbul's main airport. CIA chief John Brennan told a forum in Washington the attack bore the hallmarks of Islamic State



"depravity" and acknowledged there was a long road ahead battling the group, particularly its ability to incite attacks. "We've made, I think, some significant progress, along with our

coalition partners, in Syria and Iraq, where most of the ISIS members are resident right now," Brennan said.

"But ISIS' ability to continue to propagate its narrative, as well as to incite

and carry out these attacks -- I think we still have a ways to go before we're able to say that we have made some significant progress against them." On the battlefield, the US-led campaign against Islamic State has moved up a gear in recent weeks, with the government declaring victory over Islamic State in Falluja. An alliance of militias have also launched a major offensive against the militant group in the city of Manbij in northern Syria. Still, in a reminder of the back-and-forth nature of the war, US-backed Syrian rebels were pushed back from the outskirts of an Islamic State-held town on the border with Iraq and a nearby air base on Wednesday after the jihadists mounted a counter-attack, two rebel sources said.

## US lifts ban on transgenders to serve in the military

(Agencies) Washington: In a historic decision, the Pentagon has lifted the ban on transgender Americans to serve in the United States military, a move which is being hailed across the country. "We are ending the ban on transgender Americans in the United States military," Defense Secretary Ashton Carter told reporters at a Pentagon news conference. "Effective immediately, transgender Americans may serve openly and they can no longer be discharged or otherwise separated from the military just for being transgender," he said. He said the gender identity of an otherwise qualified individual will not bar them from military service or for any accession program. "In taking the steps, we are eliminating policies that can result in transgender members being treated differently from their peers based solely upon their gender identity rather than upon their ability to serve and we are confirming that going forward we will apply the same general principles, standards and procedures to transgender service members as we do to all serviced members," Carter said. According to a RAND study, there are about 2,500 people out of approximately 1.3 million active-duty service members and about 1,500 out of 8,25,000 reserve service numbers are transgender, with the upper end of their range of estimates of around 7,000 in the active component and 4,000 in the reserves.

# Ancient Temple of Mexican Otomi Indians Damaged

(Agencies) MEXICO CITY — Assailants have damaged an ancient Otomi Indian religious site in Mexico, toppling stone structures used as altars, breaking carved stones and scattering offerings of flowers, fruit and paintings at the remote mountain shrine known as Mayonihka or Mexico Chiquito. The attack was unusual in a country where few ancient pre-Hispanic religious sites remain functioning. A researcher who interviewed some of the attackers said they identified themselves as Jehovah's Witnesses and viewed the altars as blasphemy. However, the spokesman for the Jehovah's Witnesses in Mexico said Tuesday that the allegation appeared to be false. A local official in the state of Hidalgo said Monday that some local residents were angered by what believed to be idolatry and had damaged the remote site.

"I don't know what religion they belong to, but they destroyed several images that were there," said Daniel

Garcia, the municipal secretary of the nearby township of San Bartolo Tutotepec. "The thing is, there are some religions that don't believe in using idols." Luis Perez Lugo, a professor at the University of Chapingo, visited the site in May and talked to residents of a nearby hamlet, El Pinal, whose residents said they had carried out the attack. "I was there, and the Jehovah's Witnesses said they had done it," Perez Lugo said, noting some were recent converts to the religion who used to go to the site for Otomi ceremonies. "They said it (the pre-Hispanic ceremonies) weren't in their Bible, and, in their words, they said it was piggish, garbage that wasn't in the Bible, and so they went to clear out what was offensive to their God." Gamaliel Camarillo, the Jehovah's Witness spokesman in Mexico, said that "to the extent we have been able to investigate, we found this story to be false." "We know that if we want to be respected, we have

to respect others," Camarillo wrote. "People without prejudices who know the Jehovah's Witnesses know that we don't promote such acts." The site itself, deep in the forest near a river, is not particularly elaborate. There a few ancient stone walls, some with bas-relief carvings. But it is significant in a country where most Indian religious sites were demolished or built-over over to make way for churches centuries ago. Jaime Chavez, an Otomi poet who leads the group Otomi Nation, said Indians from several states "use the site to perform ceremonies for Mother Nature, and some even do weddings or baptisms." "The important thing is the (natural) space, not the objects" destroyed in the attack, said Chavez. "You can get more objects. What the elders want is for them to stop invading, or destroying the site." Chavez said the elders, known as badi, had apparently reached a sort of informal agreement with the intruders to leave the site in peace.

But the attack sparked a debate about how the ceremonial site should be protected. Perez Lugo tried to hold an Indian conference there, including a ceremony meant to apologize to the gods for the damage. But other Indians objected, saying only local elders should hold ceremonies there. Perez Lugo attributed the resistance to academic rivalries between archaeologists, anthropologists and others who study Mayonihka. A bigger danger is possible government intervention. Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History is charged with guarding and preserving archaeological sites, but many Otomis don't want it to take over. "The authorities shouldn't get ahead of themselves or try to fence off the area and make it into a dead zone" like many other ceremonial sites now covered by churches or used as tourist attractions. "What people want is for this to continue to be a living area" for ceremonial use.

## \$39 domestic flights are coming to NYC

(Agencies) New Yorkers can soon fly on a budget. Starting in November, Allegiant air will be selling one-way flights from Newark, NJ, to Cincinnati; Knoxville, Tenn.; Savannah, Ga.; and Asheville, NC, for as low as \$39. Meanwhile, Wow airlines is offering one-way trips from Newark to Iceland starting at \$99, and to London, Paris, Berlin and Frankfurt, Germany, for \$149. Although Allegiant travels to 117 domestic cities, only those four nonstop routes will be available from Newark at the start.

"We think we provide something really unique. At Newark, we'll be the first," Lukas Johnson, Allegiant's vice president of planning, told USA Today. He's referring to the "ultra low-cost carrier" budget airlines like Spirit and Frontier, which fly out of La Guardia Airport. Though like those other carriers, budget airline customers should be prepared to pay for extras like carry-on luggage and assigned seats. If you pay with a credit card, for example, you'll get an \$8 surcharge. Many budget carriers maintain their low cost by flying into smaller regional airports with lower landing fees — like Ogdensburg, NY. "Our new air crafts are fuel efficient and we use technology wherever possible and sell everything through our Web site," Skuli Mogensen, founder

# Miss Teen USA Pageant Dumps the Swimsuit

(Agencies) Miss Teen USA is getting rid of swimsuits and swapping bikinis for athletic wear starting with the next pageant, on July 30.

The switch is aimed at "highlighting a healthy lifestyle" for younger viewers, said Michael Antinoro, the head of original content at IMG, a talent agency that last year bought the Miss Universe Organization, including Miss Teen USA, a contest for 14- to 19-year-old girls, from Donald J. Trump. But there are no plans to remove the controversial, skin-

baring display from the organization's competitions for adult women, Miss USA, and Miss Universe, he said in a telephone interview. "For Miss Universe and Miss USA, that's a very important part of the competition and will continue to be an important part of the competition," Mr. Antinoro said. Replacing the teenagers' swimsuits with athletic wear — which he defined as clothes the contestants might wear to the gym or yoga class — should not be seen as "anti-swimsuit," he said. Whether through swimsuits or athletic wear, the aim is to "celebrate being healthy, and being in shape and being comfortable in your own skin," he added. It's part of a continuing effort to distance the pageants from their roots: a competition based entirely on the contestants' appearance. In recent years, organizers have sought to focus on the offstage lives of the women and girls, pushing their accomplishments and charity work, but criticism remains steady. "Although pageant officials and contestants emphasize scholarships, talents and platform issues and repackage the swimsuit competition as

the 'lifestyle and fitness' category, their rhetoric rings hollow," Blain Roberts, a historian, wrote in 2013. "Beauty

and restrictive and perpetuate a damaging link between real world success and a woman's capacity to

cultivate a very specific, stereotypical definition of beauty." Paula Shugart, the president of the Miss Universe Organization, said in a letter to state directors this week that the pageant was "committed to continuing to evolve in ways that celebrate women's strength, confidence and beauty for years to come." "This decision reflects an important cultural shift we're all celebrating that empowers women who



pageants should go the way of the corset," Courtney E. Martin, an author, wrote the same year "They're outdated

lead active, purposeful lives and encourage those in their communities to do the same," she wrote.

## Travelers to Dominican Republic Lead New York City in Positive Zika Tests

(Agencies) More than half of those who have tested positive for the Zika virus in New York City had traveled in recent months to the Dominican Republic, the city's health department said on Wednesday, releasing data from its latest round of testing. The results were a stark reminder that, as the summer travel season begins, many of the most popular destinations for New Yorkers in the Caribbean and Latin America pose a serious health risk, especially for pregnant women. The new and more detailed data — which broke down cases by borough and by travel history — was issued in a health alert to doctors and health care providers across the city. Dr. Mary T. Bassett, the city's health commissioner, said that of the 233 people who have tested positive, 140 had reported recently arriving from the Dominican Republic. After the Dominican Republic, the places most frequently visited by patients who tested positive for the virus were Puerto Rico, with 20 cases, and Guyana, the small South American nation, with 14. Dr. Bassett said the results should not be used to stigmatize any group, but to raise awareness. "It won't serve New Yorkers well if we create the impression that Zika is a Dominican problem or a Puerto Rico problem or a Guyana problem," she said. A vast majority of people who contract the virus, spread most commonly by mosquitoes, have no symptoms, and those who do become sick generally experience only mild illness. Pregnant women, however, face a different set of dangers. Zika poses the greatest risk to a developing fetus, and has been linked to a number of birth defects, including microcephaly, a condition that causes children to be born with abnormally small heads and brain damage.



# Uttarakhand cloudburst: Toll at 30, disaster relief dispatched



TV grabs show the destruction caused by torrential rains and landslides that hit Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh and Chamoli districts on Friday killing at least 30 people with many others missing. CM Harish Rawat announced ₹2 lakh for the kin of each deceased.

## NEXT 72 HOURS CRITICAL

■ The Centre on Friday rushed rescue teams of National Disaster Response Force to Uttarakhand, which has been hit by torrential rains & landslides

■ Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh spoke to Chief Minister Harish Rawat over phone and took stock of the situation arising out of the cloudburst and heavy rains in Pithoragarh and Chamoli districts

■ All major rivers in the hilly tracts have also swollen after over 54 mm rainfall was recorded in the state in the last 24-hours. River Alaknanda has risen above the danger level mark

■ The Met department has issued a warning of heavy rains in isolated places in Uttarakhand especially Nainital, Udham Singh Nagar and Champawat districts over the next 72 hours starting Saturday morning

■ Light to moderate rains are likely at most places during the period, the Met department said. Nainital, Udham Singh Nagar, Champawat, Almora, Pauri, Haridwar, Dehradun & Tehri may be hit by very heavy rains during the period

■ Official sources said the district administration concerned have been asked to remain alert in view of the Met department warning

■ The Thal-Munsyari road has been cut off and dozens of vehicles remain stranded on both sides



BSF to spend ₹20 crore on J&K border.

## India plans Israel-like invincible borders

By Jitendra Bahadur Singh

INDIA is planning to build impregnable defences along the borders with Pakistan in a project modelled after Israeli security mechanisms, according to highly-placed official sources.

Code-named Operation Chakravayuh, the project aims to plug any possible routes for terrorists to infiltrate into India, be it land, air or sea, top military and home-ministry sources told India Today TV.

Under Operation Chakravayuh, a network of highly-sensitive sensors, radars, cameras, optical fibre and automatic guns will be laid along the Pakistan border, which will be linked to a round-the-clock control room, they said.

Authorities have already done preparatory work for installation of detection devices underground and undersea, according to the sources. Six types of sensors will be used in the border-securing scheme. To start with, locations have been identified in Jammu and Kashmir and

### Project aims to plug all routes of terrorist infiltration

Gujarat to induct equipment at every few kilometres as part of an initial project starting this month, defence and BSF sources said.

The BSF will spend between ₹18 and ₹20 crore in Jammu and Kashmir alone for the

initial phase of the overall plan, according to official documents accessed by India Today TV. Devices are being procured from several companies for the first round of the project. Radars with 360-degree detection capabilities will alert control rooms about potential infiltrations. There will be active cameras and subsequently there will be automatic guns to shoot intruders down on the spot, officials explained.

Similarly, large underground and under-sea sensors will beam scanned images of infiltrators back to the control room for swift response. Besides, airborne versatile micro-aerostat balloons fitted with high-quality surveillance cameras along the borders will monitor the skies. All systems will be integrated together for coordinated action, sources said.

# The revolt in Brexit

*Anxieties arising from the collapse of the welfare state lie behind the vote.*



attacked and destroyed by the US and NATO: Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Somalia and Yemen, backed up by those from West and Central Africa. They were the targets of attack because of their wealth in terms of natural resources and for strategic reasons linked with the new Cold War with its imagined threat from Russia, China and North Korea that helped to bolster the arms trade. So the Brexit fear of immigrants from Eastern Europe is as much a myth as the war threat from the East is. But it creates confusion in minds suffering from the collapse of the welfare state services, stagnant wages and crushing unemployment. It is from this angle then that we have to cope with confusion because it exacerbates the

FOR Anyone who attended the fourth conference of the Trade Unions International of Workers in Agriculture, Food, Commerce, Textiles and Allied Industries in Paris from June 13 to 16, with delegates from 86 countries of the world, or participated in the million strong demonstration through the Paris streets on June 14, the Brexit vote was no surprise. In fact, what was surprising was it took so long to materialise.

To some, the British rejection is inspired by events in that country. So Brexit was coming, but the British collusion in the wars of West Asia, Afghanistan and the Balkans under the flag of NATO delayed the process.

There are still two major aspects of the people's consciousness to tackle. The first is immigration. The immigrants are mostly refugees from countries

Delegate after delegate highlighted how in different countries, inequalities of income were growing, assets of the people were being plundered by a handful of rich and the multinationals, inflation was eroding incomes while unemployment kept increasing. In this background, policy decisions were imposed on governments by financial institutions that have amassed huge reserves well above the total debt burden of developing countries. Yet they continued to squeeze the majority of their citizens, in the name of austerity measures, increasing workload, and hire and fire policies under the cover of creating flexibility in employment.

Every country in Europe has seen the dismantling of the post-war welfare state that evolved as a response to the Soviet bloc straddling nearly half of the continent. But it has taken a generation for the truth to dawn on the mass of Europeans. We have seen upsurges in Spain, Greece, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Poland, Portugal and Italy. Countries like Iceland could survive the austerity noose as they were not a part of the European Union.

## Parched and thirsty: A different form of liquidity crisis



Water scarcity is a global phenomenon and India is no exception to this. The reasons for this are not far to seek. They range from agro-climatic to sheer human population pressure. And as writer P Sainath has said, the water crisis in India is 'policy-driven' and not so much related to the monsoon. Since water is just a partly renewable resource, there is a cost to its extraction and use. This cost is not shared uniformly by all sections of society, as has been pointed out by various studies. For example, water for human consumption is sometimes charged at a rate that's substantially higher than what is paid for making, say, a

bottle of cold drink or beer. And this is a cost that's hidden because it is not something paid over the counter. The country's water crisis has been induced also by a skewed irrigation policy. India has 140 million hectares under cultivation, and, less than 50% of that, just 62 million hectares, is irrigated. Take, for example, Vidarbha, which falls in a rain-shadow area. Following the drought in the region in 1992, 15 irrigation projects were cleared. The Vidarbha Irrigation Development Corporation had once about 100 major, medium and minor irrigation projects in the pipeline. Most of them still remain on paper. And contrast this with Punjab, where

faultlines that exist in society as the Brexit has done in the case of Northern Ireland and Scotland, both of whom voted at sharp variance with England. The history of hundreds of years of oppression of the Irish people, who even succeeded in liberating a part of their country in the face of British obduracy, has now found a voice in the pro-EU vote they have cast. Scotland too, while it gave the Stuart Kings to Britain, never really integrated with the United Kingdom as it became the happy hunting ground of landlords, who drove out the peasants and found an outlet for them in the colonies.

Today what is far worse is the xenophobia that has afflicted individuals. The sense of losses going into trillions of dollars afflicting the predatory classes is also sought to be covered up by blaming immigrants and not the policies of the very people who followed the free market dispensation. Rather than becoming the targets of their own working class, they are

looking for convenient scapegoats. They will not only create tensions between themselves over rising and falling currencies and their effect on the imports and exports, but they will divert the anger of the people from themselves to relatively helpless immigrant communities as Hitler did with the Jews. Worse, weaker economies will look for plunder in fresh pastures to make up for their losses, actual or imagined. What they need is empty threats and xenophobia rather than any real basis for conflict. In such conditions, destructive conflicts have been unleashed by the NATO and its allies, but they are getting too close to Russia for comfort. The only way to counter this is by uniting the working people as the French unions are doing and to extend the struggles against unemployment, for food security, keeping prices of food and education down, as well as respect for the sovereignty of all national and international boundaries on the basis of mutual trust, freedom of movement and respect for democratic rights and principles of all concerned.

paddy, a water-guzzler, is grown and irrigation for this has been made possible chiefly because of the political clout of the farming community. This is one aspect of the problem. Another is that water resources are being given by several states to bidding parties. In the early 2000s, Andhra Pradesh (then undivided) did away with its irrigation development corporation. This meant an increasing number of borewells, dug chiefly by rich farmers, and as a result, the groundwater level went down. And since irrigation is not picking up in the way desired, groundwater is the only fallback option for our farmers. Sometimes the rationale for such differentiated pricing is that it is linked to employment generation. This is no doubt true. But since this is something that affects every individual directly, this is a national problem and we must get the right policies to tackle it. Many of our national problems are in some way or the other related to water. A water activist in her book had said "water could become a multi-trillion-dollar industry in the future". Hence without appropriate policy choices and discipline over consumption, we would be staring at problems that could have been precluded.

# *I Hate Donald Trump, But I Might Vote For Him*

No Trump campaign buttons or bumper stickers for me. I'm part of the new silent majority: those who don't like Donald Trump but might vote for him anyway. For many of us, Trump has only one redeeming quality: He isn't Hillary Clinton. He doesn't want to turn the United States into a politically correct, free-milk-and-cookies, European-style social democracy where every kid (and adult, too) gets a trophy just for showing up.

Members of this new silent majority, many of us front-wave baby boomers, value hard work and love the United States the way it was. We long for a bygone era when you didn't need "safe spaces" on college campuses to shelter students from the atrocity of dissenting opinions, lest their sensibilities be offended. We have the reckless notion that college is the one place where sensibilities are supposed to be challenged and debated. Silly us.

And please don't try to stereotype us. We're not uneducated, uninformed, unemployed or low-income zealots. We're affluent, well-educated, gainfully employed and successfully retired. Some of us even own our own business, or did before we retired, creating not only our own job but also employment for others. While we're fiscally conservative, we're not tea partiers. And on certain social issues, many of us even have some leftward leanings. Shhhh . . .

Our view of the media is old-school, too - just the facts, please. Before his untimely death some years ago, Tim Russert of "Meet the Press" set the standard for "fair and balanced" by grilling both Democratic and Republican politicians in a way that never betrayed his personal political persuasions. That still works fine. It's just damn hard to find.

The only pleasure the new silent majority has taken throughout this primary season has been watching progressives marinate in their own righteous indignation. They were giddy, like spoiled children opening Christmas presents, as they watched 17 Republican combatants call in airstrikes on one another. But eventually the tables turned as the Hillary-Bernie slugfest got ugly, and we took particular delight in the sourpuss expression on the faces of the lefties we know when they realized that the Republicans, left for dead, suddenly had new life and a chance to win the presidency.

We are under no illusions about Trump. We know that this Man Who Would Be King is a classic bully and a world-class demagogue in his personal, professional and political lives. He will continue to demonize his perceived enemies and take the low road at every opportunity.

And we know that if Trump makes it all the way to 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., the view after that is murky at best. We're confident that he will surround himself with smart and capable people from the business world, as well as some Capitol Hill veterans. But here's the rub: Past business associates describe him as a micromanager who likes yes men at his side. How long this new Washington brain trust will last in a Trump administration is anybody's guess.

Who's to blame for the Trump phenomenon? There's culpability on both sides of the aisle for the absence of bipartisanship that fueled his rise. The left blames the policies of a fragmented, delusional, right-wing GOP. But the left bears responsibility, too. Turns out that the obstructers in Congress weren't just the Republicans, as Bob Woodward reported in his book "The Price of Politics." President Barack Obama kept "moving the goal posts" in the 2011 sequester negotiations with Republicans. And who can forget the way Republicans were bullied over health care? They were left with no choice but to use every procedural maneuver in their arsenal to block, delay or postpone the liberal legislative agenda.

So why then would rational, affluent, informed citizens consider voting for The Donald? Short of not voting at all - still an option some of us are considering - he's the only one who appears to want to preserve the American way of life as we know it. For the new silent majority, the alternative to Trump is bleak: a wealthy, entitled progressive with a national security scandal in her hip pocket. In our view, the thought of four to eight more years of a progressive agenda polluting the American Dream is even more dangerous to the survival of this country than Trump is.

So come Nov. 8, you'll find many of us sheepishly sneaking into voting booths across the United States. Even after warily pulling the curtain closed behind us, we'll still be looking over our shoulders to make sure the deed is shielded from view. Then, fighting a gag reflex, we'll pull the lever. We hate Donald Trump. But he just might get our vote.

# *What Comes After the Istanbul Airport Attack?*

ON Tuesday night, just as millions of Muslims here were breaking their Ramadan fasts, three terrorists attacked the city's busy airport. They fired randomly at passengers with automatic weapons before blowing themselves up. They killed 41 innocent people, most of them Muslims, supposedly in the name of Islam. The assault on the airport is the latest in a series of horrible traumas in Turkey. In the past year, the country has endured almost a dozen major terrorist attacks. Some were the work of the Islamic State, which kills in the name of God; others were the work of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or P.K.K., which kills in the name of the people.

This country was much more peaceful a year ago. It was only last summer that a two-year-old peace process between the government and the P.K.K. fell apart. Meanwhile, the Islamic State, which initially benefited from Turkey's lax control of the Syrian border, began to carry its violence inside Turkey. Islamic State suicide bombers first aimed at secular Kurds, then Western tourists and finally random people at the airport. Since last summer, the Islamic State has been condemning Ankara as the capital of an "apostate regime" that allies itself with "Crusaders." The group's Turkish-language magazine proclaimed: "O Istanbul, you have allowed disbelief in your avenues. You have filled your streets with sins, but surely you will be conquered." The jihadist group and Turkey have been at war since last summer, when American planes began taking off from an air base in Turkey on their missions to bomb Islamic State targets. Since January, the conflict has escalated: The Islamic State began shelling the border town of Kilis, and the Turkish Army retaliated. More recently, Turkey supported an operation by a rebel group called the Syrian Democratic Forces to wrest the town of Manbij in northern Syria from the Islamic State's grasp. Turkey also supports Islamist rebels in Syria that oppose the Islamic State. No wonder a Turkish intelligence report warned in early June that the Islamic State would soon seek revenge. The group can hit soft targets inside Turkey, the report added, specifically mentioning Istanbul's airport. Sources say that thanks to this warning, security had been heightened at the airport, perhaps preventing more deaths. Where will we go from here? The reaction from the government is sure to be severe. Raids on Islamic State cells in Turkey will most likely increase. So will airport security. Intelligence efforts will be stepped up and the border monitored more closely. But security and intelligence measures alone won't bring an end to the bloodshed.

Turkey has become so vulnerable lately because it is polarized internally and isolated externally. This is not the result of a "global conspiracy," as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's propaganda machine keeps saying. It is the result of the president's rigid, divisive and combative policies. He has picked fights with our neighbors and tried to crush his opponents at home. Now his government is finally taking steps to repair some of the damage. The start of reconciliation with both Israel and Russia, which came as happy news just before the airport attack, are steps in the right direction. A pledge by Prime Minister Binali Yildirim seems promising: "We will increase the number of our friends; we will decrease the number of our enemies."



ISSN No. 1554 06X

Chairman: Karam Singh Thind (Honorary)

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A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

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# No fiasco at Seoul

*PM Modi's search for support for India's NSG bid around the world shows leadership, not desperation.*

The Seoul plenary of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) ended on June 24 without a "conclusive" decision on India's membership bid. This has sparked partisan sniping in India, where the Congress party has accused the Modi government of showing "desperation" in its diplomacy. It has also spurred a flurry of commentary about the "failure" of India's bid. Both statements are untrue, and miss the larger picture: India has made significant progress toward its quest for NSG membership, a long and complicated multilateral pursuit. This effort did not begin in June 2016, but has been underway for several years. India should keep pressing for a decision. For those who woke up to India's interest in NSG membership only over the past month, it likely appears that the run-up to the June plenary — with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to Switzerland, the US, and Mexico — was a fast-and-furious diplomatic press with a disappointing outcome. A positive decision certainly would have been a welcome result, for New Delhi and for its supporters in Washington and in many other capitals around the world. But imagine the counterfactual: Had India sat back quietly, mentioning its NSG bid only in passing, the participating governments in the NSG would have concluded that New Delhi placed little priority on membership. I doubt that would have positioned India's candidacy more favourably.

This leads to lesson number one. The 48 members of the NSG are seeing India's clear interest in making the rules that organise the world, in consonance with its larger position in the global economy and rising global power. The fact that the prime minister made clear his search for support at the highest levels around the world shows leadership, not "desperation."

India has interests in joining a number of other multilateral organisations in which it presently does not hold membership, from the UN Security Council to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum to others, and will need to keep up active diplomatic strategies across multiple levels to advance its candidacies. That each of these will not come to fruition exactly when India wants is no reason for New Delhi to either stop trying or downplay its

diplomatic efforts. On the question of the NSG, India's membership bid has always been a complex and ideological affair. The organisation was originally formed as a result of India's 1974 nuclear test, and over the years it has developed its own "Factors to be Considered" for membership. India's stance as a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty — for its own well-documented reasons — means that it will appear to a number of countries for which the NPT looms large as not meeting a basic threshold.

The US has stated publicly on numerous occasions that it views India, based on its record of responsible nuclear technology stewardship, its unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, its export control laws, its safeguards agreement with

the International Atomic Energy Agency, and its publicly stated commitments to disarmament and nonproliferation, as ready for NSG membership. Essentially, Washington has argued that India's responsible stance advanced nuclear technology in the same way that the NSG members do. But some countries that have staked much of their international diplomacy on nonproliferation matters, like Ireland and New Zealand, may require further convincing still.

Which brings us to the matter of decision by consensus. A consensus-based organisation functions very differently from a majority or super-majority voting process. If the NSG used a majority vote process, India likely already would have been inducted as a member. However, it does

not, and that means even one holdout can prevent a decision. As a US government official explained to me, at Seoul only a handful of countries continued to have process concerns. Notably, the NSG plenary public statement from Seoul does not speak of a negative decision on the question of how to induct non-NPT countries into the NSG. Rather, it "decided to continue the discussion." Lesson number two: Continuing the discussion is not a diplomatic failure. (If it were, the US-India civil nuclear agreement could have been called a failure many times on the road to its completion.) India's diplomacy, and indeed the concerted engagement of high-level US State Department and White House officials over the course of the past weeks, have brought more than 40 countries on board as supporters of Indian membership. The challenge ahead — to convince remaining holdouts — is much smaller than when this process began.

A path to successful NSG membership still exists for India, including the possibility of calling an "Extraordinary Plenary"

meeting of the NSG later this year instead of waiting for next year's plenary meeting. (The September 2008 exemption for India took place through an Extraordinary Plenary.) India and the countries supporting its bid can and should continue building India's case for membership, which will be strengthened even further with India's Missile Technology Control Regime membership. The most vocal holdout, China, should hear from dozens of countries that have made firm commitments to support Indian membership, like Russia, France, and the United Kingdom. Holding out against Indian membership to seek parity for Pakistan on an issue in which Pakistan possesses the most egregiously bad track record in the world has no rationale, and is embarrassing for Chinese diplomacy. Given its fraught history, nothing about India's pursuit of NSG membership has been easy. But that is no reason to critique the effort or assume failure. If anything, the Seoul plenary sends encouraging signals to keep at it.

## Don't merge loss-making banks, privatise them

The final results of the public sector banks (PSBs) for fiscal 2015-16 have been declared. The results, as expected, were poor and the government, being owner of PSBs, has been paying utmost attention to the banking situation and initiating various actions such as strengthening the selection process of the top management, setting up a stressed assets fund and recovery tribunal, and legislating a bankruptcy code.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley observed that the losses by banks were mainly on account of higher provisioning of bad loans, especially in the last two quarters, in well-known stressed sectors such as infrastructure, steel, and textiles, and that the government has sufficiently empowered banks to recover their dues. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also initiated major policy steps to help PSBs to maintain robust books.

The key factors for the gloomy performance of commercial banks are both global and domestic. Globally, world economies are recovering slower than expected, and oil prices are beginning to rise again. Domestically, though India is a bright spot in the world economy, growth is below its potential.

The government has already allocated sufficient funds to recapitalise the banks over the next few years. But when it is time to consider whether the taxpayer has to bail out PSBs and write off their losses, should the employees, including the top management, of a loss-making commercial bank not share the cost too?

In pursuing the objective of consolidating banks, the government has announced that State Bank of India (SBI) and its associates would be merged. Earlier, in 2009, the Rakesh Mohan-led Committee on Financial

Sector Assessment had proposed that the RBI should create a conducive environment for mergers and amalgamations. The merger of PSBs had been recommended even earlier in 1998 by the M. Narasimham-led Committee on Banking Sector Reforms. Still earlier, restructuring of Indian banks through merger and acquisitions had also been recommended by other committees since 1972. Thus, issues related to consolidating the Indian banking sector have been debated and discussed for many years and merger has been a preferred recommendation consistently.

Globally, the Southeast Asian crisis of 1997 had encouraged consolidation and restructuring of banks in many Asian countries. In the U.S., there has been consolidation of banks since 1916. In India, many banks in the past were merged with other banks. Illustratively, New Bank of India and Punjab National Bank, both PSBs, were merged in 1993. Similarly, State Bank of Saurashtra and State Bank of Indore had merged with the SBI in 2008 and 2010, respectively. Theoretically, key reasons for merger are economies of scale and scope, revenue enhancement, value maximisation, efficiency gains, cost savings, diversification of customers and assets, and also that large banks help in international recognition. Therefore, the decision to merge SBI and its affiliates is a step in the right direction.

Mergers, in general, are a challenge and have to be carefully crafted. It is important to consider the strengths and weaknesses of eligible PSBs before binding them together. Mergers can be successful in similar institutions with a similar culture but cannot be extensively adopted because they lead to job cuts, branch closures and,

in some cases, lowering of quality and quantity of services. That is why mergers have always been considered as only one alternative to consolidation.

In addition to mergers, the government could consider other alternatives. The loss of Rs.18,000 crore incurred by PSBs has implications for the national exchequer. On the one hand, the government foregoes revenues through dividends and profits, while on the other it would need to provide resources through enhanced expenditure to bail out loss-making banks from a pool of resources garnered from a small subset of population — taxpayers. The government could consider setting standards for the banking industry — privatising some of the inefficient PSBs while rewarding profit-making ones. This implies that the 60-year-old policy of social control needs to be reviewed. One of the objectives of social banking under which private sector banks were nationalised in 1969 and 1980 was to ensure banking penetration in rural areas and to avoid a nexus between industry and banking. In the past two years, the Central government has been successful in ensuring a bank account in every household under the Prime Minister's Jan-Dhan Yojana. The advancement in technology is already making possible safe banking transaction through mobile phones. In a digital India, and with widespread availability of credit rating, bank accounts, Aadhaar information and mobile phones, technology can help in eliminating human intervention in sanctioning and extending credit to the borrower. Small banks and payment banks are expected to penetrate deep into rural India, and therefore the need for a brick-and-mortar commercial bank branch is diminishing.



# A Kautilya in the BJP

*Why Subramanian Swamy's real target is not Raghuram Rajan or Arvind Subramanian.*

Subramanian Swamy has been attempting to create major problems for the BJP government — more particularly for Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself. This is clear in the way he went after Raghuram Rajan, governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian and other officials in the finance ministry. Not just this. Ever since Modi came to power, every now and then, he does something or speaks loosely on sensitive, communal issues. He organised a seminar in Delhi University, for instance, on the need for building a Ram temple, knowing well that the issue is in the Supreme Court. Though he has never been popular in UP's political circles, unlike other loose cannons like Sakshi Maharaj, Swamy has been visiting that state, sponsoring small meetings by himself.

He is known for public litigation that does not benefit the rural masses, tribals or Dalits but goes after individuals and political opponents, whom he targets as enemies. He got some credibility after J. Jayalalithaa was imprisoned after he pursued her through a case supported by the DMK. Recently, he filed a case against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, in relation to National Herald assets. The RSS and the BJP supported this case, more with childish interest than political maturity.

Swamy lost his job at Harvard after writing a newspaper article against Islam in general and Muslims in particular on July 2011, titled "How to wipe out Islamic terror". Dismissing him from service, the university's Department of South Asian Studies described Swamy as "insidious" and head of the "minuscule" Janata Party. By admitting him into the party, the BJP, with one stroke, effectively changed the status of his party from minuscule to "majoritarian".

Now the prime minister has put him in a spot by saying that "publicity stunts" won't benefit the nation. The PM must know that Swamy is not just a publicity stunt master, but a witch hunter working against him from within his own camp for reasons that his party hesitates to tell.

The PM must ask why Swamy has been bringing issues to the forefront that do not have any connection to promises he

made to the nation in his election campaign. The mandate given to Modi was for development. Swamy did not help Modi in getting even five votes. Even then, the party headed by Modi, who has a vote base of his own, considers Swamy a man "bigger than the system". Where does this "bigness" of Swamy come from?

Knowing Swamy, how did Modi allow him to become a member of Rajya Sabha? The nation knows from day one that Swamy would start embarrassing the government in Rajya Sabha. Where does his gumption come from? From Mohan Bhagwat, obviously. What distinguished achievements carried Swamy into Rajya Sabha through the quota for nominated MPs? Why did the RSS support him? And, if he was a Dalit or OBC, would they have supported him still? There is no such evidence before us.

Swamy was active in the political field when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was in power. And when P.V. Narasimha Rao was in government. During Rao's rule, the BJP and RSS took up the campaign that led to the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Swamy was not a very active supporter of the campaign at that time because, apparently, his sympathies were with Rao, then India's PM. During this period, remember, buying votes for sustaining the government took place quite brazenly. Shibu Soren was caught, allegedly red-handed, taking money to vote for the survival of the Rao government. Yet Swamy did not file a single PIL against Rao. During Vajpayee's period, he did not get any major position, yet, by all accounts, he was loyal to him. Why? Swamy's Brahminism is more insidious than that of Kautilya, the author of Arthashastra, or Manu, the author of Dharmashastra.

Swamy is not a great writer but the Brahminical media considers him an intellectual. Even Modi is made to treat him as a big man because of the dual support he gets — from Mohan Bhagwat's network and the media. Look at the way whatever he speaks gets front page coverage. Why? Because the media thinks even loose cannons are useful if they go against some forces.

Why did Swamy target Jayalalithaa and Sonia Gandhi? As one belonging to the Kautilyan tradition, he must fight the Dalit-Bahujan and women. In his own state, one party is headed by a lower caste rationalist and the other by a woman — though a Brahmin. His hatred for Sonia Gandhi is for more Manuwadi reasons than one. She is an Italian by birth and a born Christian. But his real target is Modi. I do not think he is a loner in this plan within the party. There are a number of people who matter in the party who supported Swamy's candidature for the Rajya Sabha berth. Modi could not overrule his candidature. The anti-Modi clique from within the party uses Swamy well and the media keeps telling us that he is an individual loose cannon. In my view,

Swamy is the public face of the Kautilyan faction of his own party. This faction has been upset ever since Modi claimed that he was an OBC during the election campaign in Uttar Pradesh after realising that that factor would get him more votes. That identity has helped him. The Swamy faction of the BJP is determined that he should pay for that. Hence his real target is neither Rajan nor Subramanian. By no stretch of the imagination can one think that they are his enemies.

Modi has not come to power because the Brahminical faction negotiated with other parties in a situation of a fractured mandate. If it were so, by now he would have been pulled down. He has come up through his vote pulling ability, of which his caste background was one of the instruments. The Manuwadis in the RSS do not like that. Hence the pot must be kept boiling.

There are many issues on which I do not agree with Modi and I have written about them ever since the Gujarat 2002 carnage took place. But if the Kautilyan-Manuwadi-Swamy faction succeeds in overthrowing Modi, no OBC could rise to the PM's chair, whatever his vote-catching power.

## A Himalayan balancing act

The great Himalayan Divide between India and China was in evidence last week following the Chinese refusal to support India's case for entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group. While non-entry into the Group is not the end of the world, for India lives to fight another day, of concern is what the Chinese stance implies for the bilateral relationship between the two Asian giants.

This is a relationship that has been assiduously tended over the years since the mid-seventies when ambassadorial relations between the two countries were restored at the initiative of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Despite the humiliation suffered in 1962, she famously opined that "we cannot march to Peking" and that normalisation of relations constituted the triumph of maturity over the futility of alienation. Cut to summertime, the year being 1986. An Indian border patrol on its way to re-establish a post in the Sumdorong Chu area in the north-eastern corner of the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh found it had been pre-empted by a group of Chinese military personnel who had already set up camp at the same location. Tension between the two sides escalated in the period that followed, stretching through 1987, as each side accused the other of jockeying for positions, with virtual cheek-to-cheek confrontation ensuing. The grant of statehood to Arunachal Pradesh in early 1987 infuriated the Chinese and raised the temperature further.

In an age of 24/7 electronic media and social media platforms, one shudders to imagine what the consequences of the

Sumdorong Chu confrontation may have been. Diplomacy, as former External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh once said, "must not be conducted in an amphitheatre." The eighties were a different era, and although the situation festered, with the two sides holding their positions, a discussion in Parliament apart, the subject found very limited mention in the media, which was focussed at that time on the intervention by the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka.

The initiative that defused the problem came from India. It was no white flag, but an act of strategic boldness. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi decided to activate a channel that had lain dormant since the fateful April 1960 visit of Premier Zhou Enlai to New Delhi. Since the early eighties, the Chinese had expressed their keenness for a visit by the Indian Prime Minister to Beijing. The Indians demurred, the view being that such a high-level visit would expend critical political capital with no assurance of success, and that the consequential fallout would do further disadvantage to India.

Thus it was that Rajiv Gandhi went to China on a state visit in the bleak Beijing winter of 1988. The warmth of the reception from Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders compensated for the cold weather. The visit was an unquestioned success, for it not only defused the tensions at Sumdorong Chu, leading eventually to the elimination of dangerously close confrontation between troops of the two sides in the area, but also established a template for bilateral relations that has been

followed to this day.

That template basically enabled the advancement of relations in a broad spectrum of areas ranging from trade to scientific and technological exchanges, educational and cultural cooperation, even as efforts to seek a fair and reasonable solution to the boundary question between the two countries continued. The border issue did not become the arbiter of relations in other fields, which for the first time since 1962 were allowed to grow on a relatively independent trajectory. Fast-forwarding to the present, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's response to questions about the Chinese attitude on the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) issue, during a television interview after the denouement in Seoul, was measured and calibrated. He appeared to see the relationship with China as an organic continuum, evolving slowly over the last three decades, a relationship where experience foreshadows hope, counselling pragmatism and careful deliberation. Foreign relations, he said, are not about changing mindsets, but about achieving a meeting of minds. Geopolitical rivalry and calibrated cooperation, seemingly antithetical, coexist within the framework of our relationship with China. The latter has pinned its colours to the Pakistani mast as recent developments have demonstrated. It is suspicious about our friendship with the United States, our closeness to Japan, and our naval cooperation in the East and South China Seas with these countries. It challenges us with its myriad dalliances in our neighbourhood.

# NASA TESTS DEEP SPACE ROCKET



A BOOSTER for the most powerful rocket in the world has been fired up in the Utah desert. The key component of Nasa's Space Launch System successfully fired up for its second qualification ground test at Orbital ATK's test facilities in Promontory, Utah.

It is the last full-scale test for the booster before SLS's first uncrewed test flight with NASA's Orion spacecraft in late 2018, a key milestone on the

agency's Journey to Mars. Crowds gathered to watch the successful test. 'This final qualification test of the booster system shows real progress in the development of the Space Launch System,' said William Gerstenmaier, associate administrator for the Human Exploration and Operations Mission Directorate at NASA Headquarters in Washington. 'Seeing this test today, and experiencing the sound

and feel of approximately 3.6 million pounds of thrust, helps us appreciate the progress we're making to advance human exploration and open new frontiers for science and technology missions in deep space.' The booster was tested at a cold motor conditioning target of 40 degrees Fahrenheit - the colder end of its accepted propellant temperature range.



## GET YOUR SPOOK ON



*Horror In The Bylanes in collaboration with Lightcube Film Society will be hosted from June 29 to September 7.*

By **Radhika Bhalla**

GET ready to be scared off your pants this Wednesday! Greenr Cafe and Store — a vegetarian health eatery in Shahpur Jat — is hosting the first-ever horror-thriller film festival, *Horror In The Bylanes* in collaboration with Lightcube Film Society from June 29 to September 7. Every Wednesday at 7pm, a

new horror, thriller and drama film based in the city will be screened at FF 416, Shahpur Jat. Tickets would ₹350 per show, which includes screening, a non-alcoholic drink, a bite, discussions, and cheap thrills. The schedule is available at [Lightcube.in](http://Lightcube.in) and their Facebook events page for 'Horror in the Bylanes: A Series of Urban Horror Films'.

# Pakistan Clerics declare trans marriage legal

(Agencies) A group of clerics in Pakistan has declared marriage between transgender individuals permissible in Islam. They also said they have a right to be buried in Muslim ceremonies, according to a copy of a religious edict Reuters obtained on Monday. Further, transgender people have full rights under Islamic inheritance law, the Tanzeem Ittehad-i-Ummat Pakistan, a little-known clerical body in the eastern city of Lahore, said in its fatwa. "It is permissible for a transgender person with male indications on his body to marry a transgender person with female indications on her body," said the document, signed by 50 clerics and issued on Sunday. "Also, normal men and women can also marry such transgender people as have clear indications on their body." But it did not say what these indications were. In 2012, Pakistan's Supreme Court declared equal rights for transgender citizens, including the right to inherit property and assets, preceded a year earlier by the right to vote. Pakistani



The fatwa to legalise transgender marriages was signed by 50 clerics.

marriage law remains murkier, however. It denies homosexual couples permission to marry, with male homosexuals having been charged under antisodomy laws in the past. Sunday's fatwa declared marriage with any individual possessing both male and female 'indications' to be against Islamic principles. Shunned by mainstream society, transgender individuals in the country of 190 million are often forced into begging, prostitution or dancing to earn a living. Late last month, Alisha, a 23-year-old transgender woman, died

after being shot and then refused treatment at the largest public sector hospital in Peshawar, in northwest Pakistan. Her death sparked debate over the rights of transgender people, with an inquiry concluding that senior doctors at the hospital were responsible for 'criminal negligence', and recommending that criminal charges be filed. Transgender people are, however, also sometimes venerated in the South Asian tradition of according spiritual powers to eunuchs and others who fall outside traditional gender

## Cops detain Ops Detain LGBT Activists at Pride Parade

(Agencies) POLICE in Istanbul used tear gas and detain LGBT activists who were celebrating the end of Pride week. Several who gathered Sunday to issue a statement to mark the global LGBT rights week were injured after authorities banned their rally in the city. At least 19 activists were rounded up, organisers said. Dozens of activists assembled on Istanbul's main pedestrian street to publicly read a statement marking the end of the gay, lesbian and transgender pride week and to denounce the ban. Several of them were detained however, before they could speak. Turkish police later used tear gas and rubber pellets to chase activists from side streets. Istanbul's governor banned both last week's Trans Pride March and Sunday's broader LGBT pride parade, citing security concerns in the city, which has been hit by deadly attacks by Islamic State militants or Kurdish rebels. Turkish Islamist and ultranationalist groups had also threatened counter-demonstrations to stop the gay rights rallies. Activists believe authorities are using security as an excuse to ban the gay parades. They say the government they should be taking measures to deal with the threats instead. Two European legislators were also briefly detained Sunday, activists said. They included prominent Green Party lawmaker Volker Beck - an outspoken activist for gay rights - who was detained when he wanted to speak at the event in Istanbul. The German news agency dpa quoted Beck as saying: 'The police tore away my passport and pushed me around.'

divisions. Although the Lahore that people consider harassment clerics' fatwa is not legally of transgender people a crime binding, it also recommended under Islam.

# Afghanistan to crack down on child sex slavery

(Agencies) THE Afghan government says it will punish police officers involved in the institutionalised sexual abuse of children after an AFP report found the Taliban are exploiting the practice of paedophilic 'bacha bazi' — literally 'boy play' — to launch insider attacks. Militants in Uruzgan province have killed hundreds of police after turning their child sex slaves against them, exploiting a centuries-old practice in Afghanistan that observers call one of the most egregious violations of human rights in the country. Powerful warlords, commanders, politicians and other members of the elite often keep 'bachas' as a symbol of

authority and affluence.

Bachas, dressed as women, are widely used by these men as dancers at private parties and are sexually exploited. Bacha bazi is not widely seen as homosexual behaviour - popularly demonised as a deviant sexual act, prohibited in Islam - and is largely accepted as a cultural practice. 'Women are for child-rearing, boys are for pleasure' is a common saying across many parts of Afghanistan. The ancient custom, banned under the Taliban's 1996 to 2001 rule, has seen a resurgence in recent years. It is said to be widespread across southern and eastern

Afghanistan's rural Pashtun heartland, and with ethnic Tajiks across the northern countryside. Tight gender segregation in Afghan society and lack of contact with women have contributed to the spread of bacha bazi, rights groups say. Several other factors such as an absence of the rule of law, corruption, limited access to justice, illiteracy, poverty, insecurity, and the existence of armed groups have also resulted in the spread of bacha bazi, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) said in a report in 2014. AIHRC points out that Afghanistan's criminal law prohibits rape and pederasty, but there are no clear



provisions on bacha bazi. 'There is a gap and ambiguity in the laws of Afghanistan regarding bacha bazi and the existing laws do not address the problem sufficiently,' the report said.

# Istanbul airport attack: Toll rises to 42

(Agencies) Turkey pointed the finger of blame at Islamic State jihadists Wednesday after suicide bombers armed with automatic rifles attacked Istanbul's main international airport, killing 42 people, including foreigners. Witnesses described scenes of terror and panic on Tuesday evening as the attackers began shooting indiscriminately and then blew themselves up at the entrance to Ataturk airport, one of Europe's busiest hubs.

The assault, which comes at the start of Turkey's crucial tourist season, was the latest in a wave of attacks in Istanbul and the capital Ankara blamed

either on Islamic State (IS) jihadists or Kurdish rebels.

Interior Minister Efkan Ala said there was an ongoing "serious and comprehensive investigation" into who was behind the attack, using another name for IS as he told reporters: "First signs point to Daesh but it's not certain yet."

CIA director John Brennan also said the attack bore the "hallmark" of the jihadist group.

Istanbul's governor said 42 people were killed, including 13 foreigners, and 239 wounded.

The dead include several Saudis, a Chinese national, a Tunisian and a

Ukrainian.

The carnage sparked global condemnation, with US President Barack Obama speaking by phone with his counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan to express his condolences.

Erdogan declared Wednesday a national day of mourning after urging an international "joint fight" against terror.

Security camera footage widely circulated on social media appeared to capture two of the blasts. In one clip a huge ball of flame erupts at an entrance to the terminal building, scattering terrified passengers.

Another video shows a black-clad attacker running inside the building



before collapsing to the ground -- apparently felled by a police bullet -- and blowing himself up.

The attack came just as Turkey, which had found itself increasingly friendless on the international stage, begins rebuilding relations with Israel and Russia.



# THE HONOUR PARADE



Hundreds of thousands of Americans took to streets from New York to San Francisco on Sunday to celebrate gay pride, honour those who died in the Orlando massacre and promote tolerance. Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, buoyed by a double-digit poll lead over Republican Donald Trump in the race for the White House, joined the tail end of the route in New York. In San Francisco, the crowd cheered and electronic music blared from floats, a group carried placards with photos of the Orlando victims and men in leather bondage walked the route under bright sunshine. "One year ago, love triumphed in our highest court. Yet LGBT Americans still face too many barriers. Let's keep marching until they don't," tweeted Clinton, joining a slew of elected state and city Democrats who took part. She was referring to the US Supreme Court decision a year ago to legalise gay marriage across the country. New York, which prides itself on being one of the most diverse cities on the planet, is the birthplace of the gay rights movement.

## WW II tunnel dug by Jews using spoons to escape Nazis found in Lithuania: Israel



(Agencies) A legendary tunnel secretly dug out with spoons by Jewish prisoners in an attempt to escape their Nazi captors during World War II is reported to have been located in a Lithuanian forest by an international research team, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced on Wednesday.

The tunnel, located in the Ponar forest, known today as Paneriai, outside

Jewish historians from Israel, the United States, Canada and Lithuania did not want to disturb any human remains in the mass burial pits at the site.

So the researchers used scanning technology called electrical resistivity tomography — the same kind used in mineral and oil exploration — to map out the path of the 34-meter (112-foot) -long tunnel. "To find a little glimmer of hope

of the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, is the site where some 100,000 people, including 70,000 Jews, were killed and thrown into pits during Nazi occupation.

In the quest to find the tunnel, the team of archaeologists, geophysicists and

within the dark hole of Ponar is very important as humans," said Jon Seligman, an archaeologist with Israel's antiquities authority, who participated in the expedition.

"The tunnel shows that even when the time was so black, there was yearning for life within that," he added.

Toward the end of the war, the Nazis sought to erase the evidence of their mass killings. Jewish and Soviet prisoners were brought to the Ponar forest from Stutthof concentration camp. With their legs chained, they were forced to dig up the mass graves, collect bodies and burn them.

The prisoners were dubbed the Burning Brigade and they lived in fear that once their task was complete, they too would be killed.

According to accounts, one prisoner, Isaac Dogim, was piling decomposed

corpses when he recognized members of his own family, including his wife. He identified her by the medallion he had given her for their wedding.

He is credited with organizing the escape. At night, the prisoners were held in one of the pits used in the killings. For three months, some of the prisoners secretly dug an underground tunnel to escape.

Then on April 15, 1944, in the middle of the night, 40 prisoners filed off their chains and fled through the narrow tunnel. Guards quickly discovered them and many were shot, but 11 prisoners managed to escape to the forest, reach partisan forces and survive the war. "It is a very important discovery, because this is another proof of resistance of those who were about to die," said Markas Zingeris, director of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum in Vilnius.

# Pakistan team visiting China to check reports of Ramzan ban in Xinjiang



(Agencies) A Pakistani delegation has left for China to verify media reports that Chinese authorities have banned fasting during the holy month of Ramzan in Muslim-majority Xinjiang province.

China formally requested the Pakistan government to send a delegation to Xinjiang to ascertain the facts regarding the observance of Ramzan in the province, an official of the religious affairs ministry was

quoted as saying by The Express Tribune.

The request was made after an international news agency reported Chinese authorities had outlawed fasting in the region.

The delegation from the religious affairs ministry includes the director general for research and the chief cleric of Islamabad's Faisal Mosque. It will stay in Xinjiang for four days and ascertain facts regarding the reported ban. Earlier, it was

reported that Chinese authorities marked the start of Ramzan with a customary ban on fasting for civil servants, students and children in Xinjiang.

However, the Chinese government rejected these reports as baseless. Chinese officials said they did not force Muslims in Xinjiang to break their fast during Ramzan because the constitution guarantees religious freedom. China formally requested the Pakistan government to send a team so that this controversy could be ended, the newspaper reported. China has approximately 20 million Muslims, and the far-

western region of Xinjiang is home to 10 million Uighur Muslims. The official said the delegation will meet people of Xinjiang and clerics of mosques.

"It's a kind of visit in which formal statements of the Muslim population would be recorded as it is a state visit on the request of the Chinese government," the official said. The delegation will submit its report to the secretary of the religious affairs ministry.

The reported attempt to ban fasting among Uighur Muslims every year has attracted widespread criticism from rights groups. It was earlier reported that China had also ordered

restaurants in Xinjiang to stay open during Ramzan. "Food service workplaces will operate normal hours during Ramzan," read a notice posted in June on the website of the state Food and Drug Administration in Xinjiang's Jinghe county.

Officials in the region's Bole county were told not to "engage in fasting, vigils or other religious activities", according to a government website's report of a meeting. Uighur rights groups say China's restrictions on Islam in Xinjiang have added to ethnic tensions in the region, where clashes have killed hundreds in recent years.

## UK appoints interior ministry official to head EU divorce unit



(Agencies) Britain has appointed Oliver Robbins, a senior official at the interior ministry, to head the unit that will help negotiate an exit from the European Union. Robbins, Second Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, will move to his new role as head of the EU unit on July 4, the Cabinet Office said. "He will offer the very best advice and support to the government through these unprecedented times to ensure we secure the best possible deal for the UK," cabinet secretary, Sir Jeremy Heywood said.

## Sikh WWII veteran dies in Canada

(Agencies) Pritam Singh Jauhal, a 95-year-old World War II veteran who fought and won a high-profile battle to allow Sikhs wearing turbans into the Royal Canadian Legions, has died. Jauhal died peacefully in Surrey on Sunday, his daughter Varinder Bains was quoted as saying by The Globe and Mail newspaper. He spent 38 years in the Indian Army and Central Reserve Police Force, retiring with the rank of lieutenant colonel before immigrating to Canada to



be with his children in 1980. A prominent figure in the Sikh-Canadian community, he shot into the limelight in 1993 when he was prohibited from entering the Newton Legion on Remembrance Day. At the time, the establishment would not allow turbaned Sikh veterans on the premises. Legion officials insisted that Jauhal and other Sikh veterans who had served the British Empire in the Second World War could only come in after removing their turban as rules forbade veterans from wearing headgear. This was despite the fact that female veterans from England were allowed

to go in wearing their berets. He wrote an open letter listing turban wearers who had won the British Empire's highest military decoration. "Good enough for the Victoria Cross. Not good enough to earn a seat among the heroes of the

Newton Legion," he wrote. But the national headquarters of the Royal Canadian Legion issued a formal apology and condemned the actions of the local officials. Sharanjit Kaur Sandhra, who co-authored Jauhal's 2013 memoir, "A Soldier Remembers", said he was a proud man who insisted he wouldn't have launched his campaign but for the fact that he had been invited to the Legion and then turned away. The foreword of the book was penned by a reserve army officer who is now Canada's defence minister, Harjit Singh Sajjan. "(Jauhal) could have just gone home and tried to forget the insult, but instead he readied himself for another battle; a battle that he fought with his wits by attacking the ignorance with education," Sajjan, an Indo-Canadian Sikh, wrote. Jauhal was the eldest of four children of farmers in Jalandhar district of Punjab. He is survived by his son and a daughter.



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# Wife Includes Late Husband In Her Maternity Shoot And The Photos Will Warm Your Soul



(Agencies) "I wanted to do something special." And she did. Maternity shoots are precious. They remind one of the time in a mother's life when she nurses her baby and makes sure the moments are forever preserved on the canvas of love. So when Nicole Bennett's husband, Deonta, passed away a few months before their second baby's birth, she decided to include him in the photos and make his presence be felt forever. A Mississippi resident, Nicole went ahead with the shoot with her 4-year-old son Landen. And every picture had a silhouette of her late husband embedded as an angel spirit that refused to leave them alone. As media reports, Nicole hopes that this way, her children will always remember their dad. "It's memories for my son of his father and for my daughter who will never meet her father, it's memories for her as well,"

she said. Photographer Conley digitally included Deonta in the photographs and admitted that he was so deeply moved, that he was brought to tears. "Just how I edited [the photos] with him looking down on them, it's showing that he's making sure they're okay," he said. Nicole thought the pictures were "perfect". The photos received over 100,000 shares on Conley's Facebook page. True love is undying and these photos prove just that. In a beautiful, soul-moving gesture, Nicole made sure that her kids will always have their dad by their side.

## 2 transgender women running for US Congress could make history



(Agencies) Los Angeles: Two transgender women have been selected by primary voters in Utah and Colorado to run for the US Congress in November. Democrats Misty Snow and Misty Plowright would make history if elected. Snow, 30, a Utah grocery store clerk, is running for the Senate while Plowright, 33, a Colorado army veteran and former Microsoft employee, is running for the House of Representatives. Snow is the first transgender candidate of a major party to run for the Senate, and if elected would also be the youngest senator of the chamber. "While I'm not running on the basis of being a trans woman, my experiences as a trans woman have given me the empathy to understand the struggles of groups that feel that the American Dream is out of reach," she said in a statement. "I'm running to give a voice to the voiceless." The two candidates, who won primaries on Tuesday, will be fighting fierce election battles as their Republican opponents,

both incumbents, are ahead in polls. Plowright is not the first transgender candidate to run for the House. The late Karen Kerin, of Vermont, ran for the House as a Republican in 2000 but lost overwhelmingly to Bernie

Sanders. Sanders now represents the state in the US Senate and ran a campaign backed by strong grassroots support to challenge Hillary Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination.

## Queen's estate value touches record 12 billion pounds

(Agencies) London: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II is set for a 2.8 million pounds pay increase next year as her Crown Estate's value rose 9.7 per cent to 12 billion pounds this year, it was reported today. The 90-year-old monarch made a record 304 million pounds for the UK Treasury after her estate, which owns London's Regent Street and the entire UK seabed, had a hugely profitable year. The increase in the value of the estate means the monarch will get a 2.8 million pounds pay increase next year, marking a potential 6.5 per cent rise in the grant paid to cover her official duties.

Under the Sovereign Grant Act of 2011, the Queen receives the equivalent of 15 per cent of the profits of the estate's property empire. In theory that means she would receive a grant of 45.6 million pounds in 2017-18, up on this

year's figure of 42.8 million pounds. However, the level of the grant is currently under review in talks between the UK government and Buckingham Palace. During a briefing to launch the report, Sir Alan Reid, Keeper of the Privy Purse, said that the cost to the country last year of the Queen's official duties and property maintenance, excluding security, came to 62 pound per person. "Despite increased investment the condition of the estate is deteriorating at a faster rate than we have been able to respond," he said. The Queen's Crown Estate is an independent commercial property business and one of the largest property portfolios in the UK. This year it has reaped the benefits of a regeneration programme of London's Regent Street and St James's Park, where it lets out shops.

## Will work with other members for India's entry into NSG: US



(Agencies) Washington: The United States has expressed disappointment over India not getting entry into the NSG and asserted that it would continue to work constructively with other countries of the group for New Delhi's inclusion in the 48-nation atomic trading bloc. "We're not going to let that go," State Department Spokesman John Kirby told reporters yesterday. "We're obviously disappointed that India was not admitted during this recent session, but I can tell you that we're going to continue to work constructively with India and all the other NSG members on India's accession in the months ahead," He said while responding to a question. He added that India has a strong record and the US believes it deserves to be included in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). "That's why the Administration, including senior White House and State Department officials, made a concerted effort and I do mean concerted effort to secure India's membership in the recent NSG plenary that was held in Seoul, we talked about this," Kirby said.

# Sikh musician racially profiled at US restaurant



(Agencies) New Delhi: A Sikh musician has claimed he was racially profiled while having lunch

at a restaurant in Orlando when a “concerned citizen” called police to investigate him for carrying a “suspicious container” which just contained his bamboo flutes. Neelamjit Dhillon was having lunch in Orlando, Florida, when police responded to a call about a suspicious container at the restaurant.

“A concerned citizen called the police to investigate me while having lunch because of my suspicious container. Just my bamboo flutes,” Dhillon wrote in an Instagram post about Tuesday’s incident. Dhillon — who moved to the Orlando area from Los Angeles to work on Disney’s Animal Kingdom show

— ‘Jungle Book Alive’ as a performer and Indian music director — was having a late lunch at a local restaurant with a friend. While outside on a phone call, Dhillon says a smiling and apologetic police officer approached him. “A police officer was walking towards me, put out his hand and shook my hand, and right away he said, ‘I need to have chat with you. Can we have a discreet conversation back at your table?’” Dhillon was quoted as saying by BuzzFeed News. Confused, Dhillon complied. Back at the table, the officer explained that someone unaffiliated with the restaurant had called police to report a

suspicious man carrying a “suspicious container”. As it turned out, the suspicious container was a carrying case for his bamboo flutes — one of the many instruments Dhillon plays professionally. Dhillon, who carries his flutes in a case designed to hold blueprints, showed the flutes to the officer, who apologised for the trouble and left. Dhillon said it was not the first time a member of his community has been judged or profiled as a possible Muslim terrorist based on his experience as a Sikh. “We always joke that we get randomly selected for security 100 per cent of the time,” Dhillon was quoted as saying. “If

someone just asked a question, and if someone didn’t come to conclusions based on appearances, they might just learn something about people,” he said. “Sikh-Americans, we wear these articles of faith to represent justice, equality, and tolerance for all, and these are also American values. After the tragedy in Orlando, all I know is that more that bigotry and hate will never be the solution,” Dhillon said of his experience. The incident comes months after Waris Ahluwalia, a Sikh model and actor living in New York, was prevented from boarding an AeroMexico flight because of his turban.

(Agencies) New Delhi: They are ostracised, humiliated and sneered at, and yet India’s transgender community continues to battle for their rights amid all opposition. Fida, a member of India’s first transgender group — 6 Pack Band - says the community in the Mumbai region aspires for an “ashram” of its own, but they have yet not been able to get the land for it. According to Fida, an organisation called the Kinnar Maa Samajik Sanstha Trust had requested for a separate ashram for the



## For Indian transgenders, getting a shelter home is an uphill battle

transgenders in Mumbai, but they are yet to get the work done. “There are a lot of handicapped kinnars (transgenders) who are either homeless, or who have faced acid attacks.

Some of them have sustained injuries after being thrown from trains while begging. There are old age ashrams, but there is nothing for the transgenders,” she added. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) criminalises homosexuality and activists of the country’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) community have been fighting a legal battle asking for the law to be revoked on grounds that it violates their human rights. The Delhi High Court had struck down Section 377 in 2009 but the Supreme Court reversed this in 2013. It heard the matter again earlier this year but stood by its previous judgement.

Thereafter, a group of celebrities, including celebrity chef Ritu Dalmia, approached the apex court to quash the penal provision. The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to examine the fresh petition, saying it

will be placed before Chief Justice of India T.S. Thakur. In 2014, the Supreme Court had ordered that transgenders be treated as the “third gender” and be given reservations on the lines of those for OBCs (other backward classes).

Last Novmeber, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had called for treating transgenders with greater sensitivity. “We need to amend and make new laws for transgenders,” he had said. Like several others fighting for their rights, Fida said that the trust has been battling for the last five to six years to get permission for the ashram but owing to political issues, they are yet to get this. “We have been fighting to get this ashram for the last five to six years. We have asked for an ashram in Thane,” Fida told IANS on the phone from Mumbai.

Fida has now gained fame with 6 Pack Band, which won the coveted Cannes Grand Prix Glass Lion at the Cannes Lions Festival. It was given to the group for espousing a social cause. Backed by Yash Raj Films’ youth-wing Y-Films, the group has

even worked with industry stalwarts like Sonu Nigam and Hrithik Roshan, who have given them support. Fida says that she wants to use this platform to help her community. “Now people know our six-member band, but who knows the thousands of people in our community? Who will be our voice? I want to take the opportunity to play in the band to express the desires of our community in front of the public,” she said.

Due to the lack of an ashram, Fida rued that the already marginalised transgender community of India is forced to beg on the streets or work at bars. “Those who are rotting on the street are still suffering, those who are working in beer bars are still stuck there. We have been ignored. We will die on the streets. The government is not giving attention to us,” she said. Last year, the Kinnar Maa Samajik Sanstha Trust had organised a Pink Rally to demand equal rights for the transgender community in India. Fida said that despite such rallies and the support they garner, India’s transgenders are yet to find firm footing in society.

## Kerala Govt to ban e-cigarettes



Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala government has decided to ban ‘electronic cigarette’ in view of studies claiming that its use can cause various health issues, including cancer and heart ailments. State Health Minister K K Shylaja on Thursday directed the additional chief secretary (health) to issue an order banning the production, sale and advertisement of ‘electronic cigarette’ alias ‘e-cigarette’.

E-cigarettes are handy devices that emit doses of vaporised nicotine. An official release here today said that there were media reports that the e-cigarette market was flourishing in Kerala targeting youth and children. The state drugs enforcement authorities had also found that the device is widely used for smoking ganja, hashish and other narcotic substance. It was also found that use of e-cigarettes among children would result in indiscriminate use of original cigarettes and other substances in the long run, it said.

A series of studies conducted in the US and Japan has proved that the usage of e-cigarette would cause cancer and heart ailments. The e-cigarettes are being marketed in Kerala through unauthorised courier services and online sites, it said. An expert committee appointed by the Centre to study the ill effects of e-cigarette had recommended banning the device in the country in 2014 itself, the release said, adding that the Indian Medical Association was also in favour of banning it.

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# Govt to build toilets for 55,000 households in UT

(Agencies) Puducherry: Puducherry government has drawn up a massive Rs 120 crore plan to build toilets for 55,000 households in the union territory without the facility under the Swachh Bharath Abhiyan scheme, Chief Minister V arayanasamy said here today. The CM said he had urged the Prime Minister to make available the funds for the toilet scheme during his recent visit to Delhi and he had responded positively to his plea. The purpose of providing the

facility was to ensure that Puducherry emerged a clean city, he said, adding that the scheme would be implemented by October 2. Municipalities, department of rural development, District and Rural Development Agency and also the Cooperative Building Centres would jointly implement the scheme on a war footing, the Chief Minister said. He was speaking after handing over 20 kg rice each to ration card holders free of cost in neighboring

Abishegapakkam village. The CM alleged that the previous AINRC government had not properly implemented the free rice scheme. They had shown interest only in the run up to the May 16 Assembly polls and beneficiaries were not getting 10 kg rice per month regularly.

The 20 kg rice distributed to the families today was due for the last two months, he said, adding his government's promise was to make this quantity of rice

available free of cost from August. As much as Rs 20 crore would be spent each month to implement the free rice scheme, which would cover around 3.3 lakh families coming under the Public Distribution System. He also detailed the infrastructure facilities planned by the government for rural areas. The CM said he found no difficulty in getting the Union government's cooperation for launching welfare oriented programmes in the union territory.

## World War-2 veteran Col Randhawa dies

(Agencies) Colonel Daljit Singh Randhawa (ret'd), 96, the lone surviving Military Cross winner of Punjab, died on Friday as he was not keeping good health for some time. Cremation will take place on Saturday.



He was the first parade commander at the country's first Independence Day parade in Delhi, after Partition where a guard of honour was given to the outgoing Viceroy Lord Mountbatten. His seven generations had served in the Army, the first being his great-grand father Colonel Harnam Singh, who took part in action during the 1857 mutiny. Col Randhawa had fought World War-2 and was part of the UN Forces in Congo and Lebanon. He was barely 24, when he won the Military Cross for his services rendered during the Burma conflict. In recognition of his distinguished services, he was given 28-acre land in Pakistan, which was later re-allotted at Hoshiarpur's Phuglana village. Col Randhawa was born in Montgomery (now in Pakistan). His family had migrated to Indian Punjab after Partition. Colonel Randhawa's two sons, Colonel Jasjit and Major Amanjit, also served in the army and his grandson too is a senior military officer.

## Rs 390 crore approved for SC students in poll-bound UP, Punjab

(Agencies) New Delhi: The central government on Wednesday approved Rs 390 crore to be given as scholarships to Scheduled Caste students of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab where assembly elections are due next year. "The sum of about Rs. 390 crores under post-matric scholarships for SC students in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh for the year 2016-17 has been approved," Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot said in a statement here. "Out of Rs. 390 Crores, Rs. 217.89 crore has been released to Punjab and Rs. 173.32 crore for Uttar Pradesh. " Under the scheme, scholarships ranging from Rs 230 to Rs 1,200 per month are to be given to SC students up to post-graduation level. "With the release of these funds, a large number of SC students in both the states will be able to take up higher education," Gehlot said. Uttar Pradesh and Punjab will elect new governments in 2017. While the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is a junior partner in the ruling combine in Punjab, it has not been voted to power in Uttar Pradesh since 2002.

## Sikh activist Joga Singh Khalistani, accomplices attacked

(Agencies) Ludhiana: Sikh activist Joga Singh Khalistani and his three accomplices were allegedly attacked by car borne unidentified persons at Churpur road on Thursday late evening. The victim has suffered injuries and admitted to hospital where his condition is stated to be stable. However Joga Singh Khalistani was not associated with any organization but he always participated in issue related with Sikh community. Few days ago, Joga Singh Khalistani was booked for thrashing preacher associated with Damdami Taksal at Police station Shimlapuri. According to information Joga Singh stated to Police that he along with three accomplices were going on two

motorcycles and when they reached Churpur road, unidentified persons in Innova car hit them and thrashed brutally. Joga Singh claimed that it was murderous attack in which his accomplice Sukhwinder Singh was also injured seriously. The Haibowal Police have reached the spot and initiated investigation in the case. The Police have registered case against unidentified persons in this context. It is pertinent to mention here that on July 12, Sandeep Singh, preacher associated with Damdami Taksal Chowk Mehta, Amritsar was attacked by Joga Singh and some other persons.



## Hyderabad IS arrests: NIA gets 12-day custody of 5 suspects

(Agencies) A city court on Friday sent five members of a suspected Islamic State (IS) module to 12 day custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

The agency, which arrested the youth on Wednesday, sought their custody for 30 days but the court only granted 12 days custody.

The metropolitan sessions judge pronounced the orders after hearing the arguments of both the prosecution and defence lawyers through the day.

The five youth, who were sent to judicial custody for 14 days on



Thursday, are currently lodged in Cherlapally Jail. The NIA is likely to take them in its custody on Saturday.

The agency prosecution told the court that it needs to interrogate the accused to gather more details about the terror plot, their targets, their

handler in IS, their contacts in other parts of the country and the source of arms, chemicals and Rs 15 lakh seized from them.

The defence counsel, however, opposed the NIA petition saying there is no need for further questioning as the accused revealed whatever they could during 24 hours custody.

The NIA had detained 11 youth during searches at 10 places in the old city of Hyderabad.

Five of them were arrested. They are Mohammed Ibrahim Yazdani, 30, Habeeb Mohammed, 32, Mohammed Ilyas Yazdani, 24, Abdullah Bin Ahmed Al Amoodi 30 and Muzaffar Hussain Rizwan, 29.

The NIA said the youth were conspiring to commit terrorist acts in various parts of the country. According to the agency, they were planning to target public places including religious sites and sensitive government buildings.

The NIA said it seized chemicals used in making explosives, two semi automatic pistols, an airgun with telescopic sight and shooting practice target boards. According to the NIA, the preliminary examination revealed that the youth were preparing IED for commission of terrorist acts and were being guided by an online handler suspected to be based in Iraq/Syria.

## Three CRPF personnel injured in Pulwama attack

(Agencies) Three Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) troopers were injured on Friday evening in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district when guerrillas attacked their camp, police said. The attack came as even Union home minister Rajnath Singh is in the state to review

security. "Militants hurled grenades and then resorted to firing at the CRPF camp in Litter village of Pulwama district in the evening," a senior police officer told IANS here. "Guards at the camp retaliated to the militant firing after which the militants escaped under the cover of darkness. "Three CRPF jawans have sustained splinter injuries in this attack. They are being shifted to hospital for treatment," said the officer, adding that the area around the camp has been cordoned off for searches.



## Four sexual assaults in a day shame Ludhiana, 3 victims are kids

(Agencies) Three more cases of rape and molestation by acquaintance were reported here on Thursday since the early arrest of a self-styled sorcerer named Rizwan Malik on the complaint of a teenager who had come to him seeking magical remedies. Three of the four victims are minor. Another man is accused of leading the gang rape of his friend's daughter (13) and intimidating the child. Based on an FIR (first-information report) registered at the Haibowal police

station, police have arrested accused Chet Ram of Samta Nagar and alleged accomplice Deepak Kumar. On June 24, Chet Ram, a mason, had taken away the child from her father on the pretext that he'd get her work as domestic help. On June 27, he dropped her back. Noticing that the child was in depression, the father encouraged her to open up and she said Chet Ram had taken her to an abandoned house south of the city instead, where Deepak Kumar and he had

raped her. Haibowal station house officer (SHO) inspector Amarjit Singh said the accused would be produced in court on Saturday. Aslum-dweller named Shankar is charged with raping his neighbour's minor daughter (14) on Wednesday night after abducting her to his shanty when the family was asleep. The Salem Tabri police registered this case under Section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences Act. SHO concerned

inspector Jatinder Singh said a hunt for the accused was on. Focal Point police have charged Gobind Nagar grocery shop owner Rakesh Kumar with molesting a girl (10). The case is based on the statement of the victim's father. The child had gone over to drop her younger brother at his tuition class near the shop when

Rakesh allegedly lured her inside with chocolate. The child confided in the family after coming home and police arrested the accused under Section 354 (molestation) of the IPC.



## Sartaj Aziz says 'Pathankot' no excuse to cancel Indo-Pak dialogue



(Agencies) Maintaining his assertion that India was reluctant to hold dialogue with Pakistan, prime minister's adviser on foreign affairs, Sartaj Aziz on Friday stated that, New Delhi was using excuses like the Pathankot attack to further delay talks with Islamabad on a range of issues crucial to both nations. Speaking in an interview, Aziz said that the priority for Pakistan has always been improved relations with its neighbours including India, and it remains so because without that, Islamabad's economic goals and revivals cannot be achieved. "But of course, it takes two to achieve that objective and India so far has not responded. In one excuse or other, they delay dialogue. In the first case, after Prime Minister Modi's inaugural ceremony, the two Foreign Secretaries could not meet because the High Commissioner met Kashmiri leaders, and they have been meeting for 20 years, so that was hardly an excuse," Aziz stated.

Asserting that Pathankot was no grounds for dialogues to be cancelled, Aziz added that talks also include terrorist related activities and both nations can also exchange progress reports on that basis also. "That's why I think that everyone in the world

has been emphasising that when two countries have problems, they resume dialogue. The non resumption of dialogue is a problem," he said. Aziz further stated that Pakistan has tried to

ensure that the relationship remains cordial, including no tensions on the LOC and the normal trading continues, so that if the relationship cannot improve, it should not deteriorate either.

"To that extend, I think we have succeeded. So we will continue to insist and urge that we should resume dialogue on all issues and try to improve out relation both in economic and non economic fields," Aziz said. However India today, flatly refused Aziz's statements saying that it has never shied away from any engagement with the hostile neighbour and is

prepared to discuss any issue in an atmosphere free from terror and violence.

"As far as the comments of Sartaj Aziz are concerned, I would say that India has never ever shied away from any engagement with Pakistan and is prepared to discuss all outstanding issues with Pakistan bilaterally, in an atmosphere free from terror and violence," Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson Vikas Swarup told the media. Adding that it was Prime Minister Modi who yet again took the decision to travel to Lahore on a very short notice on

December 25 last year, Swarup stated that Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar was prepared to go to Pakistan in the first half of January this year to hold initial discussions on the modalities of the comprehensive bilateral dialogue, but the Pathankot incident intervened. "After that incident of Pathankot, it was a natural and legitimate acceptance of both the governments and the people of India, that there should be concrete action from Pakistan which has not denied of the involvement of its nationals in the attack," Swarup added.

## No Navjot Sidhu at Punjab BJP panel meetings 'till SAD alliance remains'

(Agencies) Even as many saw the induction of Rajya Sabha MP Navjot Singh Sidhu into the Punjab BJP core committee last week as his return to the poll-bound state's political arena, his wife and chief parliamentary secretary (CPS) Dr Navjot Kaur Sidhu on Friday declared he won't attend meetings of the panel till the party remains in alliance with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD). "Shukar karo main aa gyi! Hun BJP de palle ki bacheya hai Punjab vich? (It's enough that I have come! What's left of the BJP in Punjab now?)," she remarked on the sidelines of a BJP state executive meet in Jalandhar. "He (Sidhu) will not be part of any meeting or programme at which Punjab is discussed in alliance with the Akali Dal," said Dr Sidhu, who is the BJP MLA from Amritsar-East. On the issue of the state's drug menace too, she dropped a bombshell, saying that illicit drugs in Punjab were being "ferried in red-beacon (official) vehicles". This is in contrast to the BJP's solidarity

with the Akali argument, that the issue was a ploy to defame Punjab. The Sidhu couple has been at loggerheads with chief minister Parkash Singh Badal,



and his son and deputy Sukhbir Singh Badal, over alleged government bias against Amritsar which they see as an effort to erode their political standing. A former cricketer known for his aggression on the field, Sidhu remained Lok Sabha MP from Amritsar (2004-14) before bowing out in favour of (now-finance minister) Arun Jaitley's candidature. "Even when Jaitley contested, he never came to campaign," Dr Sidhu told HT from Amritsar later, "because he never wanted to share the stage with the Badals".

## No Boko Haram role in abduction of 2 Indians in Nigeria, says govt

(Agencies) India on Friday ruled out involvement of terror group Boko Haram in the abduction of two Indians from Gboko, a town in the Benue state of north-central Nigeria, and said it appears that "local criminals" were involved. The duo -Mangipudi Sai Srinivas (from Andhara Pradesh) and his colleague Anish Sharma (from Karnataka)- were travelling to Dangote Cement Plc Plant in a car from their residential quarters around 7.20 pm on Wednesday when a group of armed men kidnapped them at a traffic signal. "I have obtained a detailed report on the two Indian nationals Sai Srinivas and Anish Sharma who have been abducted in Nigeria. I have ... spoken to Mrs. Lalita Srinivas. I have assured her that we are doing everything to secure their release," external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj tweeted. Ministry spokesperson Vikas Swarup described the abduction as "nothing surprising or new in that area", saying such incidents keep happening there. Asserting that there has been no ransom demand so far, the spokesperson said, "As far as our information goes there is no hand of terror group Boko Haram and it seems local criminal elements were responsible for the act."

He also said Indian mission in Abuja was in touch with Nigerian authorities in the matter and the ministry was hopeful that they will return safely.

# Life After The Chinese Cracker

They feel that Sino-Indian partnership where the two countries are supposed to work closely in cooperation with each other to make the 21st century a truly 'Asian century' is a concept that remains mainly on paper. China, according to them, misses no opportunity to prevent India from attaining its rightful place at the global stage and therefore, India should also join forces, particularly the US-led coalition in Asia, to contain China and deal with its assertive rise.

But in the post-Seoul scenario some important questions that got buried under the ensuing debate needs to be looked at more carefully. First, China, unlike 2008 where it had not publicly aired its opposition to India, had made it clear right from the beginning that it was in no mood to bend the existing rules—where all NSG members also have to be a signatory of the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT)—to accommodate fresh applicants in the Group.

Much of its opposition to India's membership definitely came in view of Pakistan, which too had applied for a NSG membership, but Beijing's opposition was well-known to Delhi.

It is true that by engaging President Pranab Mukherjee, the foreign secretary S. Jaishankar and finally the Prime Minister, South Block did try to enlist Beijing's support. But it also continued to give out contrary signals and statements on developments in South China Sea, stressing on 'freedom of navigation' which the Chinese and others see as a euphemism for the US' navy being able to patrol close to China's coastline. Moreover, just a few days before the crucial NSG Summit India went ahead with the Malabar exercise with the US and Japanese navies close to the Chinese coastline.

Additionally, one wonders how much ground work was done by the Indian establishment to ensure that all the other countries in the 48-member NSG, despite the Chinese opposition, were firmly committed to see India in the NSG as a full member. The Seoul Summit made it clear that nearly a quarter of the members in the NSG, including some of the countries where Modi had visited to enlist their support, were ambiguous in opening up the Group's membership at this juncture, even to accommodate India.

And finally, one must ask the logic behind South Block's high-profile campaign for India's membership in the NSG. Instead of relying on quiet diplomacy and behind the scene negotiations with key NSG members, especially potential 'nay sayers,' the Ministry of External Affairs decided not only to trumpet each engagement in the media but also put the Prime Minister on the frontline. Every single visit of Modi's was highlighted to achieve the only goal: enlisting support from countries in the NSG to India's membership.

It is a point to be noted that despite its initial failure, India's quite diplomacy worked successfully in ensuing a place for it in an equally important body—the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). One can argue that China's absence in that body made things easier for India. But the fact that India had been trying to get in this body for some years now and was also rejected in the previous year, shows that quiet diplomacy often has better chance to succeed than highly publicized ones.

The question, therefore, uppermost in the minds of many observers is whether Narendra Modi can now do what the

previous BJP government under Atal Bihari Vajpayee had managed in wake of India's Pokhran II nuclear test I May 1998. It had cited China as the 'main threat' to its security as a reason for going nuclear. This was mainly done to engage with the Americans and enlist its support to ensure India does not get isolated internationally in the wake of its nuclear tests. But the Vajpayee leadership also realized the importance of China and soon after made all efforts to engage with it in a serious manner.

The engagement between the two led to some serious confidence-building-measures where the two sides not only started the 'Special Representatives' dialogue to address the unresolved boundary issue, but also got China to recognize Sikkim as part of India and subsequently entered into a 'Strategic Partnership' with India.

Modi has to now calm the 'anti-Chinese' sentiments in the country and give out a clear signal that relation with no country is based on a single issue. Therefore, India will continue to engage with China in a more robust manner to expand the areas of cooperation that are mutually beneficial for both countries. And in doing so, he will

also be able to give out the signal that despite provocations, he is not willing to end India's sovereign foreign policy by joining any alliance led by the US to corner China.

He has already indicated that after his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Tashkent he is hopeful that the process that began in the NSG in Seoul will be taken further and lead to a membership of India in the coming months. Modi will get two more chances at least of engaging with Xi—during the G-20 Summit in China and at the BRICS Summit in India later this year. Hopefully, these will lead to further consolidation of Sino-Indian relations in future.

On his part Xi is also required to make a proper assessment of the Chinese position to determine whether China's support to Pakistan should come only at the expense of India. Like most countries, the Chinese political structure is also not a monolithic one. It also has its various lobbies that keep contesting with each other to determine and formulate key policies. If China manages to overcome its current opposition in extending support to India's entry in the NSG, it will be seen as a major confidence building measure in strengthening Sino-Indian relations in the coming days.

## Young, rich - and busted

and Huffington Post blogger and education professional Alexander Mallory, 31, were also among those indicted.

They were all charged with the criminal possession of a controlled substance in the seventh degree, according to court documents seen by Daily Mail Online.

It followed a year-long investigation into a massive drug ring that sold \$75,000 worth of cocaine and operated from the Lower East Side.

Three kingpins Kenny 'Jay' Hernandez, Felix Nunez and Oscar Almonte were also arrested.

They allegedly used livery services to deliver cocaine to customers throughout Manhattan.

The probe is believed to have begun after investment banker Thomas Hughes jumped to his death from his 24th floor luxury apartment in May last year.

Reports suggest police found the number of his dealer on his cell phone when they searched his home.

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance said: 'Drug dealers profit by

sowing seeds of addiction that destroy lives, families, and communities.

'We are dedicated to stemming both the supply and demand for dangerous narcotics, and the crime that accompanies the market for illegal drugs.'

'I thank my Office's prosecutors and our partners at the NYPD, and in particular, the undercover detectives who put their lives at risk to protect our City's residents,' said Police Commissioner William J. Bratton.

'This narcotics operation was organized and discreet, but it could not withstand the precision of this long-term investigation.'

'Selling cocaine in a variety of bars and clubs throughout Manhattan, the ringleader also allegedly sold to NYPD undercover on more than a dozen instances.

'I commend the brave work of all the investigators who built this case, along with the Violent Criminal Enterprises Unit at District Attorney Vance's Office.'

From June 2015, they were

allegedly obtaining, transporting, processing, packaging, selling, and delivering large quantities of powder cocaine to customers throughout Manhattan, the indictment reads.

Hernandez oversaw the ring and personally conducted the vast majority of the sales, including eleven separate sales to undercover detectives.

As detailed in the indictment, members of the ring allegedly used car services to deliver the drugs to buyers, including to delis, restaurants, bars, apartments, hotels, and the buyers' workplaces.

The defendants delivered to locations across Manhattan, including the Lower East Side, the Upper East Side, Chelsea, the Financial District, and Midtown, as well as areas of Brooklyn and Queens. Many of the sales took place in delis or Duane Reade and CVS pharmacies.

Customers generally paid between \$200 and \$300 per transaction.

Welhofer and the Dodsons were arraigned in Manhattan Criminal Court

on Thursday morning.

According to the indictment, Welhofer made two purchases of cocaine - one in March and one in May - to an address on West 25th Street.

The producer was led into the court in a jumpsuit with handcuffs and with her hair pulled back. She was held on \$15,000 bail.

According to her Facebook profile, Welhofer is from Wilmette, Illinois. Before joining Fox Business, where she produces for 'Money Honey' Maria Bartiromo, she worked for One World Sports.

The Northwestern University graduate has also been a producer of Good Morning America and had stints at Inside Edition and CNBC.

In November 2014, she attended Eric Trump and Lara Yunaska's lavish wedding.

At the time she and Lara were colleagues at Inside Edition. It is not believed that she and the Trumps remain friends but she does still post on his social media pages.

It is her 30th birthday on Friday.

# Chabahar Port

## A game-changing deal

Despite sustained efforts made to convince Pakistan that allowing Indian goods to reach Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries through Pakistan's territory would be economically beneficial for Islamabad too, no concrete result could be seen. Since Pakistan continues to treat Afghanistan as a neighbour which can help fulfil its long-cherished desire for strategic depth, Islamabad has been feeling threatened by Kabul's increasing closeness to New Delhi after the discredited Taliban regime in Afghanistan was overthrown in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York's Trade Towers and the Pentagon in Washington DC.

Afghanistan and Pakistan have been having a love-hate relationship because of Islamabad's interference in Kabul's internal affairs through the ISI's patronage to various Taliban factions, yet Pakistan has been trying to prove to the world community that there can be no peace in Afghanistan without Islamabad's involvement in any such effort. India's growing presence in Afghanistan is obviously viewed by Islamabad as a big hindrance in its designs with

regard to that land-locked country. Hence the denial to India of access to Afghanistan though Pakistan's territory on various pretexts. The problem will now be easily surmountable for India due to the Chabahar deal signed with Iran.

Iran's Chabahar port, which falls in the Gulf of Oman, is as strategically located as Pakistan's Gwadar port, which has been taken over by China on the pretext of expanding and developing it as a major trading junction. The location of both ports is such that each would face a tough competition from the other one. The Pakistani viewpoint in this regard has been summed up by Muhammad Daim Fazil, who teaches at the University of Gujarat, Sialkot Campus. Fazil points out in his latest article carried in Diplomat magazine that Gwadar has an edge over Chabahar in some ways. While China is in full control of Gwadar, India does not have such a role to play in the case of Chabahar.

The second significant factor, according to Fazil, is that there may be a clash of economic interests between India and Iran, impacting the

functioning of Chabahar. As against this, the interests of China and Pakistan are different and would not come in the way of functioning of Gwadar. Despite these factors, Fazil admits, "Whether Gwadar or Chabahar, the development of both ports can assist millions of people.

Gwadar may well hold a slight edge because of its importance and utility, but it can produce best results only when there are no major regional threats. The same goes for Chabahar. Economic cooperation and integration is what's needed in South Asia and even beyond. That, however, demands enhanced cooperation among all involved parties and the dissolution of all outstanding strategic and political misunderstandings."

That is alright, but India will have to take care of at least two major security issues for its goods to reach their destination safely in Central Asia. One, India will have to ensure that the Pakistan Navy, which has a strong presence in the waters where Chabahar is

located, does not create any roadblocks for Indian consignments reaching there. Two, once goods are loaded on trucks at Chabahar for being transported to the receiving parties in Central Asia, these vehicles will be passing through areas in Afghanistan where Taliban factions have their undisputed control. How to meet the Taliban threat will not be an easy task for India.

The Iranian Press described the deal as a major gain for both India and Iran with New Delhi now being comfortably "positioned against its strong competitor (China) by investing in the port." Yet India needs to be wary of the Iranians, who may not like any move by New Delhi which may hurt the interests of China and Pakistan. Some time back China and Iran signed a 10-year economic cooperation agreement with Beijing committing to increase its trade to \$600 billion after the lifting of sanctions against Iran. Though Tehran is willing

to supply as much oil and gas as India wants, Iran needs both China and Pakistan too for its energy exports. Lately, Iran has been strengthening its relations with Pakistan to meet the threat posed

by the Islamic State extremists. For some time Tehran has been cultivating friendship with Afghanistan's Taliban factions too to take on the Islamic State, which has been threatening Iranian interests in the Gulf region in various ways.

The situation is such that all the players in the region would do all they can to gain the maximum advantages possible under the changed circumstances. These are times of cooperative competition when India has to play its cards very cautiously, keeping its varied interests in view. Despite the opportunities available after the Chabahar deal, New Delhi will have to continue to mount diplomatic pressure on Islamabad to allow the land route to be used for transporting India's goods to Afghanistan as there is a humanitarian angle also in the matter. Pakistan must be forced to abandon its negative policy on the land route to Afghanistan and Central Asia. A change in Pakistan's policy will also go a long way in bringing India and Pakistan closer.

## *Encroachers join the league of god men, gangsters in UP*

anti-encroachment drive against members of the Swadheen Bharat Subhash Sena in Mathura turned into a gory incident. This left behind a trail of blazes and a scar on the system. Was it a simple case of intelligence failure? Or was it the ill-preparedness of police in handling such a situation? Ironically, the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav has admitted the mistakes and charged the police "ill-preparedness" in taking on the organised gang of encroachers. However, he has conveniently ignored the political complicity. The political patronage and State complicity apparently emboldened the self-appointed guru and his henchmen who piled up deadly arms and ammunition. A month ago the civic authorities had cut off electricity and water supply to the park, but it was restored in 12 hours. There were 40 intelligence reports pointing to the presence of licensed and unlicensed weapons in large numbers inside the Jawahar Bagh campus.

The BJP president Amit Shah has been most vocal when he said that "if even a little bit of self-respect is left in Netaji (Mulayam), he should get minister Shivpal Yadav to resign immediately. His words of advice to Chief Minister are "Akhilesh ji, if you have to maintain only the chacha-bhatija relation, you should end all relations with public". The BSP chief Mayawati has gone a step ahead and demanded Supreme Court monitored CBI probe into the clash in the temple town. It seems that law and order would be a major poll issue in the coming Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh. Is Akhilesh Yadav listening?

## *The Unbelievable Tale of Jesus's Wife*

Scholars took to their blogs to point out apparent errors in Coptic grammar as well as phrases that seemed to have been lifted from the Gospel of Thomas. Others deemed the text suspiciously in step with the zeitgeist of growing religious egalitarianism and of intrigue around the idea, popularized by The Da Vinci Code, of a married Jesus. The controversy made news around the world, including an article in these pages. A year and a half later, however, Harvard announced the results of carbon-dating tests, multispectral imaging, and other lab analyses: The papyrus appeared to be of ancient origin, and the ink had no obviously modern ingredients. This didn't rule out fraud. A determined forger could obtain a blank scrap of centuries-old papyrus (perhaps even on eBay, where old papyri are routinely auctioned), mix ink from ancient recipes, and fashion passable Coptic script, particularly if he or she

had some scholarly training. But the scientific findings complicated the case for forgery. The Gospel of Jesus's Wife had undergone—and passed—more state-of-the-art lab tests, inch for inch, than almost any other papyrus in history.

But skeptics had identified other problems. Among the most damning was an odd typographical error that appears in both the Jesus's-wife fragment and an edition of the Gospel of Thomas that was posted online in 2002, suggesting an easily available source for a modern forger's cut-and-paste job. With King and her critics at loggerheads, each insisting on the primacy of their evidence, I wondered why no one had conducted a different sort of test: a thorough vetting of the papyrus's chain of ownership.

King has steadfastly honored the current owner's request for anonymity. But in 2012, she sent me the text of e-

mails she'd exchanged with him, after removing his name and identifying details. His account of how he'd come to possess the fragment, I noticed, contained a series of small inconsistencies. At the time, I wasn't sure what to make of them. But years later, they still gnawed at me.

The American Association of Museums' Guide to Provenance Research warns that an investigation of an object's origins "is not unlike detective work": "One may spend hours, days, or weeks following a trail that leads nowhere." When I started to dig, however, I uncovered more than I'd ever expected—a warren of secrets and lies that spanned from the industrial districts of Berlin to the swingers scene of southwest Florida, and from the halls of Harvard and the Vatican to the headquarters of the East German Stasi.

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## Jaipur: 3 dead, several injured as BMW driven by MLA's son rams into auto



Maharia.

The incident took place at around 1:50 am, when Siddharth along with his cousin Jayant were going to their house in Jalupura in a BMW 520d Sedan. The speeding car collided with an autorickshaw, killing three people on the spot and injuring one, before ramming into a PCR van of the Ashok Nagar police station. Both Siddharth and Jayant have been detained. "Two of the deceased have been identified as Jethalal and Kailash, while the other man couldn't be identified. Another man, Anil, who was with them in the auto,

sustained injuries and was admitted to the trauma centre of SMS Hospital," said an official of the police station. Four police officers were also injured in the accident. Assistant sub-inspector Rajju Singh sustained injuries to his head and was admitted to SMS Hospital. Officials said his condition was stable. The other three officers sustained minor injuries. "Prima facie it appears that Siddharth was driving the car although more can be said after further investigation. Currently medical tests are being conducted to ascertain whether they were under the

influence of alcohol," said deputy commissioner of police (south) Manish Agarwal. Ashok Nagar station house officer Bala Ram said the bodies have been sent for post mortem. He said the car was being driven at a high speed. "An FIR has been lodged in this regard and after we receive the medical reports, relevant sections of the IPC will be decided. Chances are that the case will be registered under section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder)," said Agarwal. Despite repeated attempts, Siddharth's father MLA Nand Kishore Maharia could not be reached for comment.

(Agencies) Three people were killed and several others, including four police officers,

were injured when a speeding BMW car rammed into an autorickshaw and a police van near St Xavier's School in Jaipur on Friday night. Police said the car was allegedly being driven by Siddharth Maharia, son of Sikar MLA Nand Kishore

## At Amarnath, pilgrims say faith helps overcome fear of militant attacks



(Agencies) At dawn on Saturday, thousands of pilgrims began their journey to the holy Amarnath shrine in south Kashmir from the Batal base camp, some 120 km from Srinagar.

"It's my 18th Yatra and all I will ask Bhole Baba once I reach the cave is to bless all humanity," said Satpal Verma, 53, from Rajasthan, as he began the trek with a wooden walking stick.

The 48-day pilgrimage to the holy shrine, located at an altitude of more than 3880 metres, through the two

routes of Baltal and Pahalgam is expected to be taken by about 400,000 visitors. Inside the cave, a natural ice formation is considered the Shiva Lingam by Hindus.

As cold winds swept the camp, pilgrims began their 16km trek on foot, horses and palkis, chanting "Bum Bum Bholey" amidst a massive security set-up comprising personnel from the state police, army, CRPF and BSF. Tosha Devi, 50, a pilgrim from Jammu, said she was excited to begin her first trek and determined not to take a horse but

walk up to the cave.

Since Friday evening, the scene at the Batal base camp was that of exuberance — with tents put up for lodging the pilgrims by various religious bodies, multi-coloured lights and devotional songs blaring out of loudspeakers. Hundreds of pilgrims crossed the arduous security checks to enter the camp and the langars put up in a large tent adorned with posters of Shiva serving vegetarian meals.

The security arrangement for the annual pilgrimage became a major concern this year following a series of militant attacks in Kashmir in the last few weeks, including a major one on a CRPF convoy in Pampore.

Late on Friday night, a CRPF camp was attacked by militants, leaving three personnel injured, hours after Union home minister Rajnath Singh reviewed the security arrangements for the Yatra. Sources said more than 12,500 central paramilitary personnel and 8,000 state police officers were being deployed. But pilgrims with whom HT spoke said although they were aware of the spike in attacks in the Valley, they were not scared because of their "faith".

## Corrosion spots found in coolant channels of

## Kakrapar reactors



(Agencies) India's atomic energy regulator has said unusual corrosion spots were found in the coolant channels in the power reactors at Kakrapar Atomic Power Station (KAPS) owned by Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL). "During the ongoing inspections in KAPS units, unusual indications of corrosion spots were noticed in the coolant channels," Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) said in a statement on Friday.

"How these have been formed and whether these are linked to the failure is being checked and it can fully be established after the failed channel is removed and examined," the statement added. On the morning of March 11, the first reactor at KAPS shut down automatically following leakage of heavy water from its coolant channel. The leak was plugged ten days later.

According to AERB, as its regulatory focus is on operating units to assure their safety on priority, it had asked for inspection of coolant channels of other units to rule out the possibility of similar corrosion. "The inspections done so far in different reactors indicate that presence of local corrosion spots on coolant channels is specific to KAPS units alone and no evidence of this phenomenon is seen in other reactors inspected so far," AERB said.

"We studied the pressure tubes and leak detection systems in all other PHWRs in the country and found them to be satisfactory. We didn't find anything amiss in them that might result in an incident similar to that happened at Kakrapar," Shiv Abilash Bhardwaj, Chairman, AERB told IANS on June 30. According to AERB officials the focus is to see whether the corrosion is specific to KAPS units and whether it is linked to operational factors.

## Close aide of Mathura violence 'mastermind' Ram Vriksha Yadav dies



(Agencies) The prime suspect in the shocking murder of an Infosys employee in Chennai attempted to commit suicide as police cornered him in his house late on Friday night. Police tracked down 22-year-old Ramkumar to Tirunelveli, where he was arrested at around 10:40 pm, following an exhaustive manhunt that lasted a week. As police closed in on

him, Ramkumar slit his throat with a sharp object. He sustained severe injuries and has been admitted to a government hospital. Upon his recovery, he will be transferred to Chennai, located about 650 kms away. S Swathi, an employee for Infosys, was attacked while waiting to board the local train at the Nungambakkam railway station on June 24. The suspect hacked her to death on the crowded platform and managed to escape, leading to a public outcry at the seemingly lax security at the station. Police were led to Ramkumar based on CCTV footage at the station, which showed the suspect dressed in a blue checked shirt. The

man's image from the video was flashed across the state while police personnel went from door-to-door in Chooleimedu, the area in which the victim lived. An engineering graduate, Ramkumar was tracked to a rented house in the same area, and was found to have lived there for three months, sharing accommodation with another person who is missing. In Ramkumar's room, police found a checked shirt believed to be the same the suspect was wearing at the time of the crime. The accused was then traced to Tirunelveli where his family — a brother and sister and his parents — live. It is also where Ramkumar studied engineering.





## North America's Hottest Male Leaders Gather for Steamy Three-Way Politics Sesh

(Agencies) Europe may yet dissolve beneath the xenophobic ramblings of an off-brand Donald Trump bootleg, but here in North America, our political leaders are showing off the sex appeal of progressive politics. In what some are calling the Three Amigos Summit, Barack Obama is meeting with Canadian prime minister/feminist dad Justin Trudeau and Mexican president/total dreamboat Enrique Peña Nieto in Ottawa this week, setting hearts aflame across borders and prompting a million fantasies of a Black Mirror-like scenario in which some enterprising terrorist would blackmail the three into a passionate livestreamed makeout session. (A million fantasies, right guys? Right?)

R. Eric Thomas gets today's award for the best tribute to this dapper, toothy triad. "Whoever took this photo deserves a GD Pulitzer Prize," he wrote on Thursday in a semi-viral Facebook post. "We may be two minutes from doomsday but thank the Lord we still live in a universe where three world leaders can strut into a room like they're the new interracial male cast of Sex and the City." He went on:

Like I have ALREADY prepurchased tickets to this film. Out here in these streets looking like Career Day Ken. Looking like Destiny's DILF. Looking like the Alternate Universe version of our Current Political Universe. Looking like Tom Ford presents The Avengers. How you going to be one of the leaders of the "free" world and still stalk the runway,

killing all our faves? The only thing that would make it better is if they were pounding through a pool of water like Bey-sus on the BET Awards. Why do any of us walk on land anymore, tbh? YES YOU BETTA SALUTE YOU MOUNTIES! Pledge allegiance to this day drag! Based solely on this photo all three of them were just declared the first non-drag winners of RuPaul's Drag Race. The Destiny's Child analogy—three attractive, similarly dressed wannabes strutting toward the camera in a blinding aura of charm—rang true for many fans: As the world's reigning Upworthy post of a human being, Trudeau has added the occasion to his well-known portfolio of made-for-social-media moments. Both he and the White House have embraced the characterization of Trudeau and Obama's friendship as a "bromance," though in an address to the Canadian Parliament, Trudeau tried to make the alterative portmanteau "dudeplomacy"



stick. Unfortunately, the Canadian looker threw cold water on the steamy throuple fanfic that was writing itself in our brains when he orchestrated a clumsy three-way handshake between the world leaders, the most awkward failed attempt at public intimacy since Ted Cruz elbowed his wife in the face. But the people can overlook the limits of the trio's physical chemistry if they just keep posing for pics together. "Europe: falling apart / North America: Buddy cop movie with heads of state," wrote one Facebook commenter on Thomas' post. "Why can't they just power together and run one country. I'd move to that country," lamented another. Even the Canadian Parliament can't help itself: Members started chanting "four more years!" when Obama made his appearance on the floor.

In other news, the three leaders agreed on ambitious goals for their nations to combat climate change, and Trudeau and Peña Nieto went on a run in short shorts.

## Apple Patents to Block iPhone Cameras in Sensitive Locations. That Could Be Dangerous.



(Agencies) Smartphone cameras have become an important tool for documenting unexpected events or situations, whether they're capturing Julius opening a door or an incident of police brutality. But a patent filed by Apple in 2011 and approved Tuesday describes technology that would allow the company to control iPhone owners' ability to use their cameras. Spotted by 9to5Mac, the technology would work by scanning photos and videos for the presence of particular infrared signals. If someone wanted to block iPhones from taking photos in a specific location, they would set up an infrared beam that iPhones could detect through image processing. Photos/video without the infrared signature would be stored to the phone's memory like normal, but when the processor detected infrared signals, the phone would display a notification that recording had been disabled.

The patent explains, "A transmitter can be located in areas where capturing pictures and videos is prohibited (e.g., a concert or a classified facility) and the transmitters can generate infrared signals with encoded data that includes commands temporarily disabling recording functions."

Though the technology is speculative and still only a patent, it's hard not to jump ahead to how potentially censorial it could be. There are definitely situations where the impulse to use this type of technology would be understandable, like performances where artists/backers/venues are looking to control media distribution. But as ThinkProgress points out, the ubiquity of portable cameras can help people hold powerful entities accountable for wrongdoing, and it might be tempting for institutions to use this technology to combat transparency. These hypotheticals are reminiscent of other ways technology can already be used to curb dissent, like the 2011 incident where San Francisco mass transit police shut off cell phone service in a subway station to make it harder for would-be protesters to organize.

As Chad Lorenz wrote on Slate last year in the wake of the Walter Scott shooting (which a bystander caught on video), "The most effective thing ordinary Americans can do to stop these shootings and the most effective way to make police departments accountable right now is to take more video of police confrontations. We've reached the point where this is the socially responsible thing to do." Apple probably won't be building camera-blocking tech any time soon, if ever, but this patent could give other people ideas.

# Yes, my baby is crying but I am not a bad mother



(Agencies) I push my almost-full cart through the grocery store, distracted by the high-pitched squeal of my 15 months old. "We're almost done," I repeat for the seventh time, but she's not buying it. I quickly grab my last few items and head to the checkout line, feeling the stares of

the other customers as my little one's shrieks reach a fever pitch. My jaw tightens and a harsh "Shhh! That's enough," escapes my clenched teeth. That doesn't help, of course. As I load my items for billing, I try keeping her engaged by either crooning silly tones or handing over her sippy cup to shift her attention. A woman behind me says to her friend, loud enough for me to hear, "If my kid acted like this, I'd scoop her up and leave the store right then and there. You have to teach them that they can't behave like this anywhere they want." I'm too exhausted and frustrated to explain that leaving the store is exactly what my daughter

wants.

I take her out for a stroll in her pram. People smile and wave at her and she lets out a sweet 'Hi' to them. They stop by and say 'She's so sweet and social.'

I just smile. We are having lunch at a fine dining restaurant. The little one enjoys eating her food while sitting in her 'baby chair' while we finish our meals. Suddenly she doesn't want to sit there any longer and starts shrieking and throwing everything she can let her hands on. People who would probably be raving about how biddable the child is - look at us like we are torturing her by making her sit in that chair! Now, if

you judge my parenting based on any given five minute snippet, you may either think of me as a bad parent or the greatest mother in the world. Yet I regularly witness strangers make such judgments of other moms. The truth is, for the most part, parenting on any given day is full of uncertainty. It's easy to judge other parents, but what we see always may not be the case. We could all benefit from a little compassion and understanding that a five-minute snippet of someone's life is not indicative of who they are as a parent. We are not defined by our worst moments; it's only fair to give parents the grace we hope others would extend to us.

## Dogs can sniff out low blood sugar: Study



(Agencies) Touted as man's best friend, canines can now also be trained to sniff out conditions of low blood sugar in patients with Type-1 diabetes, finds an

interesting study. Hypoglycaemia — low blood sugar — can cause problems such as shakiness, disorientation and fatigue and comes with little warning. If the patient does not receive a sugar boost in time, it can cause seizures and lead to unconsciousness. The findings showed that the scent of chemical isoprene found in human breath could act as a warning for patients with Type-1 diabetes experiencing a rapid decline in the blood sugar levels. "Isoprene is one of the commonest

natural chemicals that we find in human breath," said Mark Evans from University of Cambridge. In the study, the team analysed eight women with Type-1 diabetes and within an average age of 40. The participants' blood glucose levels were slowly lowered during controlled conditions. Researchers used mass spectrometry to distinguish the presence of chemicals in the women's breath that may change as the blood sugar levels change. Isoprene levels were found to significantly rise during hypoglycaemia.



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# Attentions parents: Babies' sleep habits make them gain weight



(Agencies) You may want to introduce your baby to good sleep habits from day one as a recent study has suggested that

strong links exist between inadequate bedtime routine and childhood obesity.

The Penn State College of Medicine researchers are studying the use of an intervention to prevent rapid infant weight gain and childhood obesity.

Through the INSIGHT study (Intervention Nurses Start Infants Growing on Healthy Trajectories), the intervention was recently shown to cut in half the incidence of one-year-old infants being

## Bad news! Size 'does' matter in bedroom

(Agencies) It's an ongoing bone of contention among many for centuries: does size matter? Well, a team of researchers has an answer and it isn't good news for shorter people.

Researchers at Chapman University studied 60,058 people and found a link between bodily size and the number of previous sexual partners.

They found that taller guys tend to get more action, while men who were shorter than average had one to three fewer sexual partners than larger lads and the shortest men had the least previous bedroom encounters.



Study author Dr. David Frederick said the findings show how important height is when it comes to the "mating market" and reckoned that women might have a minimum height in mind when looking for male suitors.

He explained, "Research has repeatedly shown that women prefer men who are slightly taller than they are. It is possible that for most women there is a certain minimal threshold of height, after which they will consider a male as a potential sex partner, and thus men above that height will end up with similar numbers of sex partners."

With regard to women, underweight women had notably fewer partners than other women. "There are numerous possibilities as to why underweight women had few partners," explained Frederick. "They may be highly dissatisfied with their weight and suffering from anorexia and thus not motivated to show their bodies; additionally, being underweight is associated with a relatively high mortality rate and/or they could be suffering from a variety of ailments that cause weight loss and thus have fewer sex partners because they are dealing with serious health issues."

overweight. One component of the intervention promotes improving sleep-related behaviours for parents and their infants.

In the study, parents were randomly assigned to one of two groups. Both groups received educational materials and four home nurse visits. One group received obesity prevention education that covered sleep-related behaviours, bedtime routines, improving sleep duration and avoiding feeding and rocking to sleep. The other group received safety education about preventing sudden infant death syndrome.

Infants of parents who learned bedtime techniques had more consistent bedtime routines, earlier bedtimes, better sleep-related behaviours and longer sleep during the night than the infants of parents who received the safety training. The sleep-trained infants were more likely to self-soothe to sleep without being fed and were less likely to be fed back to sleep

when they awoke overnight.

"A lot of parents try to keep their babies up longer, thinking that then they'll sleep longer at night and they won't wake up," said lead author Ian M. Paul, adding "We found that's not true. When parents keep babies up longer, they just sleep less. If you want your baby to sleep longer and better, put them to sleep earlier. Regardless of what time you put babies to sleep, they wake overnight. If we don't set the expectation that they're going to be picked up and fed, they learn to soothe themselves back to sleep."

"It is important to establish good sleep habits early in life for health reasons, including obesity prevention, but also for the emotional health of parents and families," Paul noted. "New parents of infants aren't thinking about obesity. Our intervention is designed to prevent obesity without having to explicitly talk to parents about their child's weight." The study is published in JAMA Pediatrics.

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The Infinity pool at the Sands SkyPark in Singapore.



For a taste of luxury climb aboard the majestic cruise ship as it sails along Singapore, Malaysia & Thailand

(Agencies) ONCE upon a time there was Shanti, nine years later comes Nikita Rai. As I waited for my flight to take off to Singapore, I could feel the excitement of what awaited on the other side of my little vacation – 24 action-packed episodes and a whole new avatar! With all the butterflies fluttering around in my stomach, all I wanted to do was enjoy a splendid vacation with my beautiful family and get back to the ring, gung ho! First stop, aboard the Super Star Virgo Cruise. And majestic is not the word! Over 900 cabins, yet more than enough space for the numerous swimming pools I could catch a glimpse of. Since I was going to be there for two whole days, I thought I might as well go all out and really log this fabulous journey for a rainy day. Who knew, I would end up sharing this with the world! I hope reading this will be as much fun as it was for me. The cruise journeyed from Singapore harbour to Penang, there on to Phuket in Thailand and back to Singapore over two nights and three days. I planned to spend all the quality time I could with my little man Vir. I had been away too often then and didn't get as much time with him as I would have liked.

This really was a great way to get away with the entire family and have fun while at it. The ship set sail and headed out into clear blue waters. I remember so vividly what a lovely night it was and to experience it aboard a ship with nothing but the calm sea around was nothing but serene. Tomorrow was just too far away! Slept like a baby that night, the rooms truly outstanding. We were booked in the suite on level 10 of the cruise liner. It had a large

# ONBOARD A FLOATING CITY



Mandira Bedi with husband Raj and son Vir enroute to Penang.

bay window, a balcony and a large jacuzzi right in the bathroom.

Talk about spoils! The members aboard the cruise told us the suites on level 10 have the best seaside views and was also one of the biggest on the ship. Next day the ship docked at Pulau Redang, which lies off the coast of Malaysia. The waters there were so blue; all I wanted was to take a quick dip. But since jumping off a ship wasn't on my to-do for that day, I made do with a family dip in the Jacuzzi at level 7 with the island in the background. Lunch time was a regal affair to say the least. Did I mention how the entire ship had a truly imperialistic feel? From the large staircase at the reception to the

numerous decks, every space across all twelve stories had been done up to exude luxury.

And some of the interiors were works of creative minds. Raj called it "an amazing floating city" and I think it's quite apt. Vir simply loved the ship. All the excitement left the little one tired though, had to tuck him in and then head for a tour of the cruise ship. Captain Magnus runs the crew aboard the ship and what a kind man he is. We were to meet him at the Captains bridge where he then went on to give us a run through of the complete mechanics of steering a cruise ship. One of the facts that he shared was that the behemoth weighed over 75,000 tonnes and was almost



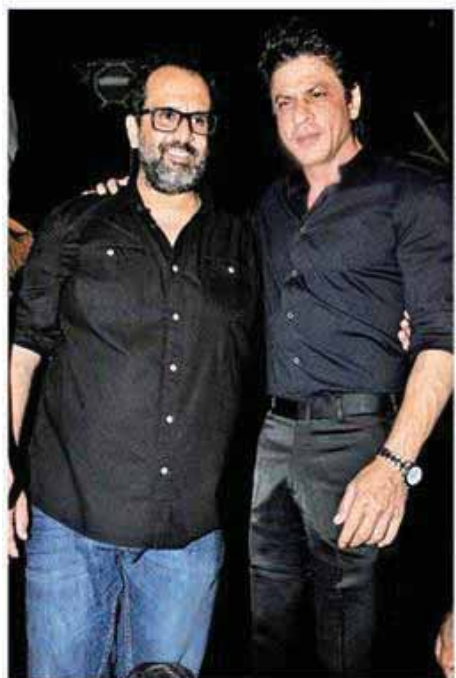
Kai Kai and Jia Jia in the giant panda forest at Singapore's river-themed zoo and aquarium which attracts 820,000 visitors a year.

270 metres in length and all of it was controlled by the one tiny joystick under his hand! He even let me sit in the captain's seat, completely made my day. I THINK the holiday was already getting to Raj because he insisted we enjoy a more roman-

tic dinner tonight, just the two of us! Who am I to complain when the husband wanted a night out to pamper me. We decided on The Palazzo for some fine Italian dining. The restaurant actually felt like from out of a turn of the century luxe Italian restaurant.

# SRK, Kangana, and others attend Anand L Rai's **birthday bash**

**T**anu Weds Manu director Anand L Rai held a bash on his 45th birthday for his Bollywood friends on Tuesday. The party was attended by celebrities like Shah Rukh Khan, Kangana Ranaut, Aditi Rao Hydari, Huma Qureshi along with brother Saqib Saleem, Diana Penty and Rajkumar Rao.



## Disha Patani and I are 'good friends', says Tiger Shroff



Tiger Shroff is rumoured to be dating Disha Patani, but the actor says they are just "good friends". The 26-year-old Baaghi star, who has been spotted with the model-actress at several occasions, will be seen romancing her in a new music video. "We both were comfortable with each other on and off screen. She (Disha) pushes me to do better," he added. Disha, who will be making her Bollywood with Dhoni biopic said she shares a great comfort level with the Heropanti actor. "We are good friends. We do dancing (training in dance) and sports together so we share a comfort zone. Hence we are very much comfortable with each other." The duo said they enjoy each others company and go for outings like any two friends would go. "We like spending time with each other. And so we go together to eat, watch films," Tiger said. "It is normal to go out with friends for lunch, dinner and movies," Disha added. The music video is shot in Paris, but the actors couldn't enjoy much as they were busy with the shoot.

## Freedom to express my opinion very important for me: Kangana Ranaut

Known for her outspoken behaviour, Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut has said that it is something which is extremely important for her.

Kangana says it means a lot to her to just be herself and not live for any materialistic goals in life.

"There are all kinds of people out there. Some live for admiration, some live for money, some just for the sake of living. I live for my freedom. And its very important to me," Kangana told reporters. It means a lot to me to be able to say what I feel is the

right thing to say and bring able to do what I want to do basically. Just being my own person means a lot to me. That's the only thing I live for, nothing else," she added.

The 29-year-old Tanu Weds Manu Returns star was speaking at the launch of Grazia magazine. Recently, Kangana was mired in a controversy with actor Hrithik Roshan. The two actors have been at loggerheads since the Queen star called Hrithik her 'silly ex'. The feud between Hrithik and his Krrish 3 co-star turned

nasty after they slapped legal notices on each other.

When asked how she used her 'superpower' to defeat a 'superhero', Kangana said, "Please ask a decent question if you want to. You are toh completely into scandals." The actress last week unveiled Bollywood Director Shirish Kunder's short film Kriti, which has been accused of being a copy of another short film Bob, made by a Nepali filmmaker. Asked about this, Kangana said, "I don't know anything about that."



PHOTOS: YOGEN SHAH

# Big stars align at b'day bash

(Agencies) FILMMAKER Anand L Rai celebrated his birthday on Tuesday at a posh restaurant in suburban Mumbai, and the A-list that turned up to wish him would prove his current run of success has indeed won him quite a few influential friends in B-Town. The evening's big draw was Shah Rukh Khan, whose arrival set off a mini frenzy among the gathered shutterbugs. SRK will soon team up with Rai to play perhaps the most challenging role his life — the filmmaker is readying a script that will see the superstar essaying the role of a dwarf. Kangana Ranaut arrived looking pretty as ever in a long blue number with a shrug, and matching shoes. Rai has been among the most influential filmmaker in her career, having directed Kangana in *Tanu Weds Manu* and *Tanu Weds Manu Returns*. The latter film won Kangana her third National Award last year. By the time new-generation hunk Sidharth Malhotra arrived, it had started pouring heavily. The actor made way from his car into the party venue with an umbrella but not before pausing to enjoy the pleasant showers for a few minutes. Huma Qureshi came along with her brother Saqib Saleem. Huma looked gorgeous in a maxi number by Michael Costello.



Anti-clockwise: Actors Diana Penty, Shah Rukh Khan, Aditi Rao Hydari, Huma Qureshi, Sidharth Malhotra, Kangana Ranaut and Rajkumar Rao at the birthday bash of filmmaker Anand L Rai.





(From left) Abhay Deol, Riteish Deshmukh & Ranveer Singh. (Right) Shahid Kapoor arrives on a donkey to pose on the green carpet before the awards.

# OF LOVE & LAURELS

(Agencies) THE Bollywood titans of the year 2015 — Bajrangi Bhaijaan and Bajirao Mastani — emerged victorious at the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards 2016 with the Salman Khanstarrer winning best picture while Sanjay Leela Bhansali's magnum opus taking home best director gong. Director Kabir Khan heaped praise on his lead star as he accepted the best picture award at the 17th edition of the awards. "Thank you IIFA, thank you Salman for starring and also producing the movie. He let me do the film the way I wanted to." Bhansali was honoured with the award by his lead actors — Ranveer Singh, Deepika Padukone and Priyanka Chopra. "No other film of mine has got so much love like Bajirao. I am surprised to see how it has done so well this awards season. It is a special moment for me to get this awards by my three favourite actors. I don't want to thank anyone for the film because a 'thank you' is not enough," the director said. The historical romantic saga earned Ranveer the best actor trophy for his portrayal of the great Maratha warrior Peshwa Bajirao. The actor began his acceptance speech by thanking his director but did not miss a chance to show his affection towards rumoured girlfriend Deepika. "I am so glad I won.



Priyanka Chopra (right) was quite sensational as she danced and even crooned to her songs, including *Pinga*



Deepika Padukone bagged the Best Actress for *Piku*. (Right) Athiya Shetty.



# The Unbelievable Tale of Jesus's Wife

*A hotly contested, supposedly ancient manuscript suggests Christ was married. But believing its origin story—a real-life Da Vinci Code, involving a Harvard professor, a onetime Florida pornographer, and an escape from East Germany—requires a big leap of faith.*



contends, an outrageous modern fake: Jesus's bachelorhood helps form the basis for priestly celibacy, and his all-male cast of apostles has long been cited to justify limits on women's religious leadership. In the Roman Catholic Church in particular, the New Testament is seen as divine revelation handed down through a long line of men—Jesus, the 12 apostles, the Church fathers, the popes, and finally the priests who bring God's word to the parish pews today.

On a humid afternoon this past November, I pulled off Interstate 75 into a stretch of Florida pine forest tangled with runaway vines. My GPS was homing in on the house of a man I thought might hold the master key to one of the strangest scholarly mysteries in recent decades: a 1,300-year-old scrap of papyrus that bore the phrase "Jesus said to them, My wife." The fragment, written in the ancient language of Coptic, had set off shock waves when an eminent Harvard historian of early Christianity, Karen L. King, presented it in September 2012 at a conference in Rome. Never before had an ancient manuscript alluded to Jesus's being married. The papyrus's lines were incomplete, but they

seemed to describe a dialogue between Jesus and the apostles over whether his "wife"—possibly Mary Magdalene—was "worthy" of discipleship. Its main point, King argued, was that "women who are wives and mothers can be Jesus's disciples." She thought the passage likely figured into ancient debates over whether "marriage or celibacy [was] the ideal mode of Christian life" and, ultimately, whether a person could be both sexual and holy. King called the business-card-size papyrus "The Gospel of Jesus's Wife." But even without that provocative title, it would have shaken the world of biblical scholarship. Centuries of Christian tradition are bound up in whether the scrap is authentic or, as a growing group of scholars

**(Contd on page 21)**

# Life After The Chinese Cracker

*Post the NSG fiasco, Modi has to now calm the 'anti-Chinese' sentiments in the country*



The Seoul Nuclear Suppliers' Group Summit on June 23-24 is widely being seen as the first diplomatic setback for Narendra Modi. His supporters, keen as they were to see India doing even better than 'the one-time waiver' it got in 2008 under the Manmohan Singh government, are disappointed that it did not find a membership in this elite club.

His detractors see this as a much needed reality-check for the 'high-flying' Prime Minister. They feel Modi will take hard lessons from last week's development to realize that the world of diplomacy is a little more than creating spectacles in different parts of the globe through much-

publicized visits. The Indian establishment holds China as the one country that was primarily responsible for keeping it out of the NSG. This view, gaining wide acceptance in the country, has now opened the door wide for the pro-American lobby to push India further in a stronger and tighter strategic embrace of the United States.

Taking advantage of the 'anti-China' sentiment in wake of the Seoul Summit the pro-Washington group in the Indian strategic community is now arguing for Delhi to end its ambiguity and wholeheartedly join the US-coalition against Beijing, particularly in dealing with developments in the East and South China Seas.

**(Contd on page 20)**

## Young, rich - and busted

*Fox producer, Chipotle executive, Merrill banker, Wall Street accountant, Cushman & Wakefield broker and HuffPo blogger cuffed after year-long Manhattan cocaine sting*

A Fox Business Network producer, a Chipotle executive and an associate at Merrill Lynch are among a group of 18 high-flyers who have been arrested after a massive New York cocaine ring was cracked.

Katie Welnhof, 29, who works on 'Mornings with Maria' on Fox Business, and the Mexican fast food chain's Chief Marketing and Development Officer, Mark Crumpacker, 53, have been indicted after the operation.

Christopher Dodson, 28, a client associate at Merrill Lynch, and his brother Austin, 24, an associate at real estate firm Cushman & Wakefield, were also arrested.

Underwriting consultant Christian Jewett, 31, Marwood Group senior associate Kyle Holmes, 27, tax accountant Roman Yoffe, 36,

**(Contd on page 20)**



## Encroachers join the league of god men, gangsters in UP

TEHELKA team that visited the site of tragic -incident for in-depth ground reportage found that this is a classic case as to how the sects could -operate with impunity because of political -patronage. Of late, pictures of such camps showing brandishing rifles, grenades, explosives and swords openly proclaiming plans to expand to other parts of the country have become viral on social media sites. The rational view of every right-thinking -person is that a modern welfare state should have no place for religious sects, goons, mafias, whether impelled by political connections or religious cult or beliefs. Private militias are a total taboo in a -modern welfare state. So what could have been a routine

**(Contd on page 21)**