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Mann and his meaningful messages

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How Anti-Democratic Propaganda is Taking Over the World

Autocrats from Beijing to Moscow are spreading their toxic ideology in more parts of the globe than ever before. And they're much more sophisticated than you think.

STORY ON page 22

'Authentic' Fake On Sale

Websites facilitate degrees. Busted, the racketeers regroup.



The Intermediate Council of Schooling Education sounds very much like a genuine board examination. In fact, its acronym ICSE can be easily confused with the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education—the Class X exams held by the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations.

(Contd on page 23)

US suspends expedited processing of H-1B visas

The US is temporarily suspending expedited processing of H-1B visas, eliminating the option of shorter wait times for the program that helps highly skilled foreigners work at US companies.

Under the current system, companies submitting applications for H-1B visas for potential employees can pay extra for expedited processing, which is referred to as premium processing. Premium processing costs an additional \$1,225 and ensures a response from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services in 15 days or the fee is refunded. Processing of standard H-1B applications — those that are not premium — takes between three to six months.

The suspension is effective April 3,



and could last up to six months, according to USCIS.

The change comes as President Donald Trump is said to be drafting a new version of his court-halted executive order that banned travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the US.

(Contd on page 22)

US: Attacker Yells 'Go Back To Your Country' Before Shooting Sikh Man



A 39-year-old Sikh man in the US has been shot and wounded outside his home by an unidentified person who shouted "go back to your own country", just days after an Indian engineer was killed in a hate crime shooting. The Sikh man was working on his vehicle outside his home in Kent, Washington, on Friday when he was approached by a stranger, who walked up to the driveway, the Seattle Times reported.

Kent police said an argument broke out between the two men, with the victim saying the suspect made statements to the effect of "go back to your own country". The unidentified man then shot him in the arm.

The Sikh man, who has not been named, described the shooter as a six-foot-tall white man, wearing a mask covering the lower half of his face. Kent police are looking for the gunman. Kent Police Chief Ken Thomas said while the Sikh man sustained "non life-threatening injuries", they are "treating this as a very serious incident". Kent police have launched an investigation into the case and reached out to the FBI and other law enforcement agencies, the report said. "We're early on in our investigation," Thomas said. Kent Police Commander Jarod Kasner said the incident is getting attention from the Sikh community and others. (Contd on page 22)



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Amicus Curious?



This one could be the shortest legal thriller ever, but with a Jeffrey Archer twist in the tale. In early February this year, a litigant was observing lawyer Ajit Kar with awe as the latter argued a brief in front of a magistrate in Delhi's Dwarka court. It didn't take him long to decide that, in Kar, he had found the advocate to replace the one representing his cousin. Bail had been granted to an accused in a criminal case,

and they needed a lawyer who could get it cancelled. Right afterwards, he struck a deal with Kar. The alleged scene: a glib Kar said his speciality was criminal cases, and he would charge Rs 1 lakh as fees—the litigant paid up half of that as advance on the spot, the rest was to be furnished when the case was settled.

On February 4, when the litigant went to court for the hearing as scheduled, 'lawyer'

We've heard of fake encounters, but fake lawyers? There are lakhs of them, duping clients and even judges with court craft, black coats and a smattering of legalese. With degrees bought at dubious law colleges, sometimes even without.

Ajit Kar was standing ash-faced amongst other lawyers and bar association members. The would-be prosecutor had himself turned into an accused. Kar's cover had just been blown: he was a fake lawyer.

The police say Kar had had a good run for around seven years and had perhaps appeared in some 60 cases. He had first come to the court in 2010 for a case and realised to his dismay that legal fees were very high. Not much dope exists on the back-story, except that he had a dispute in his own family. Anyway, out of desperation, he argued his own case—and decided he had the knack for it. Realising one could make a good living from it, Kar would wear a black coat and approach litigants to entrust him with power of attorney and charged them as much fees as the others.

Other lawyers practising in Dwarka were in awe of Kar. "He could argue like a seasoned

senior advocate and knew both the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code well," says B.S. Jakhar, president, Dwarka Bar Association. "During elections, we would ask Kar for votes and junior lawyers used to touch his feet in reverence. Pair chhoote thhe."

In some cases, Jakhar claims, Kar even filed a fake 'vakalat-nama'—a kind of power of attorney through which the litigant empowers the advocate to represent him. The advocate has to file the vakalatnama in the court where he appears on behalf of his client. After that formality was taken care of, Jakhar says, there was really nothing to stand in Kar's way: his knowledge of the law and arguing skills were mostly decent enough for him to pass off as a lawyer in front of a judge.

And yet, the self-taught always run the risk of not doing things in a schooled way—and can stand out. Another lawyer,

who observed irregularities in Kar's arguments, became curious and asked where his chambers were. Kar's answers were evasive and, his suspicions piqued, the lawyer tipped off bar association members. They had just accosted Kar when the first litigant landed at court. The latter was persuaded to file a complaint and Kar was handed over to the cops. Booked for fraud, he is now in judicial custody. His courtroom skills should come in handy now, since the lawyers in Dwarka have decided not to represent him. But Kar could almost count as an amateur compared to some other luminaries from his fraternity of fakes—and it's a sizeable one, numerous enough to make up a whole bar association of "Munnabhai LLBs", as Mannan Kumar Mishra, senior advocate and Bar Council of India chairman, calls them.

Indo-Americans should unite in face of hate crimes: US Sikh body



Gurinder Singh Khalsa
SikhsPAC Chairman

Washington
The US-based Sikhs Political Action Committee (SikhsPAC) chief has condemned the shooting incident that resulted in the death of an Indian engineer in Kansas, saying there is a need for Indo-Americans to unite. "Our first priority needs to be ensuring safety and security of every Indian and Sikh living in the US," Gurinder Singh Khalsa, founder and chairman of the SikhsPAC said. The organisation aims to raise awareness of Sikh culture, identities and values, promote diversity through interfaith dialogue and pave the way for the community's involvement in American politics. Khalsa announced to organise the community nationwide to work with the states and federal government to ensure that

Indians and people of Indian origin no longer become victim of hate crimes. "While the new immigration guidelines nominally continue the previous administration's emphasis on targeting criminals, there are significant changes... There is a lot of uncertainty about the rules right now," said the community leader from Indiana. Khalsa also plans to travel to Washington DC in the next few days to meet with members of the Congress and the Trump administration about clarification on the new guidelines. "The tragic death of Srinivas Kuchibhotla in a hate crime in Kansas is further proof that xenophobic rhetoric can and does have consequences... We all need to work together to ensure that this type of violence is never repeated," he said.



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Uber Acknowledges 'Greyball' Technology Which Allowed Drivers To Skirt Law-Enforcement Across The World



Uber has acknowledged the use of a secret software program to steer drivers away from trouble, including sting operations by local authorities to catch law-breakers.

In the latest in a streak of damaging news for the ridesharing giant, Uber came forward about its "Greyball" software yesterday after a New York Times report which said the program aimed to

deceive authorities in markets around the world.

According to an Uber statement, the tool was used in cities where it was not banned from operating, and the main intent was to protect drivers from disruption by competitors using the smartphone application to interfere instead of summon legitimate rides.

"This program denies ride

requests to fraudulent users who are violating our terms of service," an Uber spokesperson said in an email reply to an AFP inquiry.

"Whether that's people aiming to physically harm drivers, competitors looking to disrupt our operations, or opponents who collude with officials on secret 'stings' meant to entrap drivers."

Uber said the program was used in locations where drivers feared for their safety, and "rarely" to avoid law enforcement.

The New York Times report, which said Greyball was used in several countries, cited interviews with current and former employees whose names were cloaked.

The report said Greyball was part of a broader program created to reveal people trying to use Uber in "violation of terms of service"

and had the blessing of the company's legal team.

According to the report, the program raised ethical and potential concerns, and had been a closely guarded secret in Uber's toolbox as it expanded around the world, clashing with regulators and traditional taxi groups.

The "Greyball" disclosure comes as accusations of sexism, cut-throat management, and a toxic work environment have Uber trying to pull its image out of a skid as competition revs in the on-demand ride market.

Uber chief Travis Kalanick this week apologized, acknowledging that "I must fundamentally change as a leader and grow up," after a video showed him verbally abusing a driver for the service.

The incident which

circulated on social media was another hit for the image of the global ridesharing giant, which faces accusations of sexual harassment and a lawsuit contending it misappropriated Google's self-driving car technology.

In the message to employees later, Kalanick wrote "To say that I am ashamed is an extreme understatement."

Uber is one of the largest investor-backed start-ups with a valuation estimated at USD 68 billion, and has operations in dozens of countries and hundreds of cities, even as it battles regulators and an established taxi industry.

Kalanick also faced criticism for agreeing to be part of a business advisory panel for President Donald Trump, but then quit the panel amid a campaign by Trump opponents to delete the application.

White House Staffer Quits US President Donald Trump's Office Over Travel Ban

WASHINGTON

Hijab-wearing Muslim ex-White House staffer of Bangladeshi-origin has said she quit her job after US President Donald Trump announced his controversial travel ban, lasting just eight days in the new administration. Rumana Ahmed was hired in 2011 to work at the White House

she spent much of 2016 watching with "consternation" as Mr Trump "vilified our community". "Despite this - or because of it - I thought I should try to stay on the NSC staff during the Trump Administration, in order to give the new president and his aides a more nuanced view of Islam, and of America's



and eventually the National Security Council (NSC).

"My job there was to promote and protect the best of what my country stands for. I am a hijab-wearing Muslim woman - I was the only hijabi in the West Wing - and the Obama administration always made me feel welcome and included," she wrote in an article published in The Atlantic. Ms Ahmed said that like most of her fellow American-Muslims,

Muslim citizens. "I lasted eight days. When Trump issued a ban on travellers from seven Muslim-majority countries and all Syrian refugees, I knew I could no longer stay and work for an administration that saw me and people like me not as fellow citizens, but as a threat," she said. Ms Ahmed said the evening before she left her job at the White House, she notified Mr Trump's senior National Security

Council (NSC) communications adviser, Michael Anton, of her decision. "His initial surprise, asking whether I was leaving government entirely, was followed by silence - almost in caution, not asking why. I told him anyway," she wrote. "I told him I had to leave because it was an insult walking into this country's most historic building every day under an administration that is working against and vilifying everything I stand for as an American and as a Muslim," Ms Ahmed said.

She told Mr Anton that the administration was attacking the basic tenets of democracy. She said Mr Anton just looked at her and said nothing. Ms Ahmed, whose parents immigrated to the US from Bangladesh in 1978, said inspired by then president Barack Obama, she joined the White House in 2011, after graduating from the George Washington University.

"The days I spent in the Trump White House were strange, appalling and disturbing," she wrote. Ms Ahmed's personal account comes amid a spike in incidents of intimidation and assault targeting hijab-wearing women across the US following Mr Trump's electoral triumph.

US Powerball jackpot grows to \$403m, 10th largest ever



WASHINGTON

The jackpot in the US lottery Powerball grew to \$403 million before the drawing on Wednesday, making it the 10th largest in the game's history. The drawing is scheduled for 10:59 p.m. ET on Wednesday (0359 GMT on Thursday). The winner will get annual payments over 29 years, totaling \$403 million, or \$243.9 million in a lump sum payment, before taxes. The last time a winning ticket in the jackpot was sold was on Dec. 17. The odds of winning the jackpot is 1 in 292,201,338. Powerball's jackpot swelled to a record \$1.6 billion in January 2016, when

three winning tickets were sold in Florida, California, and Tennessee. The game and a second major US lottery, Mega Millions, have exceeded \$400 million only a few other times. Powerball tickets are sold in 44 states, as well as Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. Players can buy the \$2 tickets with their own numbers or have the numbers randomly generated by a computer. Half of Powerball sales goes to prizes, 40 percent to state governments for items such as education and 10 percent to retailers who sell the tickets and for other administrative costs.

President Trump's Island Mentality



Throughout history, American presidents have declared it their job to protect and advance the interests of the United States and its citizens. President Trump has shoehorned that whole-some, uncontroversial idea into a narrow-minded, exclusionary governing platform that's likely to alienate much of the world while hurting the very people whose cause he claims to uphold.

In his campaign, his Inaugural Address and, most recently, his speech to Congress, Mr. Trump has proudly embraced the isolationist "America First" rallying cry from the 1930s while rejecting the internationalism of his predecessors. He has disparaged NATO, an alliance that has helped keep the peace in Europe for more than half a century; cozied up to Russia and its latter-day czar, Vladimir Putin; disdained global solutions to global problems like climate change and the surge of refugees from Syria, Iraq and elsewhere; and declared his intention to upend the international trading system created by the United States and its allies. Nowhere is his cramped vision more evident than in his scapegoating of unauthorized immigrants as criminals and his rejection of the American ideal of welcoming the foreign-born.

A GO-IT-ALONE APPROACH

Of late, Mr. Trump has seemed to back off from some of his views, as in his assertion on Tuesday evening that "we strongly

support NATO." But it is unclear what that will mean in practice, especially since Defense Secretary Jim Mattis repeated Mr. Trump's threat to "moderate" America's commitments to NATO if the allies don't pony up more for defense.

In one breath Mr. Trump tells Congress, "Our allies will find that America is once again ready to lead"; minutes later, he says: "My job is not to represent the world. My job is to represent the United States of America." No president can claim to represent the world; yet since World War II, all have accepted, even celebrated, America's unique power and ability to lead in promoting democracy, peace and free markets. The word "democracy" did not appear in Mr. Trump's speech, something that should have been central to this address. And he said little about working with allies on common interests.

E C O N O M I C NATIONALISM

Of all the manifestations of Mr. Trump's nationalism, the one most obviously calculated to appeal to the disaffected workers in his political base are his repeated claims that China, Mexico and other countries are stealing American jobs and wealth, and that the only way to stop this is for the United States to withdraw from bad trade deals and impose border taxes on imports. His protectionist pronouncements are, like much of what he says, reinforced with inaccuracies and exaggerations, as in his

assertion that America's trade deficit (\$502 billion in 2016, not \$800 billion as he said) is the reason tens of thousands of factories have been shut.

Demonizing imports is just plain wrong. Phones sold in the United States count as imports from China, but they are only assembled there from components produced all over the world, including in

America. And California-based Apple pockets most of the profit from those sales. More than one-tenth of the total trade deficit is accounted for by petroleum products, essential commodities. The country also imports components that go into products made in the United States, like Boeing airplanes and Ford cars. And trade benefits American consumers through lower prices and more choices.

By raising tariffs and canceling trade agreements, the Trump administration will needlessly hurt American businesses and workers while antagonizing friendly countries. A far better approach would be to insist on stronger labor and currency standards in trade agreements while helping American workers and industry by investing in education and infrastructure.

ANTI-IMMIGRATION HYSTERIA

Mr. Trump's instinct to wall off the world exacts its greatest human toll on America's immigrants. The unfortunate human consequences of Mr. Trump's punitive policies tend to obscure the economic consequences of keeping people out and deporting those already here, but these effects are real. Mr. Trump selectively cited a 2016 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report when he told Congress that immigrants cost taxpayers "billions of dollars a year." The report actually says that over the long run immigrants and their descendants contribute more in taxes than they use in government benefits. It also finds that immigrants have a "very small" impact on the wages of native workers, and adds,

"Immigration is integral to the nation's economic growth." That is because immigrants on the whole tend to be younger than the native-born population, so they are more likely to be working and paying taxes, and less likely to be collecting benefits. Many undocumented immigrants and workers on temporary visas pay into Social Security and Medicare without ever benefiting from those programs. Skilled foreigners in particular help the economy and native-born workers by starting businesses and creating new technologies — about half of 87 start-ups valued at more than \$1 billion had one or more immigrant founders, according to a 2016 study. It would be beyond foolish for America to withdraw into a shell. The country is not diminished, but strengthened, when it engages with the world.

War, state and martyrdom

Amid the ongoing commotion triggered by arrogant and puritanical claims about nationalism and patriotism, the words of Gurmehar Kaur, a Delhi University student whose online video of May 2016 has suddenly become a needless controversy, come across as profoundly wise and humane. Ms. Kaur's moving and thoughtful statement — "Pakistan did not kill my dad, war killed him... I fight for peace between India and Pakistan. Because if there was no war between us, my father would still be here" — has, however, not gone down well with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders and certain celebrities, among others.

Kiren Rijju, Union Minister of State for Home, suggested that someone was "polluting this young girl's mind", which was soon supported by his party colleague and MP Pratap Simha with an equally disgraceful tweet. Statements by these two leaders and their supporters have displayed an appalling lack of nuance about the larger import and context of what Ms. Kaur was referring to when she said that it was war that killed her father. Such a 'nationalist' backlash against thoughtful comments should make us wonder if indeed war is profitable to some sections of society, and hence preferable to peace.

In a more fundamental sense, the prevailing understating of the nation state as "father", "mother", etc. has dehistoricised and reified the true nature and context of the modern state, thereby

condoning the many atrocities committed by states around the world. There is therefore a need to 'de-anthropomorphise' the nation state to gain insights into its historically appropriate character.

Role of violence

Modern states not only monopolise and organise violence, but more importantly, violence has played a central role in their historical evolution. War-making and the use of force are intrinsic to the modern state, and this deep-seated tendency of the state should be constantly mediated by popular resistance, reasoned debates and peace-building, lest those tendencies run amok. Nation states are not sentient beings to be revered, but entities often controlled by powerful interest groups, whose power and control should be constantly checked and interrogated. Moreover, war is not always, as many of us believe, an undesirable evil thrust upon us by 'immoral' outsiders, but often something that our politicians and governments create through their actions and engage in for their own selfish political and other interests. As historian Charles Tilly reminds us, "Governments themselves commonly simulate, stimulate, or even fabricate threats of external war." The argument here is not that we should do away with states altogether or that armed forces should be disbanded. But rather

that the state's so-called national security functions cannot be allowed to continue unquestionably, without critical public scrutiny. Notwithstanding Mr. Rijju's advice that "we should stop this habit of raising doubt, questioning the authorities and the police," we must make it a habit to question the security claims and functions of our state: for our own good.

States routinely use wars, or as Ms. Kaur puts it, "state-sponsored hatred", for domestic political ends. Sometimes as diversionary war tactic — to divert our attention from domestic turmoil such as economic slowdown or rising unemployment — and sometimes for political ends like how the BJP cleverly used the 'surgical strikes' for electoral purposes, while advising others not to do so. The sharp spike in ceasefire violations in the Jammu sector during the Jammu and Kashmir election in 2014 is yet another example. As a matter of fact, ceasefire violations, terror attacks and military casualties have considerably increased ever since the BJP government has come to power: would it not be logical then to argue that the BJP's political inability to make peace in Kashmir and negotiate the Kashmir dispute with Pakistan has become costly for the country? World over today, the link between conflict and huge costs to the economy is well understood.

The road to China is through Kabul



Afghanistan has again emerged as a platform providing new possibilities on the India-China cooperation front. After the restructured 'Strategic dialogue' between India and China last week, Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar said: "On Afghanistan, they certainly seem to suggest to us that their approach and policies are in tandem with us, not on different page." The strategic dialogue, which was divided into five sub-groups of which Afghanistan was one, focussed significantly on the country. China expressed admiration for India's developmental work in Afghanistan amidst a broader understanding that New Delhi and Beijing need to strengthen the government in Kabul.

This development comes against a backdrop of the growing threat of the Islamic State (IS) to China. The IS released a video this week of Chinese Uighur Muslims vowing to return home and "shed blood like rivers" even as the Chinese military displayed its military might as a show of force in Xinjiang. A rattled China is calling for greater global cooperation against the IS, which is also a reason why China has joined ranks with Russia in a bid to engage the Taliban in Afghanistan.

China has for years blamed exiled Uighur "separatists" for violence in Xinjiang and has warned of the militants' potential to link up with global jihadist groups. It is worried about the spillover effect of continuing instability in Afghanistan. The impact of Afghanistan's destabilisation will be felt not only in Kashmir but also in Xinjiang where the East Turkistan Islamic Movement is active. Moreover, China's mega investment plans in Pakistan are predicated on a measure of regional stability.

With the Donald Trump administration yet to clarify its position on Afghanistan, and with it looking unlikely to add more American troops to the depleting reserves of Western forces in the country, it is not surprising that China is keen to engage India, the one country that has built a reservoir of goodwill in Afghanistan and has demonstrated some ability to deliver concrete results on the ground. But there remain some fundamental divergences in Sino-Indian positions on Afghanistan and broader counterterrorism postures. Just last December, Mr. Jaishankar said that India and China were not able to "cooperate as effectively" as they should in countering terrorism. His statement had come in the wake of China putting on hold the inclusion of JeM chief Masood Azhar's name in the United Nation's list of global terrorists.

Even after last week's strategic dialogue, the Foreign Secretary was careful to underline the differences. On the Taliban, for example, he suggested that "their [China's] characterisation was that there were elements of Taliban which are very extreme. In their view there were also elements of Taliban that can work with international community and Afghan government."

For long, India sought to include Afghanistan in its discussions with China on counterterrorism. The Sino-India counter-terrorism dialogue was initially viewed as a promising bilateral initiative for dealing with terrorism. But nothing of consequence emerged from these dialogues. For India, the main source of terrorism is Pakistan where the state machinery continues to view terrorism as a legitimate tool of national policy. For China, Pakistan is an important asset in its South Asia policy and an all-weather friend. As a consequence, where New Delhi had, somewhat audaciously, expected to make common cause with Beijing vis-a-vis Islamabad and Rawalpindi, there was only disappointment at the outcome of these dialogues.

But as concerns started rising in the region about the consequences of the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2014, China reached out to India. This too couldn't go far as China continued to emphasise that its relationship with Pakistan was far more important than a regional approach on terrorism with India. In this context, New Delhi should not expect Beijing to change its Afghanistan policy significantly to suit Indian interests. The road to stability in Kabul lies through Rawalpindi, and China has few incentives to challenge the Pakistani security establishment's traditional adversarial mindset vis-à-vis India that continues to look at Afghanistan for some chimerical 'strategic depth'. But the fact that China is interested in working with India on Afghanistan suggests that new possibilities on regional cooperation are emerging, which India should not hesitate to explore. Its success, of course, remains predicated on how committed China is in tackling extremism as opposed to hemming in India in South Asia.

Moscow's shadow

Less than three weeks after the resignation of Michael Flynn, U.S. President Donald Trump's National Security Adviser, over failure to disclose contact with Russian officials, Attorney General Jeff Sessions is now staring down the barrel of similar allegations, intensifying a storm that the White House was already struggling to cope with. This week Mr. Sessions faced three distinct, serious questions regarding his conduct in this context. First, did he have an undisclosed meeting with the Russian Ambassador to the U.S., Sergey Kislyak, in September? Second, if he did make such contact with Russian officials, was there not a conflict of interest in the Attorney General overseeing an investigation into Russia's alleged attempts to influence the November 8 presidential elections? Third, did he then perjure himself during his confirmation hearing in the Senate when he appeared to fudge a direct question about contact with Russian officials? The first and second questions have already been answered — investigations by the Washington Post revealed that Mr. Sessions and two senior aides met with Mr. Kislyak in his Senate office on September 8, about a month before the Obama administration accused the Russian government of interfering with the U.S. election process and three months before it ejected 35 Russians diplomats from their U.S. posts and slapped sanctions on Moscow.

Under immense pressure from Democrats on Capitol Hill, on Thursday Mr. Sessions recused himself from the inquiry into alleged Russian meddling in the election. They must now wait for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Justice, which Mr. Sessions heads, to get details on the nature of contact that Russian officials had with Mr. Sessions, Mr. Flynn, and Mr. Trump's son-in-law, White House adviser Jared Kushner. The law enforcement machinery must then determine whether U.S. national security was in any way compromised by those interactions. The third question regarding whether Mr. Sessions lied under oath to Congress about his meetings, a potential felony under U.S. law, may make his continuance in office uncertain. The combined weight of the conversations that he and other Trump team members had with those officials makes Moscow's fingerprint on American politics hard to ignore. This saga leaves a heavy question hanging over the sovereignty of U.S. foreign policy in the days ahead. President Trump, who's come to office on an "America First" battle cry, will struggle yet more to counter the allegations of Kremlin's hand covertly influencing policy. The denouement matters immensely to the outcomes in Syria, the future of the embattled European Union, and across an increasingly multipolar world.



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Uber image battered by company culture skids

SAN FRANCISCO

Accusations of sexism, cut-throat management, and a toxic work environment have Uber trying to pull its image out of a skid as competition revs in the on-demand ride market.

"Experienced managers know how to prevent these kinds of problems, or make it look like there isn't a problem at all," analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group said while discussing Uber's travails. "It is showcasing a severe lack of skill at the top."

Uber hired former attorney general Eric Holder to review workplace conditions after an ex-employee alleged sexual harassment and sexism at the firm. Susan Fowler, an engineer who worked at Uber until the end of last year, said in a blog post that her manager made sexual advances shortly after she joined the company. She said she complained to upper managers and the human resources department, but was told that it was the man's "first offense" and that they wouldn't feel comfortable punishing a "high performer." Fowler told of later meeting other women engineers at the company who said they had experienced similar harassment, including inappropriate behavior from the same manager she had reported. Men engineers were gifted leather jackets, while women were left out, she noted.

"In the background, there was a game-of-thrones political war raging within the ranks of upper management in the infrastructure engineering organization," Fowler said, comparing the scene to a hit fantasy television drama in which rival nobles viciously vie for power. "It seemed like every manager was fighting their peers and attempting to undermine their direct supervisor so that they could have their direct supervisor's job." A New York Times report on Friday depicted a "Hobbesian environment" at Uber in which workers were pitted against one another and misbehavior by top performers was overlooked.

The story included tales of a director shouting a homophobic slur in a meeting; a manager threatening to beat an underperforming worker with a baseball bat, and women employees groped at a Las Vegas retreat where cocaine was used in bathrooms during private parties. Uber CEO Travis Kalanick said that Holder and another attorney will look into issues raised by Fowler, "as well as diversity and inclusion at Uber more broadly."

Holder was former US president Barack Obama's attorney general between 2009 and 2015. The lawyers were to be aided by journalist Arianna Huffington, who

is a member of the Uber board.

The controversy threatened to revive a #DeleteUber campaign triggered by Kalanick's short-lived plan to be part of a business advisory group for US President Donald Trump.

Kalanick quit the group under pressure from a growing movement to stop using the ride-sharing service because of his connection to the new administration, and by extension an anti-immigrant agenda.

As the campaign picked up speed, rival Lyft's popularity accelerated. "Now, they are facing yet another avoidable backlash where people are disconnecting themselves from the (Uber) app," analyst Enderle said. "Lyft is likely the biggest beneficiary, but at the same time, Google is coming to market with its Waze carpool service - this is the wrong time for Uber to have this." Meanwhile, the race to develop self-driving vehicles took a turn on Thursday when Google's parent company Alphabet filed a lawsuit against Uber, accusing it of using stolen technology. Alphabet contends that a manager at its autonomous car subsidiary Waymo took technical data with him when he left to launch a competing venture that went on to become Otto, Uber's self-



driving vehicle unit, in a reported \$680 million deal. Waymo is calling for a trial to stop Otto and Uber from using technology taken in a "calculated theft." Waymo also wants unspecified damages in what it described in court documents as "an action for trade secret misappropriation, patent infringement and unfair competition." San Francisco-based Uber acquired commercial transport-focused tech startup Otto last year as it pressed ahead with a pursuit of self-driving technology. "We take the allegations made against Otto and Uber employees seriously and we will review this matter carefully," an Uber spokeswoman said. In the eyes

of consumers, Uber's controversies pack together into "a snowball of trouble rolling down the hill getting bigger and bigger," said brand management specialists Bruce Turkel.

Once people switch to a new ride-hailing app, they are likely to stick with it and forget about using Uber, according to analysts. "Uber can do all the damage control they want, it's not going to change who they are at their very core," Turkel said.

"And, unfortunately, when you watch Travis Kalanick when he is on TV or whatever, he has that frat boy kind of attitude anyway. So, when you hear about sexual harassment, it actually fits."

Alphabet accuses Uber of stealing self-driving car technology



SAN FRANCISCO

The race to develop self-driving vehicles took a new turn on Thursday when Google's parent company Alphabet filed a lawsuit against Uber, accusing it of stealing technology.

Alphabet contends that a manager at its autonomous car subsidiary Waymo took technical data with him when he left to launch a competing venture that went on to become Otto, Uber's self-driving vehicle unit, in a reported \$680 million deal. "Otto and Uber have taken

Waymo's intellectual property so that they could avoid incurring the risk, time and expense of independently developing their own technology," Waymo said in a San Francisco federal court filing. Waymo is calling for a trial to stop Otto and Uber from using what it says is patented technology. Waymo also wants unspecified damages in what it described in court documents as "an action for trade secret misappropriation, patent infringement, and unfair competition."

US Girl Scouts mark 100 years of their iconic cookies

CHICAGO

On a sunny Sunday afternoon, Molly Sheridan is hard at work in front of a Starbucks coffee shop in Chicago. The 13-year-old is playing her ukulele and, along with her five-year-old sister Edie, singing about Girl Scout cookies - boxes of which she has arranged for sale on a table. "Singing with my ukulele, I think that brings in people," Molly says. It is Girl Scout cookie season, a uniquely American tradition marking its 100th year. This time of year is eagerly anticipated by the millions of Americans who crave the sweets that can only be purchased a few weeks each year, and can't be found in stores. Some fans take home a pile of boxes and squirrel them away in the freezer to enjoy all year until cookie season rolls around again. The cookies aren't made by the scouts, but rather are marketed and sold by members of the service organization between January and April - the local

weather determines the timing - to raise money for their activities. The tradition has been interrupted only during World War II, when a shortage of ingredients led the scouts to sell calendars. This weekend, the Girl Scouts will celebrate self-proclaimed National Girl Scout Cookie Weekend, and scouts will be out in force selling the 12

moments later by Anthony Stratton, 27, who stopped by to pick up several boxes. His favorite: the Samoas - a rich treat covered with caramel and toasted coconut. "It just has a yearly draw to it," Stratton said, "Knowing that the cookies come around once a year, it's pretty special then." Jean Niederman, 56, stopped by to purchase Thin



varieties of cookies. "Most people know their favorites," Molly said, proven right just

Mints, chocolate and mint cookies that are among the most popular.

'It's like tripping' says French artist entombed in rock

PARIS

An artist entombed inside a 12-tonne rock for nearly three days has described the experience as like "tripping", insisting he would stick it out for a week. Speaking to AFP through a crack in the limestone boulder late Friday,



Abraham Poincheval said he had been buoyed by how his performance has "got into people's heads". The artist made headlines worldwide when the two halves of the rock closed around him on Wednesday at a Paris art museum. Poincheval, 44, had carved out a hole inside the rock in his own image, just big enough for him to sit up in, with a niche to hold supplies of water, soup and dried meat.

"People seem to be very touched. They come and talk into the crack, read poetry to me, or tell me about their nightmares or their dreams," he said.

"They are not so much talking to me, I think, as to the stone. I am very happy that the stone has got into their heads." If he survives the ordeal, the performance artist who has previously spent a fortnight sewn-up inside a stuffed bear, will attempt to become a human hen and hatch a dozen eggs by sitting on them for weeks on end. Lack of sleep rather than

claustrophobia is his biggest worry inside the darkness of the rock, he confessed. Without a watch - and with only an emergency phone line - he has no way to tell the time.

"I can sleep but it is very hard. It is very strange, I don't know

whether I am sleeping well or not." Even though he can only move his feet and hands a few inches, "I do not feel oppressed (by the rock), I feel completely at ease, in real connection with it." "Right now, it's sweet. Like when you are starting to climb a mountain. But I know it will get difficult," said Poincheval, who is having store his own excrement around him. "For now, it is OK," he said, adding there had been "no accidents" peeing into his empty water bottles. "We are already locked into our own bodies," the artist told AFP minutes before climbing inside the rock at the Palais de Tokyo to become what he called the boulder's "beating heart". However, he admitted that emotionally, his time inside has been something of a rollercoaster. "It's very complex. You pass from one feeling to another. Like you are being carried away on a raft," he said. "It's like tripping."

To keep a hold on himself, the man dubbed France's most

extreme artist has been keeping a diary, which he will later publish. Poincheval is certainly no stranger to bizarre and hair-raising performances.

He ate worms and beetles while living inside the bear, was buried under a rock for eight days and navigated France's Rhone river inside a giant plastic corked bottle. He has crossed the Alps in a barrel, and last year spent a week on top of a 20-metre (65-foot) pole outside a Paris train station. The artist also spent 20 days underground as a human mole and lived like a Stone Age man with his former sidekick Laurent Tixador on a small rocky island in the Mediterranean off the southern city of Marseille. The pair also walled themselves into a cave for a night with hundreds of mosquitos and crossed France in a straight line on foot. Poincheval's big dream, however, remains to "walk on the clouds. I have been working on it for five years, but it is not quite there yet," he added. Unorthodox ideas seem to run in the family. His inventor father Christian, who sports a bowler hat and a white Santa Claus beard, is best known for coming up with pills that make farts smell of roses, violets and even chocolate.

The artist said his spirit of adventure comes from a child-like love of exploration.

Comics, music shows in KSA draw rebuke from



RIYADH

A comic show and a recent pop concert have drawn rebuke from powerful religious figures and social media users in Saudi Arabia this week, highlighting the sensitivity of cultural reforms underway in the conservative kingdom.

Thousands of Saudis - including women - decked out in costumes and face paint attended the country's first-ever Comic Con in Jeddah on Sunday.

The event was held by the state-run General Entertainment Authority (GEA), which has bucked some of the Islamic kingdom's strict social codes to host a series of festivals, comedy shows and concerts this year.

It came weeks after Saudi Arabia saw its first major public concert in over a decade, also

in Jeddah. Authorities announced this week that the headline act, Saudi superstar Mohammed Abdo, would perform in the more conservative capital Riyadh in March.

"We were astonished by the hideous act of the Entertainment Authority, by these events held in Jeddah that are not in line with good behavior or our great religion," Hussein Al-Sheikh, the imam of the Prophet's Mosque, posted on Twitter.

"It is a duty upon officials to consider God in these actions," he said, calling on Saudi citizens to boycott events like it.

Sheikh Adel al-Kalbani, the former imam of Mecca's Grand Mosque, said the state body set up to promote the kingdom's entertainment drive "violates human nature." "Humans are meant to seek refuge in God in times of difficulty," he wrote.

Four Indonesians wealthier than poorest 100

JAKARTA

The four richest Indonesians are wealthier than the poorest 100 million people in the country, a study has found, highlighting how huge numbers have been left behind as the economy booms. Oxfam said that President Joko Widodo had failed to fulfil pledges to fight inequality and called on the government to urgently increase spending on public services and make corporations and the wealthy pay more tax. Indonesia has enjoyed an economic boom that has reduced the number of people living in extreme poverty but the gap between rich and poor has risen faster than in any other Southeast Asian country in the past 20 years, the Oxfam study said. "The benefits of growth have not been shared equally, and millions have been



left behind," said the research, which was released earlier this week. "The widening of the gap between the rich and the rest is a serious threat to Indonesia's future prosperity. If inequality is not tackled, then

reducing poverty will be much more difficult, and social instability could increase." In 2016, the collective wealth of the four richest Indonesians, all men, was \$25 billion, Oxfam said.

Guantanamo Bay prison healthy for national security: White



Washington

US President Donald Trump believes that the Guantanamo Bay prison is serving a healthy purpose towards the national security, the White House has said, indicating that its closure is unlikely. "I think he (Trump) has made very clear though, that he believes that

Guantanamo Bay does serve a very, very healthy purpose in our national security and making sure that we don't bring terrorists to our seas," White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer told reporters yesterday. Asked whether the terror suspects picked from overseas would be shifted to Guantanamo Bay, he said, "I'm not gonna get into what we may or may not do in the future." "As the president has said very clearly before, we don't telegraph what we're gonna do," he added.

Wikipedia bots more like humans than expected: study

London

'Benevolent bots' or software robots designed to improve articles on Wikipedia sometimes have online 'fights' over content that can continue for years, say scientists who warn that artificial intelligence systems may behave more like humans than expected.

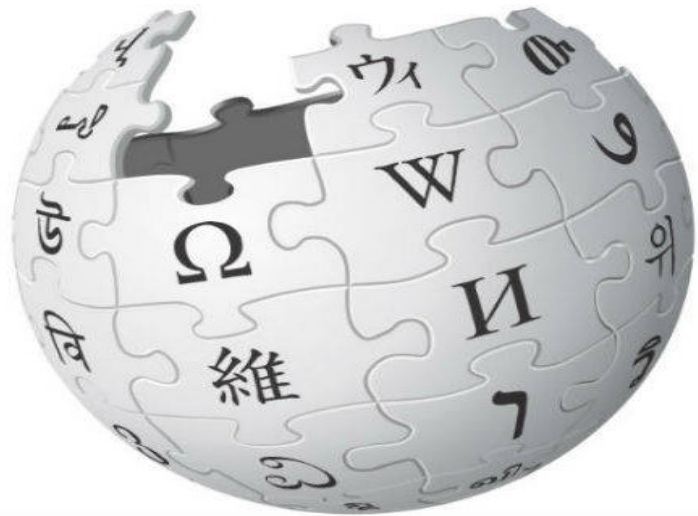
Editing bots on Wikipedia undo vandalism, enforce bans, check spelling, create links and import content automatically, whereas

They found that bots interacted with one another, whether or not this was by design, and it led to unpredictable consequences. Researchers said that bots are more like humans than you might expect. Bots appear to behave differently in culturally distinct online environments. The findings are a warning to those using artificial intelligence for building autonomous vehicles, cyber security systems or for managing social media.

capacity for emotions, bot to bot interactions are unpredictable and act in distinctive ways. Researchers found that German editions of Wikipedia had fewest conflicts between bots, with each undoing another's edits 24 times, on average, over ten years. This shows relative efficiency, when compared with bots on the Portuguese Wikipedia edition, which undid another bot's edits 185 times, on average, over ten years, researchers said.

Bots on English Wikipedia undid another bot's work 105 times, on average, over ten years, three times the rate of human reverts, they said. The findings show that even simple autonomous algorithms can produce complex interactions that result in unintended consequences – 'sterile fights' that may continue for years, or reach deadlock in some cases.

While bots constitute a tiny proportion (0.1 per cent) of Wikipedia editors, they stand behind a significant proportion of all edits. Although such conflicts represent a small proportion of bots' overall editorial activity, the findings are significant in highlighting their unpredictability and complexity. "We find that bots behave differently in different cultural environments and their conflicts are also very different to the ones between human editors," said Milena Tsvetkova, from the Oxford Internet Institute. "This has implications not only for how we design artificial agents but also for how we study them. We need more research into the sociology of bots," said Tsvetkova.



other bots (which are non-editing) can mine data, identify data or identify copyright infringements. Researchers from the University of Oxford and the Alan Turing Institute in the UK analysed how much they disrupted Wikipedia, observing how they interacted on 13 different language editions over ten years (from 2001 to 2010).

We may have to devote more attention to bots' diverse social life and their different cultures, researchers said. The research found that although the online world has become an ecosystem of bots, our knowledge of how they interact with each other is still rather poor. Although bots are automatons that do not have the

Archaeologists hunt for long-lost tomb of Scottish king

EDINBURGH

The tomb of a medieval king whose murder changed the course of Scottish history in a real-life "Game of Thrones" could be unearthed in a new hi-tech project launched Saturday.

Archaeologists and virtual reality artists want to digitally recreate the court of King James I of Scotland in Perth, around 40 miles (64 kilometres) from Edinburgh, and try to find the king's tomb buried beneath the modern-day city.

They are also looking for the remains of his queen, Joan Beaufort, and of Margaret Tudor, sister of Henry VIII of England and wife of James IV of Scotland, who was also buried there a century later.

The team has been inspired by the discovery of King Richard III of England beneath a car park in Leicester. "It's like 'Game of

Thrones' and 'Outlander' all rolled into one - except this story is real," said Paul Wilson, who is leading the digital visualisation project at Glasgow School of Art (GSA). James I was assassinated on February 21, 1437, by supporters of a rival claimant to the throne, an act which historians say brought an end to his ambition to make Perth the capital of Scotland. "That day changed Scotland forever," Wilson said. The king's mausoleum lay at the heart of a Carthusian priory called the Charterhouse, which was modelled on the Grande Chartreuse in the French Alps.

The team is planning archaeological digs over the next two years to map out the Charterhouse boundaries and recover artefacts, which will then be used to create a virtual reality tour.

Boxing icon Muhammad Ali's son detained at US airport, asked 'Are you Muslim?'

Washington

A son of boxing legend Muhammad Ali was held for questioning for two hours at a Florida airport on his return from Jamaica because of his Arabic-sounding name, US media reported. Muhammad Ali Jr, 44, who was born in Philadelphia and has a US passport, was travelling with his mother Khalilah Camacho-Ali, the late sports icon's second wife, friend and lawyer Chris Mancini told the Louisville Courier-Journal.

Mancini told the newspaper that both were held for questioning at the Fort Lauderdale International Airport on February 7 because of their Arabic-

US group asks Sikhs to be vigilant after Kansas shooting



New York

A Sikh civil rights group has urged members of the Sikh-American community to exercise caution and be extra vigilant in the wake of a possible hate crime in Kansas city that left an Indian engineer dead and another injured.

The Sikh Coalition said its prayers go out to the family of Srinivas Kuchibhotla, 32, who was killed when 51-year-old Olathe man Adam Purinton shot him at a bar in the city on Wednesday. Another Indian engineer Alok Madasani, 32, was injured in the incident and has now been discharged from hospital on Thursday. Purinton has been charged in Johnson County district court with two counts of attempted first-degree murder. Bond has been set at \$2 million.

The advocacy group urged "every Sikh-American to exercise extra vigilance and caution during this period of heightened vulnerability". It urged members of the community to call law

enforcement immediately if they have been a victim of hate violence or received threats of violence.

Kuchibhotla worked in aviation systems for Olathe-based Garmin Ltd. Madasani was his co-worker at Garmin. "It was a tragic and senseless act of violence," Olathe police chief Steven Menke said in The Kansas City Star. Another individual Ian Grillot, 24, was reportedly shot while attempting to stop Purinton. Grillot said he was happy to see Madasani is recovering.

Following the shooting, Olathe residents went to the bar where the incident took place to lay flowers and offer condolences to staff, patrons and victims' families. "You just can't help but your heart goes out to them, and it's such a sad story for the community but I just wanted to support and of course honour the lives and everybody involved," nearby business owner Amber McCracken said in a report in KSHB Kansas City.

sounding names.

Camacho-Ali however was released after she showed US Customs agents a photo of herself with her ex-husband.

Ali Jr had no such photo, and according to Mancini, was held



for nearly two hours and repeatedly asked "Where did you get your name from?" and "Are you Muslim?"

When he said that he - like his

father - was a Muslim, the agents asked more probing questions. "To the Ali family, it's crystal clear that this is directly linked to Mr. Trump's efforts to ban Muslims from the United States," Mancini told the Courier-Journal, a reference to President Donald Trump's late January executive order imposing a 90-day entry ban for citizens of seven Muslim majority countries. The travel ban has since been halted by a US federal court. Mancini said that he and the Ali family are trying to find out how many other people were stopped for similar questioning, and are considering a federal lawsuit.

'US belongs to all nations': Ex-Iran president writes a letter to Donald Trump

New York

Iran's former hardline president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sent a letter Sunday to President Donald Trump, striking a somewhat conciliatory tone while applauding immigration to America and saying it shows "the contemporary US belongs to all nations". It isn't the first

Ahmadinejad decried US "dominance" over the United Nations, as well as American meddling in the world that has brought "insecurity, war, division, killing and (the) displacement of nations". He also acknowledged the some 1 million people of Iranian descent living in America, saying that US policies

to the Islamic Republic building atomic weapons. Iran has long maintained its program was for peaceful purposes. Iran under current President Hassan Rouhani struck a nuclear deal with world powers, including the Obama administration, to limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of some sanctions. Trump campaigned promising to renegotiate the deal, without offering specifics. Ahmadinejad gave the letter to the Swiss Embassy in Tehran, which represents US interests in Iran. The embassy declined to comment Sunday while American officials could not be immediately reached. The letter comes ahead of Iran's presidential election, in which Rouhani is widely expected to seek a second four-year term. While allies of Ahmadinejad are expected to run, he himself won't after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned him in September his candidacy would bring about a "polarized situation" that would be "harmful for the county." Ahmadinejad's popularity in Iran remains in question. During his tenure, he personally questioned the scale of the Holocaust and predicted the demise of Israel.



dispatch sent by Ahmadinejad, who has counted US Presidents George W Bush and Barack Obama among his pen pals. But this letter, weighing in at over 3,500 words, comes as criticism of Trump over his travel ban affecting seven Muslim-majority countries including Iran mounts in Tehran. It also may serve to burnish Ahmadinejad's image domestically after the nation's Supreme Leader warned him not to run in Iran's upcoming May presidential election. In the letter, published by Iranian media outlets, Ahmadinejad noted Trump won the election while he "truthfully described the US political system and electoral structure as corrupt".

should "value respect toward the diversity of nations and races." "In other words, the contemporary US belongs to all nations, including the natives of the land," he wrote. "No one may consider themselves the owner and view others as guests or immigrants." A judge later blocked Trump's travel ban, and an appeals court refused to reinstate it. Trump has promised to issue a revised order soon, saying it's necessary to keep America safe. Entirely missing from the letter was any reference to Iran's nuclear program. Under Ahmadinejad's presidency, Iran found itself heavily sanctioned over the program as Western governments feared it could lead

Soldiers catch man trying to cross Indo-Pak border to meet 'Facebook love'



Chandigarh

A 30-year-old city resident was nabbed on Sunday by BSF from near the Indo-Pak border at Ferozpur while trying to sneak out of the country to meet his "Facebook girl friend" at Lahore. Sikandar Khan, a resident of Sector 49 in Chandigarh, was caught while "moving under suspicious circumstances" near Lakho Ke Behram border in Ferozpur district, police said.

"A patrolling team of Border Security Force (BSF) caught Sikandar Khan who wanted to go to Pakistan to meet a woman whom he loved," said Ferozpur DSP Balwinder Singh. DSP said Sikandar came into contact with the woman on the social networking site over two years ago and claimed that both of them were in love. Sikandar, who works at a marriage bureau in Chandigarh, was not carrying his passport, DSP said.

Daily prayers to determine salary of court employees in PoK



Islamabad

The court employees in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) will have to offer daily prayers punctually - both in and outside the court - as their annual raises would now hinge on their offering prayers regularly and on the prescribed times, a top Judge has said.

Ibrahim Zia, who took oath as the 12th chief justice of the PoK Supreme Court yesterday, has directed the court employees to ensure punctuality in the court and in their prayer timings, the Express Tribune reported.

"The annual salary hikes of court employees would now hinge on their offering prayers regularly and on the prescribed times," he said, while declaring that offering prayers was now mandatory for all employees of the court.

Zia said the move would ensure

that employees offer daily prayers regularly and he himself would be leading some prayers. "To make sure employees offer their prayers regularly, Justice Zia said they would be secretly checked by the court," the paper said.

However, it was not clear what mechanism he would use to check employees' punctuality of prayers outside the office.

Five times daily prayers is one of the pillars in the faith of Islam and an obligatory religious duty for Muslims.

The Chief Justice also directed court employees to work with dedication, honesty and regularity to ensure speedy justice to the public. After taking oath, Justice Zia administered oath to officers working in the Supreme Court, a first in the history of the apex court.

Life expectancy to break 90 barrier by 2030

PARIS

By 2030 life expectancy for South Korean women could top nine decades, an average lifespan long thought to be out of reach, researchers said Wednesday.

South Korea is not only the first country in the world where women may live past 90 on average, it is also the one on track to log the biggest jump in longevity, they reported in The Lancet medical journal.

Other developed countries are not far behind: the longevity of French and Japanese women are more likely than not to stretch past 88 years.

"As recently as the turn of the century, many researchers believed that life expectancy would never surpass 90 years," said lead author Majid Ezzati, a professor at Imperial College London. Nations boasting the greatest longevity among men by 2030 - 84 years in each case - will likely be South Korea, Australia and Switzerland, according to the study. Among

35 well-off countries examined, life expectancy was predicted to increase across the board over the next 15 years. While a marker of progress, ageing populations also pose huge challenges to health care systems and social services, and may require pushing back the age at which people stop working, the study warned. "It is important that policies to

gains in economic status, along with improved child nutrition and broad access to health care and modern medical technology, the study noted. The East Asian nation of 50 million, along with its neighbour Japan, has also maintained significantly lower rates of obesity, and of smoking among women.

In the United States, by contrast, life expectancy at birth is currently below most other high-income countries, and is poised to fall even further behind.

"The poor recent and projected US performance is at least partly due to high and inequitable mortality from chronic



support the growing older population are in place," Ezzati said.

"The social implications of this change will also likely require changes to pensions and retirement." The South Korean success story is built on broad

diseases and violence, and insufficient healthcare," the study concluded. Among the countries canvassed, the United States has the highest child and maternal mortality, homicide rate, and body-mass index, a standard measure of obesity.

Indian-origin MP among anti-Trump voices in UK Parliament

London
Indian-origin Labour MP Seema Malhotra was among a number of British MPs who spoke out

such validation. The government strongly believe that it is a perfectly legitimate decision to use the full impact of an



against US President Donald Trump's proposed state visit to the UK in Parliament.

The MP for Feltham and Heston said many of her constituents are very concerned about the visit planned for later this year during the three-hour-long debate in Westminster Hall yesterday.

"Does the Minister agree at least extending a state visit in this way and at this time could effectively be seen as a validation of the views and statements of President Trump? It has been seen in that way by many of my constituents, who feel very concerned about the message that it sends," she said, referring her question to UK Foreign Office minister Alan Duncan.

"I do not accept that the process of a State Visit will be seen as

invitation to maximise the diplomatic significance of a State Visit at the start of President Trump's term of office," Duncan said, presenting the UK government stance on the debate which followed a public petition opposing the tour attracting over 1.8 million signatures.

"President Obama and President George W Bush both visited the UK on a state visit during their first term in office, so it is entirely appropriate that President Trump, too, should be invited in his first term," he said. Among some of the harsh comments by British MPs against Trump's state visit, which is traditionally hosted by the Queen and involves considerable pomp and

pageantry, included describing him as "racist and sexist".

"To do so now [invite Trump], now that he is President, would only reinforce and condone his actions and his divisive, racist and sexist messages. We cannot support what he is doing by offering him legitimacy," said Naz Shah, a Pakistani-origin Labour party MP. Scottish National Party (SNP) MP Alex Salmond criticised British Prime Minister Theresa May's body language during the US visit when she had relayed Queen Elizabeth II's invitation to Trump for the State Visit. "As an example of fawning subservience, the prime minister holding hands [with Trump] would be difficult to match. To do it in the name of shared values was stomach churning. What exactly are the shared values that this house, this country would hope to have," the former Scottish first minister questioned. The MPs were speaking as hundreds of protesters gathered in Parliament Square to protest against the visit, chanting and waving placards reading "no to racism; no to Trump". The state visit, expected around August/September this year, has been at the centre of a string of protests and controversy, including House of Commons Speaker John Bercow's impartiality coming into question after saying that Trump should be barred from addressing Parliament during any such visit

Obamas just can't quit Broadway, ex-US prez goes to see 'The Price' with daughter Malia



New York
The Obamas just can't quit Broadway. Former US president Barack Obama and his daughter Malia Obama have caught a new revival of Arthur Miller's "The Price." They attended the play starring Danny DeVito, Mark Ruffalo, Tony Shalhoub and Jessica Hecht at the American Airlines Theatre on Friday. In "The Price," a police officer feels that life has passed him by while he took care of his now-dead father. He and his estranged brother must reunite to sell off dad's

possessions. The Obamas were big boosters of Broadway during his presidency, especially "Hamilton," "A Raisin in the Sun" and "Joe Turner's Come and Gone." Members of the Obama family also attended "Memphis," "Kinky Boots," "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark," "Sister Act," "The Trip to Bountiful," "Motown the Musical" and "The Addams Family." Hillary and Bill Clinton have also been attending Broadway shows since the election, seeing the musicals "In Transit" and "The Color Purple."

Man jailed for Facebook threat to Cambodian PM Hun Sen



Phnom Penh
A Cambodian court today sentenced a 27-year-old to two years in jail for Facebook posts that threatened strongman Prime Minister Hun Sen. Ven Sopheap, a resident of eastern Prey Veng province, admitted during his trial last week to posting threats against Hun Sen — the authoritarian premier who has ruled Cambodia for more than three decades.

He reportedly wrote "Hun Sen, today is the day of your death" and "Beheading Yuons (derogatory term for Vietnamese people) is the duty of all Khmer children" on his Facebook account, leading to his arrest in October. On Friday a Phnom Penh court handed the man two years in prison for issuing a death threat and inciting discrimination, according to judge Ly Sokheng.

Rights groups criticised the verdict as the latest smothering of free speech in Cambodia as Hun Sen clamps down on critics

ahead of a 2018 poll. "Flippant social media posts or throw away comments, without any real intention to follow through, should be handled with a common-sense approach and treated with leniency," Chak Sopheap, executive director of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, told AFP.

Prison sentences for social media posts have become increasingly common in Cambodia and around the region, with governments often leaning on defamation laws to muzzle dissent. The clampdown in Cambodia comes as 64-year-old Hun Sen brandishes his own social media arsenal in a bid to connect with young voters fed up with the corruption and rights abuses that have flourished under his tenure. The premier's political rivals have accused him of buying "likes" from foreign click farms to boost engagement on his active Facebook page — a charge Hun Sen vehemently denies.

IS forcing children, disabled into suicide cars: US general

Washington
Islamic State jihadists are forcing children and disabled people into explosives-laden trucks and making them drive at Iraqi security forces in Mosul, a general from the US-led coalition has said.

The barbaric tactic, coupled with other increasingly desperate battlefield measures, is a sign the IS group knows defeat is inevitable, officials say. The jihadists have used exploding trucks, known in military circles as VBIEDs — vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices — and pronounced "Vee-Bids," to devastating effect in numerous engagements during the Mosul offensive and elsewhere in Iraq. Speaking to AFP and other reporters in Baghdad this week, US Air Force Brigadier General Matt Isler said the IS group had

adopted coercive new techniques in its use of suicide car bombs because the jihadists appear to be running out of willing drivers.

"We saw people being led to a VBIED, being put in (it) and being chained in the VBIED," he

aren't able to walk... I don't know if they signed up for this service."

The coalition has often seen VBIEDs depart on missions, only for their drivers to veer off course and attempt to hide behind structures.



said. "We've seen children put in VBIEDs as drivers, people that

"We see a VBIED going to its attack, going off and hiding," Isler said.

How tough is it to be a 'first kid'? Ask Barron, Donald Trump's ten-year-old son



Washington

If it's tough being a kid, try being a "first kid" — the child of an American president. Just ask President Bill Clinton's daughter, Chelsea. Or President George W. Bush's twins, Jenna and Barbara. And now, President Donald Trump's youngest child, Barron, is finding out. Ten-year-old Barron was the target of a poorly received joke tweeted by a "Saturday Night Live" writer on January 20, as the new first family reveled in Inauguration Day events. Separately in Chicago, comedian Shannon Noll played the title character in "Barron Trump: Up Past Bedtime," which had a recent run at a theater in Hyde Park. Both instances have revived age-old questions about the sometimes less-than-kid-glove treatment of presidential kids. "I think the children are off-limits," said Lisa Caputo, who was White House press secretary when "Saturday Night Live" made fun of then-13-year-old Chelsea Clinton. "They didn't run for public office, they don't hold an official role."

SNL cast member Mike Meyers sent the Clintons a letter of apology after the incident. The teenage Chelsea Clinton also was mocked by talk radio host Rush Limbaugh, who called her a dog. Katie Rich, the SNL writer who tweeted about Barron, was suspended indefinitely. After deleting the tweet and deactivating her Twitter account, she reactivated the account, saying she wanted to "sincerely apologize" for the "insensitive" tweet and that she deeply regretted her actions. "It was inexcusable & I'm so sorry," Rich said. Fellow comedians have risen to her defense, but Noll told the Chicago Reader that she has been the subject of a social media backlash, including death threats, as well as homophobic, transphobic, anti-Semitic and racist comments directed at her. The theater has also been harassed. All presidents and first ladies seek a life outside the spotlight for minor children who live in the 132-room mansion, except when they themselves put their kids in the spotlight.

Days after the incident involving Rich, the White House appealed for respect for Barron's privacy. "It is a longstanding tradition that the children of presidents are afforded the opportunity to grow up outside of the political spotlight," the White House press office said in a brief statement. "The White House fully expects this tradition to continue." That same week, Trump told Sean Hannity of Fox News that it was "a disgrace" for NBC "to attack my 10-year-old son." Trump also suggested the dustup may have bothered Barron, who has only been seen publicly during big moments of the past year, such as the night Trump addressed the Republican National Convention and election night. He continues to live full-time in New York City with his mother, first lady Melania Trump. "It's not an easy thing for him. Believe me," Trump said of his son. In contrast, Trump's adult children, Don Jr., Eric, Ivanka and Tiffany, are sharing the limelight with their famous father. Don Jr. and Eric are running the family business, and Ivanka could end up joining the administration. All three Trump children sat in on meetings their father conducted before and after he took office. Doug Wead, who wrote a book about the children of presidents, said it's the "ultimate hurt" when the offspring become the vehicle for the ire that some grownups wish they could direct toward the president. He said kids become targets because they're seen as weak.

Japan's troubled 'space junk' mission fails

TOKYO

An experimental Japanese mission to clear 'space junk' or rubbish from the Earth's orbit has ended in failure, officials said Monday, in an embarrassment for Tokyo. Over 100 million pieces of garbage are thought to be whizzing around the planet, including cast-off equipment from old satellites and bits of rocket, which experts say could pose risks for future space exploration. Scientists at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) were trying to test an electrodynamic 'tether' - created with the help of a fishing net company - to slow down the orbiting rubbish and bring it into a lower orbit.

but only had a one-week window to carry out the mission before the vessel reentered the Earth's atmosphere before dawn on Monday. "We believe the tether did not get released", leading researcher Koichi Inoue told



The hope was that the clutter - built up after more than five decades of human space exploration - would eventually enter the Earth's atmosphere and burn up harmlessly before it had a chance to crash into the planet. The 700-metre (2,300-foot) long tether - made from thin wires of stainless steel and aluminium - was due to be extended out from a cargo ship launched in December carrying supplies for astronauts at the International Space Station. Problems arose quickly, however, and technicians tried for days to remedy the situation

reporters. "It is certainly disappointing that we ended the mission without completing one of the main objectives," he said. The disappointment is the latest failure to hit JAXA and comes just weeks after the agency had to abort a mission that sought to use a mini-rocket to send a satellite into orbit. The agency also abandoned a pricey ultra-high-tech satellite launched in February last year to search for X-rays emanating from black holes and galaxy clusters after losing contact with the spacecraft.

US embassy in Iraq reports threat against Baghdad hotels

Baghdad

The US embassy in Baghdad said on Monday it has limited the movement of its personnel after receiving "credible threats of possible attacks on hotels frequented by Westerners". "As a reminder, U.S. citizens should maintain a heightened sense of security awareness and take appropriate measures to enhance their personal security at all times when living and working in Iraq," an emergency security message for U.S. citizens on the embassy's website said. It did not give details on the nature of threat. U.S. authorities advise citizens to avoid travelling to Iraq citing the risk of being kidnapped by armed political groups or

criminal gangs and bombings by the group Islamic State. Three defence contractors kidnapped in January 2016 in Baghdad and released a month



later were the first Americans kidnapped in Iraq since U.S. troops pulled out in 2011. Iraq is one of seven majority-Muslim countries that are subject to U.S. President Donald Trump's temporary travel ban, which Baghdad has said is unfair.

China's first large homemade passenger jet to fly in 2017

Beijing

After years of delays, China's first large homemade passenger jetliner will take to the air for its maiden flight in the first half of this year, state media reported Monday. State-owned aircraft maker Commercial Aircraft Corp. of China Ltd., or Comac, based in Shanghai, has nearly completed work on the 175-passenger C919, the ruling Communist Party newspaper People's Daily reported. The C919 was originally due to fly in 2015, but has been beset by delays blamed on manufacturing problems. It is now scheduled to enter service in 2019, aimed at competing with the Airbus A320 and Boeing

737, along with the Russian Irkut MC-21. Airbus and Boeing say the market for new aircraft will be worth more than \$5 trillion over

immediately be reached. The C919 is part of China's efforts to develop a homegrown aviation industry in one of the world's biggest and fastest-growing air travel markets. China currently relies heavily on foreign-made aircraft. Last June, the ARJ21-700, China's first homemade regional jet, made its debut flight carrying 70 passengers. The jet is one of a series of initiatives launched by the party to transform China from the world's low-cost factory into a creator of profitable technology in aviation, clean energy and other fields. The ARJ21, also made by Comac, is a rival to aircraft made by Bombardier Inc. of Canada and Brazil's Embraer SA.



the next 20 years. Industry experts say China faces a tough slog capturing a significant share of that market, even with government support. Comac has 517 orders for the C919. Company officials couldn't

Iran biggest state sponsor of terrorism: US Defence Secretary



Tokyo

US Defence Secretary James Mattis on Saturday described Iran as the world's greater sponsor of terrorism, hours after the Trump administration announced fresh sanctions on the country following a recent missile test.

"As far as Iran goes, this is the single biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world," Mattis told reporters in Tokyo, before adding that he saw no need to increase troop numbers in the Middle East in response.

"I do not see any need to increase the number of forces we have in the Middle East at this time," Mattis said as he wrapped up his visits to Japan and South Korea, his first foreign trip as defence secretary. Michael T. Flynn, US President Donald Trump's national security adviser, said this week that the US was putting Iran "on notice"

because of its January 29 missile test and support for Houthi rebels in Yemen, whom the US has accused of threatening American vessels in the Red Sea and attacking a Saudi Navy patrol boat, the New York Times reported.

The Trump administration imposed economic sanctions on Friday against 25 Iranians and companies that it said were connected with Iran's missile programme and the country's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Mattis defended the decision to put a spotlight on Iran's behaviour, saying that it was important to make Iran recognise that "it is getting the attention of a lot of people", according to the report.

He also said that the US did not need to deploy additional military resources to signal its concern. "Right now, I do not think that is necessary," he said.

Indian teen discovers cheap way to make saltwater drinkable

San Francisco

An Indian-American student has found a cheaper and easier method to turn salt water into drinkable fresh water and his research has caught the attention of major technology firms and universities.

Chaitanya Karamchedu from Portland, Oregon, is turning heads across the country all because of a science experiment that began in his high school classroom.

The Jesuit High School Senior told KPTV that he has big plans of changing the world.

"1 in 8 people do not have access to clean water, its a crying issue that needs to be addressed," said Karamchedu. He made up his mind to address the matter himself. "The best access for water is the sea, so 70 per cent of the planet is covered in water and almost all of that is the ocean, but the problem is that's salt water," said Karamchedu. Isolating drinkable water from the ocean in a cost effective way is a problem that has stumped scientists for years. "Scientists looked at desalination, but it's all still inaccessible to places and it would cost too much to implement on a large scale," Karamchedu said. Karamchedu figured it out, on his own, in a high school lab. "The real genesis of the idea was realising that sea water is not fully

saturated with salt," he was quoted as saying. By experimenting with a highly absorbent polymer, the teen discovered a cost effective way to remove salt from ocean water and turn it into fresh water.

cent is free, then why are we so focused on this 10 per cent, lets ignore it and focus on the 90," Shamieh said. It is a breakthrough that is estimated to impact millions of lives if ever implemented on a mass scale.



"Its not bonding with water molecules, its bonding to the salt," said Karamchedu.

"People have been looking at the problem from one view point, how do we break those bonds between salt and the water? Chai came in and thought about it from a completely different angle," said Jesuit High School Biology Teacher Dr. Lara Shamieh. "People were concentrated on that 10 per cent of water that is bonded to the salt in the sea and no one looked at the 90 per cent that was free. Chai just looked at it and said if 10 per cent is bonded and 90 per

"What this is compared to current techniques, is that its cheap and accessible to everyone, everyone can use it," said Shamieh. Scientists across the country are taking note. He won a USD 10,000 award from the US Agency for International Global Development at Intels International Science Fair and second place at MITs TechCon Conference where he won more money to continue his research. "They were very encouraging, they could see things into it that I couldn't, because they've been working their whole lives on this," said Karamchedu.

Writer-poet Gulzar unfolds heartrending chapters of Partition

Amritsar

Aankhon ko visa nahi lagta, sapnon ki sarhad hoti nahi, band aankhon se roz main sarhad paar chala jaata hoon, milne Mehdi Hassan se... This poetry was narrated by legendary poet, Gulzar, to an audience at Partition Museum in Amritsar.

family got separated, how we were taken to refugee camps. The ones who left their homes; us paar, ya iss paar; cultures have seen bloodshed."

"There can't be more perfect place for this museum. Coming here has brought history alive for me. One should learn that history

archives should be brought out." Gulzar suggested the trustee's and the dedicated team of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Trust (TAACHT) to also get the poignant tales from Pakistan to the museum.

He said, "Jiye hain hum dard ke saath aur dard ko saath lekar (we have lived with the pain and keeping the pain with us), now if we have a platform like this museum, we should take out some chunks of our pain and hang it on the walls for generations to read and feel."

"Let's try to get the stories from across the border as well. People in Pakistan also felt the tremors that we felt.

Their stories should also be a part of the museum. In one of my writings, I had stated hum logon ki duniya mein aam log kitne milte julte hain (People this side and that side have many things in common)," said the poet-writer.

Gulzar, while winding up the talk, said, "Pakistan ko main watan kehta hoon, par Hindustan mulk hai mera. (I was born there, but I belong here).""Desh, sarkar nahin hota, aur mulk hukoomat nahin hoti. Hukoomat aur sarkar to badal jate hain par mulk aur watan nahin badalte," he quoted. "One cannot change what happened and neither it is possible to be one again.

cannot be changed, it just has to be accepted as it is, irrespective of the fact that it gives us pain and tears till date," said Gulzar, who along with Sukrita pointed out the wounds were grave, and filmmaking on this incident was not allowed. Also, till date cinema has not been able to show a film where this chapter of history can be seen as it was. Sukrita said, "Not only cinema, even our education system has failed to unfold the heart wrenching truths of Partition. Earlier it was needed to heal the wounds, but now the



The writer, while mapping memories of partition, unfolded a few of his literary creations along with poet Sukrita Paul Kumar at 'Guftagu with Gulzar' on Sunday. Before sharing his literary creations, he took a walk around the museum, feeling the pain of people, and said, "Likh likh ke main ye dard bhoolta raha, par aaj ye dobara samne aagaya (I kept writing for years to subside my painful memories of partition, but today history came alive yet again). I was a kid of about nine-years, but I remember everything. How our

Qatar Airways launches longest flight: Here are other long routes



Doha

Qatar Airways launched the world's longest scheduled commercial service with its inaugural flight from Doha to Auckland taking off eight minutes early on Sunday, a company spokeswoman said. Flight QR920 left the Qatari capital at 05:02 (local time) and is set to land in New Zealand at 07:30 (local time on Monday). The Boeing 777 flight will take 16 hours and 20 minutes, pass over 10 time zones, five countries and travel 14,535 kilometres before reaching Auckland. But even that flying time may be looked on jealously by passengers on the return flight which, due to high-altitude

winds, will take 17 hours and 30 minutes, according to the company website.

This will make it the world's longest passenger service in terms of flying time, according to tracking website flightradar24.

Qatar Airways did not immediately have a figure for the number of passengers who boarded on Sunday, but it is believed there are four pilots and 15 crew on the plane.

In March last year, Emirates airline launched what was then thought to be the world's longest non-stop scheduled commercial flight, with a service from Dubai to Auckland, spanning 14,200 kilometres.

Maastricht aims to rekindle European dream, 25 years on

MAASTRICHT

Maastricht, a picturesque Dutch city of cobblestone streets and medieval arches marks the 25th anniversary of the European treaty bearing its name, showing rare optimism and hope amid rising euroscepticism. Sandwiched just a few kilometres (miles) between Liege in Belgium and Aachen in Germany, this southern provincial capital bore witness more than two decades ago to the birth of an audacious plan to integrate Europe's countries into one union. On February 7, 1992, the whole town was swept up in the euphoria of the moment, recalled Limburg provincial governor Theo Bovens. "You could feel the pro-Europe atmosphere," he told AFP. "Every shopping street was linked to one country," he said - one for Belgium, another for Germany and yet another for Britain. "Shopkeepers decorated their street with goods and flags." On that day, in a new provincial building on the banks of the River Maas, the 12 nations of the then European Economic Community signed the

Maastricht Treaty, which paved the way for the foundation of today's European Union and the single currency, the euro. Twenty-five years on, after a series of crises - a plummeting euro, Greece's political and economic woes, a wave of immigration unprecedented since World War II and Brexit - Maastricht and its 120,000 inhabitants feel the city still has an essential, even existential, role to play. "I think we should try to light the candle again, this little spark that still is there, to make sure that this European dream that we had 25 years ago is going to be a dream again and not the nightmare that we are fearing now," said Maastricht mayor Annemarie Penn-te Strake. "Because this is the Maastricht treaty we feel indebted and have to pay attention to the fact that we are living in an era in which Europe has a lot of problems, a

lot of scepticism, and a lot of anger." Local authorities are pleading for a return to the ideals and values enshrined in the treaty, which they fear too many EU members will soon send to Brussels a programme of ideas culled from a year of debates on how to reconstruct Europe in an organic fashion from the ground roots up. "We don't need less of Europe, we need another Europe," said Bovens, criticising those countries he sees as still too inward-looking. On Maastricht's main square, where the smell of frying doughnuts mingles with that of roasted chicken and carnival music tangles with a riot of different languages, locals appear to have kept faith. Here the EU is seen as a bulwark against the current international climate of anxiety. "When I see all these changes happening in the United States, I think it's a good thing that the European dream still exists," said grocer Fabien Ruiter, 23. To those filled with doubt and tempted to retreat behind national borders, 19-year-old Esmee insisted "migration will still be a problem whether you

are still in Europe or not." But Tine Raenarts, 54, standing at a table in the market square, remained unconvinced. "I have always had my doubts about Europe," she said. Charting a path towards a stronger EU is indeed a difficult task in "this Europe which is bigger, but also more divisive," said Sophie Vanhoonacker, an expert in European affairs at Maastricht University. "Political leaders must step up and shoulder their responsibilities, but it is not certain they will," she told AFP. The same dilemma faced their predecessors in 1992. Even as the birth of a new Europe was feted on the cobblestone streets of Maastricht, uncertainty shrouded the historic moment after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet bloc. In the end, European leaders opted for a message of hope as their signatures lent a flourish to their positive and bold plan. But now this dream unveiled a quarter century ago can either be rekindled, or die. "The key rests with the member states, not with Brussels," said Vanhoonacker.

have become disconnected from. They yearn for a renewed embrace of the idea of European citizenship, for a better focus on improving working and living conditions, and to change labyrinthian structures that have become too institutional. Nestling in the crossroads of three countries in what it calls the "euregion," the small province



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Woman escapes 30 yrs of captivity and rape ordeal

FOUR Perth women were abducted and raped by Australia's worst serial killer couple in the 1980s. Catherine and David Birnie were only caught when their fifth victim, Kate Moir, escaped from the sadistic killers' home in southwest Perth in 1986. Moir was just 17 when she was kidnapped, shackled to a bed in chains and repeatedly raped after the 'very drunk' teenager accepted a lift home from the killers after a night out with friends. Moir, now 47, has revealed the harrowing details of her ordeal in her first television interview with Channel

Seven's Murder Uncovered. After accepting the ride home and sensing danger, she asked the couple if they were going to kill or rape her. The sickening reply was: "We'll only rape you if you're good." Moir recalled the killer couple used code words to signal they had found their next victim. "I remember hearing, 'have you got the munchies?'," she said. "David was the puppet, Catherine was the puppeteer. She gave the tick of approval.

She would say, 'I've got the munchies, which meant 'you can have this one'. 'You know you're going to die but you don't acknowledge that to yourself,

you just live it," she said. Moir managed to escape through a window and ran for her life - unaware the couple had already killed four young women. The pair murdered Sussannah Candy, 15, Denise Brown, 21, Mary Neilson, 22, and Noelene Patterson, 31 in the weeks prior to Moir's abduction. Moir alerted authorities and the Birnies were sentenced to life in prison. David hanged himself in a West Australian jail cell in 2005. But Catherine could be freed within a

matter of weeks, with her case set to be reviewed in the coming months. Paul Ferguson, a retired detective, told Seven News it would be an outrage if she was released. "If that woman had an ounce of decency, she would have made some effort or showed remorse," he said. "This woman does not deserve one day of freedom." But Birnie's barrister, Simon Watters, said, "One can reasonably assume she's been rehabilitated so it's hard to see why - putting public pressure to one side - she would not be considered for parole." Murder Uncovered premieres on Channel Seven on Wednesday at 9pm.



Air hostess saves trafficking victim

Attendants get tips on how to spot trafficking



A FLIGHT attendant rescued a girl from human trafficking after she spotted the dishevelled teen sitting on a plane and left a note for her in the restroom. Shelia Fedrick, 49, was working on an Alaska Airlines flight from Seattle to San Francisco when she noticed a teen, believed to be 14 or 15 years old, sitting in the window seat next to a well-dressed older man, NBC reported. Fedrick said the victim had greasy blond hair and looked like she 'had been through pure hell'. It was the contrast between the two that raised a red flag. When Fedrick would speak to the two passengers, the girl would not look or talk and only the man would respond, she said. The perpetrator would allegedly become defensive when the stewardess tried to make conversation. The Alabama woman eventually relayed a message to the girl to go to the bathroom where she had left her a note on the mirror. "She wrote on the note she needed help," said Fedrick



Shelia immediately told the pilot about the situation, who contacted the police. Officers were waiting for the man at the terminal when the plane landed and arrested him. "I've been a flight attendant for 10 years and it's like I am going all the way back to when I was in training and I was like I could have seen these young girls and young boys and didn't even know," she told WTSP. Fedrick said she has kept in contact with the girl she rescued over the past few years, who is now attending college. Flight attendants now have tips on how to spot human trafficking as part of their training, reported airlineamb.org. Former airline stewardess and founder of Airline Ambassadors,

Nancy Rivard is hoping to incorporate Shelia's instincts into the jobs of staff. A group of about 100 flight attendants flew to Houston to learn how to spot the signs of human-trafficking situations. The seminar trained them to look for signs that Fedrick found, such as disheveled passengers, people who insist on speaking for the victim, or if they appear to be drugged. In an online Star Now Profile Fedrick says: "I love to smile, like being around people, that's why I'm a flight attendant. Loving working with people and taking risk." The actress and model says she has worked as an extra on HBO and Lifetime shows and appeared in Ebony Magazine.

Judge slams Facebook as 'tool for evil' after suicide



A JUDGE has slammed Facebook as a "tool for evil" after an innocent mother killed herself after being falsely accused of killing a baby on social media. Jayne Pearce, 23, suffered 'vitriol' at the hands of an online 'pitchfork mob' after two mothers hacked into her Facebook page and falsely alleged she had tried to smother one of their children. During her ordeal the warehouse worker was charged with attempted murder and locked up in jail for three months to await trial after one of the women put a 'fake confession' on her timeline. Although Pearce was eventually cleared of wrongdoing and her accusers arrested, she turned to drink to block out the memories of her incarceration. And two days before the women were due in court, Pearce was found dead in her flat in Royton, Greater Manchester, after ingesting vodka, cocaine and an antidepressant drug. At Minshull Street Crown Court in Manchester, Judge Angela Nield condemned the 'artillery' of social media as she jailed mother-of-two Leonie Hampson-Ogden, 24, and Shauna Stanway, 21, who has one child. They were both jailed for ten months each after they pleaded guilty to perverting the course of justice. Both women claim they were severely trolled after the tragedy. Passing sentence, Judge Nield said: "Social media has a great deal to answer for. "It does do a great deal of good for bringing together friends who have not met each other for many years - but sadly, as is often the case now, people find it to be a tool for evil, a tool for friend and a tool for criticising each other."

90-second shower trick to stay fit all day

IF YOU struggle to wake up in the morning and require a double espresso to feel human, a simple energy-boosting trick you can do during your morning shower could work wonders. According to the experts at Career Girl Daily, despite showering every morning, most of us are doing it wrong. They share a 90-second hack you can do whilst washing yourself in the morning to boost your energy and keep you awake all day. And Victoria Beckham swears by it. If

you think that taking a hot shower in the morning sets you up for the day ahead, think again. Indeed, according to the experts, dousing your body in warm water is actually sending you back to sleep. They found that when we feel colder air on our skin after getting out of the shower, the drastic temperature drop causes a tranquil state of mind. You should, in fact, blast yourself with cold water for 30 seconds, followed by hot water for 30 seconds and freezing water

again for 30 seconds. It might be unpleasant but it opens capillaries and boosts circulation so stimulates your body and mind. It also apparently reduces stress because it builds up your 'tolerance levels', boosts your immune system by creating more white blood cells and helps you burn fat more effectively. If that wasn't enough, the trick, which Victoria Beckham swears by, has an anti-depressive effect by sending high levels of electric impulses to the brain.

Automation will takeover 47 percent modern day jobs by 2033: Oxford University Study

New Delhi

A University of Oxford study has revealed that by the year 2033, as many as 47 percent of modern day job roles could be claimed by automation. Take for instance the hospitality industry, it will experience or be exposed to technological advances in four areas in 2017. The first and the foremost is the use of Geo-targeting and Beacons. Geo-technology provides filtered, location-based information from services or devices such as Snapchat or iPhone. With the help of GPS, geo-tech can help get messages to the people close by. Even online, adverts using 'geo' technology drive significantly more traffic back to their websites.

It will be highly relevant for hotels, bars and restaurants, where 94 percent of retail spending is still done in store and geo-technology provides the perfect opportunity to attract nearby prospective customers. Similarly, Beacons are masts – often using Bluetooth – that are engineered to communicate with iOS and Android operating systems to pass messages between a company and their consumers. A bit like a metal

detector, when you are within distance of an active beacon, they can interact with smart devices and even send push notifications.

Second is the next generation of CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems that will go beyond logging customer data and behaviors. Using smart data and social media engagement, CRM providers such as Cluboid offer hotels, bars and restaurants a system that reduces time and energy spent of administration and enhances customer engagement and experience. This CRM makes it possible to wish customers a happy birthday, remember their drinks order, and scan social media for photographs so the venues can greet them by name.

Third is the digital/physical interfaces and smartphone pairing which is the fastest growing and favorite method of getting things done. Millions of people are now using smart devices to monitor everything from their fitness activities to their home surveillance equipment. Venues can allow their guests to add to a virtual playlist via an app linked to an

interactive jukebox. Apps such as SecretDJ, Startle and TouchTunes enable you to request music in your favorite bars, pubs and clubs for a more personalized night out.

Charles Goldstuck, CEO of TouchTunes, has been quoted, as saying, consumers today expect a personalized experience, whether it is to choose the specific song they want, the toppings on their burger, the dressing on their salad. 2017 will also see the release of the Apple Watch 3 which will decrease the value of the previous 2, making them more affordable and accessible. The evolution of social media is also a factor, where 90 percent of consumers polled by Zendesk claim that online reviews and critique influence their spending habits. Social media has been both a blessing and a curse for hospitality. Most importantly, it has enabled businesses to gather feedback and implement



appropriate changes for even better customer service.

Last year, social media has gone one step further with live video streaming that enables businesses to see how effective their marketing is in real time. Using the engagement rates from live video on social media, smart hospitality companies will prosper from the ability to alpha and beta test new products, lines and events.

Virtual reality is another way of improving user experience that is already finding its way into the entertainment and hospitality industries. The Marriott Hotels are already in the early stages of testing a new amenity known as 'VRRoom Service'. This allows guests to order VR headsets to their room and enjoy a selection of pre-loaded virtual reality

experiences for a spot of travel inspiration.

Voice activation is also coming along in leaps and bounds with the introduction of Apple's Siri, Amazon's Echo and Microsoft's Cortana. Voice controlled software is in fact now reaching a level of comprehension as high as 95 percent.

Last, but not least, comes the growth of online education for the hospitality sector. To keep up with the latest trends in hospitality technology, hospitality managers need ongoing education and online courses offer an ideal format to build skills for this digital age.

US and Russia have common interest in defeating ISIS: US Vice President

Washington

The US and Russia have "common interest" in confronting radical Islamic terrorism and defeating ISIS, Vice President Mike Pence said today. "Russia has a common interest in confronting radical Islamic terrorism and especially ISIS. And if we have opportunities to work together I think the President is looking for an opportunity to begin that relationship anew," Pence told ABC News in an interview.

"But make no mistake about it, those decisions will await action and they'll be very dependent on how the Russians respond in the days ahead," he said. Pence said there is kind of changes in posture by Russia.

"The opportunity perhaps to work on common interests. The President's made it clear the top priority of this administration is to hunt down and destroy ISIS at its source," he said.

"He's directed our military commanders and our Secretary of State to collaborate and to develop a strategy in the region to bring together the resources and the allies necessary to do that," the Vice President said.

Responding to questions, Pence told Fox News in another interview that the Trump Administration is determined to reform financial regulations.

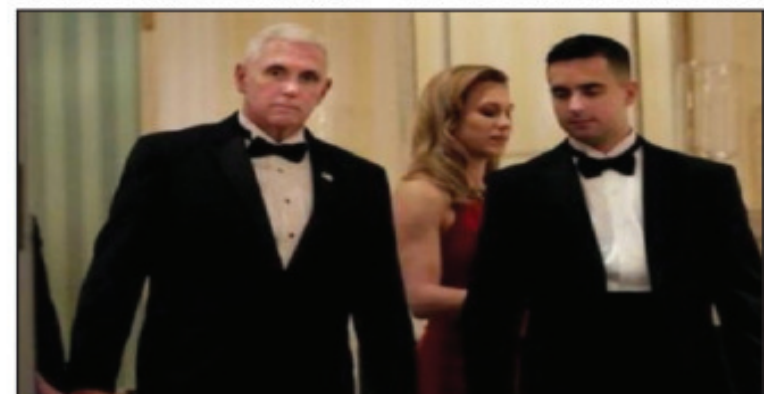
"The message that we're sending to Main Street is that we're going to pull back this mountain of red tape that is stifling access to capital loans particularly for small businesses across this country and we're going to get this economy moving again," Pence told Fox News.

"The action that the President took this week is just the

beginning of that effort, and we're going to continue to work hard while we protect consumers along the way. We're going to

seen to be involved in political expression, he added.

"I don't think we'd have ever made it to these hallowed halls back



continue to work hard to advance that kind of regulatory reform that will make resources and loans available for a growing America," he said.

Pence also defended Trump's decision to make changes on religious liberty. "The President's made it clear that he wants to take action on the Johnson amendment," he said. Back in the 1950s, the Congress passed a law that essentially threatened the tax-exempt status of churches and synagogues and religious institutions if they were

in 1790 if the pulpits of this country had been silenced from speaking about what they thought was right and wrong. The President provided real leadership in the campaign where he identified the Johnson amendment and he told people of faith of every background across this country that he would work to repeal it," Pence said. Trump has directed the administration to begin to look at ways, both legislatively and through executive action to do that, he said.

65 years on the throne: Queen Elizabeth makes history

London

Queen Elizabeth, the world's longest-reigning living monarch, will celebrate her Sapphire Jubilee on Monday, commemorating 65 years since she took the British throne. A 41-gun royal salute will take place in central London to mark the occasion. The queen's office released a 2014 portrait showing her wearing a suite of sapphire jewellery she received from King George VI as a wedding gift in 1947. The Queen, 90, has cut back on international tours but still regularly performs official duties around Britain. In December, she said she would reduce the number of her patronages, passing on her role at dozens of charities, academic institutions and sporting groups to other members of the royal family.

Punjab, Goa polls done, next stop for AAP's Arvind Kejriwal is PM Modi's Gujarat



New Delhi

After a high-pitched campaign in the recently concluded Punjab and Goa elections, the Aam Aadmi Party has turned its focus on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat where polls are due later this year. The party is planning a show of strength in Gandhinagar on March 26, top party sources told HT on Monday. "We have been running a campaign called Gujarat Azadi Andolan in all districts of the state. This campaign will culminate in a massive rally in Gandhinagar. The plan is to gherao chief minister Vijay Rupani," an AAP leader involved with the campaign said.

The AAP's volunteers have been identifying issues to corner the ruling BJP government, which has seen two chief ministers in Anandiben Patel and Rupani since Modi moved to Delhi as PM in 2014. Their focus is on farmers' issues, healthcare and education, sources revealed.

The party has carried out an elaborate exercise in all districts to both raise awareness about the party and identify the weak spots of the ruling party. The AAP has been focusing on states where the BJP and the Congress are a direct fight. The other states where AAP is focusing after the Punjab and Goa elections include Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The results for Goa and Punjab will be declared on March 11. The party is confident of a good showing in Punjab. In Goa, a four-cornered contest and a high voter turnout of 83% has raised its hopes of opening its account in the state assembly. If it is able to trump the Congress and BJP-SAD in Punjab to emerge as the single largest party, AAP believes its efforts in Gujarat will get a fillip. Even a good number of seats will boost its image as a serious political player outside Delhi.

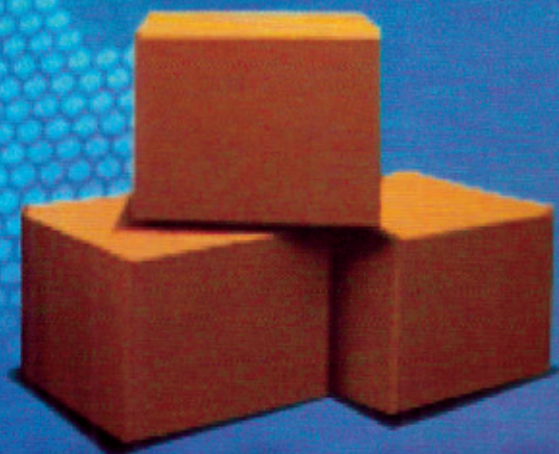
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Muslim pupils fill UK church classrooms



NEW figures have revealed that Muslim pupils outnumber Christian children in more than 30 church schools in UK. According to the latest available statistics, one Church of England primary school has a '100 per cent Muslim population'. It has prompted education experts to urge some church schools to become secular institutions because it is 'confusing for children'. St Thomas in Werneth, Oldham, is reported to have no Christian pupils, according to the local diocese, with a 100 per cent Muslim population — though this figure may be 'out of date' according to one governor. Bishop Bridgeman Church of England Primary in Bolton has a 90 per cent Muslim population, while at Staincliffe CoE Junior School in West Yorkshire 98 per cent of students are reported to come from a Muslim background. Professor Alan Smithers, director of the centre for education at the University of Buckingham, told the Sunday Times: "The Church of England has traditionally provided education in this country but now that risks being an uncomfortable experience for the Muslim pupils that fill many of these schools." He added: "It must also be very confusing for the handful of Christian pupils in some of them. It would seem logical these schools become secular institutions." According to the St Thomas' website: "St Thomas is a Church of England school and at present most children who attend are of the Muslim faith. We begin each day with a school worship when we say prayers to recognise the place God has in our lives."

ISIS pushing child refugees inside Europe

TERROR groups like ISIS are recruiting unaccompanied child refugees by paying for them to get into Europe. A report from counter-extremism firm the Quilliam Foundation also warned hundreds of under-18s have gone missing in the UK since migrating. The youngsters' passage to Europe and the UK is being funded by the terror groups, who hand over cash to human smugglers to get them over the border having radicalised them at some stage along the way. Terrorists are also actively recruiting in refugee camps and a new government strategy isn't expected to address the issues until May. Militants give out food to the children and attempt to buy their allegiance by paying for the first leg of their journey to Europe. "Children and young people who are indoctrinated and recruited by IS are an important resource," the report says. Having gained entry to countries in Europe, many children vanish from the care system. This is understood to be over fears they will not be granted asylum, while others are abducted, trafficked further or sexually exploited, the report said. The foundation's report says extremists may attempt to infiltrate refugee groups and radicalise young minds at any stage of the trip. Figures from 2015 show 340 children went missing between

January and September and that 132 of those remained unaccounted for at the end of the year. The government's answer to this is expected to include measures to increase the amount of available foster placements and supported accommodation. Rosalind Ereira from Solidarity with Refugees said: "Among the most eye-opening points in this report is the fact that while most of us understand that our failure to provide safe passage to refugees endangers refugee lives, we might not understand that it also creates a threat to our own national security. "Money paid by refugees to smugglers not only helps to fund

Islamic State activities, but refugees are signed up to support IS in exchange for their travel. Where we fail to offer security to refugees, we leave the door open for radicalisation. "We need to understand that the provision of safe and legal routes for refugees is in the best interests of all of us." Refugees making their way to Europe via the Mediterranean may have to pay smugglers up to \$560 (£37,600) for passage towards the coast. ISIS, capitalising on this route, offer free passage to those willing

to join the terror group and the militants are also able to provide a degree of security.



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PUNJABI DUNIYA



Five ways to avoid brittleness to grow your nails faster

Who doesn't want a set of long and sexy nails? But very few of us are blessed with such wonder nails as most of us the face problem of brittle nails due the unhealthy lives we lead. But you can now shed your worries, as Permanent Makeup expert and Executive Director of ALPS Beauty Clinics, Ms. Gunjan Gaur, shares some fantastic tips to grow your talons while keeping brittleness at bay!

Massage magic: Massage your nails for 10 minutes after dipping it in almond oil every night before bed to make them stronger from within. The almond oil will nourish your talons; preventing brittleness and boosting nail growth. The remedy will show up its effects with steady implementation; so please be patient enough to encounter effects.

File right: Always file your nails while

they are painted to prevent further brittleness and turn them longer. Besides, it is advisable to never keep your nail-bed nude and apply a transparent nail paint to keep them protected and away from fragility.

Bitterness works: Nail biting not only looks unattractive but can damage your cuticle, gums and can cause brittleness. In that case bitterness can often work in your favor! Yes, just catch hold of a taste-inhibitor to wave off your woes this time. Buy BITREX from your local chemist and apply it onto your nails with a nail paint

brush, this awful edible liquid will keep you miles away from biting these bacterial "hubs" ever again. **Nutrition is important:** Nails are made up of keratin- a hard protein, therefore, it becomes important to have a wholesome diet containing necessary vitamins, especially, B-complex, vitamin-E; for boosting the keratin formation. This will not only nourish, but boost the growth of nails too. So, aim for long and strong talons, by consuming B-complex enriched foods such as; fish, egg, beans, broccoli, milk and milk products, potatoes, red meat and more... It is also advisable to have all your

raw-veggies/salad of your plate before the main-course, to obtain maximum benefit from it. **Permanent nail extensions** As a permanent solution,

acrylic powder and liquids are used to paste the natural looking long nails on the original nails. These extensions are beautiful, longer lasting, grow along your nails and stay for more



go for beautiful permanent nail extensions in order to make them longer and exotic! For this special

than a month. And, while they grow, a little filling can be done at the nail bed so that they do not look artificial.

Acupuncture efficacy depends on your expectations!



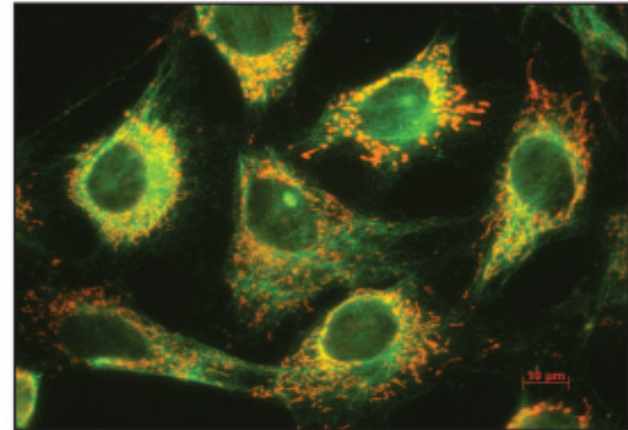
People with back pain who have low expectations of acupuncture before they start a course of treatment will gain less than those who believe in its efficacy, new research shows. People with a positive frame of mind about back pain, who are in control of their condition, experience less back-related disability during the course of treatment. "The analysis showed that psychological factors were consistently associated with back-related disability," explained Felicity Bishop from the University of Southampton and arthritis research UK career development fellow. "People who started out with very low expectations of acupuncture - who

thought it probably would not help them - were more likely to report less benefit as treatment went on," Bishop noted. Acupuncture is one of the most established forms of complementary therapy which is recommended in clinical guidelines. To conduct the study, Bishop recruited 485 people who were being treated by acupuncturists, and they completed questionnaires before they started treatment, then two weeks, three months and six months later. The questionnaires measured psychological factors, clinical and demographic characteristics and back-related disability. The findings were published in The Journal of Clinical Pain.

Eating seafood increases risk of autoimmune disorder

New York Exposure through seafood could increase the risk of autoimmune disorders, especially among women of childbearing age, a study says.

healthy cells by mistake, predominately affect women. "We do not have a very good sense of why people develop autoimmune disorders," said lead author Emily Somers, associate



Autoimmune disorders, which cause the body's immune system to attack

professor at the University of Michigan Medical and Public Health Schools.

"In our study, exposure to mercury stood out as the main risk factor for autoimmunity," Somers added. Autoimmune disease - which can include such conditions as inflammatory bowel disease, lupus, Sjogren's syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis - is among the 10 leading causes of death from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey from 1999-2004. Greater exposure to mercury was associated

with a higher rate of autoantibodies, a precursor to autoimmune disease. Fish such as swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish contain the highest levels of mercury while shrimp, canned light tuna and salmon have lower levels. The authors noted that there were many health benefits to seafood, a lean protein packed with vital nutrients. However, they added that women of reproductive age should be mindful of the type of fish they are eating. The study appeared in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives.

Energy drinks trigger hyperactivity in middle-school children

New York Middle-school children who consume heavily sweetened energy drinks are 66 per cent more likely to be at risk for hyperactivity and inattention symptoms, reveals a new study. The finding has implications for school success and lends support to existing recommendations to limit the amount of sweetened beverages school children drink. The authors also recommend that children avoid energy drinks, which



in addition to high levels of sugar also often contain caffeine. "Our results support the American

Academy of Paediatrics recommendation that parents should limit consumption of

sweetened beverages and that children should not consume any energy drinks," said lead researcher Jeannette Ickovics from the Yale School of Public Health. The research team surveyed 1,649 middle-school students randomly selected from a single urban school district in Connecticut. The researchers found that boys were more likely to consume energy drinks than girls. The average age of the student participants was 12.4 years.



Health

Plant-based diet may prolong obese children's life

New York
Obese children who begin a low-fat, plant-based vegan diet may lower their risk of heart disease, new research says. The risk can be reduced through improvements in their weight, blood pressure, body mass index, cholesterol levels, insulin sensitivity, and high-sensitivity C-reactive, according to researchers. "As the number of obese children with high cholesterol continues to grow, we need to have effective lifestyle modifications to help them reverse their risk factors for heart disease," said lead researcher Michael Macknin, a staff paediatrician at Cleveland Clinic Children's. "We've known that plant-based diets are beneficial in adults in preventing and possibly reversing heart



disease," he added. The four-week study compared a plant-based vegan diet to the American Heart Association (AHA) diet in 28 obese children with high cholesterol between the ages of 9 and 18. Those on the plant-based diet consumed plants and whole grains, with limited avocado and nuts, no added fat, and no animal products. These children experienced significant improvements in nine measures: BMI, systolic blood pressure, weight, mid-arm circumference, total cholesterol, low-

density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, and insulin, as well as two common markers of heart disease, myeloperoxidase and high-sensitivity C-reactive protein. Those on the American Heart Association diet consumed fruits, vegetables, whole grains and non-whole grains, limited sodium, low-fat dairy, selected plant oils, and lean meat and fish in moderation. These children experienced significant improvements in four measures: weight, waist circumference, mid-

arm circumference and myeloperoxidase. This study shows that the same may be true in children too, though more studies are needed. "Cardiovascular disease begins in childhood. If we can see such significant improvements in a short four-week study, imagine the potential for improving long-term health into adulthood if a whole population of children began to eat these diets regularly," Macknin said. The study appeared online in *The Journal of Paediatrics*.

Why sleep loss could lead to weight gain



Following a night of total sleep deprivation, a brain region known as the "salience network" may lead us to eat more fat, new research has found. "Although this study examined the effects of acute total sleep deprivation, similar changes may occur in response to the chronic partial sleep restriction that is so prevalent in today's society," said study's senior author Hengyi Rao from the University of

Pennsylvania. The study involved 34 sleep-deprived participants and 12 controls in a sleep lab for five days and four nights for round-the-clock monitoring. Sleep deprived participants consumed close to 1,000 calories during overnight wakefulness. They consumed a similar amount of calories the day following sleep deprivation as they did the day following a good night's sleep.

Damaging effects of obesity on fertility reversed

Melbourne
In a breakthrough, researchers have found how to reverse the damage obesity causes

leads to very serious fertility problems, including the inability to conceive," said lead author associate professor Rebecca Robker

damage caused by obesity from one generation to the next. "In our laboratory studies, we've been able to unravel a key mechanism that leads to this multi-generational damage, and we've found a way to stop it happening," Robker said. The research team found that obesity leads to a particular stress response that causes damage to the mitochondria, which are critical energy-producing 'organs' within living cells. "All of the mitochondria in our bodies come from our mother. If the mother is obese, this produces stresses that lead to reduced transmission of mitochondria to the offspring," Robker said.



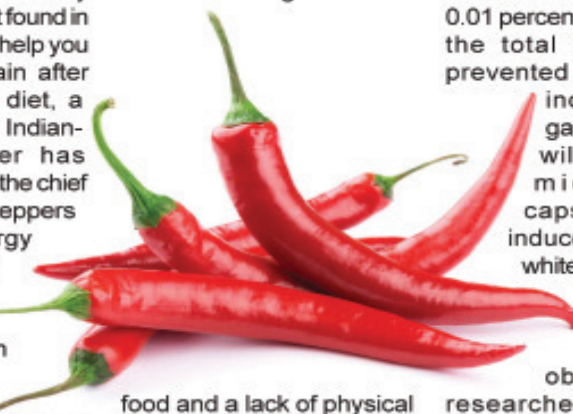
to a woman's fertility and her offspring. Researchers at the University of Adelaide said the findings in mice have major implications for the future of fertility research. "It's now well established that obesity in females

from the University's Robinson Research Institute. "Obesity can also result in altered growth of babies during pregnancy, and it permanently programmes the metabolism of offspring, passing the

Chili pepper ingredient could prevent weight gain

There is good news for those who find it hard to resist fatty foods. An ingredient found in chili peppers could help you prevent weight gain after eating a high-fat diet, a study involving an Indian-origin researcher has found. As capsaicin the chief ingredient in chili peppers - stimulates energy burning, a dietary supplement could be developed to do away with restriction in calorie intake, the findings suggest. "Our group's laboratory data revealed that dietary capsaicin suppresses high-fat-diet-induced obesity," explained Vivek Krishnan, a graduate student from the University of Wyoming in the US. "In our bodies, white fat cells store energy and brown fat cells serve as thermogenic (heat produced by burning

fat) machinery to burn stored fat. Eating calorie-rich



food and a lack of physical activity cause an imbalance in metabolism that leads to obesity," Krishnan

explained. The researchers found that dietary capsaicin 0.01 percent of capsaicin in the total high fat diet prevented high-fat-diet-induced weight gain in trials with wild type mice. Dietary capsaicin may induce browning of white adipose tissue and stimulates thermogenesis to counteract obesity, the researchers noted. Developing a natural dietary supplement as a strategy to combat obesity can be easily advanced to human clinical trials. "We envision a nanoparticle-based sustained-release formulation of capsaicin, which is currently under development in our laboratory," the researchers added.





Pack up time for Cook

Done with captaincy but ready to play as batsman

ALASTAIR Cook has stepped down as England Test captain after four-and-a-half years in the role. The opening batsman, who took charge of 59 matches during his tenure - more than any other skipper of the national side, discussed his position with ECB chairman Colin Graves on Sunday evening before making a final decision. He has outlined his intent to continue playing for England to director of cricket Andrew Strauss and the selectors. "It's been a huge honour to be England captain and to lead the Test team over the past five years," Cook said. "Stepping down has been an incredibly hard decision but I know this is the correct decision for me and at the right time for the team. "I've had time to reflect after the India series and this weekend I spoke to Colin Graves, the chairman, to explain and offer my resignation. "It's a sad day personally in many ways but I want to thank everyone I've captained, all the coaches and support staff and, of course, the England supporters and the Barmy Army who follow us home and away and have given us unwavering support. "Playing for England really is a privilege and I hope to carry on as a Test player, making a full contribution and helping the next England captain and the team however I can." Cook was appointed in August 2012 and has presided over

Stepping down has been an incredibly hard decision but I know this is the correct decision for me and at the right time for the team.

— ALASTAIR COOK,
Former England captain

periods of terrific success and substantial disappointment in the Test arena. England's most-capped captain led his team to home Ashes victories against Australia in 2013 and 2015 and notable series wins in both South Africa and India. In 2013 and 2016, he was named captain of the ICC World Test Team of the Year, he was one of Wisden's five Cricketers of the Year in 2012 and picked up a CBE for services to cricket on Friday, February 3. He hands over the captaincy baton after a difficult winter tour of India, which resulted in a 4-0 defeat. In total, Cook won 24 of his 59 Tests in charge. The ECB said in a statement on Monday that the 'proper process' to appoint the Essex stalwart's successor has begun. Joe Root - Cook's vice-captain - is widely fancied to take on the role. Ben Stokes and Stuart Broad have



Alastair Cook could be replaced by Joe Root as captain soon.

been mentioned in passing as other possible alternatives to fill Cook's shoes but, realistically, Root is the stand-out candidate. Strauss suggested that the selectors intend to make an announcement prior to England's trip to the West Indies for a one-day international series later this month. The next Test date in the England calendar is not until July, when South Africa visit for a four-match series prior to games against the West Indies which see out the summer and the winter Ashes tour of Australia. Strauss

paid tribute to Cook's 'determination, conviction and pride', saying England 'owes him a great debt of gratitude' for the way he has conducted himself as leader of his country. "Off the field as well as on, he has shown his strengths, developing the team and its culture, managing a fundamental transition and helping us to build for the future," Strauss said. "As with all leaders, there have been times where circumstances have tested him but his resilience and temperament have helped him to prevail and to prosper."

India make Bangladesh toil in warm-up tie



BANGLADESH were at the receiving end for the majority of their sole warm-up game against India A with as many as three home team batsmen slamming hundreds on second and final day of the match that ended in a draw in Hyderabad on Monday. Bangladesh, who are in India for the oneoff Test starting here February 9, endured a long day on the field with India A declaring at 461 for eight in response to the visitors' 224 for eight on the opening day. Bangladesh operated with eight bowlers and most of them leaked runs, as the hosts scored at more than five runs per over. Bangladesh were

73 for two in their second innings when play was called off. India's domestic performers picked for the game cashed in on the opportunity with Priyank Kirit Panchal (103 retired out), Shreyas Iyer (100 retired out) and Vijay Shankar (103 not out) making fine hundreds. The India A batsmen put up a dominating display a day after the bowlers, led by pacer Aniket Choudhary, came up with a disciplined effort. Panchal, the highest run-getter in Ranji Trophy this season, and Iyer piled on the runs after resuming at an overnight 91 for one. The talented duo shared a 159-run partnership for the

second wicket to set the tone for the innings. Bangladesh bounced back after the two set batsmen retired out, running through the middleorder through pacer Subhashis Roy and spinner Tajjul Islam, who both picked three wickets to have India 'A' at 287 from seven from a commanding 243 for two. However, that was the only period when Bangladesh had the upper hand as Shankar and Nitin Saini (66) frustrated them with a 115-run stand for the eighth wicket. Tamil Nadu batsman Shankar remained unbeaten in his 81-ball blinder that comprised 14 fours and three maximums.

How Anti-Democratic Propaganda is Taking Over the World

R, the controversial Russian state propaganda network that has extended its tentacles into the United States and Europe, finally is seen as a clear menace to democracy. Operating in dozens of countries around the world, the network serves as a crucial artery for pumping Kremlin spin into the public discussion. It would be unwise, however, for observers in the U.S. and the European Union to become fixated on RT (formerly known as "Russia Today"). The Russian state-run network is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to modern tools of authoritarian influence in the realm of ideas.

In contrast to inward-leaning democracies, which have an "End of History" sense of complacency, today's autocrats are vibrant internationalists in the ideas sphere. In recent years, the leading autocracies have forged a diverse constellation of efforts to shape perceptions and project their preferred worldview, while contesting the ideas they find anathema. They have upped the competition in this arena at a time when the world's leading democratic states have largely gone to the sidelines.

Leaders in Beijing, Tehran and Moscow invest heavily in such efforts because they understand that their political preferences are best advanced through a strong capacity to communicate ideas. These regimes therefore have developed an array of tools that include cultural, policy and educational initiatives; people-to-people exchanges; and wide-ranging, multiplatform media enterprises, of which television outlets such as RT are only one part. As capacity has caught up with intentions, the autocrats' toolkit now is used to actively compete on the democracies' home turf.

Consider this: As part of its "Great Leap Outward" in recent years, China has quietly built up a multibillion dollar international media empire transmitting content in a multitude of languages that is making inroads in dozens of countries around the globe. As an indication of its growing sophistication, Xinhua, the state news agency, and CGTN, the Chinese state television global network (until 2016 known as CCTV), cultivate content-sharing agreements in a growing number of countries, especially in young democracies. In countries such as Argentina, Kenya and Peru, the Chinese authorities embed their own entertainment, documentary and news programming into domestic media platforms, enabling CCP-friendly soft propaganda to reach audiences in these settings.

Russia has taken a more visible and pugnacious approach to the ideas realm, attempting to subvert the global information space by

using both traditional and new forms of media to spread disinformation, reshape narratives and thwart the open exchange of ideas. As part of its effort to numb, but also poison, minds, the Kremlin has invested significant attention on the democracies of Europe and the Americas, including the United States. Russian state media has also taken a special interest in Latin America.

In October 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Argentine President Cristina Kirchner announced the start of RT broadcasts in Spanish to nationwide audiences in Argentina. This arrangement has continued into the administration of President Mauricio Macri since his election in 2015. RT now broadcasts in Argentina, Venezuela and Colombia and can be viewed on cable television networks in nearly every country in

Central and South America. It is complemented by paid Russian state media supplements in newspapers across the continent including Argentina's La Nacion, Brazil's Folha de S.Paulo and Uruguay's El Observador. The editorial line of Russian state media content dovetails with that of Telesur, the Spanish-language network inspired by the late Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez, enabling the Kremlin content to more intensively reverberate across the region.

The Russian-state-backed information sources, like those of the Chinese, take a sophisticated approach to their audiences and are differentiated by country with the goal of influencing specific demographics.

Sputnik, a Russian state online and radio service, produces content in 30 languages, feeding Russian

state spin into the global information ecosystem. For its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) has expanded its reach in recent years. Its international branch, which in March 2016 changed its name to Pars Today, now broadcasts in 32 languages.

The Chinese government has placed enormous resources into relationship and network building, undertaking extensive people-to-people programs in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Eastern Europe. Through such efforts, many hundreds of students, media professionals and policymakers each year are brought to China, often full-freight paid by the Chinese hosts. Emblematic of these wide-ranging efforts are initiatives such as the June 2016 "Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation" and the December 2013 "High-Level Symposium of Think Tanks of China

and Central and Eastern European Countries," which convened hundreds of media and think tank professionals in China. Chinese state-backed Confucius Institutes operate a vast network of cultural influence embedded in universities and schools—more than 1,000 institutes and classrooms operating worldwide. Iran spreads its ideas and influence through international educational exchanges with universities in the Middle East and Eurasia.

Why should we care about this dramatic influence buildup? After all, aren't China, Iran and Russia simply pursuing their own interests? They are, to be sure. But such interests are animated by authoritarian political preferences, which privilege state control above all else, something that is abundantly clear from the way they treat their own media and civil society.

US: Attacker Yells 'Go Back To Your Country' Before Shooting Sikh Man

"With recent unrest and concern throughout the nation this can get people emotionally involved, especially when (the crime) is directed at a person for how they live, how they look," Kasner said

The incident is the latest in a series of troubling cases where members of the Indian community have been targeted in apparent hate crimes.

It comes close on the heels of the tragic shooting in Kansas last month in which 32-year-old Indian engineer Srinivas Kuchibhotla was killed when 51-year old US Navy veteran Adam Purinton opened fire at him and his friend Alok Madasani, yelling "get out of my country".

Earlier this week, Indian-origin convenience store owner Harnish Patel, 43, of Lancaster in South Carolina was found dead of gun shot wounds in his yard. However, police said in Patel's killing his Indian ethnicity does not appear to be a factor.

Jasmit Singh, a leader of the Sikh community in Renton, said he had been told that the Sikh man injured in Friday's incident has been released from hospital.

He said the victim and his family are "very shaken up".

"We're all kind of at a loss in terms of what's going on right now, this is just bringing it home. The climate of hate that has been created doesn't distinguish between anyone," he said.

Singh said that men from his community have reported a

rise in incidents of verbal abuse, "a kind of prejudice, a kind of xenophobia that is nothing that we've seen in the recent past."

He said the number of

incidents targeting members of the Sikh religion, are reminiscent of the aftermath of the September 11 terror attacks.

"But at that time, it felt like the (presidential) administration was actively working to allay those fears," Jasmit Singh said, adding that "now it's a very different dimension."

Advocacy group The Sikh Coalition said it calls upon local law enforcement officials to investigate this shooting as a possible hate crime.

Various rights groups and ethnic Indian organisations are reaching out to people of the community asking them not to succumb to fear and immediately report any incident of hate crime or violence to law enforcement authorities.

The Indo-American Democratic Organisation strongly condemned Kuchibhotla's tragic killing, saying "the circumstances around this horrible crime are incredibly troubling which includes but not limited to: unprovoked violence in a public venue, racial slurs, and a senseless attack against innocent members of the public." It also called on local elected leaders to express outrage over the "unacceptable and appalling" situation and publicly commit to doing what they can to prevent and call out hate crimes across communities.

It said it will continue to "represent the best interests of the local South Asian American

community against the rise of any and all hate crimes and we join in partnership with many other organisations and civic leaders who stand for a more just, safe and equitable country."

India Civil Watch, a collective of Indian-American activists and professionals, called on Indian-Americans to not succumb to fear in the wake of incidents like Kuchibhotla's murder.

The community must get organised in broad coalitions with others who intend to defend immigrant and minority rights, it said. "This is also a moment for Indian communities in the US to reflect, take stock, and prepare for the oncoming weeks and months of struggle against a rising tide of racism and xenophobia," it added.

US suspends expedited processing of H-1B visas

The new ban will exclude existing visa holders, sources familiar with the plan have told CNN. The H-1B visa program is the main pathway for highly skilled foreigners to work at US companies. Various industries, including tech, engineering, journalism, medicine and academia, vie each year for the program's 85,000 visas.

The visas are doled out by a lottery, and the number of applicants continues to swell each year. Last year, the demand was three times greater than the quota.

Outsourcing firms flood the system with applicants, obtaining visas for foreign workers and then farming them out to tech companies. They take a sizable cut of the salary.

While the visas are used to fill the US skills gap, Trump has spoken out about abuse of the

program. A bipartisan bill introduced this week in Congress calls for reform of visas for highly skilled workers.

Lawmakers for years have debated proposals to change the popular H-1B visa program, with suggestions for how to fix it a highly contentious topic.

The proposed legislation would eliminate the lottery system in favor of a "preference system" created by USCIS to give priority to foreign students educated in the US. In doing so, it would aim to weed out foreign outsourcing firms, which are said to exploit the system.

It would also require employers to make a "good faith effort" to recruit American workers over foreigners, as well as give the departments of Homeland Security and Labor more authority to investigate fraud and abuse.

'Authentic' Fake On Sale

That is exactly the kind of error that seven education racketeers in West Delhi were relying upon. The genuine ICSE is a certification granted by 2,100-plus schools in the country. In February 2016, Delhi Police busted a racket that was operating a website called IndianICSE.in.

The police say the racket offered fake degrees for everything from Class X to an MBBS. The website still exists and lists a Bachelor of Law degree as well as degree in education, science, commerce, business studies and several diplomas in technical and vocational training.

Apart from the obvious problem with fake medical, law and other degrees, the existence and operation of such rackets has a direct bearing on dubious bar

enrolments. The police also seized a large number of degree certificates from them, adding these were all fake. (These include the Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University of Bihar, whose graduation certificate former Delhi law minister Jitender Singh Tomar had shown.) Such bachelor's degrees—especially since they are backdated—can be easily coupled with fake or genuine law degrees to obtain an enrolment with a state bar council.

The 'education consultancy' firm used to advertise offering help on any form of educational certification. 'Students' approaching them would be promised and deliver a backdated degree on a certificate that would look very convincing. After enrolments, they would upload first the admit cards and

then the marks on the websites, then deliver the 'degrees'. The cost would range between Rs 10,000 and Rs 2 lakh per certificate.

The website promises a 'temper (read: tamper)-free' hologram and 'special security features'. A large number of private employers now employ the services of forensic consultants who verify degrees and antecedents of potential employees. To beat such intrusion, IndianICSE website has a section that 'verifies' the degree awarded to the 'scholars'. The portal even urges a word of caution to those claiming fraud, "Persons coming across and such publications/ information/ back dated dmc/ and in receipt of letters or emails containing such allegations are requested to ignore the same and bring them to the notice of undersigned".

Many developed countries

offer migration to those with technical skills. Since it offers diplomas in technical education, the IndianICSE website has published a circular directed to embassies and government departments as well. The verification charge for the government and embassies is set at Rs 2,000. Anyone looking to affiliate their study centre with IndianICSE need only send a letter of application with a demand draft for Rs 20,000.

The police say the racket was busted in 2014. The operation conducted by the West District of Delhi Police was indeed impressive, except for one thing: the same racket, operated by the same people, had existed in East Delhi till the police of that district had busted it in 2014. That was called ICS Education at Jalandhar. During the 2014 bust, the racketeers were found distributing fake Class 10 degrees for Rs 42,000 from the

ICSE that has now been busted. The arrested were released on bail and seem to have gone back to the trade, albeit in changed locations.

Another website—not yet busted—runs under the name of The Council of Basic And Technical Education (CBTE), Punjab, and offers the same phone number as IndianICSE. CBTE's website (technicalcouncil.ac.in) even claims to follow the NCERT syllabus. A 'Whois Lookup' reveals that the website's owner is Pawiter Singh, who the Delhi Police (East District) had arrested for the same scam in 2014. Pawiter is registered as a resident of Phillaur in Jalandhar and his phone number (registered with the domain host) went unanswered. Surprisingly, the website had been updated: it was renewed last on October 2016. This means that the scam is still running.

Arts save young Mexicans from crime



MEXICO CITY

Ex-drug addict Fernando Rivera lived through hell as a youth from a poor and violent suburb of Mexico City - until art saved him. Now, aged 24, he smiles as he shows the mask with a skull design that he wears when he creates paintings with a spray-can. After spending time in a rehab clinic, he ended up at the Arts and Crafts Factory (FARO), a network of municipal centers that have saved thousands like him from lives of drugs and violence.

"It is like being shipwrecked and then finding a place of refuge," he tells AFP. The dead bodies of crime victims used to be found at dawn on the spot where the vast warehouses housing the FARO now stand, on the outskirts of the capital. The spot is home to the Eastern FARO, offering free workshops in art, crafts, drama, literature and more to 2,000 locals. Rivera started off at the center six years ago on a photography course and traveled the country taking pictures of folk customs. That led to an interest in social anthropology, a subject he is now studying at university level.

Without the center, he says, "my life would have been totally different." "We are at war here against the gangs to see how you can recruit more young people - with culture or with drugs," says award-winning photojournalist Jesus Villaseca, who teaches at the center. He says authorities have neglected the surrounding Santa Martha Acatitla district. Cracks run through the walls of the nearby houses and the ground, unrepaired following an earthquake. There are two jails in the neighborhood but no university.

That is where the FARO - the acronym means "Lighthouse" in Spanish - comes in. It started 18 years ago and has since spawned three other similar centers in other troubled neighborhoods. One of Villaseca's students, Emiliano Lopez, aged just 12, has been taking photographs since he was six. He specializes in pictures of demonstrations. "Photographing protests is a way to give a voice to people," he says, "and also to express my own complaints." Alam Yael Bernal recalls that his aunt brought him to the center "almost by force" when he was a child. He was living with relatives after seeing his mother killed in a shoot-out that landed his father in jail when Alam was 11. Many of his old schoolmates are either dead, jobless or in gangs. But Bernal, now 23, is studying politics at FARO. He wants to study to become a journalist to report on politics and social justice. On arriving, "I believed in nothing.

Canadian PM Justin Trudeau expected to visit India later this year



New Delhi

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is expected to make a state visit to India later this year, External Affairs spokesperson Vikas Swarup

said in New Delhi. "We expect the Canadian Prime Minister to visit India sometime later this year," Swarup said.

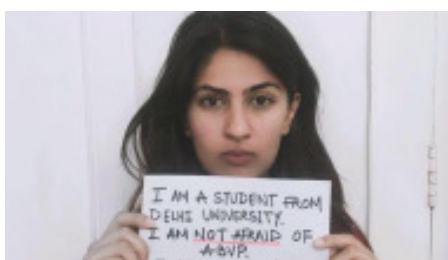
Swarup was speaking at a party organised to bid farewell as he leaves the office of the spokesperson of the Indian External Affairs Ministry. Swarup is headed to Canada where he will take up the position of India's High Commissioner to the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has already visited Canada, becoming the first prime minister in 42 years to visit the North American country while still in office. During Modi's trip, India inked a multi-million-dollar deal for uranium to power its civilian nuclear programme for five years and also inked 13 agreements, including on skill development, following talks with then Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Justin Trudeau, the son of former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, assumed office in November 2015. Canada's population of over 35 million, includes 1.3 million people of Indian origin.

I got rape threats for opposing ABVP, says Kargil martyr's daughter

New Delhi

The Delhi University student, whose social media campaign against ABVP recently went viral, alleged on Sunday to have received "rape threats". Lady Sri Ram Ram College student Gurmehar Kaur, daughter of Kargil martyr Captain Mandeep Singh, said she has attracted a barrage of hate messages over her stand on the issue. "I have been getting a lot of threats on social



media. I think it is very scary when people threaten you with violence or with rape," she told NDTV.

Giving rape threats "in the name of nationalism" is not right, she added. Her comments received widespread support including from Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal. "Just listen to this. THIS is BJP. They will destroy our country. Everyone must rise against their goondaism," he tweeted while sharing her statement. After the North Campus clash,

Kaur had changed her Facebook profile picture holding a placard which read "I am a student from Delhi University. I am not afraid of ABVP. I am not alone. Every student of India is with me. #StudentsAgainstABVP".

Delhi University's Ramjas College had on Wednesday witnessed large-scale violence between members of AISA and ABVP workers. The genesis of the clash was an invite to JNU students Umar Khalid and Shehla Rashid to address a seminar on 'Culture of Protests' which was withdrawn by the college authorities following opposition by the ABVP.



Recipes



DIVINE SPAGHETTI SAUCE

Ingredients:

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 2 (28 ounce) cans whole peeled tomatoes
- 2 (6 ounce) cans tomato paste
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 green bell peppers, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 15 fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 5 tablespoons Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon dried red pepper flakes
- 4 bay leaves
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pound spaghetti

Directions:

In a large skillet, brown beef over medium heat until no longer pink; cut up any remaining chunks of beef and reserve. In a large saucepan, combine whole tomatoes and paste; mash until smooth. Cover and



heat on low. In a large skillet over medium heat, quickly sear onion and celery until transparent; add to tomato sauce in saucepan. In same skillet, saute bell peppers and mushrooms for a few minutes, but do not allow them to become soft; add to tomato sauce. Add Italian seasoning, dried red pepper flakes, bay leaves, basil and garlic to tomato sauce; add beef and mix. Remove cover, simmer over low heat and continue to simmer all day, stirring occasionally. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook for 8 to 10 minutes or until al dente; drain. Add sauce to pasta; serve.

Anaheim Fish Tacos

Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 Anaheim chile pepper, chopped
- 1 leek, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 2 large tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 1/2 pounds halibut fillets
- 1 lime
- 12 corn tortillas

Directions:

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat, and saute the chile, leek, and garlic until tender and lightly browned. Season with salt and pepper.

Mix the chicken broth and tomatoes into the skillet, and season with cumin. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low. Place the halibut into the mixture. Sprinkle with lime juice.



Cook 15 to 20 minutes until the halibut is easily flaked with a fork. Wrap in warmed corn tortillas to serve.

Simple Mexican Rice

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 cup uncooked short-grain white rice
- 1 3/4 cups chicken broth
- 1/4 cup tomato paste

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic; cook and stir until onion is translucent. Stir in the chili powder and cumin, and cook for about 30 seconds. Add the rice, chicken broth and tomato paste, and bring to a boil. Transfer to a 1 quart casserole dish, and cover with aluminum foil or a lid. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until liquid



has been absorbed and rice is tender. Let rest for 3 to 5 minutes before serving.

Quinoa Pudding

Ingredients:

- 1 cup quinoa
- 2 cups water
- 2 cups apple juice
- 1 cup raisins
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon, or to taste
- salt to taste
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Directions:

Place quinoa in a sieve and rinse thoroughly. Allow to drain, then place quinoa in a medium saucepan with water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Cover pan with lid, lower heat, and allow to simmer until all water is absorbed and quinoa is tender, about 15 minutes.

Mix in apple juice, raisins, lemon juice, cinnamon, and salt. Cover pan and



allow to simmer for 15 minutes longer. Stir in vanilla extract. Serve warm.

Amy's Spicy Beans and Rice

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 cup uncooked brown rice
- 2 (15 ounce) cans black beans, undrained
- 2 fresh jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin, or to taste
- 1 tablespoon chili powder, or to taste
- black pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 2 fresh green onions, chopped
- 1/2 (2 ounce) can sliced black olives, drained

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). In a saucepan bring the water to a boil. Add rice and stir. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 40 minutes.

Meanwhile, pour beans into a 2 quart casserole. Sprinkle with jalapenos, cumin, chili powder and



black pepper. Bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes. Sprinkle with cheese, green onions and olives. Bake for 5 to 10 minutes more. Serve beans over cooked rice.

Mexican Cucumber Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 medium cucumber, chopped
- 1 (8.75 ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 (16 ounce) can stewed tomatoes, drained and sliced
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon dried cilantro
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

Directions:

In a large bowl, toss together the cucumber, corn, tomatoes, green bell pepper, red bell pepper, and red wine vin-



egar. Season with crushed red pepper flakes, garlic, cumin, cilantro, salt, and black pepper. Cover, and chill at least 30 minutes before serving.



"I always say 'Jehda mulak apne desh di jawani te paani nu sambhal gaya, us mulak di tarakki nu koi rok ni sakda'." Not everyone can connect to his thoughts. Every word that he utters is so deep that one literally has to read between the lines to match up the level and understand the conversation. A proud Punjabi and more than that an extremely grounded human being, Gurdas Mann's persona

and songs both are certainly an inspiration for the masses.

He is a man, who can brilliantly put his emotions into words and doesn't need catchy lyrics to make his songs popular. Yes, he can talk about a 'Cycle', a 'Roti' or polishing your boots and yet deliver a meaningful message to his listeners. And, this meaningfulness remained an absolute focus of discussion during Gurdas Mann's latest interaction with dailylife. Excerpts!

He is equally updated with today's world as he is authentic with his thoughts. And thus, he is not resentful of today's music industry going digital. "I agree that there are limited 24-25 tunes around which composers are rotating their music. Today, software has become the key composer of music. "However digitalisation cannot take away the essence of music. It's up to an artiste to bring soul to his art," shares Mann. As people wait for his new songs and as he always gives them something new to ponder over, this time also there's a surprise for the admirers...But it's a secret. And for Mann, his latest composition is need of the hour. "Hun wela aa gaya hai ki ohnu bulaya jaaye...Oh kaun hai, eh main dassanga 9 February nu," depicts the teaser of his song. As his new album Punjab releases on February 9, he says, "It is the time when he is necessary to be called upon. And who he is, this I will reveal on February 9."

At a time when everyone is turning a singer in Punjab, Mann rather chooses to talk

about those who are giving quality music to the listeners.

"People may perceive that Punjab is flooded with singers today, but I do listen to those who are singing quality songs. And I really enjoy listening to those fresh voices," he adds. However, at the same time, he believes that the songs that focus on violence and other sort of unnecessary issues are unquestionably not good for the society. "Such songs certainly have an adverse affect on the youth," says Mann, "And, I always say 'Jehda mulak apne desh di jawani te paani nu sambhal gaya, us mulak di tarakki nu koi rok ni sakda'." (No one stop a country from progressing if it successfully preserves its youth and water." Interestingly, we get to know that the legendary singer is not against the rap culture in Punjabi music industry. He says, "In fact, rap is nothing new to us as it's a form of poetry. Once I came across a person, who told me that I have also done rap in one of my songs (smiles). "I like those little quirky nuances that rappers introduce in their songs. But, the idea is to do it in a way that it doesn't deteriorate our music and our people," he asserts.

Meanwhile, Mann shares that his upcoming album features seven songs of different shades and for his, the list was incomplete if he wouldn't have sung a love song. "The entire world is incomplete without love and so, how can I not add a love song in my album," he says. Last but not the least; he calls himself a hard-worker, who works hard to feel alive. "I do that because it's important for me and that's why, I don't believe in the concept of retirement," says Mann while signing off.

Gumilan Kaur

Mann, and his meaningful messages



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Associate Broker/Notary Public



Now buy and sell items on Facebook's Marketplace

New York

In a bid to make inroads into the emerging e-commerce space, Facebook has launched 'Marketplace' - its new user-to-user exchange for buying and selling goods with others in the community on its platform.

Over the next few days, Marketplace will roll out to everyone over 18-years-old in the US, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand on the Facebook app for iPhone and Android. "We will continue expanding to additional countries and make Marketplace available on the desktop version of Facebook in the coming months," Facebook's Director of Product Management Mary Ku said in a post late on Monday.

In recent years, more people have been using Facebook to connect in another way buying and selling with each other. "This activity started in Facebook Groups and



has grown substantially. More than 450 million people visit buy and sell groups, each month from families in a local neighbourhood to collectors around the world," Ku added. Marketplace is a convenient destination to discover, buy and sell items with people in the community.

To visit Marketplace, just tap on the shop icon at the bottom of the Facebook app and start exploring. Marketplace opens with photos of items that people near you have listed for sale.

To find something specific, search at the top and filter your results

by location, category or price.

You can also browse what's available in a variety of categories such as household, electronics and apparel. Use the built-in location tool to adjust the region you're looking in, or switch to a different city altogether.

"When you find something interesting, tap on the image to see more details from the seller, including a product description, the name and profile photo of the seller, and their general location. You can also save the item to find it later," Ku posted.

You can also send the seller a direct message

from Marketplace to tell them you're interested and make an offer.

From that point on, you and the seller can work out the details in any way you choose.

Facebook does not facilitate the payment or delivery of items in Marketplace.

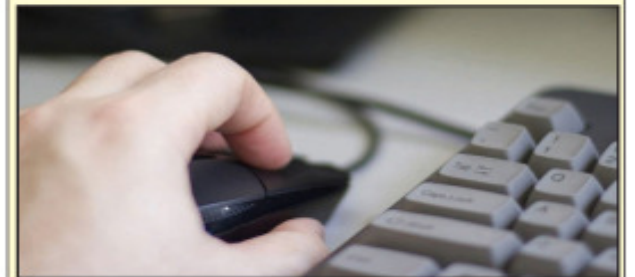
To sell an item in 'Marketplace', take a photo of your item or add it from your camera roll.

Enter a product name, description and price. Confirm your location and select a category.

"To keep track of all of your current and past transactions in Marketplace, visit Your Items section. There, you can view your saved items, products you've posted for sale, and all your messages with people," Ku noted.

Facebook does not allow transactions of illegal items like drugs or explosives. It also bans the sale of firearms, animals, and alcohol, among others.

Know how a single click online can ruin your life!



New Delhi

Technology has made the world a smaller place to live in - bringing shopping marts, banking, entertainment, and above all your friends and relatives closer to you. But did you realize that any unmindful clicking online can put you into deep trouble, and literally ruin your life? Keep the following tips in mind before you browse unknown sites for shopping or downloading content:

1. Must check the url of the site you want to shop from or view on www.scamadviser.com. You will be able to collect all the information about the site.
2. Always put your phone on Guest mode before share with anyone-known or unknown to

you. You must know that there are apps which, when downloaded on your phone, can be used to manipulate your personal data.

3. Avoid clicking on an unknown link on social media sites like Facebook. There could be a Trojan or other malware lurking in those links that can harm your computer or access your personal data.

4. If you own an Android phone, always download apps from Google Playstore. Also, you must not ignore the type of information, an app seeks before you download it from the play store. Its best to keep safe than sharing too much of personal information with the app creator.

Facebook Messenger now lets you encrypt your chat; here's how to do it



New Delhi

After WhatsApp, social networking site Facebook will let you encrypt your chats on Messenger so that it's just between you and your friend. With the test having started in July, Facebook has finally rolled out an end-to-end encryption for its Messenger users

globally. "That means the messages are intended just for you and the other person not anyone else, including us," Facebook said in a post. However, unlike WhatsApp, end-to-end encryption on Facebook Messenger is optional, which means that users will have to set it themselves and is not automatic.

So, here is how to set the end-to-end encryption on your Facebook Messenger.

1. Choose the contact you want to have secret conversation with
 2. Tap on the 'i' icon on the top right
 3. Click on 'Secret Conversations' and choose 'turn on'
- Behold! It's done. And as seen from the setting, it has to be set for an individual by the users. However, there is a catch too - the timer options range from 5 seconds to up to 1 day and the encrypted messages disappear after that. Moreover, the secret messages can only be read on one device.

Google, Apple, Disney out from Twitter acquisition race

San Francisco

Twitter stocks fell significantly after Google and Walt Disney reportedly ruled out to acquire the struggling micro-blogging platform - leaving only Salesforce in the bidding race.

According to a Re/Code report, Twitter's shares dropped 17 percent in pre-market trading on Thursday after "deep-pocketed companies Google, Apple and Walt Disney" were reported to be out from the Twitter buyout race.

Twitter is expected to announce its next quarterly earnings on October 27. According to earlier reports, Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff is "building



a case to Salesforce.com Inc. investors and others that his company should be the buyer." The acquisition of Twitter - struggling to add new users amid stalled growth - may cost over \$20 billion. It currently has 313 million monthly active users. Salesforce is vying for a social networking

platform in its kitty for long. The company, "which reached \$6 billion in annual revenue faster than any other enterprise software company", offers customer service software, market research tools, email marketing systems and other products and several of them already use social media.

HOROSCOPE



Aries

You are kind, affectionate and big-hearted with family and friends

as you celebrate Dussehra this week. Your instinct and intuition lead you in a positive direction in personal and professional matters. You bring material stability and physical well being for the family and yourself with knowledge, discipline and understanding. Do not allow work to become a drudgery but keep your enthusiasm alive. Your ambitions are realized in the coming months if you continue to be persistent in your efforts towards achievement.



Taurus

You make excellent creative and earthy plans, which materialize in the

New Year. Financial investments are gainful. A wonderful idea begins to take shape and you explore your management potential. It is a good time to resolve property matters. You celebrate in lavish style to bring in Dussehra on a joyous note. A journey over land is on the cards. You regain good health and indulge in sporty activity. You are content in relationships. Involvement in art, theatre or media is rewarding. You can start writing a book or working on the garden.



Gemini

It's important to protect yourself from negative influences at home and disruptive

elements at work this week. It's not a good idea to disclose business plans and changes that you are wanting to make in the future as others try to discourage you or steal your ideas. Some assets need to be kept away from family and associates or they have unrealistic expectations. A slow and steady approach allows you to fulfill ambitions and achieve professional goals. You are able to encounter your adversaries without any trepidation. It's best to underplay your hand and keep a low profile this week.



Cancer

You tend to be sentimental and sensitive this week as emotions cloud

your vision, not allowing you to see things as they really are. It's best to assess situations with your head, as well as, with your heart before taking important decisions. A woman, close to you, tends to get easily upset emotionally and take advantage of your good nature. Professional and business matters need to be viewed from a realistic point of view so that finances and material aspects are not ignored.



Leo

You feel unburdened, free and happy during Dussehra celebrations this

week. You are blessed with courage to stand up for values and priorities in personal relationships. A new opportunity expands your vision and horizon. Travel and movement give you a sense of release and freedom from routines and patterns. You delegate responsibility and allow others to flower and grow to their potential. You may not conform to social norms and patterns. Meditation, spiritual pursuit, physical exercise or dancing can be therapeutic.



Virgo

You may be disappointed as you have too great an expectation at work

and in personal relationships. Be realistic. Travel plans may be postponed. Professional ventures should not be overambitious or there could be delay, useful in a way because the right time for lucrative professional investment has yet to come. It is best not be judgmental but watch the turn of events – which can be sudden and unexpected – before things settle down. Anxiety is lifted at the end of the week when monetary situations are resolved.



Libra

Love, pleasure, beauty, grace and happiness manifest in personal

relationships and family scenes this Dussehra. This is a time of endings and new beginnings in professional situations and relationships! Partnerships and business collaborations are balanced, supportive and gainful. Travel and opportunities are on the cards. Be aware of dissipation, idleness and over indulgence. An integrated perspective and a new vision of life and reality is your blessing this week! Your elegant appearance and gentle nature add to the impact you make on people.



Scorpio

Dussehra brings transformation and change in your life this week. You feel

sacrificed to routines and patterns and want to make some changes in relationships and professional projects but have to consider what you give up in the process. Don't be unrealistic about goals. Learn from past experience and get on with your life rather than repeat old patterns. Endings and beginnings are on the cards! A positive attitude in personal relationships brings healing and love. Rescheduling plans and routines may be for the better.



Sagittarius

After a period of labour and strife, this week you complete perfect

unfinished business projects. Important relationships are sealed, as loving commitments are forthcoming. Personal matters and ambitions are best attended to and fulfilled as you are at your dynamic best, blessed with confidence and style. You are balanced in your approach to family and friends, who tend to go to extremes at this point. Lower stress level, or a health problem will become manifest. Dussehra on the 11th brings new beginnings.



Capricorn

You are blessed with the gift of communication on all levels of

consciousness and brings out your creative potential this Dussehra. You work and relate well with people, excel at buying, selling or trading and expand your business. You have choices and find it hard to make decisions as you see both sides of every option. Personal and professional partnerships and priorities become clear and you know who or what is important in your life. Love, romance and travel are on the cards this week! Your social life is enviable and exhausting.



Aquarius

You have great energy to achieve business targets and professional

goals. You are impatient and unable to suffer fools gladly this week. You make quick decisions and follow plans with dynamic energy. Personal relationships are full of romance and passion and you celebrate Dussehra with style and enthusiasm. You can be fiery and outspoken when opposed or attacked by adversaries or competitors. Beware of a proud and bigoted older man who can be disruptive in the work area.



Pisces

Death and rebirth or endings and new beginnings are on the cards as you

celebrate Dussehra this week! You can expect major changes in professional and business aspects, which look destructive but lead to positive situations. Inner transformation of priorities, values and attitudes leads to spiritual growth and understanding. It also leads to voluntary or involuntary, perhaps sudden and unexpected changes. You may restructure office routines, busy schedules, travel plans, work systems, food habits, fitness programs and patterns this week.

An Interview with the creative head of Zara Shahjahan



Zara Shahjahan, the creative head for, Zara ShahJahan brand, ZSJ is known for bringing back the royal motifs and designs in textile industry of Pakistan, which is in conformity, with the royal name of the brand. They have successfully positioned their brand in high street pret collection "COCO by Zara Shahjahan". We got an opportunity, to know the designer and her work.

How did ZSJ brand come into existence? What was the focal vision?

When we established in 2004, the idea was to make state of art fashion, that makes per-

fect sense, to the needs of today's woman. However, as the years have passed by, I feel as though we have grown in many ways, to try and also emulate, our heritage and traditions in our clothing. Our focus now, is to try and keep, our heritage and make luxury fashion, that can be identified as Zara Shahjahan.

What differentiates ZSJ brand from the rest in the industry? Buzz word's associated with ZSJ muse.

As I said earlier, our idea is to echo our Asian heritage and val-

ues, something I believe not many designers are doing now. When people think of Zara Shahjahan they should think of luxury, heritage, handcrafted, ethnic and tradition.

The Lawn Muse Mohali (Komal Minhas Bindra)

S/S 17 Lawn Collection's are out in full steam. Where did you draw the inspiration for your upcoming lawn collection 2017?

We stayed true to our brand identity and created this entire collection around our Asian heritage. From our Mughal fore fathers to modern miniature paintings we tried to embody our sub continental culture. You will see that represented in each of our garments, there is piece of art history behind them. It's important to us to re-iterate, that we want to promote our culture, as it is rich and very beautiful. This lawn, manufactured by Ittehad textiles is something we are very proud of this year.

Why did you select an oriental location like "Vietnam", for the S/S 2017 collection? How does it, influence your collection in terms of designs, themes and visuals?

We debated about this a lot, what Asian location would do justice to our garments. Eventually, we landed in Vietnam, a location

whose artistic culture has ties to ours. Not only was its boundless beauty perfect as the backdrop for our lawn, but also it's interesting cultural representation emulated that of our lawns. Certain, design elements, came from Vietnam for example, we took their symbolism of what cranes and different animals meant for them, and tied it back to our design elements. We want to focus the attention of our audience to Asia and its history.

How have you re-interpreted the unstitched lawn collection for the modern audience?

We decided, that we would go back to older roots, and you'll be able to see that, with the way we have decided to style our lawn.

From shalwars to sharraraha's, we want, the modern woman to be reminded of our ethic culture and be proud to wear it.

One major Lawn trend for 2017 which every woman can wear?

shalwars and ghararas.

Does your company take any measures to preserve the original lawn material and designs from being replicated or counterfeited?

We try, every year, to make sure that our embroideries are as intricate as possible, so as to avoid being replicated, however people are persistent and will always try none the less!



SCRIPT DIRECTION ACTING
CGI STUNTS IMPACT



Chan's masala chops

KUNG Fu Yoga is Jackie Chan's latest brainwave at reloading his familiar circus of excesses. The film adds masala Bollywood kitsch to a standard Indiana Jones routine, and wraps the package with Chan formula. Chan fans of course never look for original concepts. At 62, his chops and kicks are still enjoyable for them, never mind the sheer brainlessness with which the film unfolds. For hardcore fans — and there is still a legion worldwide after all these decades — Kung Fu Yoga is more or less what they look for whenever Chan makes a film. For Chan fans in India, there is the liberal sprinkling of Bollywood garnish. As you watch Hong Kong's export to international cinema shimmy-shake it with Disha Patani and Amyra Dastur, you realise why Jackie weekend REVIEWS WEEKEND Chan endears. The bundle of energy has far from slowed down with

By **Vinayak Chakravorty**

Kung Fu Yoga ★★★
Cast: Jackie Chan, Sonu Sood, Disha Patani, Amyra Dastur, Miya Muqi
Direction: Stanley Tong

age. Director Stanley Tong was merely getting on with usual business. He is an expert at making Jackie Chan movies, having directed quite a few over the decades (Rumble In The Bronx, Police Story 3 and Police Story 4, and The Myth come to mind). Tong's script casts Chan as Jack, an archaeology professor who arrives in India with his team on a hunt for lost ancient treasure. After Jack and company are ambushed by mercenaries,

he must use his history knowhow and kung fu skills to beat the villains to the treasure. Despite its evident Indiana Jones hangover, Kung Fu Yoga never moves away from its basic ambition of setting up a routine Jackie Chan adventure. For that reason, the funny gags as well as action gigs appear rehashed from a zillion times before. Even the CGI effects are amateurish in parts. It is left to Chan to engage the audience. Everyone else including Sonu Sood as the rich desi villain, and Disha Patani and Amyra Dastur as necessary PYT ingredients, are there because the film needed a supporting cast. It's garish, it's gaudy and to say it's giddy would be an understatement. But it's also typically Jackie Chan. Asia's global superstar just served his chops with a sprinkle of masala this time. Go savour if you dig that sort of spicy junk.

SHORT & TWEET



"Master Chan still has a trick or two up his sleeve."

— @yogarewards

"Such a big loss if u didnt watch #KungFuYoga."

— @ZARAAA_LEE

"Bro @SonuSood it's a very proud moment for all Indians that U R featuring with @EyeOfJackieChan."

— @MikaSingh

BLAND & BEAUTIFUL

The Great Wall ★★★
Cast: Matt Damon, Jing Tian, Pedro Pascal, Willem Dafoe, Andy Lau, Zhang Hanyu
Direction: Zhang Yimou

AMUSING, how they are crossing the walls lately. While Jackie Chan hops over to Bollywood with Kung Fu Yoga, Matt Damon has shed his Bourne skin to arrive in Chollywood, baggage of swagger in tow. The Great Wall seems to bank solely on flaunting a Hollywood superstar's charisma in a Chinese biggie. The film is directed by Zhang Yimou, ace at handling the martial arts epic — past hits such as Hero and House Of Flying Daggers would testify. Yimou's latest, though, hardly sees him break new ground, either by way of style or substance. The film is an assembly-line Chinese period fiction drama that halfheartedly tries creating the odd larger-than-life blast. Damon is cast as mercenary warrior William Garin, who is held captive within the Great Wall of China. During his imprisonment, Garin unearths the mystery of the Wall. Fantasy combines with history as deadly monsters attack the Wall. Garin the soldier of fortune decides to

join the army of elite Chinese warriors in their war against the destructive beasts. The film tries involving too many things. Yimou's attempt was perhaps to set off an action explosion that would at the same time intrigue as fantasy, dole out a slice of history and package it all in melodrama topped by the presence of a talismanic Hollywood star. The outcome is a product that does not quite manage to get any one element right. Almost everything about The Great Wall appears halfbaked. Sure, there is the mandatory quota stunts and costume drama glitz. These, however, have become commonplace in cinema of this genre and do not necessarily stand out as USP anymore. Matt Damon fans will still go, of course, to check out their star's exotic crossover in glamour. For Damon, however, the film is a big misadventure. Normally not known to make wrong career choices, The Great Wall is clearly an epic slip on part of the dapper Hollywood superstar. —

— Vinayak Chakravorty

SCRIPT DIRECTION ACTING
CGI STUNTS IMPACT



SHORT & TWEET

"Over a billion people and they couldn't find ONE Chinese actor to lead?"

— @VainandAble

"It is incredible how out of place Matt Damon looks in

THE GREAT WALL."

— @staypuffed

"How about 'Tiananmen Square' starring Charlie Sheen. F**k off Hollywood."

— @junghulee

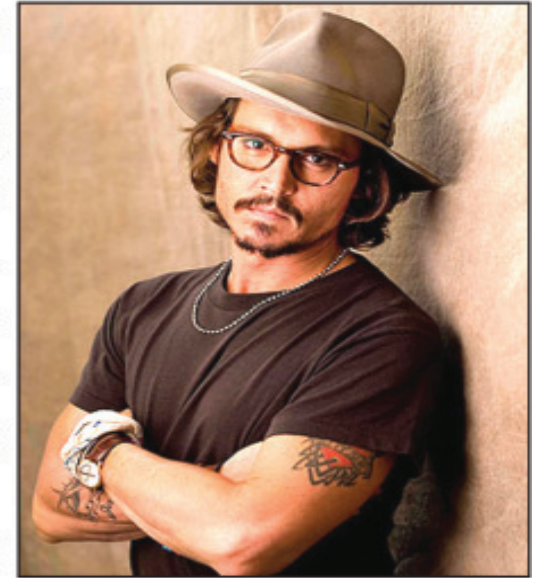
Blake Lively is a better kisser than Andrew Garfield, says Ryan Reynolds



Actor Ryan Reynolds says that his actress wife Blake Lively is way better in the kissing department than actor friend Andrew Garfield. While receiving Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatricals group award, the 40-year-old actor admitted that although Garfield is a great kisser but not better than his wife, reported US Magazine. "I'm going to go with my wife on that one, for a number of reasons. Make no mistake, Andrew Garfield is a wonderful kisser. Very generous," Reynolds said. Earlier this week, Garfield joked that kissing the "Deadpool" star at the 2017 Golden Globe Awards was "a ridiculous thing".

Johnny Depp is so broke he had to fire his agent?

Actor Johnny Depp is reportedly in such financial turmoil that he fired his longtime Hollywood agent and made a deal with a rival agency. Last October, Depp walked away from UTA's Tracey Jacobs, the famed agent who in 1988 took him from "21 Jump Street" and made him into an international movie superstar. A source told pagesix.com: "Depp told Jacobs and UTA he no longer wanted to pay their commissions. But they pushed back." So the "Pirates of the Caribbean" star jumped ship to CAA, which gave him a better deal. About CAA's lower commissions, another source said: "They don't do blue-light specials." But as far as Depp's finances, the agency was "sensitive to it when he signed". On Depp leaving UTA, the source added: "He was with Tracey Jacobs for a gajillion years - their relationship had run its course. He was looking for a change." CAA and UTA declined to comment. Last week, it was revealed in documents filed by Depp's business managers that he spends \$2 million a month.



Ryan Gosling not sure if Eva Mendes will join him at the Oscars



Ryan Gosling is one of the top contenders for best actor at this year's Academy awards, but the actor is not sure if his lady love Eva Mendes would be his Oscar

date. The 36-year-old actor, who is nominated for his role in musical "La La Land," said he still doesn't know if his partner will join him on what can be the

biggest nights of his life, reported Entertainment Tonight. "Oh, I'm not sure. It's still a little while away," Gosling said when asked if his longtime love would be joining him at the Oscars. The father of two also shared that Mendes came up with one of most memorable lines of "La La Land". "LA worships everything and values nothing." That was something my lady said to me one day and I thought it was so funny I asked her if I could put it in the movie. "She was kidding, but it's a funny thing to say... I loved when she said it, because it's funny enough to have some truth to it, you know? But it's obviously a joke, so it just seemed appropriate for the movie."

Is Pamela Anderson dating Wikileaks founder Julian Assange?



Actress Pamela Anderson has sparked dating rumours with Julian Assange after her frequent visits to the Wikileaks founder here. Anderson has visited Assange, who has been camping out at the Ecuadorean embassy for five years, five times in the past

four months: on October 15, November 13 and December 7 and 12. Most recently, she was seen at his residence on January 21 with a bag full of Whole Foods groceries, reports pagesix.com. A political activist said: "(Pamela) seems to be wearing sexier outfits every time she visits." Anderson and Assange share a mutual appreciation for Russia. Assange is believed to be well-connected to the Kremlin as much of his best material is said to come from Russian hackers while Anderson recently said she would love to become a Russian citizen.

Robert Pattinson and FKA Twigs go on dinner date



Robert Pattinson and his fiancée and singer FKA Twigs were seen in public for the first time after they had reportedly cancelled their wedding due to family issues some weeks ago. They were photographed having dinner here on Sunday evening, reports aceshowbiz.com. In some photographs, the couple is seen trying to walk past

photographers. The 30-year-old actor went casual in a beanie and a pair of sneakers as he kept his body warm in a dark jacket, while Twigs looked chose a green plunging, sleeveless top with her coat draped around her arms. Pattinson has been keeping his relationship with Twigs under the radar since they started dating in late 2014.

Mariah Carey's pregnancy advice to Beyonce Knowles

Singer Mariah Carey has warned pregnant singer Beyonce Knowles that carrying twins is "hard". Carey is thrilled that her friend is expecting two babies with husband Jay Z, but found during her own experiences carrying her and former spouse Nick Cannon's children Moroccan and Monroe, 5, that a multiple pregnancy takes its toll. "The last time I saw her, I was doing my Christmas (show in New York), and she came to my show and brought her daughter. It was really, really sweet," Carey told etonline.com.



"I just wish her and Jay all the best. It's really hard having twins. I just mean in general, going through the physicality of having twins was really, really difficult for me. I had a tough time," she added.

After quitting last year, Justin Bieber is back on Instagram!



Singing sensation Justin Bieber has returned to Instagram after quitting in August last year. The Canadian pop star has returned to the photo-sharing social media platform, as a part of huge Super-bowl campaign by a mobile perator company. The 22 year-old shared a video with his fans online, captioned "Let me see your #unlimitedmoves", which is a part of the #UnlimitedMoves spot for the big game.

8 Bollywood Celebs Who Are Younger Than Their Wives

Mark Twain has rightly said that age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter. We have all seen ageing heroes romancing young heroines, but dynamics of love are changing rapidly. The age bar has taken a backseat, and many of our Bollywood celebs are setting the right example in this context. Be it huge or little, age difference has never come in the way of romance of these Bollywood couples. Here is a look at some of the most successful couples in Bollywood, who took the plunge and got married despite their age differences:

Shirish Kunder and Farah Khan



Film Editor turned Director (of mega-flops like Joker) Shirish Kunder is 8 years younger than his wife, Farah Khan. Shirish was the Editor of Farah's directorial debut Mai Hoon Naa. Their friendship on the sets soon changed into love. The society odds like 8-year age gap, and different religions too could not stop these two love birds from being one. They got married in 2004, and are blessed with two daughters and a son. In Farah's words: "I don't know if one is reborn or not, but if it were so, then I would like to marry Shirish in my second birth too."

Abhishek Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai



The power couple of Bollywood- Abhishek and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, also has this age- angle to their love story. A 38 year Abhishek is two years younger than his wife- Aishwarya. After much speculation concerning their relationship, the couple got married on April 20, 2007. Age difference, Aishwarya's Manglik yog, or a heart-broken Vivek, there was nothing that could stop the two of them from tying the knot. This is such an adorable couple of Bollywood that their two-year old daughter, Aaradhya, has already become a 'celebrity' much.

Farhan Akhtar- Adhuna Bhabani



Director-turned-actor, Farhan Akhtar is married to Adhuna Bhabani, who is six years older than him. Adhuna met Farhan when he was still writing the script for Dil Chahta Hai. They got married in the year 2000, and are blessed with two daughters.

Aditya Pancholi and Zarina Wahab



After surviving quite a few turbulences, Zarina and Aditya have been married for almost 28 years now. Aditya, who is 6 years younger than his wife, considers age was never a problem for them. Fortunately, even their families were very supportive of their marriage. Zarina believes that it is destiny that brought them together, and their love for each other has kept their marriage strong.

Arjun Rampal and Mehr Jessie



Even after over a decade of marriage, actor Arjun Rampal seems to be madly in love with his wife. Arjun tied the knot with the former super model Mehr Jessie in 1998. Mehr is two years older than Arjun, and the couple is blessed with two daughters.

Their love exemplifies the commitment of life-time in every true sense.

Sunil Dutt and Nargis



Legendary actor Sunil Dutt got married to Nargis, who was a year older, and also a bigger star than him at that time. Their relationship began when Sunil Dutt saved her from the fire that broke out on the sets of the 1957 film Mother India. Once Nargis wrote to Sunil, "Darling, don't get angry, but remember even if I die, I will always be there with you spiritually. I am so much attached to you that even death can't take me away completely from you." We must say, when love speaks such a refreshingly vibrant language, age certainly becomes an inconsequential number.

Parmeet and Archana



After going through a failed marriage, Archana met Parmeet Sethi at a friend's place and hit it off instantly. Parmeet, who is seven years younger than Archana says, he was bowled over with her beauty and grace. They had a live-in relationship for four years. Parmeet's parents were against their marriage, but against all the odds, the two got married. They have been together for more than 20 years now, and are still very much in love. In Archana's words: "Had age been the paramount criterion, then so many marriages with the right age ratio would not have fallen apart."

Raj Kundra & Shilpa Shetty



The 39 years old long-legged lass of Bollywood, Shilpa is three months older than her husband. Raj and Shilpa met often during the launch preparations of Shilpa's perfume, S2, and in no time fell in love. Supposedly, Raj always harboured a special place for Shilpa in his heart. They tied the knot on November 22, 2009. Shilpa in an interview to a leading newspaper said that it wasn't love at first sight for her, but it was for him.

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