

Holy Cow

Behind gau raksha lies lust for power, right-wing agency and pelf.

(Insider Bureau)

At a little after 10 pm on the rainy night of July 14, a group of cow vigilantes hurtled down a highway in Haryana's Ambala district. They were chasing a pick-up van filled so they say with cows. As the van speeded away, her pursuers issued a social media SOS. Their message landed in a WhatsApp group run by Yamunanagar-based cow vigilante, 28-year-old engineering graduate Rohit Chaudhary. Chaudhary's gau raksha dal (GRD), or cow protection group, is one of Haryana's 114, with scores of gau-bhakts, or cow-worshippers, on speed dial. Gujarat has 200 such vigilante groups, and they are sprouting in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

At a primal level, these groups seek to simply terrify anyone dealing with the 'holy cow'. But look deeper, and an insidious cocktail of business and religion emerges. Economic terrorism has been introduced by the targeting of anyone who deals with cattle, cattle skin or animal byproducts. GRDs are out to deprive some of India's largest (and poorest) communities many of them Dalits and Muslims of their traditional trade in animals and animal products. There have



While politics goes on, thousands of cows are dying in shelters. And livelihoods inch towards ruin.

been incidents all over north India in recent months. The message spreads via horrific WhatsApp videos. That's how Dalits in Gujarat remain up in arms against gau rakshaks who viciously beat up cow-skinners in Una town.

The vigilantism is spreading. In Punjab and Haryana, GRDs have brought prosperous elite-caste Hindu merchants to their knees by levelling false charges of trading in cow byproducts. Businessmen narrate how GRDs function like organised extortion rackets. Many who refuse to bribe cow protectors have had to shut shop. Even hides of fallen cows headed for tanneries

in UP are unsafe. GRDs, aided by police, routinely extort wayfarers in gau mata's name. Where do the cattle GRDs 'rescue' from 'smugglers' end up? Why, in gaushalas (cattle shelters) they own, or in animal hospices that get state patronage or donations from an unsuspecting or acquiescing public. Abbas was headed home with two oxen in his white pick-up truck when Chaudhary's gang waylaid him past midnight near Kurukshetra. A tractor was parked across a road, creating a naka or roadblock. Abbas's little truck tried to flee but was stopped by another naka, fashioned out of iron nails,

with local sympathisers' help. As Abbas's van approached, Chaudhary fired four rounds from his companion's double-barrel. "Only in the air," he says. "And they were blanks." Abbas's family says their son never returned. Next time he was seen, around 25 days later, he was dead, floating face down in a Kurukshetra drain. "Abbas went to buy oxen that we use for farming. Why did they have to kill him," asks Tahir Hassan, his distraught father. Hassan says he identified his son, who had gunshot wounds, from a tooth cavity and a mole below his chest. But Kurukshetra SP Simardeep Singh

says it isn't certain if Abbas was present that night. A DNA and viscera test report is awaited. "Only police can conduct raids," Singh agrees. "If gau rakshaks do it, it's illegal. We tell them this," he says. "We avoid joint operations. We only take information on cattle movement from them." The incident is now being investigated by the CBI on a High Court of Punjab and Haryana order, which also says gau rakshaks enjoy police, administrative and political patronage.

"We got information of Abbas's vehicle through informants, so we had set up a naka. A fellow gau sevak called the police. We regularly conduct joint operations with them," Chaudhary boasts. But now he acknowledges the murkiness in the gau rakshak world. "I did so much for Hindu society. I broke the back of Muslim cow smugglers. But Hindu traitors and some rakshaks take bribes from Muslim smugglers and let cows get slaughtered," he complains. Chaudhary's calculations were simple. "One captured truck means a smuggler loses Rs 1 lakh. That's Rs 60,000 worth cattle, Rs 10,000 lawyers' fees and sundry expenses on fuel, hiring pick-ups etc," he says. "One or two raids on a trader and he's finished."

(Contd on page 21)



India Day Parade organized in Hicksville, Long Island



(By Ajay Batra) New York:- 69th Anniversary of India's Independence was celebrated by thousands on Saturday August 6th. As our Indian Prime Minister Hon. Narendra Modiji, President Pranab Mukherjee and team, get together planning for the prestigious Independence day in India on August 15th, following the footsteps, the founding leaders of IDPUSA Bobby K. Kalotee, President Beena LKothari, Indu Jaiswal, Mohinder Taneja, Kamlesh Mehta, President Beena Kothari along with many esteemed community leaders like Jagdish Sewhani, Past President Peter Bheddah, AAPI National President Ajay Lodha and many others, came together to celebrate India's Independence this past weekend. Bobby Kumar Kalotee addressed the crowd thanking and specially recognizing President Beena Kothari, Team Members Flora Parekh, all committee members, founders, sponsors, media, honorees,

supporters, well-wishers and volunteers, who strived day and night to make the event a huge success. "As diversified and Secular India is, this parade is attended each year by diversified and secular community leaders regardless of nationality and religion" say Founder Bobby K. Kalotee.

Welcomed among the dignitaries were Top Bollywood celebrity Grand Marshal Bobby Deol and Prashant Guptha along with Canadian Rockstar and Youth Heartthrob Raghav, British Singer and song writer Navin Kundra, Ballroom dancer and Choreographer Sandip Soparkar, Miss India International and beauty pageant winners. Oyster Bay Town Supervisor John Venditto, Town of North Hempstead Supervisor Judi Bosworth, NY State Senator Jack M. Martins, Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano, Politician Tom Suozzi, NY State Police, NY State Senator Michael Venditto, Town Of

Hempstead Clerk Nasrin G. Ahmad, Nassau County Comptroller Mr. George Margoos, Several County and Supreme Court Judges and many more. Long Island air filled with Orange, white and green balloons — the colors of India's flag, as multicultural floats, cars, marching bands, pipe bands, cultural dancers, elected officials, dignitaries & celebrities marched down at Saturday's fifth annual India Day Parade in Hicksville, celebrating India's independence from Britain. The parade was visualized by thousands as several residents and business owners lined part of the route. The parade crossed in front of several residential homes where a number of Hicksville residents sat outside their houses to watch firefighters lead a parade full of floats, cars and foot marchers, celebrating ties to both countries by singing Indian and US National Anthems and rallying behind cheers of being proud and caring Indian-

Americans. With themes of education environment and ecosystems, the parade's festivities started in the parking lot of Grand Sponsor Apna Bazar farmers on Bethpage Road Hicksville and ended in a parking lot adjacent to LIRR railroad where a huge stage with multicultural performers rocked the event. Several vendors exhibited exclusive designer clothing, jewelry and mouth-watering Indian cuisine was sold along with delicious kulfi. Children rides, performances and attractions drew hundreds of children. Celebrity performances rocked the parade and stage mesmerizing the audience with their appearance and performances. Attendees could also see live performances including traditional dances to Indian music and several artists and surprise beauty and talent exhibitors. Raffle Tickets to Free Trip to India drew attention of

major attendees. The event was covered by South Asian Media and American Media. Thanks a lot to our Media Partners, TV Asia, ITV, Global Punjab, IVS TV, Desi Fusion, Jus Punjabi, Jus 24X7, PTC Punjabi, B4U TV, NY1TV, News Day, South Asian Times, Indian Panorama, South Asian Insider, Hum Hindustani, Radio Chai, Radio Zindagi, Indian Express, India Eye.net, Gujrat Times, Divya Bhaskar Shere Punjab, Apna Punjab, Writer weekly, Josh India TV. Behind every successful man there is a woman behind it, let's change this phrase today, every successful event there is media behind it, Mr Ajay Batra Said This 3 day mega event started with an exclusively planned Press conference honoring all Indian-American Media, followed by parade and ended with Grand celebrations at the Gala luncheon. "Our main goal is to bring all communities and cultures together under one umbrella K. Kalotee in his closing remarks

Kesha Ram lost in Vermont LG Primary

By Staff Reporter : Washington : Kesha Ram, the great great granddaughter of Ganga Ram, an Indian civil engineer known for building a network of health infrastructures in both India and Pakistan before partition, lost the race for a top elected position in the US State of Vermont. Indian-Jewish-American Kesha, 29, lost the Democratic primary for Vermont Lt Governor to David Zuckerman who won the election yesterday with 45 per cent of the votes. She came a distant third with just 18 per cent of the votes. Ms Ram was the first woman of colour to run for State-wide office in



Vermont. Her father was born in Lahore but after partition the family moved to India and grew in Punjab. He came to Los Angeles for studies as a student where he met her mother, a Jewish American. For her studies, Ms Ram moved to the University of Vermont. She was elected to the state House of Representatives at age 22 to represent the University District and Hill Section of Burlington.

7,000 Indians Get Malaysian Citizenship: Malaysian Indian Congress President

(Agencies) Kuala Lumpur : After years of battling bureaucracy, about 7,000 Indians who were born in Malaya before its independence from Britain have at last obtained Malaysian citizenship. S Subramaniam, president of the country's largest ethnic Indian political party Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), said about 7,000 Indians have obtained citizenship so far but a lot more people have yet to register. "On average, probably more than 15,000 Indians have yet to register to obtain the citizenship. So, this process will be continued to solve this issue. "We will find ways to solve this immediately," he said after

attending a religious ceremony 'Kalvi Yathirai' organised by the Sri Murugan Centre in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday. Prime Minister Najib Razak said recently that those yet to obtain citizenship should redeem their right. Mr Subramaniam hoped the government would refine the citizenship registration process for ethnic Indians by reducing the existing bureaucracy to expedite the process. "Many have repeatedly applied but failed due to the bureaucracy. I admit the main problem is documentation whereby, their birth records have been missing. If the bureaucracy is reduced, we target this issue will be solved by this year," he said.



Obama 'founder' of Islamic State, Hillary co-founder: Trump

(Agencies) Donald Trump has accused President Barack Obama on Wednesday of establishing the Islamic State group that is wreaking havoc from the Middle East to European cities. A moment later on another topic, he referred to the president by his full legal name: Barack Hussein Obama.

"In many respects, you know, they honour President Obama," Trump said during a raucous campaign rally outside Fort Lauderdale, Florida. "He is the founder of ISIS."

He repeated the allegation three more times for emphasis.

The Republican presidential nominee in the past has accused his opponent, Democrat Hillary Clinton, of founding the militant group. As he shifted the blame to Obama on Wednesday, he said that "crooked Hillary Clinton" was actually the group's co-founder. Trump has long

blamed Obama and his former secretary of state — Clinton — for pursuing Mideast policies that created a power vacuum in Iraq that was exploited by IS, another acronym for the group. He's sharply criticized Obama for announcing he would pull US troops out of Iraq — a decision that many Obama critics say created the kind of instability in which extremist groups like IS thrive.

The White House declined to comment on Trump's accusation.

The Islamic State group began as Iraq's local affiliate of al-Qaeda, the group that attacked the U.S. on 9/11. The group carried out massive attacks against Iraq's Shiite Muslim majority, fuelling tensions with al-Qaida's central leadership. The local group's then-leader, Jordanian-born Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was killed in 2006 in a U.S. airstrike but is still seen as the Islamic State group's founder.

Trump's accusation — and his use of the president's middle name, Hussein — echoed of previous instances where he's questioned Obama's loyalties.

In June, when a shooter who claimed allegiance to IS killed 49 people in an Orlando, Florida nightclub, Trump seemed to suggest Obama was sympathetic to the group when he said Obama "doesn't get it or, or he gets it better than anybody understands." In the past, Trump has also falsely suggested Obama is a Muslim or was born in Kenya, where Obama's father was from.

The president, a Christian, was born in Hawaii. Trump lobbed the allegation midway through his rally at a sports arena, where riled-up supporters shouted obscenities about Clinton and joined in unison to shout "lock her up." He railed against the fact that the Orlando shooter's father, Seddique Mateen, was spotted in



the crowd behind Clinton during a Monday rally in Florida, adding, "Of course he likes Hillary Clinton."

Sitting behind Trump at his rally on Wednesday was former Rep. Mark Foley, R-Fla., who resigned in 2006 after allegations he sent sexually suggestive messages to former House pages.

Mullah Mansour's death disrupted Taliban finances: US general



(Agencies) The killing of Mullah Akhtar Mansour severely crippled Taliban operations in Afghanistan as it disrupted the flow of funds to militants, Gen John Nicholson, the commander of US forces in the war-torn country, said on Wednesday.

Mansour, killed in a US drone strike in Pakistan in May, controlled the Afghan Taliban's funds from drug sales and overseas donors.

The Taliban offensive through last winter exhausted their stocks of arms and money, said Nicholson, who was on an official visit to India. This year, though they have attacked checkpoints, "we don't see anything where they hold terrain" except for brief periods, he added.

Mansour had a very tight control over revenue sources. The Taliban finance commission "frankly doesn't know where the money is" following his death, said Nicholson, though the group is trying to re-establish funding streams.

Over the past two weeks, US and Afghan forces carried out a major drive against the Islamic State Khorasan in which about 300 fighters were killed. This was about a quarter of the IS's strength in Afghanistan. "There is a clear connection" between

the IS Khorasan and the IS in Syria and Iraq, Nicholson said.

In a change from the past, troops have seen the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) conducting operations in Afghanistan and US forces are now "putting pressure" on them, Nicholson said.

Though these disparate groups didn't seem to work together, some Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan fighters from the Orakzai tribal region joined the IS Khorasan when the US attacked the latter.

Nicholson confirmed that Pakistan Army chief Gen Raheel Sharif had raised concerns about Indian military assistance to the Afghan Army. The US response, he said, was to say this aided the creation of a "strong, prosperous and independent Afghanistan" which was in Pakistan's interest.

Sharif, Nicholson said, had welcomed his decision to visit New Delhi where he has met India's national security advisor

and foreign and defence secretaries. The top US commander in Afghanistan welcomed India's gift of four Mi-25 gunship helicopters to the Afghan military, reversing Washington's long-standing opposition to New Delhi providing lethal weaponry to Kabul.

Nicholson said "there is an immediate need for more aircraft" and a repair facility for the Afghan Air Force.

Western sanctions against Russia have disrupted the ability of Afghans to get spare parts for their Russian aircraft, he said. Because of the sanctions, \$4.5 billion in international donations for the air force cannot be used for such parts. "Spare parts by

India would be most welcome," he said.

An aircraft repair facility in Afghanistan would be useful, he added. Aircraft needing maintenance are currently sent to eastern Europe. This would seem to be a thumbs-up for Indo-Russia plans to build a repair facility for the gunship helicopters. Nicholson also said India's provision of education and training for thousands of Afghan soldiers and students was having a "tremendous impact on the human side". India's professional training is helping the young Afghan Army "fill the junior and mid-level ranks", who are new to the ways of a professional military.

The South Asian Insider Weekly

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and Patrons

Happy 69th
Indian
Independence
Day



(Agencies) Donald Trump is Donald Trump-ing again. Speaking at a campaign rally on Wednesday night, he suggested President Obama actually created the Islamic State terror group. "In many respects, you know, they honor President Obama," Trump said in Florida. "He's the founder of ISIS. He's the founder of ISIS. He's the founder. He founded ISIS." Then for good measure, the GOP nominee worked his general election rival into



The Real Reason Trump Makes Outlandish Claims Like Obama Is "the Founder of ISIS"

the nonsensical myth. "I would say the co-founder would be crooked Hillary Clinton."

It's not totally surprising to hear such an idea from Trump, who has previously claimed that Clinton had a founding role in the creation of ISIS and suggested that Obama is somehow sympathetic to the terror group. If you wanted to give Trump the benefit of the doubt, an overly generous reading of his comments would be something like, President

Obama and his former secretary of state Hillary Clinton's foreign policy decisions in Iraq, Libya, and elsewhere have contributed to the rise of ISIS. Trump, after all, has offered similar criticism in the past, albeit in less coherent terms. But that is not what Trump said on Wednesday—and, much more importantly, also not what he wanted voters to hear, as the candidate himself has since made clear.

Trump was given multiple chances to walk back his comments Thursday morning but repeatedly passed them up. During an interview on CNBC, Trump even feigned surprise that what he said was controversial in the first place. "What?" he asked. "Are people complaining that I said he was the founder of ISIS?" During a separate interview, he was offered multiple lifelines by a friendly interviewer only to bat them away. "I know what you

meant," conservative radio host and Trump-endorser Hugh Hewitt told him. "You meant that [Obama] created the vacuum, he lost the peace." To which Trump promptly responded: "No, I meant that he's the founder of ISIS, I do." Hewitt, though, kept at it with his best impersonation of Sean Hannity leading Trump to water, via the official transcript:

Things only get more muddled from there, as they often do when Trump speaks. But after all of Hewitt's prompting, Trump finally nodded vaguely to Obama's "bad policies" and how "if he would have done things properly, you wouldn't have had ISIS"—but even with those caveats, he made it clear his conclusion hadn't changed: "Therefore, he was the founder of ISIS." Hewitt then countered one last time by suggesting that he personally would use "different language" to communicate the same criticism. Trump's response was remarkable for its awareness. "But they wouldn't talk about your language," he told Hewitt, "and they do talk about my language,

right?" That remark is telling, and it illustrates something that should be obvious by now but is often lost in the noise of each new controversy that comes every time Trump says something outlandish and/or obviously untrue. This was not some ad-libbed comment that went awry, a bad joke that did not land, or the candidate going "off message," as Beltway pundits call it. In fact, he's completely on message, and this has been the message for years, dating back to Obama's first term, during which Trump used the birther movement to lay the foundation for his current presidential run. More than anything, Trump has built his campaign on (white) America's fears of the other, and what better way for him to harness those than by othering the sitting president of the United States, be it by questioning his citizenship, his faith, or his loyalty. It doesn't matter to Trump whether his wild-eyed accusations are true; it doesn't matter to him whether they're offensive. All that matters to him is casting an illusion his supporters want to believe in.

US government will NOT loosen marijuana laws after lengthy review



(Agencies) Marijuana has been ruled one of the most dangerous drugs and has no medical use, the government has announced.

The decision marks the end of a lengthy government review, which found the drug 'has a high potential for abuse' and 'no accepted medical use'.

The weed will remain a Schedule 1 drug alongside heroin, despite growing support for legalization, the Drug Enforcement Administration

announced on Thursday. The DEA will allow more research into its possible medical benefits.

The decision comes a day after President Obama's daughter Malia was accused of smoking marijuana after a video of her puffing on a suspicious cigarette at a festival was released.

The DEA's announcement sparked outrage in the burgeoning cannabis community that now covers more than half

the US, and Bernie Sanders slammed the verdict on Twitter.

Sanders tweeted: 'People can argue about the pluses and minuses of marijuana, but everyone knows it's not a killer drug like heroin.'

President Obama is yet to comment on the decision.

Attitudes towards cannabis have transformed in the last few years, with the drug's medicinal value driving legalization efforts.

The US government has poured millions into researching the drug, and a number of papers have concluded that CBD - an active ingredient in marijuana - can aid treatment of ailments from anxiety to cancer.

But that momentum has been stunted by the DEA's conclusion, which cites scientific evidence purportedly showing no real medical value.

'We are tethered to science and bound by statute,' DEA spokesman Rusty Payne said Thursday.

Joel Milton, CEO of cannabis branding company Baker, slammed the supposed evidence as nonsense.

'They're saying there are no medical benefits. We crossed that hump years ago,' Milton told Daily Mail Online.

'State by state progress has shown the very obvious medical benefits of cannabis.

'Each state [with legal marijuana] has a government body that is very clear about what

can be done.

'We need to move forward and not inhibit all of the businesses that are up and running.'

More than half the states have legalized the drug for either medicinal or recreational use.

And the cannabis industry has thrived under the Obama administration.

However, after Thursday's verdict, marijuana proponents slammed Obama for passing the buck to the DEA.

David Bienenstock, Head of Content, HIGH TIMES, a 42-year-old media company that reports on the industry, said:

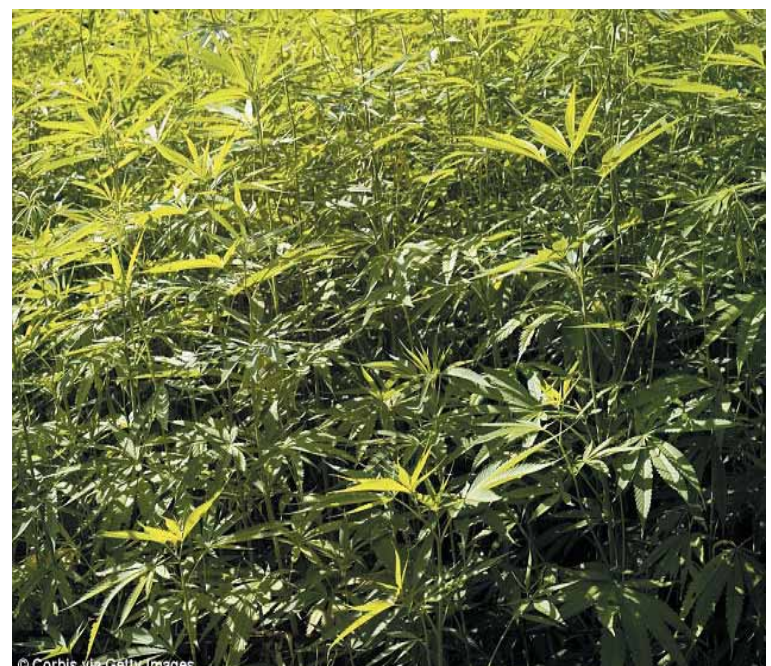
'Allowing the DEA to set our national policy on cannabis flies in the face of the very rational, science-based approach that the Obama administration has been promising for eight years,

and yet again has failed to deliver.

'Does anyone on earth beside the DEA actually believe that marijuana should be classified alongside heroin in Schedule I as an incredibly dangerous drug with no medicinal value? Perhaps the DEA should spend more time reading the latest research on this plant's incredible medical efficacy, and less time plotting how to bust peaceful citizens for weed.'

'At least the DEA finally stood up to dispel the myth that marijuana is a gateway drug. It's about time.'

The DEA said it plans to make it easier for researchers to study marijuana's possible medical benefits by expanding the number of entities that can legally grow marijuana for research purposes.



Macy's Is Closing 100 Stores. Where Did All of Its Customers Go?



one-two punch—or maybe a one-two-three punch. There are so many things going wrong.

First, as the middle class contracts, Macy's suffers. Many former Macys shoppers are trading down, purchasing an increasing percentage of their wardrobes from up-to-the-moment inexpensive options like H&M and Zara.

At the same time, some of those former middle class folks are now upper-middle-class folks. And the Macy's empire isn't perceived as being quite as upscale as, say, Saks. And even there, the luxury end of the department-store trade is experiencing problems of its own as the strong dollar discourages shoppers from abroad. Last month, the New York Post reported that same-store sales at privately held Barney's fell 10 percent in the first quarter of 2016 over the equivalent period in 2015.

Second, many of us are buying different stuff than we did in the past. Those behavioral-finance folks who proselytize that spending on things we do like

dining and travel makes us happier than buying a blender or yet another pair of jeans—well, many of us are listening. A 2014 poll found almost 4 out of 5 millennials said they would rather spend their money on experiences than things. All this is compounded by consumers' increasing use of online shopping options. According to UPS, which conducts an annual survey on internet shopping, this year marked the first time a majority of all purchases made by people who use the internet to shop were made online, not in traditional stores. In fact, those surveyed claimed that of everything they bought, only 1 out of 5 came from what could be described as traditional shopping—as in going to a store and buying the item without even checking online options. As a result, even as the overall employment situation in the United States is improving, the retail sector of the economy is shedding a substantial number of jobs. Companies ranging from Walmart to Ralph Lauren have announced store closings this

year. Others are completely going away—Sports Authority filed for bankruptcy, and the entire chain is in the process of shutting down. According to consultancy Challenger, Gray & Christmas, retailers have announced they are cutting almost 44,000 positions since the beginning of the year. That figure does not account for what is likely to be a substantial number of job cuts at Macy's.

It isn't entirely bad news for Macy's. Sales fell less than retail analysts expected this past quarter. Moreover, it seems Wall Street likes the plan to cut the number of outlets, likely because they foresee profits from real estate sales. As a result, shares are up by more than 15 percent as I type. So far no word from Donald Trump. After Macy's discontinued carrying his clothing line following his comments about Mexican immigrants last year, he took to Twitter more than once to celebrate the company's bad news. His supporters, however, are not remaining silent. Sigh.

(Agencies) Macy's announced Thursday morning that 100 of its stores, representing almost 15 percent of its locations, will ring up their final sale sometime over the next year, as the famed department-store chain continues to struggle in the fast-changing retail environment. When completed, this will leave Macy's with 628 stores across the United States.

It seems likely that even profitable locations will be on the store closing chopping block.

Sad to say, in the retail environment of 2016, even Macy's officials admit the land underneath many of their stores is more valuable than the revenues from the actual stores themselves.

Is anyone really surprised? Chances are that you're part of Macy's problem. I certainly am. Do you remember the last time you visited a department store? I don't.

In today's retail arena, Macy's is getting socked by a

When Public Housing Is Bulldozed, Families Are Supposed to Eventually Come Back. Why Don't They?



The neighborhoods would be safe, with better schools, jobs, and nice, middle-class neighbors. In the interim, cities started handing out Section 8 vouchers and relocating residents. The tenants sometimes sued to stop demolition, but the bulldozers always won. And while some of those residents do return to those newly polished communities, most stay away for good.

So why don't most people come back to the neighborhoods they've lived in, sometimes their entire lives?

In the new documentary 70 Acres in Chicago, the whole process looks like a targeted hit. When the city of Chicago decided to tear down and replace the Cabrini-Green housing project beginning in the 1990s, residents heard one promise after another from the city as the demolition began. The biggest promise of all: "Every family that wants to stay in this community will stay in this community," said Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley in 1997. Today, almost none of the tens of thousands of people who lived in Cabrini-Green now occupy the new townhomes and apartments that sit on the land.

Chicago filmmaker Ronit Bezalet spent 20 years filming the

demolition for her documentary. The last of the high rises came down in 2011. And Chicagoans are still uneasy about what happened there. "People are crying at the screenings," Bezalet told me. Former residents of Cabrini-Green are especially moved to see their old neighborhood return to life on screen. Bezalet's film is now making the rounds in the film festival circuit, on public television, and at smaller screenings in Chicago.

Among the people she follows in the film is Mark Pratt. He grew up in Cabrini, but he and his wife couldn't come back to the new mixed-income community, because there weren't enough apartments for large families. Pratt and his wife took a Section 8 voucher and moved down to another neighborhood, in Chicago's South Side. "We were all under the impression that we were moving to better neighborhoods," Pratt said. But his new neighborhood is just as poor and violent as the one he left. "Even though there was a lot of violence in Cabrini, I did feel a lot safer there," he said.

Networks of friends and relatives in Cabrini kept many of the poor residents afloat. These networks were a casualty of Cabrini's

destruction, when people were dispersed across the city. This disruption of the support networks for poor families is still haunting Chicago today.

Despite the promises that everyone could come back, the numbers don't add up. The decrepit, infamous Cabrini-Green had 3,600 public housing units. When the rebuilding is complete in 2019, there will be around 2,830 units. Only 30 percent are for families in public housing. Got that? Fewer than 900 units.

The screening process is the next barrier. People are kept out of the new neighborhood if a family member has a single arrest record—even if no charges were pressed. Public housing residents have to submit to mandatory drug testing every year. They can have no record of rent and utility delinquency. They cannot take in friends and relatives. New rules in the neighborhood include no smoking, no barbecuing, no loud music, no washing cars on the street.

"You actually have to be a nun," said Deidre Brewster, one of the few original residents of Cabrini-Green who passed all the requirements and got an apartment in her old neighborhood.

(Agencies) Since the mid-1990s, the United States government has spent billions of dollars tearing down public housing projects—replacing many of these communities with mixed-income housing on the premise that when the poor and the middle class live together, it's better forever.

Dissipating the concentrated poverty of aging housing projects may sound like a fine idea, but the new developments—often built on prime urban real estate—rarely end up housing significant numbers of the original residents who must be displaced to make way for new construction. Communities are broken up and never again reassembled.

If there is a slight exception to that rule, it's in Atlanta. There, on the site of the East Lake Meadows housing project, officials were able to bring back 25 percent of former residents to live in the new development, as my colleagues and I recount in this week's episode of Slate's Placemakers podcast. That percentage sounds low—except that the nationwide average hovers below 19 percent.

In cities like San Francisco, Philadelphia, Tampa, and elsewhere, housing authorities have told residents of public housing complexes that their ugly, sometimes barely habitable homes would be rebuilt as part of newly beautiful communities.

I Want To Set The Record Straight On Bihar's Liquor Ban

My public record is transparent. When I commit to the people, I do my best to deliver. Last year, I announced in an official program that if we come to power next time, we will implement liquor prohibition.

This was a tough ask to deliver. Not that any other is easy in governance. But what sets the liquor prohibition apart is that no one in the past has been able to deliver it totally. The liquor lobby cheers to this one fact more than anything else. I am determined to change this track record of public policy.

It is impossible to imagine Mahatma Gandhi as an authoritarian. When it came to banning liquor, he made it a primary agenda. Gandhi wrote in *Young India* in 1931 - "If I was appointed dictator for one hour for all India, the first thing I would do would be to close without compensation all the liquor shops." His other quotes are no less sharp. For example, "Nothing but ruin stares a nation in the face that is prey to the drink habit. History records that empires have been destroyed through that habit."

The Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution mandates the State to make endeavour to bring prohibition. Even the Supreme Court has held that "there is no fundamental right to do trade or business in intoxicants. The State, under its regulatory power, has the right to prohibit absolutely every form of activity in relation to intoxicants and its manufacture, storage, export, import, sale and possession." The Apex Court further stated that this "power of control is an incident of the society's right to self-protection and it rests upon the right of the State to care for the health, morals and welfare of the people."

When I had expressed the intent of liquor prohibition last year, it was an inspirational announcement. But what has followed in more than inspiration - long deliberations, extensive reviews and meticulous planning, both in policy and practice, has resulted in the state government deciding on Total Prohibition in Bihar - with an all-encompassing people's campaign and an appropriate law to back the implementation.

What followed has been transformational. It has to be experienced to be believed.

An awareness drive was launched through street plays, slogans and posters, which shaped into a massive public campaign. A resolution has been taken and signed by more than 1 crore 19 lakh guardians of children

studying in government schools that they will not consume alcohol and even motivate others who drink to stay away from alcohol. A "gram samvad dal" in each panchayat visited households and read out an appeal regarding liquor prohibition and requested participation in spreading this awareness further. These gram samvad programs were held in more than 48,000 habitations with the participation of 5 lakh self-help groups and 20,000 village organizations. Social motivators, tola sewaks, education volunteers, health workers and various public groups were involved for writing slogans at public places against liquor and in support of prohibition. Such slogans can be seen at 9 lakh locations. Cultural events and street plays were organized in districts with the help of local groups of artistes. Through songs, plays and community discussions, more than 25,000 locations have been covered in the state.

On the invite of Jeevika, a women's self-help group, I attended their gatherings in each of the nine divisional headquarters. In total, about one lakh women self-help group members attended these programs. Their narrations of personal experiences and efforts opened a whole new dimension to an administrative decision. It was a revelation to see the seeds of a deep-seated social transformation in Bihar like never before. I reaffirmed to myself that there is no going back, whatever may be the consequence. Experiencing the socio-economic benefits and outcomes, I am more than determined to implement total liquor prohibition in Bihar in true letter and spirit.

However, the vested interest is powerful. Let us not forget that even in states where liquor has been banned, the ban is merely symbolic or partial. Countless articles have already

proclaimed that liquor ban will not work in Bihar. I must say, for every word that has been written against the liquor ban in the last few months, there are numerous real families - women and children who have cheered for prohibition in Bihar and rest of India. I have openly requested the leadership in Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand to ban liquor. Those calls have been cheered by people of the state, and yet, the leaders have looked the other way. Powerful they are, but they cannot shake the will of the people. I will continue to build upon the will of the people.

Bihar has pursued solid measures to enforce the ban. Socially, I have relentlessly encouraged the self-help groups and public representatives to demonstrate "social leadership" and strengthen the hands of the state and society in the continued implementation of the prohibition.

Bihar Prohibition and Excise Bill, 2016 is a decisive step. In simple words, it makes the violators directly accountable for their actions. The Bill states that "in case liquor is found or consumed in anyone's home, an adult member (from family - "man-wife & dependent children" occupying the house, not relatives) of the household will be presumed to be having the knowledge of such an offence, unless proved otherwise. The bill, rather, protects the women of the household from a male adult who wishes to pin the blame away from him to any other member of family. Those criticizing this may care to advise as to the person to be arrested if, in a house, bottles of liquor are recovered, and no member of the family owns up to it. They should also enlighten us who should be arrested in a case if the house is in the name of the wife. Should the police either return empty-handed or commit a further travesty of justice by arresting the wife, knowing fully-well that in almost all the cases, it is the husband who drinks? Those

criticizing are also presuming that the adult male member who is actually drinking and violating the law, will, when caught, be inhuman and cruel enough to share the accusation with his wife and adult children.

However, the truth is that these measures are a response to the administrative experience of the state in enforcing the ban. These problems, if unchecked, will lead to an unresponsive system of leakage which creates hooch tragedies. We have decided to nip this in the bud by placing direct accountability. We have also taken due care to protect people who might be vulnerable to exploitation by making a provision for serious penalty in case anyone in the administration machinery is found misusing the provisions of the Bill.

When we implemented the ban on country liquor on 1st April, 2016, stating that the total prohibition will be implemented in a phased manner, those in the opposition went on an overdrive calling for a total ban and asking us to disclose the dates of the next phase. When news of the people's agitation, especially women, against the opening of foreign liquor shops flowed in, we quickly gauged the mood of the populace and concluded that the environment was conducive for the imposition of total prohibition. Thus the total ban was imposed on April 5, 2016. Now the same people say that this was supposed to be done much later and we have acted in haste.

While framing this new Bill, many of the provisions have been borrowed from similar laws like the Bombay Prohibition Act, the Gujarat Amendment, Delhi Excise Act, Karnataka Excise Act, Model Excise Act circulated by Government of India, the Madhya Pradesh Prohibition Bill (draft); the majority of the provisions are from the Bihar Excise (Amendment) Act 2016, which was unanimously approved by both



(Nitish Kumar)

houses of the Bihar state assembly. One will have to go into details to come up with an informed criticism. You cannot just criticize the law without suggesting the alternatives. It requires more than just playing to the galleries.

As expected, the vested interest has gone into a massive overdrive to misinform people about the Act, even though almost all of the penal provisions of the Bill are the same which were unanimously passed by both houses of the state assembly in the budget session this year. Politics have overtaken a social initiative. Some are selectively criticizing few provisions of the new Act without reading the same holistically. They are missing the larger picture with too much emphasis on letters and without recognizing the spirit. To them, I have to say - "you cannot have the cake and eat it too." If one is serious and determined to see through prohibition in Bihar, then there is no place for "ifs" and "buts". A combination of a fair and strict implementation of law coupled with an inspired people's campaign is a way to go.

So, I want to set the record straight. Those who violate the ban on liquor in Bihar, appropriate measures will be taken to place accountability. But at the same time, let me assure you of a fair implementation of the law. I am ready to incorporate the best ideas in making the prohibition successful and taking it to more states.

Jung vs Kejriwal: Both sides have to learn to work together

The tussle between Delhi's lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung and the Aam Aadmi Party government now resembles a perpetual motion machine. No issue howsoever small goes unchallenged by one or the other. With the court ruling that power in a Union Territory ultimately vests with the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) as the administrator of Delhi, the government has upped its attacks on the L-G, the latest salvo being a remark from an AAP leader that Mr Jung harbours a perennial hatred for chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

In all this, those who are suffering are the people of Delhi who voted overwhelmingly for this government. With the L-G now reviewing many decisions taken by the government, we are likely to see a further governance gridlock. Delhi has many problems, not the least of which is the safety

and security of people in general and women in particular. This lies within the domain of the L-G and politics should not hold up moving ahead on this. The issue of rampant unauthorised construction is another issue which is causing huge problems in Delhi. Public transport is yet another as is water supply. The government must understand that any criticism of its record is not necessarily an attempt to dislodge it. It must focus on the promises it made when it was elected, that of good and clean governance. Previous governments have worked with L-Gs and though there have been glitches, things have moved along quite smoothly on several issues. Disagreement, as the L-G has said, does not mean confrontation. AAP has to sit together with the L-G and evolve a more conciliatory approach to governance. If those at the top

are not on the same page, the bureaucracy, too, will not be able to function to its potential fearful as it will be of getting caught in the crossfire. Both sides should try and work on areas where there are least points of contention for a start. AAP is looking to expand its footprint across India and for that its performance in Delhi will be keenly observed by potential voters. While it is true that a Union Territory has its own unique functioning problems, there is nothing in the present case which cannot be sorted out. AAP cannot wash its hands off issues which are in the L-G's domain, rather it should come up with constructive suggestions. Now that the ground rules have been laid by the court, both sides have to learn to work together howsoever difficult this may seem in the present charged atmosphere.

Should MPs decide their own salaries? Trump's Wink Wink to 'Second Amendment People'

A mechanism to determine MPs' salaries will address issues of legitimacy and accountability.

The decision to increase the salaries of Members of Parliament in India is always met by a public furore and adverse reactions in the media. The recent recommendation of the Parliamentary Committee on Salaries and Allowances led by Bharatiya Janata Party MP Yogi Adityanath to double the salaries of MPs has also raised eyebrows and drawn criticism from various corners. Yes, there are worries about the unreasonably high salary hike proposed by the committee, but more than that, it is the decision-making process that has added to the criticism — the salary of the MPs is proposed to be increased by those who would be its beneficiaries. This, when it is done as per laid-down norms and a worked-out criteria for all other professions committed to public service: teachers, government officials, diplomats, judges and even for the highest offices of the President and the Vice-President.

udging by comparative standards, the remuneration of a member of Indian Parliament is not very high compared to what is paid to a member of the national legislature in countries like the U.S. and the U.K. even going by purchasing power or similar indices. But what angers the people at large is that these hikes in salaries are proposed without any justification, without any timelines, without any formula or rationale, while there is a strict timeline regarding when the salary of a government official will be revised, justification about why such a revision is taking place and a formula laid down about how much the revised salary is going to be. One should also remember this is only for government employees, who constitute less than 2-3 per cent of the total workforce in India. A huge majority of people engaged in other kinds of gainful employment is left out of this process. The private sector employees are at the mercy of their employer for such revision while those self-employed, either in business, agriculture or in professional work, have neither of the two options available.

The issues related to salaries and perks for MPs is decided by a Joint Parliamentary Committee consisting of members of both Houses of Parliament. Any decision to raise the salary or perks of MPs is passed as an amendment Bill as per the recommendations of this parliamentary panel. Such amendment proposals are usually approved, without any delay, by an all-party consensus.

India is not an exception to this practice where MPs decide their own salaries. In Canada, a multiparty parliamentary committee called the Board of Internal Economy enjoys the right to revise salaries of MPs. However, other comparative examples run contrary to this practice. In other advanced democracies such as the U.K. and Australia, the salaries of MPs are decided by an autonomous body called the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority and the Remuneration Tribunal (set up by the Remuneration Tribunal Act, 1973), respectively. In a young democracy such as South Africa, salaries of lawmakers are decided by an autonomous body called the Independent Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers whose recommendations are subject to the final approval of the President. A newborn democracy like Bhutan also follows a similar practice according to which salaries are determined by an independent body.

In terms of how salaries are determined, Singapore provides a good case: salaries of lawmakers are decided by the Public Service Division located in the Prime Minister's Office; the salaries are determined by a benchmark which is pegged to 60 per cent of the median income of the top 1,000 Singapore citizen earners. Adhering to this formula, salaries of the MPs are pegged at 17.5 per cent of the above-mentioned benchmark. Many other countries follow this practice. In both France and Japan, salaries of parliamentarians are decided in relation to the salaries of the highest-paid bureaucrats. Even in the U.S. Congress, salaries of senators are usually revised on an annual basis as part of an automatic adjustment process which reflects increase in living cost.

Thus it is imperative that in the larger interests of India's democratic polity, it may be useful to create a mechanism of determining salaries, perks and allowances addressing the two concerns of legitimacy and accountability. This would foster higher levels of trust in our political institutions such as parties, which have over the years witnessed dwindling levels of trust. The result of a survey conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) indicates that the level of trust in political parties has declined from 43 per cent to 37 per cent during the last one decade.

Interestingly, the Prime Minister had remarked a few months ago that lawmakers should not decide their own salaries; rather it should be linked to the salaries of some important offices in the country like the President or the Vice-President. It seems to be a good proposal worth considering and implementing.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is how Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin got assassinated.

His right-wing opponents just kept delegitimizing him as a "traitor" and "a Nazi" for wanting to make peace with the Palestinians and give back part of the Land of Israel. Of course, all is fair in politics, right? And they had God on their side, right? They weren't actually telling anyone to assassinate Rabin. That would be horrible.

But there are always people down the line who don't hear the caveats. They just hear the big message: The man is illegitimate, the man is a threat to the nation, the man is the equivalent of a Nazi war criminal. Well, you know what we do with people like that, don't you? We kill them.

And that's what the Jewish extremist Yigal Amir did to Rabin. Why not? He thought he had permission from a whole segment of Israel's political class.

In September, I wrote a column warning that Donald Trump's language toward immigrants could end up inciting just this kind of violence. I never in my wildest dreams, though, thought he'd actually — in his usual coy, twisted way — suggest that Hillary Clinton was so intent on taking away the Second Amendment right to bear arms that maybe Second Amendment enthusiasts could do something to stop her. Exactly what? Oh, Trump left that hanging.

"Hillary wants to abolish, essentially abolish, the Second Amendment," Trump said at a rally in Wilmington, N.C., on Tuesday. "By the way, and if she gets to pick her judges, nothing you can do, folks. Although the Second Amendment people, maybe there is, I don't know."

Of course Trump's handlers, recognizing just how incendiary were his words, immediately denied that he was suggesting that gun owners do anything harmful toward Clinton. Oh my God, never. Trump, they insisted, was just referring to the "power of unification." You know those Second Amendment people, they just love to get on buses and vote together. But that is not what he said. What he said was ambiguous — slightly menacing, but with just enough plausible deniability that, of course, he was not suggesting an assassination. Again, it's just like the Rabin story. When I wrote about this issue back in the fall it was to urge readers to see the new movie "Rabin: The Last Day," by the Israeli director Amos Gitai, timed for the 20th anniversary of Rabin's assassination.

As The Times's Isabel Kershner reported from Israel when the film was released, it "is unambiguous about the forces it holds responsible" — the extremist rabbis and militant settlers who branded Rabin a traitor, the right-wing politicians who rode the "wave of toxic incitement against Mr. Rabin as they campaigned against the Oslo accords," and the security services that failed to heed the warnings that the incitement could get out of hand.



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How Rajnath Singh's Visit Has Given Pak The Clear Upper Hand

Kudos to Home Minister Rajnath Singh on having transformed SAARC into the South Asian Association for Regional Confrontation.

He had no constructive aims. He only wanted to show naive and impressionable Indian saffronites that he had the chutzpah to tick off the Pakistanis on their own soil. That may have won him some brownie points at home, but no one else was impressed. Certainly, the joint conclusions drafted at the end of the meeting made no mention of the pyrotechnics of either India or Pakistan. While the two principals were going for each other's throats, the SAARC ministers got no further than reiterating that earlier decisions relating to SAARC cooperation on terrorism needed to be acted on. It was clear that the six other SAARC partners were keen only to not be seen taking sides in the India-Pak tu-tu-mein-mein. They had all heard it before.

What has been little reported or not reported at all in the Indian media is Pakistan Interior Minister, Chaudhury Nisar Ali Khan's riposte to Rajnath Singh. Dawn, on the other hand, reported our Home Minister's stinging remarks, "Terrorists should not be glorified as 'martyrs'. There is no good or bad terrorism. Terrorism is terrorism." What is really unfortunate for us, however, is that same news item also reported what Nisar Ali Khan had said in response: "violence against freedom fighters in a disputed territory under Indian occupation is state-sponsored". Did we really want our partners in SAARC to hear such language directed at us? Or while we mutter that "talks and terrorism cannot go together", do we really want to hear the Pakistani Interior Minister telling SAARC and the whole world that "Pakistan is ready to engage in any dialogue process based on mutual respect and dignity with no strings attached"? Dawn told its readers that Rajnath Singh stormed out of the meeting "after losing a war of words with his Pakistani counterpart". We may argue till Kingdom Come who won and who lost this "war of words" but certainly no higher diplomatic purpose is served in letting the Pakistanis get away with the last word.

We certainly have not been seen by the United States as coming out the victor. While ritually asking Pakistan to "act against groups targeting neighbours", while Rajnath Singh demands to know how we can cooperate against terrorism with a state that itself sponsors such terrorism, the US State Department's deputy

spokesman, Mark Toner, availed himself of the opportunity provided by the spat to restore the hyphenated US view of India and Pakistan. Said Toner, "We advocate for closer cooperation, certainly, between India and Pakistan to deal with the terrorist threat in both countries". If that isn't one in the eye for India, I would like to know what is. Rajnath's position has been repudiated and Nisar Ali's view has been reflected in the US State Department's reaction to the SAARC Home Ministers' meeting. Toner went on to make things even more explicit: "Terrorism is obviously a reality in both countries, and in order to effectively confront it, they need to work together." We say we can't work with a terrorism-complicit Pakistan government; Pakistan says there is no alternative to India and Pakistan working together to control terrorism; and the US State department, mixing up who is its "Major Defence Partner" in South Asia, not only wants India to follow the Pakistan line, it endorses Nawaz Sharif's boast, saying, "We believe that Pakistan has taken and is taking steps to counter terrorist violence." The spokesman then moderates that compliment by adding that these steps are "certainly focusing on those groups that threaten Pakistani or Pakistan's stability." He reiterates that \$300 million in aid to Pakistan has been put on hold because the US is not satisfied that adequate attention is being paid to action against the Haqqani network, but confirms that no such aid suspension is contemplated for Pakistani non-action against groups "focusing" on India. Does

this amount to "US endorses India's anti-terror stand" as more than one Indian media headline claims? While Indian opinion has been inflamed by pictures and stories of Pakistani terrorist leaders holding demonstrations against Rajnath Singh, a report by Imtiaz Ahmed in The Hindustan Times of 6 August gives a startling twist to the tale. It quotes Pakistani officials as saying that "it was the army that discouraged religious and hardline parties from banding together under the banner of the Difa-e-Pakistan Council (Defence of Pakistan Council) and holding countrywide protests." This, says Imtiaz Ahmed, resulted in protests being largely limited to "Hafiz Saeed's Jamaat-ud-dawah and Syed Salahuddin's Hizbul Mujahideen". It was apparently ensured that the demonstrations would be held all of ten kilometres distant from the site of the meeting.

This report by one of India's better known friends in the Pakistan media stressed that both the Pakistan army and the government were concerned for the stability of the Nawaz Sharif regime if serious trouble were to break out as a result of protests during Rajnath Singh's visit. He quotes a well-known independent Pakistani analyst, Ali Zaidi, as saying "if the religious parties had started a public agitation which resulted in violence and deaths, the situation would have turned precarious for the government. At such a time, the arrival of the Indian home minister, who is seen as one of the players behind the violence (in Kashmir), is hard to justify".

Another Pakistani journalist, Tahir Najmi, adds an explanatory note: "That is why we saw the blacking out of coverage of the event on national channels as well as downplaying on most media."

Surely, all this was conveyed by our High Commissioner in Islamabad to the Modi government before the latter decided to send Rajnath on a fruitless trip to Pakistan. Our views about Pakistani-sponsored terrorism were well-known. We did not need yet another platform to repeat what we have been saying for years. Why then send so senior a minister as our Home Minister, effectively Number 2 in our government, to indulge in grandstanding in Islamabad if his speech was going to be downplayed, indeed not made public at all as per SAARC conventions and past practice? That could have been left to Rajnath's affable and able deputy, Kiren Rijju, especially as no bilateral meetings with the Pakistanis were scheduled on the sidelines. After all, only Bhutan and Sri Lanka were represented at Home/Interior minister level; Afghanistan and Maldives sent their deputy ministers. Bangladesh sent their Home Secretary. And Nepal was represented by their Ambassador. Has our war against terrorism been advanced an inch by the Home Minister's flying visit to Pakistan? Are we any safer than we would have been if India, like Pakistan, had "downplayed" the event? Rajnath Singh did not have anything of substance to say by way of strengthening on the ground the SAARC mechanism

for regional action against terrorism. Of course, in the given situation, SAARC has little opening to operationalize measures agreed to in principle on paper. But when that is so, why undertake a futile exercise in high-profile denunciation of the host country?

Ever since Simla 1972, we have rejected any role for the UN in Kashmir. The UN has been only too pleased to wash its hands of the whole affair. So, the Home Minister's thunder could not have been addressed to the international community. His words were not heard at all in Pakistan. The other SAARC ministers were just not interested and, in any case, could do nothing about it. The US, as shown above, barely backed us. So, what national purpose has been served by Rajnath Singh personally performing to a non-audience in Islamabad?

It was not always like this. When P Chidambaram as Home Minister went to Islamabad in 2010, he was given a ceremonial welcome. His main purpose, publicly stated, was to present definitive evidence on Pakistan's involvement in the Mumbai 26/11 terrorist outrage. Stone-throwing had resumed in the Valley. Tension was in the air. And yet, there was enough respect for the Indian Home Minister for Chidambaram to receive a welcome fit for a Home Minister. This time insults were exchanged, courtesies were given the go-by, nothing was achieved at either SAARC or bilaterally with Pakistan. Was it for this that Rajnath Singh took his "Plane to Pakistan"?

Shobhaa De, Stick To Your Air Kissing, Not Dissing

The image of a distraught Indian hockey captain Sreejesh sitting alone after a goal by Germany three seconds before the full-time whistle broke millions of Indian hearts. But one. Writer Shobhaa De, known for her merciless takedowns, was unsparing of athletes who were giving everything they had in Rio.

While most of us kept awake late into Sunday night hoping for three unassuming girls to bring us some glory in archery, or did our own version of a somersault after Dipa Karmakar became the first Indian to reach the final of any gymnastics event, Ms De had zero team spirit.

I wonder what it takes to even talk or think like this when the rest of the country has for once united with national pride. Neither am I convinced that this was directed at the officials who accompanied the team and chose to travel business class while sending our athletes in economy.

It is also doubtful that Ms De personally financed any player on the team, or has ever played much of a sport; else, she would have had at least an inkling of how athletes

have no semblance of a normal life when they train for the Olympics. But it is easy to give gyaan sitting in air-conditioned rooms far away from wrestling akharas or dilapidated facilities. Abhinav Bindra, whose own Olympic dreams were shattered - he missed the bronze medal by a whisker in the men's 10m air rifle - also issued a reprimand. Admittedly, it hasn't been the best start by us but I will continue to wake up in the morning expecting some magic from our sportsmen, many of whom have come from extremely humble backgrounds. Instead what Ms De did was trivialize every sacrifice they and their families have made and pushed our thinking back by years. People like her are a big reason why, for decades, we never had a sporting culture.

An Indian athlete wins in spite of our cricket obsession and despite our system of power-hungry babus and shoddy infrastructure. Ms De's parochial mindset it seems is only interested in being a part of the good times. Maybe more than a few feel the same about your writing Ms De! If you have nothing nice to say, sometimes it really

is better not to say anything.

Instead of making a mockery of our athletes maybe she should consider how they reached where they have in the first place, how winning isn't always everything and for us most of them are already winners. Wonder if she knows that Dattu Bhokanal, the 23-year-old rower who qualified for the quarter-finals has a mother back home who is seriously unwell and sinking. Or that the father of the women's hockey team captain is a cart-puller. Forget selfies, they should be doing the samba for what they have achieved.

Ms De on the other hand should be sticking to what she does best, celebrity air kissing and dissing. Only the frivolous will find it humourous, because when the chips are down and all that you have worked for in the last four years comes to nought, like Jitu Rai, Abhinav Bindra or any of the others in Rio, then it is our duty to remind our sportsmen and women that they are still champions and will always be.

Thank you, Sachin Tendulkar, for doing just that.

What Kashmir says

All parties meet today to talk about Kashmir. But are they prepared to hear the Kashmiris?

I have been a journalist for the last 22 years and I feel my curse is to write the same story, again and again. That story is Kashmir. It is in essence a single story where like Sisyphus's rock, efforts to resolve the dispute go through a similar and endless journey each time it is pushed up the mountain.

There is a script, a standard operating procedure is put into play each time Kashmir erupts, seeking "azadi" from India. So this time, when after more than a month of total lockdown, killing of 56 young Kashmiris, and blinding of hundreds of others, New Delhi finally decided to hold an all-party meeting, I am not wondering about the outcome of this effort. It has happened before. I have seen it.

There will be a promise of a "dialogue with all stakeholders", with the compulsory disclaimer that J&K is an integral part of India. A group of parliamentarians may go to the Valley to "meet and ascertain" the reason for the uprising as if it is unknown to those in the corridors of power in Delhi. By the time the all-party delegation gets to Srinagar, Indian intelligence and security agencies would have gathered the same handful of groups for the meeting.

Like in 2010, wholesale mutton dealers will show up, shikarawallas will be rowed in and apple growers will be brought. Voices palatable to New Delhi will be told to spell out their requirements, while a few bureaucrats-turned-civil society members and former Ikhwanis-turned-politicians known to New Delhi's dialogue circuit will be shoed in.

This time, though, the ground has shifted. There are two reasons for it.

First, the complexion of the uprising has changed on the ground and the movement for azadi has transcended human rights issues. Unlike previous upsurges in 2008, 2009 and 2010, the protestors aren't angry against a civilian killing. Though there are a number of reasons for this accumulated anger, the trigger for this massive outpouring explains the shift.

These large gatherings aren't a protest against the killing of Kashmiri militant Burhan Wani. Instead, Kashmir has risen to endorse what Burhan stood for and the consensus seems to be around one theme: "We don't want to be part of India." The language of the people has never been so

clear.

When Kashmir erupted in 1990, it was a sudden explosion, the heavy cost of such a demand for freedom was unknown. The Kashmiri youth who decided to pick up the gun in 1990 were of my generation and as classroom after classroom emptied to join the militancy, there were few who understood the scale of the state repression that it would draw. Once the state crushed the initial phase of the militancy, the azadi movement turned into a lament, centered on human rights abuses. Each time armed forces would conduct cordon and search operations looking for militants, the entire male population would be herded at one place. One by one, they would be brought before a masked informer. There was so much fear, hardly anybody would protest.

In the beginning of the new millennium, while azadi continued to be the main demand, militancy started to take a backseat and hopes for a negotiated settlement arose. By 2008, there was a strong realisation that peaceful means alone would help. In 2008 and 2010, there were scores of instances where people made human chains around a security bunker or a vehicle of the armed forces to avoid a confrontation. People would throw stones only when the government disallowed peaceful marches. The government's response to the rallies and the marches was the same as against the militant movement. The peaceful protests were called "agitational terrorism" and sought to be crushed.

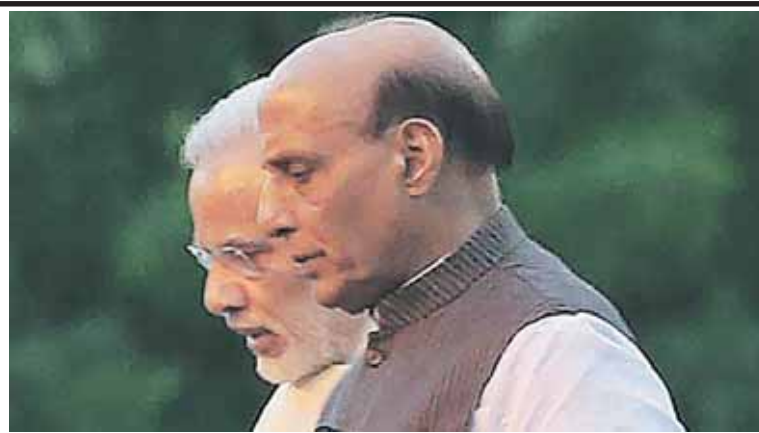
In 2016, there is no illusion that

anything would convince New Delhi to accept and engage with the evident reality that a vast majority of Kashmiris don't want to be part of India. The fear seems to have evaporated completely. The young men, who go out to confront the armed forces, are aware of the costs.

The hints for dialogue by New Delhi, the constituting of parliamentary committees and civil society groups that are sent to visit Kashmir after every uprising, are seen as nothing more than a façade aimed at soft surrender. Unlike in the past, the known structures of separatist politics too aren't in control of the street. The oligarchs of separatist politics are exhausted. The state hasn't allowed them to do politics, leaving a big void. This uprising is run by a new generation born after 1990 — the children of the conflict, as they are called — and they are deeply suspicious of the customary peace talk.

The second reason is the policy shift in New Delhi. The reason why the Centre doesn't want to even acknowledge the ground reality in Kashmir isn't an aberration or a reactionary response by a few hawkish officials. It is a manifestation of the Modi government's Kashmir policy.

Ever since P.V. Narasimha Rao declared that the "sky is the limit" for resolving the Kashmir dispute, New Delhi's policy had been rooted in the belief that managing the conflict, maintaining status quo and delaying resolution will ultimately tire out the majority in Kashmir and end the political problem. While New Delhi used force to suppress the separatist movement, the "sky



is the limit" promise was aimed at convincing the National Conference to participate in the 1996 assembly polls.

By getting an NC government to replace governor's rule, New Delhi managed to put up a Kashmiri political face without upsetting the status quo and without losing direct control of Kashmir. When in June 2000, the NC passed the autonomy resolution in the assembly, the Vajpayee government rejected it summarily. It, however, kept the veneer of dialogue intact.

While maintaining and controlling the status quo, New Delhi kept sending emissaries — first politicians, then bureaucrats — and mostly, the talks were only about the modalities of talks. The emergence of both the PDP and the moderate Hurriyat between 1999 and 2004 was an outcome of New Delhi's policies to create a favourable buffer between the pro-azadi camp and the integrationists.

Even Vajpayee's much-hyped promise of a dialogue "within the ambit of humanity" was only a vague expression to allow the separatists to avoid the "taint" of surrendering by agreeing to talk within the framework of the Constitution. For New Delhi, the engagement itself became the objective. The UPA government set up working groups but didn't consider their recommendations, sent interlocutors but disowned their report. There was a tacit understanding on Article 370 too:

Erode it gradually to the point where there is no need to remove it.

The Modi government has only pulled the iron fist out of the velvet glove. Its policy is based on the ideological position of the RSS, which wants Kashmir's "complete assimilation" by removing constitutional hurdles such as Article 370 and the Permanent Resident Act. The RSS calls the Kashmir dispute a myth, insists that the problem is limited to Sunni Muslims of the Valley and that even if Muslims are a majority, "85 per cent of the area is Hindu or Buddhist dominated". In a speech in Kargil in 2014, Modi talked about his government's focus on "20 per cent of J&K's population", clubbing together "the West Pakistan refugees, Kashmiri Pandits and victims of militancy".

The recent speech where Modi referred to Vajpayee's "insaniyat" framework is a repeat of what he said in Srinagar in 2014. Arun Jaitley has explicated the regime's understanding: "The political debate on the constitutional framework of J&K is no longer linked to the aspirations of common people."

As Kashmir erupts again, I look back at the two decades of stories I wrote. I wrote about promises for resolving the conflict and the sterile notes of fact-finding teams and parliamentary committees. I wrote of despair as well as hope. It seems that I wrote only one story that is repeating itself.

and GST is expected to do that. The cascading effect of taxes makes the effective rate of tax higher than in the statute books; so the price rise is also more. Thus, if the cascading effect is removed/reduced, then to collect the same amount of taxes as earlier, the rate of tax under GST must rise. But under a one tax (or a few taxes) regime that would mean higher taxes on basics and, therefore a greater inflationary impact. If inflation kicks up, inequalities rise, output stagnates and that impacts employment generation. It has also been argued that a single market will hit the small and the cottage sectors even if they are kept outside the GST net. The way out of this political quicksand would be to go for a rate lower than RNR. GST would apply to non-agriculture which is 86 per cent of the GDP.

A GST Less Taxing

Keeping the rates of the tax low would keep a check on inflation.

The GST is expected to be implemented from April 1, 2017. Many are worried about its inflationary impact.

There is talk of a revenue neutral rate (RNR) of between 15 per cent to 18 per cent — the rate at which the amount of tax collected under the GST would be the same as that collected at present. A shortfall in revenue is a worry for states, since they cannot easily resort to a deficit budget. For them, the loss of revenue usually translates into cuts in the allocations to welfare programmes.

A single RNR rate implies that some current rates of indirect taxes will rise while some others will fall. For instance, services are taxed at a rate of 15 per cent currently but if the RNR is fixed at 18 per cent, then all services prices will rise. However, if some good faces a combined excise and sales tax rate of 22 per cent then its rate of tax would fall and so would its price. Thus, in the aggregate, prices should not rise with the RNR. But there is a catch: Even with the RNR, the rate of inflation is likely to rise.

Indirect taxes "cascade" from

one tax to the other and also feed from one good or service to another. Even though wheat does not bear an excise or a sales tax, when taxes on diesel are increased transport costs rise and so do the prices of wheat. The more basic a commodity, the more the prices of other goods rise. VAT is supposed to get rid of such cascading effects. Sales, excise and service taxes were already collected as VAT. But the cascading of service tax on sales or excise or of sales tax on services and excise, and other such combinations, did not get eliminated

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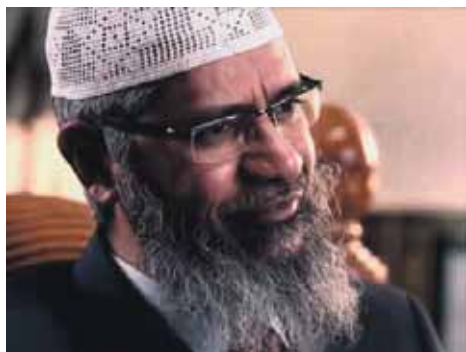
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Zakir Naik got Rs 60 crore in 3 years from abroad: Cops



(Agencies) Mumbai : A total of Rs 60 crore was deposited in controversial televangelist Zakir Naik's bank account in the last three years from three different countries, a Mumbai police probe has found. The money was transferred to five accounts belonging to Naik's family members, a police officer who did not wish to be named said.

Police sources said they had probed the money angle and found details of all transactions. "We still don't know what this money was meant for. We have done an inquiry and found the money trail. The money was transferred to family members' accounts," said the officer.

The account, the officer made clear, does not belong to Naik's NGO Islamic Research Foundation (IRF) but is his own. Police are looking into the financial transactions of Naik and the IRF. However, they are yet to question IRF officials.

"We may question them about the source of income, the connection between the depositors and Naik," said the officer.

A decision on whether to initiate action against Naik's two NGOs under the

Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Act 2010 is yet to be taken. The Union home ministry is examining possible FCRA violations by IRF and IRF Educational Trust, both registered as "educational" NGOs under FCRA but reportedly receiving and utilising foreign funds for "religious and religion-linked" activities. A source close to Naik however said, "There is no illegal transaction. The money came into the bank account, and all the records of IRF have been cleared till 2015 by the Income-Tax department. Whatever money came is in white and all the records are maintained. This also helps the country's foreign exchange to grow."

Mumbai police are also probing the accounts of an international school run by Naik. A police inquiry report, submitted

to commissioner D D Padsalgikar recently, was compiled after going through the bank statements and money transfers, sources said.

Media had on Wednesday reported that the Maharashtra government is all set to book Naik for promoting religious enmity. The tele-preacher has been under the scanner after a probe into the July 1 Dhaka attack revealed two of the attackers were inspired by him.

Last month, Kerala police registered a case of forcible conversion against Arshi Qureshi and Rizwan Khan and arrested the two. Qureshi was in the past attached to the IRF. Mumbai police on August 6 registered a case against four persons, including Khan and Qureshi, for allegedly radicalizing Ashfaque Abdul Majeed, 22 and instigating him to join the IS.

Kerala man who survived Emirates crash-landing wins lottery

(Agencies) When his phone rang on Tuesday, Ahmad Abdul Khadar's first thoughts were, "Must be a relative calling to enquire about the accident." Khadar, 62, was among 300 passengers who escaped death by a whisker when his flight crashlanded at the Dubai airport last week. It turned out to be arguably the most shocking, pleasantly that is, call he ever received — someone called from Dubai to inform that he has won \$ 1 million (around Rs 6.5 crore) in a Dubai duty-free raffle. "For the lucky escape I have been praying to Almighty all these days. After the precious first gift (of life) I got another one... The latest gift has emboldened me to do more good things for the rest of my life," he said. Khadar, who



had a habit of buying lottery tickets on journeys back home, had purchased one at the Dubai airport while returning to Kerala on Eid last month. Khadar is working in the middle-east since 1978 and is employed as a fleet manager with a car dealer in Dubai. One of his sons suffered a paralytic attack after a fall 16 years ago. "My wife used to scold me for spending huge amount for raffles. I always consoled her, one day we will hit the jack port. I think this is my 17th lottery or so," said Khadar.

Life of the bovine: Delhi has no time for 'holy' cows dying in shelters

(Agencies) Cows are dying by the thousands in Delhi's cow shelters, even as protection groups and political parties squabble over saving the 'holy' animal. Data collated by the municipal corporations in Delhi and government cow shelters is startling.

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation sent 3,398 cattle to shelters in 2015-16 and 3,685 died during the same period. In 2014-15, 2,974 cattle were sent and 2,143 died. The East Delhi Municipal Corporation shared similar figures. Between August and October 2015, 190 cattle were sent to shelters. Of these, 120 died. The North Delhi Municipal Corporation did not



share any data. Managers of these shelters say most cows and bulls that come to them are either ill or are injured in accidents. Cows have been in news for over a year. More recently after Prime Minister

Narendra Modi criticised self-styled cow-protection groups and said their actions make him angry, and then after 500 died in a shelter in Jaipur. All the while, Delhi's stray-cow problem has remained unsolved.

Air India Pilot With Gold Bars Worth Rs. 16 Lakh Arrested At Mumbai Airport



(Agencies) Mumbai : A senior pilot of Air India was arrested from the Mumbai Airport on Wednesday evening for allegedly smuggling gold bars worth Rs. 16 lakh. The pilot was found to be carrying around 600 grams of gold during routine checks. He had kept the gold bars inside his check-in and hand baggage. Seven gold bars worth Rs. 16 lakh were seized from the pilot's possession, said

an official of the Air Intelligence Unit of the Customs department. "He has admitted to possession, carriage and concealment of bars which were being smuggled into India," the official said. The senior pilot was later released on bail. All air crew have been subjected to routine checks recently, said officials. There was no immediate comment from Air India.

'GSTN-a PC time bomb' Why Subramanian Swamy thinks GST won't survive in SC

(Agencies) The ruling NDA government, economists and even the opposition is optimistic about the Goods and Services Tax. But Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Subramanian Swamy is not.

A day after the 122nd constitution amendment bill was cleared by Parliament, ending the legislation's five year-long hibernation, Swamy raised questions if the future GST act can withstand legal scrutiny.

"I am confident Smart Cities will be a reality in 2018 but not sure if the future GST Act can survive in SC because of GSTN— a PC time bomb," Swamy tweeted on Tuesday morning.

The Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) is the special purpose vehicle that was formed to create the information technology backbone to the roll-out of the new, nationwide tax that will replace myriad local levies.

In the GSTN, the government of India holds 24.5% share. State governments, including NCT of Delhi and Puducherry, and the Empowered

Committee of State Finance Ministers, together hold another 24.5%. Balance 51% equity is with non-government financial institutions.

Swamy, a Harvard-returned economist, has not been a vocal supporter for the GST. He is also known to have a bitter equation with Chidambaram who is now in the same Rajya Sabha, where Swamy is a member. During the seven-hour-long debate on the GST bill in the Upper House last week, the BJP did not allow Swamy to participate.

The BJP leader also re-tweeted an article that questioned why the tax collection management of GST has been given to an entity where private players have a majority stake. On Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the GST bill will liberate people from "tax terrorism" as the Lok Sabha passed a Constitution amendment bill for GST.

Modi also said the consumer will be "king" in the new system and hailed the new tax regime as "pro-poor" and "pro-consumer".

Progressive Modi? The PM speaks on transgenders, Dalits and Kashmir



(Agencies) After cows, Dalits and Kashmiris came the turn of transgender people.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi told his party MPs on Tuesday to reach out to the transgender community in their respective constituencies, setting them a target of meeting 500,000 people from one of India's most marginalised sections.

This is possibly the first time that the BJP leader has reached out to the transgender community, often ostracised by society and shut out from jobs and education opportunities.

"Humanity is not confined to male or female. Go and meet them. Have meetings and rallies," Modi told his party members, hailing a bill conferring rights to transgender people as a "great step for social reforms".

Modi's comments aren't surprising though he leads a party that has been in the news for its deeply conservative views. It is in line with the views of new progressive Modi – a 2.0 of the Hindu Hriday Samrat if you will – who lashes out at once-patronised cow protection vigilantes, asks people to attack him instead of Dalits and loves Kashmir.

For the past four days, the prime minister has sprung a surprise—indicating to the world

that he is alert to mounting international criticism of his administration as a tech-savvy but culturally intolerant regime that is hostile to minorities and dissent.

His paeon to Dalits came shortly after the United States expressed concern over rising atrocities against the vulnerable community. He spoke on the spiraling violence in Kashmir more than a month after the first clashes and it came after his image as a pan-India leader was questioned in national and international media because of his silence.

Every single of these messages appeared carefully tailored for an international audience and aimed at giving out the message that India is ruled by a global leader with progressive views.

This is a sea change from the prime minister's earlier responses, when he chose to be silent and bulldoze through a torrent of criticism following Hindu hardline ghar wapsi conversion programmes, vitriol against alleged cases of "love jihad" and especially the mob lynching of Mohammad Ikhlaq over rumours that he slaughtered a cow.

Even this January when India was rocked by protests over the

death of PhD student Rohith Vemula in Hyderabad after alleged casteist hounding by university authorities, Modi chose to keep silent – making a short statement that further infuriated anti-caste activists and opposition parties.

Most commentators attribute this change-of-heart to upcoming polls in a clutch of states where the desertion of the Dalit vote can sink the BJP. But apart from poll compulsions – after all transgender people aren't a significant vote bank – the statements hide a leader who has begun to realise that vitriol by constituents might give election dividends but doesn't play well in high diplomacy.

Of course, this comes at a cost—the undying love of hardline Hindu elements, who are already grumbling that the new "secular" Modi isn't the leader they voted for. The BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh have had a troubled relationship with oppressed communities of all hues – be it religious minorities, backward castes or the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community.

Hindu hardliners have attacked couples out on Valentine's Day, have been accused of peddling violence and patriarchal norms that shackle women, and have called homosexuality an abomination – India's home minister Rajnath Singh called it a mental illness last year. Modi's overtures might further rupture his relationship with his core constituency.

But a more pressing concern is whether the statements will inspire any real change. Dalit activists have already said they'd prefer stricter implementation of anti-atrocity laws to impassioned appeals. Kashmiris have

unequivocally rejected the prime minister's professed love for the Valley and his offer of development, saying they'd rather see some real political change on the ground.

But a host of others have raised questions about the bill, which they say dilutes Supreme Court guidelines from a historic verdict two years ago.

Many activists say the bill in front of the Lok Sabha mutilates the definition of transgenders, erases important provisions for quotas and initiatives in employment and education, and crates an elaborate arrangement that will most likely makes things more difficult for transpersons to get government benefits.

"The terms, phrasing and wording of the bill, - very ignorant, ill-informed and inadequate - are things to worry about, and may hurt the transgender community more than it helps," said Nadika N, a non-binary writer from Bengaluru.

On top of that is the question of Section 377, a colonial-era law that criminalises homosexual lives and love and is used primarily by police to harass transgender people on the streets. The government has barely moved to remove a law that puts India in dubious global company, choosing to take

shield behind judicial proceedings. Before coming to power, the BJP batted for the law. Till today, it appears hostile to the LGBT community.

Modi himself received widespread flak two months ago, when he expressed solidarity with the victims of the Orlando club shooting in the United States, without mentioning that the victims were gay or putting in a thought about the millions of similar Indians who live precariously.

If the prime minister is serious about his transgender outreach, it will not remain confined to mere words. His government will consult trans activists and amend the bill, bat for stricter implementation of benefits, and induct transgender leaders in his party.

He will also follow through on his promises to other minorities – because transgender people can be Dalits, Muslims or women – and violence against one community touches all. His government will come out against section 377 and end this shameful law once-and-for-all. Anything less may soar the prime minister's international reputation and make for good headlines abroad, but will do little to help the people he is elected to serve.



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On highway to Bulandshahr, yet another gangrape; woman thrown from vehicle



(Agencies) A young woman was allegedly gangraped and thrown from a moving vehicle on to the highway leading to Bulandshahr on Tuesday, less than a fortnight after a mother and her minor daughter were gangraped in the same area. A 23-year-old woman alleged she was attacked by relatives of her live-in partner whom she had lodged a case against. The victim was found semi-conscious on the road by locals near MMR mall – about 100m from Kotwali – where she was thrown from a vehicle. When they revived her, she said she had been gangraped. Locals informed the police, who took her to the district hospital. After initial medical treatment, the victim was brought to Kotwali (rural).

“The girl said that she was friends with one Paras Tomar, who worked at the same mall where she was employed. They were in a live-in relationship in Noida for several years. Sometime ago, Paras had assaulted her. The girl had also lodged a case against him in Noida in May (after he refused to marry her). Paras was sent to jail nine days ago,” superintendent of police (city), Man Singh Chauhan told Hindustan Times. The woman, who hails from Lucknow, works as a beautician at a mall in Noida. According to the victim’s statement, some relatives of Paras asked her to accompany them in a car on Monday because they wanted to talk to her. They tried pressurising her in to

withdrawing the case against Paras. When she refused, they abducted her and took her to Bulandshahr where she was sexually assaulted by two of them and dumped outside MMR Mall. The accused then fled from the spot. “The police have registered a case on the basis of her written complaint and further investigations are in progress,” Chauhan said. A medical examination of the woman was conducted but the report is yet to come. On the night of July 29, a family of six was driven off national highway 91 in Bulandshahr, and a 35-year-old woman and her teenage daughter were gangraped by highway robbers. On August 8, police managed to nab the main accused in the case.

Former Arunachal CM Kalikho Pul found hanging, leaves note on his ‘thoughts’



(Agencies) Former Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Kalikho Pul was found hanging at the official chief minister’s residence in Itanagar on Tuesday. “The body was found hanging around 9 am by a servant. He may have committed suicide on Monday night itself,” DGP Arunachal Pradesh S Nithianandam told Hindustan Times. “A long note titled ‘My Vichar’ (my thoughts), which contains details on various subjects, was found in the room where the body was hanging. I won’t call it a suicide note,” Nithianandam said. Preliminary investigation did not reveal any foul play. Police have taken possession of the body and sent it for post mortem. The 47-year-old, who held the

CM’s post for about five months, had left office last month after a Supreme Court ruling ordered removal of his government. But he hadn’t vacated his official residence. Unconfirmed reports suggest Pul was extremely upset since the apex court’s order and had stopped communicating properly with others for the past few days. “It is sad and really unfortunate that young leader Kalikho Pul is no more with us,” former CM Nabam Tuki told ANI. “A loss for entire Arunachal Pradesh. The Congress family is with his family in this moment of grief.” Pul belonged to the Kaman Mishmi tribe and hailed from Walla village in eastern Arunachal Pradesh’s Anjaw district — among the most backward areas.

Whodunit! Cops clueless 24 hours after Tamil Nadu’s great train robbery

(Agencies) Three police teams in Tamil Nadu are racing against time to crack the case of the country’s most audacious train robbery. But more than 24 hours later, the police are still clueless. Robbers had cut a gaping hole through the roof of Salem Express coach, transporting the soiled currency notes of the Reserve Bank of India to Chennai from Salem, and escaped with Rs 5.75 crore after breaking open two of the 226 wooden trunks on board on

Tuesday. The trunks were in two bogies that were sealed from outside. Investigators are trying to figure out how and where the robbers boarded the train or where they could have cut through the roof of the bogey. Police have widened their search from the originating point – Erode from where the rakes of the train came – and also were looking at the CCTV footage of all the 10 stations between Salem and Egmore in Chennai where the train terminated. “We

are investigating Erode yard from where the train rake originated, if the hole could have been cut there. We have also questioned the porters who loaded the train and also checking with the bank staff about the people who had information about the money being transported,” said P. Rajmohan, divisional security commissioner, RPF, Salem Railway Division. The money was loaded in the train in afternoon when the Salem Express was in its yard. “We are looking at the case from the originating point – the banks in Salem, their staff,” Rajmohan said. “We are leaving nothing to chance and are looking into every angle, including the possibility of it being the handiwork of a gang from outside the state,” said a senior police official associated with the probe. Nine armed security personnel on guard duty for the consignment, were instead travelling in other bogies. They have also been questioned but



are not being suspected in the case, said a police official. In Salem, a 10-member team comprising railway police, reserve police and Tamil Nadu police is investigating the case. The investigators have visited Salem station, yard, Erode and inspected the line for few kilometres to check for clues. They have also questioned several people in Salem including bank officials and porters who loaded the money. Railway employees were also being questioned. The police are yet to come to a conclusion as to where the heist could have been pulled off – between Salem and Vridachalam (most likely as this section of the railway tracks was not electrified) or later at any other station. Investigators are covering an 80 km stretch from Aathur to Vridachalam.

Investigators have picked up finger prints left by the robbers and are checking with the database of gangs of known train thieves. A police officer said a similar heist was carried out by an Andhra Pradesh-based gang in Guntur a few years ago when 10 people allegedly looted valuables in a moving train. The investigating team from Chennai is headed by government reserve police SP Vijaykumar and has three DSPs. In Tiruchy, a team headed by an SP has been formed. Railway Police Inspector General M Ramasubramanian said that investigations began after a complaint was filed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Banks routinely send soiled notes to the RBI to replace them with fresh currency of same value.





Grim forecast! This hurricane season could be the worst since 2012

be the busiest Atlantic hurricane season since 2012. In 2012, Hurricane Sandy decimated much of the Northeastern Coast. It is the costliest US hurricane after Hurricane Katrina and killed 233 people. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's updated outlook predicts 12 to

17 named storms, including five to eight hurricanes, two to four of which could be 'major'. On average, the U.S. gets 12 named Atlantic storms a season, including six hurricanes, three of them major. Sandy was the tenth hurricane of 2012, and the second major hurricane.

Atlantic hurricane season runs from April until around November, with storm intensity peaking late August through September. The El Nino effect in the Pacific that tends to reduce Atlantic hurricane activity is now dissipating. Gerry Bell of NOAA's Climate Prediction Center said

in a statement Thursday that the opposite, La Nina, phenomenon may form as the six-month season peaks, but shouldn't have a significant impact. Landslides from Hurricane Earl killed nearly 50 people in Mexico last week. Two tropical storms have hit the US this year.

(Agencies) US forecasters say it's more likely this could

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's updated outlook predicts 12 to

Sandy was the tenth hurricane of 2012, and the second major hurricane.

The El Nino effect in the Pacific that tends to reduce Atlantic hurricane activity is now dissipating.

Gerry Bell of NOAA's Climate Prediction Center said

Landslides from Hurricane Earl killed nearly 50 people in Mexico last week. Two tropical storms have hit the US this year.

Canadian ISIS suicide bomber blew himself up in the back of a taxi



(Agencies) These pictures show the inside of a taxi after a would-be suicide bomber detonated an explosive device, injuring himself and the driver before police shot him.

Aaron Driver, 24, a Canadian man previously banned from associating with ISIS extremists, had prepared a martyrdom video and was on the verge of committing a terror attack in a major city, authorities said.

But a tip from the FBI triggered a 'race against time' as police scrambled to identify and locate the balaclava-wearing man in the video and stop the atrocity.

Driver was killed in southern Ontario after he detonated his device inside a taxi and was shot at by officers, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said.

Police said they were tipped off by the American authorities at 8.30am on Wednesday.

The FBI provided a screen shot and later a video of the masked suspect threatening a terror attack.

After being tipped off by the FBI, Canadian police furiously worked to find out who it was.

By 11am, Canadian police said they had a good idea who it was.

Driver was identified as the person in the video and planned to carry out a suicide bombing in a public area during rush hour within 72 hours, Deputy Royal Canadian Mounted Police Commander Mike Cabana said.

'It was a race against time,' Cabana said. RCMP Commander Jennifer Strachan said Driver, originally from Winnipeg, Manitoba, was intercepted by police as he entered a taxi with a backpack outside his home in Strathroy. She said Driver detonated an explosive device, injuring himself and the taxi driver, before police shot at him.



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Arms wide Open

If the statue had a right ankle, the door reserved for workers would open into it. Once inside, the hubbub disappears. There is little natural light and only a few bare bulbs. Flights of open stairs make their way up through the centre, between the criss-crossed concrete supports that give the statue its strength. A thick skin of reinforced concrete means the inside is cool, despite the summer heat outside.

Climbing up, a number is crudely painted on the wall of each of the 12 floors in what feels like an abandoned, dusty warehouse. There is no sign that this is the inside of Christ the Redeemer until an upper level, where a roughly shaped heart bulges from the inside of the chest. It is covered in the same stone mosaic as the outside of the statue - where the outline of the heart can also be seen - the only delicate detail in an interior that's otherwise rough around the edges. From the top of the last set of stairs, a vertical steel ladder leads to a tunnel in the statue's arm. A dark, narrow passageway then stretches all the way to the fingers. The only way to inspect the damage caused by the recent lightning strikes is to go out - through the top of the 30m-high statue. The workers who crawl out of the holes in the arms, shoulders or head use ropes to tether them as they abseil down the torso or inch along the 28m-span of the arms, the city spreading out before them, far below. Brazil's tropical location makes it one of the lightning capitals of the world, which was never going to be good for a statue on a sharp 710m-high granite peak.

There are two, maybe four, direct hits each year, according to the Brazilian Institute of Space Research. Most cause no damage. But recent storms have been unusually violent. "In the past few years, there have been some cases of storms registering more than 1,000 lightning bolts, which did not occur previously," says Dr Osmar Pinto, chief of the institute's atmospheric electricity group. "It is necessary to review the structure of the statue periodically and revise the earthing system of the lightning rods." The statue has a conductor that covers its head in something resembling a

crown of thorns, and stretches down each arm to the hands. Part of the work now under way is to extend the lightning rods to the statue's fingertips. Improving the earthing of the rods is just as important. Effectively earthed, there would be less risk of damage to the statue in the immediate vicinity of the conductor. But earthing is tricky at the top of a big granite rock, as granite itself conducts electricity poorly.

The damage caused by January's dramatic lightning strikes was more serious than usual says Paolo Dal Pino, president of tyre company Pirelli in South America, which is footing the 1.9m real (£500,000, \$790,000) bill for the current round of repairs. "For a monument like this, that hosts two million guests a year - it's going to be three million people probably in 2014 - a place like this, damaged, is something that cannot exist," he says. With bigger storms, and the statue getting older, it's possible that such repair jobs will be needed more frequently. But the original pale grey-green stones that make up the mosaic surface have run out - so there is a possibility that the statue will gradually turn a darker shade. Already, years of piecemeal repairs mean the statue is a patchwork of varying shades of grey, blue and green, when seen from close quarters. Future repairs will be further from the original colour, unless a new deposit of the stone is found. Marcia Braga, the architect who led a restoration of the statue in 2010, says she faced difficulties finding the right stone. In the process of replacing 60,000 tiles, she rejected 80% of those supplied by the quarry. "The idea is to do something as close to the original as possible because when you use different colours it's not a pleasant aesthetic," she says.

Reports that all the statue's six million stones will be replaced, and that Christ the Redeemer will change colour in one fell swoop, have been denied. The next major renovation is expected in 2020, 10 years after the last. As yet no decision has been made on how many tiles to renew, but any new stones used will be a deeper shade, "a different, a darker green", says spokesman for Brazil's National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage. "The stones of Christ are hard

to find." The stone tiles that cover Christ the Redeemer were one of the last pieces of the design to be finalised. According to the project's Brazilian architect, Heitor da Silva Costa - seated, in the picture above - it was the first time mosaic would be used on a statue. The original idea for a monument to Christ came from a group of Brazilians who, in the wake of World War One, feared an advancing tide of godlessness. Church and state had been separated when Brazil became a republic at the end of the previous century, and they saw the statue as a way of reclaiming Rio - then Brazil's capital city - for Christianity.

The first proposal was for a bronze statue of Christ on Sugar Loaf - the giant lump of rock with a smooth, curved summit that rises out of the ocean at the entrance to Guanabara Bay. But it was soon decided that Corcovado ("hunch back") - a peak in the forested hills behind the city - was a better location. Da Silva Costa, whose design was chosen in February 1922, imagined the statue facing the rising sun: "The statue of the divine saviour shall be the first image to emerge from the obscurity in which the earth is plunged and to receive the salute of the star of the day which, after surrounding it with its radiant luminosity, shall build at sunset around its head a halo fit for the Man-God," he wrote. His initial design showed Christ carrying a large cross, which he hugged to his body with one hand, while holding a celestial globe with the other. Some people made fun of it, calling it "Christ with a ball". As he studied the Corcovado from various vantage points in the city - at that point topped with a radio transmission tower erected by Westinghouse - a new design took shape. In this new version, developed with artist Carlos Oswald, Christ was himself the cross, his outstretched arms signifying the redemption of mankind at the crucifixion. But the new design introduced new challenges. Da Silva Costa had already concluded the structure would need to be huge, to be visible from the city centre 4km (2.5 miles) away. It would also have to be immensely strong, to support the massive arms. Da Silva Costa decided on reinforced concrete, "the material of the

future" as he saw it, and headed for Europe in 1924 to seek help from the leading French engineer in the field, Albert Caquot. While there, he also met a number of European sculptors. Antoine Bourdelle, who had worked with Rodin, was one of those approached to make a 4m-high scale model based on Oswald's drawings, but it was French-Polish sculptor Paul Landowski who received the commission. Oswald's sketches were already vogueishly art deco - but Landowski intensified this stylisation, working particularly on the head and hands, which he produced full-sized in clay, to be shipped to Rio where they were reproduced in concrete. By 1927 a preliminary steel frame had already been erected on the top of Corcovado and yet the problem of the statue's finish had still not been solved. Da Silva Costa regarded concrete itself as unacceptably rough and crude. "We were marching towards the inevitable artistic failure, without being able to go back," he wrote later. Inspiration came in an arcade which had recently opened on the Champs Elysees, where, after work one evening, he saw a fountain covered in a silvery mosaic. "By seeing how the small tiles covered all the curved profiles of the fountain, I was soon taken by the idea of using them on the image which I always

had in my thoughts," wrote Da Silva Costa. "Moving from the concept to the making of it took less than 24 hours. The next morning I went to a ceramic studio where I made the first samples." For the material, Da Silva Costa chose soapstone, according to his great-great-granddaughter, Bel Noronha, partly because it had been used by the 18th Century sculptor Aleijadinho ("the cripple") in the state of Minas Gerais, just north of Rio. After losing his fingers to disease, Aleijadinho miraculously continued to carve ornate statues using a hammer and chisel tied to what was left of his hands. That these were still in good condition 120 years later, in Da Silva Costa's view, testified to the stone's durability. He selected a pale-coloured example from quarries near the city of Ouro Preto, where Aleijadinho had worked - unaware that eight decades later it would run out.

Small triangles of the stone, 3cm x 3cm x 4cm, and 5mm thick were then glued on to squares of linen cloth by women volunteers in one of the parishes at the foot of the Corcovado. They often added a personal touch to their work by writing messages or their boyfriends' names on the back of the tiles. "I wrote many wishes on the soapstones," said one of the workers, Lygia Maria Avila da Veiga, in a film shot by Bel Noronha. "They are up there, up there on top."

Terror module linked to NRIs busted in Punjab before I-Day

"The calls used to be made to one Jaspreet Singh of Handowal village, who was a 'Gatka' (a Sikh religious martial form) teacher in a gurdwara in Chhakowal Shiekhan. Avtar Singh (from Italy) met Jaspreet at the gurdwara on October 11, 2015. Avtar returned to Italy in June this year and used to call Jaspreet.

"Avtar Singh and Harjap Singh, who is based in the US, were in touch with Jaspreet and motivated him to revive the Khalistan movement in Punjab. They even sent him money, religious literature and T-shirts. Jaspreet roped in two more youth - Hardeep Singh and Kuldip Singh, for this purpose," an investigating officer told IANS.

After tracking their activities for a few days, Punjab Police and central agencies took Jaspreet and Hardeep into custody based on the questioning of these youths.

The conspiracy was unearthed earlier this month and the case registered on August 6, police officials said. The suspects have been booked under various sections of the Arms Act, Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

"The names of at least four other Khalistan sympathisers have been revealed, who are part of this module. These people were trying to collect explosives and ammunition. Investigations are in progress," the source said.

Besides the three KLF activists and two NRIs, others names mentioned in the FIR (first information report) include Vikramjit Singh and Balwinder Singh of Gurdaspur district.

Police sources said the suspects had revealed during interrogation that the weapons and bullet proof jackets had been brought from Pakistan via the border belt in Tarn Taran district in Punjab.

How The British Gave A Fillip To Cow Vigilantism In Colonial India

("Ocean of Mercy for the Cow") was a widely distributed text that was drafted in support of the movement.

Riots related to cows first happened in April, 1881, when a Muslim butcher bringing in an uncovered basket of raw beef into Multan was fined, followed by an order issued on 23 April that all beef being brought into the city could be permitted only through a specific gate. As Muslims rose in protest, riots broke out in Punjab. These were quelled by a special police force deputed through taxes levied on the inhabitants of Multan.

In 1883, during Bakr-Id, due to Hindu pressure the local magistrate in Multan issued an order on a maulvi, restraining the

sacrifice of a cow which he had purchased from a Brahmin. The order was lifted in the Lahore High Court, and the maulvi succeeded in having the cow slaughtered.

This encouraged the Muslims. In the following year, the number of cows sacrificed in Delhi during Id rose from about 30 to 170. By 1886, the number had escalated to 450. In Ludhiana that year, riots broke out during Bakr-Id. Hindus seized beef claiming it had been slaughtered inside the town in contravention of the government's statutory ruling of 1849. In Ambala, a local Hindu festival coincided with the Id celebrations, initiating further tension. The tensions were aggravated in the following month, in October, when

Muharram partially coincided with Dussehra. Riots broke out in Delhi, Hoshiarpur, Faridpur, Alapur, Etawa and Ambala.

Ironically, just eight years before the beef-related riots first broke out, the Journal of the East India Association (1873) reported upcoming research suggesting that the sacred Vedas and the writings of Manu clearly suggested that even the most devout Hindus sometimes consumed beef. An important text written by Bulloram Mullick -- Essays on the Hindu Family in Bengal (1882) -- claimed beef eating to be common practice for the heterodox theistic Bengalis. Under the influence of the enlightenment brought about by the Brahmo Samaj, such a claim

is absolutely credible.

Nonetheless, after a hiatus of about 20 years, when beef-riots broke out again it was in Calcutta, in 1909. In January that year, Muslims sacrificed a cow in public. The Hindu mob-rebellion was so severe that a joint fire by the police and military was called into action to dispel the rioters.

In 1912, violent riots ensued in Fyzabad and Ayodhya. The Fyzabad incident began when a Muslim, walking behind an English regiment with a cow that was not required for sacrifice in Ayodhya, started taunting the Hindu crowds. That Muslim man was let go, but the Hindus killed a maulvi instead, inaugurating a three-year-long dispute which

was only somewhat suppressed by an emergency order issued in 1915, under section 144 of the Criminal Code, forbidding sacrifice of cows in Ayodhya during Id.

Patna and Muzzaffarpur and Gaya, in Bihar, witnessed widespread clashes between 1911 and 1917. On 30 September, 1917, a mob of 25,000 Hindus attacked a Muslim village in Ibrahimpur. When the riots happened in Delhi -- especially during 1924, the worst year -- Hindus as well as Muslims took turns at murdering innocents and desecrating temples and mosques. Katra Nil, Ballimaran, Sadar Bazaar, Lahori Gate and Bagh Diwar were the bloodiest areas of the city.

The buck stops here, in officers' pockets

under his jurisdiction to allot them additional charge of Child Development Project Officer (CDPO). A sufferer of the district told Tehelka, "The DM has turned the district's government offices into a fish market. It is very difficult to work honestly".

The IAS officer in question has already been reprimanded by the auditor general for wrongfully drawing transport allowance for a year. He was forced to repay the money he had withdrawn but he continues in other corrupt practices because he is very close to a powerful politician.

So what is the Narendra Modi government doing about corruption in high places? In a written reply to Parliament in July 2015, the Union government admitted that 100 IAS officers have come under the CBI scanner for their alleged involvement in various corruption cases. The Union government has accorded sanction to prosecute 66 of them.

The minister of state for personnel, public grievances and pensions, Jitendra Singh, had at that time assured the House that CBI officers would pursue all pending cases sincerely for their expeditious and timely disposal. However, sources in the CBI informed that the government is not serious about pending cases for reasons best known to it.

Similarly, another IAS officer holding the post of district magistrate in Seemanchal region has criminal cases registered against him in one of the states in the North-east which happened to be his original

cadre. But by dint of his 'intellect' he succeeded in getting his cadre changed until he retires. Since then he has enjoyed plum postings in Bihar. During elections for Assembly and Parliament, he was removed from important posts at the direction of the election commission. But he gets reinstated soon after 'model code of conduct' limitations are lifted.

Another IAS officer holds the position of principal secretary of a 'creamy' department. His yearly income from the bribes is estimated to be in crores. That wrongful income is said to increase manifold during paddy harvesting season. His immediate political boss-cum-departmental minister has given him words to solicit his service till his ministerial term ends in 2020. The officer has got a sprawling bungalow built in the IAS colony near Raja Bazar locality. His subordinate revealed, "Saheb is delaying the celebration of the ceremonial function called Griha Pravesh of his new house to avoid the attention of media".

The three characters are merely a tip of the iceberg. Reliable sources in the state vigilance department revealed that as many as 10 IAS officers are under its lens for their deep involvement in corrupt practices. One of them Jitendra Gupta, SDM of Mohania in Kaimur district, was arrested recently and sent to jail after he was found guilty of taking bribes from truck drivers to release

their trucks. He has also been suspended by the government.

In the neighbouring state of Jharkhand, a female IAS officer holds a very important post despite her tainted track record. As the young district magistrate of a Maoist-affected district in Bihar, she was alleged to have got fake ballot papers printed to ensure electoral advantage to a politician. Now she happens to be the most trusted officer of the state's chief minister.

In fact, this is why politicians intervene in postings and transfers. Pliable bureaucrats are in demand with political bosses. Those officers who do not cater to their whims, do not heed the master's voice, are sent on punishment postings. The laid down norm of having an officer at a particular post for three years is rarely adhered to. All chief ministers have played the transfer game in the past. In the process, the steel frame of the administration has become totally malleable.

In the past, the government washed its hands off as many as 15 corrupt IAS officers by transferring their files to the Jharkhand government just after the formation of the new state in November 2000. Ideally, they should have been punished, not handed over to create trouble for the new dispensation. The Bihar government saved its own reputation by refusing to lodge criminal cases against tainted officers considered close to it.

Interestingly, those officers by pulling invisible strings in winning the hearts of the

political bosses of the ruling class. This became clear when the group Citizens Cause filed a PIL in the Jharkhand High Court. A division bench comprising then acting chief justice SJ Mukhopadhyaya and justice NN Tiwary asked the state government to submit the number of officers, including IAS, against whom prosecution sanction has been sought. The state government is yet to respond to the court.

The IAS officers who have clean images and proven administrative capability to deliver the goods are at the receiving end in almost all states in the country. No less than 13 IAS officers have been facing criminal cases of being involved in corruption in Jharkhand. The cases are pending with the state vigilance department. A sizeable number of them have been chargesheeted. But no stern action has been taken against them because they enjoy the blessings of the powers that be.

Apart from these cases, the Union government got confidential reports from different agencies, including the Income Tax department, about corrupt IAS officers. As an officer revealed, "The reports are specific, with designations of the officials and the time during which they misused their position to make illegal money. These confidential reports come at regular intervals, especially after raids by central agencies."

In a written reply to Parliament in 2015, the Centre admitted that 100 IAS officers have come under the CBI

scanner for involvement in corruption cases. Sanction has been given to prosecute 66 of them.

Unfortunately, no action has been taken and ironically the government not even asks these agencies to submit evidence on the basis of which they named the officers involved in the corruption cases.

When the corrupt are allowed to go on the rampage, it hurts their own families. Haryana cadre officer BK Bansal probably never imagined even in his wildest dream that his ill-gotten money would ruin his family. He was caught red-handed taking a bribe on 16 July. Three days later, his wife and daughter committed suicide, hanging themselves by the ceiling fan, as they could no longer live a dignified life. The shocking incident suggests that they did not know that Bansal was involved in collecting money through illicit channels.

Honest IAS officers also have to live with a damaged reputation due to their corrupt colleagues. An officer attached to the petroleum department in Delhi told Tehelka over the phone, "A few corrupt IAS officers have defamed our fraternity. The Majority among us are surviving on our salary. The suicide incident should be a lesson for the tainted bureaucrats". And there is always the view, put forth by a DM in central Bihar, that officers are corrupted by their respective political bosses. But that amounts to passing the buck.

Holy Cow



One day, Chaudhary WhatsApped a photo of a big white torch, the kind gau rakshaks use to blind drivers of oncoming trucks, cracked and smeared with blood. Minutes later, he WhatsApped another photo, of a bleeding hand, symbol of the gau raksha enterprise.

The hullabaloo is over cattle being ferried around, whether for dairying or slaughter. What's forgotten is that 60 per cent of the value of cattle is for other uses—there's leather for domestic and industrial use, glue from bones, collagen and elastin for the cosmetic industry and so on. Most god-fearing consumers would be surprised at the number of daily products they use that have come from dead bovines (see graphic). This is worsened by GRDs also attacking buffalo, goat and even chicken transporters and processors, (Contd on page 21)

as they aim to impose vegetarianism and capture the cattle trade. The GRDs are wrecking a whole network of downstream industries, like tallow manufacturers who provide raw material for soap. The chain of production that yields cattle products provides subsistence to millions—livestock producers (farmers, dairies), traders, butchers, wholesale meat dealers, retailers and dealers in industrial products.

The cow's holiness is just a ruse. What's going on is a takeover bid of industrial proportions, at gunpoint.

Nights Of Long Knives

What Yamunanagar's Chaudhary did that July night shows up GRDs' violent tactics, while the state turns a blind eye. "We have our network of khabris (informants) just like the police," says Chaudhary, who claims to be an RSS member. "Some of our informers are cattle smugglers themselves, who snitch on rivals for alcohol, money or to settle personal scores," he told MediaAfter each successful raid, cow vigilantes post photos, posing with guns, sticks and captured cattle on social media. These videos help establish them in the gau raksha pecking order and lure new members. Fiercely committed gau rakshaks are also 'imported' from other states to 'patrol' highways in SUVs with blazing blue beacons, blaring police sirens and windscreens declaring 'GAU RAKSHA DAL'. They carry guns, sticks, iron rods and equipment to barricade roads. They even fence their windscreens with iron grills, as if prepared to go into 'battle'. The legality of this is hazy. Often, policemen pose with gau rakshaks and conduct joint raids. The GRDs also inform the police on cattle movements in the rural north.

Chaudhary explains that each GRD sticks to demarcated 'areas'. He 'controls' 75 km from Hathnikund to Karnal along the Yamuna bordering Saharanpur in UP, a traditional cattle-trade hub. He claims to have conducted dozens of raids over three years and having 'saved' a hundred cows. "We are fighting a war and don't have as many members or money as we can. Eight out of ten cow smugglers are Muslim but some Hindus are bad too," he says. Though Haryana and other states do have a ban on cow slaughter, gau rakshaks, as noted above, are going after buffalo traders too, riding on a growing impunity. In predominantly Muslim Mewat region, which spans Rajasthan and southern Haryana, cattle traders report having to pay hefty bribes to gau rakshaks or risk losing cattle on charges of cruelty to animals. "Gau kasam, we consider the cow our mother but even buffaloes should not be slaughtered. Hindus don't believe in killing any life," Chaudhary insists. This is bitterly ironic, for this very April Chaudhary was accused in the mysterious death of a cattle trader named Mustain Abbas, from Saharanpur, UP.

Abbas was headed home with two oxen in his white pick-up truck when Chaudhary's gang waylaid him past midnight near Kurukshetra. A tractor was parked across a road, creating a naka or roadblock. Abbas's little truck tried to flee but was stopped by another naka, fashioned out of iron nails, with local sympathisers' help. As Abbas's van approached, Chaudhary fired four rounds from his companion's double-barrel. "Only in the air," he says. "And they were blanks." Abbas's family says their son never returned. Next time he was seen, around 25 days later, he was dead, floating face down in a Kurukshetra drain. "Abbas went to buy oxen that we use for farming. Why did they have to kill him," asks Tahir Hassan, his distraught father. Hassan says he identified his son, who had gunshot wounds, from a tooth cavity and a mole below his chest.

But Kurukshetra SP Simardeep Singh says it isn't certain if Abbas was present that night. A DNA and viscera test report is awaited. "Only police can conduct raids," Singh agrees. "If gau rakshaks do it, it's illegal. We tell them this," he says. "We avoid joint operations. We only take information on cattle movement from them." The incident is now being investigated by the CBI on a High Court of Punjab and Haryana order, which also says gau

rakshaks enjoy police, administrative and political patronage.

"We got information of Abbas's vehicle through informants, so we had set up a naka. A fellow gau sevak called the police. We regularly conduct joint operations with them," Chaudhary boasts. But now he acknowledges the murkiness in the gau rakshak world. "I did so much for Hindu society. I broke the back of Muslim cow smugglers. But Hindu traitors and some rakshaks take bribes from Muslim smugglers and let cows get slaughtered," he complains. Chaudhary's calculations were simple. "One captured truck means a smuggler loses Rs 1 lakh. That's Rs 60,000 worth cattle, Rs 10,000 lawyers' fees and sundry expenses on fuel, hiring pick-ups etc," he says. "One or two raids on a trader and he's finished."

One day, Chaudhary WhatsApped a photo of a big white torch, the kind gau rakshaks use to blind drivers of oncoming trucks, cracked and smeared with blood. Minutes later, he WhatsApped another photo, of a bleeding hand, symbol of the gau raksha enterprise. Days later, Abbas's cousin Ali Akhtar also sent pictures of Chaudhary on WhatsApp. He says he found them on Facebook days before Abbas was himself found dead. In one, Chaudhary and his group stand jubilantly before a white pick-up van. His family says it is Abbas's pick-up.

Chaudhary also took his 'rescued cattle' to a gaushala, from which he resigned this month, possibly under duress since the CBI probe. His unnamed benefactors took his SUV away. He says he has retired from gau raksha. "I'll dedicate myself to Ma Bharti."

New Business Model

Madan Mohan Chhabra in Kurukshetra is a VHP veteran with enormous experience of 'raids'. "If a village has a gau bhakt, everybody will know whom to inform about smugglers' movements. Once we get this information, our yuva karyakarta gather. We also call people from Punjab," he says. Identifying 'genuine' cattle traders from the nefarious 'taskars', or cattle thieves, is being elevated to an art by gau rakshaks like Chhabra. "Genuine transporters show their documents and stop for checks."

Chhabra is also associated with a gaushala which, he says, is run by two policemen. "People should know about the health benefits of gau mutra and gobar (urine and cow dung). Without this, solely on the basis of milk and ghee, one cannot make the cow economically viable," he says, admitting that the desi cow does not give enough milk to justify the expenditure on her care. He holds up examples of commercial organisations that have cropped up in recent years, to produce and market cow's urine and cow dung as an FMCG product. This demented world is

where hapless cattle traders and other merchants in ani-mal products venture, should they wish to survive. Strict anti-pollution rules bar commercial vehicles within city limits from dawn to dusk, so most commerce is by night. "But the moment we hit the road, gau raksha people lie in wait. They catch us at toll gates, beat us and take our buffaloes," says Mohd Iqbal, a cattle trader of Ghasera in Mewat.

Ghasera has over 500 cattle traders who deal solely in buffalo—landless Muslims here know no other trade. That is why, despite repeated beatings by gau rakshaks, men like Mohd Vakeel continue to ferry buffaloes to Delhi, UP, Rajasthan, Himachal and Punjab. Vakeel was last thrashed by a GRD last month on the Delhi-Gurgaon highway. Fifty men surrounded him, letting him off for Rs 2,000. Once, he was stopped at Delhi's Ashram flyover, where police extorted Rs 5,000.

"Ever since Modiji has come, gau rakshaks are angry with us. Nobody touched us before.... We take newly-born and young cattle and we take milch cattle too. Par gau rakshak hamari bhains ki bhi gai bana detey hain (cow-protectors turn even our buffaloes into cows). We don't deal with cows now. If we do, can you imagine what they will do to us?" asks Vakeel. One May night, an SUV full of gau rakshaks chased Ghasera's Mohd Iqbal's van. His son, with several others, was headed for Faridabad with buffaloes. The SUV overtook them at Manesar and forced them to a halt. After thrashing them, the gau rakshaks made off with 17 buffaloes and calves worth Rs 5 lakh, which were deposited at an animal shelter over charges of cruelty during transport. Iqbal has spent Rs 60,000 trying to release them, unsuccessfully, despite a favourable court order.

Buffalo transport doesn't break any cow protection law. Here a different strategy seems to be under way. A perusal of roughly a dozen FIRs filed around Mewat since February 2015 shows cattle traders are routinely booked on charges of cruelty to animals. "When they catch us they call us dirty, they say we're Muslims, cow-killers," says Mohd Fajinoor, an elderly, bearded trader. "Can't you tell the gau rakshaks they have wrecked us traders?"

In Haryana, this bizarre, Kafkaesque situation has been handed over to Bharti Arora, a joint commissioner of police, recently appointed head of the state's new cow protection force. "Some policemen don't know the law, so they stop buffalo traders. It's a new law and we are training them on it," she says. "We tell gau rakshaks not to conduct raids independently or they can face action. Some of them are committed, attached to cows but there are also blackmailers among them." As for buffaloes, she says, "Cruelty against animals is an important aspect of law. Buffalo traders can be caught for it." She says she knows nothing of shelters where the cattle ends up. Bharti also claims, invidiously, that Mewatis cull 500 cows

a day' for meat. "Mewat is a fertile zone," she says, incorrectly. "Why don't they eat vegetables?"

Bharti runs a gaushala from her official Gurgaon residence. "My cows are strays or rescued from smugglers," she says, offering kheer made from the captured animal's milk. Recently, she ferried most of her 'rescued' stock to another shelter in Rewari, where she was earlier SP. Incidentally, Azad Arya—a former classmate of yoga guru Baba Ram Dev, is now vice-president, GRD Haryana—took credit for her appointment. "Bharti Arora ko hamne hi lagwaya hai (we got her appointed). We knew of her excellent work in Rewari and thought she is an achhi ladki," Arya told Outlook.

Clearly, Arora is closely identified with the GRDs, a strange position for a police officer. Close ties like this ensure protection for vigilante groups and give them legal cover. She's not alone. Retired IAS officer S.P. Gupta—currently director-general, Haryana Institute of Public Administration—and his wife Shashi run Kamdhenu Gowdham amidst the Aravalis in Mewat's Bissar-Akbarpur. Her 1,500 cows were also rescued, she says, entirely from 'smugglers'.

Shashi insists the desi (indigenous) cow prevents or cures cancer, diabetes, obesity and other illnesses. This helps justify her avowed goal—improvement of indigenous varieties. This is a tall order, for, a handful of exceptions aside, desi cows produce 2 to 10 ltr milk, while Jerseys can give 60 ltrs. Shashi expects 'success' in nine years—a paltry 15 ltrs for the third generation reared at Kamdhenu. One step towards her target is inexplicable: monthly pravachans or religious lectures held to inculcate gau sanskar or respect for the cow among attendees. "Many people donate generously, even at these pravachans," Shashi says. An 'adopt a cow' scheme, with monthly donations starting from Rs 2,000, is up and running. In turn, some donors get a regular supply of milk, manure and ghee.

"We get no government aid. Let's see what happens in future," Shashi says.

Disaster In Dairy Land

Punjab's dairy commercial dairies started cross-breeding Jersey cows in the late '90s, using semen imported from the US. From 20-25 litres, Punjab's cows now yield 40-65 litres, rivaling European and American yields. "But the Punjab government has encouraged gau raksha dals, whose job is to loot us," says Daljit Singh Gill, president, Progressive Dairy Farmers Association, a network of 6,500 large dairy farmers. "Nobody can transport anything related to cows in Punjab; even buffaloes are being stopped," he says.

Higher milk production lowered dairying costs but GRDs don't get this, or the fact that dairying depends on milk and sale of animals. High-yielding cows from Punjab fetched Rs 75,000 to Rs 1 lakh plus a couple of years ago. Now, cow prices are as low as Rs 60,000. Buyers are too terrified of GRD attacks to risk transportation. Farmers have taken to letting cows loose on roads to avoid GRD wrath.

(By Pragya Singh in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. As reported by Outlookindia.com)

Bengali nights

Kolkata's dance bars thrive in a twilight world of obscure laws and political connections. Despite troubling allegations of trafficking, the nightspots continue to flourish.

(Agencies) In the short six kilometre drive on the VIP Road from Baguiati to Kolkata's airport, a visitor so inclined could have his pick of 70(ish) dance bars. In each of these little havens, from the muggy pressures of the day, can be found alcohol, greasy food, and girls fully, albeit provocatively, clothed, wiggling hip and limb in the hope of earning an appreciative note or two from clients. The men, meanwhile, grub together what notes they can for a flash of uncovered thigh, for the glimpse of a navel, or even cleavage into which the notes can be placed. For those who can afford it, the dancing is a precursor to a fleeting encounter in a purpose-built cubbyhole or even an hour in a grim room.

Women dance on poles. Waiters circumnavigate the room with change for tips. Numbers and addresses are exchanged on paper napkins. And the cars and SUVs converge at all hours. Dozens of bars have sprouted in the southern and northern fringes of the city. Even the centre, a stone's throw from the city police headquarters, is not immune. Outside bars in central Dharmatala pimps close in on pedestrians. "Laagbe naki? laagbe naki?" they hiss, "Noorjehan, Anarkali, patakaguddi." Show interest and you are pulled aside and shown an album of girls in glitzy costumes. Hesitate or linger a moment and you're pushed into a bar, the music—"oh baby meri chittiyaan kalaiyaan ve"—and the

AC turned on full blast. Night Queen's, a bar in Esplanade, even has reviews on the website Zomato, all of them disapproving of the "shadiness".

That these bars are sleazy is not in doubt. But are they illegal? The Maharashtra government has tried to ban dance bars, and failed. In April this year, the Supreme Court once again reminded the Maharashtra government of its responsibilities. "As the state," said Justice Dipak Misra in April, "your job is to protect the dignity of these women in their workplace. Your attitude should not go into the extremes of prohibition when you are only supposed to regulate.... In case the performances slip into obscenity, it naturally stops having legal permissibility and the Indian Penal Code will take care of the rest." In Kolkata, few are arguing that these dance bars are flouting the law, even if the law is nebulous. According to Section 239 of the West Bengal Excise Act, no licensed retail vendor is allowed to hold any professional entertainment or dance or live music, vocal or instrumental, without the special sanction of the District Magistrate or, in Kolkata, the Excise Collector and Police Commissioner.

So-called 'crooning' licences are granted at the discretion of the police department. "The licence issued by civic bodies has no provision called 'dancing licence'," points out SDPO, Baruiapur, Arka Banerjee, who has raided several of these bars. In

May, last year, he led a team that rescued 25 girls from a bar near VIP Road. The girls had been trafficked from Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, a reversal of the usual trend in which girls from West Bengal are trafficked in the north. "The problem," Banerjee says, "is that while bar owners can

be booked for a show of obscenity in public, the offence is bailable. There are non-bailable sections for trafficking, but a senior cop of deputy superintendent rank or above has to lodge the complaint on the basis of which arrests and seizures are made and investigations started. But there are over 100 bars in the northern outskirts and it isn't humanly possible for senior police officers to keep track of what is happening in these bars when there are more pressing problems at hand."

Bishakha Datta, who runs the NGO Point of View, argues that "rather than focusing on the obscenity issue, the emphasis should be on providing safe working conditions for women, whether they are being financially exploited or not, their right to safe mobility, whether clients are taking a lunge at them or harassing them, just like in any other profession".

The first alarm against these bars in Kolkata was raised in March 2015, when 21-year-old Twinkle and her 18-year-old sister Rosy Rajput lodged an FIR with the Baguiati police station against their employer for forcing them to entertain a client who tried to rape them. The girls alleged that they were brought to Kolkata by a Manu Agnihotri, who promised them a job and placed them in a flat in Chinar Park. Girls from the north of the country are of particular appeal here. SDPO Banerjee says that "analysis of what FIRs there are show that the majority of girls are trafficked from north India. The bait is an office job or housekeeping at a hotel. Very rarely are victims able to file a complaint because they are kept under tight surveillance, but when they do, it is because they are being denied a 'fair' share of the profits". Sometimes dancers turn to NGOs. "When we cannot take it anymore," says Pooja

Singh (name changed) from Punjab, "when a band leader exploits us, for instance, we seek help despite the risk of being murdered. One friend of mine contracted a venereal disease, and the bar owner, instead of having her treated, fired her without notice and without pay."

Accurate statistics about trafficking are hard to come by, but the Kolkata police maintain that most girls from out of the state are brought to the city under false pretence. The money, though, motivates many to keep going. And the profits for everyone, from dancers to so-called band leaders to bar owners to the politicians said to be involved, are large enough to keep bars thriving. Band leaders are the key middlemen. They arrange the girls, provided by pimps and touts, look after their accommodation and rent floors from bars. One band leader, on the condition of anonymity, explained his role: "The cost of providing shelter to these girls is high. We look for flats in 'posh' areas where people don't ask too many questions and there is a mixed

crowd. Sometimes rent costs as much as Rs 30,000." The bar owner rents his space to the band leader and ensures that politicians don't interfere. An employee of one bar, who gave his name as Arif, said that the "lease of floors can cost as much as Rs 20 lakh a month but earnings on a single weekend night can be Rs 15-20 lakh. Popular bars bring in revenue of Rs 80 lakh-2crore a month, and the most popular dancers can earn one, or even two, lakhs rupees a month."

Owners such as Jagjit Singh and Ajmal Siddiqui, whose names figure in the police records, are said to be multi-millionaires, with bars abroad, in the likes of Pattaya, a resort city in Thailand. Jagjit Singh was a taxi driver. At Down Town, his first bar, he used to provide a free beer for every purchase of a bottle of alcohol. In 2006, as Salt Lake was being turned into an IT hub, and New Town (Rajarhat) was taking off, Singh put himself in prime position to open new bars.



Gujarat Model in Danger

Chief Minister Anandiben Patel's exit highlights the crisis within the BJP in Gujarat after the Patel and Dalit agitations alienate the votebanks.

(Agencies) On a Monday afternoon on May 16 this year, as the mercury touched 44 degrees in New Delhi, Gujarat Chief Minister Anandiben Patel called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The venue was the PM's official 7, Race Course Road residence. Anandiben Patel, 74, had fought a battle for survival ever since the violent Patel agitation for reservation rocked Gujarat last July. The clamour for her exit mounted within the party after her mishandling of the situation. BJP president Amit Shah, one of her most bitter critics within the party, stepped up demands for her replacement. His concerns had risen after a fact-finding mission to the state in April had found the party's electoral support base diminishing rapidly. The study also put a question mark on the CM's leadership. It was, therefore, not a matter of if but when Anandiben would go. Her half-hour-long meeting with the PM ended with her requesting a graceful exit from office. Anandiben offered to quit on her 75th birthday, on November 21. It was a wish Modi granted. Anandiben, like Amit Shah, was one of his most trusted aides within the party.

Come July, and Una exploded. A video of Shiv Sainiks stripping and flogging Dalits for alleged cow slaughter went viral, triggering statewide protests by the community. As opposition

leaders poured into Una and Dalit protests refused to die, Modi took a call on July 28. He was withdrawing the lifeline he had extended to Anandiben.

The PM had to be seen taking action after the Dalit agitation, a messenger personally informed Anandiben. He would very much appreciate it if she could step down. It was a request the CM could not refuse. Over the next three days, Anandiben announced a series of rapidfire people-friendly measures to leave behind as her legacy. In a public function on July 30, she announced the abolition of all toll taxes on state roads; on July 31, she announced the adoption of the seventh pay commission report by the state for its employees; later, 391 of the 430 police cases against Patel agitators last year were withdrawn. On August 1, she made education in medical and dental colleges free for girls from families below the poverty line and then, in possibly a first for an Indian CM, she posted her resignation on Facebook as a note and a video post. "After the chief ministership of Shri Narendrabhai for over 12 years, I was chosen to take his place, which is naturally as difficult as counting stars in the sky, but I am proud of the fact that nowhere have I lagged behind in maintaining the pace in taking Gujarat forward on the course of development charted by him,"



she signed off.

CHINKS IN THE ARMOUR

Anandiben's departure solves only one of the many problems for the BJP. It heads off a possible anti-incumbency and gives her successor a clean slate to start with. The trouble is, the Gujarat assembly elections are a little over a year away.

Even until last year, Mission 2017 for the BJP seemed to be the challenge in Uttar Pradesh, its assembly elections in January. Now, there's another. Prime Minister Modi's home turf is under threat. This is where he forged his political reputation, built up the Gujarat model—decisive governance leading to economic growth—and created a record for the longest-ruling BJP chief minister, for 12 years and seven months (broken only now by Chhattisgarh CM Raman Singh, who completed 12 years and 230 days in power on July 25).

The consequences of a defeat in Gujarat could be debilitating for the party and the PM. For starters, it will severely dent his aura, diminishing his chances of winning the 2019 polls.

The return of Congress, out of power since 1995, could have

other consequences. It could mean the revival of old cases still in the courts, including the controversial 2004 killing of alleged LeT terrorist Ishrat Jahan in an encounter, to target Modi and Amit Shah.

The estrangement of Dalits from the BJP in Gujarat, brought on more by a keen opposition strategy than Sangh Parivar high-handedness, is more worrisome. It risks rupturing years of work put in by the RSS and Sangh Parivar.

There are signs that Dalit ire against the BJP could spread across the country, proving electorally lethal nationwide. It could especially impact the party's fortunes in UP where it has been assiduously wooing the backward castes. The political turbulence in Gujarat has unsettled the party. "The oxygen for 2019 has to come from Gujarat and UP," explains one senior BJP leader. "We have to win UP and Gujarat, come what may." That seems like an uphill task at the moment. The Patels, Gujarat's most powerful community which comprises close to 15 per cent of the electorate, have been on the warpath for over a year.

The opposition has been quick to sense this chink in Modi's armour. Last June, Congress poll strategist Prashant Kishor advised party leaders in the state to redirect their attack towards Modi and Amit Shah and away from chief minister Anandiben. The longer she continued as CM, Kishor reasoned, the greater the chances of victory. Kishor had similar advice for aides of pro-preservation leader Hardik Patel when they met him for a strategy meeting.

"The Gujarat CM's resignation is an indication of the BJP's sure defeat in 2017 elections," says Congress Rajya Sabha member Ahmed Patel, who has famously dubbed the Gujarat model of development '13 years of false publicity'. Gujarat BJP spokesperson Bharat Pandya dismisses any such pronouncement. "We are going to return to Gujarat with a thumping majority in 2017," he said. "A few political ups and downs don't affect the Gujarat model. Before every assembly poll, the Congress dreams of defeating us, but each time it is proved wrong."



India witnessed religiously motivated killings in 2015, says US



(Agencies) A US report on religious freedom around the world in 2015, released on Wednesday, took note of the returning of state awards by Indian filmmakers and authors protesting growing intolerance.

The report, an annual exercise by the state department, also noted "reports of religiously motivated killings, assaults, riots, coerced religious conversions, actions restricting

the right of individuals to change religious beliefs, discrimination, and vandalism".

It was in this context that the report noted the return of awards in 2015: "Several well-known authors, filmmakers, and other civil society members returned national and state-sponsored awards to protest what they said was the growing religious and cultural intolerance in the country."

This is the first time that the state department has commented on the status of religious freedom in India with a full year under the Narendra Modi government.

The report also cited PM Modi's speech in February on what the government was doing to address the issue: "My government will ensure that there is complete freedom of faith and that everyone has the undeniable right to retain or adopt the religion of his or her choice without coercion or undue influence."

"On several occasions, such as at a meeting in February with Christians in New Delhi, Prime Minister Modi publicly stated he would defend religious freedom," the state department said in its report which documents the allegations of violence against the Christian community in various

parts of the country including Punjab.

"Christians who reported that they were victims of religiously-motivated violence or other animus voiced concern about the lack of police action against such incidents, as well as of hostility by the police towards Christians.

"According to the All India Christian Council and the Evangelical Fellowship of India, police resisted filing criminal complaints and had in several instances threatened falsely to incriminate the victims," said the report.

But at the release of the report at the state department, officials faced questions about growing intolerance in the US itself, specially in light of the remarks and comments from Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump.

The US is outside the purview of the report, a state department official said, adding the administration had addressed concerns raised by Trump's remarks.

President Barack Obama has been scathing in his criticism of Trump's call, for instance, to temporarily suspend immigration from areas of the world impacted by terrorism, mostly Muslim-majority countries.

The state department report's section on India cited instances and incidents of religion-related violence and discrimination based on local news reports.

And, it added, US officials at all levels, starting at the president, had engaged their Indian counterparts and "underscored the importance of religious freedom throughout the year".

Behind bars for greasy palms

They rose to the rank of chief secretaries but that did not save them from prosecution.

Mudit Mathur reports from Uttar Pradesh on how anti-corruption measures failed

(Agencies) Once, they used to call the shots, considering themselves to be above the law, leading luxurious lifestyles. Now, dingy jail barracks are their destiny. This is what happens when the law takes its course.

Two former chief secretaries of Uttar Pradesh are in jail because of corruption cases against them, quite a humbling experience for those who once exuded the arrogance of power. When the trial in the Noida plot allotment scam reached its logical conclusion, two top IAS officers found themselves convicted. The Allahabad High Court upheld their convictions. Now they have gone to the Supreme Court in appeal.

Meanwhile, the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) scam trial has been dragging on for many years. Here too, senior bureaucrats are facing accusation of bribery and corruption.

Corruption in the bureaucracy of the largest north Indian state came into prominence in 1996, when some young and honest officers came together under the banner of the UP IAS Association. As part of a self-cleansing exercise, they held a vote to identify the three most corrupt bureaucrats among themselves. The spark of the idea came from Income Tax raids on houses of some IAS officers. Twenty years later, the activism of conscientious members of the cadre is a thing of the past. Most of them have become mute spectators as high-level political and administrative corruption rules.

The UP IAS Association, through secret ballot, identified Akhand Pratap Singh, Neera Yadav and

Brijendra Yadav as the most corrupt officers of the state cadre and dubbed them the black sheep among the IAS community. This process evoked nationwide response; the identified officers came on the radar of anti-corruption agencies and tax authorities.

While corruption cases have been booked against the first two, the third accused died before any action could be initiated against him. Though Income Tax raids took place at his premises too, the evidence collected was subsequently destroyed in a mysterious fire in the IT Department's Bareilly office, where all investigation records were kept.

The idea behind identifying corrupt officers by upright officers was to draw public attention to growing corruption at the highest levels of administration. Instead of taxpayers' money being used honestly for development,

than 84 prime properties in several cities. CBI had registered a disproportionate assets (DA) case against him in 2005. The agency alleged that Singh indulged in large-scale forgery of documents and converted his gains into immovable assets in the names of his family members, relatives, friends and also a few private limited companies. The CBI investigations unearthed 84 properties in prime locations in Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad, Greater Noida, Lucknow, Bahraich and Nainital.

The FIR lodged by the agency had alleged Singh and his family owned a house worth 30 lakh and

and three-year jail terms as punishment. In the first case, she was convicted in December 2010 for illegally allotting land to a company. Her second conviction was in a case pertaining to making illegal allotments of lands to her kith and kin, close relatives, bureaucrats and politicians.

In 2012, a Ghaziabad CBI court also convicted senior IAS officer Rajeev Kumar to three years imprisonment in a Noida plot scam. He served under Neera Yadav in 1994-95. On the strength of the stay order of the Allahabad High Court, he managed to continue on the sensitive post of Principal Secretary (Appointments) in Akhilesh

family planning minister in the Bahujan Samaj Party Babu Singh Kushwaha and his principal secretary Pradeep Shukla, a 1981 batch officer, were arrested and chargesheeted for large-scale corruption to tune of 4,800 crore that led to murders of some Chief Medical Officers even when they were in prison. Besides CBI investigation into criminality aspects of the scam, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) initiated its probe and attached assets worth 196 crore belonging to Kushwaha.

The attachment order disclosed that Kushwaha had helped many private firms in rigging contracts for the health scheme. ED registered 14 separate cases against Kushwaha and others to probe the alleged financial irregularities in the NRHM scheme. These actions were initiated under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Despite all this, Pradeep Shukla got undue favours under the Samajwadi Party. This is evident from the fact that as soon as he was bailed out, the present government welcomed him by reinstating him in service and posting him as Member, Board of Revenue. Some of its ministers visit him in jail. UP's housing secretary Pandhari Yadav was removed from the chief minister's secretariat when his name came up in the court-directed CBI probe into large-scale corruption in the UPA government's flagship scheme for guaranteed 100 days employment scheme to rural poor under MNREGA. Now he is taking all major decisions in the lucrative housing sector, where real estate companies need to get their projects cleared. Change in land use from agriculture to housing, commercial, industrial or educational uses are known to come at a price.



infrastructure and welfare projects, it is being misused with the active connivance of political masters for personal gain, betraying the common man's trust.

Uttar Pradesh saw unique examples of executive failure when the Supreme Court of India came forward and removed its two chief secretaries — Akhand Pratap Singh, a 1967 batch IAS officer and Neera Yadav, a 1971 batch IAS officer — from the most sensitive post because they were facing corruption charges. It was clear their political masters were interested in keeping them in such a coveted post.

The scale of corruption is mind-boggling. Former UP Chief Secretary Akhand Pratap Singh was arrested in 2007 by the CBI for possessing assets over 200 crore, clearly disproportionate to his known sources of income. It was found that he had no less

a double-storey building in Lucknow, a flat in Delhi's Vasant Vihar, agricultural land in UP's Bahraich, and farmhouses in Lucknow and Bhimtal, Uttarakhand. After the raids on different premises owned by the powerful officer, they found over 100 bank accounts with large deposits and huge investments in shares, debentures and luxurious vehicles. "Investigation has also revealed large-scale forgeries perpetrated by him in the process of acquisition of assets and their laundering into seemingly legitimate assets." Legal proceedings were initiated against him in different courts but the final outcome is still awaited.

Another Uttar Pradesh chief secretary, Neera Yadav, was also voted as the second most corrupt bureaucrat by her fraternity. She was convicted in two separate corruption cases relating to the Noida land scam, wherein she was awarded four-

Yadav's Samajwadi Party government till recently. He was removed only after the High Court's query, "How could a convicted officer be allowed to discharge such an important duty relating to transfer and posting of IAS and PCS officers?" His unceremonious exit was only possible when the High Court confirmed his sentence, dismissing his appeal against the CBI Court's judgement, that held him guilty of corruption charges. He surrendered before the court and was lodged in Dasna Jail, Ghaziabad.

He has now challenged the High Court verdict before the apex court. His case has been connected with Neera Yadav's petition as it was disposed of by a common judgement.

The centrally funded NRHM programme in UP fell prey to high-level political and bureaucratic corruption. Former

(Agencies) India should avoid “unnecessary entanglement” in the South China Sea dispute during Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s visit to New Delhi to prevent it becoming yet “another factor” to impact bilateral ties, a state-run Chinese daily said on Tuesday. “India may want to avoid unnecessary entanglement



India should avoid ‘entanglement’ in South China Sea: Chinese media

with China over the South China Sea debate during Wang’s visit if the country wishes to create a good atmosphere for economic cooperation, which would include reducing tariffs on made-in-India products exported to China amid the ongoing free trade talk known as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership,” an article in

the state-run Global Times said.

“India is expected to allow only moderate tariff reduction on made-in-China products under the talks in a bid to preserve its domestic industries. If India wants China to be more generous in terms of tariff reduction, it would be unwise for the country to let its relationship with China deteriorate further at this

moment,” it said.

The daily said it is puzzling that India is focusing on the South China Sea issue at this moment, a move which it said might risk “unnecessary side effects” to bilateral ties and potentially create obstacles for Indian exporters hoping to increase their presence in China, the world’s second largest importer.

Underlining that tensions

between China and India have been increasing in recent months owing to a series of political incidents, it said, “Considering that India does not face territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea, is it worth letting the South China Sea issue become another factor that will impact India’s cooperation with China? India should consider this.”

Wang will arrive in India to hold talks with his counterpart Sushma Swaraj on August 13 during which key regional and bilateral issues will be discussed, including India’s bid for membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

His visit comes ahead of the G20 Summit to be held in the Chinese city of Hangzhou next month in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to take part.

Following the ruling by an international tribunal last month which rejected Beijing’s claims over much of the disputed sea

area, China is campaigning against the issue to be raised in G20 Summit, saying it is a matter to be resolved between parties concerned and outsiders have no role.

“In fairness, after dozens of countries have expressed support for China’s stance in the South China Sea, India’s attitude toward the issue may not be as important as the nation had imagined,” the article said.

“While many Indian people have been focused on the South China Sea ahead of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s upcoming trip to the country, less attention has been paid to the recent fall in exports of made-in-India products to China,” it said.

It said India should move its focus from geopolitical competition to economic issues to stop a further decline in exports to China.



Middle Class and Hungry in Venezuela

Ciudad Guhyana — I was hanging out with some neighbors in the hallway recently. We live in one of the short turquoise buildings of a mixed commercial-residential complex in this northeastern city, supposedly a model of urban development. We decided to make tea combining resources from our four apartments. We couldn’t scrounge up enough sugar. Someone had frozen pineapple and passion fruit peels. Someone boiled water.

Everyone brought their own cup, each with a different design. Mine, with a picture of a cow, was the ugliest. We sat on the floor of the hallway outdoors and in the shade of a tall mango tree. The infusion was surprisingly tasty, considering the ingredients. One of the guys said, “Yeah, and it helps a little with the hunger.” That’s Manuel. He’s a law student and the youngest in the group. He used to be buff.

My brother, a lawyer

who once had a fat neck, nodded. “We don’t even have the mangoes to round off dinner,” he said. I looked at the tree. We live on the third floor, so we’ve always been able to grab its highest fruits fairly easily. In season, they usually go to waste. This year, the tree’s already bare. “It’s better to go to sleep, so you don’t feel the hunger,” said María, a lawyer who worked as an undocumented immigrant in a restaurant in Spain but returned after two months, horrified by the working conditions there. I said, “Do that, and you end up dreaming of food.”

I was speaking from experience. Taking another sip of tea, I thought about that time when after watching a “Game of Thrones” episode I dreamed of a medieval feast, with a huge pig in the middle of the table, several cakes and mead. Other times, I dream of a supermarket with fully stocked shelves. That usually happens after a long day of standing in line in the sun at a store, hoping for a delivery

truck to arrive. Coffee and milk became luxuries for me a few years ago, but the really scary scarcity — of things like bread and chicken — hit my middle-class home at the beginning of this year. There was a week when I had to brush my teeth with salt. Nine out of 10 Venezuelans can no longer afford to buy enough food, according to a study by Simón Bolívar University. The I.M.F. has forecast that inflation would exceed 700 percent this year. We gossiped about the people we’d been noticing were getting skinnier. The list was long. It struck me how backward this was — how being fat is a sign of wealth again. Detecting the parasitic bourgeois has never been easier. The bourgeois, the wealthy and the private sector are the groups President Nicolás Maduro blames for Venezuela’s recession. But it’s years of economic mismanagement under his and Hugo Chávez’s socialist revolution that have done us in.

The carnage in Quetta

(Agencies) The suicide bombing at a hospital in Quetta on Monday that left at least 72 people dead is yet another violent reminder of the security challenges Pakistan faces. What makes matters complicated this time is that the attack in the Balochistan capital has been claimed by two terrorist groups, the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), a home-grown faction of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and the Islamic State (IS). But irrespective of the organisational links of the bomber, it is apparent now that militant groups that suffered a setback after the army’s heightened counter-terror operation two years ago are striking back whenever they get the opportunity. Take the case of the JuA. Founded in 2014, it has already emerged as one of the most potent terrorist groups in Pakistan. It remains loyal to the TTP, but had earlier declared support to the IS leadership. Over the last two years the JuA had carried out a number of deadly attacks, including the Wagah strike of 2014 and the Lahore park bombing in March this year. If the JuA is behind the Quetta blast, it is yet another warning to the Pakistani establishment. The IS connection too is worrying. The authorities say the IS does not have any organisational presence in the country, but Pakistan actually faces a high risk of IS-linked terror. The group has

already established a foothold in eastern Afghanistan, close to the border with Pakistan. Also, Pakistan’s jihadist underworld, largely based in the northwestern region, is a potential recruiting ground for powerful terrorist groups. Besides, the IS’s proximity to groups such as the JuA and the fact that both groups have claimed the Quetta attack raise questions on whether the TTP factions are cooperating with the IS.

For the Pakistani army and civilian government, this is the new reality they have to come to grips with. The rising number of terror attacks and the entry of new outfits into the region’s jihadist map show that whatever the army and the government have been doing in the fight against terror has simply not been enough. A large part of the problem is with Pakistan’s anti-terror strategy itself. Though terrorism cannot be eliminated overnight, governments need a comprehensive strategy to counter it. Pakistan has a history of supporting groups fighting Afghanistan and India, while cracking down on those operating within the country. The military’s close ties with the Afghan Taliban, for instance, have compromised its fight against the TTP, which now refuses to pipe down despite military action. If Pakistan is serious about tackling this jihadist complex, it should first stop categorising them as good Taliban and bad Taliban, or as good terrorists and bad terrorists.

Is your husband flirting with someone? Find out how to deal with it



(Agencies) Earlier this month, reports revealed how men and women in relationships react to their partners flirting. In one of the surveys mentioned in the reports, researchers wanted to find out if a heterosexual man in a room with an attractive, flirty woman would answer questions about his significant other differently, as opposed to a heterosexual woman in a room with an attractive, flirty man. As it turns out, men and women did answer the questions differently. However, men were less tolerant of their partner's hypothetical transgressions after flirting, while women were more tolerant.

Crossing the line We have all flirted or had someone flirt with us at some point in our lives. Most of the time, it is harmless. But, when there is an underlying motive to it, it can affect a relationship. Psychotherapist and relationship counsellor Gittanjali Saxena says

most people flirt for fun. But, at times, they cross the line. She says, "Flirting can be termed as cheating if you do it with the intention of winning a person's love or to have a fling." According to Saxena, if an individual is in a committed relationship and shows a sexual interest in someone other



than his or her partner, it means that some of the individual's needs are not being met by the partner. It shows that the relationship needs help. Avoiding frequent flirting Abid Khan (name changed), 35, an advertising professional, has been married for 10 years. He admits that women constantly flirt with him, but he makes sure they don't cross the line. He says, "A woman in the office flirts with me all the time. But when she crosses the line, I just ignore her." Then, there are also instances when an individual may not realise that he or she is flirting in a manner that could impact his or her relationship.

Joslyn D'souza (name changed), 29, who works at an export firm, recounts her experience. She was good friends with one of her colleagues, and chatted with him regularly on the phone. "This guy called me almost everyday post work, mostly before my husband returned from his office. One day, my husband came home early. He was shocked to hear our conversation. He made me realise that this wasn't harmless flirting. I have now limited my chats with this colleague to only work-related matters," says D'souza. While D'souza had no intention to cheat on her husband in this case, Shetty believes that people in relationships

shouldn't ignore the situation when their partners flirt with someone else. Saxena says she recently counselled such a couple after the wife discovered that her husband was having an affair. "She revealed that she had always known that her husband was a flirt. She did not think much of it, but it resulted in an extramarital affair. If she had taken the right steps, this would not have happened," she says. An individual may be the best judge of whether his or her partner is indulging in harmless flirting or not. But if there is an underlying motive to it, it's best to deal with it before it is too late.

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Spuul aims to provide best in class user experience on its video-on-demand platform



(Agencies) Video content knowledge of the advertising, aggregator startup Spuul just film and television business; happened to come into fellow co-founder Rajesh existence when a media Bothra is the CEO of Kobian, industry expert, a tech an electronics company and entrepreneur, a banker, a also a savvy investor. Tech businessman and a good entrepreneur S Mohan brings bottle of wine came together, in his vision and talent of reveals CEO Subin Subaiah. commercialising ideas. "It was clear that building a full Subaiah himself has been a stack, pure play enterprise, a senior banker with leading leading video-on-demand Wall Street players. "Trust, (VOD) player for India content friendship and a shared was a phenomenon waiting to aspiration to build Spuul into happen. Once the idea was a hugely successful brand germinated by the founders, it bonds the shareholders together," says Subaiah. was just a matter of harnessing the right talent to execute to plan," explains Spuul is a Singapore-based Subaiah. He adds that the studio neutral aggregator startup that aggregates a diversity of Spuul's founding variety of content across team is its strength. banners. Shortly after

Co-founder Sudesh lyer comes with deep domain inception, it developed smart

TV and mobile applications for streaming include Web, key markets for Spuul (in terms of user volume) are the US, UK, streaming content. Spuul's mobile (iOS, Android), TV catalogue currently consists (Samsung, Panasonic, LG), Pakistan, Australia and the United of approximately 900 movies. Airplay on iOS and Chromecast Arab Emirates. The Spuul team The supported platforms for on Android. Besides India, other consists of 29 members.

Google hammers yet another nail in Flash's coffin, but Flash still refuses to die

(Agencies) More and more nails are being hammered into Flash's coffin and we've been hammering those nails in since at least 2010. The most recent nail being driven in comes courtesy of Google. Fast on the heels of Apple's Safari browser, Google has announced that Chrome will prioritise HTML5 content over Flash wherever possible. Adobe



(you'll know it as mp4 video today) wasn't a mainstream codec. Early HTML was mostly about text and images, rich pages and embedded content wasn't as easy to implement as with Adobe Flash. There was no real HTML standard when it came to streaming and animation and interaction was much easier to implement via Flash.

Flash popped up at an awkward time for the internet. Developers wanted to do a lot more with the web than HTML standards allowed. Features like streaming multimedia content, rich interactions and animations, all these were close to impossible to implement. With Flash, Adobe offered a powerful tool that could do all this and more. But even then, it was an imperfect solution and for that, Adobe is entirely to blame. This was in the early 2000s, long before the iPhone and at a time when H.264

We call the solution imperfect because Flash, while easy to implement, was a little hard to fine-tune. In fact, we rarely notice the good implementations of Flash, partly because there are so few of them and the bad ones, they completely ruin our browsing experience. To make matters worse, Flash was, and still is, a completely closed platform. As Steve Jobs himself put it in his famous "Thoughts on Flash" editorial, if something is positioning itself as a standard, it needs to be open.

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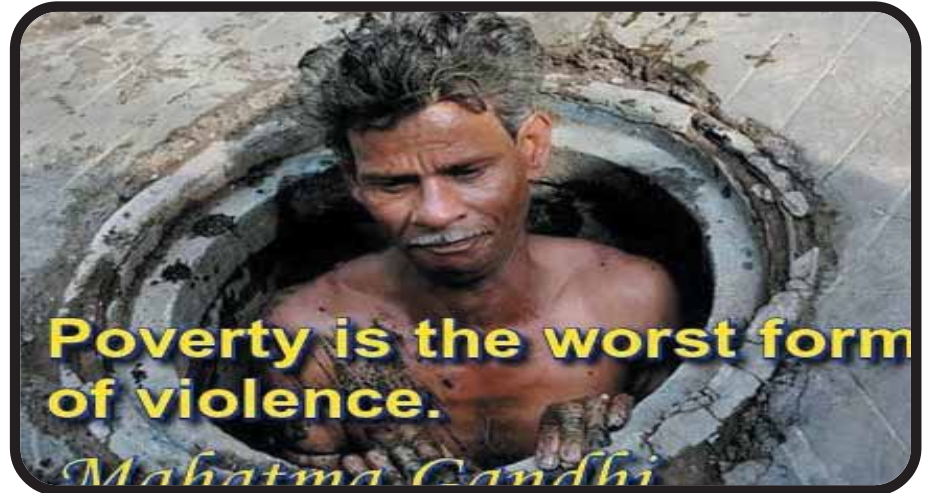
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Sare Jahan se Acha, Hindustan Hamara

Rehne ko Ghar Nahin, Magar Saara Jahan Hamara

*(My India is better than the whole the world , I don't have a place to live, but whole world is mine.
Empty promises and impressive Independence events can't hide the hungry and lost souls of India.)
We have collectively failed, even if a single soul goes empty stomach.*



The Lawn Muse : You asked , She answered.

Q&A with Komal

I have picked few of the most widespread and gripping questions of Interest for all the Lawn Muses(beautiful woman in love with Lawn) any where in the world , who struggle with styling Indian Sub Continent trends.

Q I am a Muslim woman in mid-thirties. We travel a lot and am permitted to wear only Shalwar Kameez. My biggest problem is to give an international look without compromising on my traditional staple dress when on holidays. Want a more holiday chic look.

A This is a typical catch-22 situation for many young woman who are raised/ married in traditional families like in Punjab, Haryana, Gujrat and many other regions in Indian Sub Continent , Muslims or Non- Muslims.

My General recommendation would be to have a good pair of Lawn stretch ankle length Slim Pants/ Cigarette Pants with

detailing just to add more interest to it. You can go for ready to wear pants available at any of the international stores, too and pair it with tunics. For the chic holiday look, go for super short lengths or knee length tunics. Lots of good Lawn Brands like Al Karam, Gul Ahmed , Orient do separates. Charizma and Sana S a f i n a z m u z l i n separates too are very trendy and international in their style. For a more funky chic prints Asim Jofa and Sobia Nazir high thread count unstitched tunics too make a statement.

When stitched with cut-out , flared ,or 3/4 sleeves with cuffed roll on, they make an international ensemble. Most staple neck used is Band collar, Mandarin (oriental style)collar. Boat Neck , sleeves less tunics are the mirror image of the resort wear tops.

Apart from Slim Pants, flared boot cut Pants, Palazzo's, Capri's ,Culotte's and Tulip Pants all go well with the international trend.

If carrying dupatta is a must , pair these with trendy stoles/ scarves with hip prints and vibrant colors. Tie your hair in a top knot or high pony and don't be afraid to use these scarves as head gears and let it be the most fashionable accessory of your outfit. Pair this look with flats , metallic sneakers and be ready to navigate on Holiday Ramps.

Q How can I wear leggings with Kurti's when I am curvy?

A. Try to pick colors in dark tones, avoiding light neutrals. Best colors as per my suggestion would be Black, dark shades of Teal, Indigo, Charcoal ,Burgundies and even emerald green. Wearing bright tones like Fuschia, Parrot

Green , yellow will accentuate your calves and thighs.

Avoid buying leggings with very high percentage of lycra as it is leg hugging. Instead look for more cotton based leggings which will give you a straight fit from thigh to ankle . Slim but not hugging .

Be playful with your tops. Go for embellished tunics, fancy tie necks and interesting detail which keeps the eye focus on top .

Try to wear at least knee length tops if not below. Short tunics are not for you, miss curvy.

If in a mood to m a k e statement go for floor length or ankle length jacket tunics. This style is best suited for curvy girls as

they are fitted till waist , accentuate your narrowest part of the body and then A line..... adding flare and hiding all the bulges at right place. Biggest perk of this style is leggings playing the role of peek a boo...

Q. I love stone statement necklaces, which are big these days. How do i wear earrings with these on formal occasions?

A. This a tough one !!! Statement necklaces are supposed to be a statement in their own. Now wearing two bold statement pieces together would either be a fashion disaster or the rule we bend once in a while to make it "The Statement Look "

Bottom line for me with Statement Neck pieces is to see if ears feel naked or no. If doing hair in a way that it covers your ear lobes, I hardly would bother to wear anything in ears.

On the contrary, If hair is tied back and whole ear is exposed and look is incomplete, my best suggestion would be studs in matching stone color. Diamond, Garnet and pearl studs are most versatile to go with many.

Otherwise, just pair with matching color metals, stone.

But still, if not satisfied and the need of the hour says for a bolder look. You can pair these necklaces with hoop or dangling earrings . But these need to be very carefully paired.

Avoid them if you already are wearing a very heavy dress in florals, prints, embroidery or layered in different fabrics. It will destroy the look. Simple rule as per my suggestion would be to wear earrings only with fine flowy dresses in solid and minimal detailing. Otherwise you could end in a very over busy look.

Q Five Basic Mix n Match staples for a woman who wears only Lawn and don't want to over spend ?

A. My Mix n Match staples for woman wearing Ethnic dresses and wardrobe being self sufficient without a massive budget.

1. First comes first, Good branded Lawn Trousers in basic colors-- Black, white, off white, Beige. Add your detailing with pleating, anchoring, buttons, crochet/pottli buttons. Fine embroidery patches.

2. For semi casual look- Fine lawn Tunics with embroidery and varied stitching styles . Underline different stitching styles as variety is the spice of life

Formal Casual look- Silk Tunics with digital printing and embellishments

3. Fine Quality Pure Chiffon/Silk/ Tabby silk dupatta's in basic colors to match the neutral lowers, Edging and detailing should be very fine so that it adds no extra weight to the material.

4. A fine Formal Lawn / Chiffon complete 3 pieces dress for formal occasion's. Since its a formal



dress you should opt for more formal lower's like sharara, gharara or skirts.

5.A good pair of comfortable embellished Khussa's in pearls or metallics. You can never go wrong with these.

Style is unique, as all women are unique on their own. These are general suggestions.

Rules are meant to be broken. Don't be afraid to create your Own Rules. Any questions to be asked can be emailed at thelawnmuse@gmail.com

**The Lawn Muse
by Komal Bindra**



Ajay Devgn unfazed by Shivaay – Ae Dil Hai Mushkil box office clash

(Agencies) The impending BO clash of Ajay Devgn's ambitious project, Shivaay, and Ae Dil Hai Mushkil, a Karan Johar directorial after four years, has got the industry talking, but the actor says it does not bother him.

Shivaay, an action-adventure not only stars Ajay but also marks his second directorial venture, and he believes it is better to focus on the film than think about the clash.

"The clash really doesn't matter. Though, a solo release is always a solo release. I am more concerned about what I am doing. I am not concerned about what

others are doing," Ajay said. Ae Dil Hai Mushkil, a romantic-drama, stars Ranbir Kapoor, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Anushka Sharma and Fawad Khan. The two films are set for Diwali release on October 28. "When I announced the film for Diwali, at that time nobody else's film was there. So, we thought this was the right time to release," the 47-year-old actor said. Shivaay will also mark Bollywood debut of veteran actor Dilip Kumar's grand niece Sayesha Saigal and Polish actress Erica Kaar. When asked if signing new faces for such an ambitious film was a risk, Ajay said, "Not at all. I needed fabulous

actors. And for the Indian girl, I definitely needed a new face." "As for the other girl, Erica, she had to be a foreigner. The character's demand was such. I got two fabulous actors. It's a performance-oriented film. Even the little child, I can challenge anybody including myself, we could not have performed better than her," he added. Earlier, there were reports that Ajay's wife Kajol would also be a part of the film.

The Drishyam actor, however, said, that couldn't happen as none of the roles suited her at all. "No, it didn't suit her in any way. One role needed a foreigner. And for the other one, I needed a new younger girl," he said.



Everyone is going crazy over Rakhi Sawant's 'sexy' Narendra Modi dress, and not in a good way

(Agencies) Controversy's favourite child aka Rakhi Sawant is at it again! The woman, who never fails to attract attention—whatever the raging issue of the hour maybe—chose to leverage the attention Indian Prime Minister gets in the US, in her favour. The actress, who was in attendance at a pre-Independence Day party in Chicago, USA, was seen wearing a garish black number emblazoned with pictures of Narendra Modi. Besides the tiny headshots of the PM, the worst part seems to be the PM's figure that's placed strategically enough for his hand to land right on Rakhi's bust. And behind, Sawant's butt bears another image of Modi with the Prime Minister seemingly giving

the actress' booty a first class rating with his gestures. Twitter reactions started to pour in, as expected. Congratulations! Proud Moment for all Indians, Rakhi Sawant's #MakeInIndia Costume for PM. pic.twitter.com/U1YH6aAahK sarika (@NSarika) August 10, 2016 We just don't know what Ms Sawant was thinking when she went ahead with this twisted show of patriotism (was it?). Well, we guess only she can answer that question. What we do know is that no one would have known that Rakhi came and went to Chicago, had it not been for that dress. Considering that she's been away from the limelight for sometime, what a stellar comeback that dress ensured!



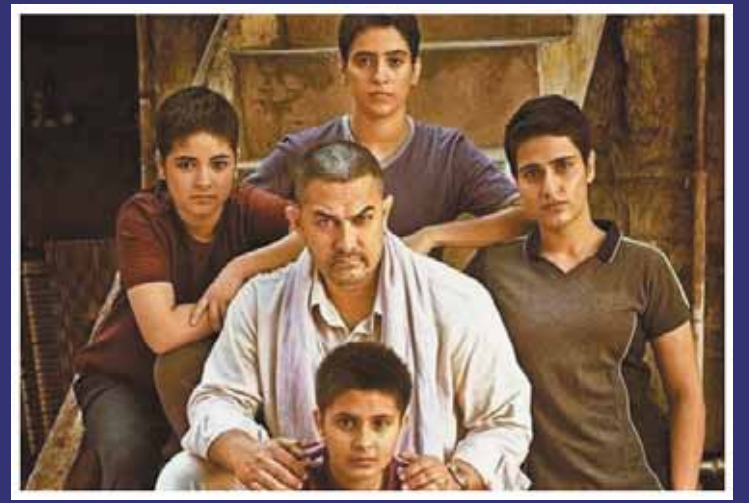
Salman wanted to be part of Freaky Ali but Sohail chose Arbaaz instead



(Agencies) Salman Khan revealed at the trailer launch of Sohail Khan's upcoming movie, Freaky Ali, that he wanted to act in the Nawazuddin Siddiqui-starrer film, but was denied a role despite repeated requests. The 50-year old actor said, "I so wanted to be part of Freaky Ali but Sohail somehow wasn't ready. I even asked him for several characters, but he took Arbaaz, not me." "This film was completed in 38 days. If I had been in the film, it would have taken 138 days," The Bajrangi Bhaijaan actor added. Arbaaz Khan, while speaking about his character in the film, said, "I play Maqsood in the film, a side kick. He is a gangster, a petty thief and extortionist. When Ali (Nawazuddin's character) is in trouble, he helps him. He shares a turbulent equation with Ali throughout the film." "Freaky Ali is themed around golf and shows how a poor man makes a name for himself in a rich man's sport. Siddiqui plays protagonist in the film, with Amy Jackson and Arbaaz Khan in important roles. Freaky Ali is slated to hit the theatres on September 9.

Aamir Khan has his hands full, will start working on Thug post Dangal

(Agencies) Superstar Aamir Khan has recently revealed that he will start filming for Vijay Krishna Acharya's Thug soon after Dangal — his upcoming sports biopic — is released. Speculations are rife that the 51-year-old actor will be seen playing a father to three teenage girls. It will be more of a lighter character with lots of pun involved, in particular, which is exactly contrary to his part in the upcoming Dangal, reports BollywoodLife. As per reports, the role was initially offered to Hrithik Roshan, but due to his demand for changes in the script, the deal couldn't work out. Later, the



director approached the Ghajini actor with a tweaked script. Aamir, who is known for taking a long time to give a nod to a movie, reportedly agreed immediately after going through the script.

A film that gave Bollywood an action hero

Phool Aur Patthar not only gave Bollywood veteran Dharmendra recognition in the Hindi film industry but also made him a matinee idol, writes Rajiv Kaplish

(Agencies) 1966 belonged to Dharmendra and Phool Aur Patthar. It was a year he will always remember and viewers will always cherish. A seminal phase in his cinematic journey, it brought him glad tidings. The actor became a star and the Hindi film industry got an action hero. If releases like Aaye Din Bahar Ke, Anupama, Devar, Baharen Phir Bhi Aayengi, Mohabbat Zindagi Hai, Dulhan Ek Raat Ki, Mamta and Dil Ne Phir Yaad Kiya during the period brought Dharmendra recognition, the blockbuster, called Phool Aur Patthar, made him a matinee idol. An outstandingly handsome man with a robust physique, Dharmendra, who made his debut with Arjun Hingorani's Dil Bhi Tera Hum Bhi Tere in early 60s, had average success till mid-60s with flicks like Soorat Aur Seerat, Bandini, Anpadh, Shola Aur Shabnam, Aaye Milan Ki Bela, Kaajal, Main Bhi Ladki Hoon, Pooja Ke Phool, Akashdeep and Poornima, in which he

played lead as well as supporting roles. Interestingly, most of the actresses with whom he worked in these films like Mala Sinha, Meena Kumari, Nutan and Nanda were big stars already. The kind of commercial and critical acclaim they had won eluded Dharmendra. It was then that he got the lead role in OP Ralhan's Phool Aur Patthar opposite the tragedy queen, Meena Kumari. Sunil Dutt was reportedly the original choice, but things didn't work out and Dharmendra bagged the role. There were also reports that during the making of the film, Dharmendra and Ralhan had a showdown over something and at one stage, the actor even thought of walking out of the project. However, the two later sorted out the matter.

Come Phool Aur Patthar and the actor became an overnight sensation. A riveting account of a hardened criminal turning a Good Samaritan by nursing an ailing widow

to health in a house he had gone to burgle and later fighting against the odds to rescue her from her greedy in-laws and redeeming himself in the process, the film catapulted Dharmendra to stardom. With songs like Sheeshe se peeya and Sun le pukar, OP Ralhan's deft direction, tight editing, popular dialogues, action sequences and stellar performances by its actors, the movie became a golden jubilee hit and was the highest grosser of the year. Though Dharmendra didn't sing any song in the film, his tour de force performance established him as the He-Man of the film industry. Images of the hero in a black jacket and a scarf around his neck were enough to draw the audiences in droves to theatres. A sedate Meena Kumari was the perfect foil to the tough but vulnerable villain. The lead actors became a hit pair after the film's release and later starred in more movies like Chandan Ka Palna,



Manjhli Didi and Baharon Ki Manzil. Ralhan acquired the status of a prominent director. The hero also won a nomination in the Best Actor category of the Filmfare Awards for that year, a trophy which eventually went to Dev Anand for Guide. Phool Aur Patthar was also remade in Tamil. Sunil Dutt's loss was Dharam's gain.

Actress Tisca Chopra's Account of the Casting Couch is Now Viral



says her first film -1993's Platform- 'vanished without a trace and soon after, her dates diary looked like a barren desert.' At a loose end, Ms Chopra went on a break to Goa. And just when she was wondering whether she would ever get any work at all, she received a call from "a very, very famous producer and director." In the video, Ms Chopra refers to the filmmaker as "RP or Reptile" and says that he asked her to meet him for an apparently "extravagant film." After seeing Ms Chopra, RP told her, "You need to learn how to walk in heels. You need a manicure and you need to do a spa for your hair. And you need to learn how to ooze." Ms Chopra admits that she took RP's words

seriously, adding that her friends were delighted to hear that she would star in this 'extravagant film.' A few friends also expressed concern as they believed that RP had a "scene" with all the actresses he worked with. A certain friend also told Ms Chopra that a director wanted her to accompany him on location hunting as he wanted "the script to penetrate every inch of her body." So, they started shooting in Bombay, with Tisca Chopra being allotted a hotel room adjoining RP's. On set, people could tell that RP was "getting fond" of her. One fine day, after directing Ms Chopra in an intimate scene, RP told her, "So, let's meet in my room for dinner. We'll discuss the script."

(Agencies) A video, titled 'Reptile Dysfunction,' of actress Tisca Chopra detailing her experience of the casting couch has gone viral since it was posted some days ago. "It's gone viral. Thanks, people," tweeted Ms Chopra, who is spending Wednesday responding to posts praising the video. In a YouTube session with creative collective Kommune, Ms Chopra

Alia Bhatt swings to Tip Tip Barsa Pani to promote Akshay's Rustom



(Agencies) Despite not being an industry insider, Akshay Kumar has cemented his place as a superstar in Bollywood. Now, when the 48-year-old actor's film Rustom is set to hit the screens, every A-lister in the movie industry is making sure that Akki knows they are by his side. The latest to do so is Alia Bhatt, who is yet to do a film with Akshay Kumar. However, that hasn't stopped her from sharing a video on Twitter in which she is reenacting a hit song from Akshay's 1994 film, Mohra. This song, Tip Tip Barsa Pani, was a rage during the '90s and was filmed on Raveena Tandon where she dances in the rain in a bright yellow saree. Composed by Viju Shah, the song featured the voices of Alka Yagnik and Udit Narayan. Later, Akshay Kumar thanked Alia for her gesture. Directed by Tinu Suresh Desai, Akshay's Rustom is slated to hit the silver screen on August 12, 2016.

Kangana Ranaut slams Shobhaa De for tweet on Indian Olympians at Rio

(Agencies) Actor Kangana Ranaut, who is known for her power-packed performances in film such as Queen and Tanu Weds Manu, on Wednesday slammed author Shobha De for her tweet on Indian Olympians at Rio saying the comment was "disheartening." De had mocked Indian athletes, saying that their aim was only to click selfies and return without any medal. Her tweet angered many who slammed and trolled the

writer. When asked to comment on the matter, Kangana told reporters in Mumbai, "It is a very disturbing thing to say to people, who are representing us. It can be also a very personal opinion but being such a credible author and a powerful woman who people look up to, for someone like that saying this is disheartening." The 29-year-old star hopes the athletes do not get disheartened and do their best. "It is not a good news, for sure. I hope our athletes don't get

disheartened and we need to do our best." The actor was speaking at the launch of a short film on Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, titled "Don't let her go". De received backlash from several quarters. Following the criticism, she came up with another tweet, putting the blame on officials and not the athletes. "Official apathy main reason why we fare so poorly during every Olympics, not just Rio. Difficult for athletes to 'compete' with this hurdle," she tweeted.





Arms wide open

Brazil's statue of Christ is, for some, the ultimate religious symbol. For others, an irresistible tourist attraction. Its image is known the world over, but few know the story behind Cristo Redentor.

(Agencies) To mount the steps and slowly, fearfully peer out is to see the world through the eyes of a bird, or even a god. Far below, white blocks of flats and offices cluster among folds of tropical green.

Down there are the poor in the favelas, the rich in the luxury high-rise apartments, the homeless, the famous football stadiums and Guanabara bay with its scattered islands and boats. Beyond the sands of Copacabana and Ipanema, the limitless Atlantic ocean. To the left, standing twice

a man's height, is the slightly bowed head of Christ, also looking down on the beauty of the city.

But unlike the forests or the ocean, this statue was the work of man and will not last for ever. Close up, the toll of 83 years of weathering is starkly apparent.

Unnoticed by the 5,000 who visit the landmark every day - and see it only from a distance - the surface is a patchwork of worn mosaic tiles resembling the skin of an aged reptile.

Lightning storms have been chipping away at it. In January, two

direct hits in eight days blasted off a middle fingertip and scorched the back of the head, sparking a race to patch up Rio's favourite picture-postcard scene before the World Cup in June.

Such is the statue's popularity that even at 8am there is a babble of tourists taking photographs and enjoying the view. For them, the only sign of anything wrong is the scaffolding that leads up the 8m (26ft) pedestal to a discreet entrance in the hem of the cloak.

(Contd on page 19)

The 21st Century Tapasya

Food is simple, till we complicate it with protein, carbs and fat. And like life, once you start complicating it, there's no end to it.

(Agencies) Ages ago in Mahabharata, Vidur said to Dhritrashtra, that tapa (tapasya) is defined as the one at the end of which there is an increase in the joy one feels in life. And it's not that we don't do tapa, or voluntary renunciation of pleasures—we have given up on ghee and eat our rotis sookha, we no longer have sugar in our tea, have even given up on rice at night, make food in minimum or almost no oil, etc. But unlike Vidur's definition, our efforts have landed us in more of the same kind of trouble. This kind of renunciation has a name too—asuri tapa. That which, other than causing harm, does very little good.

Food is simple, till we complicate it with protein, carbs and fat. And like life, once you start complicating it, there's no end to it. You can spin yourself endless webs

of confusion and disillusionment, till, like the law of karma says, you are literally knocked into your senses. And then when you open your eyes, you see that the USDA has reviewed its guidelines in April 2015 to say that cholesterol is no longer a nutrient of concern for overconsumption and that there is no upper limit to your daily fat intake. That's like your grandma saying eat ghee and eat as much as you want. Sounded so simple that you thought it just comes out of blind love and must be ignored. But then, when USDA says it and makes it sound a bit complicated, we like its scientific tone. Not superstitious like your grandma; what's she got to do with science, right? But the whole point of science is that, like Ikea furniture, if the pieces don't fit effortlessly together, you are doing something wrong.

Terror module linked to NRIs busted in Punjab before I-Day



(Agencies) Chandigarh/Hoshiarpur: In a major swoop ahead of Independence Day, security agencies and the Punjab Police have busted a Khalistani terror module with links to NRIs and Pakistan's notorious Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The module was busted in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district, 140 km from Chandigarh.

Punjab Police has arrested three suspects, all linked to the Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF), and booked two Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) on charges of trying to revive terrorism in Punjab. The case has been registered in Chhabewal police station, 10 km from Hoshiarpur town. In a joint operation, central security

agencies and Punjab Police recovered three pistols, ammunitions and explosives and nearly 15 bullet-proof jackets from their hideout.

The terror suspects are from the KLF — an insurgent group which was part of the separatist Khalistan movement in Punjab in 1980s. The NRIs booked include US-based Harjap Singh Japi, who is linked to radical Sikh organization in the US — Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) — and Italy-based Avtar Singh. Both NRIs hail from Hoshiarpur district.

Police sources told IANS that further investigations were in progress and some other people have been taken into

custody and were being interrogated. The module is also being linked to terror and separatist outfits in neighbouring Jammu and Kashmir.

"We are trying to find out if this module had any plans to carry out a strike on or around the Independence Day," a senior police officer said. Punjab Police Inspector General Loknath Angra confirmed the arrests and busting of the terror module. The module was busted following inputs from security agencies, based on phone call intercepts coming to some persons in Handowal village in Hoshiarpur district.

(Contd on page 19)

The buck stops here, in officers' pockets

Of the total 5,000 plus IAS officers across the country, many are so corrupt that they would laugh if reminded of their oath to serve the nation. Kanhaiya Bhelari reports from Bihar

(Agencies) In British times, a Collector was meant to gather revenue for the colonial authority. Even in independent India, some officers think they are entitled to 'collect' money for their personal pockets. That's what an additional district magistrate (ADM) discovered when posted in a district of Mithilanchal region of Bihar. He sent a petition to the district magistrate seeking leave for three days to do some urgent work at his village. The collector called him at his official residence and 'authoritatively' said, "My fee against granting leave for a day is 1,000. You will have to pay 3,000 to me for three



days leave." The poor officer shelled out the money to the boss.

That, of course, is just the tip of the iceberg. The district magistrate in question, an IAS officer of the 2008 batch, used to collect 2 lakh as bribe from the each Block Development Officer (BDOs)

(Contd on page 20)

How The British Gave A Fillip To Cow Vigilantism In Colonial India

(Agencies) The lynching of Mohammed Akhlaq in Dadri, Uttar Pradesh, on 28 September, 2015, by Hindu mobs, on suspicions of eating beef on Eid-ul-Adha, did not inspire condemnation from Prime Minister's Narendra Modi. The recent Dalit backlash at Una, in Gujarat certainly did.

"Cow vigilantism" in India has allowed the prime time voices of the nation to redeem their political ideologies. It has also allowed for a retrospect of India's communalism under colonial rule. According to orders issued by the Board of Administration for the Punjab in 1849, the sale of beef was banned in Multan. In the early 1880s, the same festival which marked the killing of Akhlaq led to communal riots in



Punjab, which later spread to the United Provinces (Benares) and Bihar (Patna). The cow-vigilantism of the 1880s was its first recorded instance in modern India. Hindu agitations for cow protection proceeded with establishing support from existing traditionalist anti-colonial groups and

demonstrating the allegedly "nationwide" opposition to beef-consumption through several petitions to the government. A key leader of the 1880s' cow-vigilantism was Swami Dayanand Saraswati, whose pamphlet Goukarunanidhih

(Contd on page 20)