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Seeing The World Through Indian Lenses

Indian-made medical devices can hit foreign firms' market, end the mark-up regime. The neglected sector needs a vigorous push.



(Special Report) When Anand S. Bisht had cataract surgery in both his eyes, he took the advice of the government hospital doctor and opted for imported lenses worth Rs 8,000 each. Altogether, he spent Rs 20,000. Bisht admits that India-made lenses would have cost less than half the price, but did not want to upset the doctor as he did not have to spend anything on the procedure in a government hospital. In a private hospital, a cataract operation in one eye alone can cost anywhere from Rs 20,000 to Rs 35,000. In sharp contrast, at the Aravind Eye Hospitals in south India, this costs less than Rs 2,000, points out S. Srinivasan, co-founder and managing trustee of LOCOST (Contd. on page 19)

Trump, PM Modi To Meet On June 26

White House Says It Will Set Forth Vision To Expand Indo-US Ties

(Special Report) The maiden meeting between US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi would "set forth a vision" to expand the US-India partnership in an ambitious way, the White House said on Monday. The leaders of the world's two largest democracies, home to 1.6 billion people, will meet on June 26 to discuss a gamut of bilateral issues including terrorism and India's concerns over possible changes in H-1B visa rules. (Contd on page 19)



Vijay Mallya to face further charges



(By a Staff Reporter)

London: Vijay Mallya, an Indian businessman and politician who is the subject of an extradition effort by India could face further charges and a second request to extradite him from Britain to India, a London court heard on Tuesday.

The flamboyant Indian liquor and aviation tycoon, 61, was arrested by British police in April on behalf of the Indian authorities, who accuse him of fraud. Mallya's lawyer, Ben Watson, told a hearing

(Contd on page 19)

Who's afraid of George Soros?

Governments across the globe turn on Hillary Clinton supporter accused of pushing his neoliberal agenda worldwide



(News Agencies) The growing hatred nationalists and conservatives the world over towards liberal billionaire George Soros has been detailed by a series of political experts. Those who oppose Soros and accuse him of being a 'puppetmaster' claim the American financier-cum-philanthropist has successfully manufactured Europe's migration crisis, backed a coup in Macedonia and spon-

sored protests in Hungary. All from the comfort of his New York home. From the Kremlin via Skopje to the power corridors of Washington, the Hungarian-born Jewish immigrant is public enemy number one of nationalists around the globe. The 86-year-old, who Forbes Magazine lists as the world's 29th richest man, and his Open Society Foundations is accused by his right-wing attackers of trying to meddle in politics by pushing a liberal, multicultural agenda.

Some of those who oppose him in Poland, a nation that once bestowed upon him one of its highest civilian honors, accuse him of being an enemy of the state who wants to destroy their sovereignty. Similar attacks have been particularly vicious in his birth country Hungary, which on Tuesday is set to pass a controversial anti-NGO bill seen as directly targeting his foundation.

(Contd on page 18)

Notwithstanding NDTV

There is no middle ground any longer in Indian politics or journalism. You are either a Sanghi or a Presstitute.

(News Agencies) These are trying times for journalists. We have a story, a rather detailed one in fact, without a byline. It is about the controversy over conversions and the activities of the Islamic State in Kerala. The writers several of them contributed to the story didn't want to be identified because of the threats involved: rang-

ing from being labelled a Sanghi to getting their hands chopped off. There is no middle ground any longer in Indian politics or journalism. You are either a Sanghi or a Presstitute. If you are a Sanghi, everything that happens around you is for the good, including the cow lynching and the peacock theories. (Contd on page 18)



China Detains Chairman of Anbang, Which Sought Ties With Jared Kushner



(Agencies) The chairman of a Chinese financial conglomerate who tried to forge a business relationship with President Trump's son-in-law has been detained by police.

Wu Xiaohui, the chairman of Anbang Insurance Group, was taken away on Friday in Beijing, according to *Caijing*, a respected newsmagazine. In a statement early Wednesday morning in China, the company said that Mr. Wu was "for personal reasons no longer able to perform his duties."

Two people briefed on the matter — a company executive and a business partner of

Anbang — confirmed that Mr. Wu had been detained.

Mr. Wu, who piloted Anbang's rapid rise to global prominence with splashy purchases like the Waldorf Astoria hotel in Manhattan, is the latest Chinese tycoon to be ensnared in an anti-corruption drive that has swept the country in recent years. Another of China's wealthiest and most politically connected financiers, Xiao Jianhua, was reportedly seized from his luxury hotel in Hong Kong by Chinese police officers and taken over the border in January. He has not been seen publicly since. Anbang, which claims to have almost \$300 billion in assets, had recently been on a worldwide buying spree, and Mr. Wu counted Wall Street executives like Stephen A. Schwarzman as among his business partners in the United States.

The *Caijing* article said Mr. Wu was detained as part of a Chinese government investigation into Anbang. The two people who confirmed that Mr. Wu had been detained asked for ano-

nymity because they were not authorized to speak to the news media.

Anbang is also a major issuer of speculative wealth management products, which have attracted a tidal wave of money from Chinese investors. Mr. Wu's detention follows a move last month by China's insurance regulator to bar the company from offering new insurance products for three months as part of a wider clampdown. The regulator said at the time that it was taking disciplinary measures against the company over the improper sale of insurance products. It was not clear on Tuesday what would happen to Mr. Wu. Some executives caught up in the government's crackdown on corruption in the financial sector, which began last year, have vanished for a few days only to reappear, back in charge of their companies. Others, like Mr. Xiao, have been held for months in undisclosed locations without any charges being publicized. Xu Ming, a billionaire caught up in a 2012 political scandal, van-

ished and died in prison in late 2015 at 44, according to a report in one Chinese government-owned newspaper in Hong Kong. Sterling political connections on both sides of the Pacific Ocean might have worked to Mr. Wu's advantage in his business dealings. He married a granddaughter of Deng Xiaoping, China's paramount leader in the 1980s and in November met with Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and a top adviser, in a bid to buy a stake in a Manhattan office building partly owned by Mr. Kushner's family company. The deal was eventually abandoned after media coverage that highlighted a perceived conflict of interest. Mr. Kushner's purview at the White House includes relations with China. Anbang has taken the money it raised from Chinese savers and invested much of it abroad. Last year, Anbang spent more than \$6 billion for a collection of luxury hotels across the United States. The seller of those hotels was the Blackstone Group, whose chairman and chief executive, Mr.

Schwarzman, is one of Mr. Trump's closest business advisers. In a separate effort, Anbang offered more than \$13 billion for Starwood Hotels and Resorts before abandoning its bid early last year after media scrutiny of its opaque ownership structure. China's insurance sector has been in turmoil in recent months. In April, anti-corruption investigators announced that they were focusing on the insurance sector and specifically, the country's top insurance regulator. Xiang Junbo, the chairman of China Insurance Regulatory Commission, was later removed from office after the government placed him under investigation for "severe violations of discipline." Mr. Wu's detention comes at a politically sensitive time in China. The ruling Communist Party is set to convene a leadership meeting this year that will pick a new generation of top officials, and the party puts the preservation of stability — both financial and political — at a premium in the months ahead of the conclave, held once every five years.

Biological father taking away child is not kidnapping, MEA tells court



(Agencies) MUMBAI: A man cannot be charged with kidnapping his child, the external affairs ministry and the CBI informed the Bombay high court on Tuesday. Mumbai businessman's plea challenging a request from the Netherlands to India to extradite him for "abducting his daughter" from Amsterdam following a complaint by his estranged Dutch wife. The MEA told the court it had rejected the Dutch government's request to arrest and extradite Sajid Shah*. His estranged wife Nazneen* had filed a criminal complaint

against him after he brought their two-year-old daughter back to India in September 2016. She accused Sajid of "violently kidnapping their daughter" from her house. Nazneen also launched an online campaign for the child's return. An Interpol notice was subsequently issued for Sajid's arrest, following which the Netherlands government approached the Indian authorities. Advocate Hiten Venegaonkar, the Centre's counsel, submitted in court an affidavit filed by the CBI along with a letter from the MEA.

"Since the taking away of a child by her biological father does not amount to kidnapping, it is not an extraditable offence," B P Bagchi, assistant director, National Central Bureau, CBI, said in his affidavit. "The MEA, in its May 5, 2017, letter, rejected the extradition request. In view of the above, Sajid shall not be arrested and no coercive steps will be taken against him and his daughter, the officer added. Nazneen and Sajid met in Amsterdam in 2010, during an Indian film award event, and got married in 2011. Nazneen said Sajid's behaviour changed after marriage. She gave birth to their daughter in 2014. After the couple separated, a Dutch court awarded Nazneen their daughter's custody in 2016. A few months later, Sajid abducted their daughter, she alleged. Nazneen's story went viral after it was shared on the 'Humans of Amsterdam' Facebook page. Meanwhile, Sajid filed a divorce and custody petition before the Bandra family court. Sajid claimed he was trying to protect his daughter from his "abusive wife".

Indian shot at by Saudi forces in Awamia



(Agencies) HYDERABAD: An Indian has been reportedly injured in a shooting resorted to by Saudi forces at Awamia in Saudi Arabia on June 12. A photograph of the man, soaked in blood and lying on the ground, was shared on Twitter by those who are raising their voices against the violence. The Consulate General of India (CGI) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia which took note of the post responded saying: "Very sad. Share his details to help him if he needs." On Tuesday, when TOI sought the know the identity of the Indian driver who was shot at, Ali Al Nimir, who shared the photograph said, "Unfortunately, we don't. Yesterday, there were 30 people injured. We try to know their identities to tell the world about them. Ameen who also shared photographs of the shooting incident said the India driver was working for a family in Alowina neighbourhood. "He was a victim of 34-day Saudi state terror military campaign," he said. He said many women, men, children and foreign workers were injured in what he described as "random" shooting by Saudi forces. Angry Qatifi* who also responded to CGI Jeddah also informed that three Indian drivers were shot in the last one week in Awamia. In shocking visuals and photographs, the shooting of people are being shared by those who have taken a stand against the violence that is being indulged in by security forces.

Bruhud New York seniors enjoyed watching "Sarkar3" Movie

(By a Staff Reporter) Bruhud N.Y. Seniors Shashikant Patel/Gopi Udeshi organized a

Special screening of Amithabh Bachchan's movie "Sarkar3". in Queens. Bruhud always try to find out the way for seniors to enjoy at their best and feel that they are in Bollywood "Mumbai" watching their super stars.



Yogi Barot, Bharat Patel, Divyesh Tripathi, Hirubhai Patel, Neela Pandya, Bipin Patel, Shashikant Patel, Dr Harshad Bhatt, Kaushik Patel, Subhash Patel

BOI

BOX OFFICE INSIDER

1st Hindu US Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard is coming to New York

(By a Staff Reporter) Congresswoman Tulsi is Long Island-Tulsi Gabbard , United States Representative for Hawaii's congressional district is visiting New York. She is likely to meet core group of supporters during planned fundraisers and appearances. Congresswoman Tulsi is an American politician and member of the Democratic Party .

Confirmed to attend a fundraiser being organized by Syed Akhtar and Ali Mirza in long Island. She was also a vice-chair of the Democratic National Committee until February 28, 2016, when she resigned to endorse Senator Bernie Sanders for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination.

Elected in 2012, she is the first Hindu member of the United States Congress. She served in a combat zone in Iraq. Gabbard (then known as Tulsi Gabbard Tamayo) served in the Hawaii House of Representatives from 2002 to 2004, becoming at age 21 the youngest woman to be elected to a state legislature at the time.



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CBI move will make bankers jittery, hurt banking sector

The CBI case against NDTV's Prannoy Roy and his wife goes back to a transaction in 2008 when ICICI Bank gave a loan of Rs 366 crore to a private company promoted by Prannoy and Radhika.

A Supreme Court judgement in February 2016 expanded the definition of public servants to include officers of private banks, paving the way for the CBI to probe them under the prevention of corruption act.

As reported by HT, the CBI has cited this order while filing a case of bank fraud against NDTV founders Prannoy Roy, his wife Radhika and unnamed officials of the ICICI Bank. But experts and lawyers have pointed to the pitfalls of the change in the definition of a public servant.

"The rationale of making public servants liable for their action is because they are trustees of public money. But private bank officers are answerable to

their shareholders and there are provisions in the companies act to monitor their actions," senior Supreme Court advocate KTS Tulsi said.

Sources in the banking sector said the case against ICICI would lead to tentativeness among bankers while taking decisions. "The fear of prosecution will now prevent private banks to work freely," a source said on condition of anonymity. The government has time and again admitted that bad loans, or non-performing assets (NPAs), are one of its biggest challenges facing the economy.

Indian banks were saddled with stressed assets amounting to about Rs 10 lakh crore, or close to 7%

of India's GDP, as of December-end.

Top bankers, who refused to be identified, pointed to the damage the CBI case would do to the resolution of these bad loans. Risk, a key aspect of banking, will now be avoided to ensure that sleuths do not come knocking.

It was last month that the government enacted an amendment for speedier recovery of bad loans but fears of investigation will stop banks from restructuring interest rates to ensure long-pending loans are paid off.

Piling bad loans in banks hinder credit, in turn investment slows and the economy is hurt. Any action by the government or its investigative agencies to stifle the smooth working



of bankers will have a long-term impact on economic growth. A gentle reminder of the policy paralysis during the UPA regime.

The CBI case against the Roys goes back to a transaction in 2008 when ICICI Bank gave the RRPR Holding Private Ltd, a private company promoted by Prannoy and Radhika, a loan of Rs 366 crore.

This loan was on personal guarantees of the Roys. Within a year, ICICI settled the loan, agreeing to a lower interest that allegedly resulted in a loss of Rs 48 crore for the bank, the CBI FIR said. The federal agency alleges criminal conspiracy and collusion between the Roys and bank officials that caused

this loss. But to prevent a loan from becoming irrecoverable, banks lower interest rates to ensure that at least the principal is paid back. There might be a legitimate case against the Roys, but attacking a private bank and its freedom to restructure loans will have far-reaching consequences, warn wise men.

Will US-Iran tension spill over into India's neighbourhood?

International tension surrounding Iran is yet to affect India, but New Delhi can make tactical gains by maintaining diplomatic flexibility



Wednesday's shootings in Teheran are being linked to the United States' solid backing of Iran's regional adversaries. They come in a certain historical context. From the end of World War II to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the US became the anchor power in West Asia. It came to balance the predominant Shia and Sunni nations of the region, with both the Shah of Iran and the King of Saudi Arabia as allies.

The overthrow of the Shah changed all that. It made Iran the visceral enemy in America's eyes. The populist revolt in Iran

was led by a radical clergy and this in turn triggered Islamist energies across West and South Asia. In a sense the world is still paying for that seminal moment in 1979.

Since the revolution, Washington has found it difficult to talk to much less collaborate with Tehran. Tehran hasn't helped. It has pursued a nuclear weapons programme illegally, even while being a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It has exported its radical ideas to militants targeting Israel — the Hamas — and to Yemen and Syria. Even platforms such as the Non-

Aligned Movement — Iran hosted the summit in 2012 — have been exploited to abuse the US.

A breakthrough was made when US President Barack Obama offered Iran an agreement predicated on Iran capping its nuclear weapons programme or, realistically, significantly delaying it. More important, it gave the US and Iran the opportunity to have a semi-normal relationship.

While Obama's West Asia policy was all over the place, the tentative handshake with Iran was an achievement. It left his successor with the chance to strengthen ties with the Saudis and the Sunni Arab powers as well have a line open to the Iranians. While unlikely to be as ambitious as American dominance in the pre-1979 period, this expanded US options in the arc of terror extending from Afghanistan to Syria and in

the war against the Islamic State (IS).

Obama's successor Donald Trump had different ideas. His close advisers instead sought an entente cordiale with Russia. Trump's early calculation was he could reject Iran and make up for the absent space by aligning with Russia, bringing Moscow's firepower to the conflict against IS.

This plan proved a non-starter. Trump's Russia outreach is dead in the water. On the other hand, as the US president's recent speech in Riyadh showed, he has placed himself squarely in the Sunni corner. While claiming the US was divorced from the sectarian struggles of the region, he repeatedly attacked Iran and did what he could to please his friends in Riyadh. They responded with a large military purchase.

In the normal course, a

good equation between the US and Saudi Arabia would have gladdened Pakistan. However, Trump's position on Islamabad's role in the Afghan crisis is not obvious. His national security adviser has said all the right things but the big political statement on Afghanistan is awaited. This is crucial for Iran, which is now going to be an even more determined spoiler in Afghanistan.

Iran began in the 1980s by backing Afghan Shias. Mercenaries descended from that engagement have been deployed in Syria and among Hamas. In the 1990s, Iran began supporting Farsi speakers in Afghanistan, not limited to Shias, as the civil war between Farsi and Pashto speakers intensified. Post-9/11, Iran gradually aided Sunni Pashtun commanders of the Taliban in the name of Islam and against US "occupation".

Simultaneously, Iran-Pakistan tensions have risen along the border the two countries share. This is partially a result of Sunni supremacists in Pakistan targeting Shias and partially a consequence of Iranian Balochi rebels being sheltered in Pakistan, including, Iran suspects, by American agents.

What will this lead to? In an unlikely extreme, the Pakistan-Iran frontier in the Balochistan region could become a Sunni-Shia fault-line. More immediately, Afghanistan could become a busier theatre for Iranian intervention. Iran could target Pakistani assets, in case the Trump-Saudi-Rawalpindi alliance is renewed — or it could compete with Pakistan for assets, in case Trump cuts off Islamabad.

This is not India's war. Yet, New Delhi can make tactical gains if it retains diplomatic flexibility.

President Trump Can't Just Fire Robert Mueller

The latest attention-grabbing trial balloon to be floated by a White House staffer or apparent surrogate for President Trump is the suggestion by Christopher Ruddy, a longtime friend of the president, that Mr. Trump is "considering, perhaps, terminating" Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel appointed to investigate the Trump campaign's links to Russia.

President Trump cannot legally do so.

Authority to appoint Mr. Mueller landed with Rod J. Rosenstein, the deputy attorney general, because Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused himself last March from the Russia probe. In appointing special counsel, Mr. Rosenstein was exercising authority that Congress had given the Justice Department by statute. The Justice Department, in turn, issued implementing regulations in 1999 specifically to govern such appointments. Those rules provide that a special counsel is appropriate when a criminal investigation is warranted but presents a conflict of interest for the department.

Under these rules, only the attorney general — or, in this case, the deputy attorney general — may remove a special counsel. He may do so only "for misconduct, dereliction of duty, incapacity, conflict of interest or for other good cause."

Because the deputy attorney general serves at the pleasure of the president, Mr. Trump may direct Mr. Rosenstein to fire Mr. Mueller. Although Mr. Rosenstein has cautiously avoided any statement more definitive than insisting he would not dismiss the special counsel except for good cause, he has added that he does not anticipate such a scenario. Should Mr. Rosenstein refuse a dismissal order, then Mr. Trump, like President Richard M. Nixon, could fire however many officials it takes to get someone in place willing to execute the discharge. That is not likely to be easy because there is no reason at this point to suspect that Mr. Mueller has done anything that would warrant his dismissal for "good cause," and it is doubtful there are many Justice Department officials who would rush to act unlawfully.

Following the Saturday Night Massacre — the now-infamous dismissal of the special prosecutor Archibald Cox by Robert H. Bork, then the acting attorney general — several members of Congress sued in federal court because the Cox firing made it more difficult to perform their duty in deciding whether to proceed with a Nixon impeachment.

Judge Gerhard A. Gesell, one of the most highly regarded federal trial judges of the last century, held that the firing of the special prosecutor was unlawful because it violated Justice Department regulations governing Mr. Cox's office. He observed that the attorney general chose to "limit his own authority" by specifying the narrow circumstances under which Mr. Cox could be fired. "It is settled beyond dispute," Judge Gesell wrote, "that under such circumstances an agency regulation has the force and effect of law, and is binding upon the body that issues it." What was true for Mr. Bork would also be true for the deputy attorney general now.

To be sure, there are at least some legal scholars who believe the president is constitutionally entitled to take personal charge of implementing all statutes. Under "unitary executive" theory, the president can simply seize whatever administrative authority Congress gives anyone in the executive branch. This would mean that whatever authority Congress gives the attorney general to appoint or fire a special counsel would be authority the president could carry out himself.

That position, however, is constitutional nonsense. Early attorneys general representing presidents as different in their politics as John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson agreed that presidents could not simply assume tasks that Congress had assigned specifically to other administrative officers. Moreover, the Supreme Court has held repeatedly that agencies may not discharge their officers in a manner that violates their own regulations. It follows that Mr. Trump lacks authority to fire Mr. Mueller under current rules, and he cannot personally impose new regulations to give himself that power. Broadcasting that Mr. Trump is "considering" some dramatic action has become a familiar, if tiresome, tactic. Whether he follows through, as he did in withdrawing from the Paris climate accords, or not, as in failing to use executive privilege to shortcut congressional testimony by James Comey, the former F.B.I. director, such grandstanding has political uses. A combination of suspense and outrage can distract from whatever congressional Republicans are doing, sap energy from political opponents and keep the glare of public attention where the president likes it best — on himself. In this case, however, it ought to be clear that what Mr. Trump may be "considering" is beyond his powers. Following through, as with the Saturday Night Massacre, would only provide fodder for his own removal.

Farm loan waivers will set the economy on an even more slippery slope

Costly bailouts to farmers by states such as Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh will perpetuate a bad credit culture; and worsen inflationary risks, limiting the Reserve Bank of India's ability to bring down interest rates.

Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh have now joined a lengthening list of states that have announced costly bailouts for farmers. Their profligacy is bad news for India. First, it perpetuates a bad credit culture. Second, it threatens to undo the recent years of parsimony by the central government. It also worsens inflationary risks, limiting the Reserve Bank of India's ability to bring down interest rates. Over time, states' revenues have stagnated but spending ballooned, pushing their combined deficits to their highest in 13 years. Sure, our states are sub-sovereign. But writing off loans can eventually affect the national balance sheet through fiscal slippages and inflationary spillovers. The financial rectitude of the central government helped cut the annual deficit from 5% of GDP in 2013 to about 3% now. But our debt-to-GDP ratio still stands at about 68%, one of the highest among the emerging economies. That must fall below 60% over the next three years to warrant a rating upgrade. The financial profligacy of states can derail this. Already, state finances are under strain. In 2015-16, the consolidated Gross Fiscal Deficit - Gross Domestic Product ratio of states breached the 3% ceiling of fiscal prudence for the first time in a decade. Things are unlikely to get better soon. States are obliged to take over the debt of power utilities under the Ujjwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) scheme, budget for distortion in their food credit accounts and provide for an off-balance sheet. Further, debt write-offs are often a plain perverse political incentive that increase the likelihood of reckless copycat borrowing. A recent Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BofA-ML) report estimated that states were likely to waive off at least \$40 billion, or 2% of national GDP, in farm loans in the run-up to the 2019 general elections. A big part of the problem is the central government. It underwrites states' borrowings and forces banks, insurers and pension funds to invest depositors' money in their bonds. This means states don't have to go looking for a market for their bonds. Unless the government moves to end this self-defeating sop, the states will feel little need to balance their books. The answer lies in disciplining state spending. One way can be to limit the federal guarantee on their borrowings, especially for politically expedient projects such as farm loan waivers. Once markets discriminate between prudent spenders and recklessly borrowers, easy money will dry up.



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Special Correspondent :

Photographers: Ruth Alvarez/Hamad

Gagandeep Singh (INDIA)

Editorial Intern: Aman Thind

Web Coordinator : Jatinder Kumar

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REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

Tel/Fax : 516 342 1076

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

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Of good, bad and clever banias

THERE are banias and banias. It's a caste and a vocation ranging from mercantile capitalism to moneylending, from the neighbourhood grocer to the stockbroker. Banias are communist and socialist too. They are, in fact, to be found in every party though, in India, they seem currently partial to the right-wing Hindu BJP. There are communal banias and secular banias, fascist banias and democrats. There are ascetic banias and greedy, worldly banias.

Banias patronise the fine arts and they can be gross. There are corrupt and clean banias. Arvind Kejriwal is seen by a majority of Delhi voters as a clean bania, if we insist on seeing him through his caste. His main adversaries happen to be banias too, tycoons with powerful political connections, with the current dispensation and the previous ones. Some banias are so powerful that they claim to have political parties in their pockets. They own TV channels and newspapers to engineer or subvert pub-

lic opinion. Journalists think it is their doing.

There are good and bad journalists among banias. The man who exposed the key players in the Gujarat carnage of 2002 with shocking sting operations is a bania, a key lieutenant of Kejriwal. That's one more reason why the Delhi chief minister is in such bad odour with India's ruling party.

BJP president Amit Shah is a bania from Gujarat. He has called Gandhiji a chatur bania recently. 'Chatur' could mean clever or shrewd in a positive way or it could mean sly. Given the context, I think Shah meant to say Gandhi was a clever man. In Shah's view, evidently a correct one, Gandhi could see that the Congress would degenerate into a ruling wand for the privileged after independence. He had therefore wanted the Congress to be wound up after 1947. Had Gandhi succeeded, there would have been a power vacuum. In all likelihood, the Hindu right would have stepped in. Another possibility, which the wealthy banias feared

most, was of a communist takeover. Nehru took charge to keep both sides on a tight leash. He dismantled India's first communist government in Kerala and was partial to state-owned enterprises to challenge the tycoons he didn't trust.

I am intrigued by the fuss about the BJP president calling Gandhi a shrewd bania. If Nehru could flaunt his Brahmin caste and be called a pandit, which is how he would be announced on All India Radio — Pandit Nehru — why is there so much caginess about the word bania for Gandhi?

Elections in India, without exception, are conducted along the caste arithmetic. It's not the hallmark of an enlightened democracy, but that's what we have. AJGAR in Gujarat or Rajasthan stands for an alliance of Ahir, Jat, Gujar, Adivasi and Rajput. Add Muslims to the equation and it becomes MAJGAR. Lalu Yadav has a Muslim-Yadav winning combination spelt as MY.

Castes compete with other castes and their leaders vie

for influence within each caste. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is a Thakur, a caste also known as Rajput elsewhere. Home Minister Rajnath Singh was considered the most powerful Thakur leader in Uttar Pradesh before Prime Minister Modi promoted Adityanath. The move has undercut the home minister's political influence. Caste plays a major role in stratifying Indian Muslims too but that is a separate voluminous subject. And, Muslims too have banias.

Shah's calling Gandhiji a chatur bania incurred strong criticism from upper-caste opposition parties and intellectuals. But Shah is shrewdly aware that criticism of Gandhi goes down well with the Dalits he is wooing. B.R. Ambedkar had major run-ins with Gandhi. Ambedkar called Hinduism a "chamber of horrors". Gandhi saw Hinduism as an anchor of India's spiritual (thus secular) future. If I am right, Amit Shah is the first bania president of the BJP. And he is a staunch vegetarian. In fact, of all three Hindu

upper castes — Brahmins, Thakurs and Banias — the banias are traditionally the most rigid in their vegetarianism. But they own and run abattoirs. If you ate a juicy seekh kebab at Khan Chacha at Delhi's Khan Market, the bill would have come with the name of a certain Mr Gupta as proprietor, a bania. The killing of Muslims and Dalits over beef consumption and cattle trade by fascist vigilantes has more to do with right-wing politics than with religion. Shah says Gandhi foresaw the degeneration of the Congress. But Gandhi even more presciently saw the danger right-wing Hindus posed. Excerpts below from Gandhi's prayer meeting, 20 days before India gained independence, could be a message from an old bania to the younger ascendant banias. "Rajendra Babu (who became India's first president) tells me that he has received some 50,000 postcards, between 25,000 and 30,000 letters and many thousands of telegrams de-

manding a ban on cow slaughter. I spoke to you about this before. Why this flood of telegrams and letters? They have had no effect. "I have another telegram which says that a friend has started a fast for this cause. In India, no law can be made to ban cow slaughter. I do not doubt that Hindus are forbidden the slaughter of cows. I have been long pledged to serve the cow but how can my religion also be the religion of the rest of the Indians? It will mean coercion against those Indians who are not Hindus. "We have been shouting from the rooftops that there will be no coercion in the matter of religion. We have been reciting verses from the Quran at the prayer. But if anyone were to force me to recite these verses I would not like it. How can I force anyone not to slaughter cows unless he is himself so disposed? It is not as if there were only Hindus in the Indian Union. There are Muslims, Parsis, Christians and other religious groups here." For that and less Gandhiji, the good bania, was killed by Godse, the bad Brahmin.

Why do so few girls opt for science and engineering in India?

If India wants more women doing science, the barriers - travel and safety limitations, centrality of career progression around male working patterns, inflexible work hours and negative stereotyping - have to fall. There are no short cuts in this roadmap.



The Joint Entrance Examination — Advanced (JEE — Advanced) results are out and coaching institutes have been proudly advertising their 'successful' candidates. All most all advertisements have rows of photographs of bright young boys smiling at the camera. But where are the girls? This gender imbalance is not surprising be-

cause when it comes to STEM subjects --- science, technology, engineering, and mathematics --- it's very much a boys' club. The situation is so dire that earlier this month, a meeting of the joint admission board of IITs recommended an increase of 600 seats — a hike of 14% -- in the number of seats allotted to women, taking

the quota to 1,440 seats. The committee also recommended awarding merit scholarships regardless of parental income to female students. Currently, women make up just 8% of the student strength at the 23 IITs across the country. The IITs are among India's best institutes and regularly rank high in global surveys but are plagued by a paltry number of women students, seen as Indian's society's belief that men are more suited for technical jobs. The other reason could be the preference for a "trouble-free" career. While even developed countries have fewer female scientists, the cri-

sis is different in India, says a report. In India, women do take up science for degrees, but few of them go on to pursue careers in this discipline. The reason hasn't been performance, though. Because of the default role of a woman as a homemaker and society's perception that only women are responsible for rearing children, marriage and not career is perceived to be the primary goal of a woman—no matter which profession she is in. "If you are away from research in science, particularly experimental work, even for six months, your work gets left behind and you become irrelevant soon. If you choose to have both a ca-

reer and a family, you do lose out because there is initially an age limit for projects which is 35 years and later, it is 55 years. So, at both ends, you end up losing," wrote former chief scientist and head of the biophysics laboratory at the Central Leather Research Institute, Chennai, Aruna Dhathathreyan in Lilavati's Daughters. In a recent interview with HT, Melinda Gates spoke about how women are losing out by not taking up STEM subjects. "Computer science offers the best jobs in the economy. The technology sector is connected to all industry, it offers great pay and the best opportunities, and

girls are losing points by not studying STEM subjects," she said. Getting girls hooked to science is a must. "One way could be through computer games, which are an entry point for boys. When I was growing up, they were gender neutral, but with the shooting and fighting games getting popular, girls lost interest," added Gates. Then there is the question of role models. If India wants more women doing science, the barriers --- travel and safety limitations, centrality of career progression around male working patterns, inflexible work hours and negative stereotyping --- have to be removed. There are no shortcuts in this roadmap.

Farmer protests: India's acute groundwater crisis is fuelling distress

We have looked at water from a narrow engineering perspective, while water is in every sense a multi-dimensional resource requiring an understanding of many other disciplines for its sustainable management. So we have to bring in the social mobilisers and agronomists centrestage, so that farmers can effectively come together to manage their water in an equitable and sustainable manner



India has been witnessing high-decibel protests by farmers for some time now. From declining productivity to lack of adequate remuneration, there are several reasons, which are pushing this 118 million-strong community to the brink.

But if one has to pick a key problem that is aggravating India's farm crisis, it is this: Water scarcity. The situation could only

become more difficult for farmers in the coming years, as this IndiaSpend story reveals: "Extreme rainfall events in central India, the core of the monsoon system, are increasing and moderate rainfall is decreasing — as a part of complex changes in local and world weather — according to a clutch of Indian and global studies".

Moreover, groundwater levels, which provide water

for two-thirds of India's irrigated land, are also falling. Water policy expert, member of the erstwhile Planning Commission and head of several panels tasked with reforming the country's water laws, Mihir Shah, spoke to HT about the depth of the water crisis and what India needs to do to ensure a water-secure future.

HT: You have called for a paradigm shift in India's water policy. What are the problems of the present policy and what should the new water resource governance scenario?

MS: First, we need to focus on the sustainable management of groundwater, which is our single most important water resource. With 30 million

(and counting) groundwater structures, India is by far the largest consumer of groundwater in the world.

It is groundwater that fuelled the Green Revolution and brought us food security but today we are in danger of "killing the goose that laid the golden egg". Nearly two-thirds of India is underlain by hard rock formations, which allow water to recharge only very slowly.

We have drilled deep for groundwater, without taking this basic hydrogeological fact into account. Competitive extraction of groundwater has dangerously lowered both water tables and water quality, creating an unprecedented crisis of water in India. Today, in many parts of the country,

our children are drinking water laced with arsenic, fluoride, and mercury, even uranium. A train plies daily from Punjab carrying patients to the medical capitals of India. It is cryptically called the "Cancer Express".

SOLUTIONS

We urgently need to shift focus from endless extraction to participatory sustainable demand management through crop-water budgeting, so that water tables are restored and we can continue to use groundwater. A million farmers in Andhra Pradesh have come together to manage their groundwater in this manner. So the proof of concept is there on the ground. We need to carry

it to scale. And this is the only way ahead, as we cannot possibly police 30 million wells and tubewells through licenses and permits.

Of course, this needs to be supplemented by a fundamental change in our agriculture policies, which continue to incentivise the growing of water-intensive crops like rice and wheat, as these are the only two crops procurement operations focus on. You cannot expect farmers to shift to less water-intensive crops like millets and pulses if they are not assured of a market at remunerative prices. The best way would be to make millets and pulses, the nutritionally superior options, an integral part of the ICDS

(Contd. on page 18)

Terrorists are promoting attacks during Ramadan on completely false premises

This year, just before the beginning of Ramadan, ISIS beseeched its followers to cause collateral damage and "maximise the benefits" they can get in the hereafter. The recruits think that martyrdom during the fasting month is the easiest entry ticket to Jannath (Paradise). Little do they know that they are misguided.



While doing research to "construct" the mind of the jihadist, I was flummoxed by the upsurge in "jihadi" activities during the holy month of Ramadan. The past few days alone witnessed a slew of attacks in Egypt, Afghanistan, Iraq and the UK.

Muslims worldwide fast during the daylight hours (no eating, drinking, smoking or sex), offer charity, abstain from so-lecism, observe tolerance and peace during Ramadan. This was the Holy

Quran was revealed to Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). It is astounding that the jihadis have twisted the true meaning of this month and misquoted the Quran out of context to suit their needs of recruiting new activists and to breed hatred in order to carry out more attacks on innocents. This year, just before the beginning of Ramadan, ISIS beseeched its followers to cause collateral damage and "maximise the benefits" they can get in the hereafter. The results? On the eve of Ramadan, the massacre of innocents in

Egypt, followed by the London attack last week.

Jihadis are driven by the honour and solidarity, and they consider jihad to be noble. They cite the Battle of Badr, which was the turning point for Islam, to drive their mission. In that battle on the 17th day of Ramadan (March 13, 624 AD), Muslims, in spite of being outnumbered many times by their oppressors, registered a historic victory with divine intervention. Jihadists attribute this victory to Ramadan, and propagate ferocity and fanaticism by falsely evoking God's name for better rewards in the hereafter.

The lure of "rewards-on-judgement-day" apart, they have other reasons for increasing their fervour during this month. According to analysts, Bush bombed Iraq one Ramadan when innocent Muslims least expected it.

The jihadis have taken a leaf out of his book to carry out attacks in this month. They derive a sense of power that comes from the sense of control; that they can break all rules and set new ones. The recruits think that martyrdom during the fasting month is the easiest entry ticket to Jannath (Paradise). Little do they know that they are misguided. The Battle of Badr was an exceptional event in the history of Islam. Driven to exile from their homes in Mecca by the powerful Khuraish tribe for following the Prophet, the early believers were under perpetual threat of attack. After many small assaults, the Khuraishis decided on a major invasion of Medina (to where the Prophet and followers migrated), which resulted in the Battle of Badr. According to the Quran, this battle was purely ideological. It took

place because the Meccans wanted to obliterate Islam and exterminate Muslims once and for all; while God wanted to install the supremacy of the truth. The day of this battle was also called the day of "Al-Furqaan" — the criterion that determines what the truth is. The Quran cites this as an example of when and how to stand up against injustice, and clearly, what jihadis do today has no citation there.

The belief that spiritual rewards await good deeds is being twisted by the jihadis to brainwash borderline believers to their ways. That the attacks are happening in Ramadan only proves that they respect neither life nor faith. Devout Muslims know that there is no justification for killing per se, holy month or not. The Quran warns of this in 5-32: "If anyone slays a person — unless

it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land — it is as though he has slain all of humankind; and if anyone saves a life it is as though he has saved the life of all humankind." Clearly this explains the ostracism of jihadis by Islamic scholars. Henceforth, the media should comprehend that the real meaning of "jihad" isn't holy war as commonly understood, but spiritual struggle against sin; and should discard Islam from "Islamic terrorism".

The predicament is that the Quran gets misquoted and misinterpreted by miscreants. The language of scripture is poetic and allegorical, leading to "lost-in-translation" issues. It requires considerable education for a Muslim to internalise its verses. When the vast majority has not read — even less understood — it fully, the jihadis have a field day manipulating the innocent.

NIA report details how controversial preacher Zakir Naik's banned outfit 'radicalised Indian youth to join ISIS'



(Agencies) On September 12, 2014, Bestin Vincent Francis became Yahiya. The man in his early 20s from Kerala's Palakkad district voluntarily signed on to take up Islam. Three of his associates, including his lady love Nimisha alias

Fatima, converted in the next few months.

Raids by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on controversial preacher Zakir Naik's close aide Rizwan Illiyas Khan eventually blew the lid off this alleged terror chain. Rizwan, according to the

probe body, was closely involved in processing the documents of conversion to Islam. In all, 78 affidavits, including the ones for Bestin Vincent, Bexen Vincent alias Isa, Merin Jacob alias Mariyam, and Nimisha alias Fatima, were seized from the residence.

Apart from Rizwan, another Naik aide, Arshi Qureshi, was closely involved in active the conversion of people from other religions to Islam and radicalising them to follow the path of ISIS.

A 115-page document accessed by Mail Today concludes that the NIA has collected material to show that Francis and his three associates were among the 24 youths who

migrated from Kerala to Afghanistan to join ISIS. All of the accused were allegedly regular visitors to the office of Naik's Mumbai-based non-profit Islamic Research Foundation (IRF) and attended meetings that took place between key Naik aide Arshi Qureshi and the youths.

Qureshi's job was to handle Naik's appointments and emails and he would report directly to the televangelist. Rizwan was a para-volunteer and helped in getting proper matches to prospective brides and grooms, PR manager Maqbool Barwelkar told the central agency.

The NIA in November filed an FIR against Naik

and the IRF - which he founded in 1991- accusing him of unlawful activities and promoting religious hatred.

The investigation revealed that Rizwan arranged marriage certificates for Bestin Vincent (Yahiya) and Merrin Jacob (Mariyam), as well as Bexen Vincent (Isa) and Nimisha (Fatima). Documents show that Rizwan appeared as the guardian of the brides.

Qureshi, meanwhile, played a pivotal role in conversion of all the youths to Islam. The document states that activities of conversion made them follow the path to join ISIS. The young couples were childhood

lovers and they later made a pact to enlist with ISIS together. Nimisha alias Fatima was four months pregnant when she left for Afghanistan. She delivered a child at an ISIS camp in Khorasan area. Nimisha came from an upper-class family and was a dentist. But after getting indoctrinated, officers say, she refused to touch patients and gave up the practice completely. The probe also found that during 2012-2016, the IRF paid Rs 43.75 lakh to Qureshi from the account meant for foreign contributions. He was eventually arrested by Kerala Police for his role in the conversion of at least 19 people, including some who left for Afghanistan.

STF searches Inderjit Singh's house for three hours, seizes CCTV recorder



(Agencies) A team of anti-drugs Special Task Force on Wednesday conducted a search operation at the house of arrested Punjab Police inspector, Inderjit Singh, in Amritsar. Inderjit was arrested

from Jalandhar on Monday and STF had recovered four kg of heroin, three kg of smack, live cartridges of various calibre, one illegal 9 mm pistol made in Italy, Rs 16.5 lakh in cash and

3550 GB pounds during searches at his residences. Inderjit's house was sealed after the arrest. On Wednesday, STF team brought Inderjit along and took him inside the house twice during the search operation. The search started at 11:30 am and continued for nearly three hours. Apart from some documents, the STF reportedly took in its possession the digital video recorder of the CCTV cameras installed in the house. As Inderjit did not provide keys, STF team

used a hammer to break open the locks of rooms and the cupboards. STF IG Rashpal Singh, however, declined to divulge any information regarding the search conducted saying probe was at an initial stage. According to sources, STF was looking for evidence that allegedly links Inderjit to politicians. He was considered close to a powerful Akali leader from Majha. His call records are also being analysed by the STF. An official revealed that Inderjit's bank accounts and financial transactions were

also being scrutinised. Meanwhile, the details of cases registered against him has been sent to the DGP after obtaining records from the Vigilance Bureau. As per the details sent to the DGP, a case under sections of Prevention of Corruption Act was registered against Inderjit on February 12, 2015 at Vigilance Bureau Flying Squad 1 police station. The case was registered following a complete the vigilance inquiry, which

observed that while working as CIA in-charge in Tarn Tarn, Inderjit took a bribe of Rs 10 lakh from one Jagdeep Singh through two persons and another of Rs 3.5 lakh from one Parminder Singh in a case. VB Director G Nageswara Rao, when asked about the corruption case against Inderjit dating back to 2015, said: "Investigations are on in the case. We will soon complete the investigations."

Red Fort Shown As Part Of Lahore In Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Meet Tableau Gaffe

(Agencies) A reception held by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation or SCO at its Beijing headquarters highlighting the entry of India and Pakistan turned out to be an embarrassment for the organisers as India's Red Fort with the tricolor was shown as Lahore's Shalimar Gardens in a Pakistani tableau. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Indian envoy to China Vijay Gokhale along with the ambassadors of Pakistan Masood Khalid and other SCO members attended the function. Both Indian and Pakistani diplomats pointed out the faux pas to the organisers. SCO officials were apologetic about the gaffe, saying that they failed to cross check the photos on display as this was the first event involving India and Pakistan. On Thursday, the



SCO headquarters will raise the flags of India and Pakistan and Mr Gokhale and Mr Khalid will beat a drum, heralding the entry of their countries into the organisation. India and Pakistan were admitted as members into the six-member grouping at the Astana Summit last

week. The group is now comprised of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan. Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia have an observer status in the grouping that is increasingly seen as a counterweight to NATO.

Kingfisher-IDBI loan case Rs 423 cr taken out of India, Vijay Mallya 'prime mover' of plot, alleges ED

(Agencies) The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday filed its first charge sheet against liquor baron Vijay Mallya and eight others in connection with its money laundering probe in the about Rs 900 crore IDBI Bank-KFA bank loan case. The 57-page charge sheet or prosecution complaint, with voluminous annexures, was filed under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) before a special anti-money laundering court here. The court is soon expected to take cognisance of the charge sheet, officials said. A total of nine accused have been named in the charge sheet by the ED including Mallya, Kingfisher Airlines (KFA), United Breweries (Holding) Limited and senior employees and executives of the now-defunct airline and the IDBI (Industrial Development Bank of India) Bank. The agency, in the charge sheet, has called Mallya the "prime mover of the entire plot" and has described how funds obtained as the bank loan were allegedly routed illegally including "substantial payments" being diverted by the beleaguered businessman to the Formula-1 car racing event abroad. It has also mentioned the role of other officials and executives of KFA and IDBI Bank in this deal and has explained how the alleged fraud of bank loan in this case was done, with the help of flow charts and diagrams.

Congress member praises 'Pappu', fired



(Insider Bureau) MEERUT: A senior Congress member from Uttar Pradesh has been removed from all party positions for purportedly referring to Congress

death of five protesting farmers in police firing. "Pappu" is the term Rahul's critics are known to use when denouncing him, especially on social media. Vinay Pradhan, the party's Meerut district president, allegedly made the references in a message sent on a WhatsApp group titled 'Indian National Congress'. The message sought to heap praise on Rahul for "putting the interest of the nation before his own". But

it said: "Pappu could have joined hands with Adani, Ambani and Mallya but he did not do that. Pappu could have been a minister or even the Prime Minister, but he did not go down that road. Instead, he put his life on the line by going to Mandsaur." On Tuesday, Ramkrishna Dwivedi, chairman of the disciplinary committee in Congress, issued a letter announcing Pradhan's removal from all party posts

for the "provocative" message. "This is an attempt to malign the party leadership. Other parties appear to be involved in this. It is also an effort to divert attention from the main issues, like the plight of farmers in Madhya Pradesh," he said in the letter, adding, "Vinay Pradhan is guilty of violating the constitution of Congress party." Pradhan said the message in question was not sent by him, and he

wasn't given an opportunity to explain himself. "This is an effort by some people in the party to malign me. I have not sent any such message. The screenshots being circulated have been photoshopped. I respect Rahul Gandhiji and would never use such language for him. The party should have at least heard me out before removing me from all posts. I am seeking an appointment with him and will explain the matter to him," he said.

UP farmers cry foul over loan waiver



(Insider Bureau) New Delhi: Farmer groups in Uttar Pradesh have upped the ante against the Yogi Adityanath-led UP government over the criteria for identifying farmers eligible for a loan waiver. They have alleged the current procedure for identifying farmers threatens to leave out a large chunk that has faced acute agrarian distress. Soon after it came to power in UP, the state government announced it would waive outstanding farm loans till March 31, 2016 of up to Rs 1 lakh, for small and marginal farmers. The government also said the promise of a loan waiver

would benefit 78 lakh farmers in the state. Uttar Pradesh is home to 2.15 crore farmers of which about 1.80 crore are small and marginal farmers. According to the state government's current estimates, Rs 36,589 crore will only be able to service outstanding crop loans of 37% small and marginal farmers in UP, leaving plenty of room for complaint from those who are left out. Those outside the waiver net have already cried foul, threatening to join ranks with the building farmer movement across India to corner the NDA government. President of Kisan Jagriti Manch,

Sudhir Panwar, said, "PM Narendra Modi was the ambassador of the BJP's promise of loan waiver. He was the one who gave this promise legitimacy. Now, the government is backtracking on its promises by only waiving loans for a section of the affected farm segment. It appears that BJP's politics has trumped fiscal discipline." While farmer groups including Rakesh Tikait's Bharatiya Kisan Union's have said the 'half-help' to the group is likely to do more damage to the farm sector, Wali Ullah Engineer of the Indian Minorities Front on Monday petitioned

Governor Ram Naik against the UP government's decision to leave farmers who have taken term loans from cooperative banks, out of the loan waiver net. Sources in UP's Land Development Bank told TOI that small and marginal farmers who took term loans adding up to over Rs 4,000 crore, have been entirely excluded from the state's waiver move. These loans for purchasing agriculture implements were for 5-10 year duration. A senior UP government functionary said, "We have approached the CM several times over the need to include other affected farmers. But there have been reservations because of resource constraints." With Union finance minister Arun Jaitley announcing that the Centre will not fund states' loan waivers, the state government is scrambling to put together the resources to keep the poll promise. "One view is that the profit-making corporations will be tapped for funds.

Punjab cop held for aiding & abetting drug smugglers



(Insider Bureau) Chandigarh: In what is being seen as one of the biggest crack-downs on police officials involved in Punjab's narcotics trade, an inspector who was heading the crime investigation agency of Kapurthala, was on Monday arrested with 4kg heroin from his government house in Phagwara. This is the first major arrest by the special task force (STF) the Captain Amarinder Singh-led Congress government formed immediately after assuming charge in March. One of Amarinder's key poll promises was tackling Punjab's drug menace, and he had recently said that police officers involved in the drug trade would not be spared. The inspector, identified as Inderjit, was arrested from his government accommodation in Phagwara. Besides heroin, an illegal 9-mm Italian-make pistol, a .38 bore revolver, and around 380 live cartridges of different arms were also recovered from his flat at the Punjab Armed Police (PAP) headquarters in Jalandhar. Rs 16.5 lakh and ₹3,550 in cash was also seized from his Jalandhar home. Officials also raided his private residence at Amritsar but have not disclosed seizures, if any, made there. The FIR in the case has been drafted by STF chief ADGP Harpreet Sidhu, who was repatriated to Punjab from his CRPF stint in Naxalism-hit Chhattisgarh to curb the state's drug menace. The FIR states that Inderjit played a role in protecting as well as willfully aiding and abetting smugglers in 2013 and 2014. "He made recoveries but they are with the motive to obtain illegal gratification from those in custody on the promise of helping them in these cases and later getting some of them acquitted," it adds. It also observes that Inderjit was a head constable when most of the cases were registered and was not competent enough to investigate sensitive drug cases.

Buffalo meat shops open quietly in UP, administration looks away

(Agencies) Meerut: Days after the BJP came to power in UP, meat shops began shutting down across the state



mostly due to the lack of "proper and licensed slaughterhouses", as well as a host of other "violations". Adding to the misery of meat sellers was the recent rule by the Centre prohibiting cattle sale for slaughter in animal markets. Two and

a half months later, shops selling buffalo meat have quietly opened. Meat sellers in Meerut, for instance, are slaughtering buffaloes at homes as an authorised corporation abattoir still does not exist. Administration officials said they "needed to take a sympathetic view". "How long will we stop people from eating what they want. The government has done nothing in the past three months to resolve the issue," an official told TOI. Meat sellers are happy, but cautious. "After over two months, we are finally doing some business. We had approached the municipal corporation many times for a licence, but officials did nothing. One day, after the month of

Ramzan began, they told us that we could sell meat, but quietly. We are completely at their mercy," said a meat shop owner in Khair Nagar. A meat seller in Gudri Bazar said the supply of the animal is low. "Due to the Centre's cattle law and the fear of gau rakshaks, mandis have disappeared," he said. The administration seems to have decided to ignore the trade for now. "The problem started in March. It is June now and its Ramzan. We can't forever deprive a section of people the meat they consume," said an administration official. Cops seem to be taking it easy too. "We have to allow them (Muslims) some liberty during Ramzan," said a police officer.

BJP biggest non-performing asset, Modi govt ruining India's economy: Congress



(Insider Bureau) Congress on Tuesday accused the NDA government at the Centre of ruining the country's economy and termed BJP as the biggest non-performing asset (NPA). The party also claimed that GDP nosedived due to the demonetisation move, while investment touched its lowest ebb. "Our economy has shattered during NDA rule as BJP has become country's biggest NPA.

told reporters.

Slamming the BJP for celebrating completion of three years of NDA government by organising 'Modi Fest' and 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas', Shastri said there is nothing to rejoice about the failures of Modi regime on all fronts. Dubbing demonetisation as a "himalayan blunder", he said it wiped out livelihood of millions, while seven

months after the drive, the BJP government cannot tell how much black money was found and how much fake currency detected. He said the Gross Value Added (GVA) growth of industry has fallen from 10.7% in March 2016 to 3.8% in March 2017, a decline of nearly 7 percentage points. Terming the Make in India campaign as flop, the Congress leader said the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which was growing at 5.3% in February 2016, dropped to 1.9% in March, 2017, while only 14% FDI was received in core manufacturing sectors.

As BJP confined to slogans, advertising and rhetorics, nothing concrete was done and bank credit growth stood at 5.3% in 2016-17, lowest in 63 years, Shastri said. Stating that the country witnessed lowest investment rate

in 14 years, he said new investment proposals fell from Rs 2,20,000 crore in 2008 to Rs 80,000 crore in 2016. On PSU banks, he said the NPA grew to Rs 6,14,872 crore in March 2017 from Rs 1,73,800 crore in March 2014. Ridiculing the Centre's slogan about ease of doing business, the CWC member said "It has become cease of business as India's ranking in ease of doing business remained virtually unchanged at 130, despite false bravado and foreign jaunts." Claiming that value of stalled projects is estimated at Rs 77,700 crore as on December 2016, he said falling exports show the economy is sluggish. As job and growth scenario turned gloomy, about 45 crore people including 25 crore labour and 15 crore daily earners are affected, Shastri said adding farmers are forced to sell their produce for a pittance.

At Geneva, India agrees to total ban on child labour

(Insider Bureau) Geneva : India ratified on Tuesday two fundamental conventions against child labour — the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (Number 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (Number 182) — at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference currently under way in Geneva. With this, India has become the 170th member of the ILO to ratify Convention Number 138, and the 181st to ratify Convention Number 182. ILO has 187 member states. Labour minister Bandaru Dattatreya, who is representing India at the conference, said the amended Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Central Rules completely prohibited employment of children aged below 14 years in any occupation or process, and of adolescents (aged 14 to 18 years) in hazardous occupations and processes. He added that the amended ruled provided a broad and specific framework for the prevention, prohibition, rescue and rehabilitation of child and adolescent workers. The momentum of the recent initiatives taken to eradicate child labour has to be maintained as elimination of child labour is also crucial for the attainment of sustainable development goals by 2030," Dattatreya said at the conference. Welcoming the ratifications, ILO director-general Guy Ryder said: "We all recognise the great progress India has made against child labour in recent years and the major role played by its convergence model of coherence between public policies and services."

Survey shows tobacco use down by 33% among Indian youth, 53% plan to quit

(Agencies) New Delhi : India has 81 lakh fewer tobacco users now than it did in 2010, with tobacco use falling by six percentage points in the past seven years, according to the latest Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS). GATS is a global standard for systematically monitoring adult tobacco use (smoking and smokeless) and tracking key tobacco control indicators. Its latest edition involved a household survey of 74,037 people aged 15 and above across India between August 2016 and February 2017. The first was conducted in 2009-10.

GATS 2016-17 indicates India has made massive gains on account of recent anti-tobacco measures, including large pictorial warnings on product packs, higher taxes and an intensive awareness campaign. According to the survey, since 2010, there has been a comparative reduction of 33% in tobacco use among 15 to 24 year olds, and 54% among minors (15 to 17

years). The survey shows the pictorial warnings are working, with 55% of smokers and 50% of smokeless tobacco users admitting to have plans to quit. The study shows greater prevalence of smokeless forms of tobacco among Indian adults. Khaini, bidi and gutka are the most commonly used items among Indian men, while women primarily use betel quid with tobacco and khaini, in that order. The survey shows 19% of men, 2% of women and 10.7% of all adults currently smoke tobacco, while 29.6% of men, 12.8% of women and 21.4% of all adults use smokeless forms. A significant finding of the survey is the fact

that the age of initiation has gone up by a year between GATS 1 (2009-10) and



GATS 2 (2016-17), from 17.9 years to 18.9. "The reduction in consumption shows the government's strong commitment to tobacco control," said Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, chief executive, Voluntary Health Association of India.

India has second highest number of obese children in world: Study

(News Agencies) WASHINGTON: India has the second highest number of obese children in the world after China, according to an alarming study which found that 14.4 million kids in the country have excess weight. Globally, over two billion children and adults suffer from health problems related to being obese, and an increasing number die from these conditions, researchers said. However, of the four million deaths attributed to excess body weight in 2015, nearly 40% occurred among people whose body mass index (BMI) fell below the threshold considered "obese". he findings represent "a disturbing global public health crisis," according to a study published in The New England Journal of Medicine. Among the 20 most



populous countries, the highest level of obesity among kids and young adults was in the US at nearly 13%; Egypt topped the list for adult obesity at about 35%. Lowest rates were in Bangladesh and Vietnam, respectively, at 1%.

China with 15.3 million and India with 14.4 million had the highest numbers of obese children; the US with 79.4 million and China with 57.3

million had the highest numbers of obese adults in 2015. "People who shrug off weight gain do so at risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, and other life-threatening conditions," said Christopher Murray, from the University of Washington. The study, which spans 195 countries and territories from 1980 through 2015, includes analyses of other studies on the effects of excess weight and potential links between high BMI and cancers of the oesophagus, colon and rectum, liver, gallbladder, pancreas, breast, uterus, kidney, and thyroid, as well as leukaemia. In 2015, excess weight affected 2.2 billion children and adults worldwide, or 30% of all people.

How a Punjab village is making music and money at big, fat weddings



(News Agencies POHIR, Sangrur district: Punjab loves the big, fat wedding. And the longing for the glitzy band-baaja that accompanies every baraat is sweet music for a village, about 25 km from Ludhiana town. Pohir village of Sangrur district has around 30 pipe bands. And the number is growing, just

like their reputation, across the north Indian state and beyond.

Also known as military-style bands, the pipe band generally consists of four pipers, three drummers, a bass drummer and a band master. Without musical instruments like shehnai or trumpet, they have a dis-

tinctive sound which separates them from the other wedding bands.

"It is perhaps the only village in Punjab with so many military-style bands. Our village is popular across Punjab due to these musicians. Out of a total population of 4,500, more than 300 villagers are into this profession," said Sukhdarshan Singh, sarpanch, Pohir.

Music is now Pohir's USP. The bands have catchy, colorful names: Muskaan Fauji Band, Heera International band and the likes. One of the groups, Lovely Khalsa Pipe band, was also invited to perform at the tercentenary celebra-

tions of the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib as the Sikh Guru at Takht Hazoor Sahib in Nanded (Maharashtra) in 2008. They also performed during the 350th birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Gobind Singh at Patna Sahib (Bihar) in January this year. It all started about 30 years ago when one Gurdeep Singh retired from the Army and came home. He was a member of a regimental military band and became the village's pied piper. Literally. He trained the villagers to play the instruments and formed Pohir's first pipe band. "My band has performed at 125 marriages in the last seven months, and that includes

weddings in cities like Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Chandigarh. We charge Rs 6,000 per day," said Manjinder Singh, manager, Lovely Khalsa Pipe band. Gurdeep, 61, says that he joined the army in 1973 and learned to play the pipe from another Punjabi soldier Gurmeet Singh Maala Chaliyan. "From 1980 to 1988, I was part of band wherever I was posted—Hyderabad, Ladakh, Patna, Mizoram and Sri Lanka. I retired in 1988 but the piper in me didn't leave me," he said. His son Manjeet Singh is also a musician.

"In 1997 I put together a band with 10 villagers. It took me around four

months to train them. Punjabis love royal weddings. Soon my business picked up. Since then we have performed in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, apart from the cities and towns of Punjab." Their success inspired other villagers with an aptitude for music to learn the skill and has led to a proliferation of such bands. Gurdeep said most bands play a cocktail of martial tunes, Punjabi numbers, including those of slain singer Amar Singh Chamkila, and Hindi film songs such as Pardesi, pardesi jaana nahi (film: Raja Hindustani) and Yeh desh hai veer jawaano ka (film: Naya Daur).

India's 'locked up' land is enough to build housing for all, experts say

(News Agencies India should use excess land held by government agencies to meet its goal of providing housing for all by 2022, experts and activists said, as the country struggles with rising conflicts over land for industry, infrastructure and its citizens. The government recently launched a long-delayed process to sell 2,000 acres (800 hectares) of unused land belonging to unprofitable state-owned enterprises -- known in India as public sector undertakings (PSUs). The railways, ports, aviation and defence ministries also hold vast tracts of surplus land. A portion of this land held by the government must be given to states to build housing for poor and low-income groups to meet India's goal of Housing for All by 2022, experts and activists said. "The government says finding land is the biggest problem for affordable housing, but the government is sitting on so much land that is lying idle," said Shivani Chaudhry, executive director at New Delhi-based advocacy group Housing and Land Rights Network. "PSUs could easily work with the ministry of housing to see how best to address this issue, but they would rather monetise the

land in other ways." India's state-owned enterprises hold more than 1 million acres of surplus land, according to some estimates. Government enterprises themselves are unsure how much land they have, said Samar Lahiry, a former adviser to the government's planning commission. "India has sufficient land for all uses, including housing, if we use our existing resources with prudence," Lahiry said. "We need to evaluate land use and take stock of land that is locked up with PSUs. Using idle land for vital civic infrastructure such as hospitals, roads and affordable housing is important, given the contentious nature of land acquisition." Some of

these surplus government-held lands have been encroached upon by the urban poor struggling with a lack of affordable housing. Government committees over the years have failed to sell off these lands because of a lack of clear guidelines, inadequate records and a lack of coordination between various ministries. A spokesperson for the ministry of housing said plans to create a land bank are on track. "The government has asked PSUs how much unused land they have. Once there is a clear idea of how much land there is, the government will draw up a plan for its use," AA Rao told the Thomson Reuters Founda-



tion. "Affordable housing will be a priority." A quarter of India's urban population lives in informal housing such as slums, according to social consultancy FSG. That number is set to rise as tens of thousands of

people leave their villages to seek better prospects in cities. The government's Housing for All plan aims to create 20 million new urban housing units and 30 million rural homes. Availability of land to meet this goal

is a challenge. Conflicts over land have risen as demand grows for industrial and infrastructure projects to drive growth and boost development for India's 1.3 billion citizens.

Aadhaar one of measures to tackle corruption, black money: Supreme Court



(News Agencies New Delhi : Introduction of Aadhaar into the tax regime is one of the measures to tackle the menace of corruption and black money, the Supreme Court today said. The apex court said "malafides" cannot be attrib-

uted to the Aadhaar scheme as it would go a long way to check and minimise the malaise and agreed with the government's contention that UIDAI is the best and robust method of de-duplication of PAN database as there was no instance of Aadhaar duplication. The court said that Aadhaar, which is most advanced and sophisticated infrastructure, may also facilitate law enforcement agencies to take care of problem of terrorism to some extent and may also be helpful in checking crimes and also help investigating agencies in cracking the crimes. "No doubt, going by aforesaid, and may be

some other similarly valid considerations, it is the intention of the government to give fillip to Aadhaar movement and encourage the people of this country to enrol themselves under the Aadhaar scheme. "Whether such a scheme should remain voluntary or it can be made mandatory imposing compulsiveness on the people to be covered by Aadhaar is a different question which shall be addressed at the appropriate stage," a bench headed by Justice A K Sikri said. The remarks of the top court came while upholding the validity of Section 139AA of the Income Tax Act

which makes Aadhaar mandatory for allotment of PAN cards and linking the filing of Income Tax returns. The bench, also comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan, said the Parliament was fully competent to enact Section 139AA of the Act as one of the main objectives is to "de-duplicate PAN cards" and ensure that one person does not have more than one card or there is no procurement in fictitious names. "It is mentioned that in de-duplication exercises, 11.35 lakhs cases of duplicate PANs/fraudulent PANs have been detected. Out of these, around 10.52 lakhs pertain to individual assesses.

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Eye on China, India speeds up infra projects in Myanmar

(News Agencies New Delhi : Having missed several deadlines, and with



China taking big strides, India is trying hard to speed up its infrastructure commitments in Myanmar. India's tardiness in project implementation has marred its reputation, even though India has extended over \$1.75 billion in grants and credit to Myanmar.

Indian envoy to Myanmar Vikram Misri

said India had completed building the Sittwe power and the inland water terminal in Paletwa. Speaking to a local publication, Global Light of Myanmar this week he said, "We have just awarded the contract for the final stage which is the road to be built from Paletwa to a point called Zorinpui which is on the border with Mizoram. I think the creation of this transport corridor, once it is fully functioning, has the potential to

transform the economic landscape in the states through which it goes, Rakhine and Chin." Construction is expected to start in October, with a Rs 1,600-crore contract awarded for building 109-km road connecting Paletwa river terminal to Zorinpui in Mizoram. India is also building the trilateral highway, or India-

Myanmar-Thailand highway, which was originally targeted for 2014, but will now only be complete by 2020. Misri said projects there are underway. "We are repairing 69 bridges on the Tamu-Kalay road and also constructing the Kalaywa-Yagyi section of the highway. In Chin State which borders Mizoram in India, we are constructing a road that will connect Rhi on the border to the town of Tiddim." India-Myanmar relations saw some official attention recently, when foreign secretary S Jaishankar went to Naypyidaw for foreign office consultations on May 27, but by and large this eastern neighbour has not seen the kind of high-voltage attention lavished on Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Yet Myanmar is crucial to India's Act East policy, particularly as India tries to balance out China's massive presence in

the country. Ironically, India is helped by Myanmar's own growing discomfort with China. China's Belt & Road (OBOR) project has seen an almost \$10 billion investment in a port Kyaukphyu and a special economic zone, which, China has promised, will generate thousands of jobs. Aung San Suu Kyi, state counselor and effectively the head of the civilian government, allowed the Chinese investment as Beijing-Yangon relations have improved under her watch, perhaps more than India. But there remains a popular distrust of China, which is largely absent vis-a-vis India. Part of the problem is also security-related issues. India still worries about some of the insurgent groups that take sanctuary across the Myanmar border, though in recent years, the two security systems have worked quietly to combat them.

China Will Fund \$12 Billion Mega-Dam Opposed By India, Says Pakistan

India has previously opposed any construction in the Indus Basin, and has criticised CPEC as a challenge to its sovereignty because the \$57 billion corridor runs through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.



(Agencies) Pakistan expects China to fund a long-delayed Indus river mega dam project in Gilgit-Baltistan, part of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, with work beginning next year, its Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said in an interview to news agency Reuters.

Pakistan has been keen for years to build a cascade of mega dams along the Indus flowing down from the Himalayas, but has struggled to raise money from international institutions amid opposition from India. Those ambitions have been revived by China's Belt and Road infrastructure plans for Pakistan, a key cog in Beijing's creation of a modern-day Silk Road network of trade routes connecting Asia with Europe and Africa.

The \$12-\$14 billion Diamer-Bhasha dam should generate 4,500 megawatts (MW) of electricity, and a vast new res-

ervoir would regulate the flow of water to farmland that is vulnerable to increasingly erratic weather patterns.

Iqbal, the Islamabad lead on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), said a Chinese company from a Beijing-picked shortlist and a local partner would build the dam over a 10-year period, and work should begin in the "next financial year", which begins in July.

India has previously opposed any construction in the Indus Basin, and has criticised CPEC as a challenge to its sovereignty because the \$57 billion corridor runs through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.

India this year fast-tracked \$15 billion worth of dam projects on its side of Kashmir, with Islamabad claiming that the power stations will disrupt vital Indus water flows into Pakistan. China and Pakistan signed a

memorandum of understanding in December for Beijing to help fund and develop Pakistan's Indus Basin dams, though no timelines have been released. Pakistan estimates there is 40,000 MW of hydro potential. India's foreign ministry and ministry for water resources did not respond to requests for comment, said news agency Reuters. Iqbal, a close ally of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, said India needs to "stop its myopic think-

ing towards CPEC" and accept the Chinese-funded project is going ahead. Better still would be for India to become part of Beijing's Belt and Road plans, he said.

Future CPEC plans are increasingly focused on how Beijing can help build up Pakistan's ailing industries, creating special economic zones and opening up sectors from mining to agriculture to Chinese firms.

But Iqbal said infrastructure con-

struction won't stop, with contracts set to be signed for roads and for mass rail transport systems in Quetta, Peshawar and Karachi. He said about \$10 billion in new deals should be signed in the next year on top of Chinese pledges topping \$50 billion, and that was likely to double by 2020. "I would say conservatively \$20 billion plus (in new investment by 2020)," Iqbal said, adding this would also include private investment.

In a first, China offers to mediate between Pakistan, Afghanistan

It is for the first time that China has offered to mediate between Islamabad and Kabul.

(Agencies) China has reportedly expressed its willingness to mediate between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

It is for the first time that China has offered to mediate between Islamabad and Kabul.

According to a report in Dawn, Tolo News reported that the Chinese offer was revealed in a statement issued by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's office on Monday.

"China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi is scheduled to visit Kabul soon where he will meet



Afghan officials to discuss ways to improve Afghanistan-Pakistan relations," the statement issued said. The statement further said that the Chinese foreign minister would work to discuss the possibility of setting up a meeting between the four members of the Quadrilateral Coordination Committee consisting of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China.

The Quadrilateral Coordination Committee was formed in

January 2016 for reconciliation in Afghanistan through the direct peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

"It is the first time that China wants to be a mediator in Afghanistan's peace process and soon the Chinese Foreign Minister will visit Kabul. Peace with Pakistan was our demand and this must be solved between government and government," the statement quoted President Ghani as saying.

(Agencies) CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh (AFP) – Heavy monsoon rains and landslides have killed at least 134 people in south-east Bangladesh, burying many in their homes as they slept, authorities said on Tuesday (June 13).

Three young children from the same family were among those killed in the disaster, which comes just weeks after a cyclone battered the region and destroyed camps housing thousands of Rohingya refugees. Police warned the death toll would likely rise as emergency workers reached remote parts of the Chittagong Hills, where tele-



Heavy rain, landslides kill at least 134 in Bangladesh

phone and transport links had been cut.

Manzurul Mannan, the government administrator of the worst-hit Rangamati district, said at least 98 people were killed in the hilly region alone.

The death toll might rise," Mannan told media.

At least 30 people were killed in neighbouring Chittagong and another six in Bandarban, officials told AFP, adding about 15 people were missing, feared buried under chunks of mud.

Many of the victims were from poor tribal communities in the remote hill district of Rangamati, close to the Indian border, where mudslides buried hundreds of

homes.

One woman described the ground sliding from beneath their family home in the dead of night, sending them fleeing to a house next door.

"A few other families also took shelter there, but just after dawn a section of hill fell on the house. Six people are still missing," Khatiza Begum told local news website Bangla Tribune at Rangamati hospital.

District police chief Sayed Tariqul Hasan said most of the landslides happened before dawn Tuesday.

"Some of them were sleeping in their houses on hillsides when the landslides occurred," he said.

Police and local authorities ordered the evacuation of thousands of people living in slums at the base of hills in the neighbouring district of Chittagong, where 30 people have been confirmed dead.

At least 126 people were killed in that district when a massive landslide buried a village a decade ago.

In the latest incident six people were killed in the nearby district of Bandarban, among them three children buried by a landslide as they slept in their home.

Authorities have opened 18 shelters in the worst-hit hill districts, where 4,500 people have been evacuated, disaster management

and relief minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya told reporters.

- 'Constant fear' - Head of disaster management department Reaz Ahmed said disaster response teams had been deployed but had not yet been able to reach all the affected areas. "Once the rains are over, we'll get a full picture of the damage and get the recovery work in full swing," he added.

The monsoon rains came two weeks after Cyclone Mora smashed into Bangladesh's southeast, killing at least eight people and damaging tens of thousands of homes. Rohingya leader Mohammad Anam said

the latest rains had further worsened conditions in camps that were badly hit by the cyclone.

"We're living in constant fear of landslides," he told AFP.

Around 300,000 Rohingya, a mainly Muslim stateless ethnic minority, are living in camps in southeastern Bangladesh after fleeing persecution in Myanmar. Heavy monsoon rains also pounded the capital Dhaka and the port city of Chittagong in the district of the same name, disrupting traffic for hours and flooding key roads and business districts.

A ferry sank in the River Buriganga in Dhaka on Monday evening with an estimated 100 passengers aboard, police said, adding all the passengers had managed to swim ashore.

Among the victims in Rangamati district were at least four soldiers who had been sent to clear roads after an earlier landslide.

Thousands of troops are stationed in Rangamati, where a tribal insurgency raged for two decades, and which still suffers sporadic violence.

"The soldiers were sent to clear roads hit by landslide in Manikchhari town when they were themselves buried by a second landslide," armed forces spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Rashidul Hassan told AFP.

"They fell 30 feet (9m) from the main road," he said, adding one soldier was missing and 10 injured, five critically.

Will India send 15,000 troops to Afghanistan?

Time is ripe for concerted action against Pakistan's terror

(Agencies) Media reports emanating from Washington, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India are all talking about New Delhi planning to send 15,000 troops to Afghanistan. Not only is the text exactly the same in all these reports, as if a press release was handed out by someone, they also refer to deliberations at a "close-door round table at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars". So does the Woodrow Wilson International Centre hold press briefs after close-door discussions?

The report further talks of a veteran Indian military scholar having "visited Washington DC, and tried to convince the Donald Trump administration to allocate India an official role in Afghanistan". One wonders if this leak was inspired by Washington and then picked up by Pakistan and India, or if it was inspired by Islamabad for testing possibilities and then picked up by Washington — which has wanted Indian troops to be deployed in Afghanistan for several years — and later picked up by Indian media? India has direct channels of communication with Washington and Kabul, as also Islamabad, so where has this spoof come from? Moreover, India doesn't need a veteran

military scholar to convince the Trump administration (or any other nation) to allocate it an official role in Afghanistan or anywhere else. India and Afghanistan are both sovereign nations — and joint signatories to the India Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement, 2011, whose four pillars are "political and security cooperation; trade and economic cooperation; capacity development and education; and social, cultural, civil society and people-to-people relations". The report, quoting unnamed diplomatic sources, states that India's NSA Ajit Doval is planning to rush to Afghanistan to cash on the latest wave of terror attacks and to make an official offer of sending Indian troops to defend Afghan government leaders. Doval recently met his Afghan counterpart, and asked the Afghan government to deliver an official invitation to New Delhi to dispatch troops. On 28 May, just two days before Kabul was attacked, the Afghan Pajhwok news agency from Washington reported that India could send its troops to Afghanistan under a "UN mission". The Pajhwok dispatch published in Outlook Afghanistan quoted a "prominent Indian defence expert" as telling a Washington audience on 18

May that "New Delhi could perhaps be persuaded to send up to a division of Indian troops — around 15,000 in total — to Afghanistan under a United Nations Peacekeeping mission". Technically, India can position troops anywhere in the world with the concurrence of the host country and no one else. India has sent a peacekeeping force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka under a joint accord in the past. India and Afghanistan have a strategic partnership agreement, which includes security cooperation, but it is not a defence pact. Afghanistan has never made a request for Indian military troops either, and to say that the Afghan government would make such a request to "protect its leaders" is a derogatory suggestion, one that implies the Afghan National Security Forces cannot protect their government leaders. Despite the ghastly terrorist attacks last week, Kabul has been conscious of Pakistan's sensitivities to having an Indian presence in Afghanistan. There is also the issue of costs that will come from maintaining such a force in Afghanistan, because in all probability, Pakistan will not allow flights over its territory in doing so.

Bangladesh summons U.S. diplomat to protest arrest of envoy in New York

(Agencies) Bangladesh's foreign ministry summoned a United States diplomat on Tuesday to express dismay over the arrest of the country's deputy consul general in New York on charges of labor trafficking and assault. The deputy consul general Mohammed Shaheldul Islam was indicted on Monday on charges of using threats and intimidation to force his servant to work without pay, a New York City prosecutor said. Islam has limited diplomatic immunity and was ordered to surrender his passport when he appeared in court, said Queens District Attorney Richard Brown in a statement. He faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted. Bail was set at \$50,000 bond or \$25,000 cash and was due to be posted on Tuesday. According to the indictment, Islam brought another Bangladeshi, Ruhul Amin, to New York between 2012 and 2013 to work as household help. Mahub Uz Zaman, Dhaka's acting foreign secretary, summoned the U.S. diplomat to the foreign ministry to ask for an explanation. "We have urged the U.S. to release Bangladesh's deputy consul general," he said without elaborating. Shameem Ahsan, the Bangladeshi consul general in New York, told Reuters over the telephone from New York that Amin disappeared on May 17, 2016 but only made these allegations recently. "It is surprising for us that after 13 months he has appeared with these allegations.

U.S. 'not winning' in Afghanistan, Defense Secretary tells Congress



(Insider Bureau) The United States is "not winning" the war against Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told Congress on Tuesday, promising to brief lawmakers on a new war strategy by mid-July that is widely expected to call for thousands more U.S. troops.

The remarks were a blunt reminder of the gloom underscoring U.S. military assessments of the war between the U.S.-backed Afghan government and the Islamist militant group, classified by U.S. commanders as a "stalemate"

despite almost 16 years of fighting. "We are not winning in Afghanistan right now. And we will correct this as soon as possible," Mattis said in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee. Mattis acknowledged that he believed the Taliban were "surging" at the moment, something he said he intended to address. Some U.S. officials questioned the benefit of sending more troops to Afghanistan because any politically palatable number would not be enough to turn the tide, much less create stability and security. To date, more than 2,300 Americans have been killed and more than 17,000 wounded since the war began in 2001. The Afghan government was assessed by the U.S. military to control or influence

just 59.7 percent of Afghanistan's 407 districts as of Feb. 20, a nearly 11 percentage-point decrease from the same time in 2016, according to data released by the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

A truck bomb explosion in Kabul last month killed more than 150 people, making it the deadliest attack in the Afghan capital since the Taliban were ousted in 2001 by a NATO-led coalition after ruling the country for five years.

On Saturday, three U.S. soldiers were killed when an Afghan soldier opened fire on them in eastern Afghanistan.

Reuters reported in late April that the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump was

carrying out a review of Afghanistan, and conversations were revolving around sending between 3,000 and 5,000 U.S. and coalition troops there. Deliberations include giving more authority to forces on the ground and taking more aggressive action against Taliban fighters. Senator John McCain, the chairman of the Senate committee, pressed Mattis on the deteriorating situation, saying the United States had an urgent need for "a change in strategy, and an increase in resources if we are to turn the situation around." "We recognize the need for urgency," Mattis said. (Reporting by Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali; Editing by Bernadette Baum and Grant McCool)

Pakistan says slain Chinese misused business visas, were missionaries



(Insider Bureau) Two slain Chinese nationals who were kidnapped in Pakistan in May and whose deaths ISIS has claimed responsibility for had been missionaries and the "misuse" of their business visas contributed to their abductions and deaths, Pakistan's interior minister said. Amid "deep concern over the unfortunate incident," Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on Monday ordered a review of its visa policies and called for the establishment of a database of Chinese nationals.

The man, 24, and woman, 26, killed were among a group of Chinese citizens who obtained a business visa from the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing, the ministry statement said.

Instead of doing business, it is alleged the pair went to the Pakistani city of Quetta and under the guise of learning Urdu from a Korean, they "engaged in preaching," the Pakistani statement said. The statement did not elaborate on what kind of preaching the two were engaged in.

"Ensuring the security of

foreign nationals is a shared responsibility," according to the Interior Ministry statement.

"Where the government makes every effort to provide security to foreigners, the visiting foreign nationals are equally bound to abide by the terms and conditions of their

visas and inform local authorities about their movements and activities keeping in view the security requirements, if any."

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

In a social media post discussing the story, the People's Daily newspaper, the Communist Party's official mouthpiece, said Friday that China was the biggest target market for South Korean missionaries and urged people "to cover their souls."

It is not known whether the two Chinese nationals had been accompanied in Pakistan by Korean Christians. The man, 24, and woman, 26, were kidnapped by armed men on May 24 from the city of Quetta, the capital of Pakistan's Balochistan province, a senior security officer told CNN. The official said they were on their way to teach a Chinese language class. Amaq, a news agency affiliated with ISIS, said Thursday that Islamic State fighters had killed two Chinese teachers who were being held in the Mastung, Balochistan. The group also released a video, which showed two bodies shot and bleeding on some grassy ground. On Friday, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying, said at a regular press briefing that Pakistan had said that the two kidnapped Chinese were likely dead, adding that the ministry was trying to get more details. The Ministry, in a statement earlier on Friday, said that "China resolutely opposes all forms of kidnapping of civilians and opposes all forms of terrorism and extreme acts of violence." Khan directed Interior Ministry "to review, regulate and streamline the process of issuance of visas to Chinese nationals coming to Pakistan for various projects," the statement said. Khan also noted an occasional "laxity" of Pakistani missions in granting visas and added that there needs to be a database of Chinese nationals and to regulate the process of granting visa extensions, according to the statement.

Islamic State boasts of 'jihad in East Asia' as Malcolm Turnbull warns of attacks on our neighbouring nations

(Insider Bureau) EVEN in promoting his national security strategy in Parliament, Malcolm Turnbull couldn't help but raise the serious threat of terrorism striking on our doorstep. Amid announcing measures that would work to curb extremism and make Australians feel safe, the Prime Minister let his speech to Parliament on Tuesday take a dark and concerning turn. "There is no place for complacency, no place for set and forget," he said. "I am keenly alert to the risk that the next mass casualty attack on Australian victims could well be in Southeast Asia, where ISIL

propaganda has galvanised existing networks of extremists and attracted new recruits." The government's worrying message is very similar to the one Islamic State itself has promoted in the terrorist group's latest issue of propaganda magazine Rumiya. The terror group has devoted this month's entire 46-page issue to promoting the group's "increase in numbers" and calls for support from people looking to join its cause in countries that are Australia's nearest neighbours. The publication features an interview with Abu Adillah al-Muhajir, identified as "the amir (leader) of

the soldiers of the Khilafah in East Asia". In the interview, the purported leader of IS's East Asia branch asserted that IS fighters in the region, particularly in the Philippines, "continue to increase in numbers and weapons" with new recruits including "many youth" and people "from various countries in the region of East Asia" and surrounding regions. He also used the platform to assure readers there were plenty of accessible opportunities to join the caliphate. "We continue to receive muhajirin (migrants), and we welcome them. There are several safe paths and ways to

achieve that," he said. In the Q&A style interview, Al-Muhajir said he wanted to "teach the Crusaders that zero hour has arrived" and establish "Allah's rule in the land ... which had become a thorn in the throats of the belligerent Christians". The threat of IS has reached a dangerous reality in the Philippines, where an aligned group last month moved to lay siege to the nation's southern city of Marawi. Marawi is the main Islamic city of the predominantly Catholic country. Usually populated by about 250,000, the area has been largely abandoned since the IS takeover began last month.

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Who's afraid of George Soros?

And his status as the right-wing's most hated man has not been lost on many in the political realm.

To go on what you read and hear these days, Soros seems to be responsible for every political upheaval,' said German political analyst Ulf Brunnbauer.

'He makes an excellent scapegoat for increasingly authoritarian regimes as someone who's invested a lot of money into philanthropy and represents capitalism.'

Another Hungarian law hastily approved in April threatens to shut down the Soros-founded Central European University in Budapest.

Across Hungary, government-backed billboards have popped up showing the magnate as a puppeteer pulling the strings of an opposition politician, a motif associated with anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

'His (religious) background is irrelevant to the central issue, which is that an increasing number of governments... see Soros' networks as a threat to democracy,' Zoltan Kovacs, the spokesman of ultra right-wing prime minister Viktor Orban, wrote in a re-

cent blog post entitled 'Myths and facts about Hungary and George Soros'.

Orban - a one-time recipient of a Soros scholarship - has accused his former benefactor of using 'predator' NGOs to flood Europe with Muslim refugees and create a 'transnational empire'. But he himself has his critics, having been accused of being a 'tyrant', while coming under fire last year for saying, 'every single migrant poses a public security and terror risk,' the Guardian reports.

'For us migration is not a solution but a problem... not medicine but a poison, we don't need it and won't swallow it.'

Soros has a long and complicated history. Born in Budapest in 1930, he survived both the Nazi and Soviet occupation before eventually moving to the US where he made his fortune from hedge funds.

But those dealings, as with many on Wall Street, were not without controversy.

In 1992, he became known as 'the man who broke the bank of England' when his aggressive speculation against the sterling

sent it crashing out of the European exchange mechanism.

He also has a 2002 conviction of insider trading in France, a verdict he described as a 'gift to my enemies'.

'I have seen the damage done when societies succumb to the fear of the "other",' he wrote in the New York Times in March.

As a result of that driving force to avoid future totalitarianism, Soros created his foundation in 1984 to help countries move from communism toward democracy. Since then, he has poured billions into ex-Soviet satellite states for causes and programs ranging from finance, health and justice reforms, to promoting the rights of minority groups and keeping tabs on government corruption.

He also backed pro-democracy groups in the color revolutions in central and eastern Europe, and vowed to spend \$1 billion in Ukraine to help save it from 'Russian aggression'. Recently, he described Moscow as having a 'concept of government (that) is irreconcilable with that of open society'. As a result of his outspoken nature, and what those

who oppose him describe as 'interference', he has earned him powerful enemies. Earlier this month, Orban likened Soros's description of Hungary as a 'mafia state' to a 'declaration of war'. The Kremlin has accused Soros of fermenting violent uprisings and banned his foundation in 2015 as part of a massive NGO clampdown. Europe's migration crisis, which erupted that same year, has also deepened the rift between the pro-refugee OSF and anti-immigration nationalists. In January this year, a 'Stop Operation Soros' campaign emerged in Macedonia. It was fueled by the country's authoritarian ex-premier Nikola Gruevski, who regularly called for the country's 'de-Sorosisation'. The head of Poland's governing right-wing party Jaroslaw Kaczynski said Soros wanted to create 'societies without an identity', while Romania's ruling party leader alleged the tycoon had 'financed evil' by sponsoring recent mass protests. And the hate towards Soros has not just been fostered in Europe. In the US, he is a favored target of the far-right website Breitbart, which

runs anti-Soros stories on an almost daily basis. The website's founder, Steve Bannon, left the website to become an aide to Donald Trump. The website's hatred for Soros played a part in a petition calling for the philanthropist's arrest for 'standing in the way of making America great again' receiving 60,000 signatures online. And while all these examples prove hostility towards Soros is not new, its increased intensity is unprecedented, OSF's Eurasia director Leonard Benardo said. 'The OSF as an institution and George Soros as a person condemning corruption have always faced pressures from governments that have an illiberal cast,' he told AFP. 'What is different about now is the ferocity and tenacity of the response.' Incidentally the attacks come at a time when the OSF only spends a fraction of what it used to. 'What we're witnessing is that democracy is not only about institutions, that you can have largely free and fair elections and yet still have great anxieties and problems when it comes to forms of open society.'

Notwithstanding NDTV

If you are a Presstitute, you ought to defend the Vadras, the Chidambarams, the Virbhadrans, and now the Roys. And if you don't, you are reminded of Martin Niemoller. So, here is my take on the CBI raids against NDTV. At the outset, a disclosure: I was an NDTV employee 10 years ago. NDTV is not an ordinary news organisation. Politically connected people seeking contracts from the government to run shows on Doordarshan set it up. No doubt their shows were superb, better than anything the government-run channel ever had. In fact, many of us grew up admiring Prannoy Roy and his team that produced The World This Week and India's first live election coverage. I have a cousin, now a middle-aged university professor, who would hurtle towards the TV room hearing the TWTW signature tune from wherever she was just to watch and listen to Roy. He was undoubtedly India's best TV anchor ever.

against Roy was registered during the United Front government supported by the Left and the Congress. In a written reply given to the Lok Sabha on March 2, 2001, the then information and broadcasting minister, Sushma Swaraj, said that the CBI registered a case against the then DD director general, NDTV and its managing director Roy on January 9, 1998, under various provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1998. "It relates to certain instances of favouritism shown by Doordarshan to NDTV, in telecasting of various programmes on Doordarshan including The World This Week during the period 1990-96. The investigation is in progress. Doordarshan has filed a counter claim suit of Rs 4.69 crore with interest at 18% per annum, against M/s NDTV towards the charges for telecast of some programmes produced by them in the Honourable High Court of Delhi."

I believe the BJP government, which came to power

in March 1998, dropped the CBI investigation and the court case. Interestingly, the channel is not known to take on the government of the day. It is surprising that the CBI raids on NDTV are termed vendetta because NDTV has not done any big expose on the Modi government in the last three years. If it is about the 2002 riots, NDTV's coverage wasn't any different from any English newspaper's. But doubt lingers because the raid, according to a CBI statement, is about the losses incurred by ICICI bank during the settlement of a loan. I am not a banking expert, but I believe the RBI has allowed banks to settle loans by foregoing a portion of the principal or the interest, often waiving off the interest completely. So, what is this case all about? Sure, there have been instances of round-tripping of NDTV loans, curious transactions abroad and leaked e-mails that don't sound kosher, but where is the criminality? Nobody is above the law, but the CBI needs

Farmer protests: India's acute groundwater crisis is fuelling distress

and MDMS programmes for children and focus our procurement operations more and more on these crops, creating a win-win for all. Second, we need to make sure that the trillions of litres of water lying unused in the command areas of our large dams, actually reaches the farmers for whom it is meant. These dams were built at huge financial, social and environmental cost. But they have not yet fulfilled their promise. Our focus has been on building more and more dams and not on putting in place last-mile connectivity to ensure this water reaches the farm. One reason for this is that we have looked at water from a narrow engineering perspective, while water is in every sense a multi-dimensional resource requiring an understanding of many other disciplines for its sustainable management. So we have to bring in the social mobilisers and agronomists centrestage, so that farmers can effectively come together to manage their water in an equitable and sustainable manner. This is again something we already see on the ground in many parts of India where farmers have been handed over the management of their part of the command and they have successfully ensured that every farm

gets its required water. These farmers are happy to pay the price for this water, which they collectively arrive at and they use what is earned for the operation and maintenance of the system. MS: The NWC is required to complete the paradigm shift we are trying to institute. The fourth element of the paradigm shift is that we must not continue to place groundwater and surface water in separate silos. Today, the Central Water Commission (CWC) looks after surface water and the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) is the custodian of groundwater. The sad thing is they hardly ever work together. But you cannot manage water like that. Water is one and needs to be understood in all its integral inter-connections. Let me give you an example. One of the biggest tragedies India faces in recent times is the progressive drying up of its rivers. When we look at our peninsular rivers, we realise that their post-monsoon water flows come from the base-flows provided by groundwater. One of the largely unnoticed consequences of over-extraction of groundwater has been to completely dry up these base flows, which used to feed our peninsular rivers after the monsoon was over.

the Gujarat-based low-cost drug manufacturing company. "Partly it is overcharging by the hospital and partly patients are made to feel the imported product is better than the Indian product," says Srinivasan, a member of the All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN). He stresses that imported medical devices cost at least two to three times more than their import price. In the case of implants like cardiac stents, the MRP is more than eight times the landed cost.

Despite the government's Make In India push, including through 100 per cent FDI, manufacturing of medical devices has not progressed much. One reason is that multinational firms are not manufacturing here. Sans any monitoring, they are only marketing their imported products. Medical devices and component imports last year amounted to Rs 25,540 crore.

Rajiv Nath of the Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AIMED) holds government policies responsible for the low levels of domestic manufacturing. He says that the draft policy on medical devices manufacturing, which had been submitted to the PMO after consultations with the industry lobbies, has been gathering dust since June 2015. Fur-

Seeing The World Through Indian Lenses

ther, the industry demand for "nominal protection of 10 per cent"—higher taxes for imports—has been partly met with a duty on 78 devices being raised to 7.5 per cent.

On FDI, Nath is critical of the fact that the government gave in to pressure to allow investments in brown field projects (existing companies), "as it allowed multinational firms to cherry-pick and take over many among 50 of the Indian companies with a turnover of over Rs 50 crore."

Since 2010, there have been 23 mergers and acquisitions, attracting around \$429 million investments in the sector. For instance, Smith & Nephew acquired Adler Mediquip, and Terumo Corporation bought out promoter Terumo Penpol Ltd. Similarly, Peter Surgicals SAS acquired Stericat Gutstrings Pvt Ltd and Cipla acquired Precision Pharmaceuticals.

"MNCs are only setting up distribution companies and have been lobbying for a cut in import duties," says Nath. "The prime minister has been talking about Make in India, but the policy is working to the

contrary." Industry players say that unlike the auto or telecom industry, the medical devices industry does not enjoy any protection either in terms of duties or through a "Buy Indian" policy.

Last month, PM Narendra Modi had publicly mentioned that 70 per cent of medical equipment used in India are imported. "This situation has to change because it makes treatment costly," Modi had said. Yet, the much-awaited law on medical devices has not moved beyond the draft bill stage.

Currently, apart from the dominating MNCs, there are three categories of domestic manufacturers. The first are those who hold manufacturing licences issued by the Drugs Controller of India, and conform to quality standards both in raw material (imported) and manufacturing. Their products are 40 per cent cheaper than imported products. The second category are those, also licensed, but who don't conform to quality standards. Their pricing is 40-45 per cent cheaper than the best Indian manufactured products. Lastly, there are unlicensed manufacturers whose products are priced 30-40 per cent less than the second category.

"The best Indian manufacturers are able to sell their products at a low rate as their overheads and margins are lower compared to firms in the US or EU," says Vivek Mangalwedhekar, director, SH Pitkar Ort-hotools, who make orthopaedic medical devices. "It is expected that within a year or so, the DGCI will clamp down on units not complying with quality norms."

The advantages of boosting domestic manufacturing can be gauged from a simple example. Indian manufacturers supply around 70-75 per cent of the domestic requirement of intraocular lenses. Some leading eye hospitals, including Aravind Eye Hospitals, Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital, Venu Eye Institute and LV Prasad Eye Institute, all use Indian-made products. "Imported lenses cost double or even thrice more than Indian products. There seems to be no difference in quality too, as most Indian firms are ISO and CE-certified and accepted globally," says a senior eye-specialist. He adds that Indian companies have helped bring down the cost of cataract operations and made it affordable for the poor.

The cost of imported medical devices and thereby the mark-up varies largely depending on

the type of device, says Dinesh A. Peter, business consultant, Life Sciences Practice, mentioning glucose-monitoring handheld devices and the relatively new transcatheter heart valve or the ventricular assist devices.

"A large number of glucose-monitoring devices have permeated the Indian market and the mark-up between the imported and indigenous devices is not substantial and is easily overlooked due to the growing purchasing power, at least in metropolitan cities," says Peter. "However, when it comes to life-supporting critical devices new to the Indian market, such as the transcatheter heart valve or the ventricular assist devices, the mark-up is huge. You can google and find out that an imported ventricular assist device costs about Rs 1 crore, while it would be around \$80,000 (Rs 51 lakh) in the US," he says.

These devices are sold at either the same price as that in their country of origin, or more, depending on the device and its specifications. There are no indigenous alternatives and only the affluent few can afford them, though many Indian patients could benefit from these critical devices. Peter stresses that to truly expand in India, either the foreign manufacturers should lower prices or domestic firms should produce devices at a lower cost, thus putting pressure on imports.

Vijay Mallya to face further charges, could be extradited to India, UK court told

at London's Westminster Magistrates' court on Tuesday that India was believed to be preparing a second extradition request with further separate charges. "I don't know its contents," Watson said.

India is seeking Mallya's extradition over unpaid loans tied to his defunct Kingfisher Airlines after the businessman fled to Britain in March last year.

Banks are seeking to recover about \$1.4 billion that the Indian authorities say Kingfisher owes. Mallya has repeatedly dismissed the charges against him.

"I deny all allegations that have been made," he told reporters as he arrived at court. "I have enough evidence to prove my case. The next hearing will be held on July 6 when Mallya, who was granted an extension to his bail, was told he need not attend.

The full extradition hearing was provisionally listed to start on 4 December and to last two weeks. Aaron Watkins, the lawyer representing the Indian

government, told the court that prosecutors in Britain were still waiting for documentation and evidence from India and this was expected to arrive in the next month.

However, any delays or a second extradition request could push the case back to April next year, the court heard. Britain's extradition process can be complicated and take a long time to conclude.

The judge will make a decision based on whether there is a prima facie case against Mallya and if the alleged crimes would be offences in Britain as well as India. That ruling can be challenged in a higher court before being passed to the home secretary (interior minister) for approval.

That decision can also be appealed to the courts. Mallya, who has a base in London and a country home bought from the father of triple Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton, on Friday dismissed speculation of a possible sale of his Force India team.

Trump, PM Modi To Meet On June 26

"I think you can expect the two of them to set forth a vision that will expand the US-India partnership in an ambitious and worthy way of both countries' people," White House press secretary Sean Spicer told reporters at his daily news conference.

The Indian external affairs ministry in New Delhi said that meeting would provide a new direction for a deeper bilateral engagement "on issues of mutual interest and consolidation of multi-dimensional strategic partnership."

Modi was invited to Washington when he rang Trump in January to congratulate the new president on his inauguration.

"The president and the prime minister have had a number of positive phone conversations, and expect to further that discussion ... whether it's economic growth and reforms, fighting terrorism, expanding our cooperation as major defence partners," Spicer said in response to a question.

The bilateral talks appear to be no bed of roses as they come amidst thorny issues like US' plans to reduce the number of H-1B visa slots that are mainly used by Indian IT workers, and its withdrawal from the historic climate accord. The White House said that the US-India trade has grown six-fold since 2000, from USD 19 billion to USD 115 billion in 2016, despite the recent hiccups over the H-1B visa issue.

Notably, Modi's US visit, which would begin on June 25, comes in the backdrop of Trump's announcement to withdraw the US from the historic Paris Climate Agreement signed by over 190 other countries.

In his announcement of the decision for which he received a global condemnation, Trump had blamed India and China for the US withdrawal.

"India makes its participation contingent on receiving billions and billions of dollars from developed countries," he had said.

Strongly rejecting Trump's contention, India said it signed the Paris deal not under duress or for lure of money but due to its commitment to protect the environment.

Apart from ways to enhance trade and business cooperation, Modi and Trump are expected to discuss defence ties. US Defence Secretary James Mattis has already made it clear that his country recognises India as a major defence "partner partly out of respect" for New Delhi's "indispensable role" in maintaining stability in the Indian Ocean region.

The US was exploring "new ways" to address new challenges as well from maritime security to the growing threat posed by the spread of terrorism in Southeast Asia, Mattis has said.

Regional security situation including Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and other international issues are expected to figure prominently during the meeting of the two leaders.

CBI arrests promoters of mining group for Rs 290 crore bank fraud



(News Agencies)New Delhi: Probing a major bank fraud, the Central Bureau of Investigation on Tuesday arrested Manoj Jayaswal and Abhisek Jayaswal — promoters of mining company Abhijeet Group—along with former DGM of Canara Bank for allegedly causing a loss to Rs 290 crore to two public sector banks.

Abhijeet group was probed by CBI in coal scam as well and Manoj Jayaswal was chargesheeted by the agency. In the present case, CBI said that the Rs 290 crore loan is just the tip of the iceberg as the agency, during the last two years of probe has found

that 13 companies of Abhijeet Group—now known as Pathbreaking group—have defaulted on loans of Rs 11,000-15,000 crore from 20 banks and financial institutions which have become non-performing assets since 2014. The agency has found that these funds from the banks have allegedly been diverted through 132 shell companies of the group, sources said. According to CBI, State Bank of India has outstanding dues to the tune of Rs 2,200 crore and Axis Bank has Rs 1,600 crore debt in its books which comprise some of the largest non-performing assets on account of

group companies of Abhijeet group. The duo was arrested in Kolkata and a special court there has sent them to eight days of custody during which investigation officers are planning to not only

examine them on the Rs 290 crore but also on web of transactions allegedly used to divert bank loans for purposes other than specified. The root of this particular case emanate from the coal scam as Abhijeet group created a special purpose vehicle set up a 1320 MW power plant in Banka, Bihar after the allocation of the Mahuagarhi coal block to the group, the CBI sources said. In order to set up the plant, Jas Infrastructure started giving further contracts.

Uber chief Travis Kalanick to take leave of absence



(News Agencies)Uber boss Travis Kalanick plans to take time away from the company, and could return in a diminished role. It comes after a review of management and practices at the firm, which is facing a number of scandals including complaints of sexual harassment.

Uber's board on Sunday voted in favour of the recommendations from the review.

Board member David Bonderman made a sexist remark at a meeting about the recommendations on Tuesday and

has now resigned as a director.

In the email to staff, Mr Kalanick said the decision to take leave, which also comes after the sudden death of his mother in a boating accident, is part of an effort to create "Uber 2.0".

"For Uber 2.0 to succeed there is nothing more important than dedicating my time to building out the leadership team," he wrote. "But if we are going to work on Uber 2.0, I also need to work on Travis 2.0 to become the leader that this company needs and that you deserve."

Mr Kalanick's email did not say how long he would be away from the firm. When that blog post by former employee Susan Fowler dropped on a quiet Sunday afternoon in February, I doubt anybody at the company thought it would lead to this. I certainly did not. That moment marked the

beginning of the crisis at Silicon Valley's most talked-about start-up. In the middle of it all, Travis Kalanick, a man who, rightly or wrongly, now symbolises what people feel is the very worst of tech "bro" culture. A man flush with money and an unrelenting ambition that slowed for no-one - until now.

Uber's problems were enough, most argued, for Mr Kalanick to make this decision. But coupled with the tragic death of his mother, the 40-year-old is quite understandably not in a position to give the company the attention it so desperately needs. Since I started reporting this story I've been told how this problem is not limited to Uber; that it affects the tech industry far and wide. With that in mind, it will perhaps be encouraging to the rank-and-file at every tech firm that this fiasco began with one act.



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Jeff Sessions denies secret meeting with Russia envoy



(News Agencies) US Attorney General Jeff Sessions has denied during a Congress hearing having undisclosed meetings with Russian officials at a Washington DC hotel. America's top law official also told the Senate Intelligence Committee any suggestion he colluded with the Kremlin was "an appalling and detestable lie". Mr Sessions repeatedly

refused to answer questions about his private conversations with the president.

He vowed to defend his honour "against scurrilous and false allegations".

Mr Sessions' remarks came after sacked FBI boss James Comey said he believed he was fired to influence the agency's investigation into Russian political meddling.

US intelligence agencies believe that Russia interfered in the election in order to help Republican President Donald Trump get elected.

The Senate committee is of one several congressional panels that, along with a special counsel, is also investigating

whether any Trump campaign officials colluded with the alleged Kremlin plot.

Mr Sessions, the country's top law enforcement official, told the Senate committee he has never received a classified briefing about Russian meddling in last year's election. He also vehemently denied speaking to Russian officials about the election, during a campaign in which he was a close adviser to candidate Trump.

"I have never met with or had any conversation with any Russians or any foreign officials concerning any type of interference with any campaign or election in the United States," he said on Tuesday.

He is the most senior member of the Trump administration to testify before the Senate committee. Mr Sessions acknowledged he met Russian Ambassador Sergei Kislyak twice, but suggested he could not remember whether he met the envoy at a foreign policy speech event for then-candidate Mr Trump at the Mayflower Hotel on 27 April 2016, as US media have reported.

The former Alabama senator also denied media reports that he offered his resignation when Mr Trump was reportedly angered by his recusal from the FBI Russia probe, telling the panel he "will not be deterred".

Don't send more migrants, Rome mayor tells Italy's government



(News Agencies) The mayor of Rome, who is from the anti-establishment Five Star Movement, has asked Italy's government not to send more migrants to the city. Virginia Raggi said more arrivals could exacerbate social tension. Her call follows local elections on Sunday in which the Five Star Movement performed poorly. More than 500,000 people have arrived by boat since 2014. Nearly 200,000 are being housed in centres across the country. "We cannot permit the

creation of more social tensions," Ms Raggi said on Facebook. "That is why I am saying it is impossible, risky even, to think about creating any new reception structures."

The interior ministry has asked all Italian municipalities to find space for an expected 250,000 new migrants this year, up from about 180,000 last year.

Some observers say Ms Raggi is attempting to win back support by targeting migrants after her party failed to make the run-off in 24 of the main 25 cities choosing a new mayor.

About half of Italians do not want the country to take in more people, pollster Renato Mannheimer told Reuters news agency. Italy is accommodating rising numbers of migrants because countries to the north have tightened their borders and some EU states have refused to take part in a plan to relocate 160,000 people from Italy and Greece.

Why Qatar is the focus of terrorism claims

(News Agencies) The dispute that has seen Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies isolate Qatar stems from allegations that the tiny gas-rich nation is sponsoring extremist groups which are destabilising the Middle East.

This is not the first time Qatar's neighbours have expressed their displeasure over its individualist foreign policy - diplomatic relations were severed for nine months in 2014.

Tensions have arisen from Qatar's support for the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood; its close relationship with groups such as the Taliban and certain al-Qaeda affiliates; and its relationship with Iran, which has most recently led to allegations from Saudi Arabia that the state-funded broadcaster Al Jazeera is supporting Houthi rebels in Yemen fighting government forces backed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Doha has strongly denied Riyadh's accusations, and said it has taken more robust counter-terrorism measures than some of its neighbours. Yet this latest row is shining a particular light on the role Qatar plays with its immense wealth.

In April, it reportedly paid a ransom of as much as \$1bn (£790m) to a former al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria and to Iranian security officials as part of a deal that resulted in the release of 26 royal family members reportedly kidnapped by Iranian-backed Iraqi Shia militiamen and of dozens of Shia fighters captured by jihadists in Syria. Thus it is Qatar's alleged continued funding of radical ideology and extremism that is seemingly the cause of concern this time.

EU targets Poland, Hungary and Czechs for not taking refugees

(News Agencies) The EU has begun legal action against Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic for refusing to accept refugees under a 2015 solidarity plan. Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos said the three countries had ignored "repeated calls" from the EU's executive to take their share.

Only 20,869 of the 160,000 refugees have so far been relocated in the EU. The three states could be referred to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and eventually face heavy fines.

The relocation plan was conceived in response to the large influx of migrants and refugees in 2015, in an attempt to relieve pressure on frontline states, mainly Greece and Italy, where the vast majority of migrants were arriving.

EU countries agreed to relocate 160,000 asylum-seekers between them - though Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary voted against accepting mandatory quotas. Hungary and Slovakia challenged the quota last month in the ECJ. While the UK and Ireland were exempt from the original 2015 proposal, Poland's previous government backed the plan, although its current Eurosceptic administration has since rejected it. The Czech Republic has accepted only 12 of the 2,000 it had been designated, while Hungary and Poland have received none.

Australia agrees to pay A\$70m to Manus Island detainees



(News Agencies) The 1,905 claimants had alleged they suffered harm while being held on PNG's Manus Island between 2012 and 2016. The government said it "strongly denied" the

allegations but that settling was a "prudent" decision.

Australia turns away any refugees and asylum seekers arriving by boat and sends them to PNG and Nauru. It says this

deters migrants from attempting the life-threatening voyage to its shores in trafficking boats.

But the policy has been heavily criticised both at home and internationally, including by the United Nations. The Manus case was due to be heard in the Victoria Supreme Court on Wednesday.

But shortly before the trial began, lawyers for the claimants said the government and its service providers had offered a last minute settlement of A\$70m.

They also offered to cover costs estimated to be more than A\$20m. The full details of the settlement and the financial package are yet to be fully approved by the court.

That sinking feeling that comes from food deflation

Food deflation is occurring against the backdrop of bumper crop production after two back-to-back drought years. The State usually intervenes by providing minimum support prices for wheat, rice and several other major crops. However, in recent years, these minimum support prices have failed to keep pace with rising input costs of crop cultivation – making farming an increasingly unviable proposition.

(News Agencies) Agrarian distress casts a troubling shadow over the India growth story, a current facet of which is food deflation or an across-the-board crash in food, fruit and vegetable prices. This is sparking unrest even in vanguard agricultural regions such as western Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Earlier this month, farmers went on the rampage in Mandsaur in MP demanding better prices for their produce and waiver of loans. Agriculturists in Rajasthan, too, have demanded higher prices. In April, farmers in Andhra Pradesh and Telengana protested against the free-falling red chilli prices, which were a quarter of those prevailing last year.

Food deflation is occurring against the backdrop of bumper crop production after two back-to-back drought years. Economists typically attribute the falling food prices to demand-supply mismatches. When farmers reap record harvests, prices are bound to collapse with excess production. The opposite holds if there are severe shortages and prices spiral upwards. But the State heavily intervenes in Indian agriculture by providing minimum support prices for wheat, rice and several other major crops. However, in recent years, these minimum support prices have failed to keep pace with rising input costs of crop cultivation – making farming an increasingly unviable proposition. The knee-jerk response of state governments to the ongoing farmer unrest due to food deflation is loan waivers. But if a loan waiver was a magic bullet to solve the crisis of farming, then the massive loan waiver of Rs 72,000 crore in 2008 would have surely done the trick. But it hasn't. The waivers announced by Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh would only impair their finances to provide infrastructural support to agriculture. Stepping up public investment in irrigation is imperative. More remunerative prices are necessary to



neutralise soaring costs of cultivation. Farmers need to be better linked to urban markets. Back to food deflation, it would be unwise to dismiss it as only a demand-supply problem. What is interesting in this regard is the timing of the generalised price crash as it occurred when the country was experiencing the rigours of

demonetisation from November 8, 2016 onwards when high denomination notes were taken off circulation. The shock to the cash economy was felt most acutely in Indian agriculture. Cash is needed for seeds and fertilisers. Farmers have no access to formal funding while informal money lending dried up. They need to be paid for

the crops that have been harvested. So when bumper crops came to markets, liquidity had dried up. Across-the-board, prices crashed of every crop marketed since November like soya bean, green gram, pigeon-pea, potatoes, tomato, onions, garlic, grapes, red chillies, among others. Garlic and methi or fenugreek prices crashed in

Mandsaur, which averaged Rs 3,400 and Rs 3,100-3,200 per quintal in April as against Rs 4,400-4,800 respectively at the same time last year. According to him, the food deflation is linked to demonetisation as the cash shortages hit produce trading, resulting in farmers selling at rock-bottom prices. The spectre of food deflation will not go away unless the neglect of crisis-ridden agrarian India is redressed. More than loan waivers, the sector needs to be put on a modern footing. Policy makers still have a mindset that only cereals constitute the bulk of output. Not any more as horticultural production has outstripped food production. Farmers are growing more and more commercial crops. There is a need for more cold chains that can store this produce. There is a need for crop insurance schemes that insure farmers against boom-bust cycles and remunerative price support. Farming needs to be made more viable.

Farmers wilfully defaulting on loans in hope of waiver

(News Agencies) New Delhi : Expectation of loan waiver has prompted farmers across states to stop repayment of money owed to financial institutions. This adds pressure on banks that are already grappling with a record pile of bad corporate debt. Several bankers TOI spoke to confirmed that there was a rising trend of farmers refusing to clear dues, an issue that was also flagged at a meeting on Monday convened by the finance ministry. The total farm loans are estimated at a little under Rs 10 lakh crore.

While it is early to quantify the extent of loan delinquency by farmers, bankers say that in some states, the default rate has increased by up to 50% in recent months. "Farmers are emptying their bank accounts so that we cannot deduct the payment due from them," the head of a large bank told TOI. The chief of a public sector bank headquartered in the south said that in some places loan defaulters have come together to demand relief.

Read this story in Gujarati

"If I expect someone to write me a cheque of Rs 1 lakh to take over my loan, I am going to stop repaying. This is exactly what is happening in many states," said a



Mumbai-headquartered bank's CEO.

Andhra, Telangana, UP and Maharashtra have announced farm loan waivers. Other states, especially where polls are due, are under pressure to follow suit. At least two bank chairmen said they were finding it tough to get dues from Andhra, which had waived loans of over Rs 40,000 crore after N Chandrababu

Naidu won the assembly polls in 2014. Loan waivers or relief from governments help clear our books as far as defaults are concerned but it impacts the overall payment culture badly in the long run," said a bank head. SBI chairman Arundhati Bhattacharya, too, had recently warned: "Support to farmers is necessary but not at the cost of credit discipline."

It takes a village: Locals wade in to bring water bodies back to life



BEFORE



AFTER

(News Agencies)When Chennai into a floating city. an IAS officer waded into a dirty lake in Ernakulum to clean it, some in the team of officials that joined him were wary. Locals too were sceptical about the district collector's bid to clean it up. At the time, in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, floods had turned much of

A major reason that the city was deluged was that water bodies in the surrounding areas had been "closed", that is, either built over or drained for agricultural use. Their natural function as sinks to collect rainwater was thus blocked. Excess runoff

water contributed to the flooding of the city.

The Chennai floods sounded a loud warning for cities that neglect or kill their natural water bodies. From around 2,300 ponds in Ernakulam district in the 1980s, the number has slipped to fewer than 800 now. For IAS officer Rajamanickam, it was time to ensure the district's ponds were restored to being clean water bodies. Cleaning mainly involves desilting and removal of garbage choking the pond, thus restoring its holding capacity and making the water fit for human use.

In the 1980s, residents of Thiruvathavoor, a tiny village near Madurai, cleaned their village pond just before the monsoon every year. At least one person from every family

volunteered in the community practise called 'oorani kappathe', Tamil for protection of ponds. In primary school at the time, Rajamanickam would volunteer for the task. As an adult, when he'd return to his native village, Rajamanickam worried seeing the local water bodies reclaimed by the authorities.

Says Rajamanickam, "When we started, locals were sceptical. But after four or five ponds were cleaned, they began to join us." Soon, the initiative to revive the community practice took root and, says Rajamanickam, now managing director of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation, "people started requesting permission to clean their area's ponds." In 2015-16,

about 53 ponds in the district were cleaned.

His successor KMY Saferulla is eager to make the project standard practise. "This year, we targeted to clean 100 ponds in 50 days," he says, adding "NGOs, greens, locals, students and NSS volunteers joined hands." The administration also plans to institute awards for the district's three best-maintained ponds.

"Next year, we'll inspect the ponds that we cleaned now and award the local bodies and activists who help keep the ponds clean," says Timple Maggie, project coordinator and assistant director, panchayats department. The idea is also to dry up some of the dirtiest ponds, clean them,

and let the monsoon refill it with clean water.

Cleaning the ponds has helped recharge wells in surrounding areas, say locals. "We cleaned Eruvelichira in our panchayat. This helped recharge 40-50 wells in the area. We cleaned another pond on an acre of land that we use for swimming," says Omana Sasi, president, Chottanikkara grama panchayat.

In Kalady, locals and the administration have together managed to clean up almost 50 ponds, also using MGNREGA funds for the purpose, says K Thulasi, president, Kalady gram panchayat, adding that "it has helped address drinking water issues as well."

'Intolerance on rise, defend the spirit of Constitution'

(News Agencies)Painting a bleak picture of "rising authoritarianism", "intolerance" and "majoritarianism", a group

happening in India" and had no political affiliation. It is a litany of complaints that has agitated intellectuals and

Aruna Roy among others. The former officers, who have worked with central and state governments for

communities — widely seen as a dog whistle to Hindutva storm-troopers during UP elections.

academics who talk about social justice and equality are being subjected to harassment by the administration, backed

"In the run-up to the elections, an odious and frankly communal comparison was made..." the letter says, without referring to the PM.

as seen in Hyderabad and JNU campuses."Argumentation and discussion about different perspectives — the lifeblood not only of institutions of learning

Pointing to a conspiracy against Muslims, the letter points out that banning the slaughter-houses targets the livelihoods of minorities besides breeding communal violence. Referring to the lynching of Akhlaq in Dadri, Pehlu Khan in Jaipur, attacks on nomadic shepherds in J&K, the petition points to the wider problem of "vigilantism" which also underlines the functioning of "anti-Romeo" squads.

but of democracy itself — are being throttled," the letter laments, adding, "Disagreement and dissent are considered seditious and anti-national. Such attitudes have a chilling impact on free speech and thought." The letter also accuses the government of using violations of FCRA and IT Act to target civil society organisations who have taken a critical stand against the State, while underlining the "ugly trend of trolling and online intimidation of activists, journalists and intellectuals".

"Gaurakshaks function with impunity and seem to be doing so with the tacit complicity or active encouragement of state machinery....(anti-Romeo squads) a thinly-veiled effort to prevent Hindu-Muslim relationship or marriage, there is no justification to harass these couples," it says. The former top bureaucrats said students and

In the face of rising authoritarianism and majoritarianism, which do not allow for reasoned debate and dissent, we appeal to all public authorities, public institutions and constitutional bodies to take heed of these disturbing trends and take corrective action. We have to reclaim and defend the spirit of the Constitution of India," it says.



of retired bureaucrats has issued a direct appeal to public authorities and constitutional bodies to take corrective action to defend the spirit of the Constitution.

In an open letter, 65 former bureaucrats of central services said they decided to speak out in view of "a sense of deep disquiet at what has been

activists over a couple of years and dominated the political discourse during the Narendra Modi regime. Among those who have signed the letter are super cop Julio Rebeiro, former Prasar Bharati CEO Jawahar Sircar, former secretary, planning commission NC Saxena, EAS Sarma, Harsh Mander,

decades, have lamented a "growing climate of religious intolerance that is aimed primarily at Muslims", tracing it to the Prime Minister's controversial remarks about "burial grounds and cremation grounds" (shamshan vs kabristan) and power supply during religious festivals of different



British PM Theresa May, who took part in a Mexican wave during an England game against France, was trolled on social media for poor timing.

THE Prime Minister let her hair down as she enthusiastically took part in a Mexican wave during the England game against France.

But unfortunately for Theresa May, her fun was short lived as social media was soon awash with memes poking fun at her.

May was caught on camera trying to get involved at the international friendly the Stade de France.

Her French counterpart Emmanuel Macron led the way as he stood up and flung his arms in the air as the 'wave' went around the stadium. But when May decided to get involved, people blasted her attempt as "cringe", "awkward" and "hopeless".

As cameras panned across the crowd Macron stood up and joined in with the traditional routine.

Moments later, out of time with everyone else, May jumped to her feet with her arms outstretched before sitting back down. Her move prompted a chuckle from home secretary Amber Rudd, who was sat a few seats away.

Commentator Clive Tyldesley even said: "I think the French president looked a little more confident than the British premier."

Viewers took to Twitter to make fun of her erratic performance.

Matt Wiles wrote: "She can't even do a strong and stable Mexican wave." Ben Nutland added: "I've never seen anything more awkward than Theresa May doing a Mexican wave."

Some people, however, did stick up for May.

Referring to Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's recent awkward high five with MP Emily Thornberry, Tom Conrad said: "Theresa May's attempt at a Mexican wave a rival for Corbyn's high five."

May's Mexican wave gets web awash with witty memes

One man wrote: "Theresa May attempts a Mexican wave and gets ridiculed, however if Corbyn did it he would have been a top lad".

The Prime Minister took time out of negotiating a coalition deal with the DUP for a meeting with Macron in Paris. The pair discussed terrorism and Brexit before watching France beat England 3-2.

As the Labour leader unrolled autumn tour of the marginals, he told his MPs that Labour needs to win power

Daily Mail



DISGUISED SAS TROOPS DEPLOYED ON STREETS

ARMED SAS troops are disguising themselves as beggars in a bid to stop future terrorist attacks.

Soldiers armed with Heckler and Koch MP7 guns and medical kits are stationed at key positions in cities and are ready to strike at a moment's notice.

Troops from the Counter Revolutionary Warfare Wing have reportedly been drafted for the operation.

A military source said: "The armed units have been deployed for some time now and it is unlikely the operation will be brought to a halt."

"The threat level is still assessed by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre as severe and that means an attack is highly likely so we must be ready."

"Soldiers provide a very good layer of immediate response to minimise casualties or stop injuries, deaths if they react quickly."

Daily Mail

CORBYN: LABOUR IS A GOVERNMENT IN WAITING



Jeremy Corbyn urged his newly elected MPs to maintain unity and collective discipline.

JEREMY Corbyn demanded unity from his MPs on Tuesday night as he revealed plans to tour Tory marginals ahead of possible autumn election.

The Labour leader, buoyed by last week's unexpected results, said he would make speeches over the next few months in the 60 seats that he needs to win to take power.

Addressing his party's newly-elected MPs, he urged them to "maintain the unity and collective discipline" they had shown during the election campaign.

The Labour leader told his MPs that Theresa May had no mandate and no legitimacy, declaring: "We are now a government in waiting".

He said Labour would remain on a general-election footing due to the instability of the minority Tory government.

Corbyn said: "Last Thursday, we turned the tables on Theresa May's

gamble and gained seats in every region and nation of Britain and I'm particularly delighted that we have increased our representation in Scotland.

"We increased the Labour vote by the largest margin in any election since 1945 and gained seats as a party for the first time since 1997."

"So now the election is over, the next phase of our campaign to win power for the majority has already begun. We must remain in permanent campaign mode on a general election footing."

Daily Mail



A RESIDENT claims he saw a "child on fire" jump from the 22nd floor of the Grenfell Tower block in west London which was gutted and at least 12 people perished on Wednesday.

The unnamed man said: "The fire started happening on third floor, we called the fire brigade which came 20 minutes later, and then the whole thing just went up."

An hour and a half later, I saw a kid on the 22nd floor on fire, he walked to the window, and he jumped."



(Left top) A firefighter tries to douse the flames that engulfed Grenfell Tower (above) in west London on Wednesday.

London horror: 'I saw kid leaping out of 22nd floor'

Dozens of horrific eyewitness accounts have begun to emerge from the 27-storey tower block fire in White City in the morning, with residents claiming many people are still stuck inside the building which houses 600 people.

At least 12 were killed in fire & police suspect toll could go up

A baby was caught by a member of the public after being dropped from Grenfell Tower as it was engulfed with flames, a witness said.

Another resident claimed a woman with six children who was attempting to escape from the 21st floor of the London tower block fire this morning got to the bottom to discover two of them were missing. There have been a 'number of fatalities' at the fire at Grenfell Tower in west London, London Fire Commissioner Dany Cotton has told reporters.

One resident broke down as he described how people just threw their kids out screaming "save my children". Another said his mother stepped over a body to escape the building.

Samira Lamrani said she saw a woman try to save a baby by

dropping it from a window "on the ninth or 10th floor" to waiting members of the public below.

She said: "People were starting to appear at the windows, frantically banging and screaming. The windows were slightly ajar, a woman was gesturing that she was about to throw her baby and if somebody could catch her baby."

"Somebody did, a gentleman ran forward and managed to

grab the baby."

She added: "I could see people from all angles, banging and screaming for help. Us members of the public were reassuring them, telling them we've done what we can and that we've phoned 999, but obviously the look on their face was death."

"My daughter's friend said she

observed an adult who made some sort of homemade parachute and tried to lower himself out of the window. The more I looked up, floor upon floor. Endless numbers of people.

"Mainly the kids, because their voices, those high-pitched cries will remain with me for a long time. I could hear them screaming

for their lives."

Mahad Egal said, "It was rapid, the fire was growing well out of control. There is only the stairs, which is smoke, it's dark, it's scary, it's trip hazard. There's all sorts, there are the elderly, there are children, there's disabled people there are all sorts, there's luggage in the stairwell."

"Even on the stairwell it was so dark in there that so many people lost their way."



Firemen assemble outside the building; a woman cries after seeing people die in the fire on Wednesday.

An eyewitness said stranded people just threw their kids out of building screaming 'save my children'

US gunman fires upon Republican leaders

A GUNMAN opened fire on Wednesday on Republican US lawmakers who were practicing near Washington for a charity baseball game, wounding senior Republican leader Steve Scalise and several others before being taken into custody, police and witnesses said.

Scalise, no. 3 in the House of Representatives Republican leadership, was shot in the hip at the baseball field in Alexandria, Virginia. He was tended to by fellow lawmakers, including Brad Wenstrup, an Ohio congressman who is a physician before being transported to a hospital.

Five people were transported medically from the scene, Alexandria's police chief Michael Brown told reporters.

Two of the wounded were Capitol Hill police who were at the scene and who engaged in a gunfight with the shooter, witnesses said.

The gunman who was armed with a rifle was shot before being taken into custody, lawmakers who saw the shooting, told reporters.

Scalise's office said the Louisiana congressman was in stable condition and undergoing surgery. President Donald Trump said in a tweet that Scalise was "badly injured but will fully recover".

Representative Joe Barton, who was at

REUTERS



Republican Chuck Fleischmann (in red) speaks to the media at the Capitol building in Washington, after the shooting, on Wednesday.

the scene, told reporters the gunman was a middle-aged man who appeared to be white and was wearing blue jeans and a blue shirt.

Representative Mo Brooks of Alabama said the shooter said nothing during the rampage. The shooting took place at Eugene Simpson Stadium Park in the Del

Ray neighbourhood of Alexandria, which is across the Potomac River from Washington. Brooks said 25 to 30 Republican members of the House and Senate had gathered for a practice a day before the annual charity congressional baseball game pitting Republicans against Democrats. The game is

scheduled to be played at Nationals Park, home of the Washington Nationals Major League baseball team.

Brooks told CNN that during batting practice he heard a "bam" and he looked over the third base dugout and saw a rifle and heard a quick succession of shots and saw the gunman shooting through the holes in a chain link fence. When Scalise was shot, he went down on the infield between first and second base, then dragged himself into the grassy outfield as the incident unfolded with a trail of blood following, Brooks said.

Assailant was shot and taken into custody by policemen

Two Capitol police officers who were at the scene to provide security for the lawmakers engaged the gunman with pistols, Brooks said.

"But for the Capitol police and the heroism they showed" it could very well have been a large-scale massacre. All we would have had would have been baseball bats versus a rifle. Those aren't good odds, Brooks said. The shooting was certain to raise again the contentious issue of gun violence in the US.

Master these rules to break the ice and have a great first date

(Agencies) First impressions matter, especially if you are on a date. Here are some expert tips on how to make a good impression on a first date.

First meetings are always tricky, so it is better to brush up

your dating knowledge before you go out. Dress well, loosen up and get your humour right to leave a good impression, say experts.

Gorav Aggarwal, founder of Loveviva.com and Solene Paillet, Head of

Communication, Gleeden.com, share some tips leave an indelible impression on a first date:

* Loosen up: Don't behave like you are going for a job interview. Make eye contact and greet with your best smile and make the situation comfortable.

* Pick up your best outfit but don't get overdressed: Your physical appearance will be your first impression, so pick a decent dress which makes you look charming and fresh. Make sure you don't get overdressed because this might become a distracting factor for your date. His or her focus will be less on you and more on your clothes.

* Compliment your way through: A compliment is the best way to start the conversation. It



makes the other person more comfortable and inclined towards you. But be careful with your words and adjectives.

* A good sense of humour always works: Keep positive humour in your talk to make her or him laugh. This will lend the conversation a positive note. Please be creative and funny with your jokes and not stupid and annoying and use them in the appropriate moment and timing.

* Do your homework well: Do a proper study of the profile and the interests of your date and talk about it, this shows your interest in her/him and your acceptance towards her/him interest and hobbies.

* Ask for a second date: Show that you liked her/him and want to meet the person again. This will make the person more confident and admire you more.



Want to have a productive day? Include high-carb foods like oats, fruits, yams in your breakfast

Researchers found that people's decision-making was often influenced by the amount of carbohydrates and protein contained in their breakfast.

(Agencies) Eating a high-carb breakfast, which includes bread, cheese and milk, may help you make good decisions throughout the day, say scientists who found that people who consume a lean meal in the morning tend to accept unfair financial offers.

Researchers said that people's decision-making was often influenced by the amount of carbohydrates and protein contained in their breakfast. The study participants were more likely to reject an unfair financial offer if they had filled up on carbs that morning.

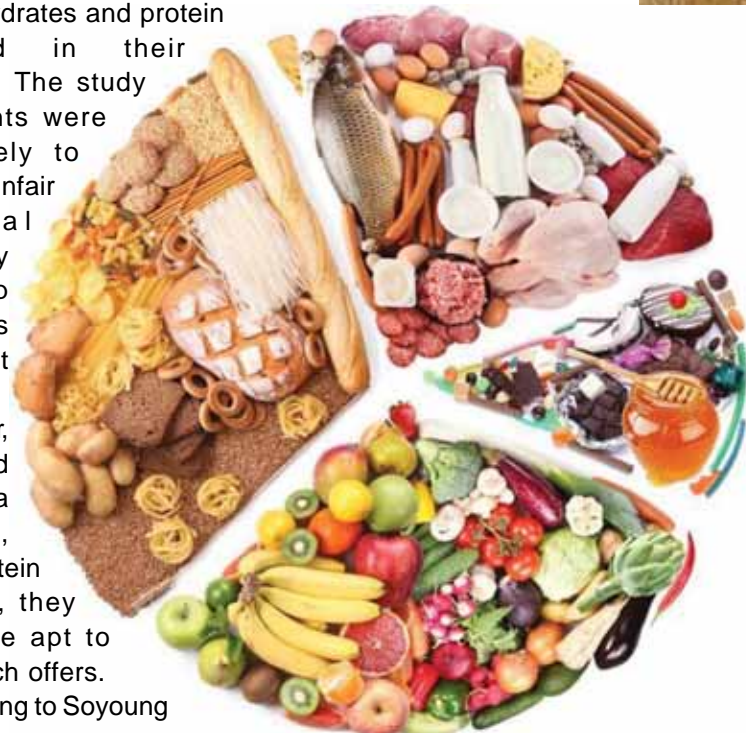
However, if they had eaten a lower-carb, higher-protein breakfast, they were more apt to accept such offers.

According to Soyoun

Park from the University of Luebeck, in Germany, after a high-carb breakfast people tended to have lower levels of an amino acid called tyrosine.

Tyrosine is important in producing brain chemicals like dopamine – which is part of the brain's "reward system."

Changes in tyrosine correlated with changes in people's decision-making, Park said.



In the first, Park's team had 87 college students play an online version of the Ultimatum Game. The game gives players the opportunity to either accept or reject a clearly unfair financial offer from an opponent.

The catch is, if the offer is rejected, no one gets any money. So when a player makes that choice, it's seen as a form of "social punishment" for the opponent.

After playing the game, the students

told the researchers what they had eaten that morning. It turned out that 53% of people who had eaten a high-carb breakfast rejected unfair offers, compared with only a quarter of students who had eaten a lower-carb breakfast.

The second phase included 24 men who came to the lab for a controlled breakfast before playing the Ultimatum Game. They also had blood samples drawn over several hours.

On one day, the breakfast was 80% carbs, 10% protein: Bread with jam and cream cheese; milk and apple juice; and an apple and banana.

On another day, the breakfast was 50% carbs and

25% protein: There was bread and jam again, but also ham, yogurt, milk and a bigger slab of cream cheese. The results were similar. The men were more likely to reject unfair offers after the high-carb breakfast.

The test included only men, Park said, because there are gender differences in metabolism that might have interfered with the results. Even in the all-male group, people varied in their responses. Some still accepted unfair offers after having a high-carb breakfast, for instance. It would be interesting to figure out why some people were influenced by the breakfast switch, and others were not, Giliberto said.

(Agencies) New research finds that bad parenting on part of the father may lead the eldest daughter to engage in risky sexual behaviour. Researchers have found that the bad behaviour of the father may increase the eldest daughter's likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviour more than the younger ones. The findings published in the journal *Developmental Psychology* suggest that genes alone are not responsible for a child's problem behaviour, including engaging in risky sex and affiliating with delinquent peers. By using pairs of sisters who spent differing amounts of time living



were found for older sisters who spent many years living with low-quality fathering. The researchers believe that in divorced/separated families, a father – and how he behaved – was likely to have exerted a stronger influence on an older daughter than a younger daughter since older daughters systematically received larger “doses” of dad's behaviour. The results suggest a causal relationship between a father's behaviour and his daughters' experiences. Different amounts of exposure to fathers of high or low quality changes daughters' social environments – the monitoring they received and the peers with whom they affiliated – in ways that can impact their sexual behaviour.

Here's how parenting impacts risky sexual behaviour of daughters

with their fathers, the study was able to control for inherited genes and environmental conditions, such as socioeconomic status or religious background, to isolate the effects of fathering quality on daughters. “It's not enough for a dad to just be in the home,” said Danielle DelPriore, a post-doctoral fellow in the University of Utah in the US and lead author of the study. “The quality of a father's rela-

tionship with his daughter has implications for both the overall monitoring she receives from her parents as well as her likelihood of affiliating with more promiscuous or more pro-social friends,” DelPriore said. The study compared the outcomes of older and younger full biological sisters who experienced the divorce or separation of their parents while growing up, and thus spent differing amounts of time

living with their fathers. The study found that older sisters with greater exposure to their fathers were strongly influenced by the quality of fathering they received. When fathering was high quality, parental monitoring was increased and older sisters were less likely to affiliate with sexually risky peers during adolescence compared to their younger sisters.

The opposite effects



Include green veggies, carrots in your diet. Vitamin A deficiency may raise TB risk



(Agencies) People with low levels of vitamin A living with individuals sick with tuberculosis (TB) may be 10 times more likely to develop the disease than people with high levels of the nutrient, new research has found.

The findings suggests that vitamin A supplementation might be an important part of controlling the spread of TB – one of the leading causes of death worldwide.

“If the link is affirmed in a clinical trial of vitamin A supplementation, it would make a powerful case for using this approach to prevent TB in people at high risk of disease,” said senior author Megan Murray, professor at Harvard

Medical School, at Boston in the US.

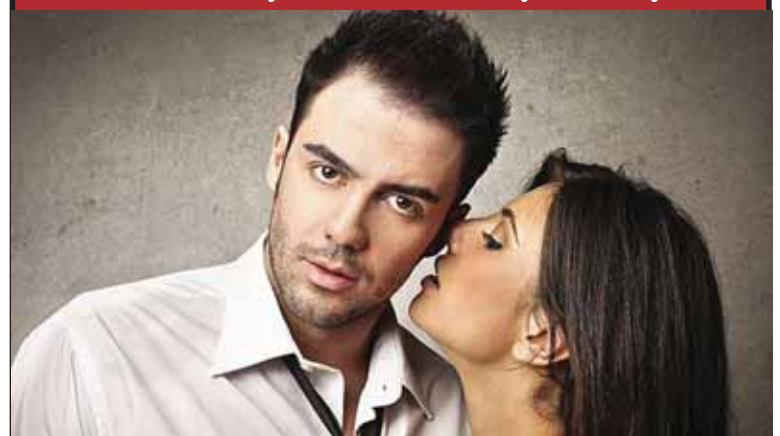
The findings, published in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, are based on an analysis of blood drawn from more than 6,000 household contacts of people diagnosed with TB in Lima, Peru. A 10-fold increase in risk is striking, the investigators said. More than 1.8 million people died from TB in 2015. TB strikes hardest in low- and middle-income countries, where vitamin A deficiency can affect up to 30% of the population.

“It's exciting to think that something as simple and inexpensive as supplementing people's diets with vitamin A may be a powerful tool for pre-

venting TB,” Murray said.

Vitamin A, also known as retinol, is best known among public health experts for its association with blindness. Healthy levels of the nutrient have been defined as those needed to prevent damage to eyesight. Previous studies have suggested that vitamin A modulates the immune system and may ward off infection. However, just how vitamin A might affect the risk for TB has, up until now, remained unclear and a matter of debate. In this study, the researchers found that the protective effect of vitamin A grew stronger as levels of the nutrient increased. Protection continued to grow well above what has been considered the minimum healthy level. Vitamin A deficiency – defined as less than 200 micrograms per litre of blood – fuelled the risk of developing TB disease 10-fold. That risk was 20 times higher among young people between the ages of 10 and 19. That finding, the researchers said, suggests that vitamin A may play an even greater role in immunity among younger people.

Sexual dissatisfaction, not porn, causes erectile dysfunction, says study



(Agencies) If you were wondering whether watching porn is unhealthy, the answer is no. A study recently warned that men, who regularly watch porn, are not sexually satisfied in their relationship with their partner and are more likely to suffer erectile dysfunction. It suggested males addicted to adult movies become disinterested in sex with their partners because their ‘sexual tolerance is higher’. Erectile dysfunction is an inability to get or keep an erection firm enough to have sexual intercourse. It's also sometimes referred to as impotence. Porn is often blamed for turning men off sex with their partners, but one in five men watch X-rated films to avoid intimacy, it was found. It follows a recent study that discovered men who, regularly watch porn, are more likely to become disinterested in sex with their partners. Dr David Ley, a clinical psychologist specialising in sexual problems, said that men use masturbation to compensate for lack of sexual satisfaction in relationships. As this sexual behaviour is often accompanied by viewing pornography, it can be easily misunderstood, he told *The Sun*. A team from Los Angeles, California, studied 335 men in relationships. The findings revealed that 22 percent reported of viewing porn to having sex with their partner. They also found that 28 percent of respondents said that they opted for masturbation over intercourse.

Banned docu makers to drag I&B min to Kerala HC

Debarred from screening at Kerala film fest, In the Shade of Fallen Chinar team, along with two other filmmakers, move HC against I&B Ministry

MOHAR BASU
mohar.basu@mid-day.com

UPSET at the Information and Broadcasting Ministry's decision to stall the screening of his Kashmir-themed film at the upcoming International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala, director Shawn Sebastian and co-director Fazil NC have approached the Kerala High Court for relief.

"Four films have been banned by the Ministry," said Sebastian, whose 16-minute documentary titled In The Shade Of Fallen Chinar puts the spotlight on a conflict-torn Kashmir through the eyes of young artists.

"We approached the High Court on Monday for interim relief so that we can screen the film. The hearing is scheduled to take place today. Given the support that we have received, I am certain the decision will be in our favour," he added.

Denying reports of having been informed about the rea-



Stills from In The Shade Of Fallen Chinar

son behind the ban, Sebastian says, "We were only told that our film won't be screened. The Ministry hasn't pointed out any objectionable material. This arbitrary denial is unconstitutional."

Apart from Sebastian's documentary, Ramchandra PN's 45-minute-long, The Unbearable Being Of Lightness, that looks at Hyderabad University research scholar Rohith Vemula's suicide has also faced the axe. Plus, there is Kathu Lukose's March, March, based on the Jawaharlal Nehru University protests, and Muhajir, which revolves around a labour camp in the Gulf.

A source from the Ministry says, "Their works were provocative, and will not pass the censor regulations. [Sebastian's] film violates the guidelines. It's a prerequisite that films don't threaten national security or national integrity."

Although Sebastian's short may not make it to the festival



(June 16 to 20), it has been available on YouTube since June 2016. A release on a public podium, asserts Sebastian, will be instrumental in sparking-off an essential discussion. "All the films that have been banned deal with a revolutionary voice of the youth and their issues with political agendas," Sebastian said.



'We were only told that our film won't be screened. The Ministry hasn't pointed out any objectionable material. This arbitrary denial is unconstitutional'

Shawn Sebastian, director

'Their works were provocative, and will not pass the censor regulations. It is in the best interest of all to deny the screening at the festival'

Source from the Ministry



Pari finds fresh co-star in Neil

Duo kickstarts Golmaal 4's next schedule in Ooty

MOHAR BASU
mohar.basu@mid-day.com

NEIL Nitin Mukesh is set to make his first appearance before the camera after getting married earlier this year — for Rohit Shetty's Golmaal 4. The film already has a host of A-listers on board. Neil joined the cast of the comic caper in Ooty on Monday to shoot with Pari-

neeti Chopra.

While refusing to confirm if the actor plays Pari's love interest, a unit hand told mid-day, "There is a long song sequence between Neil and Parineeti. It will be shot over the week."

Neil's spokesperson clarified that the actor hasn't been roped in for just a cameo, but has a key role in the film.

"Neil is not making a special appearance. The song is only one part of the film. Neil's character is well layered. He will definitely add an element of intensity to the comedy."



Will Hrithik back film on the Super 30 IIT tutor?

Rumour mills suggest actor will co-produce the film on Anand Kumar, besides acting in it

SONIL DEDHIA
sonil.dedhia@mid-day.com

The commercial success of Aamir Khan's Dangal and MS Dhoni: The Untold Story, starring Sushant Singh Rajput have proved that biopics are a winning template in show business. With murmurs of Hrithik Roshan playing mathematician Anand Kumar in his next, growing louder, the actor may be the newest entrant on the list. A source says Hrithik loved Vikas Bahl's script and may consider co-producing the film too.

"Hrithik had previously said he wants to take to production with a good subject. This might be it. However, it is unclear whether he will start a company or team up with his father, Rakesh Roshan under the Filmkraft Productions banner. Hrithik has discussed the idea with



Mathematics prodigy Anand Kumar, who founded Super 30

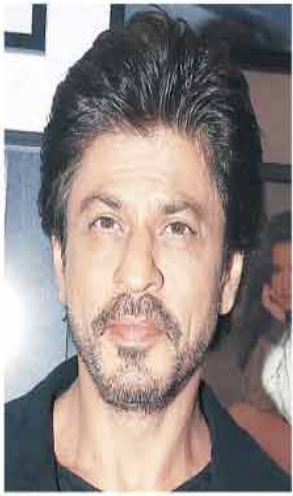
Vikas and they are working out the formalities," the source added.

Kumar's Super 30 programme prepares economically backward students to crack IIT-JEE.



'It is unclear whether he will start a company or team up with his father, Rakesh Roshan for the film'

A source



SRK's notes to Kabir's rescue

Shah Rukh Khan, who has a cameo in **Kabir Khan's** Salman Khan-starrer, *Tubelight*, has known the filmmaker for long. "I have known him since college. He had given me his notes to study. I cleared my masters

in filmmaking with his notes. We were in the same school. He was senior to me by two years. Gauri [Khan; SRK's wife] and I were dancing partners in a production called *Westside Stories*," says Kabir.

SLB upset with Dippy?

Last week, **Deepika Padukone** found herself being slut-shamed by 'samskari' netizens for a sizzling magazine photo-shoot. Now, word comes in that the sexy snaps have got **Sanjay Leela Bhansali's** goat. The filmmaker has **Dippy** playing the titular role in his period drama, *Padmavati*, and is apparently fuming over the bold photos. The upcoming film has already run into trouble with fringe outfits that vandalised the sets twice — in Jaipur and near



Kolhapur, fearing inaccurate portrayal of the Mewar queen. Bhansali is concerned that the actress' sultry shots may invite unwanted attention, leading to more trouble.



Going down the retro route

Kirti Kulhari's look in **Madhur Bhandarkar's** upcoming film, *Indu Sarkar*, which is set in the '70s, has been inspired by the styling of the actresses of that era. Make up man **Vikram Gaikwad** and costume designer **Amrita Sarkar** drew inspiration from **Zahida** and **Priya Rajvansh**. Says Kriti, "It's something that Madhur's team had researched and I had to pretty much follow it. But, for me, the way my character has to look in every scene is important



and I always add my own inputs and understanding to it. I loved looking like a '70s woman. In fact, I felt like a different person altogether."



Shweta bani heroine

Shweta Rohira, who **Salman Khan** considers his rakhi sister, makes her acting debut in producer-director **Sunil Thadani's** short film, *Parineeti*. She will play the title role with seasoned actors like **Kitu Gidwani** and **Kanwaljeet Singh** as co-stars. Says Shweta, "It was a mind-blowing experience. Thanks to the team, I was comfortable and able to do justice to my role." Shweta was earlier married to actor **Pulkit Samrat**.



TELLY TATTLE

Going green — with envy!



TV actor **Gaurav Khanna**, who plays the lead in *Prem Ya Paheli Chandrakanta*, seems to be insecure about his leading lady. A source says that the actor is unhappy with the starry treatment that his co-star, **Kritika Kamra**, enjoys on set. "She gets Sundays off, has flexible timings, is being promoted more than Gaurav and is also paid better. He seems to be envious of her."

In step

Saqib Saleem, who was last seen in *Dobaara* with sister **Huma Qureshi**, has started prepping for his next. He is learning kathak for his character in a short film, *Aamad*, directed by **Neeraj Udhwani**. Neeraj was the writer of Saqib's 2013 film, *Mere Dad Ki Maruti*. His new project will be centered on a father-son relationship.



Pedal power

Salman Khan is a trendsetter. Whatever he does or endorses becomes an instant hit. And it looks like **Amyra Dastur** has been inspired by the superstar. The petite actress was recently spotted riding a bicycle. On enquiring, we found out that the actress is shooting for her upcoming South projects and cycling is part of her new fitness regimen, given that the gym is far from her shoot location.



My daughter is a fan of Deepika Padukone and Varun Dhawan, reveals Juhi Chawla

(Agencies) Actor Juhi Chawla talks about how her daughter Jhanvi often gets star-struck on seeing the fresh breed of actors, whom Juhi has seen growing up on the sets of her films. Actor Juhi Chawla often talks about how her kids, son Arjun and daughter Jhanvi, haven't seen any of her popular films from the '90s, and still, she really wishes that they grow up to be actors. Even though both her kids have other career plans in mind, they do get star-struck on seeing or meeting a top Bollywood actor. Ask Juhi if there has ever been such a moment, she says that her daughter often gets awestruck when she sees Deepika Padukone or Varun Dhawan on-screen. "Jhanvi has always been a fan of Deepika and once the actor had come over and I think, Jhanvi must have been quite in a daze," says Juhi. Really? "Yes, she did. Come on, it's natural for my kids," she adds. Juhi goes down memory lane and recalls how she often used to interact with star kids, who have now turned into big stars, while she was shooting for her films back then. "I have seen Varun [Dhawan] as a kid around, though I have not worked with him. Whenever we went outdoors together during Deewana Mastana (1997), David [Dhawan] Ji's kids would come along. I remember, we had a 20-day schedule in Toronto, so we had spent lot of time in the bus and I would chat with Rohit [Dhawan] and Varun. I have their pictures all around. Now, today, Varun has become a star and when my daughter says 'oh he is so cool, so nice and so handsome', I'm like, 'Wow! How time flies!'" So, is there anything in particular that Jhanvi admires about Deepika or Varun? "I think, she just likes the personalities of both of these actors. She loves to watch their films and follow them on social media. I can't recollect more details of what exactly she said about them, but she did mention that she really likes Deepika as an actor."

Anushka Sharma looks scary in first look of Pari

Bollywood actor Anushka Sharma shared the first look of her upcoming production venture, Pari, on Tuesday and it is quite scary.

(Agencies) The first look of Pari, Anushka Sharma's third home production is out now and it has a stunning eerie feel. Anushka Sharma shared the first look of her film which is primarily a love story. Anushka shared the picture on Twitter Tuesday morning. Pari, co-produced by Clean Slate Films and KriArj Entertainment, is currently under production. Directed by debutant Prosit Roy, the film also stars Parambrata Chatterjee. Karnesh Sharma of Clean Slate Films said in a statement, "Here's the first look of Pari, our next production.

The film is on floors now and we are looking forward to a memorable shoot." Prerna Arora of KriArj Entertainment stated, "Pari is a fantastic story. It promises an intriguing and engaging cinematic experience for the audience. We are very excited for this collaboration with Clean Slate Films and are certain that the content we create will further the reputation of our young companies and stand out from the crowd." Anushka is also gearing up for the release of her next opposite Shah Rukh Khan, Jab Harry Met Sejal.



Main aur mera matin: Salman Khan shares still from Tubelight

Directed by Kabir Khan, Tubelight also stars Sohail Khan, Zhu Zhu and Om Puri. The flick is slated to release on June 23, 2017.



(Agencies) Salman Khan, who shares a unique relationship with Matin Rey Tangu, has now given another glimpse of his camaraderie with the child actor. The Sultan star took to Twitter to post a new still from 'Tubelight' where he is seen cycling with Matin. He captioned the picture as, "Main aur mera matin #Tubelight @TubelightKieid @kabirkhankk" Directed by Kabir Khan, Tubelight also stars Sohail Khan, Zhu Zhu and Om Puri. The flick is slated to release on June 23, 2017.

Raabta movie review: Excellent Sushant Singh Rajput but an average film

Raabta is based on the theme of reincarnation starring earnest actors like Sushant Singh Rajput and Jim Sarbh. Here's our movie review.

Raabta
Cast: Sushant Singh Rajput, Kriti Sanon, Jim Sarabh, Rajkumar Rao
Director: Dinesh Vijan
Rating: 3/5

Reincarnation is still a sought-after theme for the Hindi film industry despite its fondness for modern clothes, gadgets and locations. Commercially successful films and shows like Baahubali and Game Of Thrones also influence choices. Sometimes, then, filmmakers appear stuck in a dilemma. Debutant director Dinesh Vijan is probably one of them.

Vijan's Raabta (Urdu for connection) is thematically a 'love-never-dies' sort of a film, and it wants to look glossy, which means the characters are likely to make transitions in time and space. With such predictability comes the challenge of striking a balance between two different time zones. Raabta struggles real hard there.

Shiv (Sushant Singh Rajput) and Shaira (Kriti Sanon), which seems Bollywood's current favourite name for NRI girls, meet in picturesque Budapest and realise they might have

a history, from a previous birth maybe. Shaira, a non-committal chocolate maker, gets inexplicable flashes, but then she meets a globe-trotting, cynical yet charming business tycoon Zak Merchant (Jim Sarbh) and her world turns upside down, literally.

Nobody knows where things are headed till Vijan decides to go all out on cheesy lines, saturated colours and a dash of hastily planned flashback.

To his credit, he manages to assemble the desired ingredients of a 'masala' Bollywood film: A hardworking lead fresh out of a sizeable success (MS? Dhoni - The Untold Story), a fairly recognisable heroine, Deepika Padukone for a cameo, and a bankable antagonist in Jim Sarbh. But the mixture doesn't quite shape up in something very exciting.

Vijan's vision is clichéd and that hampers the film more than anything else. The guy and the girl have to look

up-market and thus are a banker and a chocolate maker. The cynical one has to creepily sing old Hindi songs and paint.



At some point, they would also talk how they knew they would meet. The good yet valiant guy and the rich yet hysterical cynic would also engage in a tussle to impress the heroine somewhere during the first half. They would do it the old fashioned way by actually saying, 'Ladki to main hi le ke jaaunga.' In all of this, the girl would mostly play coy and keep giggling.

Such films also need an indispensable friend for occasional comic relief and good-natured flower sellers to make us believe in the beauty of mankind.

Doing a 10 minute tayyari for a picture is a bit obnoxious, says Katrina Kaif as she talks about selfies

The actor says there is nothing wrong with people clicking and posting selfies on social media, it's the drama before and after the selfies that irks her



(Agencies) Last year Katrina Kaif made her social media debut and a month ago, she joined a popular photo-sharing website. Though the actor in an earlier interview had admitted that she unnecessarily worried about the invasion of privacy social media brings, she still maintains that she will keep her equations with people in her personal life out of it. Talking about the kind of stuff she would post on her social media accounts, Katrina says, "Films for me are my biggest passion. My art, at this point of time in my life is my reason to get up in the morning so if I am not going to share that aspect of my life on my social media accounts, that's unbalanced. You have to share what you really feel about – whether it is a tissue box, a piece of

paper of a person, you have to be honest." What about celebrities making personal announcements like pregnancy, weddings and engagements? "That is absolutely fine as they are using the platform to announce what's special to them. If I was in that situation I would too. But I am not. So whenever that happens, of course", Katrina says. There have been lots of studies conducted on selfies and the results suggest that people who cannot stop clicking themselves might be vain, narcissistic, lonely or attention seekers. But Katrina brushes aside all such negative talk. "When people talk to me about selfies, I feel like it has a negative connotation. Like is everyone who takes a selfie a megalomaniac? The answer is no. I can do a study

with a 100 candidates and prove that people, who are on social media in ten years, will be slightly emotionally dysfunctional. These are studies which we can't never prove or disprove." Katrina adds, "Today, I can tell you something and I can change my mind in one week. Unfortunately, that is the way of the world. The world moves so fast, we all change our mind. I don't think there is anything wrong with taking selfies. But I can tell you what has become annoying or for lack of a better word, funny is the way people behave before clicking a picture. I am very happy to take pictures. But maybe, just figure the arrangement of your hair in advance or just get ready and come. Doing a 10 minute tayyari for a picture is a bit obnoxious."

Behen Hogi Teri movie review

A lesson on how to turn a potential comedy into a bore fest

Behen Hogi Teri movie review: This is a love story where the lover (Rajkummar Rao) does everything in his capacity to get his beloved (Shruti Haasan) married off to another guy. Not much of a film, wouldn't you say?

Behen Hogi Teri

Director: Ajay K Pannalal

Cast: Rajkummar Rao, Shruti Haasan

Rating: 2/5

There is little to recommend in Behen Hogi Teri, which hits theatres on Friday, other than the performance of Rajkummar Rao. The movie tells the story of Gattu (Rajkummar) and his co-star, Shruti Haasan, who plays his neighbour Binni. The two live in Lucknow, where they are lovers burdened with the long tradition of 'mohalle ki ladkiyan behen hoti hain'. Gattu's fight (or the lack thereof) is what forms the film's narrative. Herry Tangri plays Gattu's friend Bhura, who is unwittingly caught in the chaos. Behen Hogi Teri suffers from a poorly conceived plot that fails to offer the fun expected of a story of its kind. Gattu is a loser who has not even completed his education. He is simply,



hopelessly in love with Binni. Being neighbours, he gets to carry out some chores at her house and grows close to her family, which treats him as her brother. Not being concerned about his career would not be a definitive flaw if Gattu were a more impressive lover. He fails in this, however, just as much as he does in his USPC entrance. He doesn't have the courage to talk to Binni's family about his relationship — he even contributes to the spread of a rumour that Binni and Bhura are having an affair! The sad joke of serving cold drinks at your girlfriend's marriage is an old one in the northern parts of our country, but Gattu comes across

as yet more pitiful when he helps the family find a bride and gets his own friend in a rumoured relationship with her. Behen Hogi Teri is a love story where the lover does everything in his capacity to get his beloved married off to another guy. Not much of a film, wouldn't you say? The only enjoyable parts of the movie are the dialogues and the acting of Rajkummar. As they talk to each other, even some members of the supporting cast rise above the dismal storyline and deliver some brilliant punches. Behen Hogi Teri must also be applauded for avoiding several potentially misogynist moments. When Bhura's uncle (Ranjeet) and his dad (Gulshan Grover), a criminal who has at least a hundred murders to his credit, confront Binni's family, the women attack the goons with harsh words and slippers. They take charge, and the men only try to pacify them.

Jab Harry Met Sejal: Shah Rukh Khan hangs out with director Imtiaz Ali

This is for the first time fans will see Shah Rukh in an Imtiaz Ali film. The movie also stars Anushka Sharma in the lead role.



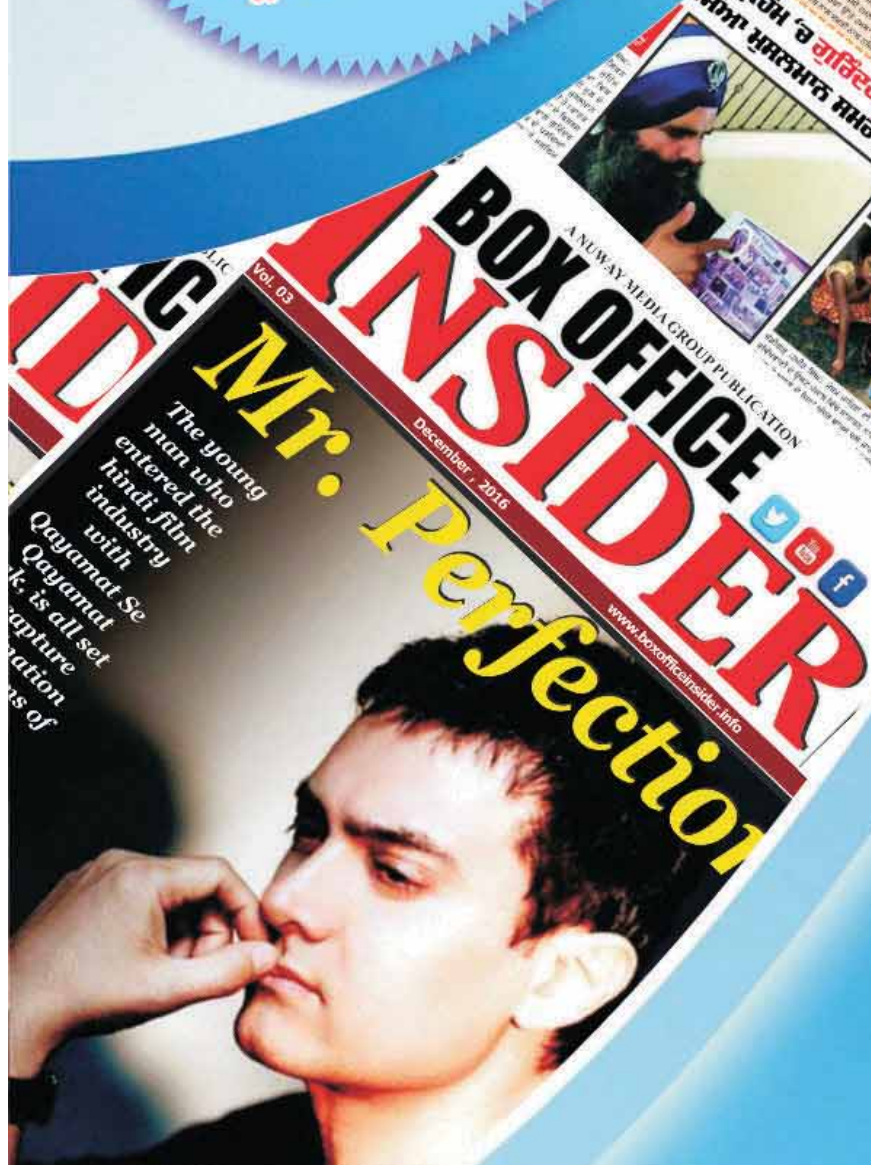
(Agencies) Fans are really excited to see Shah Rukh Khan and director Imtiaz Ali work together in the upcoming movie Jab Harry Met Sejal. And even Badshah of Bollywood is all excited for the release.

The 51-year-old actor took to Twitter and shared a selfie with Ali and captioned the photo as, "So nice to see sooo many meeting so many. This is my contribution Jab Harry Met Hair all over the place Ali." This is for the first time fans will see Shah Rukh in an Imtiaz Ali film. The movie also stars Anushka Sharma in the lead role. Recently, the Raees star noted that there is no similarity between Jab Harry Met Sejal and When Harry Met Sally, but hopes that the movie turns out to be one of that kind of unabashed classic love stories.



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