



INSIDER

Voice of South Asian Community Since March 2002

Vol. 14 Issue 35 Wednesday 10 May to 16 May, 2017 \$1 www.thesouthasian.info

In Ransomware Attack, Where Does Microsoft's Responsibility Lie?



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Shah Rukh Khan on his TED talk debut



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Why Is Trump So Angry?

The President's uncontrollable rage powers his ruthlessness and his ineptitude.



(Special Report) Donald Trump is upset. He's not happy about America's preoccupation with the "Russia narrative." He's angry that we're bothered by the possible damning ties between his campaign and a hostile foreign power. He's seething over the Senate Judiciary Committee's insolent insistence on scrutinizing his people. "He would sometimes scream at television clips about the probe," Politico reports, in a piece that characterizes the president as "enraged" and "fuming." He has sent furious tweets.

(Contd on page 22)

End Of A Dream

Kapil Mishra's charges conclusively prove that the AAP is now just another political party, that too a below average one.

(Special Feature) Allegations of corruption against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his trusted lieutenant Satyendra Jain have turned a dream into a nightmare. Not because we believe those allegations. Nobody believes charges made by a loser. Kapil Mishra, the former water minister in the Kejriwal government, (Contd on page 20)



Forced Surrogacy

Trafficked, traded, enslaved, raped and made to conceive babies for adoption. Adivasi girls are turned into baby-making machines that fetch Rs 1-4 lakh per child.

(Insider Bureau) There's something almost eerily Nazi about this. Not in terms of formal politics, of course. Only ordinary people are involved here. But their actions speak of a rarefied universe of cruelty—elevated to an organised, clinical, coldly amoral enterprise. At the heart of it is the idea that one can exert absolute control over another's body. The terms of abuse go beyond even sadism; the human body here is just a device and also its product. The stories offer no great cause for optimism, but avoiding the dark dramas, and pretending they don't exist, is precisely what allows them to grow. The first story. We'll call her Soni, as many of them are indeed called—an adivasi name that



contains resonances. She is at an undisclosed location in Bihar at present, in hiding, fearing for her life, recuperating from the injuries to her soul. She breaks down often over the phone as she narrates her story.

(Contd on page 21-22)



New Delhi must ensure that rights of NRIs in Saudi Arabia are protected

It is not enough if the ministry of external affairs intervenes to rescue Indians trapped in West Asia. The government must get assertive to ensure that cases of human rights violations, especially as seen in Saudi Arabia, are not passed off as a routine matter

(By Our Staff Reporter) It's a dream of a better life that has been conclusively shattered. Recently the ministry of external affairs (MEA) had to step in to rescue 24 Indians "held captive" by a company in Saudi Arabia over salary disputes. The matter was brought to the notice of the MEA after Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik sought the help of external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj. This is not an isolated incident. Last month a woman from Hyderabad who was reportedly "sold and tortured" in Saudi Arabia was rescued after Ms Swaraj intervened. In March, after the Telangana

government approached the MEA, 29 workers held captive in Saudi Arabia were rescued. In July, the MEA intervened to help more than 10,000 Indian workers who had lost their jobs in Saudi Arabia and were short on food supplies.

Like a record stuck in a loop, horror stories of Indians working in West Asia, especially Saudi Arabia, keep repeating themselves with frightening frequency. Most of the times it runs like this: On the promise of better pay and working conditions Indians go to the Gulf but are duped into working in inhuman conditions; they send out

messages pleading for help and finally the MEA steps in to their rescue.

In many cases Ms Swaraj has personally intervened to ensure the safe return of these NRIs. The role of the ministry in this matter has been nothing short of commendable. But rather than effectively dousing fires, the effort should be to prevent it. Unauthorised recruitment agencies and visa dealers are the main culprits here. They sell false promises and trap gullible people who often realise their plight much later.

The government on its side has mechanisms to prevent such fraud: It has



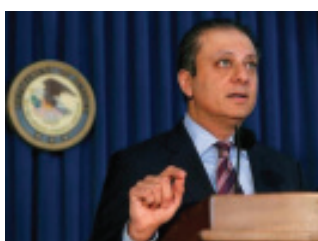
advised job seekers to go through recognised employment agencies. To assist, the MEA and Indian embassies in the host countries have special cells.

But, as repeated cases show, more needs to be done. Of course, the primary focus of the government should be on providing avenues for employment here in India, which would

prevent this economic migration. But until then, to stop this trend, those dealing in illegal labour export must face stricter punishment and there's a need for more awareness through effective ICTs. New Delhi, on its part, must also get assertive on ensuring that such cases of human rights violations are not passed off as a routine matter. While India still

imports most of its oil and gas, West Asia is not the market dictator it used to be. Shale gas from the United States and Iran's re-entry into the market has weakened the Arab oil card and India, the buyer, is at an advantage here. This coupled with the Modi governments positive outreach to countries across the region should help the case of such NRIs.

Very proud of my Indian heritage, Preet Bharara says



(By Our Staff Reporter) New York: India-born former top federal prosecutor in Manhattan Preet Bharara said he is very proud of his Indian heritage which made him more compassionate and tolerant towards other people.

Bharara, who was fired by President Donald Trump as US Attorney for the Southern District of New York after he refused to quit, is now a distinguished scholar in residence at New York University's School of Law where he continues working on issues like criminal and social justice, honest government, national security, and corporate accountability.

"I am an American, I happen to be an Indian-American. I am very proud of my background, my roots and my heritage. I am a huge Springsteen fan ... but I also listen to Bhangra music, which is a kind of Punjabi music," Bharara said during a conversation

last week with New York University's School of Law Dean Trevor Morrison here.

Asked about his heritage and background has shaped his personal and professional life, Bharara said he comes from a multi-cultural background and his children know about their "Indian heritage and also about being American".

Bharara said people

would ask him whether his being of Indian heritage and member of a minority group made him more compassionate and tolerant towards other people. "I say I suppose it does. But what has mattered more to how I think about things is not the fact that I am an Indian-American but that I am an immigrant," he said adding that he and his family are grateful to what America

has given them. He recalled how his father came to the US with nothing but 40 years later his son became the chief federal law enforcement officer in the financial capital of world. "The first Indian-American US attorney appointed by the first African-American President. That is not a small thing in the minds of some people ... So I began to appreciate that," he said.

Three of Britain's four wealthiest are Indians



(By Our Staff Reporter) The wealthiest persons in Britain are India-born, according to the Sunday Times Rich List 2017 which places the Hinduja brothers Srichand and Gopichand+ at the top of 134 billionaires. The brothers' estimated riches: 16.2 billion pounds, 3.2 billion pounds more than last year. Overall, the United Kingdom has witnessed, contrary to all expectations, what can only be described as a Brexit boom. Its billionaires are richer than before, so much so that the combined wealth of the top 500 individuals and families is more than the total put up by last year's wealthiest 1,000, the Sunday Times reported. And there are more of them; together, they have earned a staggering 658 billion pounds, a record. The list compiler credited their growing fortunes to a revival in the stock market. David and Simon Reuben, of Iraqi Jewish origin but Mumbai-born, have slipped from first to third place this year+ with an estimated wealth of 14 billion pounds. Steel magnate Lakshmi N Mittal is fourth with 13.2 billion pounds; the increase in his wealth from last year is quite phenomenal at 6.1 billion pounds.

I was done with him: Preet Bharara on not returning Trump's call

(Agencies) New York: India-born former top federal prosecutor Preet Bharara, who received a phone call from US President Donald Trump just two days before being fired, said he "was done with" the American leader and did him a favour by not returning his call.

"I was doing everyone a favour by not returning the call. I was doing the President a favour by not returning the call," Manhattan's former prosecutor said during a conversation last week with New York University's School of Law Dean Trevor Morrison.

Two days before he was fired, 48-year-old Bharara had received a phone call from Trump's office asking him to call the President back. Bharara did not return the call. Asked if he had considered returning that call, Bharara said

there are lots of regulations regarding how contact should be made between the White House and the Justice Department.

"This is a man who campaigned day after day after day on the argument that (former President) Bill Clinton met with the sitting Attorney General during the pendency of an investigation," Bharara said, referring to the controversial meeting in Phoenix between Clinton and Loretta Lynch. Trump had repeatedly said during the campaign trail that he did not believe that talks about investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server had not come up during that meeting between her husband and Lynch and that the two had just talked about their grandchildren and other frivolous things.

Donald Trump is CEO of the country, can fire anyone he wants: Nikki Haley



Haley said she believed that the criticism of Trump stems from discomfort with his propensity to act on his decisions.

"The president is the CEO of the country," Indian-origin Haley told ABC News Chief Anchor George Stephanopoulos on "This Week" on Sunday. "He can hire and fire anyone he wants."

She was responding to a question if she found herself having to explain to foreign diplomats Trump's domestic policy decisions.

"I think what you can see is that this is a president of action," she said of Trump. "The reason people are uncomfortable is because he acts."

Asked whether the president sought a pledge of loyalty from her, Haley replied, "No".

At the same time, she said that during her tenure as South Carolina's governor demonstrations of "loyalty and trust" were important to her.

Regarding the president's tweet this week warning the fired FBI director that he better hope there are no "tapes" of their private conversations, Haley seemed unconcerned by the possibility that the president was taping conversations. "I assume I'm being taped everywhere," she said. Haley also addressed a range of other topics, including North Korea's latest missile launch Saturday night. She said there is a growing international

consensus to impose further sanctions on North Korea over its nuclear programme and that the US will "tighten the screws" on North Korean President Kim Jong Un's government.

Trump has said in the past that he would be willing to sit down with Kim Jong Un, but Haley said such a meeting would only happen if North Korea meets certain conditions. "A missile test is not the way to sit down with the president," Haley said.

On May 10, Trump fired 56-year-old Comey, abruptly removing the top sleuth overseeing a criminal probe into whether the Trump campaign colluded with the Russian government to influence the 2016 presidential election.

(Agencies) New York : US President Donald Trump is "CEO of the country, he can fire anyone he wants", America's envoy to the UN Nikki Haley has said, while defending him for firing former FBI director James Comey.

Indian man, in US for nearly two decades, ordered deported

(Agencies) Los Angeles : An Indian man who fled persecution in home country and has been in the US for nearly two decades was detained in California after losing his latest appeal over a deportation order.

Gurmukh Singh, who is married to an American citizen and has two daughters, was taken into custody on Monday by federal agents after failing to get a stay in his case, his attorney and family said.

The 46-year-old Sikh taxi driver from Punjab state sneaked into the United States without a visa through the border with Mexico in 1998.

He later applied for asylum, citing religious persecution. But his family and lawyer say he failed to properly pursue the case and was ordered deported.

Singh married a US citizen in 2010 but his deportation case resurfaced when he applied for a residency visa in 2012 given his new status.

He was subsequently jailed for about five months but after rights activists posted his bail, he was released and his case has since been going through the appeals process.

His family said in the past several years, he had been checking in with the office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on a regular basis pending the outcome of his appeals against the deportation order. Alexis Perez Nava, with Resilience Orange County, a group helping with his case, said Singh was detained on Monday after the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals denied a request to quash the deportation order.

"We are completely devastated. This has completely broken us apart, emotionally and physically," Singh's 18-year-old daughter Manpreet told AFP. She said her father has no criminal record, had always paid his taxes and just sought to "live a normal life and feed his family."

Indian-origin couple's murder in US: Family in shock

(Agencies) Mangaluru : The relatives of Raynah Prabhu, a native of Mangaluru who was gunned down with her husband Naren Prabhu at their Willow Glen home in San Jose (USA), are in a state of shock. Raynah's relatives - mother Lila Sequeira, 86, and sisters Diana and Zina - have left for the US to attend the funeral scheduled for May 10. Lila was born and brought up in Karambar near Mangaluru International Airport in Bajpe. She moved to Mumbai when she was 20. Later, she married Stephen Sequeira, a businessman.

"The couple has four daughters - Ina, Raynah, Diana and Zina," recalled Wilfred Mathias, Raynah's cousin who is an electrical contractor and local politician in the coastal

town. Wilfred, who presently stays at Raynah's ancestral home, added that she visited the house on several occasions when she was young. "She loved to call herself a Mangalorean," Wilfred added. Raynah married Naren 25 years ago and migrated to the US in 1997. The couple visited Mangaluru 20 years ago, when Rachel, their daughter, was a child. Her sister Ina is also settled in the US. Naren was the vice-president at Sunnyvale-based Juniper Networks. However, Lila has many relatives in and around Bajpe and Mangaluru. She would visit Mangaluru often. "During the feast of Nativity of Mother Mary on September 8 last year, my aunt (Lila) was here. That time, she received compensation for



handing over the property to Mangaluru airport for its expansion. Before that, she participated in an ordination ceremony of her relative in April."

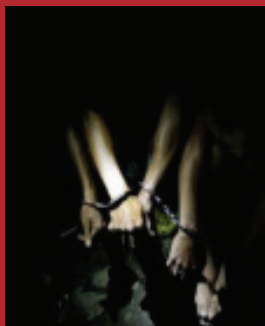
On May 5, Prabhu and

Raynah were fatally shot by Rachel's spurned former boyfriend Mirza Tatlic, 24. Before being shot down by police, Mirza had briefly held the couple's 13-year-old son hostage.

Three Indian-origin South Africans held for medical school scam

(Agencies) Johannesburg : Three Indian-origin South Africans have been arrested in a massive corruption scam for allegedly selling seats to Indian students to study medicine and other health

sciences courses at a university in the country. Varsha, 44, and Hiteshkumar Bhatt, 46, owners of 'Little Gujarat' restaurant in Durban as well as Preshni Hiramun, 55, a



school teacher, are facing charges. They were a part of a syndicate allegedly selling places to study medicine and other health science courses at the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where racial quotas restrict the number of places for Indian students.

The trio were later granted bail of over \$3,000 each

when they appeared in court on Monday and were charged with fraud and contravention of the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act.

The arrest of the accused follows a sting operation by the weekly Sunday Tribune.

A reporter posing as a parent was allegedly told by Hiramun, a former teacher at a government school, that places for studying pharmacy could be secured for \$18,987 while a place for studying to qualify as a doctor would cost twice that amount.

The three accused faced raids on their homes and businesses by members of the elite Hawks Organised Crime Unit and spent the weekend in jail.

At Hiramun's home, laptops were found hidden in a washing machine. Hawks investigator Mandla Mkhwanazi told the court that more arrests were likely as the investigation continued, with possible links to a second university in the country, but would not give details due to the sensitive nature of the probe.

It is time to shed these 'watershed' moments in Kashmir

From 'time to act' to 'about time the Kashmiri issue is settled', the response of those who shape our national discourse has grown stale. The Indian Army oversteps and ties up an innocent Kashmiri to a jeep as a human shield and we are told the army leadership must be more mature. When militants kill an unarmed soldier, our conscience-keepers take the high moral ground and decry violence.



Every time violence rocks Kashmir, inflicting more human misery, the immediate aftermath is invariably followed by a set pattern of platitudes.

From 'time to act' to 'about time the Kashmiri issue is settled', the response of those who shape our national discourse has grown stale. The Indian Army oversteps its limits and ties an innocent Kashmiri to a jeep as a human shield and we are told the army leadership must be more mature. When militants kill an unarmed soldier, our conscience-keepers take the high moral ground and decry violence.

The talk is also peppered with suggestions that the Indian government must do what it takes to win over alienated Kashmiri youth. The die-hard nationalists amongst us call for decisive action.

But as we talk, Kashmir continues to hurtle towards more chaos and anarchy. The sound bites clearly lack substance with the rhetoric failing both the Kashmiris and us.

But amid the orchestrated din, what is not asked is what purpose all the talk serves if it is not implementable. It is easy to say that the government now must seize the initiative in the aftermath of the unarmed soldier's killing. Or, that the alienated Kashmiri youth must be won over.

But no one seems interested in giving us a blueprint as to how.

A r m c h a i r commentary by eloquently holding forth on the Kashmir imbroglio that has defied

a solution over decades is certainly far easier.

But it is time to cut out the empty talk and get down to some work. A day after the soldier's killing, the Army said it was a 'watershed moment'. True, some Kashmiris have condemned the killing of a local by militants, but

we still need to know how the moment translates into a watershed. Does the Army expect one killing to turn the mood on the ground against the militants? Or will it serve as provocation to let loose the State machinery with fuller might? And why on earth

Three years after becoming PM, the pradhan sevak has not lost his magic touch

Three years ago, on May 16, the people of this country put a stamp of approval on Narendra Damodardas Modi becoming Prime Minister. In response Modi had politely described himself as pradhan sevak (principal servant). Three years later, it may be appropriate to ask how Modi has fared during his tenure of service.

The people's verdict can be interpreted as a report card for most politicians. He has done well on this parameter. Whether it was smaller civic body elections in Mumbai and Delhi, or the assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, Modi was the BJP's face. In the beginning his party may have faced defeat in the Delhi and Bihar assemblies, but in the other elections it got the numbers required for a majority. How do you see it? Modi has emerged as the boldest incumbent prime minister since Indira Gandhi.

Whether it is talking tough with China, teaching a lesson to terrorists flourishing in Pakistani territory or suddenly deciding to stop circulation of large

currency notes, he has displayed an irrepressible capacity to take big decisions. The people have appreciated this because the largest democracy in the world has discovered that it has the capability to become a powerful nation. That is why it has begun to admire strong leaders. Narendra Modi and his colleagues recognise this.

Modi also knows that many of the promises that he made haven't been fulfilled. The incidence of Maoist terror hasn't come down despite demonetisation. Pakistan has responded to the surgical strikes by mutilating our soldiers. The stone-pelters are back in Kashmir. The promises to create one crore jobs every year and depositing Rs 15 lakh in every account are yet to be met. The Opposition was expecting that after the passage of two years, the shadows of unfulfilled promises will take some sheen off Modi's magic. Even the brute majority enjoyed by Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi was eclipsed by these factors. But the results of the five assembly

would the Kashmiri youth come around, after being on the other side so steadfastly for so many years?

In the absence of clarity, we can only speculate. We are also forced to speculate about almost everything that is talked about, from weaning away

youth to our side to ending violence has come to nothing. Amid all the noise that we hear, we have not heard anything on how exactly India plans to win hearts and minds. As copious tears are shed on the plight of Kashmir, the region promises more bloodshed. Empty talk

has not changed anything on the ground for almost 30 years. It will not even in the future. For a window of opportunity to open itself, we should stop the talk and get down to some real business. A concrete road map is the need of the hour.



elections have dashed the Opposition's hopes. The reasons are clear. Over the past three years, the Prime Minister and his ministers have set new records for productivity and hard work. There is no significant corruption charge against his colleagues or him. Not just this, on every occasion, Modi has projected himself as a person from humble origins. You would remember that after attaining a majority, before climbing up the flight of stairs, Modi had touched the steps of Parliament with his forehead like a devotee.

That is not all. The way he has addressed issues such as VIP culture, cleanliness and

patriotism have touched the people's hearts. The common man loves his way of doing things.

It is not as if there is a drought of honest and hardworking leaders in the country. Their political adversaries don't raise questions over the personal integrity and honesty of Nitish Kumar in Bihar and Manik Sarkar in Tripura. I also wanted to mention Arvind Kejriwal in this list of upright CMs but... The PM's penchant for change management has compelled the Opposition space to shrink. When he faced criticism about wearing a suit priced at Rs 10 lakh and that his was a 'suit-boot' government, instead of defending

himself with words focused on changing his appearance.

He realises that no electoral victory is meaningful without a strong organisational structure. Which is why he appointed his trusted colleague Amit Shah to the post of party president. As was expected, Shah has not left any stone unturned in making the BJP relevant in the current context. Today if some of the faces of the party are people who earned their spurs in the RSS shakhas, there are other office-bearers who've studied at Wharton and Cambridge. If army generals occupy key party positions, so do farmers.

Digital Insecurity Is the New Normal

The latest widespread ransomware attack, which has locked up computers in nearly 150 countries, has rightfully captured the world's attention. But the focus shouldn't be on the scale of the attack and the immediate harm it is causing, or even on the source of the software code that enabled it (a previous attack against the National Security Agency). What's most important is that British doctors have reverted to pen and paper in the wake of the attacks. They've given up on insecure digital technologies in favor of secure but inconvenient analog ones.

This "back to analog" moment isn't just a knee-jerk, stopgap reaction to a short-term problem. It's a rational response to our increasingly insecure internet, and we are going to see more of it ahead.

As part of our research, in 2015 we developed a scenario for the not-so-distant future called "the New Normal," in which consumers' baseline belief has flipped from "the internet is basically safe unless I do something stupid" to "the internet is fundamentally insecure, a dangerous neighborhood in which my safety is always at risk." The impetus for the flipping in that scenario was a flurry of larger, ever more visible hacking attacks — of personal email accounts (Colin Powell and John Podesta) and corporate data (Yahoo and Sony), not to mention bank account information. Last week's ransomware attack may start to tip a significant proportion of internet users over the edge.

The surprise is not that the frequency of such attacks is accelerating; it's that it took so long. There are at least three reasons for this acceleration. First, the internet has a fundamentally insecure infrastructure that was initially made for interoperability among a small number of trusted parties, but is now being used by billions who do not know and should not trust one another. The second reason is that increasingly inventive criminals have become today's most ambitious internet entrepreneurs. Their work has been made easier by the theft of powerful hacking tools created by and for state security agencies but now available for sale.

Third is the commercial innovation imperative. Consumer demand for digital devices and services keeps pushing companies to the limits of what is technically possible, and then pressing them to go even a little bit further, where security often becomes nice to have but not a necessity.

Silicon Valley has responded creatively, but there's no silver bullet. Experts have encouraged us all to use two-factor authentication, but text messages can be intercepted even with it. We've moved to biometrics, but once a fingerprint or iris scan is stolen, there is no way to change it the way you can change a password. Such security measures are better than nothing, but they won't repair the internet's underlying structural flaws.

So what would it mean if we crossed the threshold to digital insecurity? One possibility is that some things we now take for granted — from banking online to electronic medical records — will shift from being seen as common sense to being viewed as scary, dangerous, even reckless.

We know what it looks like when expectations of security in physical environments degrade: People put triple locks on their doors, retreat into gated communities, look over their shoulder as they walk down the street. In our scenario, we've imagined the digital equivalent. Will you soon be asked to place your phone and laptop in a locker before you are allowed to enter an office building or a friend's home? Will you tell your colleagues to call you before they send you an email with an attachment?

Governments will start worrying more about protecting themselves than about innovating in services. Industries like health care and finance will go back to basics. Getting paper money from a bank teller may be less a novelty than a necessity. What happens if your hospital has fully converted to digital X-rays and doesn't have an analog backup machine lying around? (The British National Health Service is already finding out).

A society and economy that moves in this direction would be different from the one we have today, and very different from what Silicon Valley is looking to build. Security needs to be made a priority at least as great as innovation right now. We recognize that the consequences of prioritizing security are not all good, and the slowing or reversal of digitization will be a significant headwind for the United States economy even more than for other countries, at a time and in a political environment that really can't afford such a setback. But there is no other viable choice. You can't fix a broken foundation by simply building more stories atop the house that rests on it.

The world spends a lot of time right now thinking and dreaming about how life will be digitized, mostly for the better. We don't yet have a word for even a partial "return to analog," but we will have to start looking for one at the same time as we work to create a much more secure internet.

Russia is playing games with Trump and pushing its own global agenda

Russia has gone from complaining about not knowing who to call at the US State Department to getting on with the job on its own.

If Vladimir Putin was disappointed that Donald Trump has failed to cozy up to the Kremlin in the months since entering the White House, he's put it behind him. Instead, he is now focusing on exploiting Trump's plodding, glacial grasp of global affairs.

A case in point: In the past 24 hours, the Kremlin has been running rings around the White House's stumbling protocol, publishing its own cringe-worthy photos of Trump shaking hands with the Russian ambassador to the United States -- the man at the center of the Russia scandal.

This debacle taking place the day after Trump sacked the man investigating the Russian connection is hugely embarrassing to the White House. To the outside world Trump appears snow-blinded to his own hubris.

The Russian calculus appears to have caught up with the rest of the world that Trump's White House is learning on the job -- and that gives Russia space to ram through its own agenda. While Putin says that firing FBI Director James Comey was Trump's right and not Russia's business, he'll be reveling in the political undertone of the FBI chief's departure: Don't look too closely at Russia.

Trump wants "America First," and Putin is only too happy that America is now looking the other way -- on Syria, in particular.

President Barack Obama, who failed to act when Syrian President Bashar al-Assad crossed a "red line" in 2013, now looks far more like a hawk than Trump.

John Kerry, Obama's secretary of state, was ceaseless in his diplomatic efforts parrying Russia's pushiness to dictate the Syrian agenda.

Whether face to face or behind the scenes at peace talks in Geneva, Switzerland, Kerry was there, looking out for US interests, backing the opposition and blocking Russia's efforts to keep the killer tyrant Assad in power.

For sure, Trump made a huge splash when he fired a salvo of cruise missiles at Assad's forces following a chemical weapons attack in April. But gone is Kerry's insistent diplomacy, curbing Russia's excesses.

In December 2015, Putin supported a UN Security Council resolution, 2254, to end the fighting in Syria and transition Assad out of power within 18 months.

Russia has since proved an unreliable partner, not only refusing to pressure Assad to step down but also doubling down on his attacks on civilians, helping him grab territory such as Aleppo and torpedoing UN peace talks.

All the while, Russia has steadfastly tried to turn Assad's transition from power into an ambiguous outcome. Kerry, backed by Obama and the United Nations, stood in the way. Far from enforcing UN Resolution 2254 to establish a new government and remove Assad, Russia wants Assad's government left in office with a token nod to the idea of an opposition: way short of what Putin first signed up for.



ISSN No. 1554 06X

Chairman & Publisher : Karam Singh Thind

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A Publication of NuWay Media Group

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The World Is Getting Hacked. Why Don't We Do More to Stop It?

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The path to a global outbreak on Friday of a ransom-demanding computer software ("ransomware") that crippled hospitals in Britain — forcing the rerouting of ambulances, delays in surgeries and the shutdown of diagnostic equipment — started, as it often does, with a defect in software, a bug. This is perhaps the first salvo of a global crisis that has been brewing for decades. Fixing this is possible, but it will be expensive and require a complete overhaul of how technology companies, governments and institutions operate and handle software. The alternative should be unthinkable. Just this March, Microsoft released a patch to fix vulnerabilities in its operating systems, which run on about 80 percent of desktop computers globally. Shortly after that, a group called "Shadow Brokers" released hacking tools that took advantage of vulnerabilities that had already been fixed in these patches.

It seemed that Shadow Brokers had acquired tools the National Security Agency had used to break into computers. Realizing these tools were stolen, the N.S.A. had warned affected companies like Microsoft and Cisco so they could fix the vulnerabilities. Users were protected if they had applied the patches that were released, but with a catch: If an institution still used an older Microsoft operating system, it did not receive this patch unless it paid for an expensive "custom" support agreement.

The cash-strapped National Health Service in Britain, which provides health care to more than 50 million people, and whose hospitals still use Windows XP widely, was not among those that signed up to purchase the custom support from Microsoft. They were out in the cold.

On May 12, a massive "ransomware" attack using one of those vulnerabilities hit hospitals in Britain, telecommunication companies in Spain, FedEx in the United States, the Russian Interior Ministry and many other institutions around the world. They had either not applied these patches to systems where it was available for free, or had not paid the extra money for older ones.

Computer after computer froze, their files inaccessible, with an ominous onscreen message asking for about \$300 worth of "bitcoin" — a cryptocurrency that allows for hard-to-trace transfers of money. Ambulances headed for children's hospitals were diverted. Doctors were

unable to check on patients' allergies or see what drugs they were taking. Labs, X-rays and diagnostic machinery and information became inaccessible. Surgeries were postponed. There was economic damage, too. Renault, the European automaker, had to halt production.

The attack was halted by a stroke of luck: the ransomware had a kill switch that a British employee in a cybersecurity firm managed to activate. Shortly after, Microsoft finally released for free the patch that they had been withholding from users that had not signed up for expensive custom support agreements.

But the crisis is far from over. This particular

vulnerability still lives in unpatched systems, and the next one may not have a convenient kill switch.

While it is inevitable that software will have bugs, there are ways to make operating systems much more secure — but that costs real money. While this particular bug affected both new and old versions of Microsoft's operating systems, the older ones like XP have more critical vulnerabilities. This is partly because our understanding of how to make secure software has advanced over the years, and partly because of the incentives in the software business. Since most software is sold with an "as is" license, meaning the company is not legally liable for any issues with it even on day one, it has not



made much sense to spend the extra money and time required to make software more secure quickly. Indeed, for many years, Facebook's mantra for its programmers was "move fast and break things."

This isn't all Microsoft's fault though. Its newer operating systems, like Windows 10, are much more secure. There are many more players and dimensions to this ticking bomb.

During this latest ransomware crisis, it became clear there were many institutions that could have patched or upgraded their systems,

but they had not. This isn't just because their information technology departments are incompetent (though there are surely cases of that, too). Upgrades come with many downsides that make people reluctant to install them. For example, the more secure Windows 10 comes with so many privacy concerns that the Electronic Frontier Foundation issued numerous alerts about it, and the European Union is still investigating it. My current Windows 10 machine is more secure but it advertises to me in the login screen.

(Contd on page 20)

Those who kill for partisan ends cannot be patriots

Patriotism and nationalism are two different concepts. We must not confuse the two. It is not unpatriotic to oppose the government when it is behaving dishonestly, foolishly or viciously.

I love my country, right or wrong, is an attribute of patriotism to stand up and be counted when my country led by the government navigates a path which is inconsistent with our constitutional values. Was it unpatriotic to be a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War? Was the 'Arab Spring' at Tahrir Square unpatriotic? Was it patriotic for the RSS to have attempted to disrupt the national movement and support a colonial power? Was it patriotic for the Sangh not to have participated in the Satyagraha?

We must not confuse our love for the country in protecting her identity with our right to dissent. It is not unpatriotic to oppose the government when it is behaving dishonestly, foolishly or viciously. Patriotism is an emotive response, which manifests itself in action to

protect an identity of which we are an integral part. That identity is the result of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic affinity shared historically over a period of time. Within the contours of territory, shared experiences of people identifying with each other become the foundation of nationalism. The symbol of that identity, and every nation has one, is its national flag. When unfurled, people identify themselves with it. Their patriotism does not depend on externalities. People should not be forced to demonstrate that they love their country and respect their flag. I do not wear my patriotism on my sleeve. Others should also not be required to do so.

I am a patriot as long as I respect the rights and sensibilities of others, pay my taxes, inculcate the right values in my kids. I should not have to carry my mother's photograph in my wallet to prove to her that I

love her. Today, the flag has been made a logo — the "trademark of a monopoly on patriotism". I do not doubt the patriotism of those in government; I only question their policies. Those who pin the national flag on their lapels are no greater patriots than those who don't.

Now, our patriotism may be questioned if we do not stand up in a cinema hall when the national anthem is played. I wonder how many of us stand up in our homes watching the national anthem on television. If we don't, are we to be regarded as unpatriotic? My problem with this mandating prescription is that it is fundamentally wrong for people to have to demonstrate that they are patriotic. The act of standing up in a cinema hall is not an act of volition. Patriotism reflects in my response to protect the identity of not just myself but of millions of which I am



a part. Only in situations which should evoke such a response is true patriotism tested. Patriotism and nationalism are two different concepts. We must not confuse the two.

Is it then patriotic for vigilantes who in a show of patriotism for the sacred cow, insult, beleague and not hesitate to kill ordinary folk? Vigilantes do it to protect their misplaced cultural identity. Their response is not emotive for the sacred animal. It is in fact motivated to demonstrate and propagate that identity with which the victims of violence have no emotive affinity. The victims may be dealing with the sacred animal to trade or nourish it for their livelihood. Yet to do such acts under the present dispensation is

considered patriotic and thus justified.

Instead such acts of violence create fissures in an identity which is historically shared by people, who together have fought wars and shed their blood to assert their identity. They together challenged the supremacy of the white man and humbled a colonial empire. They together forged a permanent identity based on cultural, linguistic, religious diversity coalescing because of shared values and a shared history. That is what we need to protect. True patriots are those who protect diversity — linguistic, cultural and ethnic. Patriotism is not paying lip service to a perceived identity.

(Contd on page 20)

Banks must be the change agents in the digitisation of the rural economy

Over a span of 6 years, the number of banking outlets in villages has increased 8 fold, basic savings bank deposit accounts by 6 fold and agriculture credit off-take has doubled. The focus of the Government on the Jan Dhan – Aadhaar – Mobile (JAM) trinity and more recently demonetisation, have induced a behavioural change in hitherto unbanked masses towards banking services.

In the last decade, the face of the rural economy has undergone a metamorphosis both from an economic and social perspective. The rural clientele is no longer limited to farmers and the uneducated, but has come to include a generation which can use and adapt technology effectively. This evolution of the rural economy has dictated a change in the nature of the supply of banking services, adopting a more inclusive approach combined with innovative digital solutions.

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India is now at the cusp of the great collision of the 3Ds of disruptive forces – demographics, (de)regulation and digitisation, and banks need to be ready to fully seize this “once in a centennial opportunity”. There has been early identification of the propellers of rural digital banking and the government has moved fast to lay the foundations for cash alternatives such as debit/credit cards, mobile/internet banking, e-wallets and Aadhaar merchant pay.

Cheaper mobile handsets and the spread of cheap data networks have enabled the mobile phone to become a virtual bank in the hands of rural masses. This trend is going to strengthen as BHIM USSD 2.0 kicks in, to empower 350 mn feature phone users to take advantage of

the united payment interface (UPI).

From the bank's perspective, digitalisation offers low hanging fruit; however to reap the full benefits of the evolving winds of change banks must adopt a 4P approach -

Product strategy: For catering to the varied needs of small ticket size transactions, banks must identify how best to deploy technology to ensure flexible and

continuous availability Processes: More efficient monitoring and tracking of underlying credit generation to enable stronger intent from organised financial sector to extend last mile funding.

People: The experience of plastic money, internet availability in the smart phones at negligible costs, e-commerce boom in youth crowd

needs to be ingrained, via efficient frontline staff

Protection: Adoption of appropriate risk practices to ensure that banks protect themselves against flow of any uncertainty in credit culture. Achieving 100% financialisation of the rural economy will require further strengthening of institutional mechanisms, including digitisation of land



records, setting up financial literacy centres, and a shift in policy priorities towards encouraging savings, provision of insurance products among others in the rural economy.

The fact that the rural economy largely withstood the impact of demonetisation is a reflection of the evolved face of the rural economy. Ensuring access and equity in the

availability of financial services is a necessary building block for the sustainable growth of the country. Digitisation has allowed this transformation to become quicker, easier and at lower costs. I believe the rural economy has never been more ready to embrace this change and it is imperative that banks must adopt the role of 'change agents' to become the spark plugs in this endeavour.

India has its reasons to boycott China's Belt Road Initiative

It is increasingly difficult to buy Beijing's arguments that their plan to splash a few trillion dollars around the world is a benign gift to the world



The only major country to openly boycott the Belt Road Forum, India has emerged as the most vocal opponent of China's continent-spanning infrastructure project. The reasons for New Delhi's skepticism about the Belt-Road Initiative (BRI)? may not seem evident. They become clear, however, when seen through the prism of geopolitics.

India's position

regarding what was originally called the One Belt, One Road has evolved over time — and become increasingly hostile as the nature of China's plans in the subcontinent and Indian Ocean area become clear. New Delhi's began with pointing out that the China - Pakistan Economic Corridor, the flagship project of the BRI, would run

through territory that it claimed. More important was the unwillingness of Beijing to agree to New Delhi's requests for consultations on the objectives, nature and financing of the BRI. However, as China's infrastructure projects have begun to roll out the alarm bells have been ringing. In many countries, notably Sri Lanka but also elsewhere, China's

construction of ports and highways have resulted in huge debts, usurious interest rates, bribing of political leaders and — once the government in question is sufficiently entangled — attempts to influence that country's foreign policy.

This is not true in all segments of the BRI, but it seems prevalent in the areas closest to India. Even in the case of the Pakistan corridor, the debt obligation is such that the main lesson is that Beijing is happy to entrap even its closest allies. The layout of most of the land-based projects is telling — almost of all it connects very little connects other countries to each other. It is increasingly difficult to buy Beijing's arguments that their trillion dollars around

the world is a benign gift to the world. This should not be a surprise to anyone and is not necessarily an argument against BRI. Great powers often end up providing global public goods through selfish actions. In any case, India has never said it would try to undermine or block Chinese projects in other countries — merely that it would not be signing up for the initiative. It remains an open question why Beijing is so insistent that India endorse the BRI, especially given that it has seen fit to turn against New Delhi in almost every other international fora including the Nuclear Suppliers Group. At the very least, there needs to be a far more transparent dialogue with New Delhi that, so far, the Middle Kingdom has refused. The recent forum should have been a lesson on the limits of geopolitics through Chinese whispers.

**Supreme Court questions
WhatsApp's move to
tweak privacy policy**

As per the new policy the Whatsapp can share data with the social networking platform Facebook.



(Agencies) The Supreme Court questioned WhatsApp over its change in privacy policy after Facebook acquired it in 2016. As per the new policy the instant message service can share data with the social networking platform. A five-judge bench headed by Justice Dipak Misra raised the query while it was hearing petitions challenging WhatsApp's privacy policy on the ground it allegedly infringed a user's fundamental right to communicate freely.

Monday was the first day of the hearing. During the arguments the court was told that the messaging service provider's pre-2016 policy did not include data sharing. Senior advocate Siddhartha Luthra, lawyer for WhatsApp, denied the assertion. He said the company never snooped on messages or shared the content.

"What is shared is the phone number of the user, the identification number of the device used, user's registration detail and last access of the service by the user," Luthra said. The court then asked him: "But why did you change the policy and what is the purpose for sharing the data."

CBI books 13 firms in foreign remittance scam of over Rs 2,200 crore

CBI claims accused companies indulged illegal remittances under fraudulent imports of goods due to which at least six banks incurred loss.

(Agencies) The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed a criminal case against 13 private firms for allegedly remitting over Rs 2,200 crore to foreign entities against bill payments of imports of only Rs 24.64 crore.

The agency claimed that unknown public officials were also part of the alleged scam and have been listed as accused in the FIR filed. A case under sections for criminal conspiracy, cheating and criminal misconduct was registered against the accused companies, including Stelkon Infratel Ltd (SIPL).

CBI officials said SIPL allegedly indulged in large-scale illegal foreign remittances under fraudulent imports of goods between 2015 -16 due to which at least



six banks, including Punjab National Bank and Canara Bank, incurred major loss. In its FIR, the CBI stated that Rs

680.12 crore was remitted by SIPL using six accounts for imports but in reality, they filed only 25 bills of entry during this period with a declared value of Rs 3.14 crore with the customs. Thus, an excess of ₹676.98 crore was "illegitimately" remitted abroad by SIPL. Many of these transactions were carried out through the company's account at Punjab National Bank. According to the agency, 12 other companies remitted Rs 1,572.7 crore abroad using similar modus operandi. The companies allegedly submitted non-existing or forged import documents to the banks. "All these firms were floated using IEC's registration at fictitious or non-existent addresses" the CBI alleged.

India can play important role in Palestine issue, says President Mahmoud Abbas

(Agencies) India can play "a very important role" in resolving the dispute between Palestine and Israel, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said on Monday, on the eve of his talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi here.

Abbas, who is being hosted by India ahead of Modi's first ever visit to Israel, said New Delhi's role will have significance as it had good relations with both the countries.

"There should be a role for India in making peace in our region. India has played this role (by supporting the Palestinian cause) and we are looking forward that India continues to play the same role," he said while delivering a lecture in New Delhi.

He said he will ask Modi on Tuesday to use India's "good offices" in bringing in peace between Israel and Palestine.

Palestine is against any kind of

military intervention to resolve the dispute, said Abbas who will also be meeting his Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee on Tuesday.

Abbas' comments assume significance as Modi is slated to visit Israel in a couple of months, which will be the first by an Indian Prime Minister.

India has been a vociferous supporter of the Palestinian cause.

The Palestinian president said during his meeting with Modi and Mukherjee, he will also apprise them of the ongoing political developments in Palestine and the Middle East.

Condemning terrorism by ISIS, Abbas said ending the "Israeli occupation" will greatly help in countering terrorism in the region.

"So, achieving this justice is the basis for success in fighting terrorism being practised by terrorist groups such as

The Palestinian President said India's role will have significance as it had good relations with both Palestine and Israel.

ISIS in the region. We condemn all their barbaric activities," he said.

The Middle East region, Abbas said, was living in a state of instability and conflict, especially after the Arab Spring, which is "catastrophic" for the region and its people. "It has inflicted severest damage to the stability and integrity of the social fabric," he added.

Abbas also pitched for an agreement with India on religious tourism as Palestine has several religious shrines.

The Palestinian president is on a four day visit to India from May 14 to 17.

Land deal scam : CBI questions ex-Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda



Monday in connection with an alleged land deal scam in Haryana's Manesar area. Hooda was questioned at the Chandigarh office of the agency, where he arrived at noon. The former chief minister was quizzed earlier this month too by CBI officials in a case of alleged irregularities in allotment of industrial plots in Panchkula. Monday's questioning was related to a September 2015 case in which it was alleged that private builders, in conspiracy with unknown public servants of the Haryana government, purchased around 400 acres of land from farmers and land owners of villages Manesar, Naurangpur and Gurgaon at throwaway prices. The CBI has

alleged that the land was purchased from the farmers between August 27, 2004, and August 24, 2007, by threatening them that the state government would soon acquire it. "It is alleged that in this process, initially, the Haryana government issued a notification under the Land Acquisition Act for acquisition of land measuring about 912 acres to set up an industrial model township at villages in Manesar, Naurangpur and Lakhnoulia in Gurgaon. After that, all the land was allegedly grabbed from land owners by private builders under the threat of acquisition at meagre rates," the agency officials said. A loss of ₹1,500 crore was caused to the land owners of the villages, the agency said.

(Agencies) The former chief minister was quizzed earlier this month too by CBI officials in a case of alleged irregularities in allotment of industrial plots in Panchkula.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) questioned former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on

Bihar CM Nitish Kumar favours a second term for President Pranab Mukherjee

(Agencies) PATNA: Bihar CM Nitish Kumar favours a second term for Pranab Mukherjee, saying on Monday there would be no better "idea" than to re-elect him as President.

Nitish then asked the Narendra Modi government to talk to all opposition parties and try for a consensus candidate for the post. "It's the responsibility of the ruling party at the Centre to contact all opposition parties and try to build a consensus on the presidential candidate," he said.

"If there is no such effort by the ruling party, the opposition will have no option but to field their joint candidate for the President's post," Nitish told reporters. Nitish Kumar reiterated that he wasn't a "claimant" for the prime minister's post in the 2019 general election as he led a "chhoti-moti" (insignificantly small) political party.

"We have a 'chhoti-moti' party. That is why I am being targeted. I have been given the mandate for leading the grand alliance government in Bihar. I am not a claimant for the PM's post in 2019," Nitish said. Observers felt this was a time-tested way of attracting political attention. Flanked by deputy CM Tejashwi Prasad Yadav of RJD and education and information technology minister Ashok Choudhary of the Congress, Nitish also said that he did not possess the "capability to become PM".

3 years on, Modi remains people's PM but key issues remain unaddressed: Survey

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's political capital has largely remained intact even though his government has not done enough to create jobs, check inflation, improve healthcare and prevent crime against women and children.



(Agencies) Three out of five Indians are satisfied with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's performance though a majority feels his government is sliding on checking prices, generating jobs and preventing crime, an online poll has found.

Tuesday marks three years of the BJP-led NDA storming to power at the Centre. The Modi government, in these years, either met or exceeded expectations of 61% of the people surveyed while 59% felt it

was on track to fulfil pre-poll promises, says a survey by LocalCircles.

More than 40,000 respondents in around 200 cities participated in the exercise conducted by the online citizen engagement platform.

Modi's political capital has largely remained intact even though his government has not done enough to create jobs, check inflation, improve healthcare and prevent crime against women and children.

Of the missions the government has launched,

direct benefit transfer got the highest approval (47%) and Make in India the lowest (8%).

Modi's signature Clean India campaign seems to fail to impress as 57% of the people responded in negative when asked if their cities were cleaner. The areas in which the Modi government scored high were foreign policy, especially vis-à-vis Pakistan, its handling of terrorism, infrastructure development and performance in Parliament in terms of delivery on key bills.

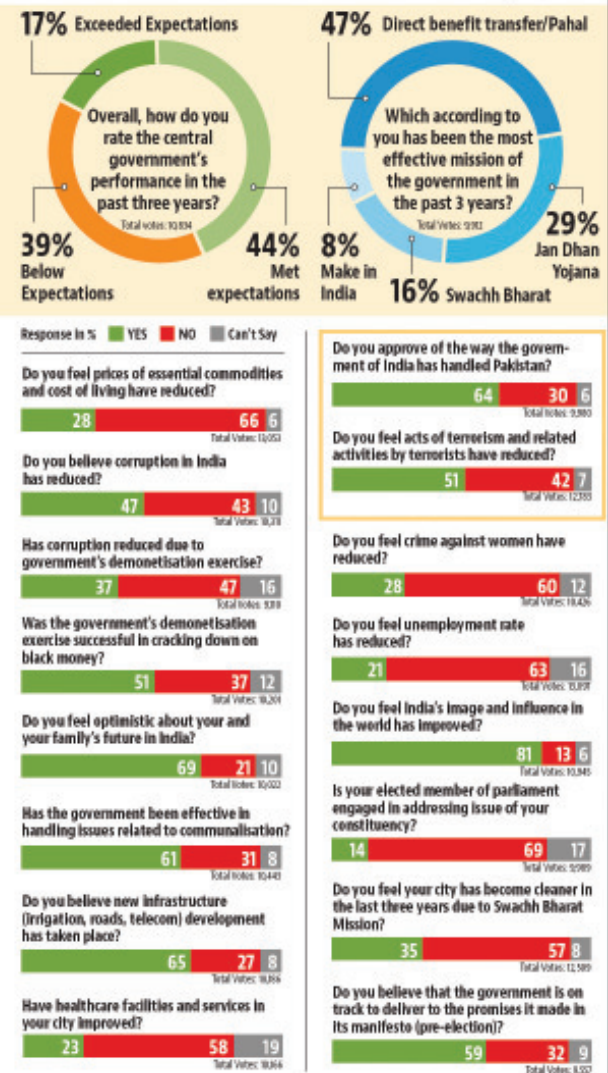
While 81% respondents felt that India's image and influence in the world had improved, 64% approved of the handling of Pakistan, a significant increase from last year when the figure stood at 34%. About 51% said demonetisation of 500 and 1,000 rupee banknotes was successful in cracking down on black money. But only 37% agreed that

scrapping of the high-value notes had reduced corruption.

The contradiction reinforces the goodwill the PM continues to enjoy despite poor rating of his government's schemes that have a bearing on daily life. People have a grim view of parliamentarians, with 69% citizens saying their elected MPs did not address problem of their constituencies. This was the third annual survey of the government's performance by LocalCircles. Compared to last year, there was a marginal fall in the percentage of people who felt the government met their expectations — from 46% to 44% — while dissatisfaction rose by 3% to 36%. "Overall, as change hasn't come fast enough for most people, there is a decline in citizens' rating of the government in most areas compared to last year," stated LocalCircles.

Modi govt's 3-yr report card

A survey indicates three out of five people are satisfied with the NDA govt but a number of them feel the Centre needs to do more in certain key areas



6-inch worm was making baby's liver sick, pulled out in a rare op



(Agencies) NEW DELHI: Doctors at Delhi's GB Pant Hospital recently removed a six-inch long roundworm from the liver of an 18-month-old infant. Roundworms are parasitic organisms, which get into the human body through

ingestion of contaminated food and water. Commonly, they are found in the intestine but this was a rare case in which the parasitic organism managed to travel to the liver via bile duct of the baby boy, doctors said. "This is

perhaps the second such case in the world," Dr A S Puri, professor and head of gastroenterology department of the hospital, said. He added that in older children, above three years of age, roundworm has been found in liver

previously.

The first case was reported in Brazil. There, Puri said, the doctors removed the parasite using a paediatric endoscope of 9mm in diameter from the liver of a one and-a-half-year-old patient. However, GB Pant did not have this equipment, so they had to use an adult endoscope, which is bigger in size.

"We took a chance because if the child wasn't operated upon in time, he could have died. Thankfully, the procedure was uneventful," the doctors said. The endoscope is a flexible tube with a camera attached to it. During the procedure, which was conducted on Friday, doctors inserted it into the child's food pipe via mouth. It went up to the small intestine. Then, an endoscopic knife

was inserted into the bile duct, which had to be cut to extract the roundworm.

"The whole procedure took us 20 minutes. But we had to do a lot of brainstorming before making this attempt. The food pipe is next to windpipe and any complication could have proven fatal," said one of surgeons. The GB Pant doctors are happy at their feat—they successfully removed a roundworm from a small child's organ using adult endoscope. And the parents look much relieved to see their son regain his health. "For the past one and a half months, Dawood had been in pain and crying incessantly. He used to pass worms in stool and vomit. We took him to local doctors, but medicines failed to bring him any respite

since a roundworm had reached his liver," Farheen, the infant's mother, told TOI. Doctors said roundworm infestation is common in urban slums where sanitation is not proper and children often consume contaminated food and water. "The government has been conducting deworming programme but many children still have the problem. To prevent this, we need to improve hand hygiene and create awareness about importance of eating freshly-cooked food," said a doctor. The worms, mostly found in intestine, affect a child's ability to grow—both intellectually and physically—and develop into a fully functioning adult, capable of contributing to wider society, according to World Health Organisation.

PM to states: Follow Madhya Pradesh to breathe life into rivers

(News Agencies) Amarkantak (MP): PM Narendra Modi praised Madhya Pradesh on Monday for turning the conservation of its "lifeline", the Narmada, into a "mass movement", and urged other states to follow its example in their own river-cleaning campaigns.

The plea was a clear message to states that have so far not

been successful in carrying out the Centre's ambitious Ganga rejuvenation programme.

Referring to the state's time-bound plan, he said no programme could be successfully implemented without the involvement of people, no matter what kind of policy it has or how effective the leadership is. "The biggest strength of democracy is 'jan

bhagidari' (people's participation). We are seeing great enthusiasm in people here to save the river Narmada," Modi said, addressing a function to mark the conclusion of the 'Narmada Sewa Yatra', which was flagged off on December 11 last year as part of a campaign to create awareness among the masses for rejuvenating the Narmada. He also released

MP's action plan that details with timelines how the state would go about reviving Narmada's sources of water to the river through a massive plantation exercise in the catchment area and also along the banks of the river that originates from Amarkantak. "I wish this document should go to all states so that they can

emulate it for their respective river rejuvenation plan," said Modi. There are many rivers in India, he said, that are visible only on the map and non-existent on the ground. MP's Narmada action plan lays great emphasis on afforestation as trees, with their water retention/absorption capacities, in the Vindhyas are the main source of water to the river and its tributaries.

Will bring in new law if triple talaq nixed, Centre tells Supreme Court



(News Agencies) New Delhi: The Centre assured the Supreme Court on Monday that it would bring in a law to oversee divorce among Muslims if all forms of talaq were struck down, prompting the court to observe that this might erase personal laws and it was bound by the Constitution to protect the rights of minorities.

Attorney general Mukul Rohatgi's assertion came when a five-judge bench headed by CJI J S Khehar, taking note of his argument that all three forms of talaq needed to be struck down as they violated a Muslim women's right to equality, dignity and gender justice, asked, "If talaq in entirety is erased, how will a Muslim man walk out of bad marriage?"

The bench, also comprising Justices Kurian Joseph, R F Nariman, U U Lalit and Abdul Nazeer, said if the Centre wanted uniformity in marriage, then it should do away with all other laws and tell citizens that all must marry according to the secular Special Marriages Act. "Marriage is a religious

ceremony. The manner in which you (the Centre) are arguing, it will finish all personal law rights. Some religious rights are given to all under Article 25.

The way you argue, it would mean that religion and religious practices can be thrown to the wind," the bench said. However, the SC said the ball was in the Centre's court.

"If the court takes the first step and quashes talaq in entirety, we will take the next step of enacting a new law," Rohatgi replied. Rohatgi argued that triple talaq was bad in law as it gave men unilateral right to irrevocably end a marriage.

He appeared to prefer, for the present, the other two forms of talaq, which have inbuilt process of reconciliation and revocation of divorce.

When the bench sought a clarification, the AG said, "If all three forms of talaq are struck down, then we will not leave a vacuum. Triple talaq is not part of religion." He went on to list a large number of Muslim majority countries that had repealed triple talaq as an irrevocable mode to end marriage.

WannaCry ransomware cyberattack fails to paralyse India; some businesses hit

(News Agencies) Barring sporadic incidents in a few states, most institutions and industries across India

continue to remain insulated from the effects of the 'WannaCry' ransomware cyberattack that has affected computers in approximately 100 countries worldwide.

Banks, government departments and corporate houses have issued messages of caution and reinforced online security. However, business was unaffected as markets and offices opened on Monday after a weekend during which ripple effects of the malware were witnessed across the globe.

For now, the RBI has asked banks to

operationalise their ATM networks only after software updates are installed.

The social network was abuzz with talk on Monday that ATMs in many places were not functional. However, bankers said this was likely because the machines had run out of cash. Corporate houses urged employees to back up their data and refrain from opening unfamiliar file attachments. "We are also urging all Windows users to install software upgrades and firewalls," said the IT head of a media group.

The broking and mutual fund industries were not affected by the malware attack, said top officials. "All exchange operations went on

normally," said Ashishkumar Chauhan, MD & CEO, BSE. Among cities in which sporadic attacks were reported are Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Chennai and Kolkata.

Dhananjay Dwivedi, secretary in there Gujarat government, said there were 120 incidents across the state. "However, there is no harm on government functioning," he added.

In Kerala, computers in panchayat offices in Wayanad and Pathanamthitta districts were affected. "The staff found Microsoft Word and MS Office files inaccessible," said Thariyode panchayat president Reena Sunil. Meanwhile, the Oragadam, TN, factory of alliance partners Renault & Nissan

restarted production on Monday after a disruption on Saturday. The attack had affected production of 1,200 vehicles. In Gorakhpur, UP, a motorcycle dealer was asked to pay \$300 to access files on his PC in a pop-up on Saturday. Computers in at least three locations in West Bengal, including those of a power discom, also came under attack.

"The disruption caused was local. It did not affect power distribution, customer data or commercial operations," said West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Co Ltd MD Rajesh Pandey.

India can play important role in Palestine issue, says President Mahmoud Abbas

(News Agencies) India can play "a very important role" in resolving the dispute between Palestine and Israel, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said on Monday, on the eve of his talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi here. Abbas, who is being hosted by India ahead of Modi's first ever visit to Israel, said New Delhi's role will have significance as it had good relations with both the countries.

"There should be a role for India in making peace in our region. India has played this role (by supporting the Palestinian cause) and we are looking forward that India continues to play the same role," he said while delivering a lecture in New Delhi. He said he will ask Modi on Tuesday to use

India's "good offices" in bringing in peace between Israel and Palestine.

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"So, achieving this justice is the basis for success in fighting terrorism being practised by terrorist groups such as ISIS in the region. We condemn all their barbaric activities," he said. The Middle East region, Abbas said, was living in a state of instability and conflict, especially after the Arab Spring, which is "catastrophic" for the region and its people. "It has inflicted severest damage to the stability and integrity of the social fabric," he added. Abbas also pitched for an agreement with India on religious tourism as Palestine has several religious shrines. The Palestinian president is on a four day visit to India from May 14 to 17.

India must cash in on the change in Sri Lanka's earlier pro-China tilt

India's response has been suitably measured. New Delhi has declined to help Sri Lanka reduce its debts but has signed up for a number of projects and investments to help the country grow itself out of its debt problems

(News Agencies) Through a combination of bad luck and poor calculation Sri Lanka has emerged as a point of contention between India and China. It is not a source of military confrontation, for all the noises about submarines that may or may not be docking in Colombo. It is not even a source of diplomatic sparring. Sri Lanka made itself a geopolitical concern, it did two things that small countries should avoid. One, it sought to play a China card to fend off Indian pressure over a political settlement with the country's Tamil minority. Two, part of the Lankan political leadership decided it could guarantee its

domestic dominance by accepting billions from Beijing. Either one of these policies would have led India to take countermeasures. The consequences of Sri Lanka of all this manoeuvring: A mountain of high-interest Chinese debt, a number of economically questionable infrastructure projects and far too much attention from the world's major powers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi -- in keeping with his 'Neighbourhood First' policy -- has now sensibly visited Sri Lanka twice in as many years. Under former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, Sri Lanka came to see China as a solution to all its problems. While all this



went down poorly with New Delhi, it helped precipitate the coalition that brought Maithripala Sirisena to office and left Sri Lanka saddled with huge debts, there can be no getting away from a permanent China presence on the island. India's response has been suitably measured. New Delhi has declined to help Sri Lanka reduce its debts but has signed up for a number of projects and investments to help the country grow itself out of its debt problems. Fortunately, Beijing's extortionist interest rates and its attempts to convert the debt into land holdings have resulted in strong civil protests in Sri Lanka and led even Mr Rajapaksa to

criticise China's plans. Sri Lanka's problems are acute enough that they have raised alarm bells in other countries who have signed up to China's Belt Road Initiative. The other side to all this is a broader hearts and minds issue. Mr Modi spoke at a Buddhist

conference and then to the Indian-origin plantation workers, earning points with both communities. The island nation is deeply polarised thanks to the bitterness of the civil war, even within the Tamil and Sinhalese communities. This makes its public

US urges India, Pak to engage in direct dialogue

The US said the two countries would benefit from a 'practical cooperation'.



(Agencies) The US on Monday urged India and Pakistan to engage in direct dialogue to reduce tension as they faced-off at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over the death penalty given to Indian national Kulbhushan Jadhav, a former Navy officer accused of spying. "We believe India and Pakistan stand to benefit from practical cooperation," a state department spokesperson told media. When asked about the US' stand on Jadhav, who is facing the death penalty in Pakistan, the official said, "We encourage India and Pakistan to engage in direct

dialogue aimed at reducing tension." Jadhav was arrested in March last year and sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and subversive activities. His sentencing has become the latest flashpoint in India-Pakistan ties. Pakistan denied India consular access to Jadhav 16 times, claiming he was an agent of the intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing. His execution was stayed last week by the ICJ, which on Monday heard arguments presented by both the sides. The court reserved the order and will set a date for the verdict later.

Beijing plans to turn Pakistan into its economic colony

(Agencies) NEW DELHI: China's longterm plans for Pakistan would do the East India Company proud. Proposals for the China Pakistan Economic Corridor+ revealed in Pakistani newspaper Dawn envisage thousands of acres of agricultural land being leased to Chinese enterprises to set up demonstration projects and a fibre-optic system that will facilitate the dissemination of Chinese culture.

The proposals seem to confirm that Pakistan will become an economic colony of China as CPEC will help Beijing tighten its strategic embrace of its ally and provide it connectivity from Xinjiang to the Arabian Sea at Gwadar in Balochistan.

The range and scope of the plan is breathtaking, showing a deep penetration into Pakistan's economic life. This could have several implications for India - Pakistan's sovereignty could be forfeited to Chinese interests and

China would be uncomfortably close to India's borders in the east and west. It would be a virtual ring-fence of India.

Thousands of acres of Pakistani agricultural land will be leased to Chinese enterprises, according to proposals for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The land will be leased for projects ranging from seed varieties to irrigation technology. A full system of monitoring and surveillance will be built from Peshawar to Karachi, with 24-hour video recordings on roads and busy marketplaces for law and order.

A national fibre optic backbone will be used not only for internet traffic but also terrestrial distribution of broadcast TV, which will cooperate with Chinese media in popularising China's culture. The Pakistani government has argued that CPEC will spur the economy and its linkages with agriculture and power will benefit citizens. Its critics, particularly in Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan+, feel it is an

infringement on their land and culture.

Others have pointed to strings attached to Chinese aid. It was noted that the "CM" of Gilgit Baltistan was not involved in the One Belt, One Road discussions in Beijing attended by PM Nawaz Sharif.

The Dawn report said, "The plan envisages a deep and broad-based penetration of most sectors of Pakistan's economy as well as its society by Chinese enterprises and culture. Its scope has no precedent in Pakistan's history in terms of how far it opens up the domestic economy to participation by foreign enterprises."

The report concluded, "In the areas of interest

contained in the plan, it appears access to the full supply chain of the agrarian economy is a top priority for the Chinese. After that, the capacity of the textile spinning sector to serve the raw material needs of Xinjiang, and the garment and value added sector to absorb Chinese technology is another priority. Next is the growing domestic market, particularly in cement and household appliances, which receive detailed treatment in the plan. And lastly, through greater financial integration, the plan seeks to advance the internationalisation of the renminbi, as well as diversify the risks faced by Chinese enterprises entering Pakistan."

NEW EAST INDIA COMPANY

- CPEC will provide connectivity from Xinjiang (China) to the Arabian Sea at Gwadar (Balochistan)
- Thousands of acres of land will be leased for projects ranging from seed varieties to irrigation technology
- Surveillance system will be built from Peshawar to Karachi, with 24-hour video recordings of roads and busy marketplaces for law and order
- National-fibre optic backbone will be used to popularise Chinese culture

“The plan envisages a deep and broad-based penetration of most sectors of Pakistan's economy as well as its society by Chinese enterprises and culture. Its scope has no precedent in Pakistan's history...” **REPORT IN DAWN**

UN report slams 'opaque' Pak military courts; Let civil courts try Jadhav-like cases, says panel

(Insider Bureau) New Delhi: Even as India has gone to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), terming the sentencing of Kulbhushan Jadhav+ by a Pakistani military court as "premeditated murder"+, the United Nations has come down heavily on the military courts system in Pakistan, lack of independence of military court judges who are within military hierarchy and the practice of holding "closed trials".

The UN Committee Against Torture,

in its findings published last week, has expressed concerns over Pakistan government "authorising military courts to try civilians for terrorism related offences". "The committee is also concerned by the very broad powers given to the army to detain people suspected of involvement in terrorist activities without charge of judicial supervision in internment centres", the UN panel said in its report.

Incidentally, Pakistan has accused

Indian national Kulbhushan Jadhav of spying without providing consular access to India+ and without any evidence. There are reports that Jadhav was picked up by Pakistani agencies from Iran.

The UN panel has asked Islamabad to "end the resort to military courts for terrorism-related prosecutions and transfer criminal cases against civilians from military courts to civilian courts and provide the opportunity for appeal in civilian

courts of cases involving civilians already adjudicated under military jurisdiction". It says that Pakistan's counter terror legislation, particularly the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997, "eliminates" legal safeguards against torture that are otherwise provided to people deprived of their liberty, like prompt presentation before a magistrate and the possibility of a habeas petition, and to ensure that "confessions obtained outside the presence of a magistrate are inadmissible as evidence".

Pakistan signs nearly \$500 million in China deals at Silk Road summit

(Insider Bureau) Pakistan signed new deals with China on Saturday worth nearly \$500 million ahead of Beijing's international forum on its "Silk Road" trade and infrastructure initiative for Asia, Africa and Europe, the Pakistani government said.

The memorandums of understanding add to \$57 billion already pledged for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a network of rail, road and energy infrastructure that is part of the wider Chinese project also known as the Belt and Road initiative, or One Belt, One Road.

The deals came as Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met Chinese President Xi Jinping ahead of the Beijing summit expected to be attended by leaders from at least 29 countries to promote Xi's vision of expanding trade links.

Delegates in Beijing will hold a series of sessions on Sunday to discuss the plan in more detail, including trade and finance.

Proposed in 2013 by Xi, the project is broad on ambition but still short on specifics.

Pakistan has been a flagship country

and one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the One Belt-One Road initiative, in part because many projects are for power plants to alleviate the country's decade-long energy-shortage crisis that sees frequent blackouts.

"China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a core component of your visionary initiative of the 'One Belt-One Road'," Sharif told Xi when they met at the Great Hall of China on Saturday, according to the Associated Press of Pakistan.

Xi called for a swift completion of projects involving Gwadar Port and special economic and industrial parks along the corridor, state Xinhua news service reported.

In a separate meeting, Premier Li Keqiang told Sharif that China hopes Pakistan "will intensify its efforts in protecting the safety of Chinese personnel in the nation, and ensure the security of related projects," Xinhua added.

Wary of Islamist militants, Pakistan has set up a new army division to protect the economic corridor. Ten Pakistani labourers were gunned down on Saturday while working on link roads to connect outlying towns to the Belt and Road

initiative.

Among the 3.4 billion yuan (\$492.95 million) in deals Sharif's office said were signed on Saturday were:

* Two cooperation agreements worth 2.3 billion yuan for an airport in the southwestern town of Gwadar, site of a deep-water port that is to provide an outlet to the Arabian Sea from the far western Chinese region of Xinjiang.

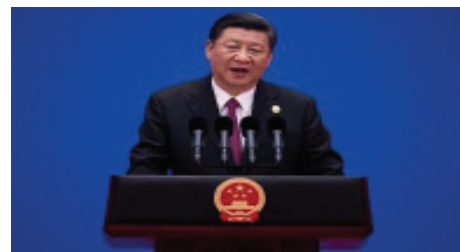
* Establishment of the Havelian Dry Port in Pakistan. Agreement on economic and technical cooperation worth 1.1 billion yuan for the East Bay Expressway linking Gwadar to Pakistan's existing highway system.

China says that between 2014 and 2016, its businesses signed projects worth \$304.9 billion in Belt and Road countries. Some of the projects could be in development for years.

Some countries are wary of the debt burden that the Chinese financing could create. Pakistan, however, has expressed an optimistic view, with the government's chief economist telling Reuters this week that the repayments will peak at around \$5 billion in 2022, but will be more than offset by transit fees charged on the new transport corridor.

OBOR meet

Only promises, no framework for plan rollout



(Agencies) BEIJING: The two-day Belt and Road Forum ended in Beijing on Monday evening with promises of joint action by participating countries, but without establishing an institutional framework for implementing the planned construction program.

Though India is the only major country to boycott the event, its presence was felt during discussions between China and other South Asian countries on different programs.

For instance, China signed an agreement to lay a \$8 billion railway line connecting it to Nepal. But this rail line cannot be sustained economically if Chinese goods cannot access the Indian market.

"India is in the room without being in the room," Laurence Brahm, founding director of Himalayan Consensus, told the official China Global Television.

Chinese expert and former counselor in Mumbai, Liu Youfa, said, "India has problems with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. But it can still join the Belt and Road projects even if it has not come here".

The official Chinese media took a somewhat different view saying that India cannot keep other countries from joining the program even if it decided to stay away.

The meeting was attended by the prime ministers of Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the deputy prime minister of Nepal and the state counsellor of Myanmar.

"While India recently issued an official statement saying it would not be part of the "One Belt and One Road" (B&R) initiative, it will not affect the trend towards cooperation in infrastructure development among its neighbouring countries at all," Global Times said in its online edition.

Nepal in talks with China to build \$8 billion cross-border rail link - fin min official

(Insider Bureau) Nepal is in talks with China to build a cross-border rail link that may cost up to \$8 billion, and funding could be expected after Nepal formally signed up to Beijing's Belt and Road initiative, a Nepali finance ministry official said on Sunday.

Yug Raj Pandey, an under secretary at Nepal's Ministry of Finance, told Reuters the proposed 550 kilometre-long railway would connect China's western Tibet region to Nepal's capital of Kathmandu and will carry goods and passengers.

The Himalayan nation officially signed an agreement two days ago to be part of President Xi Jinping's ambitious plan to build a new Silk Road, he said on the sidelines of the Belt and Road Forum in

Beijing.

"Now we are a member of (the initiative) we can get some specific project assistance from China's government. We expect it for the railway," he said. "Once we connect by railway then we can increase our trade and invite more tourists to Nepal." Pandey said the two countries had been in discussions for the past five months about the project, which could cost \$7-8 billion and take up to eight years to complete.

He said Nepal planned to start preparing a detailed project report for the railway, and that they had yet to decide how much funding they will seek from China.

The railway will travel over 400

kilometres in China to the Nepal border, and then about another 150 kilometres from the Nepali border to Kathmandu, he said. "Our first priority is railway, and second will be hydropower projects and cross-border transmission lines between Nepal and China," he said. China last year agreed to consider building a railway into Nepal and to start a feasibility study for a free trade agreement with impoverished, landlocked Nepal, which has been trying to lessen its dependence on its other big neighbour India.

Pandey declined to comment about India's opposition to parts of the Belt and Road initiative, in particular an economic corridor China is building in Pakistan.

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Reckless stock trading leaves Congress rife with conflicts

After the furor over Tom Price's investments, four more members quietly bought shares in the same firm.

Even a looming scandal wouldn't deter some of Congress' most eager stock traders.

Rep. Tom Price (R-Ga.), President Donald Trump's nominee to be Health and Human Services secretary, was under siege, the harsh lights of a Senate hearing upon him. News reports showed he had bought shares in a tiny biotechnology company while sitting on committees that could influence the firm's prospects. A colleague, Rep. Chris Collins (R-N.Y.), had tipped him off to the investment. A Washington Post editorial called Price "a walking, talking example of the ways in which congressional ethics requirements are too lax." Sen. Chris Murphy demanded: "Tell me how it can possibly be OK that you were championing positions on health care issues that have the effect of increasing your personal wealth?" Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) asked him, "Doesn't this show bad judgment?"

But what many saw as a scandal, others saw as an opportunity. On the very day that Wyden was decrying Price's bad judgment, Rep. Doug Lamborn, Republican of Colorado, bought shares of the same tiny Australian company, Innate Immunotherapeutics. Within two days three more members also bought in — Republicans Billy Long of Missouri, Mike Conaway of Texas and John Culberson of Texas. Conaway added more shares the following week.

These brazen decisions to gobble up shares of a little-known firm at the very moment when such trading was being

decried as an abuse of power reflects Congress' anything-goes culture around stock investments. In the pursuit of wealth, even obvious conflicts of interest are routinely ignored by members who feast on daily trades. Long, for instance, serves on a committee overseeing Obamacare, and Conaway is a deputy House whip.

The health care lawmakers who invested in Innate Immunotherapeutics are hardly alone in trading in companies that have a major interest in federal legislation, according to a three-month investigation and examination of all stock trades by members of Congress.

POLITICO found that 28 House members and six senators each traded more than 100 stocks in the past two years, placing them in the potential cross hairs of a conflict of interest on a regular basis. And a handful of lawmakers, some of them frequent traders and some not, disproportionately trade in companies that also have an interest in their work on Capitol Hill. House and Senate members who are active traders insist their buying and selling is a normal part of managing their finances, as with any American who wants to save for retirement or put their kids through school. But their colleagues don't seem to agree. The clear majority of lawmakers avoid potential conflicts of interest by buying mutual funds, putting their portfolios in blind trusts or simply staying out of the stock market.

POLITICO found that 384 House members and senators who served in the 114th

Congress made no stock trades over the past two years. Meanwhile, the lawmakers who are active in stock trading conducted a total of more than 21,300 trades during the past two years, but a small group of very wealthy lawmakers accounted for a significant share of those trades.

Texas Republican Rep. Mike McCaul — whose wife, Linda, is the daughter of Clear Channel communications founder Lowry Mays — reported approximately 7,300 stock transactions in an array of industries over the two-year period. Oregon Democratic Rep. Kurt Schrader, who sits on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, has made a substantial number of trades so far this year in companies that have an interest in the committee's health and energy work, including Exxon Mobil, Marathon Oil and Gas, Conoco Phillips, Pfizer and Eli Lilly. Schrader has made close to 700 stock trades over the past two years.

In some cases, these very wealthy lawmakers own significant stakes in private companies that are affected by their legislative work. Conaway maintains partial ownership in oil and gas companies that stand to benefit from energy-related bills he's sponsored in Congress. GOP Kentucky Rep. Hal Rogers traded dozens of stocks while serving as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, which affects a broad array of policy areas. Rogers also maintained partial ownership of a small bank and collected at least \$100,000 in

dividends from the bank while chairing the committee, which is on the front lines of deciding whether to roll back Dodd-Frank regulations on banks. Under congressional rules, owning companies and sitting on corporate boards is permitted so long as members don't draw a salary. Rogers didn't respond to requests for comment, and a McCaul spokesperson said that the congressman is not involved with trades made in his wife's accounts. Ethics-concerned lawmakers and experts who have labored for years to persuade Congress to regulate itself over apparent conflicts of interest were surprised by POLITICO's findings because Congress passed a law designed to curb lawmaker insider trading and stock trades just five years ago. They had assumed 2012's Stock Act, which created new disclosures about the stock trades and for the first time explicitly barred lawmakers from insider trading, had deterred most lawmakers from engaging in conflicts of interest. At the time the bill was passed, many thought the simple fear of exposure and political embarrassment would stop the conflicts of interest.

"I'm deeply concerned," said Minnesota Democratic Rep. Tim Walz, an early supporter of the Stock Act who does not himself trade stocks. "If you buy stock and then do something that changes that stock, you've got to know what's going on." In December, Congress approved the 21st Century Cures Act, a bill stocked with \$6.3 billion in new funding for medical research and faster

drug approval. In the months leading up to the vote, more than 1,000 lobbyists flocked to Capitol Hill to make their case for what should be included in the legislative package. It was a rare opportunity to dramatically increase the amount of federal money going into pharmaceuticals. It was also, as it turned out, a time when some of the members who contributed to the writing of the bill boosted their own portfolios of drug stocks, POLITICO found.

Whitehouse, Collins, Price and Fleischmann all invested in pharmaceutical companies over the months that the bill was being pulled together. Price traded and held multiple medical stocks, including McKesson, while contributing to the 21st Century Cures Act. Collins sat on the boards of multiple medical companies and bought and sold health care stocks while authoring parts of the bill.

Whitehouse, the veteran Democrat on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, began a series of purchases in health care stocks related to the bill in mid-November, through his own accounts and family accounts. At the time, negotiators were wrestling over the final version of 21st Century Cures and hoping to vote on it in a matter of weeks. Eager to battle prescription-drug addiction in his home state of Rhode Island, Whitehouse pushed leaders to include funding to fight opioid abuse, as well as health IT legislation. Both of Whitehouse's measures were eventually included in 21st Century Cures.

(Insider Bureau) House Republicans just voted to slash hundreds of billions of dollars in health care for the poor as part of their Obamacare replacement. Now, they're weighing a plan to take the scalpel to programs that provide meals to needy kids and housing and education assistance for low-income families.

President Donald Trump's refusal to overhaul Social Security and Medicare — and his pricey wish-list for infrastructure, a border wall and tax cuts — is sending House budget writers scouring for pennies



Republicans plan massive cuts to programs for the poor

Under pressure to balance the budget and align with Trump, the House GOP has its eye on food stamps, welfare and perhaps even veterans' benefits.

in politically sensitive places: safety-net programs for the most vulnerable. Under enormous internal pressure to quickly balance the budget, Republicans are considering slashing more than \$400 billion in spending through a process to evade Democratic filibusters in the Senate, multiple sources told POLITICO.

The proposal, which would be part of the House Budget Committee's fiscal 2018 budget, won't specify which programs would get the ax; instead it will instruct committees to figure out what to cut to reach the savings. But among the programs most likely on the chopping block, the sources say, are food stamps, welfare, income assistance for the disabled and perhaps even veterans benefits.

If enacted, such a plan to curb safety-net programs — all while juicing the Pentagon's budget and slicing corporate tax rates — would amount to the biggest shift in federal spending priorities in decades.

Atop that, GOP budget writers will also likely include Speaker Paul Ryan's (R-Wis.) proposal to essentially privatize Medicare in their fiscal 2018 budget, despite Trump's unwavering rejection of the

idea. While that proposal is more symbolic and won't become law under this budget, it's just another thorny issue that will have Democrats again accusing Republicans of "pushing Granny off the cliff." "The Budget Committee is trying to force the entire conference and committees of jurisdiction to focus on ways to bring down this deficit," said senior budget panel member Rep. Tom

Cole. Republicans have long sought to tackle the nearly \$20 trillion debt, but Trump has tied their hands by ruling out cuts to Social Security and Medicare.

The Oklahoma Republican, however, acknowledged that mandatory spending reductions could become "very tough issues" — though he declined to name which programs would see major cuts: "These are hard

for anybody, no matter where you're at on the political spectrum."

While budget writers are well aware of the sensitive nature of their proposal, they feel they have no choice if they want to balance the budget in a decade, which they've proposed for years, and give Trump what he wants.

Enraged by Democrats claiming victory after last month's government

funding agreement, White House officials in recent weeks have pressed Hill Republicans to include more Trump priorities in the fiscal 2018 blueprint. House Budget Republicans hope to incorporate those wishes and are expected, for example, to budget for Trump's infrastructure plan. Tax reform instructions will also be included in the budget,

paving the way for both chambers to use the powerful budget reconciliation process to push a partisan tax bill through Congress on simple majority votes, as well as the \$400 billion in mandatory cuts. "The critique last time was that we didn't embed enough Trump agenda items into our budget," said Rep. Dave Brat (R-Va.), a budget panel member. Trump has "made it clear it will be embedded in this budget. ... And so people will see a process much more aligned with President Trump's agenda in this forthcoming budget."

New spending, however, makes already tough math even trickier for a party whose mantra is "balance the budget in 10 years." Lawmakers need to cut roughly \$8 trillion to meet that goal, budget experts say. And while a quarter of their savings in previous budgets came from repealing Obamacare and slicing \$1 trillion from Medicaid, Republicans cannot count on those savings anymore because their health care bill sucked up all but \$150 billion of that stash — relatively speaking, mere pocket change to play with.

China's silky threat to American leadership



(Insider Bureau) This weekend, while the Sunday talk shows obsess about Trump, Comey and secret recordings, a top-level gathering in China will kick off the biggest challenge ever to America's place in the world economy: the creation of a 21st Century version of the ancient Silk Road travelled by Marco Polo. President Xi Jinping will host the so-called Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Summit. If the name

sounds like a convention of car parts manufacturers, think again. The BRI is Xi's \$1 trillion — yes, with a T — plan to build state of the art roads, ports, pipelines and airports that will link China to 110 countries around the world and make Beijing the epicenter of world trade for decades to come. Russia's Vladimir Putin thinks the BRI is important enough for him to attend. So do the leaders of

Turkey, Pakistan, the Philippines and 25 other countries, most of them with developing economies. The United States, trapped in political navel-gazing, could only ante up an assistant to the president.

For Xi, the initiative is a brazen attempt to seize worldwide economic leadership from the United States. With official Washington bogged down on President Trump's tweets and his relationship with Russia, Xi sees an opportunity to bind emerging trade partners to him by offering them access to China's vast consumer market.

"Xi is offering a lot of money and infrastructure to a lot of recipient countries who have a pressing need for their

economies to be modernized," says Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Institute for China-America studies. "There are real political, economic and strategic goals at stake. It is China effectively applying soft power in a very visible way. It wants to become what the United States has been until now — the leader of the world economy."

There is, of course, a catch: Xi will ask the heads of state that he is wining and dining to sign a joint communique endorsing Beijing's claims that Taiwan is part of China, and that it has legitimate territorial rights in the South China Sea.

Among the massive infrastructure projects being offered to potential

partners, China wants to build a port in Pakistan, complete a China-to-Myanmar pipeline, giving it access to Middle East crude oil, and dredge and deepen the historic Greek port of Piraeus.

The stakes for Xi are high. China's economic growth has been slowing. Its vassal state, North Korea, is increasingly rebellious, and banks and bond markets are showing signs of stress.

Xi hopes the conference will cement his position as a global leader in advance of the 19th congress of the Communist Party, which he heads. The summit's slogan is "One Belt, One Road." For Xi, that means showing that the rest of the world is girded to China, and that all roads lead to Beijing.

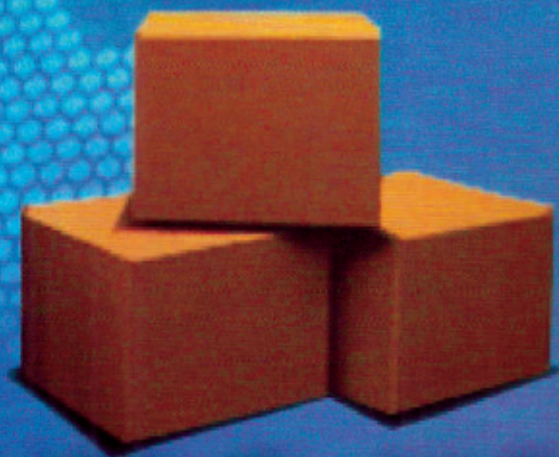
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The World Is Getting Hacked. Why Don't We Do More to Stop It?

(Are they also profiling me to target advertisements? A fair question in this environment.)

Further, upgrades almost always bring unwanted features. When I was finally forced to upgrade my Outlook mail program, it took me months to get used to the new color scheme and spacing somebody in Seattle had decided was the new look. There was no option to keep things as is. Users hate this, and often are rightfully reluctant to upgrade. But they are often unaware that these unwanted features come bundled with a security update.

As an added complication, the ways companies communicate about upgrades and unilaterally change the user interface make people vulnerable to phishing, since one is never sure what is a real login or upgrade message and what is a bogus one, linking to a fake website trying to steal a login.

The problem is even worse for institutions like hospitals which run a lot of software provided by a variety of different vendors, often embedded in expensive medical equipment. For them, upgrading the operating system (a cost itself) may also mean purchasing millions of dollars worth of new software. Much of this software also comes with problems, and the "no liability" policy means that vendors can just sell the product, take the money and run. Sometimes, medical equipment is certified as it is, and an upgrade brings along re-certification questions. The machines can (as they should) last for decades; that the software should just expire and junk everything every 10 years is not a workable solution. Upgrades can also introduce new bugs. How do you test new software when the upgrade can potentially freeze your M.R.I.? Last year, a software update "bricked" Tesla cars: they could not be driven anymore until another update fixed the problem. Many large institutions are thus wary of upgrades.

The next crisis facing us is the so-called "internet of things": devices like baby monitors, refrigerators and lighting now come with networked software. Many such devices are terribly insecure and, worse, don't even have a mechanism for receiving updates. In the current regulatory environment, the people who write the insecure software and the companies who sold the "things" bear no liability.

If I have painted a bleak picture, it is because things are bleak. Our software evolves by layering new systems on old, and that means we have constructed entire cities upon crumbling swamps. And we live on the fault lines where more earthquakes are inevitable. All the key actors have to work together, and fast.

First, companies like Microsoft should discard the idea that they can abandon people using older software. The money they made from these customers hasn't expired; neither has their responsibility to fix defects. Besides, Microsoft is sitting on a cash hoard estimated at more than \$100 billion (the result of how little tax modern corporations pay and how profitable it is to sell a dominant operating system under monopolistic dynamics with no liability for defects).

At a minimum, Microsoft clearly should have provided the critical update in March to all its users, not just those paying extra. Indeed, "pay extra money to us or we will withhold critical security updates" can be seen as its own form of ransomware. In its defense, Microsoft probably could point out that its operating systems have come a long way in security since Windows XP, and it has spent a lot of money updating old software, even above industry norms. However, industry norms are lousy to horrible, and it is reasonable to expect a company with a dominant market position, that made so much money selling software that runs critical infrastructure, to do more.

Microsoft should spend more of that \$100 billion to help institutions and users upgrade to newer software, especially those who run

essential services on it. This has to be through a system that incentivizes institutions and people to upgrade to more secure systems and does not force choosing between privacy and security. Security updates should only update security, and everything else should be optional and unbundled.

The United States government has resources and institutions to help fix this. N.S.A.'s charter gives it a dual role: both offensive and defensive. That the agency discloses software vulnerabilities it finds to companies more quickly may be a good idea, but doing so doesn't solve this problem, since finding bugs is not limited to the N.S.A. — criminals and other nations can keep finding them. Nor are bugs in limited supply, so we cannot get to the bottom of the problem by fixing them one by one. There are,

however, many technical measures that can be taken to build operating systems that are structurally less vulnerable to bugs. In other words, we can't eliminate bugs, but with careful design, we can make it so that they cannot easily wreak havoc like this. For example, Chromebooks and Apple's iOS are structurally much more secure because they were designed from the ground up with security in mind, unlike Microsoft's operating systems.

It is past time that the N.S.A. shifted to a defensive posture and the United States government focused on protecting its citizens and companies from malware, hacking and ransomware — rather than focusing so much on spying. This isn't just about disclosing vulnerabilities, a hot-button topic that often distracts from deeper

issues. It also means helping develop standards for higher security — something an agency devoted to finding weaknesses is very well suited to do — as well as identifying systemic cybersecurity risks and then helping fix them, rather than using them offensively, to spy on others.

There is also the thorny problem of finding money and resources to upgrade critical infrastructure without crippling it. Many institutions see information technology as an afterthought and are slow in upgrading and investing. Governments also do not prioritize software security. This is a sure road to disaster.

As a reminder of what is at stake, ambulances carrying sick children were diverted and heart patients turned away from surgery in Britain by the ransomware

attack. Those hospitals may never get their data back. The last big worm like this, Conficker, infected millions of computers in almost 200 countries in 2008. We are much more dependent on software for critical functions today, and there is no guarantee there will be a kill switch next time.

It is time to consider whether the current regulatory setup, which allows all software vendors to externalize the costs of all defects and problems to their customers with zero liability, needs re-examination. It is also past time for the very profitable software industry, the institutions that depend on their products and the government agencies entrusted with keeping their citizens secure and their infrastructure functioning, step up and act decisively.

End Of A Dream

made these accusations only after he was sacked from the government. So, his credibility is zilch. Yet, it is a big turning point in the course of Aam Admi Party politics. Mishra's charges conclusively prove that the AAP is now just another political party, that too a below average one. Kejriwal's biggest failure is in admitting and rewarding crass opportunists like Mishra. How many more Mishras would be waiting to pounce on their leader, when they lose out? The next big failure of the AAP is in addressing dissent. In hindsight, one has to admit that Kejriwal was harsh with founder leaders Prashant Bhushan and Yogendra Yadav. He should have given them a longer rope because the ruthless sacking of these two leaders keeps haunting the party and gets reflected in how the party responds to dissent and discord. Mishra's sacking was a result of the rumblings within the party set off by another senior leader. That leader was allegedly mollified with the promise of a Rajya Sabha seat. But after placating that leader, his prime aide, Mishra, was sacked from the cabinet. There was no need to turn against Mishra so soon after the Punjab and Delhi

municipal corporation poll debacle.

Another great failing of the AAP is a distinct lack of ideological cohesion. The anti-corruption plank is always ideologically neutral. In fact, Hindutva leaders off-ered Kejriwal his first political platform. On February 27, 2011, Kejriwal shared the dais with the then BJP MP, Ram Jethmalani, Subramanian Swamy, who later became a BJP MP, Hindutva proponent Baba Ramdev, RSS ideologue K.N. Govindacharya and others to kickstart the anti-corruption movement that brought the UPA government down. Once this movement turned into a political party, a lot of BJP and Congress activists joined Kejriwal. The only professed ideology of this motley crowd was anti-corruption, and as power corrupts or at least attempts to corrupt this party in government, there is nothing left to hold it together.

Thus, the AAP has degenerated into a party of power-seekers, opportunists and even blackmailers. The Congress is no better. But an experienced leadership handles all of them with care, patience and generosity. It is very rare to see a Congressman or a BJP leader erupt like Mishra in

losing a cabinet berth. The worst part about AAP's conduct was in employing a diversionary tactic to counter Mishra's charges. Mishra was terribly discourteous to have attacked Kejriwal's brother-in-law the day he died. The most damaging allegation made by Mishra is about Kejriwal's brother-in-law being favoured through Public Works Department contracts. Kejriwal is still silent about this grave allegation. He could have remained so. But he should not have used

the Electronic Voting Machine controversy to respond to the corruption charges. The demonstration of the possibility of hacking an EVM and, thereby, rigging of polls was ill-timed. It is a very serious issue, which, if true, und-ermine the country's electoral process and its very existence as a democracy. Unfo-rtunately, the questions over the credibility of the EVM have got mixed up with charges of nepotism and corruption against Kejriwal. Nevertheless, the Election Commission of India should offer the AAP an opportunity to prove its charges.

Those who kill for partisan ends cannot be patriots

The State and Institutions including courts should not test patriotism. Our patriotism is tested on a daily basis by our activities in the way we live and the way we deal with each other. A soldier's patriotism is tested when he is confronted with the enemy and is willing to risk his life to save the identity of which he is an integral part. The patriotism of a lawyer is tested when he is, despite opposition, prepared to protect the victims of injustice. A doctor will emotively demonstrate his patriotism when he goes out of the way to save lives though in the process he might endanger his own. A patriotic businessman will not participate in transactions that are dishonest and adversely impact the economic interests of his country. Smugglers, terrorists and perpetrators of violence who kill for partisan ends cannot be patriots. It is possible that courts wish to instil a sense of patriotism by having audiences stand up in a cinema hall. We cannot doubt the intention of the court. But standing up in a movie hall for the National Anthem is not necessarily an emotive response. The audience must stand up because otherwise under the law, they will be prosecuted for insulting the flag. The mandate of the law does not make true patriots.

In Ransomware Attack, Where Does Microsoft's Responsibility Lie?

SEATTLE — When malicious software first became a serious problem on the internet about 15 years ago, most people agreed that the biggest villain, after the authors of the damaging code, was Microsoft.

As a new cyberattack continues to sweep across the globe, the company is once again at the center of the debate over who is to blame for a vicious strain of malware demanding ransom from victims in exchange for the unlocking of their digital files.

This time, though, Microsoft believes others should share responsibility for the attack, an assault that targeted flaws in the Windows operating system.

On Sunday, Brad Smith, Microsoft's president and chief legal officer, wrote a blog post describing the company's efforts to stop the ransomware's spread, including an unusual step it took to release a security update for versions of Windows that Microsoft no longer supports. Mr. Smith wrote, "As a technology company, we at Microsoft have the first responsibility to address these issues."

He went on, though, to emphasize that the attack had demonstrated the "degree to which cybersecurity has become a shared responsibility between tech companies and customers," the latter of whom must update their systems if they want to be protected. He also pointed his finger at intelligence services, since the

latest vulnerability appeared to have been leaked from the National Security Agency.

On Monday, a Microsoft spokesman declined to comment beyond Mr. Smith's post.

To prepare for fallout with customers, Judson Althoff, a Microsoft executive vice president, sent an email to the company's field sales team on Sunday encouraging them to be supportive of businesses targeted by the attack, or even those who were simply aware of it.

"Our key direction to you is to remember that we are in this with our customers — we are trusted advisers, counselors, and suppliers to them," he wrote. "More than technical guidance, I want you to make sure you are spending the time needed to understand the concerns they have and that they know we are here to help."

While Microsoft's reputation has suffered in the past because of security problems, the company's stock is barely down from the close of trading on Thursday, just before reports of the ransomware.

"People have extremely short memories when it comes to this," said Jan Dawson, an analyst with Jackdaw Research. "I think, realistically, people will move on pretty quickly."

Microsoft has recognized the risk that cybersecurity poses to it since about 2002, when Bill Gates, the former chief executive, issued a call to arms inside

the company after a wave of malicious software began infecting Windows PCs connected to the internet.

"As software has become ever more complex, interdependent and interconnected, our reputation as a company has in turn become more vulnerable," Mr. Gates wrote in an email to employees identifying trustworthy computing as Microsoft's top priority. "Flaws in a single Microsoft product, service or policy not only affect the quality of our platform and services overall, but also our customers' view of us as a company."

Since then, the company has poured billions of dollars into security initiatives, employing more than 3,500 engineers dedicated to security. In March, it released a software patch that addressed the vulnerability exploited by the ransomware, known as WannaCry, protecting systems such as Windows 10, its latest operating system.

Yet security flaws in older editions of Windows persist. The company no longer provides regular software updates to Windows XP, a version first released in 2001, unless customers pay for "custom support," a practice some observers believe has put users at risk. Late Friday, Microsoft took the unusual step of making patches that protect older systems against WannaCry, including Windows XP, free.

"Companies like Microsoft should discard the idea that they can abandon

people using older software," Zeynep Tufekci, an associate professor at the school of information and library science at the University of North Carolina, wrote in a New York Times opinion piece over the weekend. "The money they made from these customers hasn't expired; neither has their responsibility to fix defects."

But security experts challenged that argument, saying that Microsoft could not be expected to keep updating old software products indefinitely. Providing updates to older systems could make computers more insecure by removing an incentive for users to modernize, Mikko Hypponen, the chief research officer of F-Secure, a security firm.

"I can understand why they issued an emergency patch for XP after WannaCry was found, but in general, we should just let XP die," Mr. Hypponen said.

Despite the high profile of WannaCry, widespread malware outbreaks have become less common over the years, as Microsoft has improved the security of its systems, said Ziv Mador, vice president for security research at Trustwave, a security services firm. But the profits that criminals can make through ransomware and other malicious code ensure the problem will never vanish.

"Even though it's becoming harder and harder, the incentives have increased tremendously," said Mr. Mador, who previously worked on security response at Microsoft.

Forced Surrogacy

Trafficked, traded, enslaved, raped and made to conceive babies for adoption. Adivasi girls are turned into baby-making machines that fetch Rs 1-4 lakh per child.

Of how she came to Delhi as a minor and, in stages, passed through a dark mirror—to enter an unreal world of slavery that awaited on the other side, a tiny house, where unknown men set in motion a whole cycle of sowing and harvesting on her body. And that of other girls like her.

As the story starts, life looked cheerless but sufficiently normal. Soni was 15 in 2010 when she, along with four friends, moved out from her village in Jharkhand, joining the tide of humankind flowing out from that immiserated state. Volitional, but only to a degree. For there was an agent, as always, and then a sale and transfer of ownership to an agency, and then the drudgery of housework in a typical Delhi home. She lost track of her friends. Six months on, a man came to see Soni, and said he was from the "off-ice". He said nothing else—just saw her and left. Days later, another agent came, took her along to a new house. The people at the first

house were nice, relatively. They slipped her Rs 10,000, which she concealed in her salwar.

The new house was tiny and surrounded by narrow lanes. Soni was made to sign papers she couldn't read, something written in English. Then a strange routine started—regular check-ups at a hospital, blood tests and, most importantly, strange injections. She didn't understand why she needed them. There were other girls at the house, all secluded. The curtains were always firmly drawn. There were guards, agents, staff members and a caretaker, a woman from Jharkhand she called 'didi'. The rhythms of life seemed regular—sleeping, waking, cleaning, eating. "I would want fish and they would get me fish. Nobody refused me anything. They were nice to me, I didn't know why," she says.

One day a girl whispered to Soni in the bathroom that a baby was growing inside her. She had

never heard the English word "baby", so she didn't catch on. "I just didn't have the brains to know what was happening. I was 15 or 16," she says. After three months of regular hospital visits—always in a curtained vehicle—Soni was taken for an ultrasound. "Back home, I pestered the caretaker, 'Kya hai didi, dikhaiye na, dikhaiye na'. And she showed me. There was a photo of a very small child—ekdum chhota sa bachcha tha."

It was like a pane of glass getting shattered inside her. The news would have come as a profound shock to any woman, but it was natural for a girl her age and level of emotional maturity to be thrown totally off-kilter. The coldness of the system relies on their naivete—underage girls are especially vulnerable to this exploitation because, by the time they realise they are pregnant, it's often too late for abortion. Soni managed to stay on her feet, though. The caretaker told her to win the confidence of those running the house. She found enough steel inside her to play along, hoping to run away one day. She stayed in the house for another three months—in all, around six. They took her for walks at a local park or to buy vegetables. "Other girls would run away to try and abort

the child but they were caught, brought back and beaten. I used to get scared but kept quiet, as if I was fine," she says. Slowly she won their trust and one night she slipped out at 3 am. Where she went, how she went, is a blur. She asked a taxi driver, "Bhaiya humko station chhod dijiye—please take me to the station". Using some of the Rs 10,000, she finally escaped the city with that grey moral smog hanging over it, and reached Ranchi.

Back in her village, still pregnant, Soni wandered alone in the forest, trying repeatedly to kill herself. By hanging, by pouring kerosene...but always survived. "I knew there was a child inside me but didn't know how to tell anybody, how to explain how it happened," she says. Girls in her situation, Soni realised later, often end their lives—as a friend of hers did recently. In her own case, a male friend finally arranged a doctor. An abortion ensued, at almost four months.

The village was where it started. Soni recalls, through tears, leaving her mother crying at the bus stand, asking her not to leave for Delhi. "I didn't listen—meri zidd thi—I was set upon going. The agent was from my village so I believed him," she says. Her father had filed an FIR

when he found her gone, but there was no police investigation. Now she registered a case, and promptly started getting threats to her life. "The agents tore up my FIR and threw it away," she says. She did not mention the pregnancy in the FIR. "My FIR was only about agents selling girls for Rs 40,000-50,000 but the police didn't probe even this. Nobody supported me," she says. From a sense of sheer isolation, a sense of community began growing in her. The pattern started sinking in. Soni met another girl from Jharkhand who told her of having given birth six times, until her body gave way. "She got Rs 50,000 per child. It is such a sad thing. I believe her. Nobody can live with a lie this big. I cry so much. Why did this happen to me? Why does it happen to unmarried girls? I didn't love anybody, had no friend. Why does god do this to us—how have we ever harmed anybody?" Depleted of her inner resources of vitality, it was a slow recovery—and a vague apprehension about the future kept Soni silent in public. "Tell the police? What will they do? They will only ridicule me and I'll never be able to marry. My parents will be defamed, that's all. What choice do I have? What can anybody do for me?"

Forced Surrogacy

Trafficked, traded, enslaved, raped and made to conceive babies for adoption. Adivasi girls are turned into baby-making machines that fetch Rs 1-4 lakh per child.

The second story overlaps with the first—the same points on the physical and social map—but this time it's an eyewitness. Her account helps us map out the territory from the outside, as it were. Rashmi is only about 20 but solemn-faced, as if the weight of years has worn her down slightly. She was all of 13 when the system smoked her out of her village home up on the Simdega plateau in southern Jharkhand, bordering Orissa. One day in September 2014, Rashmi escaped from seven years of domestic slavery. The placement agent who had lured her to that city back in 2008, put her on a train back to Ranchi. Rashmi travelled another 100 km by bus, crossing jungle and river to reach familial territory. A house in the town of Gumla. Her own people at last.

It was the house of her sister and brother-in-law. Soon after, the two of them accompanied Rashmi to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) office in Gumla. Yes, it was a child's story—a tale about the lost years of childhood—that she had to relate. The CWC is the only government body authorised to hear and record such testimonies. But its officers were away that day. "Our team was attending a UNICEF function in Ranchi that day so we didn't meet Soni," says Targen Panna, CWC's Gumla chairperson at the time. Nice touch that...UNICEF. Anyway, outside the CWC campus, Rashmi bumped into news reporters and activists. One of them brought her to Shashi Kant, an anti-trafficking activist who heads an organisation of his Chik Baraik tribe and is a journalist for a district paper. In the nondescript, white-walled courtyard of his house, Rashmi recorded, on videotape, what she had witnessed in Delhi.

"Bachcha bechne waala kaam," she called it. Baby-selling. A racket that's evolved in the shadow-zones of modern life to cater to demand. Or rather, many demands. For, baby-selling is only the last link in the chain. Baby production is a necessary interim stage. The laws of the market dictate that supply will rise up to meet demand. And that latter is a primordial word that can encompass many meanings. To reveal the full variety of exploitative practices, throw in a form of slavery. The video

conversation with Rashmi, roughly five minutes long, is one of the rare testimonies of what was always suspected happens in Jharkhand but has not been acknowledged so starkly—adivasi girls are trafficked, then raped, compelled to conceive, and finally their children sold in the flourishing adoption black market. A whole assembly-line of organised cruelty.

The price of a child secured through forced conception ranges between Rs 1-4 lakh, say activists. Besides the desperation of those seeking a child, the fluctuation is on account of the money the agents invest in adivasi women and the risk and problems encountered to have them conceive—the cold chain logistics, essentially. The commodification of the human body is abject, merciless and complete. In this economy, the adivasi woman and her womb are turned into money-making devices.

When reports about Rashmi were splashed in the papers, it was initially assumed she was a victim too. One news report talked of a "rescued girl who had had six babies". Another said she had been asked, and she refused. Indeed, some tell-tale signs fit the pattern, but Rashmi herself denies it. Anyway, all the buzz spurred the CWC into action—but even then, not much of it. "We didn't visit her village but we kept asking her to come to us. Rashmi never responded," says Panna. "Tell me—you are a victim, you have a problem, shouldn't you at least tell us about it? She is also over 18, so what could we do? Yes, even if such a crime occurred, she should have come to us."

In a tangential way, the episode cuts to the nub of why this phenomenon is hard to track down, let alone establish. The traumatised women often don't want to talk—and for a variety of understandable reasons. Victims feel vulnerable in surroundings alien to them—and revisiting rape in front of strangers can be akin to a second violation. Two, they may simply not want the fact of rape or pregnancy disclosed. The stigma is overpowering, and thoughts can turn to mere survival. A testimony such as Rashmi's, therefore, is valuable in the extreme, and likely reveals just the tip of the iceberg.

But in contrast to the



lackadaisical CWC, Shakti Vahini, an NGO, sent a fact-finding team to meet Rashmi at her home. "We heard of a rescued girl going to her village and telling people she was forced to have a child in Delhi so we went to meet her," says Rishikant, who runs Shakti Vahini. He and Baidnath, a Ranchi-based activist who was also in the fact-finding team, pieced together Rashmi's story and the NGO later publicised the facts in a report. The essential elements go thus:

An agent named Chayin Singh delivered Rashmi to Delhi. Not to any ordinary placement agency but to the Moti Nagar office of Manpower Bureau, run by Naina Kumari, allegedly one of Jharkhand's three most notorious traffickers. Whenever she visited that office, one thing struck her as odd: the number of babies and pregnant women. On one such visit, she met four girls, two of them pregnant, who explained things to her. As Rashmi recounted even in her video, "Girls who get pregnant, their children are kept in the agency office and sold after they are around one year old."

From here on, the trail goes hazy. As Rishikant admits, "We could not verify her claims." The NGO recommended an official investigation, which never took place. Trouble is, the complaint Rashmi later filed with the police (FIR No 08/15) in Basia, near Gumla, also does not mention the allegation she made before the media, activists and the fact-finding team. "Rashmi's case is only about recovering dues under labour laws and accuses Chayin Singh and Naina Kumari with trafficking and keeping bonded labour," says an officer who investigated the case. Naina, of course, denies involvement and claims a witch-hunt. "Some journalists and the CWC coerced three girls to give

statements against me, but they backed out before the SP," she says.

How does one square these blurred circles? "The police should have investigated the allegations when she first made them. We keep hearing of such cases but the victims are poor tribal girls. They recant under pressure from agents," says Shashi Kant. It seems too coincidental that Rashmi's actual testimonial reached everybody's ears except the CWC and the police. At any rate, there's a pattern in the testimonials—an initial burst of candour, then reticence, even retractions.

Similar graph was marked out when, three months after Rashmi, another woman, Vinati Bhuiya, approached the Basia police's AHTU (Anti Human Trafficking Unit) and also complained before the CWC. Her daughters, aged 15 and 17, had gone to Delhi in October 2013 with an agent and her older daughter, Mamta, was forcibly impregnated, she said. "The mother told us this in a written complaint, filed before me," says Alakh Narayan Singh, then a CWC member. "She wanted her daughters returned but her allegations were not confirmed," says Panna.

Strangely enough, the CWC soon received a letter signed by the two girls saying they were well and the rumours about pregnancy were untrue. "Two barely educated girls could not have written such a long, articulate letter. We demanded they be produced before us and then the girls returned," says Panna. Alakh Narayan says the agency wields inordinate power over the girls—"they were simply afraid to speak".

The FIR (No. 38/15, May 6, 2015) once again omitted the most serious charges. Instead, Vinati only charged the agent,

Anita Devi—also related to Manpower Bureau—of "spreading a rumour in the village that her daughter is pregnant." Anita, her husband and son were chargesheeted, the police say, on December 27, 2015, for keeping bonded labour and trafficking—charges softer than rape and impregnation of minors. The case is still on trial.

After the FIR, Vinati's daughters returned to Basia (through an agent), visited the police station and were taken to the SP's office in Gumla. "I myself took the girl (Mamta) to the SP's office. After the mother's allegations of pregnancy appeared in the news, the DG, IG, everybody took notice. But the girl denied being forced to have children," says a police officer.

The flurry of attention did not escape Naina Kumari either. It was three months after Rashmi's FIR that Vinati's daughters were sent back home from Delhi—another sign that she too could have been a victim. "Naina became afraid after the FIR," says Alakh Narayan. In September 2016, she came down to the CWC office in Gumla straight from a court appearance. "She created a ruckus. She accused us of harassing girls, of pressurising them to make statements against her," recounts Alakh Narayan. "Naina is very dabang—bold. She's young and looks innocent but don't be fooled; she can kick up a storm, trick anybody."

It was clear that the FIR had had its effect—but the crucial gap in incrimination remained. Without a high-level inquiry into placement agencies, the sheer enormity of the phenomenon escaped notice. Meanwhile, the dribbles of information kept coming. Other girls have returned pregnant to Jharkhand. Some had their children taken away at birth. All stories have the same depressing arc.

Why Is Trump So Angry ?

"The Russia-Trump collusion story is a total hoax," he ranted during Sally Yates' testimony on Monday. "When will this taxpayer funded charade end?" It is such an odd, ubiquitous detail—that Trump is "enraged." He is apoplectic, incensed, irate, vexed, sore, peeved, tantrum-y, mad online, mad offline, mad in a boat, mad with a goat, mad in the rain, mad on a train. The president's rage, his defining characteristic, is not of the contemporary political moment. It is something archaic, mythological, like the rage of Achilles. How can you be "enraged" about an investigation that has already found clear evidence of your team's wrongdoing and yet that your allies have moved mountains to hinder? Why is it infuriating that the American people want to resolve the question of whether an authoritarian country meddled in their election? A man with nothing to hide would feel indignant, surely, but not this all-consuming rage; a man with secrets would presumably feel dread or guilt. But Trump's wrath is not the response of a conventional politician. It is the lashing out of a mad king against

the disobedience of his subjects. On Tuesday, that rage resulted in the most famous Trumpian act: a firing. Citing a Justice Department memo that he commissioned, the president ejected James Comey from the driver's seat of the FBI—the agency that has placed Trump's campaign under a microscope. In Slate, Phillip Carter called the axing a "public execution" and argued that POTUS had declared "war on justice ... there are no shoes left to drop." Press secretary Sean Spicer, fumbling among the bushes on the darkened White House lawn, seemed about as prepared as one might expect (from a person hiding among bushes) to explain his boss's decision and assuage the public's concerns. Trump's circle thought Republicans and Democrats would all rejoice to see Comey go. The former FBI director was unpopular; Hillary Clinton's supporters blamed him for handing Trump the presidency. With the ouster, the administration had anticipated a "win-win." Really? It would be easy to blame such shortsightedness on stupidity or

ignorance alone. But the motivations run far deeper than that. Trump wants the Russia story to go away. This is not simply a matter of political pragmatism. The allegations attack his legitimacy, striking at the tender root of his self-image. James Comey has the power to stop these blows; he hasn't. Therefore, Trump is angry at Comey, and his fury, like a molten reactor core, powers every impulse radiating from the West Wing. According to the New York Times, Trump's advisers must indulge a "ritualistic need to criticize the Russia investigation to assuage an anxious and angry president." According to the Washington Post, Trump is "angry" at Comey's lack of support, is "frustrated" at his testimony, has "fumed" at the lack of attention to leaks. There is only one thing to do. Such a solution seems born of instinct—removing the guy who's the biggest threat to your continued employment may not be a sage move in the long term, but it will definitely make you feel better for the next five to 10 minutes. (The TV, on the other hand, doesn't care if you scream at it.) The president's grievances

result in an unpredictable mix of real assaults on the republic and inept tantrums. Is Trump evil, or is he a moron? Is he the guy cannily dismantling checks on his power, or is he the old coot shaking his fist at CNN? It turns out this was always the wrong question to ask. We Trump-watchers have spent far too long trying to figure out whether he is a savant or a clown—whether he plays 11-dimensional chess in his leisure hours or drools onto his robe while turning the White House lights on and off. The truth is that the president has one eternally rageful mode, which sometimes blows up in his face and sometimes greases the cogs of the highest office in the land. Trump's ire is a form of genius, and not just because it made him a wild card that status-quo-weary Americans thrilled to empower. During the campaign he deployed his permanent resentment as an effective showtime staple, railing against swamps and job-stealers. While his opponent ran on togetherness, he chanted "lock her up" and the rally-goers followed suit. He rolled the dice on repealing Obamacare (he hated Obama, his cool, constitutional opposite) and it sort of worked. But Trump's Achilles-like cholera is also an

Achilles heel. His hasty executive orders, his quick-twitch violations of diplomatic norms, have already tarnished his young presidency. There were the impotent ravings about inauguration crowds and embarrassing (to some, effective to others) cries of "fake news." On the campaign trail, much was made of the Republican mogul's fluency in the language of anger, his surprising and intuitive connection to a similarly inflamed white working class. We were slower to realize that his fury was no posture—that there was no "real" Trump preparing to take his solemn seat on Jan. 20. For better or for worse, being mad was his way of being in the world. So here we are. It beggars belief that the White House would sack Comey for any reason other than to thwart the Russia probe (or maybe to punish a parvenu given excessive credit for Trump's victory). To pretend otherwise, as Michelle Goldberg observed, to think we would actually believe Trump fired Comey for being unfair to the woman he calls "Crooked Hillary," is deeply stupid. The frantic violence of the president's feelings—anything to sweep the Kremlin back under the rug—has produced what is surely one of the all-time great mindfucks in American history. The problem with a doctrine of wrath—in the presidency as in other walks of life—is that the rationale so clear to the boiling brain can appear ridiculous to the outside observer. The administration's babbling excuses have a knee-jerk quality; it's as if the president so desired to disappear his Putin problem that he was willing to embrace whatever absurd explanation came to hand (and then became surprised—and angry all over again—when we didn't fall for it). Don't look at Russia! our commander in chief shouts in fury, and of course our gaze stays fixed on Moscow. Such transparent terror is contagious: Republican senators this week tried to make the Trump-Russia hearings about the travel ban, leaks, and Clinton's emails—anything but Trump and Russia. After a certain point, this is no longer strategy. It is reflex. It is a child covering his eyes to make the loathsome object in front of him vanish. Trump may be a politician, but he is also a man consumed with desperate, narcissistic rage. Easing that pain will always be his primary goal.



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Will Trump Be the First to Politicize the FBI?

Shortlist names like Kelly Ayotte and John Cornyn sound like ideal Washington department heads—until you realize why the FBI has never had a political leader.

The news Thursday that Kelly Ayotte, the former New Hampshire senator, was being considered by President Donald Trump to be FBI director met with nods across official Washington, where people tend to like former boldface names for boldface jobs. By day's end, Representative Trey Gowdy's and Senator John Cornyn's names were being mentioned too.

At first blush, these names seem like exactly the type of Washington appointment trial balloons you'd see for any ambassadorship, commission or Cabinet appointment—widely respected and serious-seeming elected officials who have some expertise in the subject. Ayotte was a former state prosecutor and the attorney general in New Hampshire; Cornyn was attorney general in Texas and an elected associate justice of the state's supreme court. Lost, though, amid this week's spiraling controversies is the fact that appointing any of them to lead the FBI would mark a radical departure from the entire history of the century-old law enforcement agency. From its founding over a century ago until Tuesday afternoon, when James Comey was summarily fired as director, the FBI has been led exclusively by nonpartisan career law enforcement professionals with no background in elected politics.

The bureau, in fact, has been perhaps the last bastion of nonpolitical leadership in Washington—an agency whose powers are so extensive and potentially damaging to American citizens that it has been kept clear of direct political influence. Whereas even sensitive jobs like CIA director and the director of national intelligence are seen clearly as political positions that change from administration to administration, the FBI



director's term has been expressly designed by Congress to avoid any taint of political influence: A 10-year nonrenewable term is meant to ensure that an FBI director can seek justice without fear or favor, straddling multiple presidential administrations and never currying favor for a future reappointment. At least since the days of J. Edgar Hoover, presidents likewise have carefully steered clear of treating the directorship as a political tool.

This unique background and historical legacy is especially important to consider given the circumstances in which Trump will name his new nominee for the post: The FBI was plunged Tuesday into what is almost inarguably the most politically fraught and weighted moment in its history, a situation that has only been heightened in the past 24 hours, after the White House admitted that the president fired this nonpolitical appointee in the interest of slowing or stymying the FBI's investigation into Trump's campaign and its possible ties to Russian agents. With a \$9 billion annual budget and 35,000 employees—including the core of some 13,000 special agents—the FBI investigates the nation's most sensitive cases, including both political

corruption and espionage cases, as well as a wide-ranging set of criminal violations that range from tribal reservations to counterterrorism cases. It operates in every state in the country and more than 60 foreign countries. The FBI's power over the life, freedom and liberty of the American people is unparalleled in U.S. government, and at key points in the bureau's history—from Hoover's attempts to blackmail Martin Luther King Jr., to its pursuit of political activists in the 1960s, '70s and '80s—we have seen the cost of the FBI's abuse of Americans' civil liberties. That unique power was actually something that Comey and previous directors have sought to underscore to their ranks: FBI agents, as part of their training, tour both the King Memorial in Washington, D.C., as well as the Holocaust Museum, to learn and witness the damage that can come from the abuse of civil liberties and the corruption of legal systems.

Until now, that's a lesson that's been carefully applied to the selection of the nation's top cop, too.

The FBI director's 10-year nonrenewable term was legislated by Congress in the wake of Hoover's death in 1972, recognizing that the man who had invented the modern bureau and led it for nearly 50 years had

grown too powerful and untouchable. The post of FBI director is uniquely situated to learn and deploy all manner of compromising political and person information—which Hoover uniquely exploited. After Hoover, Congress agreed that all future directors should be prevented from accumulating such power, yet doing the job well also required a certain freedom from day-to-day politics and short-term thinking, hence the decade-long term.

Ever since, there has always been a clear dividing line between the FBI and the normal and routine "politicization" of the Justice Department by presidential appointees—including the attorney general, deputy attorney general and the half-dozen assistant attorneys general who head the department's various divisions. "The FBI is in the executive branch," Comey often said as director, "but not of the executive branch."

In the FBI's entire centurylong history, it has never had an expressly political director. Hoover, for all his machinations as director, had actually spent his career at the Justice Department. Comey was just the seventh confirmed director in the bureau's history (a further half-dozen officials have been acting directors

during transition periods), and even the fact that Comey during his confirmation hearings acknowledged political donations to Mitt Romney and John McCain marked a departure from past nominees.

During the Obama administration's search for an FBI director, there was not a single former or current elected official seriously considered. By and large, Comey's background—as well as the backgrounds of others who were floated in 2013 as Barack Obama considered that appointment, like Ken Wainstein, Patrick Fitzgerald and Lisa Monaco—was typical of bureau leaders past: Comey was a career federal prosecutor, former U.S. attorney and one-time No. 2 in the Justice Department.

The man he replaced, Robert Mueller, had precisely the same résumé—a career federal prosecutor, former U.S. attorney and one-time No. 2 in the Justice Department. Mueller was so driven by the Justice Department's mission that, after a stint heading its criminal division under George H.W. Bush, he stayed only a brief period in private practice before starting over again at the bottom of the department's hierarchy as a line criminal prosecutor in the U.S.

attorney's office in Washington, D.C. During that 2001 search by George W. Bush, perhaps the closest any candidate came to having political ties was George Terwilliger, a former U.S. attorney and deputy attorney general who, while in private practice, had helped with Bush's legal strategy during the Florida recount. (It's worth noting that Terwilliger, though, didn't ultimately get the job.)

The three men who headed the FBI before Mueller were all longtime federal prosecutors-turned-federal judges: Louis Freeh, William Sessions and William Webster. Meanwhile, the first director of the FBI post-Hoover, Clarence Kelly, was a respected police chief and former FBI agent.

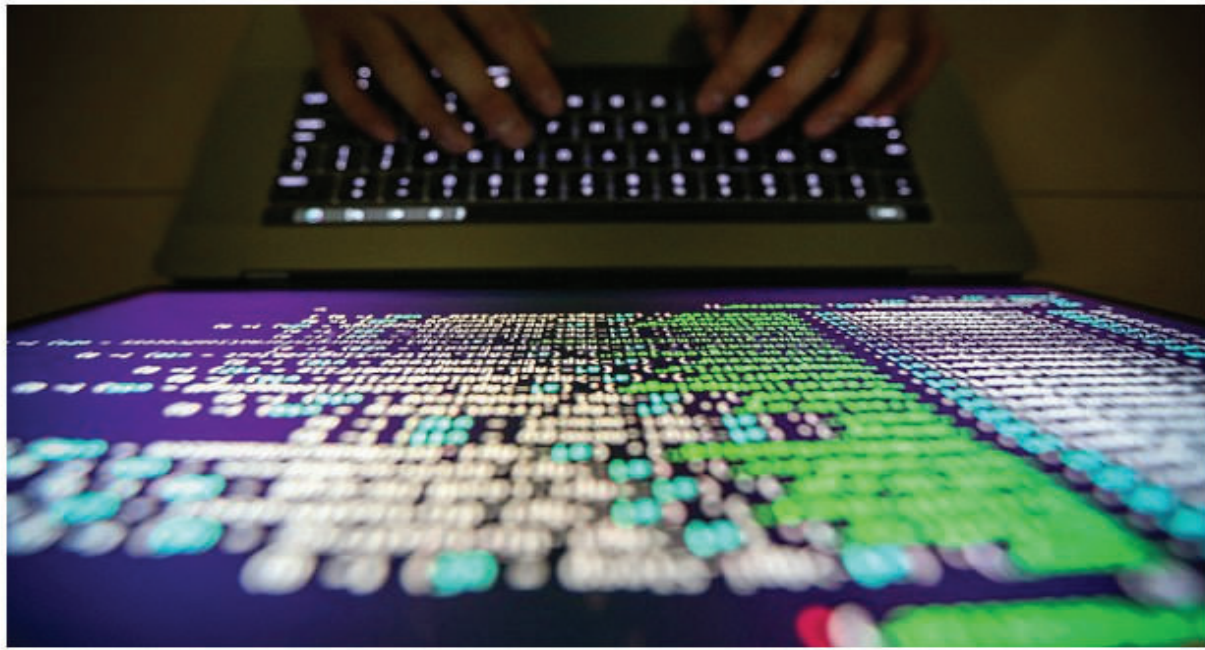
These leaders have by no means been without their own faults. Sessions was fired by President Bill Clinton in 1993 after a George H.W. Bush administration investigation found that Sessions had abused expenses and travel privileges. And Clinton's relationship with Sessions' successor, Freeh, grew so poisonous amid the scandals of the 1990s that the two men stopped speaking. Freeh also gave up his White House visitor badge, even as the threat of Al Qaeda rose across the globe—a sign that FBI directors can actually become too independent.

Even so, that independence is a fundamental bulwark of our impartial justice system, the idea that no individual in the country is above the law. The Trump administration appears to be considering undoing that long-standing tradition for no apparent reason—and without any real protest from official Washington. Anyone like Cornyn, Ayotte or Gowdy would be historically unprecedented.

(Insider Bureau) Experts fear further waves of cyber attacks may be on the way, as criminals race to re-purpose hacking tools that were stolen from the US National Security Agency and leaked last month.

After WannaCry, a ransomware program based on the leaked NSA exploit EternalBlue that hit hundreds of thousands of machines last week, criminals have adapted another NSA tool called EsteemAudit, security analysts tell the Financial Times.

EternalBlue and



Hackers 'have adapted a second cyber weapon stolen from the NSA called EsteemAudit'

EsteemAudit are among several zero-day exploits released last month by a group calling itself the Shadow Brokers, although EternalBlue is believed to be the most powerful among them.

EsteemAudit takes advantage of a vulnerability in Microsoft's Remote Desktop Protocol in

Windows 2003 and Windows XP, allowing an attacker to install and execute malicious code, according to an analysis by Fortinet.

Microsoft, which no longer supports those versions of Windows, says that the vulnerability does not affect anyone using Windows 7 or any more

recent version of the operating system.

The unprecedented WannaCry global cyber attack beginning on Friday has unleashed a new wave of criticism directed at the NSA. Microsoft Corp President Brad Smith sharply criticized the US government on Sunday for 'stockpiling' software

flaws that it often cannot protect, citing recent leaks of both NSA and CIA hacking tools.

'Repeatedly, exploits in the hands of governments have leaked into the public domain and caused widespread damage,' Smith wrote in a blog post.

'An equivalent

scenario with conventional weapons would be the US military having some of its Tomahawk missiles stolen.'

Some major technology companies, including Google and Facebook, declined comment on the Microsoft statement.

But some other technology industry executives said privately that it reflected a widely held view in Silicon Valley that the US government is too willing to jeopardize internet security in order to preserve offensive cyber capabilities.

The NSA did not respond to requests for comment.

The NSA and other intelligence services generally aim to balance disclosing software flaws they unearth against keeping them secret for espionage and cyber warfare purposes.

On Monday, senior administration officials defended the government's handling of software flaws, without confirming the NSA link to WannaCry, the tool used in the global ransomware attack. 'The United States, more than probably any other country, is extremely careful with their processes about how they handle any vulnerabilities that they're aware of,' Tom Bossert, the White House homeland security adviser, said at a press briefing on Monday.

Assad's murder machine

Syria has executed thousands of prisoners - mostly civilians opposed to the government - and burned the dead bodies in a giant crematorium, US administration claims

(Insider Bureau) The Syrian government has been accused of carrying out mass killings of thousands of prisoners by the US government - which released satellite images to prove it.

The Trump administration claims the bodies of those killed were burned in a large crematorium attached to the Saydnaya prison complex outside the Syrian capital of Damascus.

The allegation matches an Amnesty International report released in February which claimed up to 13,000 people - mostly civilians opposed to the government - have been hanged in secret at the prison.

Stuart Jones, the acting US assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, said Syrian President Bashar Assad's government 'has

sunk to a new level of depravity' as he revealed the photographs. The State Department says about 50 detainees a day are being hanged at the military prison, which is located about 45 minutes from Damascus.

'Credible sources have believed that many of the bodies have been disposed in mass graves,' Jones told reporters as he showed them aerial photos of the alleged building.

'We now believe that the Syrian regime has installed a crematorium in the Sednaya prison complex which could dispose of detainees' remains with little evidence.'

He added that the crematorium - construction on which began in 2013 - esd 'an effort to cover up the extent of the mass murders taking place in Saydnaya.' One of the

satellite images, provided by the State Department and taken from commercial satellites in January 2015, shows the building that the US says was modified to support a crematorium.

The snow on one section of the roof is melted in the photo, showing that it was taken in the winter.

Three other photos were also released, with two - taken in August 2013 and April 2016 - showing a side-by-side comparison of the building believed to house the crematorium, before and after it was altered.

The latter of those two images shows what are believed to be air intake vents, air conditioning units and a 'discharge stack' that could be used to expel the smoke created by thousands of burning bodies.



Those photos do not definitely prove the building is a crematorium, but they show construction consistent with such use.

It's not clear why the US has waited until now to release this information, but Jones told reporters: 'I would say that this information has been developing.'

The final photograph, taken in April 2017, shows how close the alleged crematorium building is to the prison - easily just a few minutes' walk for a condemned man, and moments for a vehicle.

Jones cited US

intelligence agencies and 'credible' humanitarian organizations as sources for the claims about the crematorium.

He added that 'The regime holds as many as 70 prisoners in Saydnaya in cells that have a five-person capacity.'

It's not yet clear exactly where the prisoners are killed, but a judge who witnessed the executions told Amnesty International that they are taken in the night to another building.

There they are beaten before being hanged to death.

Some - described as

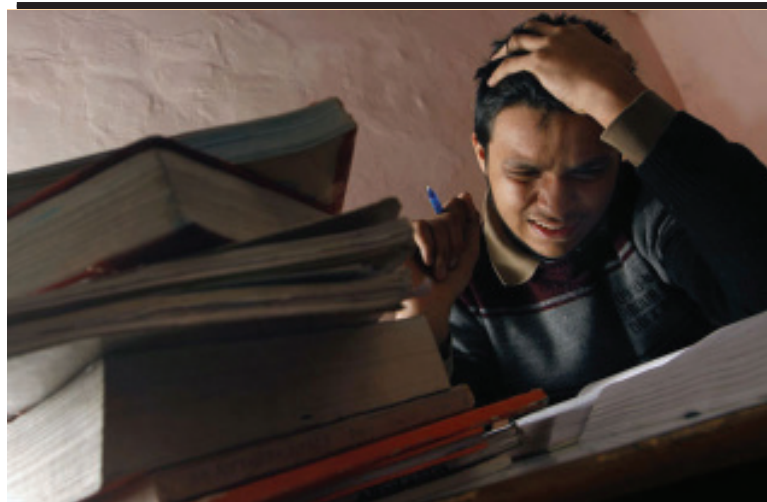
'the young ones' - are too light for the rope, and so officers' assistants will pull down on their feet to break their necks.

Others are left hanging for 10-15 minutes.

Amnesty International released the shocking claims in February, along with statistics about the secret hangings, saying up to 13,000 people had been executed there.

It said the executions have happened at a rate of around 50 a day between 2011 and 2015 - the first five years of the country's ongoing civil war.

Rising cases of student suicides sound alarm bells across India



(Agencies) Student life in popular culture is often envisioned as a happy-go-lucky period, devoid of the worries and responsibilities that define adulthood. In India, however, this assumption couldn't be farther from the truth. Students have consistently faced tremendous pressure in this country, where the opportunities are limited, the competition fierce, and where futures are determined by mark sheets. To make matters worse, Indian families are known to set incredibly high expectations when it comes to academic results, which further intensifies the burden on students. Unfortunately, not everyone emerges from this nightmare with flying colours. Statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reveal that close to 40,000 students in India committed suicide from 2011 to 2015, with 8,934 cases in 2015 alone. Another report from 2012 discloses that India's suicide rates for people between 15 and 29 years, are among the

highest in the world. This is even more significant when you consider that with suicide being illegal, several cases are hushed up as accidents or left unreported. For a typical class-XII student, stress levels run especially high as scores from board exams and the various entrance tests that follow determine not only college placements but also their careers—a fact that parents cannot drive home enough. And with no respite either at home or among peers, a student is often forced to consider irreversible measures. The year 2017 alone has thrown up several cases across the country, where exam-related stress has caused a student to take the extreme step. One major concentration of this unfortunate epidemic is in Kota, Rajasthan – India's coaching hub where, according to estimates, over 1.75 lakh aspirants gather annually to battle for limited seats in the country's most

prestigious colleges. The most recent casualty, a 16-year-old from West Bengal, committed suicide allegedly after failing to clear the IIT-JEE- Mains this April. Earlier in January, the same step was taken by a 19-year-old medical-school aspirant from Himachal Pradesh, who, like many others, had made their way to the town with dreams of a brighter future. In the past six years, Kota has seen over 60 student suicides, with a majority of them attributed to exam failures. In a video message recovered after his death last year, Aman Kumar Gupta, a student from Bihar, apologized to his parents for not being able to live up to their expectations. "Everyone at the coaching institute and my friends helped me but I am not been able to do it right," he said in the 11.14 minute long video clip. Even outside Kota, the alarm bells have been ringing for years now. Students from regions as diverse as Phagwara, Udupi, Noida, and Mumbai have all taken their lives within these first five months of 2017, due to study-related stress and burden of family expectations. In the most recent case, 24-year-old management student Arjun Bhardwaj, streamed his suicide as a 'live tutorial' on

Facebook before jumping to his death from a Mumbai hotel. The student's father reportedly told the police that his son was depressed "due to repeated failure in exams". Of late, the unsettling frequency of suicides has also drawn the attention of administrators and celebrities alike, while even reputed universities are talking of changing their curriculum. Earlier this year, PM Narendra Modi urged students undergoing depression to seek help, during his radio speech. The thought has since been echoed by Bollywood actors Anupam Kher and Akshay Kumar as well, both urging youngsters to speak up and look for other ways out. That India urgently needs to start prioritising mental health goes without saying: Currently,

only 0.06% of our national health budget is dedicated to it, along there is 87% nationwide shortage in mental-health professionals. On ground, this means that a majority of schools, universities, and institutions lack trained staff for counselling students caught on the brink of despair. From a national perspective, student suicides glaringly highlight our failure to protect and nurture our young and call for a critical review of the education system and social structures. As adults, parents, teachers, and leaders, safeguarding the interests of our students is a responsibility we bear collectively. And the fact that more and more children are driven to suicide instead of seeking help indicates that we are failing this duty, over and over again.



Delhi High Court says marital rape a serious issue, has become part of culture



(Agencies) The Delhi High Court on Monday said marital rape was a "serious issue" which had notoriously become a "part of the culture". A division bench of acting chief justice Gita Mittal and justice C Hari Shankar, hearing a PIL against the

penal code provision that protects husbands from being tried for the rape of their wives, also asked how many countries have made marital rape an offence. "It's (marital rape) a very serious issue... Is it an offence in the world? In how many countries is

marital rape an offence?," the bench said. It added: "Marital rape is part of the culture. See, how difficult is it for women to register a rape case." The court's remark came while hearing a PIL filed by NGO RIT Foundation, challenging Indian Penal Code's Section 375 saying it does not consider sexual intercourse of a man with his wife as rape. The Union government had earlier defended the provision saying "exception 2 (to Section 375 IPC) deals exclusively with private affairs of husband-wife based on traditional social structure and hence can't be said to be unconstitutional and in violation of Articles 14 to 21 of the Constitution". Section 375, which defines "rape" also contains the exception provision which states that the rape law would not apply to assault or sexual intercourse by a husband on

his wife who is above 15 years. The PIL has sought to declare the provision unconstitutional as it discriminates against married women sexually assaulted by their own husbands. The plea has said that the law as it stands today amounts to a state-sanctioned license granted to the husband to violate the sexual autonomy of his lawfully wedded wife and is therefore, a violation of the Right to Privacy guaranteed to the wife under Article 21 of the Constitution. "The exception to section 375 arbitrarily discriminates between women as it keeps the age of consent at 15 years for women who are in a wedlock whereas the same is 18 years in case of any other woman," it has stated. The court posted the matter for the next hearing on July 18.

How India Eats: The class structure of food consumption in India

A look at food consumption trends and food expenditure in Rural and Urban India shows nutrition levels are still low in large swathes of the country



(Agencies) We all know that ours is a very unequal society. The gulf between the rich and the poor in terms of wealth and incomes is enormous. Inequality is also very wide in consumption of luxury goods. But is consumption of food too very unequal? After all, there's a limit to how much a person can eat.

To understand which class of society eats what, we turn to the NSSO survey on Household Consumption of Various Goods and Services in India 2011-12. The report separates per capita consumption into 12 divisions, called fractiles. Fractile 1 is the lowest 5% of the population in terms of consumption, fractile 2 is the next 5%, fractile 3 is the lowest 10-20%, fractile 4 the lowest 20-30% and so on. Fractile 12 is the top 5% of the population in terms of consumption, fractile 11 the 5% below it, fractile 10 the 80-90% group. In other words, the fractile classes used are the percentile classes 0-5%, 5-10%, 10-20%, 20-30%, 30-40%, ..., 70-80%, 80-90%, 90-95%, and 95-100%. These fractiles are taken separately for rural and urban India. The survey shows the per capita monthly consumption of the various fractiles, or classes. The richest 5% of the urban population spent Rs2,859 per head per month on food in 2011-12, according to the survey, about nine times more than that spent by the bottom 5% of the rural population.

The rich don't spend too much more on cereals—the top 5% in urban India, or fractile 12, spent about 2.2 times the amount spent by the poorest 5% of rural Indians on cereals. But go up the nutrition ladder and a very different picture emerges. The richest 5% spend around three-and-a-half times more on pulses than that spent by the poorest 5%. On vegetables, they spend around 3.8 times more. On eggs,

fish and meat, the multiple is 14.5 times, on milk products 23.8 times. And on fresh fruits, which are obviously a luxury, they spend 61 times what the poorest 5% spend. The accompanying chart has the grim details.

But the bottom 5% of Indians is destitute. How does the picture change if we compare the 12th fractile of urban India, or the top 5%, with the 6th fractile, or the 40-50th percentile group in urban India, which is around the middle consumption level?

Well, here too there's a big difference in food intake levels. The top 5% of urban Indians spend three times the amount spent on food by those urban Indians falling in 40-50th percentile. They consume 1.5 times more pulses, 2.6 times more milk products, 2.4 times more eggs, fish and meat. As for fresh fruits, the top 5% consumed more than five times as much. The chart shows that the 6th fractile in rural India, or the 40-50th percentile in rural India, consumes much less than its urban counterpart.

This doesn't mean, by any

stretch of the imagination, that the top 5% of the urban population are gluttons. Far from it. Let's take their intake of fresh fruits. Their per capita consumption is 15 bananas a month, or one in two days. They have less than half a kilogram of mangoes a month and 200gm of watermelon. They have one coconut, 700gm of apples and 200gm of grapes in a month. This is very modest consumption.

Let's take beverage consumption. The top 5% in urban India drink 11.3 cups of tea, 1.9 cups of coffee and 20gm of coffee powder and 0.335 litres of fruit juices. This can hardly be called splurging.

So how much does the 40-50th urban percentile eat then? They have 5.8 bananas per head per month; three-fourths of an orange a month; 5 cups of tea; 0.012 of a pineapple; almost 5 litres of milk; and 2.8 eggs a month, among other things. Indeed, even the relatively well-off 8th fractile in urban India, or the 60-70th percentile, had 3gm of butter a month, Rs1.45 worth of ice-cream, 3.3 eggs, seven bananas, 1.1 oranges and 2.5 lemons and 7 cups of tea a month. And if this is what those in the middle of India's consumption ladder eat and drink, there's not much point in looking at how much the bottom 5% eats. But social divisions in India are not on the basis of class alone but also on caste lines. The NSSO survey of Household Consumer Expenditure across Socio-



INEQUALITY IN FOOD INTAKE

The gap in consumption increases sharply with more nutritious food

Monthly per capita consumption expenditure (in Rs)

	Fractile 12 urban (top 5%)	Fractile 1 rural (bottom 5%)	Fractile 6 urban (40-50th percentile)	Fractile 6 rural (40-50th percentile)
Food	2859.12	315.84	948.34	659.1
Fresh fruits	244.3	3.99	46.67	21.61
Vegetables	197.38	52.32	113.09	88.49
Milk products	420.8	17.64	159.55	90.94
Pulses	76.5	22.11	51.13	38.14
Cereals	224.51	102.96	166.11	148.46
Eggs, fish, meat	200.76	13.87	83.7	54.83
Edible oil	102.55	26.45	67.41	50.91
Spices	92.77	24.23	61.72	44.77
Beverages	180.53	8.88	49.44	24.71

Source: NSSO

economic groups 2011-12 has data on consumption by caste. In rural India, the average per capita monthly consumption expenditure on food for Scheduled Tribe households in 2011-12 was Rs630.86; for Scheduled Castes households Rs684.25; for other Backward Classes households Rs757.21 and for "other households" it was Rs879.74. Clearly, caste inequality is reflected in food consumption.

Average per capita monthly consumption expenditure on fresh fruits in rural India was Rs19.82 for ST households; Rs25.27 for SC households; Rs33.30 for OBCs and Rs42.06 for "others". Among the "others", those who had more than four hectares of land spent Rs58.28 per month on fresh fruits.

In short, what the data throws up are stark facts of poor nutrition among very large sections of the Indian population.

Arnab Goswami's Republic TV flouting rules, says NBA in Trai complaint

News Broadcasters Association says Arnab Goswami's Republic TV has been registered by cable platforms multiple times under different genres, in violation of Trai's broadcasting rules

(Agencies) New Delhi: The News Broadcasters Association (NBA), the representative body of private television news channels, has asked the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) to intervene and take action against Arnab Goswami's recently launched news channel Republic TV over allegedly unethical distribution practices.

In a letter dated 12 May, NBA said Republic TV has been registered by various cable distribution platforms multiple times under different genres, making the channel appear more than once in their electronic programme guide (EPG), in violation of Trai interconnection regulations.

"Republic TV is licensed as an English news channel but for reasons best known has been registered by several multi-system operators/distribution platform operators/distributors multiple times under different genres in their EPG (electronic programme guide) by listing it on multiple logical channel numbers (LCN). We have been informed of several infractions," the letter said. Mint has reviewed a copy of the missive.

According to Trai, every channel has to declare its genre to the regulator and every distributor is mandated to assign a unique channel number to each TV channel. "It is implied that one channel

can only be classified in one genre. We are examining this issue and, accordingly, will send notices to the parties involved," said a Trai official, who declined to be named. This is the first time NBA has written to Trai to take action against a channel for distribution malpractices. Currently, Republic TV is not a member of NBA but has applied for membership.

"I am unaware about any issue raised by NBA. I am very surprised to hear about it since most of the existing members are currently using dual (feed) as a marketing tool and have been using it actively during launch or on big events like budget and elections," said Vikas Khanchandi, chief executive officer at Republic TV.

Bill Gates reveals what he'd study if he were a college freshman today



(Agencies) Take notice, world has some advice for incoming college freshmen what you should study. - the richest person in the In a Twitter thread on

Monday, Microsoft cofounder Bill Gates said if he were to enter college now, he'd major in artificial intelligence, energy, or biosciences. He called them all "promising fields where you can make a huge impact." Experts in technology and economics generally agree that there will be profound changes in the next 20 years in the market is growing at

Microsoft companies use AI to automate their factories, construction sites, and retail locations. Powering those systems will likely be untapped sources of renewable energy, like solar and wind power. Gates has predicted humanity will see an "energy miracle" within the next 15 years. And the US biotech market is growing at

impressive rates, particularly as private firms race to develop smarter drugs and treatment options for those poorest regions. Bright-eyed 18-year-olds should take notice, he says. "You know more than I did when I was your age," he wrote in the Twitter thread. "You can start fighting inequity, whether down the street or around the world, world has made in sooner."

AB InBev to pump \$2 billion into U.S. business



(Agencies) Anheuser-Busch InBev, the world's largest brewer, plans to invest \$2 billion in the United States, where its flagship Budweiser lager has suffered from declining volumes and a falling market share over the past three years. The company, which recently bought nearest rival SABMiller for nearly \$100 billion, said it was launching one of the largest capital investment programs in U.S. brewing history, investing close to \$500 million this year and a total of \$2 billion through 2020.

In 2017, it will spend more than \$200 million on brewery and distribution projects, of which \$82 million would be to improve national supply chains and to build distribution facilities in Los Angeles and Columbus. Investment in many of its 21 U.S. breweries will also allow them to make different beers, or expand production of aluminum bottles.

The company will also push further into non-alcoholic drinks, such as the ready-to-drink tea Teavana it is producing in partnership with Starbucks (SBUX.O). AB InBev's beer sales in the United States have fallen as Americans have developed an increasing thirst for craft beer. AB InBev responded in 2011 by taking over Goose Island, and has since added 10 more U.S. craft brewers. Its 12th planned addition, Wicked Weed, was announced earlier this month. It also holds a majority stake in Virtue Cider. Its craft businesses grew by a double-digit percentage last year.

Eurozone needs more than Germany for breakout growth

(Agencies) LONDON (AP) "Germany once again helped the 19-country eurozone eke out steady, if unspectacular, economic growth in the first quarter of the year. The hope is now that others, such as France and Italy, will start to pull their weight more and push growth even higher this year.

Eurostat, the EU's statistics agency, confirmed Tuesday that the region, which spans from Ireland in the west to the Baltic states in the east, grew by a quarterly rate of 0.5 percent. The update also confirmed that the eurozone performed better than the U.S. in the first quarter. The U.S. economy, according to Eurostat, expanded by a quarterly 0.2 percent.

The eurozone's growth rate isn't bad, but it's not great either "roughly in line with its recovery from recession that started four years back.

There is evidence, however, that the eurozone could pick up pace in coming months, especially as some of the political worries that clouded its immediate future have dissipated, with the defeat of populist politicians in elections, most recently Marine Le Pen in France.

French President Emmanuel Macron, inaugurated Sunday, is inheriting an economy that appears to be gaining traction, even before any potential boon from his economic agenda, which includes cutting taxes on companies and labor, investing more in technology and promoting freer trade. Expectations are high that the French economy will do better in the second quarter than it did in the first, when it expanded by 0.3 percent. That's not enough for France to really dent its unemployment rate, which

has stood above 10 percent for years.

In particular, surveys of business activity as measured by financial information company IHS Markit are increasingly rosy about France.

The country certainly has some catching up to do, particularly with Germany, which has been driving eurozone growth in recent years. That was evident in the first quarter, when Germany's growth was double France's at 0.6 percent.

One of the major problems afflicting the eurozone during the recovery has been how reliant it has been on Germany. The hope in Berlin is that other countries will emerge as pillars of growth, especially now that the region appears to have set aside its debt issues. Italy, which is one of the region's big debtors but avoided needing a bailout like Greece or Portugal, is

another country that has been advancing at a crawl. However, like France, there are signs of improvement there, too.

"Looking ahead, economic data for the second quarter suggest that growth could accelerate as we head towards the summer months," said Oliver Kolodseike, senior economist at the Centre for Economics and Business Research. "Encouragingly, the data signal a broad-based upturn."

Of the large majority that have released first-quarter figures, only Greece showed output declining, albeit by a bare 0.1 percent. Greece has now shrunk for two straight quarters "the technical definition of a recession.

The Greek economy is 25 percent smaller than it was eight years ago following a brutal recession associated with its debt crisis and accompanying bailouts.

US industrial production posts biggest gain since 2014

(Agencies) WASHINGTON (AP) "American industry expanded production last month at the fastest pace in more than three years as manufacturers and mines recovered from a March downturn.

The Federal Reserve said Tuesday that industrial production at U.S. factories, mines and utilities shot up 1 percent in April from March, biggest gain since February 2014 and the third straight monthly gain. The increase was more than twice what economists had expected.

Factory production rose 1 percent after declining 0.4 percent in March. Mine



production increased 1.2 percent after falling 0.4 percent in March. And

utility output rose 0.7 percent after surging 8.2 percent in March. Factory

production has risen three of four months this year. Manufacturing has recovered from a rough patch in late 2015 and early 2016 caused by cutbacks in the energy industry and a strong dollar, which makes U.S. goods costlier in foreign markets. The overall U.S. economy grew at a lackluster 0.7 percent annual pace from January through March. But economists expect growth to pick up the rest of the year as consumers ramp up spending. A healthy job market bolsters consumer confidence. Employers last month added 211,000 jobs and unemployment fell to 4.4 percent, lowest in a decade.



Pictures of Priyanka and Adriana frolicking on the beach are giving us BFF goals

(Agencies) While raised the hotness quotient with hoop earrings. Those supermodel Adriana Lima in stylish bikinis. International websites reported that Priyanka and Adriana super glam in a navy blue bandeau top with bikini bottom and a long khaki shirt. They both looked super hot. It seemed as if Actor Priyanka Chopra is currently in Miami to promote her film Baywatch movie. Adriana Lima wore a black halter neck side-tie bikini. She spiced up her BFF supermodel look with red lipstick and Adriana Lima. The duo she accessorised her bikini

with hoop earrings. Those in her navy blue cat eye sunglasses looked perfect on her. Priyanka, paired with a long khaki shirt and stylish reflectors.



No clash between Deepika Padukone, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Sonam Kapoor at Cannes



bal ambassador of a cosmetic giant. If you thought there could be sparks flying on the red carpet, you are mistaken. Sources confirm that there won't be any clash as the actresses will make appearances on different days and are unlikely to even bump into each other. "Deepika Padukone will walk the red carpet on May 17-18, Aishwarya on May 19-20, and Sonam on May 21-22," revealed a spokesperson for the brand. When asked about sharing the platform with Aishwarya, Deepika was all praise for her. She added, "Our dates are different but if our paths cross, I will definitely catch up with her. She is someone who has represented not just the brand but India so beautifully for years. I know her otherwise as well and I've always admired the way she conducts herself."

While a bevy of Bollywood beauties are slated to walk the Cannes red carpet this year, all eyes will be on Deepika Padukone, who joins Cannes queen Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and fashionista Sonam Kapoor as the glo-

Shah Rukh Khan on his TED talk debut: I had to bring to the fore the personality of the Indian brethren

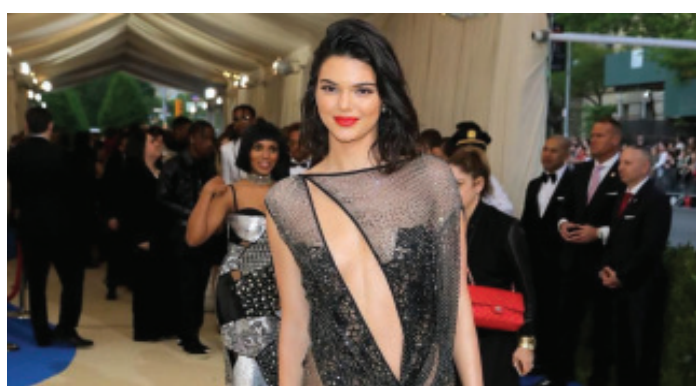
(Agencies) Shah Rukh Khan's TED talk video which was recently released saw the actor throw light on his life as he spoke about fame, humanity and love. On a platform where inspiring and change provoking speakers talk about education, business, science, tech and creativity, Shah Rukh chose to be different. The 17-minute talk saw Shah Rukh in is usually best as he used wit and humour to keep the session engaging and interesting. He kept the audience enthralled throughout and the room time and again

was filled with applause and laughter as Shah Rukh continued to share his thoughts. A leading tabloid recently asked Shah Rukh as to why he chose an unusual topic on a platform where people discuss their success stories. To this, the actor said, "People who come on TED Talks are amazing - achievers, thinkers and innovators. Being an actor known for romance, I felt it was important for me to speak about love instead of just Indian films or Bollywood. It would have been easy talking about how an actor thinks, or the pressures of it. I wanted it to be more universal in appeal, instead of what I do as an actor."

Shah Rukh is "extremely glad" over the kind of response his TED talk received. He further added, "I was actually trying to put across something that I believe our country instils in us. The speech was a summation of my life in my country and all that I have learnt so far. I have been lucky to get so much love. I had to bring to the fore the personality of the Indian brethren, which is nothing short of overwhelming." "Logon ka dil jo hai hamaare desh mein pyaar se bhara hua hai. So, if one is able to translate it for the rest of the world, it will be phenomenal. We have amazing things happening around in terms of human achievements in all fields. If love and these developments go hand in hand, we can create a happy place to live. With the first speech, all I wanted was to give people this message," continued Shah Rukh.



Kendall Jenner and the brown backlash



(Agencies) Indianness has become a knotty idea. Those who don't make it palpable--by cow vigilantism, yoga adherence or swearing against Pakistani actors -- don't fit the new charter of a nationalist identity. Like a demanding deity who must be regularly appeased with ritualistic fuss, Indianness is now a mantra, a jap to be repeated as proof of devotion. Not all such chants are divisive or disappointing—Swachh Bharat positions certainly are not, for instance. Yet some indeed are. The so-

called outrage over Vogue India's May 2017 cover with American model Kendall Jenner sits on that side of that spectrum. That a section of Indians are upset with the country's most known fashion glossy for putting an "all-white" model on the cover of one of its special issues in its 10th anniversary year is a meaty enough piece of news to make it to international newspapers is news itself. But this indignation that many "deserving Bollywood celebrities" (to quote from

Twitterverse) and top Indian models were left out to celebrate Jenner instead represents numerous cross currents. One is the cusp we are at in our socio-political constructs. From being the colonised we are learning to colonise ourselves. Where we rebel against being boxed, defined or caricatured because of our Indianness wherever we may be in the world. Yet we find those very peculiarities useful in our nationalist self-definitions. The Indian narrative is moving away from validations or reflections of India in a Western mirror to create new myths of Indianness back home. In this case, we favour brown against an all-white fashion model. If this about a thoughtful stand against the white skin bias of fashion magazines, we must cry wolf every time the white-hot

Shahrukh Khan and Inc (Siddharth Malhotra, John Abraham, Deepika Padukone, Shahid Kapoor etc) who sell fairness potions climb on to the glossy covers. Or might this mean that we would have been okay with the non-Indian but fabulously brown Naomi Campbell but the chalky gradation of Jenner's skin colour is the real issue? The Kendall on Vogue India is more delicate than this trite positioning, as some will argue. It is perhaps about Indian versus American, national versus global, us versus them. What we may be saying is that some kind of brownness validated by country of passport, some kind of Indianness by origin, some kind of Bollywood-ness by profession or some kind of PriyankaChopra-ness by achievement is now a requisite to be a cover girl for special editions of Indian glossies.

Nudity is beautiful, says Paris Jackson, sharing topless photo online

“Nudity started as a movement for ‘going back to nature’, ‘expressing freedom’, ‘being healthier’ and was even called a philosophy. Being naked is part of what makes us human. For me, it helps me feel more connected to Mama Gaia. I’m usually naked when I garden,” Paris Jackson says

(Agencies) Late star Michael Jackson’s daughter Paris Jackson, who has shared her topless photograph online, says nudity is beautiful.

“I’ll say it again for those questioning what I stand for and how I express myself,” the 19-year-old model captioned a black-and-white shot of herself smoking and relaxing outside. She posted it on Instagram

on Friday, reports usmagazine.com. Paris told her 1.4 million Instagram followers that being naked is “actually a beautiful thing” and doesn’t have to have a sexual connotation. “Not only is your body a temple and should be worshipped as so, but also part of feminism is being able to express yourself in your own way, whether it’s being conservative and wearing lots of clothes or

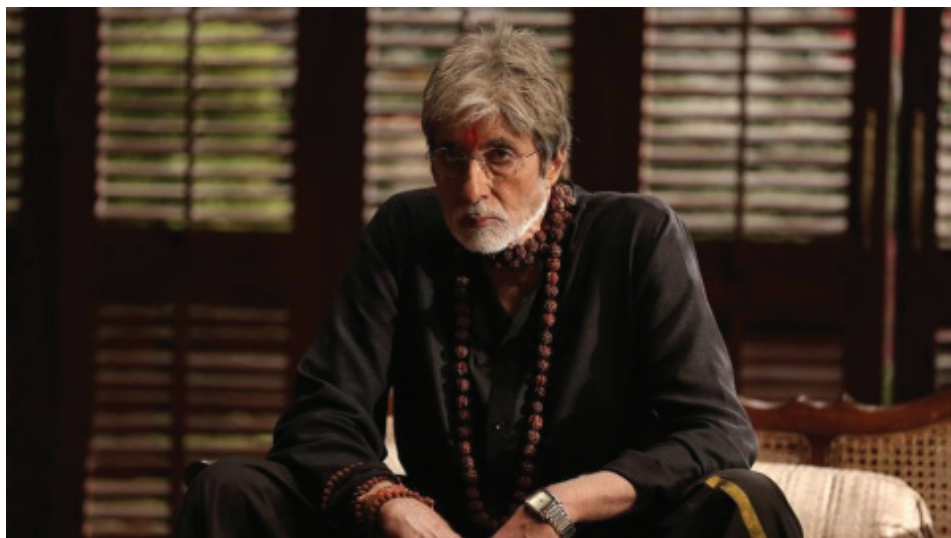
showing yourself,” she wrote. “There’s different ways of absorbing mother earth’s energy... The human body is a beautiful thing and no matter what ‘flaws’ you have, whether it be scars, or extra weight, stretch marks, freckles, whatever, it is beautiful and you should express yourself however you feel comfortable.” Paris ended her post with an unapologetic message. “If



this makes some of you upset I completely understand and I encourage you to maybe no longer follow me, but I cannot apologize for this in their beliefs.”

Is Sarkar 3 really the death knell for Ram Gopal Varma as a maverick auteur?

Sarkar 3 isn’t as bad as many of his recent films, but it hasn’t done justice to a franchise like Sarkar, and certainly not to some amazing actors.



(Agencies) Shiva (1991), the Hindi remake of Ram Gopal Varma’s first film Siva (1989), became an instant hit, because there was a director who understood the angst of the youth and knew how to encash that on celluloid.

His lead Nagarjuna wasn’t shy of using crime as a means to clean politics, something that resonated well in the times when muscle men were trying their best to enter politics and hold power. Raat, Rangeela, Satya, Kaun, Mast, Jungle, Company, Bhoot, in film after film he kept redefining genres, mostly gangster and horror.

Sarkar (2005) was his

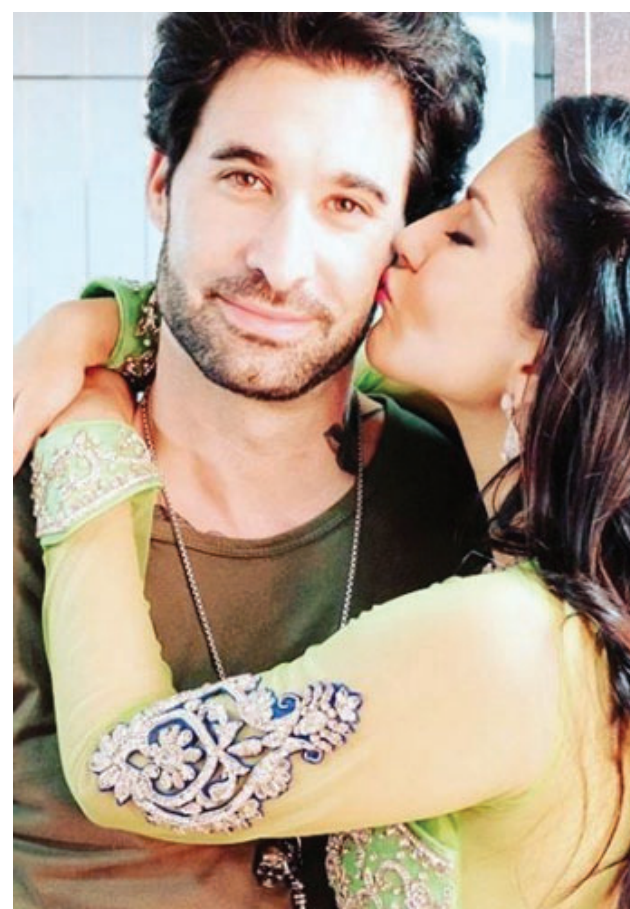
tenth Hindi film. Till then his only film that didn’t work at the box office was Naach, but even it was praised for Varma’s sensibilities. Here was the man who knew what he was doing. He was simultaneously training a lot of new talents that were to rule Bollywood in coming years. His slackening began with the Shiva remake of 2006 and continued with Darna Zaroori Hai, Darling, Phoonk, Agyaat, Sarkar Raaj and Rann. All these films released between 2006 and 2010. But the one film, which also released during the same period, hurt him the most. Ram Gopal Varma Ki Aag became the epitome of bad filmmaking. It’s a standard that can’t be surpassed easily. Critics and audience started to realise how Varma is losing grip over his projects. The cocky director paid no attention to any sort of criticism and continued to find producers to make more films. Thanks to films like Not A Love Story, Department, Satya 2 and other similar films, his brand value hit an all time low. Occasional sparks in Rakht Charitra, The Attacks Of 26/11 and Veerappan didn’t help much, and everything finally came down to Sarkar 3, his vital ticket to salvation.

Sunny Leone: Daniel makes me feel special every day; don’t need a birthday for that

Actor Sunny Leone turns 35 today. She recounts her fondest birthday memories and the most cherished gift she has ever got from husband Daniel Weber. The two are celebrating in a quiet and intimate way in LA.

(Agencies) Actor Sunny Leone turns 35 today, and she’s ringing in her birthday with her husband, Daniel Weber, in Los Angeles. The actor is quite unlike other Bollywood stars who celebrate their birthdays with pomp and big parties. About the birthday plans, she says, “I’ll hopefully get to see my friends and brother. That’s all I can ask for or need for my birthday. I just like quiet dinners and seeing family. I’m quite simple that way and not the birthday celebrating type.” Recalling her fondest birthday memories, Sunny goes down memory lane and says it was with her parents. “My last birthday that I cherish was when my parents were still alive — my mother baking me a cake, and the four of us together, and getting hugs and kisses and love from my family,” says the actor, who has been part of films such as Jism 2 (2012), Ragini MMS (2014) and Ek Paheli Leela (2015).

And any special gift



that she will never forget? birthday for that. He’s “An emerald necklace always thinking of me and that Daniel gave me. It getting me special gifts, has one of his mother’s small or big. It’s always with diamonds in it — a family a lot of love.” Though Sunny diamond — because I admits that she likes never got that from my surprises, she doesn’t look parents when I got forward to her birthday for married.” Other than this, any surprise gifts. “I don’t has Daniel ever done actually expect anything anything special to make from anyone,” she says. “I her birthday memorable? only want my husband and Sunny quips, “Daniel brother to wish me happy makes me feel special birthday and the rest is every day. I don’t need a icing on the cake.”

SAPAC (South Asian American Political Committee) led by it's Chairman Zahid Syed and Event Chair Kawaljit Chandi recently held their Annual Brunch in prestigious Marriot of Uniondale. New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, was among many Political and appointed officials from Town, County and State who were present during the event. Some prominent members of the community were honored for their contribution to the community.





Maa **Vaishno** Devi

Vishaal Mata ki Chowki

By Shree Vaishno Sewa Samiti



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